

**Investigating the effectiveness of learning and development (L&D)
provided to e-tutors in an ODeL institution**

by

Lazarus Nyiko Makhuvele

submitted in accordance with the requirements for
the degree of

MASTER OF COMMERCE IN BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

in the subject

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: DR TK MOLOTSI

CO-SUPERVISOR: DR R SHIBITI

FEBRUARY 2026

DECLARATION

Name: LAZARUS NYIKO MAKHUELE

Student number: 42013372

Degree: MCom (Business Management)

INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT
(L&D) PROVIDED TO E-TUTORS IN AN ODeL INSTITUTION

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

Furthermore, I declare that I used AI tools including M365 Copilot, QuillBot and Grammarly only for support purposes such as clarification of concepts, grammar refinement and structuring assistance.



SIGNATURE

25 February 2026

DATE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	x
ABSTRACT	xi
NKATSAKANYO	xii
MAWANWA	xiv
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background of the study	1
1.3 Motivation of the study	2
1.4 Problem statement.....	4
1.5 Research aim and objectives	5
1.5.1 Research Objectives	5
1.5.1.1 Primary research objective	5
1.5.1.2 Secondary research objectives	5
1.6 Research questions	6
1.6.1 Primary research question.....	6
1.6.2 Secondary research questions	6
1.7 Significance of the study	6
1.8 Preliminary literature review.....	7
1.9 Empirical literature review.....	9
1.10 Methodology	10
1.11 Ethical considerations	11
1.12 Outline of chapters	12
1.13 Chapter summary	12
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	14
2.1 Introduction	14
2.2 E-tutor and e-tutoring	14
2.3 Learning and development (L&D).....	17
2.3.1 An Overview of Training	17
2.3.2 Development in context	18
2.3.3 The importance of L&D	19
2.3.4 E-tutor L&D	20
2.4 E-Tutor roles, competencies and qualifications	24
2.4.1 Pedagogical competence	25
2.4.2 Social competence	26
2.4.3 Communication competence	26
2.4.4 Organisational competence	26

2.4.5 Individual competence	27
2.4.6 Technological competence	27
2.4.7 Professional competence	27
2.4.8 Intercultural competence	28
2.4.9 Evaluation competence	28
2.5 E-tutor qualifications	29
2.6 E-tutor training evaluation	29
2.6.1 Level 1 (Reaction).....	33
2.6.2 Level 2 (Learning).....	33
2.6.3 Level 3 (Behaviour).....	34
2.6.4 Level 4 (Results).....	35
2.7 Empirical literature review.....	36
2.8 Chapter summary	41
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	42
3.1 Introduction	42
3.2 Research paradigm.....	42
3.3 Research approach.....	43
3.4 Ontological Stance	44
3.5 Epistemological Stance.....	45
3.6 Research design	45
3.7 Study setting	46
3.8 Population and sampling.....	47
3.8.1 Target population	47
3.8.2 Sampling	48
3.8.3 Sample size	49
3.8.4 Unit of analysis.....	50
3.9 Data collection	50
3.9.1 Measurement.....	51
3.9.2 Reliability and validity of the study.....	51
3.10 Data analysis	53
3.10.1 Descriptive statistics	53
3.10.2 Inferential Statistical Analysis	53
3.11 Ethical considerations	56
3.12 Strengths and limitations.....	57
3.13 Chapter summary	58
CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS.....	59
4.1 Introduction	59
4.2 Descriptive statistics	59
4.2.1 Qualification level.....	59
4.2.2 Respondents by college	61
4.2.3 Composition of respondents by number of years of experience	62
4.2.4 Training attended	63
4.2.5 Subject-specific assessment	64
4.2.6 Training evaluation	68

4.2.6.1 Reaction.....	68
4.2.6.2 Learning.....	70
4.2.6.3 Behaviour.....	71
4.2.6.4 Results.....	72
4.3 Correlation analysis	74
4.4 Regression analysis.....	76
4.5 Training needs	78
4.6 Chapter summary	81
CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	82
5.1 Introduction	82
5.2 Summary of key findings.....	82
5.2.1 Profile of respondents.....	82
5.2.2 Training attendance	82
5.2.3 Subject-specific assessment	83
5.2.4 Training evaluation	83
5.2.4.1 Reaction.....	83
5.2.4.2 Learning.....	84
5.2.4.3 Behaviour.....	84
5.2.4.4 Results.....	84
5.2.5 Correlational analysis	84
5.2.6 Regression analysis.....	85
5.2.7 Training needs	85
5.3 Conclusions.....	86
5.3.1 Importance of behavioural application	86
5.3.2 The importance of subject-specific assessment.....	86
5.3.3 Positive reaction to L&D interventions	86
5.3.4 The importance of enhanced technological skills	86
5.3.5 Training variabilities	87
5.3.6 Customising training for new and experienced e-tutors	87
5.4 Limitations of the study	87
5.4.1 Limitations on literature review	87
5.4.2 Limitations of the empirical study.....	87
5.5 Recommendations	88
5.5.1 Standardised subject-specific assessment.....	88
5.5.2 Develop tiered training models	88
5.5.3 Improved technological and communication training.....	88
5.5.4 Increased frequency and accessibility of training	89
5.5.5 Address specialised and emerging training needs	89
5.5.6 Application of acquired skills.....	89
5.5.7 Recommendations for future research	89
5.5.8 Policy implications.....	89
5.6 Chapter summary	90
LIST OF REFERENCES	91

ANNEXURE A: Ethical Clearance (College of Economic and Management Sciences [CEMS]).....	116
ANNEXURE B: Permission Certificate (RPSC)	117
ANNEXURE C: UNISA Research Ethics 3rd Party Confidentiality Agreement	119
ANNEXURE D: Questionnaire	122
ANNEXURE E: Survey link	128
ANNEXURE F: Editor's letter.....	129

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Combined E-tutor Role Model	25
Figure 2.2: Organisation of the online platform	27
Figure 2.3: Levels of Kirkpatrick's Original Evaluation Model.....	32
Figure 3.1 Sampling Size Calculator	49
Figure 4.1: Training attended	63
Figure 4.2: Subject Specific Assessment Attended	65
Figure 4.3: Subject Specific Assessment	66
Figure 4.4: Reaction	69
Figure 4.5: Learning	70
Figure 4.6: Behaviour	71
Figure 4.7: Results	72
Figure 4.8: Training Needs.....	78

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Summary of the research objectives, hypotheses and statistical analysis conducted	55
Table 4.1: Highest Qualification	60
Table 4.2: Respondents by College	61
Table 4.3: E-tutor Experience.....	62
Table 4.4 Descriptive statistics subject-specific assessment	67
Table 4.5: Descriptive statistics regarding training evaluation.....	73
Table 4.6: Correlation Analysis	75
Table 4.7: Regression Statistics.....	76
Table 4.8: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).....	77
Table 4.9: Coefficients.....	78
Table 4.10: Training Needs Mentioned Once.....	80

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
AI	Artificial Intelligence
CAES	College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences
CAS	College of Accounting Sciences
CEDU	College of Education
CEMS	College of Economic Management and Sciences
CGS	College of Graduate Studies
CHS	College of Human Sciences
CLAW	College of Law
CPD	Centre for Professional Development
CSET	College of Science, Engineering and Technology
DISS	Directorate Instructional and Support Services
DREC	Department of Human Resource Management Research, Ethics Innovation Committee
HRD	Human Resource Development
HRM	Human Resource Management
IT	Information Technology
ITC	Initial Test Competency
ITM	Integrated Tutor Model
L&D	Learning and Development
LMS	Learning Management Systems
MCQ	Multiple-Choice Questions
NDP	National Development Plan
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy
ODeL	Open Distance eLearning
ODL	Open Distance Learning
SAICA	South African Institute of Accountants
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SRIPCC	Senate Research, Innovation, Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee

TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNISA	University of South Africa

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the Almighty God for guiding and leading throughout this study. I also wish to pass my sincere gratitude to the following people for their respective contributions to this study:

- My entire family, for your love, cooperation, patience and understanding of the time that I needed to spend on my studies.
- My supervisors for the consistent support and confidence that you have shown me. Dr Tebogo Molotsi, thank you for your unwavering support and patience. From the bottom of my heart, I really appreciate your guidance. Dr Ronny Shibiti, there are no words that can express my gratitude. Thank you for believing in me and helping me grow into a better version of myself.
- Dr Trust Chireka, Prof Boela Swanepoel and Dr Arthur Reynolds for the outstanding support you have shown me throughout the journey of this study.
- All the participants of the study who took their precious time to participate in the study and helped me realise my dream.

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effectiveness of the Learning & Development (L&D) offered to e-tutors at an Open Distance eLearning (ODEL) institution. The ODeL institution where the study was conducted has historically experienced low throughput, a low pass rate and a high dropout rate. To address these challenges, the ODeL institution relies on strategies that include, among others, the recruitment and appointment of e-tutors to support and mentor students throughout their academic journey. The primary objective of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of e-tutors' L&D in enhancing students' learning experiences in an ODeL institution.

A cross-sectional quantitative research approach was adopted for this study. Data were collected using a questionnaire. The instrument was captured on MS Forms and the link was shared via email to a census sample of 869 e-tutors appointed at the ODeL institution. One hundred and ninety-nine (199) e-tutors participated in the study and the quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

The findings of the study revealed that the e-tutors' L&D was effective in improving e-tutor's skills and competences. However, the study revealed that a majority of e-tutors require further training on subject-related content, online communication and technological skills. The study concluded that the ODeL institution must make subject-specific assessment compulsory across all colleges, prioritise online communication and technological skills training interventions and advanced training for experienced e-tutors.

Recommendations include: standardised subject-specific assessment; improved technological and communication training; increased the frequency of training; and the development of a tiered training model.

Keywords: e-tutor; e-tutoring; Learning & Development; Training evaluation; ODeL

NKATSAKANYO

Dyondzo leyi yi lavisisile matirhelo ya Dyondzo na nhluvukiso (L&D) leyi nyikiwaka vadyondzisi va xielekitironiki eka nhlangoana wa Dyondzo ya le Kule leyi Pfulekeke (ODEL) eka dyondzo yale henhla. Ahlangano wa ODeL laha ndzavisiso wu endliweke kona hi matimu wu vile na vuhumelerisi bya le hansi, mpimo wa le hansi wa ku pasa na mpimo wa le henhla wo tshika xikolo. Ku lulamisa mintlhontlho leyi, nhlangoana wa ODeL wu titshege hi tindlela leti katseke, na tin'wana ta tona , ku thola na ku thoriwa ximfumo ka vadyondzisi va xielekitironiki ku seketela na ku letela swichudeni eka riendzo ra swona hinkwaro ra dyondzo. Xikongomelonkulu xa ndzavisiso lowu a ku ri ku lavisisa ku humelela ka L&D ya vadyondzisi va xielekitironiki eku nhluvukiseni ka ntokoto wa dyondzo ya swichudeni eka nhlangoana wa ODeL.

Endlelo ra ndzavisiso ra tinhlayo leri hlengeletaka vutivi hi nkarhi wun'we ri amukeriwile eka ndzavisiso lowu. Datha yi hlengetiwele hi ku vutisa swivutiso. Xitirhisiwa lexi xi tekiwile eka Tifomo ta MS naswona linki yi rhumeriwe hi imeyili eka xikombiso xa nhlayo ya vanhu va Madzana ya nhungu –makume tsevu na nkaye (869) wa vadyondzisi va xielekitironiki lava thoriweke eka nhlangoana wa ODeL. Dzana na makume nkaye nkaye (199) wa vadyondzisi va xielekitironiki va ngenelerile eka ndzavisiso naswona datha ya nhlayo yi xopaxopiwele hi ku tirhisa tinhlayo leti hlamuselaka na ta xiringanyeto.

Leswi kumiweke eka ndzavisiso lowu swi paluxe leswaku vadyondzisi va xielekitironiki L&D a yi tirha kahle eku antswiseni ka vutshila ni vuswikoti bya vona. Hambiswi ri tano, ndzavisiso wu kombise leswaku vunyingi bya valeteri va le ka vadyondzisi va xielekitironiki va lava ku leteriwa ku yisa emahlweni eka timhaka leti yelanaka ni dyondzo, vundzeni, "online" mbulavurisano, vutivi na vutshila bya thekinoloji. Ndzavisiso wu gimete hi leswaku nhlangoana wa ODeL ri fanele ri endla leswaku tikholichi hinkwato ti boheka ku endla xikambelo xa dyondzo yo karhi hi nhloko-mhaka yo karhi, wu rhangisa mbulavurisano hi ku tirhisa Inthanete ni ku letela vanhu hi thekinoloji, ni ku ngenelela eku leteleni ka vadyondzisi lava nga ni ntokoto hi ku tirhisa Inthanete.

Switsundzuxo swi katsa nkambisiso lowu ringaniseriweke wa dyondzo yo karhi, ndzetelo wa thekinoloji lowu antswisiweke na vuleteri bya vuhlanganisi na nhluvukiso wa modele wa ndzetelo wa switepe.

Marito-nkulu: vadyondzisi va xielekitironiki ku dyondzisa hiku tirhisa xielekitironiki, ku dyondza na nhluvukiso, nkambelo wa vuleteri, nhlango wa Dyondzo ya le Kule leyi Pfulekeke(ODEL)

MAWANWA

Ngudo iyi yo tšodisa mvelelo dza u Guda na Mveledziso (L&D) dzo netshedzwaho vhagudisi nga inthanethe kha tshiimiswa tsha u Guda nga inthanethe kha Ngudo nga Inthanethe kha Vhukule Hovuleaho (ODeL). Tshiimiswa tsha ODeL he ngudo ya itwa hone tsho tshenzhela divhazwakale ya u bvelela ha fhasi, tshivhalo tsha fhasi tsha u phasa na tshivhalo tsha ntha tsha u litsha tshikolo. U tandulula khaedu idzi, tshiimiswa tsha ODeL tsho ditika nga zwiṭirathedzhi zwine zwa katela, vhukati ha zwiṇwe, u topola na u sedzulusa vhagudisi vha u gudisa nga inthanethe u itela u tikedza na u eletshedza matshudeni kha lwendo lwavho lwothe lwa zwa pfunzo. Tshipikwa tshihulwane tsha ngudo iyi tsho vha tshi tsha u tšodisa mvelelo dza L&D ya vhagudisi vha vha u gudisa nga inthanethe kha u khwinisa tshenzhemo dza u guda dza matshudeni kha tshiimiswa tsha ODeL. Nḡila ya tšodiso ya khwathithethivi ya zwipiḡa zwo fhambanaho yo tšangedzwa kha ngudo iyi. Data yo kuvhanganywa hu tshi shumiswa mbudzisombekanywa. Tshishumiswa tsho dzhiiwa kha Fomo dza MS nahone vhuṭumani ha kovhelwa nga imeili kha sampuli ya mbalo ya vathu ya vhagudisi vha u gudisa nga inthanethe vha 869 vho tholwaho kha tshiimiswa tsha ODeL. Vhagudisi vha u gudisa nga inthanethe vha ḡana na fuṭahe-ṭahe (199) vho shela mulenzhe kha ngudo nahone data ya tshivhalo yo senguluswa hu tshi shumiswa zwitatisitiki zwi ṭalusaho na zwi bveledzaho.

Mawanwa a ngudo o dzumbulula uri L&D ya vhagudisi vha u gudisa nga inthanethe yo vha i tshi khou shuma kha u khwinisa vhukoni na vhukoni havho. Fhedziha, ngudo yo bvisela khagala uri vhunzhi ha vhagudisi vha u gudisa nga inthanethe vha tḡa vhugudisi ho engedzeaho nga ha zwi re ngomu zwi tshimbilelanaho na thero, vhudavhidzani ha inthanethe na vhukoni ha thekinoḡodzhi. Ngudo yo pendela nga ḡa uri tshiimiswa tsha ODeL tshi tea u ita uri tsedzuluso yo khetheaho ya thero i kombetshedzee kha khoḡedzhi dzothe, u vhea phanda vhudavhidzani ha inthanethe na vhudzheneleli ha vhugudisi ha zwikili zwa thekinoḡodzhi na u wana vhugudisi ha nṭhesa ha vhagudisi vha u gudisa nga inthanethe vha re na tshenzhemo.

Themendelo dzi katela u tḡa ho linganelaho ho livhaho kha thero, vhugudisi ho khwiniswaho ha thekinoḡodzhi na vhudavhidzani, u engedzwa ha tshifhinga tsha vhugudisi na mveledziso ya modele wa vhugudisi wo tšangelanaho.

Maipfi a ndeme: u gudisa nga inthanethe, vha u gudisa nga inthanethe

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background information about the research problem, the research questions, and explains the objective and significance of the study. This chapter further provides a summary of the dissertation's structure and goes into additional detail about the setting in which the study is carried out. The groundwork for the subsequent chapters is laid in this introductory chapter.

The chapter begins with the presentation of the problem statement, followed by the research objectives and research questions. This is followed by an explanation of the study's significance. The chapter then presents a preliminary literature review, discusses the research methodology, and addresses the ethical considerations. The chapter concludes by providing an overview of the structure of the chapters in the study and the chapter summary.

1.2 Background of the study

This study focused primarily on the role of Learning and Development (L&D) in improving e-tutor effectiveness within an Open Distance eLearning (ODEL) environment. This research was carried out in the field of human resource development (HRD). Alketbi et al. (2022) define HRD as the organised learning initiative used within a company to improve employees' professional development and personal growth. According to Tien et al. (2020), HRD includes planned learning activities carried out for a set amount of time that change employees' occupational behaviour. L&D is essential for the expansion and success of an organisation as it ensures that employees have the expertise, abilities, and skills needed to carry out their jobs (Hammond & Churchill, 2018). Tien et al. (2020) state that HRD can take different forms that include on-the-job training, job shadowing, compliance training, online classes, workshops, training and growth opportunities. For the purpose of this study, L&D includes training; therefore, the term “learning and development” is used interchangeably with “training”.

The 21st century is defined by rapid developments in information and technology (Mumtazah & Rohmah, 2023). As a result, higher education systems have developed a dynamic vision that reflects and promotes the varied interests of students, employers and society (Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2021). In the world of smartphones and fast internet, e-tutoring provides the convenience and freedom of learning at the students' convenience (Nambiar, 2020). Bustos-Contell et al. (2021) indicate that e-learning has the prospect of redefining how people learn and teach; thus, effective e-tutoring plays a crucial part in bridging the gap between the institution and the students. Thus, e-learning is an integral part of challenging disciplines in education.

Maré and Mutezo (2021) discovered that students who participated in the online tutor groups achieved more positive results than students who did not participate. Maré and Mutezo (2021) found that e-tutoring created a learning environment where students felt less alone and performed better. However, e-tutors experience various challenges and limitations in carrying out their duties as their roles are constantly changing due to advances in technology (Kebritchi et al., 2017). For instance, Essuman and Appiah-Boateng (2015) indicate that e-tutors require unique support and communication tools in order to properly access and engage students. They claim that, because most tutors are new to this method of delivering education, there is a need to give them ongoing professional training and counselling.

1.3 Motivation of the study

The ODeL university in which the research was carried out has continuously faced difficulties with pass rates and throughput rates that are below average. In September 2022, the Minister of Higher Education, Dr Blade Mzimande, appointed an independent evaluator to review the state of business of the ODeL institution where this study was conducted. The evaluator's report highlighted several issues, including a high dropout rate, low throughput and success rates, concerns about the quality of teacher education, insufficient student support, and problematic enrolment planning procedures (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2023). Additionally, the Strategic Plan 2021-2025 of the institution indicated that, in 2020, the dropout rate among first-time entering students was 47% (UNISA, 2021a).

Among the many intervention tools, the institution plans to implement to remedy the students' poor performance are hiring and retaining expert lecturers and the implementation of the Integrated Tutor Model (ITM). An ITM is an online tutoring model introduced in 2013 where e-tutors provide online student support via the Learning Management System (LMS). The model entails the appointment and deployment of competent e-tutors to assist and guide the students throughout their academic journey. However, getting skilled e-tutors is not an easy task, as most e-tutors have no teaching background.

To address the challenge of e-tutor skills and development, the institution has tasked the Centre for Professional Development (CPD) with the L&D of e-tutors. In addition to the CPD programmes, the ODeL institution where this study was conducted also employs subject-specific assessments in some departments to evaluate the e-tutors' knowledge of the content in the modules they are appointed to teach. The subject-specific assessment is prepared by lecturers and made available to e-tutors once they have successfully completed the CPD training (UNISA, 2021c). However, little research has been done to evaluate or determine the effectiveness and impact of the CPD programmes and the subject-specific assessments offered by academics in an ODeL institution.

The ODeL institution, through the CPD, organises training, workshops and seminars to provide support and tools to e-tutors. However, few studies have investigated the efficacy of e-tutors' L&D for enhancing students' learning experiences. This study intended to fill this gap. The expected contribution of this study was to produce evidence of the value of L&D workshops organised by the CPD towards improving the effectiveness of e-tutors. Furthermore, this study identified the needs of e-tutors in an ODeL institution for guiding and supporting students towards the successful completion of their studies. The ODeL is perennially affected by poor throughput rates; therefore, e-tutors are trained to address this. The study thus evaluated the value of CPD e-tutor training programmes in equipping the e-tutors with online teaching and facilitation skills.

1.4 Problem statement

This study investigated the effectiveness of the training provided to the e-tutors by the ODeL institution where this study was conducted. In higher education, student support has a substantial impact on student outcomes, including academic success (Redmond et al., 2018; Yafele, 2025). The ODeL institution has embraced the appointment of e-tutoring as a novel strategy for online teaching and learning that may increase student participation and subsequently improve their performance (Maré & Mutezo, 2021). The ODeL university employs between 800 and 1000 independent e-tutors to promote, guide and facilitate student online learning (distance learning). These e-tutors are drawn from different walks of life, with the majority coming from corporate backgrounds. While this avails a wealth of knowledge and skills, the majority of these e-tutors lack the facilitation skills needed to assist and guide students in their learning experience. Therefore, the effectiveness of e-tutors in the ODeL institution is strongly dependent on how they are trained and developed by the institution to facilitate online learning.

According to Ramorola (2018), e-tutors, who have the necessary training and experience to facilitate online courses, are essential for the success of distance and e-learning. The e-tutor programme costs the ODeL university approximately ten million rand a month in salaries, excluding other administrative costs. The persistent low pass rates in an ODeL institution mean that the effectiveness of this programme must be carefully analysed. The absence of suitable professional development is said to be a significant barrier to the implementation of e-learning (Adnan et al., 2017; Gu et al., 2025).

E-tutors play a vital role in shaping the perceptions and the appeal of a university. Their effectiveness in the online environment depends on e-tutors possessing the appropriate knowledge and skills. Therefore, research into the requirements for successful and effective e-tutoring is essential (De Metz & Bezuidenhout, 2018; Maré & Mutezo, 2021). Additionally, the CPD offers training and workshops to equip e-tutors with the requisite skills required for online tutoring. Academics in the institution prepare and issue subject-specific assessments to e-tutors to test their knowledge of the subject content.

1.5 Research aim and objectives

The aim of the study is to investigate the effectiveness of learning and development (L&D) provided to e-tutors in an ODeL institution

1.5.1 Research Objectives

Study objectives, as described by Patidar (2012), are the conclusions that the researcher hopes to reach when the study concludes. Further, Patidar (2012) claims that the goal of research is what the researcher expects to accomplish when the research reaches its conclusion. The objectives of this research were delineated into primary and secondary objectives.

1.5.1.1 Primary research objective

The primary objective of this study was to determine the effectiveness of e-tutor's L&D in enhancing students' learning experiences in an ODeL institution.

1.5.1.2 Secondary research objectives

The secondary objectives of the study were the following:

- To determine the relationships among the six variables related to learning and development (L&D) and e-tutor effectiveness within an Open Distance e-Learning (ODeL) environment.
- To determine the effectiveness of the online e-tutor training programme offered by CPD in an ODeL institution.
- To determine the effectiveness of the e-tutor subject-specific assessment offered by the academics in an ODeL institution.
- To identify the training needs of e-tutors in an ODeL institution.
- To provide evidence-based recommendations for improving the effectiveness of learning and development initiatives for e-tutors in an ODeL institution.

1.6 Research questions

Research questions should be open-ended and broad enough to accommodate unexpected results in order to permit a complete, in-depth description, exploration, or explanation of the phenomenon under investigation (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). According to Dhir and Gupta (2021), the research questions represent the interrogative form of the answer the research is seeking; they are the study's objectives expressed as a series of questions in terms of the population it is targeting, the planned intervention and the intended outcome. The research questions must be precise, focused and clearly defined. Considering the authors' statements above, the following questions were fundamental to the study and the identified research gap:

1.6.1 Primary research question

The primary research question of the study was:

How effective is the e-tutor's L&D in enhancing students' learning experiences in an ODeL institution?

1.6.2 Secondary research questions

- What are the relationships among the six variables related to learning and development (L&D) and e-tutor effectiveness in an ODeL environment?
- How effective is the online e-tutor training programme offered by CPD?
- How effective is the subject-specific assessment that is offered to e-tutors by academics in an ODeL institution?
- What are the e-tutor training needs in an ODeL institution?
- What evidence-based recommendations are needed to improve the effectiveness of learning and development initiatives for e-tutors in an ODeL institution?

1.7 Significance of the study

This section outlines the importance of the study and clarifies why the research is important and who stands to benefit from it (Kornuta et al., 2019). This study is justified

on the theoretical level, empirical level and practical levels, as discussed below.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research advanced the small body of knowledge in HRD about the function and significance of e-tutor training and skills development in an ODeL institution where the study was carried out. This benefits the HRD subfield within Human Resource Management (HRM) regarding the role and contribution of L&D for successful e-tutoring. The study also defines L&D best practices for e-tutors in the ODeL institution.

Empirically, the study provides evidence-based insights that contribute to the understanding of a conducive and effective environment for e-tutors. This will lead to effective e-tutoring, an improved student learning experience and increased throughput rates in the ODeL institution where this research was undertaken.

At a practical level, the study supports the CPD and the ODeL institution by providing a training needs analysis for e-tutors through L&D. The study assists the CPD in the ODeL university in which this study was undertaken to identify areas in their e-tutors' L&D where improvements are needed. Furthermore, the study is beneficial in providing strategies to CPD and the ODeL institution as a whole by providing appropriate L&D initiatives that are best suited and cater to the needs of e-tutors.

This study also contributes to the improvement of the efficacy of e-tutors and subsequently the throughput rates in the ODeL. The study provides the CPD, the policy makers in ODeL institutions and other institutions of higher learning with crucial data on the skills that are needed for e-tutoring in future. The findings of this study aimed to support the CPD, the ODeL institution, other institutions of higher learning and government departments in developing appropriate training policies, programmes and approaches to cater to the L&D needs of e-tutors. This will result in effective e-tutoring that may lead to improved throughput rates and advance the quality of student learning experiences at the institution and the wider community at large

1.8 Preliminary literature review

The preliminary literature review provides a critical synthesis of both theoretical and empirical studies related to the effectiveness of L&D provided to e-tutors within ODeL

institutions. Its primary purpose is to establish the current state of knowledge, identify gaps, and position the study within the broader academic discourse. By drawing on existing research, the review builds a theoretical framework, avoids duplication and narrows the discussion from general perspectives to more specific and contemporary insights (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

The review begins by clarifying the concept of e-tutoring, highlighting that e-tutors are also referred to as online tutors, virtual tutors, or e-coaches. E-tutors play a crucial role in supporting students in online learning environments. Unlike traditional classroom teachers, e-tutors function primarily as facilitators, using digital tools to enhance learning experiences and bridge the gap between students and institutions. Their roles are multifaceted, including acting as communicators, managers, developers, and social agents. Core competencies required for effective e-tutoring include pedagogical, technological, and communication skills, emphasising the need for well-rounded training.

The discussion then shifts to e-tutor training, which is essential for equipping tutors with the necessary skills for effective online facilitation. Training programmes are grounded in several learning theories, including individual and social constructivism, radical pedagogy, connectivism, rhizomatic learning and self-directed learning. These frameworks emphasise active engagement, collaboration, critical thinking and learner autonomy. Collectively, they guide the design of training interventions that enable e-tutors to support diverse student needs in dynamic online environments.

The review also addresses subject-specific assessment, which ensures that e-tutors possess the required knowledge and competencies before undertaking their roles. Assessments serve multiple purposes, including measuring learning, certifying competence and evaluating educational quality. In this study, such assessments are used to ensure that e-tutors can effectively perform their duties.

Finally, the literature examines training evaluation, with a focus on Kirkpatrick's four-level model. This model assesses training effectiveness in terms of participant reactions, learning outcomes, behavioural changes and organisational impact. The study adopts the first three levels, reaction, learning and behaviour, to evaluate whether e-tutors are satisfied with the training, acquire relevant skills and demonstrate

improved performance.

Overall, the literature review establishes a comprehensive foundation for understanding e-tutor roles, training and evaluation within ODeL contexts, while identifying key areas for further investigation.

1.9 Empirical literature review

The reviewed empirical studies highlight key insights into the effectiveness of L&D interventions provided to e-tutors within an ODeL context. Pitsoane and Lethole (2022) examined e-tutors' perceptions of the CPD training offered at an ODeL institution. Their study, which involved 10 e-tutors from the College of Education, alongside CPD staff and an executive director, found that participants generally viewed the training positively and appreciated the support provided. However, despite this favourable perception, significant gaps were identified in the training programme.

A major limitation highlighted was the lack of pedagogical training. The training primarily focused on technological aspects while neglecting foundational teaching and learning theories. The study emphasised that effective e-tutor training should integrate pedagogical knowledge alongside technical skills to ensure meaningful online facilitation. Furthermore, the absence of theoretical grounding was seen as a weakness, as the incorporation of learning theories could enhance e-tutors' understanding of how to support student learning more effectively.

Similarly, De Metz and Bezuidenhout (2018) investigated e-tutors' perceptions of their roles and competencies within the College of Economic and Management Sciences (CEMS) at an ODeL institution. Using a census approach, the study collected both qualitative and quantitative data through an online questionnaire. The findings align with those of Pitsoane and Lethole (2022), particularly regarding the importance of pedagogical training. Participants valued pedagogical and social engagement roles but reported uncertainty about their responsibilities, indicating a misalignment between institutional expectations and their understanding of their roles.

The study further revealed that many e-tutors lacked confidence due to this ambiguity, suggesting a need for more comprehensive training. In addition to pedagogical

support, the findings pointed to the necessity for ongoing training, mentorship and improved communication between e-tutors, lecturers and coordinators. Since many e-tutors were relatively new to online teaching platforms, they required additional guidance to effectively utilise these systems. Strengthening collaboration between lecturers and e-tutors was also identified as essential for improving the delivery of online teaching and learning.

Both studies underscore the strategic importance of e-tutors in maintaining the quality and effectiveness of ODeL institutions. E-tutors play a crucial role in shaping students' learning experiences and perceptions of institutional quality. As such, equipping them with the appropriate skills, competencies and theoretical grounding is essential for ensuring effective performance in online environments.

Overall, the literature reveals a clear gap between existing training practices and the comprehensive development needs of e-tutors. While current programmes provide valuable technological training, they often neglect pedagogical theory, role clarity and ongoing professional support. Additionally, there is a notable lack of robust quantitative research examining the effectiveness of e-tutor L&D interventions, particularly within the specific ODeL context of this study.

This gap justifies the current research, which aims to evaluate the effectiveness of e-tutor L&D more comprehensively. By addressing these shortcomings, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how training programmes can be improved to better support e-tutors and enhance the quality of online education. The detailed theoretical and empirical discussions are further expanded in Chapter 2.

1.10 Methodology

This section provides a summary of the research approach, design, methods, and measures taken to ensure validity and reliability. It offers an early indication of how the study is conducted and demonstrates the suitability of the chosen methodology in addressing the research questions.

This study adopted the positivism research paradigm because the study sought to objectively measure and analyse the effectiveness of e-tutor L&D programmes

designed and offered to e-tutors in the ODeL institution where the study was conducted.

A quantitative research method was followed and a survey research design was adopted for the study. A quantitative approach allows for the collection of numerical data and facilitates objective measurement, statistical analysis, and generalisation of findings.

A descriptive research approach was employed. A descriptive research design is employed to systematically describe the perceptions of e-tutors regarding the effectiveness of the L&D interventions. The design enables the researcher to capture trends, patterns, and relationships within the data without manipulating variables. The design also supports the use of structured data collection instruments and statistical analysis techniques.

The target population of the study consists of e-tutors employed within the selected ODeL institution. A census method was used to gather data from all units of the population.

Data are collected using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale, which includes closed-ended questions designed to measure key variables related to training effectiveness. The questionnaire is divided into sections aligned with the study objectives, including participants' satisfaction with training (reaction), knowledge and skills gained (learning), and perceived changes in performance (behaviour). The use of a questionnaire ensures consistency in data collection and allows for efficient analysis using SPSS statistical software.

The reliability of this study was ensured through the use of Cronbach's alpha, a widely used statistical method for assessing the internal consistency of scale items. The questionnaire's validity was ensured through alignment with the study objectives, grounding in relevant literature, and review by supervisors, a statistician, and the DRERC.

1.11 Ethical considerations

To uphold the moral and ethical standards, the study adhered to the ODeL institution's

research ethics policy. Ethical considerations were also observed throughout the research process, participation being voluntary and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained to protect participants' identities. All ethical clearances were obtained from relevant sections of the institution. A detailed discussion is provided in Chapter 3 of the study.

1.12 Outline of chapters

This section outlines the chapters of this study.

- **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

This chapter provides a background on the study's problem statement, research objectives, research questions and the significance of the study.

- **Chapter 2 – Literature review**

In this chapter, the literature is reviewed to provide the background and justification for the study.

- **Chapter 3 – Research methodology**

The research design and methodology are extensively discussed in this chapter.

- **Chapter 4 – Research results and discussions**

This chapter discusses the research methodology and data analysis techniques that were employed in the study, the instruments that were used and how the instruments were tested.

- **Chapter 5 – Summary, conclusions, limitations and recommendations**

The study concludes by providing a summary of the results, conclusions, and limitations and makes recommendations.

1.13 Chapter summary

This chapter introduced the study by outlining the background to the research problem, the purpose and objectives of the study and the research questions guiding the research. The study's significance and scope were also highlighted. The next chapter

reviews relevant literature, providing a theoretical and empirical foundation for the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the background of the study, the problem statement, the research questions, the objectives, the significance of the study and the methodology applied to collect and analyse data. This chapter reviews the literature that is related to the L&D of e-tutors in the context of universities. Theoretical insights of the literature that was briefly introduced in Chapter 1 are presented in detail in this chapter. The literature review in this chapter is presented in two phases: conceptual framework, and empirical literature review.

2.2 E-tutor and e-tutoring

In an ODeL environment, the use of ICT can foster peer interaction, facilitate communication and boost student support (Makwara, 2019). E-tutors are part of the global and local transformations occurring in all Higher Education Institutions (Phelps & Vlachopoulos, 2020). However, according to Langesee and Ukhova (2023), the concept of e-tutor is difficult to define because it is utilised in a variety of contexts.

Online instructors, online teachers, online tutors, remote tutors and online facilitators are some of the many terms that are used to define an e-tutor (Denis et al., 2004; Vegliante & Sannicandro, 2020). De Metz and Bezuidenhout (2018) describe e-tutors as people who work closely with and provide aid to students in an online learning environment. Furthermore, Langesee and Ukhova (2023) define e-tutors as facilitators of online learning processes in the tertiary education setting. However, Denis et al. (2004) and Jödicke and Teich (2015) provide more substantial definitions of the term e-tutor, which is used in this study. Based on the authors' definitions, an e-tutor is a person who interacts directly with students to support and assist them in an online learning environment to realise their goals for learning (Enwereji et al., 2024).

In South Africa, early experiments with e-tutoring date back to the early 2000s (Enwereji et al., 2024). The original goal of e-tutoring programmes was to help students in underprivileged as well as rural areas remotely and online (Makwara,

2019). As a result of the steady progress in educational technology, it is difficult to determine the start of online learning in South Africa; however, several significant milestones have affected its development (Enwereji et al., 2024). Unisa was one of the first South African institutions to use digital technologies for online learning, gradually increasing the range of courses it offered (Enwereji et al., 2024).

Denis et al. (2004) explain that e-tutors support and direct their students' learning to help them acquire new knowledge and understanding of the study material. Yang (2025) highlights the two main categories of tutoring assistance: academic or tutorial and non-academic. The academic support, also known as tutorial support, focuses on helping students with the subject knowledge, cognitive, and intellectual challenges associated with a particular course or series of courses. This will involve, among other things, the advancement of reading, numeracy and general learning abilities. The second type of assistance is non-academic or counselling support, which helps students with the organisational and emotive components of their academic work (Yang, 2025)

Online tutoring, or e-tutoring, is becoming increasingly popular in the formal learning sector globally, including in South Africa (Tan, 2019). The global disruption of education systems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019 brought South Africa's educational inequalities to light (Mulaudzi, 2024). Sims (2025) indicates that COVID-19 brought these vulnerabilities to light both locally and internationally. These issues include limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, internet connectivity and accessibility in South Africa. Mkhize and Davids (2021) posit that the digital gap and the need to maintain continuity and equity in education became more prominent as educational institutions struggled with the sudden transition to remote learning. As a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, there has been a noticeable surge in the use of technology to support tutoring services in recent years (Ros & Neuwirth, 2020). Motaung and Makombe (2021) assert that COVID-19 compelled traditional universities and other higher education institutions to transition to online learning.

E-tutoring, as a strategy to bridge the gap between distance education institutions and students, aims to increase student interaction with the institution using online tools. According to Fedoseev (2018) and Madileng and Ndlangamandla (2024), e-tutoring

refers to the set of activities that take place in an online environment between the students and the e-tutor, and/or between students themselves. Fandiño and Velandia (2020) state that this tutoring strategy makes use of technology to increase knowledge and to provide feedback to students. The primary goal of e-tutoring is to close the distance and geographic divide between students and their lecturers as well as between students and their peers (Pedro & Kumar, 2020). Enwereji and Van Rooyen (2023) point out that e-tutors operate remotely and may be based anywhere across the globe, enabling students to access academic support regardless of their physical location.

Motaung and Makombe (2021) highlight that e-tutoring can be categorised into two types: synchronous and asynchronous. Sabatino (2014) explains that synchronous e-tutoring occurs in real-time, requiring both e-tutors and students to be online at the same time and provides students with opportunities to interact and learn from one another. Conversely, asynchronous e-tutoring does not occur in real-time, allowing e-tutors and students to participate at different times and at their own pace. This format provides students with time to reflect on study material and accommodates their individual learning rates (Sabatino, 2014). Ogbonna et al. (2019) discovered that, compared to the synchronous technique, the asynchronous form produced students who understood the material more thoroughly. This is reflected in the findings of Yang and Romero-Hall (2024) who found that students in a distance education environment favour asynchronous e-tutoring.

However, asynchronous has its own challenges. Yang and Romero-Hall (2024) note that it is difficult to maintain students' attention in an asynchronous mode because there is less engagement. While e-tutorials offer many benefits, Bettivia and Davis (2023) contend that students need specific guidance to navigate e-tutorials. In the absence of guidance, the tutorials may not be the best option for students who have trouble focusing, lack self-control and communication skills, struggle with independence, or have poor computer and time management skills (Motaung & Makobe, 2021).

In an asynchronous distance learning setting, there are various strategies to raise productivity and engagement. Essay-based assignments and multiple-choice

questions (MCQs) may assist students to improve their performance (Yang & Romero-Hall, 2024). Furthermore, Joubert and Snyman (2020) state that, for e-tutoring to be efficient at an ODeL institution, three key elements must be met: the students' and the e-tutors' participation; the learning materials' contextualisation; and the presentation of the study material in the online environment.

Maré and Mutezo (2021) report that the e-tutoring landscape in South Africa is supported by a variety of platforms and technology. These include virtual learning environments, such as Moodle and Blackboard, as well as virtual meeting platforms like Zoom, Google Meet, Big Blue Button and Microsoft Teams (Enwereji et al., 2024). The literature reveals that e-tutoring can take various shapes online, including written feedback, phone calls, emails, discussion forums on the LMS, live audio/video conferences, and social media interactions (Fedoseev, 2018; Madileng & Ndlangamandla, 2024). The activities and forms of e-tutoring listed above indicate that e-tutors need expertise and specialised pre-coordinated training (Jödicke & Teich, 2015; Reeb et al., 2021). The following section discusses e-tutor L&D and its theories.

2.3 Learning and development (L&D)

Countries all around the world have recently realised that developing their human resources is just as important to economic success as new technology or other production-related elements (Tshikovhi, 2012). Training forms a critical function of the HRD of any organisation. The success of any organisation, whether in the public or private sector, is determined by the calibre of its human capital (Tshikovhi, 2012). L&D are fundamental aspects of human resource management. They play a crucial role in enhancing the key skills and competencies of employees, leading to improved performance in organisations (Sothy, 2019).

2.3.1 An Overview of Training

Ichsan (2020 as cited by Sellar, 2022) highlights that the process of training employees involves enhancing their knowledge, skills, talents and behaviour to help them accomplish tasks more efficiently and logically. Rafiq (2015) defines training as providing staff members with new or conventional methods, techniques, or modules to transfer information, knowledge and skills to increase the effectiveness of the

organisation as a whole.

Mohd Said et al. (2025) argue that training is a systematic approach to L&D to increase the performance of individuals, teams and organisations. Furthermore, Vincent (2020) defines L&D as a practice of inspiring, challenging and motivating staff members to carry out job duties to the best of their abilities and in accordance with standards established by local, national and private organisations. Vincent (2020) further states that this can be achieved through the provision of on-the-job training, seminars, coaching, mentoring and other possibilities for learning.

Saleem, Shahid and Naseem (2011) state that training is a systematic progression of the abilities required of employees to carry out their duties effectively. McClelland (2002) reports that training is a means of boosting employee confidence in the workplace with the intention to improve performance. Training is a sign that employees are enhancing advanced knowledge, competencies, attitude, and talents that contribute to improved performance of employees (Laing, 2009).

Businesses invest in employee training to provide employees with the competencies necessary to carry out their jobs (Fegade & Sharma, 2023). This enables businesses to perform at an optimum level in a changing environment, gain a competitive edge, boost output, promote organisational success and engage in ongoing expansion (Almajali et al., 2016; Altamony et al., 2016; Fegade & Sharma, 2023) and continue operating in a competitive market (Niati et al., 2021). The process of enhancing an employee's current skills, knowledge and talents is referred to as L&D (Sothy, 2019).

Enhancing worker and employee performance and that of organisations requires the strategic use of training, learning, development and growth. This fosters loyalty to the organisation and serves as motivation (Kumar & Siddika, 2017). As Ampomah (2016) explains, employees understand the need for training inside an organisation as it boosts employee motivation and improves retention and performance. Ampomah (2016) suggests that all staff should receive L&D.

2.3.2 Development in context

Development is a self-directed activity that calls for self-motivation for professional and

personal growth (Noe, 2008). Development is the process of enhancing an individual's job prospects to realise their ideal job (Niati et al., 2021). Jelena (2007 as cited by Nwafor, 2022) asserts that employee development is the process of increasing each employee's potential and capability in order to fulfil future performance standards (Baskin, 2023). All employees should be provided with the chance to advance their careers and abilities to deliver the best outcomes for the business (Jelena, 2007 as cited by Nwafor, 2022).

Companies can utilise career development as a strategy to retain and grow employee productivity as well as to get workers ready for their future careers (Cedaryana & Supriyati, 2018). Obisi (2011) argues that development places a strong focus on workers' long-term personal development in order to meet future employment requirements. Development is also focused on improving worker efficiency and is connected to meeting future employment requirements (Mohammed & Kinyó, 2020). Jumawan and Mora (2018) state that development is a work activity that supports staff in planning their future careers within the organisation so that both the organisation and the individuals involved can grow to their full potential.

2.3.3 The importance of L&D

Sothy (2019) believes that L&D plays a critical role in employee development, as it improves productivity and the quality of work, enhances job happiness and shapes employees' attitudes positively. Mohammed et al. (2022) provide five reasons why L&D is important to organisations and employees:

- i. It raises worker morale, contentment, job security and productivity, all of which boost organisational productivity (Mohammed et al., 2022).
- ii. It helps employees become more confident (Tahir, Yousafzai & Hashim, 2014) to work with modern processes, which improves organisational effectiveness and efficiency (Mohammed et al., 2022).
- iii. It assists in reducing employee stress and annoyance that may arise from their failure to meet performance standards and reduces employee turnover (Mohammed et al., 2022).
- iv. It contributes to lower production costs (by eliminating waste and lowering

operational risks), higher staff quality, the accomplishment of organisational goals, lower absenteeism and labour turnover rates and improved employee morale (through boosting confidence and motivation) (Mohammed et al., 2022).

- v. It is a crucial tool for managing organisational change through employee participation, which entails actively involving them in the change process, educating and providing them with the skills needed for new, changing and complex situations, changing the way employees behave at work and motivating them to actively contribute to the success of the organisation by generating higher returns and enhancing its profitability base (Tahir et al., 2014; Mohammed et al., 2022).

Tshikovhi (2012) maintains that any business looking to increase the competitiveness and productivity of its operations must engage in L&D. Due to the ever-growing usage of technology in enterprises and industries, as well as the ongoing threat of knowledge and technology obsolescence, there is a growth in the demand for L&D (Tshikovhi, 2012). Increased job satisfaction and morale, motivation, process efficiencies, the ability to adopt new technologies and methods, innovation in strategies and products, and a decrease in employee turnover are all benefits of L&D that contribute to improved production quality and the success of an organisation (Kumar & Siddika, 2017; Sothy, 2019).

Workers are an organisation's most valuable asset (Kumar & Siddika, 2017). Based on the findings of Tahir et al. (2014), L&D constitutes a significant component of HRM. Competent employees possess the knowledge and abilities to do the task for enhanced company performance. Through L&D, employees would have more opportunities to further their careers and obtain better positions inside the company. Organisational efficiency would rise as a result.

2.3.4 E-tutor L&D

Ghenghesh (2018) states that the purpose of e-tutor L&D is to familiarise tutors with methods of instruction and learning, as well as to assist them in comprehending their roles and responsibilities in aiding students. However, opinions differ on what constitutes the perfect tutor. Adnan et al. (2017) state that, in order to prepare e-tutors

for the online learning environment, they must first prepare for a variety of roles and relevant competencies. This can be done through appropriate, real, well-coordinated and concise professional development activities.

Two elements comprise L&D: (1) content knowledge, or the tutor's educational background or subject matter expertise (i.e., particular knowledge related to the topic taught); and (2) facilitation skills, or the tutor's capacity to use their social congruence and efficiently handle the dynamics of the class (Nicolaou et al., 2021). Watson et al. (2017) explain that these qualities allow tutors to be more sympathetic and encouraging, which promotes an open and pleasant atmosphere for learning.

Effective tutoring requires fundamental skills. Adnan et al. (2017) indicate that universities ought to provide specialised training for e-tutors. While Copaci and Rusu (2015) and Kim and Bonk (2006) approached the issue from different perspectives, they agreed that e-tutor training in the use of technology is most important. For e-tutors to carry out their tutoring responsibilities and mentor students through their studies, they must become proficient users of the online tools (Bustos-Contell et al., 2021).

Chuang (2021) states that, although there are other vital skills, university e-tutor training programmes concentrate on utilising the virtual platform and its tools. Bustos-Contell et al. (2021) highlight that several crucial aspects are often neglected, such as the specific skills required by e-tutors to ensure students remain engaged, feel safe, and are comfortable throughout the online learning course.

According to Nair and Yusof (2023), while more educated e-tutors may have a deeper understanding of the material, this does not always equate to superior online teaching skills. Academic institution employees might already possess effective teaching experience, aiding their success as online tutors. Conversely, industry practitioners bring practical knowledge but may struggle with the complexities of online teaching, which requires engaging learners, clear communication, and facilitating comprehension and application of the material (Nair & Yusof, 2023).

Johns and Mills (2021) found that online tutors need to be technically proficient, knowledgeable about pedagogy, and have subject-matter experience. De Jong et al. (2018) argue that, in order for e-tutoring to be effective, e-tutors need to get training in

general pedagogical knowledge, which entails a comprehension of the teaching and learning processes. However, on the contrary, Osorio Vanegas et al. (2025) found that e-tutors favour training on online teaching & learning systems, communication tools and software over theory.

Recent studies found that the effectiveness of e-tutoring is closely linked to the quality of L&D provided. Enwereji et al. (2024) found that due to the rapid need to adapt to the new normal of e-learning, e-tutors faced numerous L&D challenges that included insufficient training on the use of technological tools, communication tools and module-specific training. These findings suggest that it is not affected only by effective L&D but also by relevant continuous professional development. Sims (2025) and Muyambi and Ramorola (2025) also highlight instructors' lack of digital abilities, while Mulaudzi (2024) contends that these issues stem from broader institutional and policy constraints. Similarly, Dempsey and Mestry (2023) discovered that teachers had to adjust to digital instruction with little preparation and received insufficient institutional assistance, emphasising institutional shortcomings in the provision of professional development.

Nair and Yusof (2023) state that the interaction of the three primary elements, social, cognitive, and teaching presence, gives students a fulfilling educational experience. For effective implementation of e-tutoring in higher education, key learning theories must be incorporated in the development or design of e-tutor L&D programmes (Youde, 2020; Pitsoane & Lethole, 2022; Langesee & Ukhova, 2023; Langesee et al., 2024). The theories are discussed below.

a) Individual Constructivism

Using the five senses to assist students in making sense of what they are learning is prioritised by individual constructivism, which also emphasises the use of existing knowledge or schema to help students make sense of new material. Thus, online tutoring programmes must support individual constructivism and the learning facilitator must assist students in making connections between new and existing information (Pitsoane & Lethole, 2022).

According to Youde (2020), the Individual Constructivism emphasises how knowledge

is acquired via active discovery, in which students develop new concepts through testing hypotheses. Chuang (2021) asserts that individual constructivism maintains that learning is a process in which each person creates their own meaning and that knowledge is generated from personal experiences.

b) Social constructivism

Understanding how social settings affect the learning process is emphasised in social constructivism (Mohammed & Kinyó, 2020). Students should develop their knowledge both individually and collaboratively, relating newly acquired information to previously acquired knowledge, in line with individual constructivism (Pitsoane & Lethole, 2022). Chuang (2021) emphasises that social constructivism views learning as a cooperative process in which meaning is mutually agreed upon from a variety of viewpoints. Youde (2020) further states that social constructivism emphasises how cooperation and communication lead to understanding.

c) Radical pedagogy

Pitsoane and Lethole (2022) claim that radical pedagogy necessitates the use of students' stories, voices, and cultures in addition to fostering critical and independent thinking. Using radical pedagogy, the learning facilitator may be able to empower students in the face of cultural challenges. The focus should be shifted from information collection about problems to be solved to fostering relationships where listening to concerns raised by others is crucial (Blanchard & Nix, 2019).

d) Connectivism and Rhizome

Rhizomatic learning, as Brailas (2020) explains, is the process of growing, fostering, and encouraging the creation of a dynamic network of informed entities that includes physical resources and objects as well as artificial and human agents. In the eyes of connectivism and rhizome, technology is a knowledge interface. Connectivism and rhizome theories view learning as flexible, fluid and nonlinear as opposed to fixed and rigid (Pitsoane & Lethole, 2022).

e) Self-directed learning

Mukhalalati and Taylor (2019) state that technology-driven simulations, problem-solving exercises and role-play experiments that prioritise personal autonomy and self-evaluation are used to implement self-directed learning. According to Pitsoane and Lethole (2022), in order to help students make sense of what they study, e-tutors should be trained in drawing links between previously taught material and new knowledge. They can achieve this by asking probing questions, letting students debate concepts, and using interactive dialogue to support material.

The next section discusses the roles and competencies of e-tutors.

2.4 E-Tutor roles, competencies and qualifications

Denis et al. (2004) state that, in order to support students, e-tutors must take on a variety of distinct roles, depending on the epistemological framework and the assignments that students must complete. Enwereji et al. (2024) report that the role of an e-tutor needs a paradigm shift in how people view the duration and location of education, online management strategies, and methods for interacting with students on digital platforms. As a result of the cyber-dynamics of the online environment, the function of the online tutor is distinct and requires a new range of skills (Cox et al., 2004).

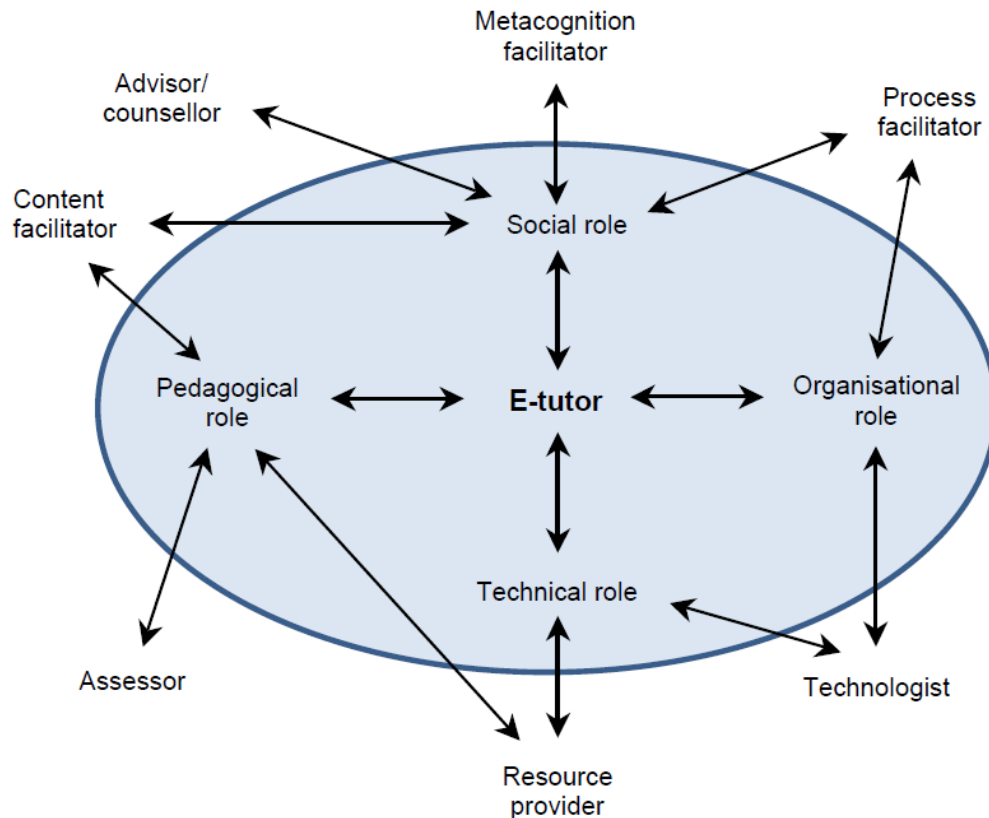


Figure 2.1: Combined E-tutor Role Model

(Source: Adopted from Goold et al., 2010)

Because e-tutors occupy a special position with particular needs, Penella and Stubbs (2009) stress that it is important to comprehend the roles and competencies of e-tutors in higher education. Even if the definition of an e-tutor's scope of practice varies, in a higher education environment, the position primarily consists of nine key competences (Langesee, 2022; Langesee & Ukhova, 2023; Denis et al., 2004; Langesee et al., 2024) that are discussed below.

2.4.1 Pedagogical competence

Pedagogy means the art and science of teaching children and adolescents (Enwereji et al., 2024). According to Liakopoulou (2011), this competency refers to the understanding of teaching methodology, educational psychology, and foundational pedagogy. Langesee (2022) states that this refers to the understanding of essential didactic and pedagogical ideas, distance learning, and online teaching.

2.4.2 Social competence

Effectiveness in social interaction characterises social competence. It is the capacity to accomplish individual objectives in social interactions and to sustain positive relationships with others over time and in a variety of contexts (Rose-Krasnor, 1997). According to Langesee et al. (2024), social competence refers to putting a human face on an online learning environment, inspiring and energising students, and making the right contributions.

2.4.3 Communication competence

Horila (2025) asserts that interaction ability is the capacity and preparedness to engage in transactions in ways that maximise the creation of shared meaning. The essential elements of good communication include the capacity for both written and oral expression, a welcoming demeanour, and responsiveness to contributions (Langesee et al., 2024). Goold et al. (2010) state that an online instructor, also known as an e-tutor, is responsible for the following: monitoring all posts made in discussion forums; promoting engagement and monitoring each student's level of participation; maintaining the focus of the topic; and fostering higher-order thinking.

2.4.4 Organisational competence

Organisational or managerial competence in an educational context is defined by Omonovich et al. (2020) as an eagerness and readiness to professionally manage students' cognitive and learning experiences, while guaranteeing the accomplishment of pedagogically significant outcomes that are personally as well as socially significant. Bustos-Contell et al. (2021) state that, since it is the first thing students see when they begin a course, the virtual platform in e-learning serves as an introduction to the curriculum. As a result, it needs to be well-organised for the pupils to find it easy to use. In this instance, the tutor is in charge of platform organisation for the current study. According to Langesee and Ukhova (2023), organisational competencies in education refer to having strategic planning and organising skills, establishing guidelines, project and change management skills, along with giving tips for literature, additives, working techniques, supporting the organisation of learning activities, and monitoring compliance with task deadlines. Figure 2.2 shows the core elements of the virtual

platform. Thus, one of the tutor's responsibilities is to oversee the general course organisation (Bustos-Contell et al., 2021). Figure 2.2 shows an overview of the organisation of the online platform.

Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5
- Welcome video - About us - Teaching guide - Events calendar	- List of job offers - Notice board - Forum	- Tutorials	- Core materials - Supplementary materials - Videoconferences	- Exams - Student satisfaction survey

Figure 2.2: Organisation of the online platform

(Source: Adopted from Bustos-Contell et al., 2021)

2.4.5 Individual competence

This competence alludes to private characteristics. Individual competences include things like learning preferences and mental qualities (Pask & Scott, 1972). Cheung and Hew (2008) contend that an e-tutor's individual qualities are evident in the contributions they make to online forums. They refer to the habits of mind, which are the characteristics of e-tutors that affect how they engage with students in online discussions. These characteristics include awareness of one's own thoughts, accuracy seeking, open-mindedness, taking a viewpoint and sensitivity towards others (Cheung & Hew, 2008).

2.4.6 Technological competence

The ability to use the institution's online learning platforms, comprehend and evaluate various facets of the platform's materials and communicate in a range of settings is referred to as technological competence (Hartai, 2014). According to Langesee and Ukhova (2023), proficiency in fundamental computing and the use of software, familiarity with a range of digital media, video, audio conferencing, and data analytic abilities constitute technological competence in e-tutors.

2.4.7 Professional competence

Professional competence, as Kane (1992) explains, is the extent to which a person

can apply expertise, abilities, and discretion directly linked to their field of practice to function well in the range of potential interactions that define the purview of their professional practice. Langesee (2022) states that pedagogical reasoning, comprehensive subject and content expertise and familiarity with appropriate online teaching and learning materials are the key factors when it comes to professional competence in e-tutoring.

2.4.8 Intercultural competence

Deardorff (2006) defines intercultural competence as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Langesee and Ukhova (2023) refer to intercultural competence as the understanding and knowledge of how to effectively interact with students from different cultural backgrounds and communities.

2.4.9 Evaluation competence

Herzpich et al. (2018) state that competency covers the progress, choice, and execution of techniques in gathering, examining, and evaluating knowledge regarding the attributes of students, like examinations, consultations, systematic viewing, tracking online student performance, grading, reporting grades, assisting with assessments using a unique online tool, and providing comments regarding each student's or group's online learning habits (Langesee, 2022).

Langesee (2022) found that e-tutors value skills acquired beyond their line of work. Furthermore, according to the author, e-tutor competencies can be categorised into three groups: very important, important, and good-to-have. Communication competence, social competence, and pedagogical competence are categorised as very important, while technological competence, professional competence, and organisational competence are categorised as important. Individual competence, intercultural competence, and evaluation competence are categorised as good-to-have. The study did discover, however, that, despite these categories, it is important to remember that each of the nine competencies is necessary for the online learning environment to succeed (Langesee, 2022).

2.5 E-tutor qualifications

Langesee (2022) found that the role of e-tutors in institutions of higher learning is increasingly seen as a professional role that has three key requirements: digital readiness, pedagogical competencies and formal qualifications. Universities require e-tutors to be in a position of advanced academic qualifications (Langesee & Ukhova, 2023). The University of South Africa states that e-tutors must have a minimum of a master's degree (preferably a PhD), ensuring that e-tutors possess deep subject knowledge suitable for higher education teaching (UNISA, 2023). These requirements are in line with international standards for e-tutors in higher education (Nardi et al., 2023) that are expected to have a solid academic background and subject-related expertise to ensure effective delivery of online learning (Nardi et al., 2023; Langesee et al., 2024).

The following section discusses the e-tutor subject-specific assessment.

2.6 E-tutor training evaluation

Several definitions of training evaluation have been published in the literature to define different elements of evaluation and what it evaluates (Alsalamah & Callinan, 2021). Evaluation, in terms of its capacity to offer feedback, is any effort to gather data (input) regarding the results of a training programme and to determine the training's worth based on that data (Topno, 2012). Newcomer (2016) defines training programme evaluation as a methodical examination of a programme's or policy's operations and/or results in relation to explicit or implicit standards in order to improve the training programme or policy.

Kiely (2009) argues that training evaluation is a type of investigation that outlines the accomplishments of a particular training programme, offers justifications for these accomplishments, and suggests strategies for future improvement. Training evaluation is the act of determining the overall worth of training, which includes the value of the enhanced performance of individuals who have received training as well as the cost benefits and results that are beneficial to the organisation (Buckley & Caple, 2009).

The evaluation's definition and goal give the evaluator the ability to choose the best course of action. Evaluation must be viewed by practitioners as more than just a collection of procedures to be followed. Using a systems approach, evaluation is a crucial component of the HRD role, which is a component of the entire organisational process.

Training evaluation is a systematic information-gathering exercise aimed at evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of training interventions (Febryan & Muafi, 2023; Alsalamah & Callinan, 2021). Aboramadan et al. (2020) state that creating a fair performance evaluation system and providing appropriate training are key to an organisation's success. The evaluation of training programmes, which comes as the final logical stage, is the activity that matters most in the training process (Aboyassin & Sultan, 2017).

Mehale et al. (2021) state that training evaluation is used to examine if learners have gained new skills and knowledge as a result of implementing the training interventions. Febryan and Muafi (2023) add that the aim of evaluation is to gather participant feedback that will help decision-makers to decide which policies and guidelines should be implemented to improve training.

In any educational institution, teachers' readiness has an impact on students' learning. Education professionals, decision-makers, and administrators who strive for societal improvement have as their goal the professional development of teachers, which eventually results in the extension of knowledge and comprehension (Mahmoodi et al., 2019). Bowes (2008) states that training takes time, effort, and money, just like any other organisational task.

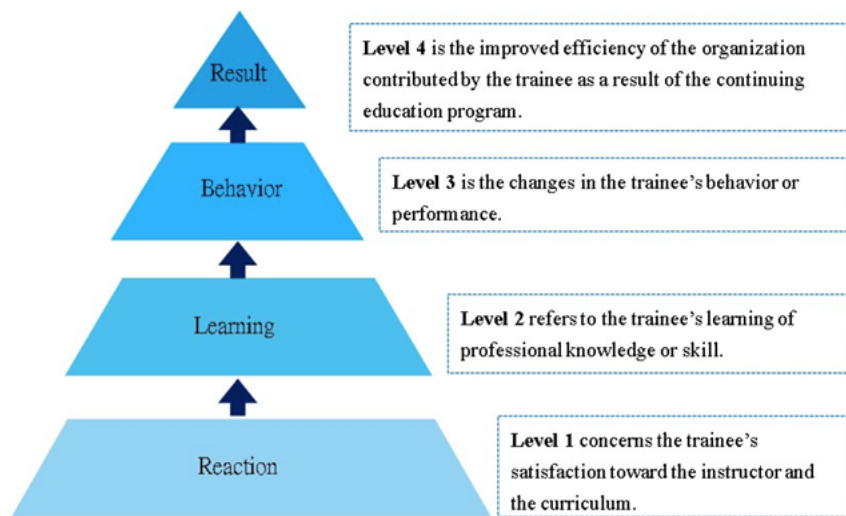
Investing in a strategy that promotes internal plans for succession and develops staff members offers long-term career advancement and job happiness; it is an investment in workers' productivity and retention. It is therefore important for every organisation to measure the impact of the training provided to its employees. The evaluation's definition and goal give the evaluator the ability to choose the best course of action. Evaluation must be viewed by practitioners as more than just a collection of procedures to be followed. According to a systems approach, evaluation is a crucial component of the HRD role, which is a component of the entire organisational process

(Foxon, 1989).

Bramley and Newby (1984) state that literature lists a number of advantages of training assessment, one of which is that it serves as a training quality control. Alsalamah and Callinan (2021) highlight that training evaluation is used for verifying the efficacy of training. Thus, evaluation is seen as an essential component of an ongoing cycle of quality assurance that also incorporates the programme's ethos (McNamara et al., 2010). Training evaluation guarantees that trainees can apply what they have learnt in the workplace to their daily routines (Topno, 2012).

According to Bramley and Newby (1984), there are five primary goals of evaluation: research (finding connections between learning, training, and transfer to the workplace); intervention (where the evaluation's findings impact the context in which it is taking place); control (using evaluation to link training to organisational activities and to consider cost effectiveness); and power games (manipulating evaluative data for corporate politics).

As pointed out by Cahapay (2021), Donald Kirkpatrick's (1959) key studies have been applied to training programme evaluation in higher education. In the past, the Kirkpatrick model served as a tool to help management account for personnel outcomes and organisational system results methodically and effectively (Cahapay, 2021). The Kirkpatrick training evaluation model was swiftly adopted by managers who required concrete proof that training would increase their sales volumes, cost effectiveness, and other business metrics (Yardley & Dornan, 2012).



Source: Kirkpatrick (1998)

Figure 2.3: Levels of Kirkpatrick's Original Evaluation Model

(Source: Adopted from Liao & Hsu, 2019)

Langmann and Thomas (2019) and Bijani et al. (2018) state that Kirkpatrick's four-level model is the most widely used training evaluation approach. Kirkpatrick's approach focuses mainly on the individual and their training experience, as well as how this experience translates into learning, changes in behaviour, and organisational impacts (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). Bijani et al. (2018) indicate that the model evaluates effectiveness on four levels.

Cahapay (2021) and Bates (2004) acclaim the Kirkpatrick model's general qualities in evaluation theory and practice. They acknowledge the model's capacity to offer the following: a straightforward language or framework for handling the various outcomes and the means of obtaining knowledge about them; critical or descriptive data regarding the type of training required, enabling organisations to ground the outcomes of their efforts in business perspectives; and a practical strategy for the usually intricate evaluation procedure. Kirkpatrick's 1959 training evaluation model is divided into four sections: reaction; learning; behaviour and results (Topno, 2012). The four levels of Kirkpatrick's model are outlined below.

2.6.1 Level 1 (Reaction)

Reaction relates to the perspectives individuals have towards the programme they attend and involves elements such as the topic, instructor, materials, activities, and instruments, among others (Mahmoodi et al., 2019; Fujita, 2006). The degree of reaction dictates the participants' satisfaction or feelings regarding the training course. Evaluators can determine how effectively participants view the training programme by evaluating the participants' level of engagement, contribution, and response (Cahapay, 2021).

There are two main methods used in training programme evaluation: formative, also called internal evaluation; and summative, also called external evaluation (Topno, 2012). Similar to formative assessment, reaction evaluation occurs when programme modifications and content, course material, and presentation redesigns are made based on the findings (Robinson & Robinson, 1989). As indicated by Topno (2012), the primary goal of reaction evaluation is to improve the quality of training programmes, which in turn improves performance by tracking participants' responses to the programmes. This needs to be measured immediately following the programme. Level one evaluation should measure participants' attitudes towards particular training programme components, such as the topics, contents, methodology and instructor, in addition to their general reactions to the programme (Topno, 2012). Typically, end-of-course assessment questionnaires are used to evaluate trainees' reactions (Alsalamah & Callinan, 2021).

2.6.2 Level 2 (Learning)

As pointed out by Alsalamah and Callinan (2021), this level evaluates how much participation in the programme has changed trainees' perspectives, improved their knowledge, or increased their skills. This level of evaluation seeks to distinguish between what participants truly learnt during the training session and what they previously knew (Jeng & Hsu, 2005; Kirkpatrick, 1959; Phillips, 1996). This means that learning evaluation can be defined as the assessment of the gain in knowledge or intellectual capacity from pre- to post-learning (Topno, 2012).

According to Rafiq (2015), level 2 of training evaluation is not designed to measure

job performance outcome, instead it measures all learning outcomes. Cahapay (2021) states that this level gauges the participants' beliefs about their ability to carry out the anticipated change, their confidence in their ability to do so, and their motivation to carry it out. Topno (2012) argues that certain training sessions will focus more on information, while others will emphasise skills, attitudes, or multiple learning outcomes. The author further states that measuring the training events' content, or the learning objectives, should be the main goal of the evaluation.

2.6.3 Level 3 (Behaviour)

As stated by Mahmoodi et al. (2019), the third stage of evaluation, behaviour, looks for evidence of whether the issues are implemented in the workplace. This stage assesses how well participants apply what they have learnt (Alsalamah & Callinan, 2021) and how they have effected the changes in their outlook (Rafiq, 2015). This demonstrates the competencies the participants have gained as outcomes of the abilities acquired during the time of training (Phillips, 1996). This aligns more closely with the impact of a practical approach and evaluates workers' application of skills (Rafiq, 2015).

The behaviour level, according to Cahapay (2021), determines how the programme has affected the participants' behaviours in the workplace. The process of measuring this level should take place during the weeks or months that precede the training programme's inputs for the participants (Kirkpatrick, 1959). However, Topno (2012) states that change in the job behaviour is difficult to measure because people change in different ways at different times, so it is more difficult to quantify and interpret than reaction and learning evaluation. Evaluation of participants' behavioural changes and determining their relevance, sustainability, observations and interviews are necessary over time (Bahl et al., 2024). Alsalamah and Callinan (2021) state that the evaluator at this level must decide whether to utilise questionnaires, interviews, or both. An in-depth or scientific evaluation is not mandatory at this level. At this stage, questionnaires can be utilised for both qualitative and quantitative evaluations, as well as for self-evaluation and objective measurements (Foxon, 1989).

2.6.4 Level 4 (Results)

The trainee's contribution to the organisation's increased efficiency as a result of the continuing training programme is the results of level four (Liao & Hsu, 2019; Kirkpatrick, 1959). This level assesses how training benefits the organisation in terms of lower costs, higher quality, and higher quantity (Alsalamah & Callinan, 2021). Alsalamah and Callinan (2021) state that this level is the most difficult since it examines how the training has impacted trainees' performances and learners' accomplishments. The Kirkpatrick model indicates that the results level is centred on quantifying financial advantages (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006).

As noted by Rafiq (2015), evaluations of training results focus on the manner in which participants are able to enhance their capabilities for an organisation and the competencies they can apply to carry out their responsibilities. It also looks at whether the delegates need organisational support to demonstrate their competencies and what improvements in performance can be linked to L&D (Rafiq, 2015). Akpen et al. (2024) state that, compared to the other three levels, Level 4 data collection, organisation, and analysis can be more challenging, expensive, and time-consuming; however, the results are valuable to the organisation (Praslova, 2010; Topno, 2012; Phillips, 1996).

The first three levels of Kirkpatrick's model underpin the theory adopted in this study. The focus was on whether e-tutors are satisfied with the training interventions provided to them, whether the interventions provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills and, lastly, whether the interventions improve their performance.

Although the Kirkpatrick Model offers a commonly applied framework for evaluating training effectiveness, its application in the South African ODeL context, necessitates contextual interpretation because evaluation models in institutions of higher learning are frequently context-dependent and can fail to effectively account for intricate institutional and environmental elements without adaptation (Aluko & Shonubi, 2014; Cahapay, 2021).

The following subsection presents the empirical findings regarding e-tutor training and its effectiveness.

2.7 Empirical literature review

The empirical literature review provided further context for this study. As it is evident in the literature review above, effective e-tutor training is critical for the implementation of the e-tutor programmes. The main objective of this study was to determine the effectiveness of e-tutors' L&D in enhancing students' learning experiences in an ODeL institution. To achieve this objective, the literature review critically analysed and synthesised the findings of studies that are similar or related to this study.

In order to create a targeted tutor-training programme, Motaung and Makombe (2021) conducted a qualitative study with an interpretivist paradigm to investigate the experiences of tutors participating in an online tutorial programme at a rural institution. Data were gathered from 15 e-tutors who were chosen through purposive sampling and a structured questionnaire was used to collect data from tutors who were involved in the e-tutoring programme.

The study found that online facilitators face challenges in online tutorial programmes, including building rapport, flexibility, student engagement, technological challenges, and a lack of motivation. The findings of this study support Stickler and Hampel's (2007) findings that online tutors face both technological and pedagogical difficulties. The study also found that Learning Management System (LMS) training is necessary for both students and tutors, and that students need to understand the difference between face-to-face and virtual tutoring. These findings support Dube's (2020) findings that creating a dynamic platform, knowledge of relevant tools, and building more computer labs are essential for fostering discussion and motivation in online learning. However, the findings of this study cannot be applied in the ODeL context as the study was conducted in the context of rural universities. Furthermore, as a consequence of the smaller sample size and methodologies used, the findings of this study cannot be easily generalised to a larger population.

Sithole (2024) carried out research to reveal how tutors at a university of technology felt about the tutor training they had received. The positivist worldview was employed to promote the use of quantitative methods. The study's sample consisted of 69 tutors who took part in tutor training. The data were gathered using a self-administered questionnaire, and an independent samples t-test was employed for statistical

analysis.

According to the study, tutor training improves tutors' abilities and knowledge, which makes them better equipped for their roles. The study found that e-tutors who had training felt confident in their ability to grow personally and in their capacity for academic achievement, empathy, communication, and organisation. These findings support the findings of Adnan et al. (2017) and Watson et al. (2017) that tutor training improves tutors' abilities and knowledge, which results in better facilitation.

The study also discovered that many elements, such as the training's content, delivery method, and tutors' level of experience, can affect the effectiveness of tutoring. This finding is in line with the findings of Nair and Yusof (2023). However, the study's ability to be broadly applied may be limited by the fact that it was carried out on a small sample of tutors. Furthermore, the study did not assess the tutors' actual performance, which makes it harder to determine whether the training improved the tutors' performance. Additionally, the fact that the study was conducted on face-to-face tutors at a university of technology rather than e-tutors in an ODeL institution, may restrict its applicability.

Enwereji et al. (2023) investigate the effectiveness of e-tutoring in an online learning environment for accounting students. The study used a quantitative methodology, and an online questionnaire to gather data. Students who expressed interest in participating in the study completed 3,837 questionnaires, and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for analysing the data. The results demonstrate whether e-tutors had been attending to students' needs and whether they offered individualised support. Enwereji et al. (2023) facilitated interactive discussions to make modules more engaging and to overcome obstacles like high student-lecturer ratios. In addition, the e-tutors in this study were able to offer more information, track their students' development, inspire, plan, and define their responsibilities.

This is consistent with research by Denis et al. (2004) and Enwereji et al. (2024) that pointed out that helping students succeed in their educational journeys is one of an e-tutor's primary duties. However, the students indicated that e-tutors struggled with communication skills and were not able to deal with accounting-related queries. Hebebcı et al. (2020) found that problems with communication are prevalent in online

learning environments.

Additionally, the study found that training allowed e-tutors to enhance the online educational setting. The study further found that a lack of teaching experience hindered e-tutors' capacity to enhance the teaching and learning process. Experience and constant training support students' interactions with knowledge in an online learning platform. Nair and Yusof (2023) argue that, while more experienced and educated e-tutors may have better knowledge of the subject content, this does not always equate to superior online teaching skills.

Continuous L&D plays a vital role in supporting students to interact with knowledge in online learning platforms. Because this study was limited to students in a single academic department within a particular ODeL university, its findings cannot be extrapolated to a larger ODeL setting. Furthermore, rather than concentrating on the e-tutors themselves, the study examined the perspectives of the students.

Joubert and Snyman's (2018) exploratory qualitative study investigated the challenges that e-tutors at an ODeL institution experienced when teaching online. Thirty-one e-tutors, who were appointed to the human resource management department, served as the sample for the study. Two open-ended questions provided to e-tutors, to be filled voluntarily, were used to gather data for the study.

The study found that e-tutors faced the following challenges: lack of interaction between lecturers and e-tutors; low participation; a lack of commitment from students who preferred interaction with the lecturers; insufficient training on the e-tutor system; students were unaware of the roles of e-tutors; students' lack of access to technology; and administrative issues.

This finding is consistent with Bettivia and Davis (2023) findings, which revealed that students require specific support in order to use e-tutoring and e-tutorials efficiently. The study included recommendations for dealing with the challenges e-tutors are confronted with. The study recommended that the ODeL institution provide more e-tutor training workshops, ensure continuous training, and offer training to e-tutors prior to their appointment. These recommendations are consistent with the findings of Langesee and Ukhova (2023), who found that e-tutors must be equipped with

necessary skills prior to beginning work and that ongoing L&D are necessary to guarantee e-tutors stay up to date with evolving technology.

Because this study was limited to e-tutors in a single academic department inside a particular ODeL university, its findings cannot be extended to a larger ODeL setting. Furthermore, because smaller sample sizes have a higher margin of error, extrapolating the study's findings to a wider population presents difficulties.

Pitsoane and Lethole (2022) investigated the e-tutors' perceptions of the effectiveness of the training that they received from the CPD at an ODeL institution. Ten online e-tutors with three to 20 years of teaching experience, two CPD training staff members, and one executive director made up the study's sample. The ten e-tutors were from the College of Education. According to the study, the participants valued the CPD-provided training even though it lacked pedagogical instruction.

According to the literature, pedagogical training ought to be a part of e-tutor training. The study findings suggest that the e-tutor training overlooked the importance of theory and focused solely on technological aspects. The study concluded that adding learning theories to the e-tutor training will help the participants to understand the theories thereby increasing the programme's effectiveness.

Enwereji et al. (2024) carried out a study on e-tutors' opinions about how online students use e-tutoring. Both a descriptive research design and a quantitative research approach were used in the study. Using an online survey, the study gathered data from 95 e-tutors who were allocated to the financial accounting modules. SPSS was employed for analysing the data.

The results of this study demonstrate the essential role of e-tutors in assisting students with problems specific to each module, particularly with difficult subjects, and raising the degree of interest in the module's material. These results are in line with those of Enwereji et al. (2023), who discovered that having e-tutors helps students in the field of financial accounting by attending to their needs and providing support for module content. Nevertheless, the study found certain challenges in helping e-tutors carry out their jobs as e-tutors. The study found that one of the challenges was the requirement for ongoing training in virtual communication competencies. This is in line with studies

by Motaung and Makombe (2021), Enwereji et al. (2023), and Hebebcı et al. (2020), which found that online tutors in higher education have difficulty communicating with students.

The study additionally found that e-tutors require regular training in the use of technology and the LMS. These results are consistent with those of Fedoseev (2018) and Madileng and Ndlangamandla (2024), who believe that an essential component of an e-tutor's skills is the utilisation of technical tools. Drawing from the findings of a study by Enwereji et al. (2024), the study recommended that they participate in continuous professional development and go through the module content training to increase their competencies. The study states that, in order to create a positive learning environment, e-tutors and lecturers should collaborate closely.

These recommendations concur with the literature that suggests that effective and meaningful e-tutoring can only be achieved if there is a working partnership between the lecturers and the e-tutors. These results cannot be extrapolated to the larger context of the ODeL institution because the study was limited to e-tutors in a single academic department.

The empirical research indicates that, by giving students online support, e-tutor programmes have the ability to positively impact students' learning experiences. The results have shown that e-tutors require ongoing training on essential tutoring components. According to the findings, pedagogical skills, technology skills, subject-specific knowledge, communication skills and learning theories are essential components of online tutoring, and that ongoing L&D on these components will provide e-tutors with the necessary skills. The results also show that understanding the LMS tools, which are the primary means of communication between e-tutors and students as well as between students, is essential to the success of e-tutoring and e-tutors.

There is a need for further investigation into the effectiveness of the training needs that have been identified in the literature. Current studies do not adequately cover this topic and addressing this gap would provide a more nuanced understanding of e-tutor training needs, which in turn could inform the interventions that can maximise the effectiveness of e-tutor training and subsequently improve students' online learning.

2.8 Chapter summary

This chapter has shown that there is still a dearth in studies that investigate and assess the effectiveness of e-tutor L&D, especially in ODeL institutions. This study sought to fill this gap by investigating the impact of L&D on e-tutors' effectiveness in an ODeL institution where the study was conducted. This ODeL institution is experiencing persistent challenges with student performance and effective student support. This study sought to address the research questions identified above. To achieve this, suitable methodologies and analytical techniques were utilised to ensure the realisation of the objectives of the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 discussed the literature that provided the knowledge base and background for this study. This chapter outlines the research paradigm and methodological approach employed in this study. The research methods, design, population, data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations are discussed in this chapter.

The primary objective of this study was to determine the effectiveness of e-tutor's L&D in enhancing students' learning experiences within an ODeL institution. The supporting aims and secondary objectives were derived from this objective. Accordingly, the methodological choices presented in this chapter are aligned with and driven by the overarching purpose of the research.

3.2 Research paradigm

According to Davies and Fisher (2018), a research paradigm is a perspective or a system of ideas that acts as a lens with which we see everything around us. The paradigm affects how we frame research questions and conduct the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). A research paradigm consists of a number of components, such as the methodology employed, the nature of value (axiology), the nature of knowledge (epistemology), and the character of truth (ontology) (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021).

Creswell and Creswell (2023) suggest that post positivism, constructivism, transformativism and pragmatism are the four philosophical worldviews that can be used to design a study. However, Davies and Fisher (2018) argue that there are five main paradigms of scientific inquiry, which include positivist, post-positivist, interpretive, critical, and pragmatic.

Expanding upon the understanding obtained from the literature, this study adopted the positivism research paradigm because the study sought to objectively measure and analyse the effectiveness of e-tutor L&D programmes designed and offered to e-tutors

in the ODeL institution where the study was conducted. Positivist research collects numerical data and uses experimental methodologies and data collection methods (Davies & Fisher, 2018). Deductive reasoning and statistical analysis are fundamental elements of positivist research methodology (Ali, 2024).

The study sought to test the hypothesis and find out if there is a relationship between the L&D programmes offered to e-tutors through the CPD, the subject-specific assessment offered by academics and the ability of e-tutors to perform their duties (refer to Table 3.1, which provides a summary of the research objectives, hypotheses and statistical analysis conducted).

3.3 Research approach

Research has three main approaches, namely, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Quantitative research is aligned with the positivist research design; it is dependent on information and data gathered for the study and it analyses data in detail (Creswell, 2014; Strunk & Hoover, 2019). While qualitative methods allow for a more in-depth exploration of individual perceptions, a descriptive and exploratory quantitative research approach was adopted for this study, as it was deemed most suitable for investigating the effectiveness of L&D provided to e-tutors in an ODeL institution.

As indicated by Creswell and Creswell (2023), quantitative research is a methodology used to determine if particular concepts account for the relationship between constructs. These constructs are measured quantitatively, and the outcomes are examined through statistical techniques. Quantitative research techniques utilise measurable statistics to study occurrences and their connections in a systematic way. Moreover, the goal of the quantitative research approach is to understand, predict and control a phenomenon by providing answers to questions about links among measurable variables (Mohajan, 2020).

Alok and Mishra (2022) mention that quantitative research is based on factors that can be measured or quantified, and its foundation is the concept of quantity or extent. This kind of research entails an experimental and methodical examination of observable events (Alok & Mishra, 2022). In addition to the above-mentioned reasons, Mahajan

(2020) provides some of the advantages of quantitative research below:

- Data can be exceptionally reliable, accurate, and consistent.
- Sample survey findings can be generalised to whole populations.
- Results are comparable across population groups and can be averaged.
- It places a focus on big samples that can offer a broad view of a region and identify trends, discrepancies, and other things.
- Fewer mistakes occur during the research as adequate statistical testing is employed.

Building on the rationale for using a quantitative approach, the study also drew on principles of descriptive and exploratory research. Dubey and Kothari (2022) and Mohajan (2020) explain that descriptive studies are within the category of formal research with clear goals. In descriptive studies, the scholar gathers data about every viewpoint of a challenging issue (Dubey & Kothari, 2022). Bordens and Abbott (2020) state that, when it comes to collecting and analysing exploratory data, there are two main goals: firstly, to classify behaviours within a certain research domain, and secondly, to determine the factors that affect the behaviour of interest. The authors also note that when conducting exploratory studies or where there is precise control over variables, a limited sample size is deemed appropriate.

In addition to the above-mentioned reasons, according to Goertz and Mahoney (2012), Newman and Benz (1998), and Singh (2006), the following are the fundamental characteristics of the quantitative research design that align with targeted study aims: (a) the reliance of research with experimental designs; (b) the assessment of observable circumstances; (c) the utilisation of enhanced analytical techniques; (d) the employment of surveys (in most cases with closed-ended questions); (e) the quantification of relations and features; and (f) the gathering, analysing, and dissemination of numerical datasets.

3.4 Ontological Stance

This study is grounded in an objectivist ontological position, which assumes that reality exists independently of human perceptions and can be understood as a single,

measurable phenomenon (Karupiah, 2022; Ali, 2024). Within the positivist paradigm, ontology is typically associated with realism, which asserts that social phenomena exist externally to individuals and can be objectively observed and quantified (Ikram & Kenayathulla, 2022; Pretorius, 2024).

In the context of this study, the effectiveness of learning and development (L&D) provided to e-tutors in an ODeL institution is conceptualised as an objective reality that can be measured using quantifiable indicators. Such a stance enables the researcher to examine patterns and relationships in a structured and systematic manner. Recent scholarship further emphasises that clarifying ontological assumptions is essential for ensuring coherence between the research problem and methodological choices.

3.5 Epistemological Stance

This study adopts a positivist epistemological stance, which posits that knowledge is generated through empirical observation, measurement, and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Positivism is rooted in the belief that valid knowledge is objective, observable and verifiable and that it can be derived through systematic data collection and statistical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Accordingly, the study investigates the effectiveness of L&D provided to e-tutors using quantitative methods, enabling the collection of numerical data and the testing of relationships between variables. The positivist epistemology aligns with the quantitative approach by emphasising objectivity, replicability, and generalisability of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Ali (2024) highlights that epistemological clarity strengthens the rigour of research by aligning the researcher's assumptions about knowledge with the chosen methodological approach.

3.6 Research design

Creswell and Creswell (2023) state that study design is a plan or intention to carry out research that combines specific methods, philosophical approaches, and inquiry methodologies. A research design is the framework or plan for a study that offers direction for collecting and interpreting data (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019; Pandey & Pandey, 2021; Patel & Patel, 2019).

Research design provides a stable foundation for the entire study and makes the study as efficient as possible by providing the most information with fewest resources employed and by creating an advance plan for the entire study (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). Dubey and Kothari (2022) state that the core of a study, together with the type of exhibit required to thoroughly solve the challenge or examine the theory, constitutes the core of the study plan. A research design serves two primary purposes: the first is to identify or construct the logistical and procedural requirements for carrying out a study; and the second emphasises the significance of high-quality processes for ensuring the validity, objectivity, and correctness of the study results (Kumar, 2018).

A survey research design was utilised for this study. The use of a survey design is justified as it is cost effective and can be distributed to a large number of respondents. Survey studies tend to be uncomplicated to undertake as the instruments can be distributed using email and other electronic communications tools (Zimba & Gasparian, 2023). Murphy (2023) maintains that respondents are familiar with surveys therefore they are one of the popular ways of collecting data. This research design is effective for systematised data collection and permits correlation analysis (Murphy, 2023). It is for these reasons that this study adopted this design.

Nayak and Narayan (2019) state that case-control, descriptive, cohort, and evaluation studies stand to benefit from the online survey method. Cross-sectional research, in which the participant is involved at a single stage, and longitudinal research, in which the participant is involved more regularly, can both benefit from the use of online surveys. In this study, cross-sectional data were collected at a specific time and not longitudinally.

3.7 Study setting

The research was carried out within an ODeL university located in South Africa that delivers fully online learning programmes. The institution recruits a large number of e-tutors to guide students and promote interaction through online platforms. Learning platforms used for online learning include the institutional Learning Management system (myUnisa), MS Teams and YouTube.

The research was situated within the colleges of the institution, which oversees

multiple undergraduate qualifications and depends heavily on e-tutors to provide student support, enhance online student engagements and encourage student participation in the submission of assessments. The colleges work closely with the CPD, which is responsible for the L&D of e-tutors. The CPD is tasked with equipping e-tutors with the necessary skills and attributes that are necessary for effective e-tutoring.

This setting was selected because it offers structured e-tutor L&D programmes and incorporates subject-specific assessment delivered by lecturers, making it suitable for investigating the efficiency of these programmes in improving ODeL institutions' student online learning journeys.

3.8 Population and sampling

Pandey and Pandey (2021) state that population, referred to as the universe, is the parent group from which a sample is to be taken and represents the entirety of observations; however, the definitions of "population" and "universe" differ from the usual definition. A population is the entire number of members of a certain class of individuals, things, or occurrences (O'Leary, 2004). Nanjundeswaraswamy and Divakar (2021) highlight that the population is the entire group of participants that a particular study intends to examine, whereas a sample is a subset or segment of that population. The authors added that sampling is the process of choosing a sample from a population.

3.8.1 Target population

A target population (also known as the sampling frame) is a collection of people or organisations that the researcher identifies and examines because they share a similar attribute (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The target population for this study consisted of e-tutors appointed in an ODeL institution where the research was carried out. The ODeL university is made up of seven academic colleges that utilise the services of e-tutors. The colleges are: the College of Accounting Sciences (CAS); College of Agriculture & Environment Sciences (CAES); College of Economic & Management Sciences (CEMS); College of

Education (CEDU); College of Human Sciences (CHS); College of Law (CLAW); College of Science, Engineering & Technology (CSET); and the College of Graduate Studies (CGS). The ODeL institution appoints over 900 e-tutors annually across all colleges.

3.8.2 Sampling

Sampling is a technique applied by scholars to systematically select a portion of representative items or individuals from an established population to serve as a unit of analysis or testing in compliance with the objectives of their investigation (Dongre et al., 2024). Lakens (2022) explains that sampling can be used to make generalisations based on known theories or to draw conclusions about a group. The purpose of survey samples is to allow the researcher to evaluate social science topics in connection with huge populations using quantitative methodologies (Eichhorn, 2021).

Majid (2018) explains sampling as the method of choosing a sample of the relevant population that is statistically representative and big enough to address the research question. In most experimental studies, sampling techniques are fundamental (Suresh et al., 2011). Kumar (2018) states that sampling in a qualitative study aims at gaining rich data on the premise that the participant is a representative of a wider group and can share information about that group. The author further notes that sampling can also be used to acquire a deeper understanding about a phenomenon. In quantitative research, sampling allows the researcher to make inferences about the entire universe by interpreting data collected from a selected portion of the universe.

For more precise and accurate data, this study utilised the census method to collect data from the entire population of e-tutors appointed in the ODeL institution where the study was conducted. The census method gathers data from each and every unit of the population and since no unit is missed, this approach provides input that is more accurate and precise (Pandey & Pandey, 2021).

The use of a census approach was justified and suitable for this study. A census offers a comprehensive research approach that covers all units of the population (Gumbo, 2024). Advantages of employing a census, as discussed by Smith et al. (2025),

include that a census covers the whole population, which removes sampling errors and allows for precise and accurate approximations.

3.8.3 Sample size

Nanjundeswaraswamy and Divakar (2021) indicate that the sample size directly affects the analytical strength, which has an effect on the statistical analysis. It is challenging to generalise study findings if an appropriate sample size is not used (Rahman, 2023). The census method considers the entire population as the sample, and it is known for its ability to provide accurate and reliable data (Pandey & Pandey, 2021).

During the period of conducting this study, the ODeL university in which the research was carried out, had appointed 869 e-tutors. To get a good rate of response, the link to the survey was sent to the entire population. Even though not all e-tutors participated in the study, as participation was voluntary, 199 e-tutors volunteered. Despite the study's comparatively low response rate, the credibility of the findings was unaffected. This is because methodological safeguards were implemented. If the sample is representative and response bias is minimal, a low response rate typically has little effect on a study's validity (Taherdoost & Madanchian, 2025).

Raosoft®		Sample size calculator
What margin of error can you accept? 5% is a common choice	5 %	The margin of error is the amount of error that you can tolerate. If 90% of respondents answer <i>yes</i> , while 10% answer <i>no</i> , you may be able to tolerate a larger amount of error than if the respondents are split 50-50 or 45-55. Lower margin of error requires a larger sample size.
What confidence level do you need? Typical choices are 90%, 95%, or 99%	95 %	The confidence level is the amount of uncertainty you can tolerate. Suppose that you have 20 yes-no questions in your survey. With a confidence level of 95%, you would expect that for one of the questions (1 in 20), the percentage of people who answer <i>yes</i> would be more than the margin of error away from the true answer. The true answer is the percentage you would get if you exhaustively interviewed everyone. Higher confidence level requires a larger sample size.
What is the population size? If you don't know, use 20000	869	How many people are there to choose your random sample from? The sample size doesn't change much for populations larger than 20,000.
What is the response distribution? Leave this as 50%	50 %	For each question, what do you expect the results will be? If the sample is skewed highly one way or the other, the population probably is, too. If you don't know, use 50%, which gives the largest sample size. See below under More information if this is confusing.
Your recommended sample size is	267	This is the minimum recommended size of your survey. If you create a sample of this many people and get responses from everyone, you're more likely to get a correct answer than you would from a large sample where only a small percentage of the sample responds to your survey.

Figure 3.1 Sampling Size Calculator

(Source: Raosoft, 2023)

Figure 3.1 shows that a sample size of 267 participants is recommended for a study with a population size of 869, 5% margin of error, 95% confidence level and 50%

response rate. Although this recommendation was noted, the study employed a census sampling approach because access to the entire population of 869 e-tutors contracted at the time of the study was available. A sample size of 100 is said to be below standard, 150 is said to be reasonable, 200 is acceptable, 250 is decent, 300 is great and a sample size that is above 400 is considered to be excellent (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Sürücü et al., 2022). Therefore, the census approach provided more substantial data than the minimum required sample.

3.8.4 Unit of analysis

The primary object of research is called the unit of analysis, and popular examples of units of analysis are people, groups, social organisations, and social objects (Gorichanaz, Latham & Wood, 2018). The specific components whose characteristics are described and for which data are gathered are the units of analysis (Monnette et al., 2014). In this study, e-tutors formed the unit of analysis. E-tutors are skilled professionals who specialise in the subjects they teach online (UNISA, 2023). They are typically recruited from various educational institutions and both public and private organisations. In an institution operating under an ODeL framework where the study was undertaken, the standard requirements for e-tutors include a master's degree or a PhD. However, certain colleges have received special allowances to appoint e-tutors who possess specialised professional qualifications instead.

3.9 Data collection

Data collection is the systematic approach of acquiring data required to address a research question, manage a precise research problem or underpin the decision to support or reject the hypothesis (Mwita, 2022). Ghanad (2023) states that the data collection method of a study must include an overview of the data description. To have a significant impact, studies must be based on data that is gathered from relevant sources using appropriate methods (Mwita, 2022). For this study, data collection was conducted using an online questionnaire (see Annexure D), which was developed specifically for the purposes of this study. The questionnaire was administered online using Microsoft Forms and the survey link was distributed to respondents via email. The data collected for this research were numerical, as a five-point Likert scale was

utilised.

3.9.1 Measurement

According to Karunarathna et al. (2024), a questionnaire can be defined as an instrument that is made up of a number of questions and other prompts used to gather data from participants in a study. The study utilised a survey instrument to obtain data from the study participants (see Annexure D). The research adopted a Likert scale instrument with five response options ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. A Likert scale refers to a type of psychometric tool utilised in survey instruments to gauge individuals’ agreement levels and preferences regarding a statement or a set of items.

Likert scales are single-dimensional and non-comparative scaling methods. Participants are requested to apply an ordinal scale to demonstrate how much they agree with a statement (Lindner & Lindner, 2024). A questionnaire was developed for the study to address the research objectives and it covered the following sections: background information; CPD training; Training evaluation; subject-specific assessment; and training needs.

The survey link was tested and the researcher verified and ensured that the survey was easily accessible and easy to complete online across various devices. To ensure the accomplishment of the research objectives through the implementation of the data analysis plan, the supervisor and the statistician were provided with access to both the instrument and survey link for thorough examination.

3.9.2 Reliability and validity of the study

Key measuring concepts applied when evaluating a survey, questionnaire or any other instrument include validity and reliability (Singh, 2017). In this study, an extensive evaluation of validity and reliability was carried out to ensure that the questionnaires were efficient in obtaining truthful replies from the respondents for reliable analysis and interpretation.

- **Reliability**

As described by Carmines and Zeller (1979), reliability means the level to which a phenomenon's measurement delivers accurate and steady outcomes. Repetition is an indicator of reliability. When the same device is utilised to take multiple readings while the conditions remain the same, the results are said to be reliable if they are consistent (Taherdoost, 2016; DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021; Sürücü & Maslakci, 2020). Dependability includes features present in the measuring tool as well as the output that is produced by it.

The reliability of this study was ensured by using a Cronbach's alpha, the most popular method for estimating the internal consistency of items in a scale (Cronbach, 1951; DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021). A widely accepted standard rule is that a Cronbach's alpha of .70 or higher is acceptable.

The researcher utilised a Cronbach's alpha to assess the questionnaire's internal consistency, focusing on each theme derived from the original Likert-scale questions. The results show that all themes (constructs) exhibited satisfactory to excellent reliability across all themes. Reaction ($\alpha = 0.865$) and Learning ($\alpha = 0.855$) showed very high internal consistency, while Behaviour ($\alpha = 0.770$) was above the acceptable threshold of 0.70. Results ($\alpha = 0.918$) and Subject-specific Assessment ($\alpha = 0.960$) exhibited near-perfect internal consistency. These results suggest that the measurement tool was dependable for the inferences made in this empirical study.

- **Validity**

As explained by Sürücü and Maslakci (2020), validity refers to the degree to which a measuring device achieves its intended purpose by determining whether it measures the patterns of behaviour it is developed to test. There are two types of measuring validity: internal and external validity (Singh, 2017). Internal validity relates to the degree to which the observed effect on the dependent variable can be credibly traced back to the independent variable (Anglin et al., 2024). External validity reflects the generalisability of the study's findings to the broader context (Anglin et al., 2024).

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, the questionnaire items were developed based on a comprehensive literature review that was related to this study and the questionnaire was aligned with the objectives of the study. The questionnaire was also

checked by supervisors and the statistician. The questionnaire was further submitted to the Department of Human Resource Management Research, Ethics Innovation Committee (DRERC) when applying for ethical clearance.

3.10 Data analysis

There are numerous statistical software analysis programmes available that include: SAS; Minitab; R-programming; STATA; SEM-AMOS; SEM-SmartPLS; WarpPLS; and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (Ong & Puteh, 2017). The study utilised the SPSS version 28 (2023) programme to enter and analyse data, as well as to make tables and graphs. Descriptive and Inferential statistical analysis were performed.

3.10.1 Descriptive statistics

The mean, mode, median, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis were computed in order to perform descriptive statistics. A standard deviation, according to Christensen (2001), is a measurement of how far a set of scores deviates from their mean. To find the mean, all values' scores were tallied and then divided by the total number of scores. In a distribution, the mode is the most frequent number, and the median is the middle category (Muijs, 2004; Salkind, 2012; Saunders et al., 2012).

A low variance suggests that the scores are tightly aggregated near the mean, while a high variance suggests that the scores diverge significantly from the mean (Christensen, 2001). A measure of symmetry or lack thereof is called skewness. If a set of data (or distribution of data) has the same appearance on both sides of a centre point, it is said to be symmetrical. Kurtosis quantifies how peaked or flat a set of data is with respect to the normal distribution. When doing parametric testing, values of skewness and kurtosis within the -1 and +1 normalcy range are advised (Howell, 2008).

3.10.2 Inferential Statistical Analysis

Regression analysis and hypothesis testing are used in inferential statistics to evaluate relationships and forecast population trends (Rajić, 2026). Walizada (2021) and

Wienclaw (2021) found that correlation analysis is used to quantify the degree and direction of correlations between variables.

Regression analysis, according to Ali and Younas (2021), goes beyond mere correlation by modelling these relationships in order to forecast results. Regression offers a more thorough insight by evaluating the relationship between changes in predictor variables and changes in the result variable, whereas correlation measures the strength and direction of association. Regression is therefore a crucial tool for both explanation and prediction in inferential statistics. Abulela and Harwell (2020) suggest that inferential statistics are important to quantitative research because they enable researchers to make inferences about a population from sample data.

3.10.2.1 Correlation statistics

Correlation statistics were used to test the direction and strength of the relationship between the online e-tutor training programme offered by CPD in an ODeL institution and their performance. Additionally, it was used to test the relationship between e-tutor subject-specific assessment and performance. The direction and intensity of the correlation between variables are determined using Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (r) (Steyn, 2001).

The degree of the association between variables is indicated by Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (r), which varies from -1 to 1 (Adams et al., 2012). A significant positive relationship between the measured variables is demonstrated through a correlation coefficient close to 1 . Two variables are perfectly correlated when their correlation coefficients produce a positive or negative score, indicating that all data form a straight line without deviations (Adams et al., 2012). An initiation point of $r \geq .30$ (medium effect) at $p \leq .05$ was used in the study to assess the correlation coefficients' practical importance (Cohen, 1988).

Data from the questionnaires were quantified using the scores from the Likert scale. The respondents were analysed according to qualifications, experience and college of affiliation; results were analysed and presented using frequencies, bar graphs and pie charts; questions were also grouped into six main themes and the aggregated scores were analysed to give descriptive statistics of the themes, showing means, standard

deviation, modes and other measures of normality using the themes as explanatory variables of the dependent variable.

The coded data were constructed variables that enabled the researcher to test the determinants of effective e-tutoring. The dependent variable was constructed from the participants' opinions of the outcomes of the trainings such as how effective they became at their tasks after the training. Independent variables included the number of trainings attended, the quality of the trainings attended, the subject specificity of the trainings attended, among others.

Table 3.1 provides an overview of the research objectives together with their hypotheses and statistical analyses used to analyse them. This alignment supports methodological coherence by illustrating how descriptive or inferential approaches and suitable hypothesis testing were used to address each objective.

Table 3.1: Summary of the research objectives, hypotheses and statistical analysis conducted

Research Objective	Hypothesis	Statistical analysis
Research objective 1: To determine the relationships among the six variables related to learning and development (L&D) and e-tutor effectiveness within an Open Distance e-Learning (ODeL) environment.	H01: There are no statistically significant relationships among the six variables related to L&D and e-tutor effectiveness.	Correlation analysis
Research objective 2: To determine the effectiveness of the online e-tutor training programmes offered by CPD in an ODeL institution.	H02: The online e-tutor training programmes offered by CPD at an ODeL institution are ineffective.	Regression analysis

Research objective 3: To determine the effectiveness of the e-tutor subject-specific assessment offered by the academics in an ODeL institution	H03: The e-tutor subject-specific assessment offered by the academics in an ODeL institution is ineffective.	Regression analysis
Research objective 4: To identify the training needs of e-tutors in an ODeL institution.	H04: There are no training needs of e-tutors in an ODeL institution.	Descriptive statistics
Research objective 5: To provide evidence-based recommendations for improving the effectiveness of learning and development initiatives for e-tutors in an ODeL institution.	Not applicable (This objective is addressed through the interpretation of findings).	Not applicable (based on synthesis of results from regression, descriptive, and correlation analyses).

Source: Author's compilation

The following section addresses the ethical principles that were considered in the study.

3.11 Ethical considerations

Before the commencement of data collection, ethical clearance was applied for and obtained from the Department of Human Resource Management Research, Ethics Innovation Committee (DREC) and the UNISA Research Permission Sub-Committee of the Senate Research, Innovation, Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee (SRIPCC). Participants were provided with an information sheet explaining the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Consent was obtained electronically before participants could access the online questionnaire. The questionnaire did not collect any identifying information such as names or employee numbers, ensuring participant anonymity.

This study applied the following in order to uphold the moral and ethical standards of the research in accordance with the ODeL institution's policy on research ethics (UNISA, 2016):

- Before the commencement of the study, research ethical clearance was obtained through the Department of Human Resource Management Research, Ethics Innovation Committee (DREC) and the UNISA Research Permission Sub-Committee of the Senate Research, Innovation, Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee (SRIPCC) (see Annexure B).
- The anonymity of participants was protected at all times (see Annexure D).
- The study contributed to the welfare of the people.
- The research was carried out diligently and professionally.
- The participants were treated fairly and with respect.
- Participation was voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any time without fear.
- The data and results of the study were handled confidentially.
- This study was conducted for the benefit of the public.
- This study ensured no exploitation of participants.
- The criteria for selection were fair.
- The participants were informed of the processing and purpose of the proposed research.

Furthermore, the gatekeeper was used to assist with the data collection and the statistician signed a confidentiality agreement to protect the respondents and the data.

3.12 Strengths and limitations

In terms of the study's strengths, this study was the first of its kind in the context of the ODeL institution where the study was undertaken, as there has been no investigation into the efficacy of e-tutor L&D in the institution. Secondly, the findings of the study have an impact on how e-tutor L&D should be conducted in an ODeL university to

maximise its effectiveness. This study adds value to the academic literature on HRM and HRD and opens doors for further future research on the topic.

A thorough discussion of the study's limitations is presented in Chapter 5 (Summary, Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations)

3.13 Chapter summary

This chapter has shown that there is still a dearth in studies that investigate and assess the effectiveness of e-tutor L&D, especially in ODeL. This study sought to investigate and produce concrete results that filled the gap by investigating the impact of L&D on e-tutor effectiveness in an ODeL university where the study was carried out. This ODeL institution is undergoing persistent challenges of student performance and effective student support. This study aims to address the research questions identified above. To achieve this, suitable methodologies and analytical techniques were utilised, which ensured the realisation of the objectives of the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 outlined the research methodology employed in this study. Building on that foundation, this chapter presents the findings and discussions derived from the application of these methodological approaches. Data were collected using a questionnaire specifically designed for this study and analysed through descriptive, inferential and regression techniques using SPSS, version 28 software. The questionnaire was captured on Microsoft Forms and shared via email to 869 individuals who were e-tutors at the ODeL institution during the data collection period. One hundred and ninety-nine (199) e-tutors responded. Data collection spanned a duration of two months.

The chapter begins with a descriptive analysis and discussion of the demographic characteristics of the respondents, followed by a presentation of the results aligned with the objectives of the study. To enhance clarity and facilitate interpretation, tables and graphs are used throughout the chapter.

4.2 Descriptive statistics

Section A of the questionnaire included information on the demographic characteristics of the respondents. This section discusses the results of the demographics of the respondents, which included their qualifications, experience as e-tutors, and colleges in which they were appointed. Furthermore, descriptive statistics related to training interventions attended, subject-specific assessment and training evaluation are presented.

4.2.1 Qualification level

Respondents were asked to indicate their highest qualification. The table below reflects the highest qualification of the respondents in percentages.

Table 4.1: Highest Qualification

Qualifications		
	Frequency	%
Honours	23	12
Professional Qualification	10	5
Masters	126	63
Doctoral	40	20
Total	199	100%

The academic background of the respondents, as shown in Table 4.1, indicates that the majority of the respondents (63%) held a master's degree, followed by 20% with a doctoral qualification. Professional qualifications and respondents with honours constituted 5% and 12% of the total respondents, respectively. At the ODeL institution where this study was conducted, the minimum qualification requirement for appointment as an e-tutor was a master's degree. However, exceptions were made in certain colleges, such as CAS and CSET, where individuals holding relevant professional qualifications may be appointed. The composition of e-tutors' qualifications illustrate the extent to which these appointments align with the institution's stipulated requirements. The qualification composition reflects the extent to which e-tutors meet the requirements as set out by the ODeL institution.

These findings are significant in the context of the institution's minimum qualification requirement for e-tutor appointments, which is a master's degree. The fact that more than 80% of respondents meet or exceed this requirement suggests strong compliance with institutional standards (discussed in Chapter 2). Moreover, the presence of doctoral-level tutors may contribute to enhanced academic support and mentorship, particularly in complex subject areas like Accounting Sciences.

The inclusion of professional qualifications, although a minority, aligns with the flexibility of the institution in certain colleges, such as CAS and CSET. This flexibility acknowledges the value of industry-relevant expertise in fields where practical application is critical. It also reflects a broader trend in ODeL institutions to balance academic credentials with professional experience, especially in disciplines that

benefit from real-world insights.

From an L&D perspective, the high qualification levels among e-tutors influence the effectiveness of training programmes. E-tutors with advanced degrees may have prior exposure to pedagogical theories and digital learning environments, potentially reducing the need for foundational training. However, this also raises the importance of customised L&D that goes beyond general orientation and focuses on discipline-specific pedagogies, technological tools, and student engagement strategies tailored to the ODeL context. These findings align with those of Enwereji and Van Rooyen (2023) and Pitsoane and Lethole (2022) on the importance of continuous pedagogical training and training in the use of technological tools.

4.2.2 Respondents by college

In this question, the respondents were asked to indicate the college in which they were appointed. Table 4.2 below indicates the colleges where the respondents are appointed as e-tutors.

Table 4.2: Respondents by College

Respondents by College						
CAES	CAS	CEDU	CEMS	CHS	CSET	TOTAL
18	73	18	31	46	12	199
9%	37%	9%	16%	23%	6%	100%

The majority of the respondents are appointed in the CAS (37%), followed by the CHS (23%) and the CEMS (16%). Less participation was from the CSET (6%), however, there were slightly more respondents from the CAES and the CEDU, both with 9%.

The significant presence of e-tutors in CHS and CEMS also highlights the broader applicability of L&D programmes across diverse academic fields. However, the relatively low representation from CSET (6%) is not ideal and other colleges may point to either limited e-tutor engagement in those areas or challenges in recruiting and retaining tutors, which could be explored in future research.

Colleges with fewer e-tutors may require more targeted support to ensure equitable access to quality training. These findings reinforce the importance of centralised coordination and decentralised customisation of L&D initiatives, as recommended by Joubert and Snyman (2020).

4.2.3 Composition of respondents by number of years of experience

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of years of experience they have as e-tutors at the ODeL institution. Table 4.3 below shows the number of years the respondents have been e-tutors at the ODeL institution.

Table 4.3: E-tutor Experience

Years of Experience						
0-1	2-3	4-5	6-7	8-9	10+	TOTAL
68	35	26	21	18	31	199
34%	17%	13%	11%	9%	16%	100%

A majority of the respondents (34%) had been e-tutors for less than one year, with respondents having between two and three years of experience (17%) and with 10 or more years of experience (16%). This shows that more than half of the respondents worked at the institution for less than three years, strengthening the need to provide them with relevant training interventions.

From an L&D perspective, this finding underscores the critical need to continue foundational training interventions. New e-tutors may lack familiarity with online pedagogies, digital platforms, and student engagement strategies specific to ODeL environments. As such, L&D programmes should prioritise: orientation and onboarding modules tailored to the ODeL context; mentorship and peer support systems to accelerate tutor confidence and competence; and continuous professional development to support long-term growth and retention.

The presence of more experienced etutors (16% with 10+ years) also presents an opportunity to leverage their expertise through peer mentoring, feedback loops, and collaborative training design. This aligns with the recommendations of Ndebele and

Maphosa (2014), who emphasise the importance of structured professional development in enhancing e-tutor effectiveness.

Overall, the experience profile of the e-tutors in the institution reinforces the need for tried L&D strategies that cater to both novice and veteran tutors, ensuring that all are equipped to provide high-quality support in a dynamic ODeL environment.

4.2.4 Training attended

The respondents were requested to indicate the number of training interventions that they had attended related to the e-tutoring provided by the ODeL's CPD. The pie chart below shows the number of training interventions that the respondents had attended.

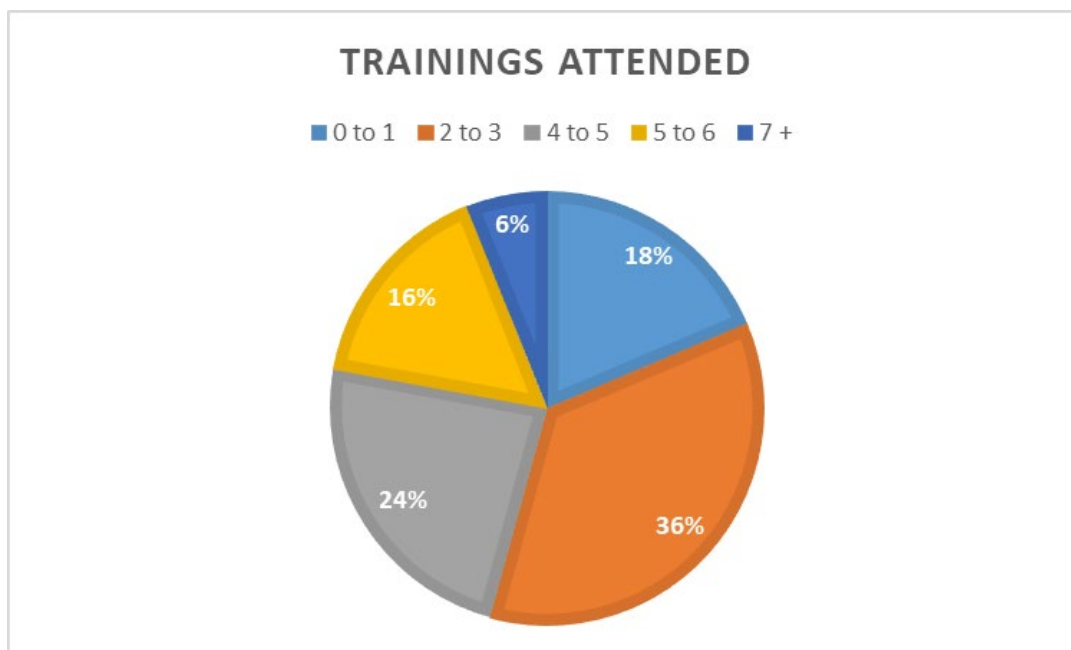


Figure 4.1: Training attended

Notably, most of the respondents (36%) had attended two or three training interventions, while 24% of respondents indicated that they had attended four or five training interventions. The group of respondents that had attended the lowest number of training interventions (0-1) constituted 18% of the total respondents, followed by those who attended five or six training interventions (16%). The small segment (6%) of respondents indicated that they attended seven or more training interventions. These results highlight the need for increased training interventions, particularly for

those who have attended only 0-1 or 2-3 interventions to ensure adequate development and capacity building.

This distribution suggests that, while many e-tutors had access to multiple training opportunities, a significant portion had only received limited exposure to professional development. Given that more than half of the respondents had three years or less experience as e-tutors (see section 4.2.3), the relatively low number of training interventions attended by some tutors raises concerns about adequate preparation and support.

From an L&D perspective, these findings highlight the need for:

- Increased frequency and accessibility of training interventions;
- Structured progression in training content, moving from foundational to advanced topics;
- Monitoring and follow-up to ensure that tutors are engaged with available development opportunities; and
- The presence of a group that has participated in seven or more interventions is encouraging, as it suggests a cohort of highly engaged tutors who may serve as peer mentors or training champions. However, 6% who had attended none or only one training intervention represent a critical gap in the institution's L&D strategy.

These findings are supported by the findings of Joubert and Snyman (2020) and Pitsoane and Lethole (2022) that professional development in ODeL must be intentional, inclusive, and sustained to ensure tutor effectiveness and student success.

4.2.5 Subject-specific assessment

Respondents were asked to indicate how many subject-specific assessments they had completed as part of their e-tutor development. The pie chart below shows the number of subject-specific assessments that the respondents had completed.

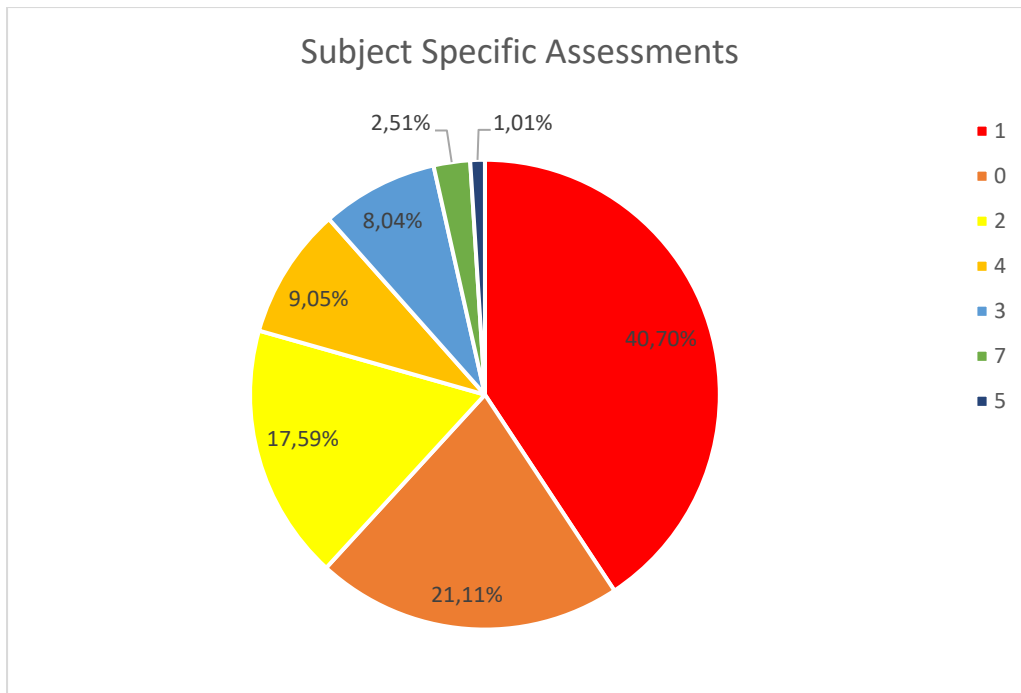


Figure 4.2: Subject Specific Assessment Attended

Figure 4.2 shows that the majority of respondents (nearly 41%) completed only one subject-specific assessment. Over 21% of respondents did not complete an assessment. This may be due to the subject-specific assessment not being compulsory in other colleges and departments within the ODeL institution. Completion of three or more assessments is relatively rare, with only about 20 responses falling into that range.

This distribution is skewed toward a lower number of completed assessments, suggesting that subject-specific evaluation is not consistently implemented or compulsory across all colleges and departments within the ODeL institution. The lack of uniformity may reflect differing practices or priorities in the development of e-tutors across faculties.

From an L&D perspective, this finding highlights a potential gap in the depth and consistency of subject-specific assessment. Although general training may equip tutors with foundational skills, subject-specific assessments are crucial to ensure content mastery and pedagogical alignment within each discipline. Their limited uptake may hinder the effectiveness of e-tutoring, especially in specialised fields.

To address this, the institution may consider standardising subject-specific assessment requirements across colleges, integrating assessments into ongoing L&D programmes and monitoring completion rates to ensure quality assurance in tutor preparedness. These findings are supported by Langesee and Ukhova (2023), who found that e-tutors need to be skilled before commencing with e-tutoring. This aligns with the broader recommendation for structured and discipline-sensitive L&D strategies that support both general and subject-specific competencies.

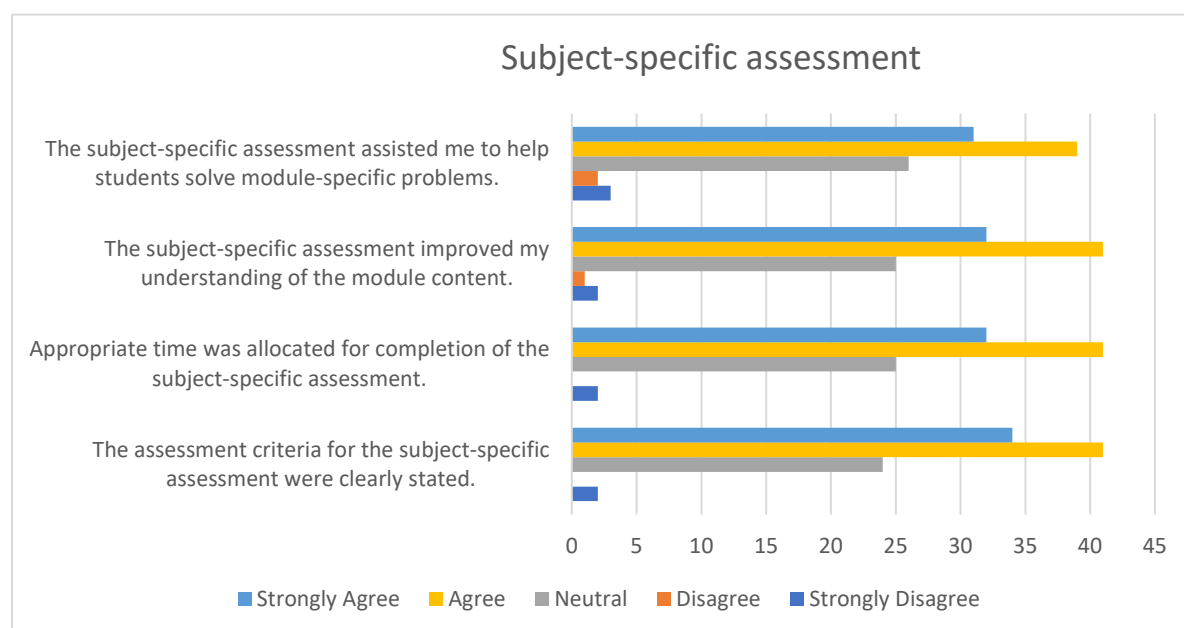


Figure 4.3: Subject Specific Assessment

The analysis of the bar chart in Figure 4.3 reveals that most of the respondents either Strongly Agreed or Agreed with all four statements, indicating a generally positive perception of the assessments. The majority of the respondents agreed that the subject-specific assessments enhanced their comprehension of the module content and enabled them to assist the students with module-specific challenges. In a similar manner, most respondents indicated that the assessment criteria were clear and that time was allocated appropriately.

Although some respondents were unsure, neutral responses were moderate, indicating that negative opinions were minimal. Overall, the data show that subject-specific assessments were thought to be efficient, well organised, and helpful for both learning and teaching objectives.

These findings reinforce the importance of transparent, well-structured, and adequately timed assessments in the development of e-tutors. They also support the need for continuous feedback and refinement of assessment practices to ensure that they remain effective and supportive of tutor growth. This finding is in line with the findings by Enwereji et al. (2023) that highlighted the importance of e-tutor training in subject-specific content. The study found that such training will ensure that e-tutors have a deep understanding of the subject matter and are well-equipped to respond and address student module-related queries.

Table 4.4 Descriptive statistics subject-specific assessment

	Subject Specific Assessment
Mean	3,995
Standard Error	0,012
Standard Deviation	0,168
Sample Variance	0,028
Kurtosis	1,395
Skewness	-0,855
Count	199

Table 4.4 illustrates descriptive statistics for the subject-specific assessment that reveal a generally positive perception among respondents. With a mean score of 3.995 on a scale of 1–5, respondents rated the assessments favourably, suggesting that they found them useful and relevant. The low standard deviation (0.168) and standard error (0.012) indicate that the responses were tightly clustered around the mean, reflecting a high level of agreement and consistency in the way the assessments were perceived.

Additionally, the negative skewness (-0.855) suggests that more respondents gave higher ratings, while the moderate kurtosis (1.395) indicates a distribution that is slightly more peaked than normal, with most responses concentrated near the

average. With a robust sample size of 199, these findings are statistically reliable and suggest that the subject-specific assessments were well received, although there may still be a small portion of respondents with less favourable views. These findings support the findings by Enwereji et al. (2023) that e-tutors who have received subject-specific training find it easy to assist students in solving subject-related problems. These e-tutors provide better support to students in overcoming specific learning challenges by providing targeted assistance. The finding of Joubert and Snyman (2020) further indicates that tutors who have completed the subject-specific assessment can assist students overcome obstacles and gain a deeper understanding of the course content.

4.2.6 Training evaluation

This section presents descriptive statistics aligned with the four levels of Kirkpatrick's training evaluation model (discussed in Chapter 2), a widely recognised framework used to assess the effectiveness of training programmes. The model evaluates training across four dimensions: Reaction (respondents' perceptions about the training); Learning (the knowledge or skills acquired); Behaviour (the extent to which learning is applied in practice); and Results (the measurable impact on performance or outcomes). Analysing these levels provides a structured view of how well the training was received, the extent of learning achieved, the influence on behaviour, and tangible results achieved.

4.2.6.1 Reaction

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with five statements regarding the quality and structure of the training sessions.

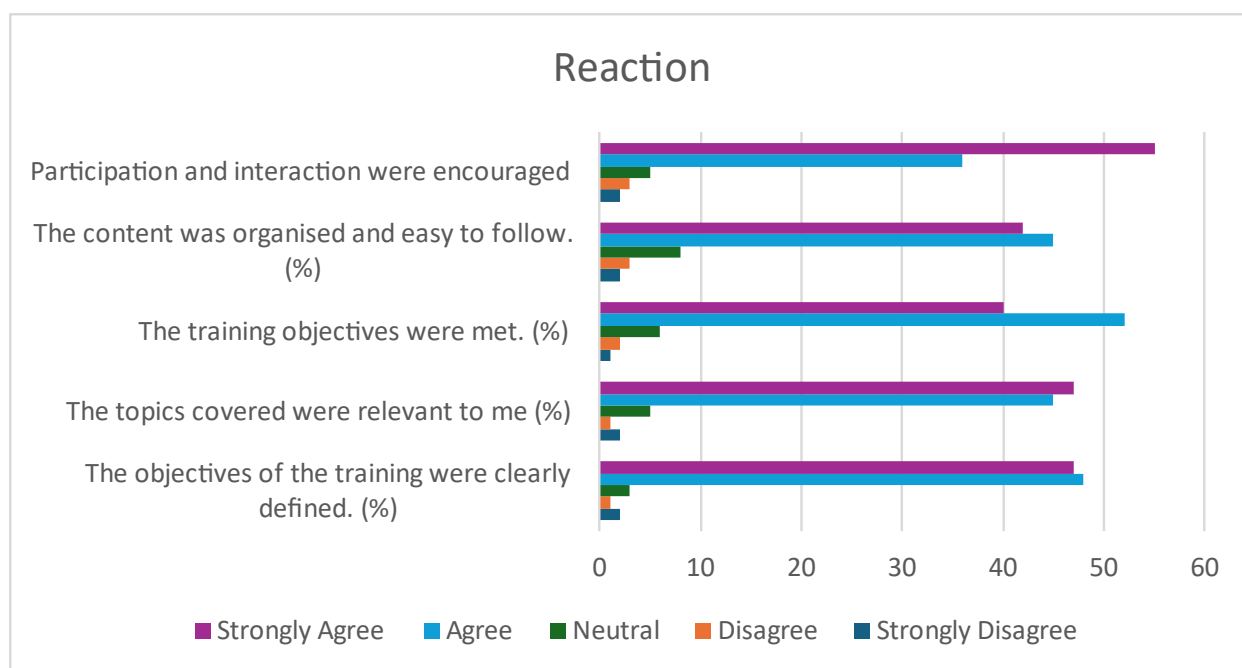


Figure 4.4: Reaction

Figure 4.5 illustrates the feedback of the respondents on various aspects of the training sessions. The statements evaluated included whether participation was encouraged, the content was organised and easy to follow, the objectives were met, the topics were relevant, and the objectives were clearly defined. Across all five statements, the majority of the responses fell under Strongly Agree and Agree, indicating a generally positive reception of the training. This suggests that the respondents found the session engaging, well-structured and aligned with their expectations.

The highest levels of agreement were observed for statements related to engagement and relevance, suggesting that respondents found the sessions were interactive and aligned with their expectations. This reflects positively on the efforts of the CPD to design meaningful and responsive training experiences. However, there were some Neutral, Disagree, and some Strongly Disagree responses across the statements, particularly in areas such as content organisation and clarity of objectives. These responses, though limited, highlight opportunities for improvement in the way training sessions are structured and communicated. Overall, the feedback reflects a strong endorsement of the training experience, with minor areas that could benefit from refinement.

Overall, the feedback supports the conclusion that the training sessions are well-received, but also highlights the importance of continuous refinement to ensure clarity, coherence, and relevance across all aspects of tutor development. This finding is in line with Enwereji et al. (2023) and Joubert and Snyman (2020), who found that constant training of e-tutors empowers them to support and interact with students effectively.

4.2.6.2 Learning

Respondents were asked to evaluate the impact of training interventions on their L&D.

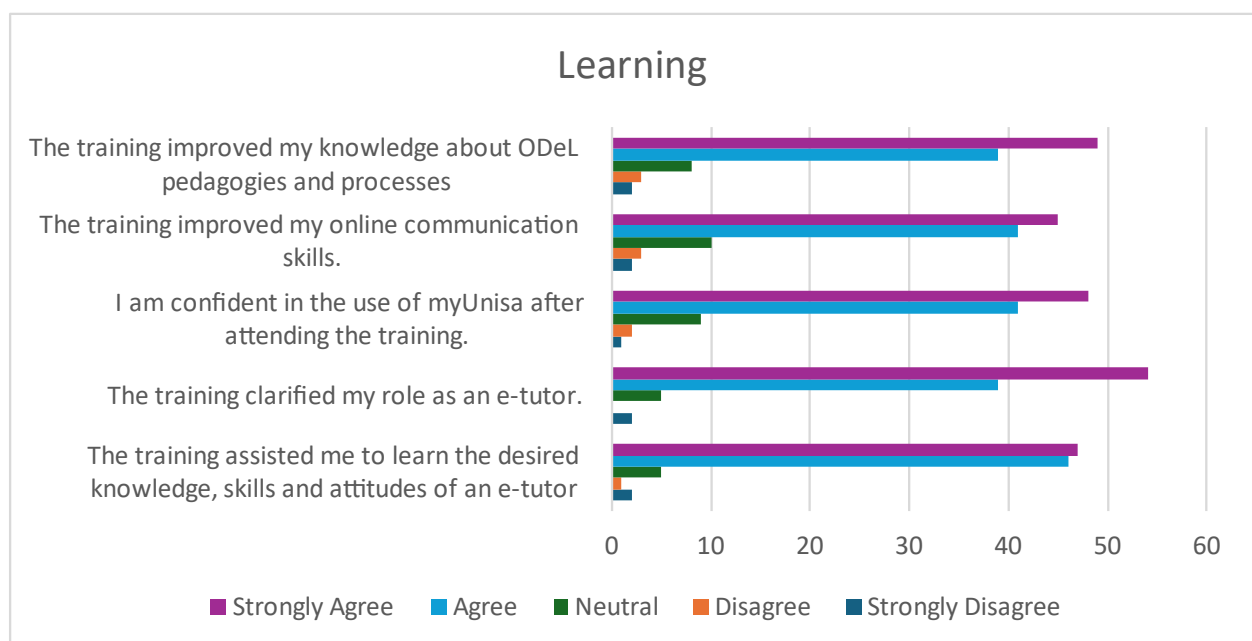


Figure 4.5: Learning

Figure 4.5 presents a positive perception of training interventions among respondents. Across all five statements, ranging from improved knowledge of ODeL pedagogies to confidence in using myUnisa and clarity on the e-tutor role, the majority of respondents either Strongly Agreed or Agreed that the training was beneficial. These results suggest that the training interventions are meeting their intended outcomes, contributing to the development of key competencies among e-tutors.

The high levels of agreement reflect the strong alignment between the training content and the practical needs of e-tutors in an ODeL environment. These findings are in line

with Pitsoane and Lethole (2022), who found that respondents thought well of and appreciated the training they received.

However, the presence of Neutral and a small number of Disagree responses in some statements indicated that not all respondents experienced the same level of benefit. This highlights the need for targeted follow-up training, especially for those who may not have fully grasped certain aspects, such as online communication or role clarity. Enhancing the depth and accessibility of future training could bridge these gaps and ensure more consistent outcomes across the board. This finding supports the findings of Enwereji et al. (2024), Hebebcı et al. (2020) and Motaung and Makombe (2021), who found that the ODeL institution should ensure that e-tutors are provided with opportunities for continuous development to improve their skills and proficiency in using online technological tools.

4.2.6.3 Behaviour

Respondents were asked to evaluate the impact of the training and development on how it changed their professional behaviour.

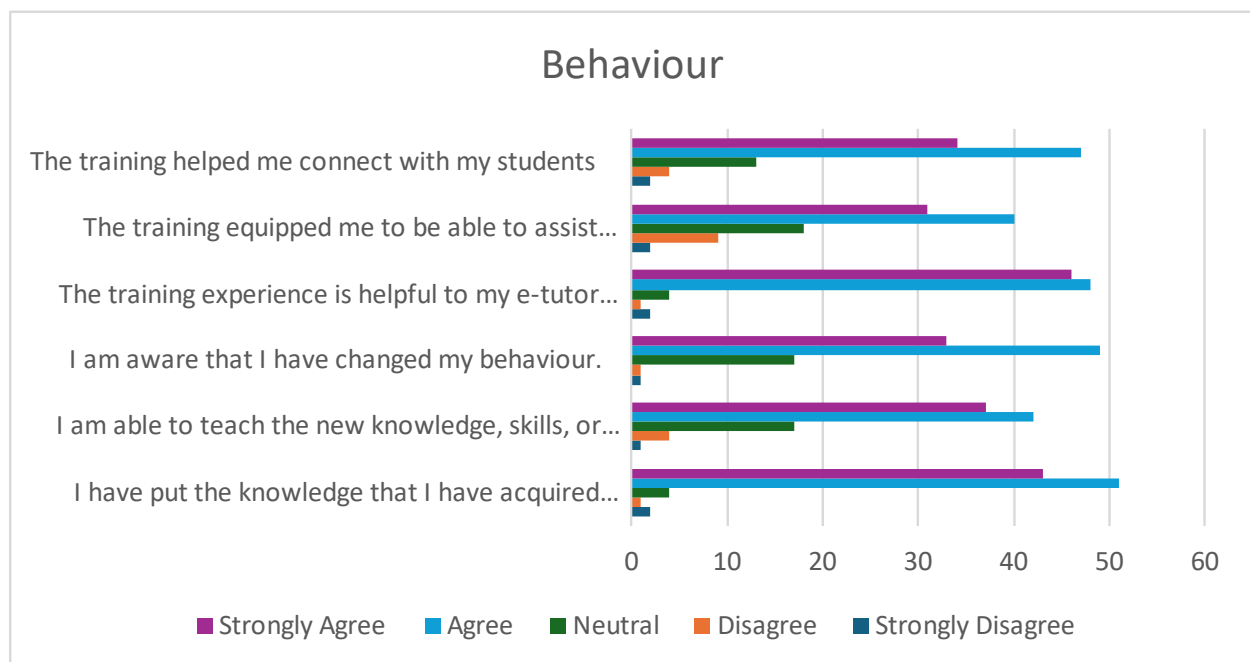


Figure 4.6: Behaviour

Figure 4.6 presents respondents' responses to six statements evaluating the impact of training on their professional behaviour. The majority of the responses in all statements fell under Strongly Agree and Agree, indicating that respondents generally found the training beneficial in enhancing their teaching practices and interactions with students. Statements, such as “The training helped me connect with my students” and “I have put the knowledge that I have acquired into practice,” received particularly strong agreement, suggesting that the training had a tangible effect on the behaviour and application of new skills of the respondents.

Although Neutral responses were present, they were relatively few and Disagree or Strongly Disagree responses were minimal, reinforcing the overall positive impact of the training. The consistent agreement across all six statements reflects a strong alignment between the training objectives and the perceived outcomes of the respondents, especially in terms of behavioural change and practical application.

4.2.6.4 Results

Respondents were asked to evaluate the perceived impact of the CPD e-tutor training on various student-related results.

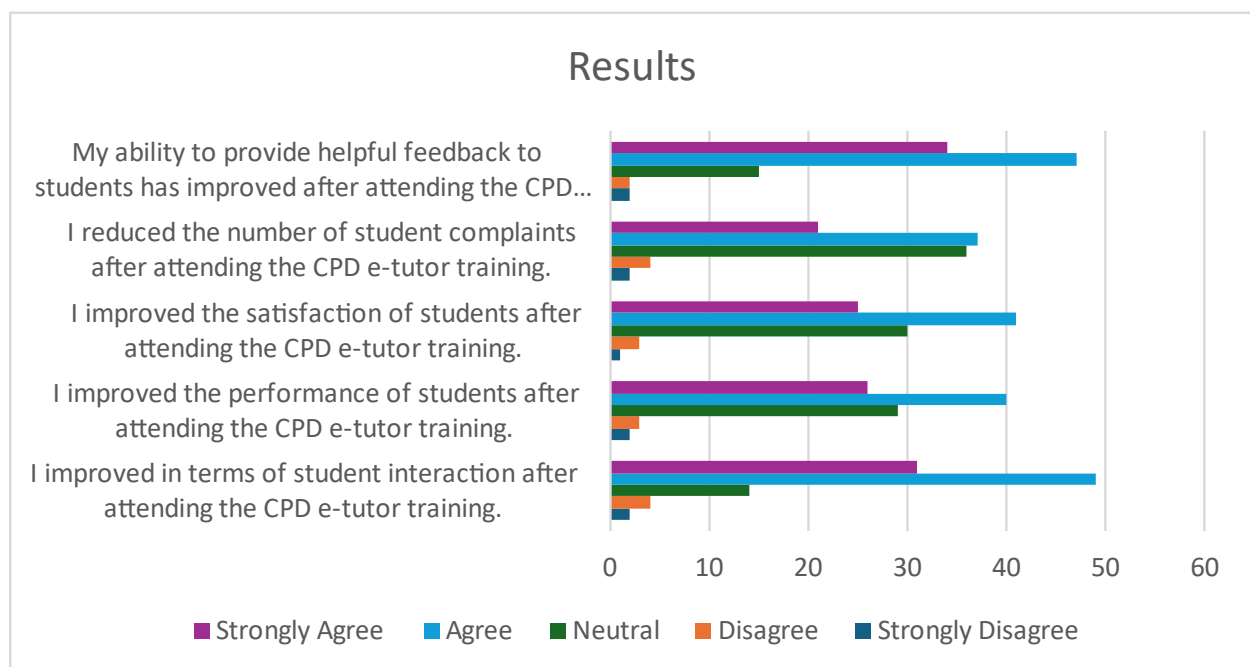


Figure 4.7: Results

Figure 4.7 illustrates the perceived impact of the CPD e-tutor training on various student-related results. The five statements focus on improvements in feedback quality, reduction in student complaints, student satisfaction, academic performance, and interaction. Across all statements, the majority of responses fall under Strongly Agree and Agree, indicating that respondents believed the training had a positive effect on their ability to support and engage students.

Notably, the statement, “My ability to provide helpful feedback to students has improved”, received the strongest agreement, suggesting that this was one of the most impactful areas of training. While Neutral responses are present, Disagree and Strongly Disagree responses are minimal, reinforcing the overall effectiveness of training in achieving its intended outcomes. This pattern reflects a strong alignment between the training objectives and the actual improvements experienced by the respondents in their professional practice.

Table 4.5: Descriptive statistics regarding training evaluation

	Reaction	Learning	Behaviour	Results
Mean	4,330	4,330	4,145	3,910
Standard Error	0,010	0,010	0,010	0,011
Standard Deviation	0,135	0,135	0,142	0,153
Sample Variance	0,018	0,018	0,020	0,023
Kurtosis	4,939	5,918	2,979	1,087
Skewness	-1,550	-1,742	-1,109	-0,627
Count	199	199	199	199

Table 4.5 presents the descriptive statistics for the four levels of the Kirkpatrick training evaluation model: Reaction, Learning and Behaviour, and Results, which provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of the training programmes.

Reaction and learning both achieved the highest mean scores of 4.330, indicating that

respondents responded very positively to the training experience and felt that they had gained valuable knowledge or skills. The behaviour followed with a mean of 4.145, suggesting that the respondents were generally able to apply what they learned. These findings appear consistent with Sithole's (2024) assertions, which affirm that training was perceived to assist e-tutors understand the dynamics of teaching and learning and contribute more positively to their work as e-tutors. The results had the lowest mean score at 3.910, which, while still positive, suggests a slightly lower perceived impact on outcomes such as student performance or satisfaction.

In terms of variability, all categories had relatively low standard deviations (ranging from 0.135 to 0.153), indicating consistent responses. Skewness values were negative across all categories, meaning that responses were concentrated toward the upper end of the scale. Learning and Reaction were the most negatively skewed (-1.742 and -1.550), reflecting a strong lean towards high ratings. Additionally, these two categories also had the highest kurtosis values (5.918 and 4.939), suggesting that the responses were closely clustered around the mean. In contrast, Results and Behaviour had lower kurtosis values (1.087 and 2.979), indicating a more moderate distribution. Overall, the data reflect well-received training programmes, particularly in terms of participant engagement and learning, with slightly more variability in perceived outcomes.

4.3 Correlation analysis

The correlation analysis, as presented in Table 4.6, reveals meaningful relationships among the six variables examined: Attendance, Reaction, Learning, Behaviour, Results, and Subject-Specific Assessment. Notably, Reaction and Learning exhibit a very strong positive correlation (0.85), suggesting that respondents who had a favourable reaction to training were also more likely to report significant learning gains.

Table 4.6: Correlation Analysis

	Attendance	Reaction	Learning	Behaviour	Results	Subject-specific Assessment
Attendance	1					
Reaction	0,25	1				
Learning	0,26	0,85	1			
Behaviour	0,20	0,73	0,78	1		
Results	0,20	0,60	0,67	0,80	1	
Subject-specific Assessment	0,06	0,49	0,49	0,58	0,57	1

These findings are in line with Sithole (2024), who found that, after attending the training, e-tutors showed an overwhelming affirmation of the training. This finding suggests that knowledge and skills gained through training will contribute to the personal and professional growth of e-tutors. This will change their approach to e-tutoring and the way students interact with them. Similarly, Behaviour and Results are strongly correlated (0.80), indicating that changes in the behaviour of the respondents following training are closely related to improved results, such as student performance or satisfaction. This relationship is congruent with the findings of Bahl et al. (2024) that demonstrate that a change in behaviour (Kirkpatrick level 3) can lead to a significant positive impact on the results (Kirkpatrick level 4).

Moderate correlations are observed between Learning and Behaviour (0.78) and Reaction and Behaviour (0.73), reinforcing the idea that positive training experiences and knowledge acquisition contribute to behavioural change. In contrast, Attendance shows weak correlations with all other variables, the highest being 0.26 with Learning. This suggests that mere attendance does not strongly predict training effectiveness unless it is accompanied by engagement and meaningful content. Overall, the analysis highlights that the quality of the training experience and the learning achieved are more critical to impact than attendance alone, highlighting the importance of well-designed, engaging training programmes. This finding is supported by Akpen et al. (2024), who found that engagement, meaningful content and interactive learning

design have a huge impact on performance outcomes more than participation alone.

4.4 Regression analysis

In this section, regression analysis of the manner in which Attendance, Reaction, Learning, Behaviour, and Subject Specific Assessment predict Results is presented.

Table 4.7: Regression Statistics

Multiple R	0,810285
R Square	0,656562
Adjusted R Square	0,649481
Standard Error	0,090686
Observations	199

In Table 4.7, the regression analysis reveals a strong and reliable model to predict outcomes based on the variables included. The Multiple R value of 0.810 indicates a strong positive correlation between the predicted (results) and actual values (Attendance, Reaction, Learning, Behaviour, and Subject-Specific Assessment), suggesting that the model effectively captures the underlying patterns in the data. The R Square value of 0.657 means that approximately 65.7% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the model, which is a substantial proportion and reflects good explanatory power.

Furthermore, the Adjusted R Square of 0.649 confirms that the model remains robust even after accounting for the number of predictors, indicating that the variables included are meaningful and not just inflating the model's performance. The Standard Error of 0.091 is relatively low, suggesting that the predictions made by the model are close to the actual values. With a sample size of 199 observations, the analysis is based on a solid dataset, enhancing the reliability of these findings. Overall, the regression model demonstrates strong predictive capability and statistical soundness. In support of these findings, Gao (2024) demonstrates that, by accounting for predictor inflation, Adjusted R Square improves model validity and reliability.

Table 4.8: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	4	3,050089	0,762522	92,71899	6,14E-44
Residual	194	1,595459	0,008224		
Total	198	4,645548			

In Table 4.8, the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) results provide strong evidence of the statistical significance of the regression model. The F-statistic of 92.72 indicates that the model explains a substantial amount of variance in the dependent variable compared to a model with no predictors. This is further supported by the Significance F value of 6.14E-44, which is extremely small, essentially zero, confirming that the likelihood of these results occurring by chance is virtually non-existent. This means the model is highly reliable in explaining the relationship between the independent variables and the outcome.

Taking the sum of squares into account, the regression sum of squares (3.05) is nearly double the residual sum of squares (1.60), suggesting that the model accounts for a significant portion of the total variability in the data. With four degrees of freedom for the regression and 194 for the residual, based on 199 total observations, the model is built on a solid dataset. Overall, these results confirm that the regression model is not only statistically significant but also effective in capturing meaningful patterns in the data.

Table 4.9: Coefficients

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95,0%	Upper 95,0%
Intercept	0,011869	0,044863	0,264558	0,791632	-0,07662	0,100354	-0,07662	0,100354
Attendance	0,032337	0,0293	1,103663	0,271113	-0,02545	0,090126	-0,02545	0,090126
Reaction	-0,09965	0,093946	-1,06074	0,290133	-0,28495	0,08564	-0,28495	0,08564
Learning	0,168102	0,102798	1,635268	0,103623	-0,03465	0,370853	-0,03465	0,370853
Behaviour	0,68505	0,078857	8,687283	1,57E-15	0,529518	0,840581	0,529518	0,840581
Subject-specific Assessment	0,157783	0,047571	3,316776	0,001088	0,063957	0,251609	0,063957	0,25169

In Table 4.9, the regression analysis reveals that, among the predictors of Results that were examined (Attendance, Reaction, Learning, Behaviour, and Subject-Specific Assessment), Behaviour stands out as the most influential factor, showing a strong and statistically significant positive relationship with the outcome variable. Its coefficient of 0.685 and extremely low p-value ($1.57\text{E-}15$) indicate a robust effect. Subject-Specific Assessment also contributes meaningfully, with a positive coefficient of 0.158 and a p-value of 0.001, suggesting a moderate but reliable impact. In contrast, variables, such as Attendance, Reaction, and Learning, do not show statistically significant effects, as their p-values exceed the conventional threshold of 0.05 and their confidence intervals include zero. Overall, the model suggests that improvements in Behaviour and Subject-Specific Assessment are likely to yield the most substantial gains in the outcome being measured.

4.5 Training needs

In this section, participants were requested to indicate the types of training they require to enhance their ability to engage students.

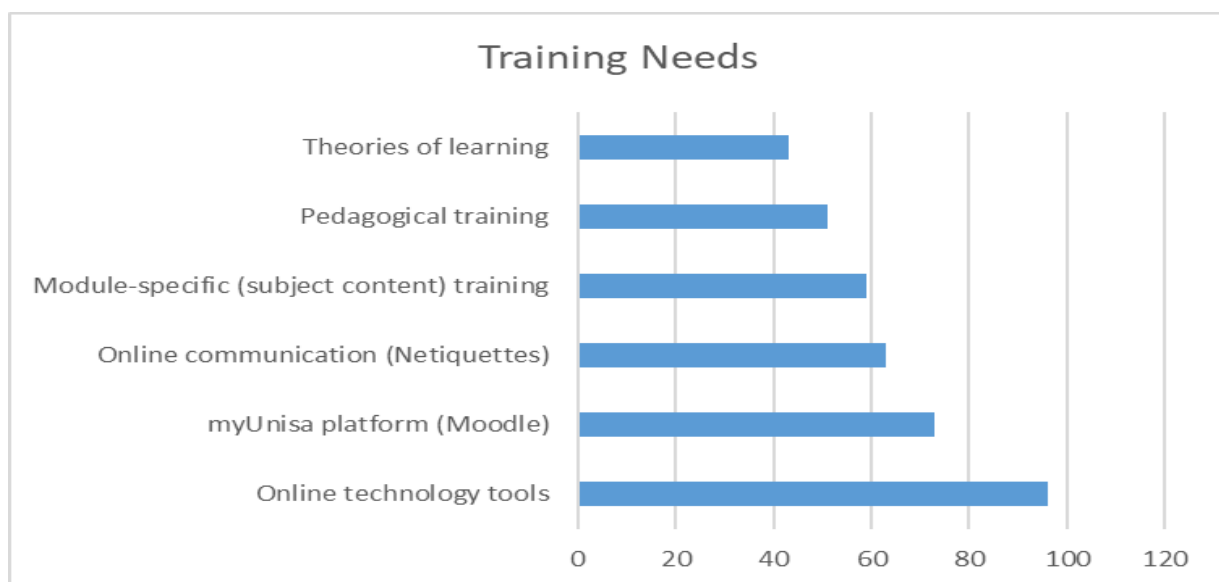


Figure 4.8: Training Needs

Figure 4.8 highlights the areas where the respondents feel that further development is necessary, with a clear emphasis on practical and technology-related competencies.

The most frequently cited need was “Online technology tools”, with approximately 100 respondents identifying this as a priority. This was followed by training on the “myUnisa platform” (≈80 mentions) and “Online communication” (≈70 mentions), indicating a strong demand for hands-on support in navigating digital platforms and engaging effectively in online environments.

“Subject-specific assessment” (≈60 mentions) and “Pedagogical training” (≈50 mentions) reflect the need for subject matter expertise and instructional strategies, which are essential to deliver quality content. The least cited need was “Theories of learning” (≈40 mentions), suggesting that, while theoretical foundation is valued, it may be perceived as less immediately applicable compared to more practical skills. These findings suggest that future L&D interventions should prioritise Technology proficiency, Platform navigation, and Online communication skills. Osorio Vanegas et al. (2025) confirm that instructors prioritise online learning platforms, software and communication tools over theory.

These findings are supported by the findings of Enwereji et al. (2024), who found that e-tutors need training on online communication skills to efficiently engage and interact with students in an online teaching and learning environment. These findings further support Enwereji and Van Rooyen (2023) who found that students anticipate that e-tutors should be capable of assisting them to manoeuvre the use of technology in their studies, which include conducting online research, getting access to study material and using the LMS.

At the same time, integrating pedagogical and theoretical components in a way that supports applied learning will ensure that e-tutors are not only technically capable but also pedagogically effective. These findings are in line with the findings by Pitsoane and Lethole (2022), who found that the training offered by the ODeL institution lacks pedagogical training. Johns and Mills (2021) found that, for e-tutors to be effective in delivering the online support, they need to be trained in general pedagogical knowledge, which includes the key teaching and learning procedures.

Table 4.10: Training Needs Mentioned Once

Moodle Analytics
Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in teaching and learning
Marking using myUnisa system
Creation of practice-specific areas on myUnisa
A refresher course
Understanding UNISA-specific operations

The training needs listed in Table 4.10, each mentioned only once, reflect specialised or individualised areas of interest that may not be widely shared but are nonetheless important. These include: Moodle Analytics; Use of AI in teaching and learning; Marking using the myUnisa system; creation of practice-specific areas on myUnisa; a refresher course; and Understanding UNISA-specific operations. Their singular mention suggests that, while these topics may not be common across the broader group, they represent emerging trends, role-specific requirements, or gaps in existing training that could impact the effectiveness of certain individuals or subgroups.

While these needs may not warrant large-scale interventions, they highlight the importance of flexible and responsive training strategies. The institution could consider offering optional workshops, personalised support or module-specific training sessions that cater to these specialised areas. This would not only enhance individual capacity but also foster a more inclusive and adaptive professional development environment that acknowledges the diverse roles and experiences of e-tutors.

Additionally, the inclusion of topics like AI and analytics points to a growing awareness of technological advancements in education, which could be strategically integrated into future training programmes to keep pace with innovation and evolving pedagogical practices. According to Zawacki-Richter et al. (2019), the integration of emerging technologies in online education requires continuous upskilling and adaptive training models to keep up with innovation.

While the findings of this study support existing literature on e-tutor training effectiveness, the findings also demonstrate that current literature may be limited in

fully capturing the contextual circumstances within the ODeL environment, where multiple institutional and operational aspects influence training outcomes.

4.6 Chapter summary

This chapter presented and discussed the results and findings of the study on the effectiveness of L&D provided to e-tutors in an ODeL institution. The analyses and discussion of the data included descriptive, correlation statistics, regression analysis and training need analyses relevant to the study to integrate the findings of the literature with the findings of this study.

The results indicate that a well-structured CPD training programme and subject-specific assessments significantly enhance the ability of the e-tutor to facilitate online teaching and learning. The findings also indicate the critical role of well-designed L&D programmes in empowering e-tutors and enhancing the quality of online learning and teaching in an ODeL institution.

Chapter 5 discusses the conclusions, limitations and recommendations for this study and the linking of the research findings to the research objectives.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive summary of the findings presented and discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter further outlines the limitations, recommendations and conclusions aimed at enhancing the L&D interventions provided to e-tutors in the ODeL institution. This chapter further discusses the conclusions in relation to the study's objectives.

5.2 Summary of key findings

This section provides a summary of the findings obtained using the analysis methods and tools that were discussed in the research methodology chapter.

5.2.1 Profile of respondents

The study found that more than 80% of the respondents graduated with a master's degree or higher. This is in accordance with the ODeL institution's qualification requirement for e-tutors, indicating that the institution had appointed a cohort of qualified e-tutors (UNISA, 2023). However, the findings revealed that more than half of the respondents had three or fewer years of experience in e-tutoring or online teaching. This emphasises the need for structured support and continuous development to ensure the success of the e-tutoring programme in the institution (Joubert & Snyman, 2020). Respondents were unevenly distributed by college, with the majority coming from the College of Accounting Sciences.

5.2.2 Training attendance

The majority of the respondents attended two or three training interventions provided by the ODeL institution through the CPD, with some smaller groups indicating having attended one or even zero. However, a subset of e-tutors indicated having attended five or more training interventions provided by the institution. These findings revealed inconsistencies in the distribution of professional development exposure among e-

tutors. These findings relate to the secondary objective 4, which aimed to determine the e-tutor training that was developed for effective implementation of e-tutoring by highlighting the lack of consistency in access and attendance of the available training programmes.

5.2.3 Subject-specific assessment

The majority of the respondents completed the subject-specific assessments. However, there is a significant portion of respondents who completed only one or even zero. Although there are inconsistencies, respondents demonstrated positive perceptions regarding the assessments, with a significant number of respondents indicating that the subject-specific assessments enhanced their problem-solving skills and helped them to better understand the module content. These findings address secondary objective 2, which sought to determine the effectiveness of the e-tutor subject-specific assessment offered by academics in the ODeL institution. The positive feedback by the participants suggests that the subject-specific assessments were perceived to be effective for those who completed them. However, inconsistent participation in the assessments highlights the need for the ODeL institution to standardise the assessments across all colleges.

5.2.4 Training evaluation

The summary regarding training evaluation findings includes reaction, learning, behaviour and results as explained below:

5.2.4.1 Reaction

Respondents reacted positively to the training programmes, indicating that the interventions were relevant, well-structured and interactive. Although a small number of respondents reacted neutrally or negatively, the overall feedback indicated a high level of appreciation and satisfaction with the delivery of training interventions. These findings relate directly to secondary objective 1, which aimed to determine the effectiveness of the online e-tutor training programmes offered by CPD in an ODeL institution. The predominant positive reactions suggest that the training programmes were well received and effective in meeting the participants' expectations and aiding

their development.

5.2.4.2 Learning

Respondents reported positive perceptions of the training interventions, an improved understanding of ODeL pedagogies, improved skills in using the myUnisa platform and having a better understanding of the role of an e-tutor. Training interventions successfully fulfilled their intended purpose. These findings relate to secondary objective 1, which was intended to determine the effectiveness of the online e-tutor training programmes offered by CPD in an ODeL institution. The findings demonstrate that the training programmes contributed to the participants' L&D.

5.2.4.3 Behaviour

Positive changes in behaviour were evident after the training interventions. Respondents reported better utilisation and application of communication skills and improved interaction with students. These changes indicate the effectiveness of training interventions in changing the professional behaviour of the e-tutors. These changes are consistent with secondary objective 1 regarding the effectiveness of the online e-tutor training programmes. The overall changes in behaviour suggest that the training was effective.

5.2.4.4 Results

The respondents believed that the training interventions added value and made a positive contribution to their ability to support and engage students. These changes were associated with improved student performance, improved student satisfaction, increased student participation and peer-to-peer interaction. These findings reflect a strong alignment between the training objectives and the improvements experienced by the e-tutors in their practices. The results support secondary objective 1 regarding the effectiveness of the e-tutor online training programmes provided by CPD.

5.2.5 Correlational analysis

The correlation analysis revealed a meaningful link between the six variables tested. Particularly, reaction and learning indicated a strong correlation, which shows that the

positive training experience improved the knowledge and skills of online tutors in teaching and learning. Behaviour and results also show a strong correlation, indicating that behavioural change in respondents positively leads to improved outcomes. Attendance revealed weak correlations with all variables, indicating that participation on its own does not influence effectiveness. This highlights the importance of well-designed training interventions. The overall correlations across the four levels of training evaluation suggest that the training was effective in enhancing the e-tutors' performance. These findings respond to secondary objective 1, which sought to determine the relationships among the six variables related to learning and development (L&D) and e-tutor effectiveness within an Open Distance e-Learning (ODEL) environment. Therefore, H01 is rejected.

5.2.6 Regression analysis

Regression findings indicate that behaviours strongly predicted favourable results. Behaviour appeared as the strongest predictor, emphasising that the practical application of training is important to reach meaningful student success. Attendance, reaction and learning were not statistically important predictors. These findings align with secondary objective 2, which sought to determine the effectiveness of the online e-tutor training programmes offered by CPD in an ODeL institution. Therefore, H02 is partially rejected because only behaviour was found to predict results.

Subject-specific assessment also contributed significantly to favourable results. The result highlights an integral part of subject-specific training and development. These findings correspond with secondary objective 3, which sought to determine the effectiveness of the e-tutor subject-specific assessment offered by academics in the ODeL institution. Therefore, H03 is rejected.

5.2.7 Training needs

Respondents indicated that myUnisa training, online communication, subject-specific assessment, pedagogical training and technological tools are the most important training needs. Additional specialised training, such as Moodle analytics, assessment marking procedures and the use of AI in teaching, indicates areas of specialised or advanced L&D needs. These findings relate directly to the secondary objective 4,

which aimed to identify the training needs of e-tutors in an ODeL institution. The findings illustrate a clear need for foundational and specialised training to equip e-tutors with the necessary competencies in the online learning environment. Therefore, H04 is rejected.

5.3 Conclusions

This section outlines the conclusions that were drawn from the empirical study.

5.3.1 Importance of behavioural application

The findings indicate that a change in behaviour is a key aspect of L&D interventions. Training that supports the practical application of knowledge leads to improved e-tutor-student interaction, improved student engagement and a conducive online teaching and learning environment for both students and the e-tutor.

5.3.2 The importance of subject-specific assessment

The subject-specific assessment makes an impactful contribution to the e-tutor L&D by increasing the e-tutors' subject-related knowledge and improving responsiveness to student queries. The inconsistent implementation of subject-specific assessment across colleges in the ODeL institution reduces its overall effectiveness, suggesting the need to implement the subject-specific assessment across all colleges within the institution (Enwereji et al., 2024).

5.3.3 Positive reaction to L&D interventions

L&D interventions were positively received by e-tutors, with respondents indicating improved confidence, deeper understanding of their roles and improved skills in pedagogy and other online teaching skills. These improvements confirm the significance of the investment and commitment to the ODeL institution in the L&D of e-tutors.

5.3.4 The importance of enhanced technological skills

The training needs of the respondents revolve around online communication and technological skills. These are the inessential skills in an ODeL environment and the

ODeL institution must prioritise them in future training interventions for e-tutors.

5.3.5 Training variabilities

Inconsistency in the attendance of training and the non-compulsory, subject-specific assessment suggests that there are gaps in the e-tutor professional development experiences across colleges within the ODeL institution. This signifies the importance of standardised processes and provides equal access to L&D interventions throughout the ODeL institution (Joubert & Snyman, 2020; Pitsoane & Lethole, 2022).

5.3.6 Customising training for new and experienced e-tutors

With the high number of new e-tutors appointed in the ODeL institution, strong foundational training interventions and support should be provided. Experienced e-tutors who have been in the system for longer should also receive advanced training to deepen their expertise and maintain engagement.

5.4 Limitations of the study

The following section discusses the limitations identified within the literature and the empirical component of the study.

5.4.1 Limitations on literature review

The literature review was restricted to studies conducted within the university context. The literature review did not include studies conducted at colleges of higher education, private higher education institutions, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). As a result, the findings of this study may not fully capture the diversity of the e-tutor L&D across a broader spectrum of ODeL.

5.4.2 Limitations of the empirical study

Firstly, although the study provides a valuable insight into the e-tutor L&D in an ODeL institution, the study was conducted within a single ODeL institution, which limits the generalisation of the findings to other contexts. Secondly, while the response rate was sufficient for analysis, it was low for credibility and reliability purposes of the findings. Although the link to the online questionnaire was sent via email to 800 e-tutors

appointed at the ODeL institution where this study was conducted, only 199 respondents participated in the study. However, the low response rate is not unique to this study, as online surveys usually receive a lower participation rate (Armstrong, 2010). Thirdly, this study adopted the cross-sectional approach, which inhibited the potential to discover the long-term effects of the training interventions that the ODeL institution offers to its e-tutors. Lastly, the study focused exclusively on e-tutors and did not include students who received e-tutoring. As a result, the findings of the study only reflect the views and experiences of e-tutors on the effectiveness of L&D. This limitation inhibits the ability to assess the effectiveness of L&D interventions in improving student experiences and performance.

5.5 Recommendations

This section provides the suggestions made to enhance the L&D of the e-tutors within the ODeL institution where the study was conducted. These recommendations are aligned with SO5 of this study. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed.

5.5.1 Standardised subject-specific assessment

The ODeL institution should implement the subject-specific assessment as a requirement across all colleges. This would ensure consistency in L&D and improved knowledge of the subject content of the e-tutors.

5.5.2 Develop tiered training models

The ODeL institution should develop and provide a structured training programme with different pathways for new and experienced e-tutors to ensure focused L&D and encourage commitment.

5.5.3 Improved technological and communication training

E-tutor training should prioritise online technology, Moodle platform navigation and netiquette skills to support the efficiency of e-tutors in an online teaching and learning environment.

5.5.4 Increased frequency and accessibility of training

The ODeL institution should increase the frequency and accessibility of training interventions to ensure broader uptake, particularly for less experienced e-tutors. Furthermore, the ODeL institution must make it mandatory for e-tutors to attend a certain number of training interventions annually across all colleges.

5.5.5 Address specialised and emerging training needs

The ODeL institution should offer optional training workshops or advanced modules on the use of AI, analytics and the ODeL institution's specific operations to accommodate specialised needs.

5.5.6 Application of acquired skills

The findings of this study indicate that behavioural application is the strongest indicator of improved results. The ODeL institution should provide a conducive environment for e-tutors to transfer their learning to achieve desired outcomes.

5.5.7 Recommendations for future research

Based on the limitations of this cross-sectional study mentioned in the section above, future research should employ a longitudinal design to determine the long-term effects of the e-tutor training interventions that the ODeL institution offers to e-tutors. Future research should also include more ODeL institutions to increase the generalisation of the findings to other contexts.

Based on the limitations and research approach of the study, future research should employ other research methodologies to better understand the effectiveness of L&D provided to e-tutors. In particular, a qualitative research approach, such as semi-structured interviews, to capture e-tutors' experience of the CPD training programmes.

5.5.8 Policy implications

The findings indicate that e-tutor training and national policy frameworks like the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS), the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goal 4 need to be more closely aligned. To

enhance the quality of teaching and learning in an ODeL context, institutions should incorporate continuous and dynamic e-tutor L&D into their policies. This will guarantee sufficient support, resources, and alignment with digital transformation strategies.

5.6 Chapter summary

This study is concluded in this chapter. This study underscores the importance of well-designed L&D programmes in improving the effectiveness of e-tutoring in an ODeL environment. By addressing the gaps in the e-tutor L&D, the findings of this study provide the basis for improved tutor-student engagement and assist the ODeL institution to realise its goal of improved throughput rates. Future research should be built on these findings to develop better strategies for continuous e-tutor training in ODeL environments. This chapter presented a discussion of the key findings of the study, the conclusions, limitations, recommendations and suggestions for possible areas for future research.

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Abdallah, M. M. (2024). *The Role and Function of Literature Review in Educational Research Studies: A Pragmatic Perspective*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED660561.pdf>
- Aboramadan, M., Albashiti, B., Alharazin, H., & Dahleez, K. A. (2020). Human resources management practices and organizational commitment in higher education: The mediating role of work engagement. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 34(1), 154-174. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-04-2019-0160>
- Aboyassin, N. A., & Sultan, M. A. (2017). The role of human resources training in improving the employee's performance: Applied study in the five stars hotels in Jordan. *International Journal of Business Administration*, 8(5), 46-56. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijba.v8n5p46>
- Abulela, M. A., & Harwell, M. M. (2020). Data analysis: Strengthening inferences in quantitative education studies conducted by novice researchers. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 20(1), 59-78.
- Adams, J., Khan, H. T. A., Raeside, R., & White, D. (2012). *Research methods for graduate business and social science students*. Sage. doi:10.4135/9788132108498
- Adnan, M., Kalelioglu, F., & Gulbahar, Y. (2017). Assessment of a multinational online faculty development program on online teaching: Reflections of candidate e-tutors. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 18(1), 22-38.
- Akpen, C. N., Asaolu, S., Atobatele, S., Okagbue, H., & Sampson, S. (2024). Impact of online learning on student's performance and engagement: A systematic review. *Discover Education*, 3(1), 205.
- Ali, I. M. (2024). A guide for positivist research paradigm: From philosophy to methodology. *Ideology Journal*, 9(2). <https://doi.org/10.24191/idealogy.v9i2.596>

- Ali, P., & Younas, A. (2021). Understanding and interpreting regression analysis. *Evidence-based nursing*, 24(4), 116-118.
- Alketbi, A. H. S. B., Jimber, D. R., Juan, A., & Ibáñez. F. A. (2022). Exploring the role of human resource development functions on crisis management: The case of Dubai-UAE during Covid-19 crisis. *PloS One*, 17(3), e0263034-e0263034. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0263034>
- Almajali, D. A., Altamony, H., & Alsharayri, M. (2016). The impact of training on employee performance: Evidence from Jordanian banks. *European Scientific Journal*, 12(10), 1857–7881. <https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2016.v12n10p185>
- Alok, S., & Mishra, S. B. (2022). *Handbook of research methodology: A compendium for scholars and researchers*. Educreation Publishing.
- Alsalamah, A., & Callinan, C. (2021). Adaptation of Kirkpatrick's four-level model of training criteria to evaluate training programmes for head teachers. *Education Sciences*, 11(3), 116. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11030116>
- Alshboul, J., Ghanim, H., & Baksa-Varga, E. (2021). Semantic modelling for learning materials in e-tutor systems. *Journal of Software Engineering & Intelligent Systems*, 6(2), 17-24.
- Altamony, H., Al-Salti, Z., Gharaibeh, A., & Elyas, T. (2016). The relationship between change management strategy and successful enterprise resource planning (ERP) implementations: A theoretical perspective. *International Journal of Business Management and Economic Research*, 7(4), 690-703.
- Ampomah, P. (2016). The effect of training on employee performance. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 6(7), 2222–6990. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v6-i7/2233>
- Anglin, K., Liu, Q., & Wong, V. C. (2024). A primer on the validity typology and threats to validity in education research. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 25(3), 557-574.
- Armstrong, M. (2010). *Armstrong's essential human resource management practice: A guide to people management*. Kogan Page Publishers.

- Bahl, K., Kiran, R., & Sharma, A. (2024). Evaluating the effectiveness of training of managerial and non-managerial bank employees using Kirkpatrick's model for evaluation of training. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), 1-14.
- Baird, J. A., Andrich, D., Hopfenbeck, T. N., & Stobart, G. (2017). Assessment and learning: Fields apart? *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 24(3), 317-350.
- Baskin, K. (2023). *To keep employees, focus on career advancement*. MIT Sloan Management Review. <https://mitsloan.mit.edu/ideas-made-to-matter/to-keep-employees-focus-career-advancement>
- Bates, R. (2004). A critical analysis of evaluation practice: The Kirkpatrick model and the principle of beneficence. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 27(3), 341-347.
- Bettivia, R., & Davis, R. O. (2023). E-support for E-learning: A tool to empower students in online courses. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, 64(1), 53-70.
- Bijani, M., Rostami, K., Momennasab, M., & Yektatalab, S. (2018). Evaluating the effectiveness of a continuing education program for prevention of occupational exposure to needle stick injuries in nursing staff based on Kirkpatrick's model. *Journal of the National Medical Association*, 110(5), 459-463. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnma.2017.11.002>
- Blanchard, L. A., & Nix, M. (2019). Creating spaces for radical pedagogy in higher education. *Human Rights Education Review*, 2(2), 64-83.
- Bloomfield, J., & Fisher, M. J. (2019). Quantitative research design. *JARNA: The Official Journal of the Australasian Rehabilitation Nurses' Association*, 22(2), 27-30. <https://doi.org/10.33235/jarna.22.2.27-30>
- Bordens, K. S., & Abbott, B. B. (2020). *Research design and methods: A process approach* (11th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.
- Bowes, B. (2008). Employee development programs help companies achieve greater

- success: Are employers ready to replace up to 50 per cent of their retiring workforce with new trained recruits? *CMA Management*, 82(2), 13-14.
- Brailas, A. (2020). Rhizomatic Learning in action: A virtual exposition for demonstrating learning rhizomes. In *Eighth International Conference on Technological Ecosystems for Enhancing Multiculturality* (pp. 309-314). Salamanca Spain: Conference proceeding.
- Bramley, P., & Newby, A. C. (1984). The evaluation of training part I: Clarifying the concept. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 8(6), 10-16.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). To saturate or not to saturate? Questioning data saturation as a useful concept for thematic analysis and sample-size rationales. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 13(2), 201-216.
- Buckley, R., & Caple, J. (2009). *The theory and practice of training*. Kogan Page Publishers.
- Bustos-Contell, E., Porcuna-Enguix, L., Serrano-Madrid, J., & Labatut-Serer, G. (2021). The role of e-tutor competencies in postgraduate e-learning courses: Spotlight on emotion management. *Sustainability*, 13(17), 9716. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13179716>
- Cahapay, M. (2021). Kirkpatrick model: Its limitations as used in higher education evaluation. *International Journal of Assessment Tools in Education*, 8(1), 135-144. <https://doi.org/10.21449/ijate.856143>
- Cedaryana, L., Luddin, M. R., & Supriyati, Y. (2018). Influence of work discipline, career development and job satisfaction on employee performance directorate general research and development of ministry research, technology and higher education. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Management*, 6(02), 87-96.
- Carmines, E. G., & Zeller, R. A. 1979. *Reliability and Validity Assessment*. SAGE.
- Christensen, L. (2001). *Experimental methodology*. (8th ed.). Allyn & Bacon.

- Chuang, S. (2021). The applications of constructivist learning theory and social learning theory on adult continuous development. *Performance Improvement (International Society for Performance Improvement)*, 60(3), 6-14.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/pfi.21963>
- Cheung, W. S., & Hew, K. F. (2008). Examining facilitators' habits of mind and their influences on knowledge construction in asynchronous online discussions. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 38(2), 125-152.
<https://doi.org/10.2190/EC.38.2.b>
- Cohen, J. (1988). Set correlation and contingency tables. *Applied Psychological Measurement*, 12(4), 425-434.
- Copaci, I. A., & Rusu, A. S. (2015). A profile outline of higher education e-tutoring programs for the digital-native student: Literature review. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 209, 145-153.
- Cox, G., Carr, T., & Hall, M. (2004). Evaluating the use of synchronous communication in two blended courses. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 20(3), 183-193.
- Cronbach, L. J. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. *Psychometrika*, 16, 297–324.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.) Sage Publications Ltd.
- Creswell, J. W., & Guetterman, T. C. (2019). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (6th ed.). Pearson.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage Publications Inc.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Davies, C., & Fisher, M. (2018). Understanding research paradigms. *Journal of the*

Australasian Rehabilitation Nurses Association, 21(3), 21-25.

Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10(3), 241-266.

De Jong, N., Verstegen, D. M. L., & Könings, K. D. (2018). The role of the e-tutor in synchronous online problem-based learning: A study in a master public health program. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 49(3), 385-397.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12554>

De Metz, N., & Bezuidenhout, A. (2018). An importance-competence analysis of the roles and competencies of E-tutors at an open distance learning institution. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 34(5), 27.
<https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.3364>

Dempsey, T., & Mestry, R. (2023). Teachers' perceptions and experiences of navigating continuing professional development during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Education Sciences*, 13(9), 933.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13090933>

Denis, B., Watland, P., Pirotte, S., & Verday, N. (2004). *Roles and competencies of the e-tutor*. Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Networked Learning, 4, 155–160. <https://doi.org/10.54337/nlc.v4.9627>

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2018). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications

Department of Higher Education and Training. (2023). *Government Gazette No. 48660: Notice 3461 of 2023*. Government Printing Works.
https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202305/48660gon3461.pdf

DeVellis, R. F., & Thorpe, C. T. (2021). *Scale development: Theory and applications*. Sage publications.

Dhir, S. K., & Gupta, P. (2021). Formulation of research question and composing study

- outcomes and objectives. *Indian Pediatrics*, 58(6), 584-588.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13312-021-2246-y>
- Dongre, S. B., Yenireddy, A., Sukaiya, G. U., & Khade, A. N. (2024). *Research methodology: Methods, approaches & techniques*. Academic Guru Publishing House.
- Dube, B. (2020). Rural online learning in the context of COVID 19 in South Africa: Evoking an inclusive education approach. *REMIE: Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research*, 10(2), 135-157.
- Dubey, U. K. B., & Kothari, D. P. (2022). *Research methodology: Techniques and trends*. CRC Press.
- Eichhorn, J. (2021). Survey research and sampling. In M. Williams & R. Wiggins (Rds.), *The SAGE Quantitative Research Kit*. SAGE Publications.
- Enwereji, P. C., Van Rooyen, A., & Terblanche, A. (2023). Exploring students' perceptions on effective online tutoring at a distance education institution. *The Electronic Journal of e-Learning*, 21(4), 366–381.
- Enwereji, P. C., & Van Rooyen, A. A. (2023). Unlocking academic excellence: The journey of online tutors at a distance learning institution in South Africa. *Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy*, 14(2), 302-327.
- Enwereji, P. C., Van Rooyen, A. A., Ngcobo, R. N., & Musundwa, F. S. (2024). Empowering e-tutors for effective online teaching and learning: E-tutors' challenges and perceptions. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 23(1), 374-399.
- Essuman, S. O., & Appiah-Boateng, P. (2015). Maintaining an effective online learning environment and the role of the e-tutor: The University of Education, Winneba Experience. *Group*, 2(1), 95-109. <https://doi.org/10.5296/jet.v2i1.6685>
- Fandiño, F. G. E., & Velandia, A. J. S. (2020). How an online tutor motivates e-learning English. *Heliyon*, 6(8),1-7.

- Febryan, F., & Muafi, M. (2023). Evaluation of the human resources training and development program for performance and productivity improvement (Case study at Perumda Tirta Manuntung Balikpapan). *Asian Journal of Management, Entrepreneurship and Social Science*, 3(3), 1028-1046.
- Fedoseev, A. (2018). E-tutor for e-learning. *International Journal of Research in E-learning*, 4(1), 78-86.
- Fegade, T., & Sharma, P. (2023). Exploring the impact of employee training and development on organizational efficiency and Effectiveness: A systematic literature review. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 25(4), 56-63
- Foxon, M. (1989). Evaluation of training and development programs: A review of the literature. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.2340>
- Fujita, T. (2006). Training impact analysis-applying the modified combined model of Kirkpatrick's and Phillips' training evaluation to measure the training impact. *Business Review*, 1(1), 9-28.
- Gao, J. (2024). R-Squared (R²): How much variation is explained? *Research Methods in Medicine & Health Sciences*, 5(4), 104-109.
- Ghanad, A. (2023). An overview of quantitative research methods. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Analysis*, 7(8), 3794-3803.
- Ghenghesh, P. (2018). Personal tutoring from the perspectives of tutors and tutees. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 42(4), 570-584.
- Goertz, G., & Mahoney, J. (2012). Concepts and measurement: Ontology and epistemology. *Social Science Information*, 51(2), 205-216
- Gómez-Rey, P., Barbera, E., & Fernández-Navarro, F. (2017). Student voices on the roles of instructors in asynchronous learning environments in the 21st century. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 18(2), 234-251. <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v18i2.2891>

- Goold, A., Coldwell, J., & Craig, A. (2010). An examination of the role of the e-tutor. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 26(5).
<https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.1060>
- Gorichanaz, T., Latham, K. F., & Wood, E. (2018). Lifeworld as “unit of analysis”. *Journal of Documentation*, 74(4), 880-893.
- Gu, Y., He, J., Huang, W., & Sun, B. (2025). Professional development for teachers in the digital age: A comparative analysis of online training programs and policy implementation. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(8), 1076.
- Gumbo, P. (2024). *Understanding the distinction between a census and sample surveys*. Progumbo. Available at:
<https://www.progumbo.com/post/understanding-the-distinction-between-a-census-and-sample-surveys> [Accessed 07 January 2025]
- Hammond, H., & Churchill, R. Q. (2018). The Role of Employee Training and Development in Achieving Organizational Objectives: A Study of Accra Technical University. *Archives of Business Research*, 6(2), 67-74.
<https://doi.org/10.14738/abr.62.4190>
- Hartai, L. (2014). Report on formal media education in Europe. *European Union*.
- Hebebcı, M. T., Bertiz, Y., & Alan, S. (2020). Investigation of views of students and teachers on distance education practices during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic. *International Journal of Technology in Education and Science*, 4(4), 267-282.
- Herzpich, M., Klein, T., & Bauer, S. (2018). Evaluation competence in online education. *Journal of Assessment and Evaluation*, 10(2), 88–102.
- Horila, T. (2025). Shared communication competence: Moving beyond the individual in interprofessional communication. In S. Fox, K. McAllum, & L. Mikkola *Interprofessional communication in health and social care: Theoretical perspectives on practical realities* (pp. 165-182). Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Howell, D. (2008). *Fundamental statistics for the behavioral sciences* (6th ed.).

Thomson Wadsworth.

- Ikram, M., & Kenayathulla, H. B. (2022). Out of touch: Comparing and contrasting positivism and interpretivism in social science. *Asian Journal of Research in Education and Social Sciences*, 4(2), 39-49.
- Jeng, Y., & Hsu, P. (2005, May). Establishment of evaluation indicators for student practical training in insurance industry. In *Proceedings of International Conference on Redesigning Pedagogy: Research, Policy, Practice*. National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.
- Jödicke, C., & Teich, E. (2015). Concepts for using e-tutors in complex e-learning scenarios – a case report [Konzepte für den Einsatz von E-Tutoren in komplexen E-Learning-Szenarien – Ein Erfahrungsbericht]. In T. Köhler, N. Kahnwald, & E. Schoop (Eds.), *Wissensgemeinschaften in Neuen Medien (GeNeMe) 2015* (pp. 45–53). TU Dresden / Medienzentrum, Universität Siegen.
- Johns, C., & Mills, M. (2021). Online mathematics tutoring during the COVID-19 pandemic: Recommendations for best practices. *PRIMUS: Problems, Resources, and Issues in Mathematics Undergraduate Studies*, 31(1), 99-117. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511970.2020.1818336>
- Joubert, Y. T., & Snyman, A. M. (2018). Challenges experienced with online tutoring in an ODL institution. *Progressio*, 39(1), 126–145. <https://doi.org/10.25159/0256-8853/2139>
- Joubert, Y., & Snyman, A. (2020). The contribution of the e-tutor model in an open distance learning higher education institution: The perspective of the e-tutor. *The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 15(1), 6-21.
- Jumawan, J., & Mora, M. T. (2018). The effect of training and career development on the performance of corporate employees. *Journal of Management and Business Research (JRMB)*, 3(3), 343–352.
- Kane, M. T. (1992). The assessment of professional competence. *Evaluation & the Health Professions*, 15(2), 163-181.

- Karunarathna, I., Gunasena, P., Hapuarachchi, T., & Gunathilake, S. (2024). The crucial role of data collection in research: Techniques, challenges, and best practices. *Uva Clinical Research*, 1, 1–24.
- Karupiah, P. (2022). Positivism. In M. R. Islam, N. A. Khan, & R. Baikady (Eds.) *Principles of social research methodology* (pp. 73–82). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.
- Kebritchi, M., Lipschuetz, A., & Santiago, L. (2017). Issues and challenges for teaching successful online courses in higher education: A literature review. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 46(1), 4-29.
- Keegan, D. (2002). *The future of learning: From e-learning to m-learning*. Fern Universität.
- Khodabandelou, R., Chaharbashloo, H., Ghaderi, M., Zeinabadi, H., & Karimi, L. (2024). A systematic review on university instructors' roles and competencies in online teaching environments. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 32(6), 2506-2519.
- Kiely, R. (2009). Small answers to the big question: Learning from language programme evaluation. *Language Teaching Research*, 13(1), 99-116.
- Kim, K. J., & Bonk, C. J. (2006). The future of online teaching and learning in higher education. *Educause Quarterly*, 29(4), 22-30.
- Kirkpatrick, D., & Kirkpatrick, J. (2006). *Evaluating training programs: The four levels*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- Kirkpatrick, D. L. (1959). Techniques for evaluating training programs. *The Journal of the American Society of Training Directors*, 13(11), 3–9.
- Kornuta, H. M., Germaine, R. W., & EBSCO Publishing. (2019). *A concise guide to writing a thesis or dissertation: Educational research and beyond* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429056888>
- Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2017). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research.

- part 2: Context, research questions and designs. *The European Journal of General Practice*, 23(1), 274-279.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375090>
- Kraus, S., Breier, M., Lim, W. M., Dabić, M., Kumar, S., Kanbach, D., & Ferreira, J. J. (2022). Literature reviews as independent studies: Guidelines for academic practice. *Review of Managerial Science*, 16(8), 2577-2595.
- Kumar, D., & Siddika, H. (2017). Benefits of training and development program on employees' performance: a study with special reference to banking sector in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Research-Granthaalayah*, 5(12), 77-88.
- Kumar, S. (2018). Understanding different issues of unit of analysis in a business research. *Journal of General Management Research*, 5(2), 70–82.
- Kumatongo, B., & Muzata, K. K. (2021). Research paradigms and designs with their application in education. *Journal of Lexicography and Terminology*, 5(1), 16-32.
- Laing, I. F. (2009). The impact of training and development on worker performance and productivity in public sector organizations: A case study of Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority. *International Research Journal of Business and Strategic Management*, 2(2), 438-449.
- Lakens, D. (2022). Sample size justification. *Collabra: Psychology*, 8(1), 1-28.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/collabra.1971>
- Langesee, L. M. (2022). Future competencies and E-tutor competencies: A chance for higher education institutions to support their student staff. *International Journal of Management, Knowledge and Learning*, 11, 297-314.
- Langesee, L. M., Hobe, N., & Schmidt, S. (2024). Empowering e-tutors: An iterative development of an e-tutor self-evaluation tool. In *INTED2024 Proceedings: 18th International Technology, Education and Development Conference* (Valencia, Spain, 4–6 March 2024) (pp. 7–16). IATED.
<https://doi.org/10.21125/inted.2024.0010>
- Langesee, L. M., & Ukhova, N. (2023). E-tutor tandems in a coil course—design,

- implementation and evaluation. *International Journal of Research in E-learning (IJREL)*, 9(1), 1-25.
- Langmann, S., & Thomas, S. R. (2019). Rethinking training evaluation: Omnidirectional evaluation, range of audience and intentional change. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 30(12), 1902-1930. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2017.1303782>
- Liakopoulou, M. (2011). The professional competence of teachers: Which qualities, attitudes, skills and knowledge contribute to a teacher's effectiveness. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1(21), 66-78.
- Liao, S. C., & Hsu, S. Y. (2019). Evaluating a continuing medical education program: New world Kirkpatrick model approach. *International Journal of Management, Economics and Social Sciences (IJMESS)*, 8(4), 266-279.
- Lindner, J. R., & Lindner, N. J. (2024). Interpreting Likert-type scales, summated scales, unidimensional scales, and attitudinal scales: I neither agree nor disagree, Likert or not. *Advancements in Agricultural Development*, 5(2), 152-163.
- Liu, R., & Li, Y. (2020). Action research to enrich learning in e-tutoring for remote schools. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, 33(1), 95-110. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11213-019-09517-5>
- Lockyer, J., Carraccio, C., Chan, M. K., Hart, D., Smee, S., Touchie, C., ... & ICBME Collaborators. (2017). Core principles of assessment in competency-based medical education. *Medical Teacher*, 39(6), 609-616.
- Madileng, M. M., & Ndlangamandla, S. C. (2024). Integration and contextualisation of TPACK and ICT 21st century skills when e-tutoring in online distance learning. *Scrutiny2*, 28(3), 18-40.
- Mahmoodi, M., Rashtchi, M., & Abbasian, G. R. (2019). Evaluation of in-service teacher training program in Iran: Focus on the Kirkpatrick model. *Education and Self Development*, 14(4), 20-38.

- Majid, U. (2018). Research fundamentals: Study design, population, and sample size. *Undergraduate Research in Natural and Clinical Science and Technology Journal*, 2, 1-7.
- Makwara, C. (2019). Experiences of e-tutoring at Africa's largest distance education University: 2013-2019. In *ICERI2019 Proceedings* (pp. 5787-5793). IATED.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2011). *Designing qualitative research* (5th ed.). Sage.
- Maré, S., & Mutezo, A. T. (2021). The effectiveness of e-tutoring in an open and distance e-learning environment: Evidence from the university of South Africa. *Open Learning*, 36(2), 164-180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680513.2020.1717941>
- McClelland, S. D. (2002). *A training needs assessment for the United Way of Dunn County, Wisconsin* [Master's thesis, The Graduate School, University of Wisconsin-Stout].
- McNamara, G., Joyce, P., & O'Hara, J. (2010). Evaluation of adult education and training programs. In P. Peterson, E. Baker, & B. McGaw (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Education* (pp. 548-554). Elsevier.
- Mehale, K. D., Govender, C. M., & Mabaso, C. M. (2021). Maximising training evaluation for employee performance improvement. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 19(12), e1-e11. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v19i0.1473>
- Mkhize, T. R., & Davids, M. N. (2021). Towards a digital resource mobilisation approach for digital inclusion during COVID-19 and beyond: A case of a township school in South Africa. *Educational Research for Social Change*, 10(2), 18-32.
- Mohajan, H. K. (2020). Quantitative research: A successful investigation in natural and social sciences. *Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*, 9(4), 50-79. <https://doi.org/10.26458/jedep.v9i4.679>
- Mohammed, N. A., Mohammed, D., & Gana, J. (2022). The impact of training and development on employee productivity in the 21st century. *African Journal of*

Management and Business Research, 3(1), 41-58.

Mohammed, S. H., & Kinyó, L. (2020). The role of constructivism in the enhancement of social studies education. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 7(7), 249-256. <http://dx.doi.org/10.31838/jcr.07.07.41>

Mohd Said, N. S., Abd Halim, N. W., Abdul Manaf, S. M., & Adenan, N. D. (2022). The impact of training and development on organizational performance. *Jurnal Intelek*, 17(2), 113-123.

Monnette, D., Sullivan, T., & De Jong, C. (2014). *Applied social research: A tool for the human services*. Cengage Learning.

Motaung, L. B., & Makombe, R. (2021). Tutor experiences of online tutoring as a basis for the development of a focused tutor-training programme. *The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 16(2), 101-117.

Muijs, D. (2004). *Doing quantitative research in education with SPSS*. Sage Publications.

Mukhalalati, B. A., & Taylor, A. (2019). *Adult learning theories in context: A quick guide for healthcare professional educators*. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2382120519840332>

Mulaudzi, L. (2024). Evaluating impact: South Africa's e-education white paper on digital equity and post-COVID education leadership. *Cogent Education*, 11(1), 2415749.

Mumtazah, D., & Rohmah, W. (2023). Strategies in managing human resource development in the 21st century education era: A case study of Platinum Qur'an Kindergarten. *Golden Age: Jurnal Ilmiah Tumbuh Kembang Anak Usia Dini*, 8(1), 13-23.

Murphy, L. (2023). The Questionnaire surveying research method: Pros, cons and best practices. *ScienceOpen Preprints*.

Muyambi, G. C., & Ramorola, M. Z. (2025). Unveiling educators' readiness to teach

- through Digital Media (DM): The case of South Africa. *Education and Information Technologies*, 30(10), 13807-13834.
- Mwita, K. (2022). Factors to consider when choosing data collection methods. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 11(5), 532-538. <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v11i5.1842>
- Nambiar, P. (2020). The impact of online learning during COVID-19: Students' and teachers' perspective. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 8(2), 783-793. DOI:10.25215/0802.094
- Nanjundeswaraswamy, T. S., & Divakar, S. (2021). Determination of sample size and sampling methods in applied research. *Proceedings on Engineering Sciences*, 3(1), 25-32.
- Nair, P. R. K. K., & Yusof, S. M. (2023). Exploring the influence of socio-demographic factors on online facilitator performance: Insights from Open University Malaysia. *ASEAN Journal of Open and Distance Learning*, 15(2), 01-09.
- Nardi, A., Cecchi, G., & Naldini, M. (2023, September). The Role of E-tutors in Higher Education: A Case-Study Research Project. In *International Conference on Higher Education Learning Methodologies and Technologies Online* (pp. 517-530). Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Nayak, M. S. D. P., & Narayan, K. A. (2019). Strengths and weaknesses of online surveys. *Technology*, 6(7), 31-38. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2405053138>
- Ndebele, C., & Maphosa, C. (2014). Voices of educational developers on the enabling and constraining conditions in the uptake of professional development opportunities by academics at a South African university. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*, 7(1), 169-182.
- Newcomer, K. (2016). Carol H. Weiss, Methods for studying programs and policies. In M. Lodge, E. C. Page, & S. J. Balla (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Classics in Public Policy and Administration* (online edn.). Oxford Academic. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199646135.013.3>

- Newman, I., & Benz, C. R. (1998). *Qualitative-quantitative research methodology: Exploring the interactive continuum*. SIU Press.
- Niati, D. R., Siregar, Z. M. E., & Prayoga, Y. (2021). The effect of training on work performance and career development: The role of motivation as intervening variable. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute (BIRCI-Journal): Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(2), 2385-2393.
- Nicolaou, S. A., Heraclides, A., Constantinou, C. S., Loizou, S., & Gillott, D. J. (2021). One size doesn't fit all: PBL tutor training and development. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning*, 15(2). <https://doi.org/10.14434/ijpbl.v15i2.30267>
- Noe, R. A. (2008). *Employee Training and Development* (5th ed.). McGraw-Hill/Irwin.
- Nwafor, S. (2022). Training and development: Strategic impact on employees' job performances. *African Journal of Management and Business Research*, 5(1), 50-60.
- Obisi, C. (2011). Employee training and development in Nigerian organisations: Some observations and agenda for research. *Australian Journal of Business and Management Research*, 1(9), 82. <https://doi.org/10.52283/NSWRCA.AJBMR.20110109A09>
- Ogbonna, C. G., Ibezim, N. E., & Obi, C. A. (2019). Synchronous versus asynchronous e-learning in teaching word processing: An experimental approach. *South African Journal of Education*, 39(2), 1-15.
- O'Leary, Z. (2004). *The essential guide to doing research*. Sage.
- Omonovich, K. D., Abdurasulovich, K. J., & Bakhtiyorovna, K. N. (2020). Competence approach in special discipline lessons. *International Journal on Integrated Education*, 3(12), 249-252.
- Ong, M. H. A., & Puteh, F. (2017). Quantitative data analysis: Choosing between SPSS, PLS, and AMOS in social science research. *International Interdisciplinary Journal of Scientific Research*, 3(1), 14-25.

- Osorio Vanegas, H. D., Segovia Cifuentes, Y. D. M., & Sobrino Morrás, A. (2025). Educational technology in teacher training: A systematic review of competencies, skills, models, and methods. *Education Sciences*, 15(8), 1036.
- Paul, J., Khatri, P., & Kaur Duggal, H. (2024). Frameworks for developing impactful systematic literature reviews and theory building: What, Why and How? *Journal of Decision Systems*, 33(4), 537-550.
- Pandey, P., & Pandey, M. M. (2021). *Research methodology tools and techniques*. Romania: Bridge Center.
- Pask, G., & Scott, B. C. (1972). Learning strategies and individual competence. *International Journal of Man-Machine Studies*, 4(3), 217-253.
- Patel, M., & Patel, N. (2019). Exploring research methodology. *International Journal of Research and Review*, 6(3), 48-55.
- Patidar, J. (2012). *Writing research objectives*. Retrieved from: <http://www.slideshare.net/drjayeshpatidar/writing-research-objectives> (Accessed on 9 August 2023).
- Pedro, N. S., & Kumar, S. (2020). Institutional support for online teaching in quality assurance frameworks. *Online Learning*, 24(3), 50-66.
- Penella, C., & Stubbs, M. (2009). Understanding e-tutor roles in higher education. *Journal of Distance Education*, 23(1), 55–67
- Phelps, A., & Vlachopoulos, D. (2020). Successful transition to synchronous learning environments in distance education: A research on entry-level synchronous facilitator competencies. *Education and Information Technologies*, 25(3), 1511-1527.
- Phillips, J. J. (1996). ROI: The search for best practices. *Training & Development*, 50(2), 42-48.
- Pitsoane, E., & Lethole, P. (2022). Exploring e-tutors' views on in–service training for online student support: A professional development analysis. *Open Learning*:

The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning, 37(1), 53-64.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02680513.2020.1801404>

- Praslova, L. (2010). Adaptation of Kirkpatrick's four level model of training criteria to assessment of learning outcomes and program evaluation in higher education. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 22(3), 215-225.
- Pretorius, L. (2024). Demystifying research paradigms: Navigating ontology, epistemology, and axiology in research. *The Qualitative Report*, 29(10), 2698-2715.
- Rafiq, M. (2015). Training evaluation in an organization using Kirkpatrick model: A case study of PIA. *Journal of Entrepreneurship & Organization Management*, 4(03), 152-162.
- Rahman, M. M. (2023). Sample size determination for survey research and non-probability sampling techniques: A review and set of recommendations. *Journal of Entrepreneurship, Business and Economics*, 11(1), 42-62.
- Rajić, V. (2026). Statistical hypothesis testing: A comprehensive review of theory, methods, and applications. *Mathematics*, 14(2), 300.
- Ramorola, M. Z. (2018). *The roles and responsibilities of e-tutors in Open Distance and eLearning environment: Beyond Familiar Territories*. South Africa International Conference on Educational Technologies. <https://aa-rf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/SAICET-2018-Proceedings-Upload>.
- Raosoft. (2023). *Sampling size calculator*. <http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html> (Accessed on 9 August 2023).
- Redmond, P., Abawi, L., Brown, A., Henderson, R., & Heffernan, A. (2018). An online engagement framework for higher education. *Online Learning Journal*, 22(1), 183-204. <https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v22i1.1175>
- Reeb, S., Clauss, A., Lenk, F., & Altmann, M. (2021). Success factors of intra-organisational online collaboration: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Management and Enterprise Development*, 20(3), 200-233.

- Robinson, D. G., & Robinson, J. (1989). Training for impact. *Training & Development Journal*, 43(8), 34-43.
- Ros, M., & Neuwirth, L. S. (2020). Increasing global awareness of timely COVID-19 healthcare guidelines through FPV training tutorials: Portable public health crises teaching method. *Nurse Education Today*, 91, 104479.
- Rose-Krasnor, L. (1997). The nature of social competence: A theoretical review. *Social Development*, 6(1), 111-135.
- Sabatino, L. A. (2014). *Interactions on the online writing center: Students' perspectives*. Indiana University of Pennsylvania.
- Saleem, Q., Shahid, M., & Naseem, A. (2011). Degree of influence of training and development on employee's behavior. *International Journal of Computing and Business Research*, 2(3), 2229-6166.
- Salkind, J. N. (2012). *Exploring Research* (8th ed.). Pearson.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2012). *Research methods for business students* (6th ed.). Pearson.
- Sellar, T. (2022). Effect of training and career development on employee performance: Moderating effect of job satisfaction. *International Journal of Research*, 9(11), 82-98.
- Sims, D. A. (2025). Online education and learning management system usage in a South African Economic and management faculty during COVID-19. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, 22(5), 465-483.
- Singh, A. S. (2017). Common procedures for development, validity and reliability of a questionnaire. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*, 5(5), 790-801.
- Singh, K. (2006). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques*. New Age International Publishers.
- Sithole, M. P. (2024). Perceptions of tutors on tutor training at a University of

- Technology. *The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 19(1), 50-63.
- Smith, P. A., Van der Heijden, P. G., & Zhang, L. C. (2025). Improving population censuses around the world. In P. J. Aston (Ed.), *More UK Success Stories in Industrial Mathematics* (pp. 285-290). Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Sothy, C. H. H. Y. (2019). The impact of training and development on employee performance: A case study of selected private secondary schools in Phnom Penh Cambodia. *Global Journal of Human Resource Management*, 7(3), 40-49.
- Steyn, H. (2001). Practical significant relationships between two variables. *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 28(3), 10-15.
- Stickler, U., & Hampel, R. (2007). Designing online tutor training for language courses: A case study. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, 22(1), 75-85.
- Sun, P. C., Finger, G., & Liu, Z. L. (2014). Mapping the evolution of eLearning from 1977–2005 to inform understandings of eLearning historical trends. *Education Sciences*, 4(1), 155-171.
- Suresh, K., Thomas, S. V., & Suresh, G. (2011). Design, data analysis and sampling techniques for clinical research. *Annals of Indian Academy of Neurology*, 14(4), 287-290.
- Sürücü, L., & Maslakci, A. (2020). Validity and reliability in quantitative research. *Business & Management Studies: An International Journal*, 8(3), 2694-2726. <https://doi.org/10.15295/bmij.v8i3.1540>
- Sürücü, L., Yıkılmaz, İ., & Maşlakçı, A. (2022). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in quantitative researches and practical considerations. *Gümüşhane Üniversitesi Sağlık Bilimleri Dergisi*, 13(2), 947-965.
- Strunk, K. K., & Hoover, P. D. (2019). Quantitative methods for social justice and equity: Theoretical and practical considerations. In: K. K. Strunk, & L. A. Locke (Eds.), *Research methods for social justice and equity in education* (pp. 191-201). Palgrave Macmillan.

- Taherdoost, H., & Madanchian, M. (2025). Enhancing Survey Participation in Academic Research: Strategies, Challenges, and a Framework for Optimal Response Rates. In *Proceedings of The 23rd European Conference on Research Methods in Business and Management*. Academic Conferences and publishing limited.
- Taherdoost, H. (2016). Validity and reliability of the research instrument: How to test the validation of a questionnaire/survey in a research. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 5(3), 28-36. <http://DOI:10.2139/ssrn.3205040>
- Tahir, N., Yousafzai, I. K., Jan, S., & Hashim, M. (2014). The impact of training and development on employees performance and productivity a case study of United Bank Limited Peshawar City, KPK, Pakistan. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 4(4), 86. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v4-i4/756>
- Tan, P. J. B. (2019). An empirical study of how the learning attitudes of college students toward English e-tutoring websites affect site sustainability. *Sustainability*, 11(6), 1748. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11061748>
- Tien, N. H., Dana, L. P., Jose, R. J. S., Vu, N. T., & Hung, N. T. (2020). Human resource development strategy of Ton Duc Thang University to improve its position on the international rankings. *International Journal of Advanced Educations and Research*, 5(3), 105-110.
- Topno, H. (2012). Evaluation of training and development: An analysis of various models. *Journal of Business and Management*, 5(2), 16-22.
- Tshikovhi, E. R. (2012). *Training and development programme: Performance of employees at a South Africa platinum mine* [MTech dissertation, University of South Africa].
- Vegliante, R., & Sannicandro, K. (2020). The role of the tutor in the university context and in distance learning: An exploratory research. *Journal of e-Learning and Knowledge Society*, 16(3), 76-85. <https://doi.org/10.20368/1971-8829/1135274>
- Vincent, M. (2020). Impact of training and development on employee job performance in Nigeria. *Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5(05), 265-268.

Vlachopoulos, D., & Makri, A. (2021). Quality teaching in online higher education: The perspectives of 250 online tutors on technology and pedagogy. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (IJET)*, 16(6), 40-56.
<https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v16i06.20173>

University of South Africa (UNISA). (2016). *Policy on research ethics*. University of South Africa. Available from
https://www.unisa.ac.za/static/corporate_web/Content/Colleges/CLAW/Research/Docs/Policy%20on%20Research%20Ethics%20-%20rev%20appr%20-%20Council%20-%202015.09.2016.pdf (accessed on 18 February 2026)

University of South Africa (UNISA). (2021a). *Unisa strategic plan: 2021-2025*. University of South Africa.
<https://www.unisa.ac.za/static/myunisa/Content/Student%20affairs%20&%20SRC/Documents/SRC%20Important%20Policy%20Documents/UNISA%20-%20Strategic%20Plan%202021%20-%20V2%20FINAL.pdf>. (Accessed on 05 February 2026)

University of South Africa (UNISA). (2021b). College of Accounting Sciences results in SAICA's 2021 ITC. *University of South Africa*.
<https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/News-&-Media/Media-releases/College-of-Accounting-Sciences-results-in-SAICAs-2021-ITC#:~:text=While%20the%20Unisa%20pass%20rate,nominal%20terms%2C%20marked%20at%20625>. (Accessed on 06 February 2024).

University of South Africa (UNISA). (2021c). Tutorial support services. *University of South Africa*. <https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/myunisa/default/Learner-support-&-regions/Tuition-Support/Tutorial-Support-Services>. (Accessed on 07 February 2024).

University of South Africa (UNISA). (2023). *Online Independent Contractors (E-Tutors) – College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences*. UNISA.
https://w2.unisa.ac.za/CW/STATIC/CORPORAT/CONTENT/ABOUT/SERVICE/_/HR/VACANCIE/DOCS/2024_CAE.PDF

Walizada, S. (2021). *Significance of correlation in statistics*. International Journal of

Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation, 2(6):317-318. <http://DOI:10.54660/IJMRGE.2021.2.6.317-318>

Watson, S. L., Watson, W. R., Yu, J. H., Alamri, H., & Mueller, C. (2017). Learner profiles of attitudinal learning in a MOOC: An explanatory sequential mixed methods study. *Computers & Education*, 114, 274-285.

Wienclaw, R. A. (2021). Correlation. In *Research starters: Social sciences and humanities*. EBSCO. <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/social-sciences-and-humanities/correlation#research-starter-title>

William, D., & Thompson, M. (2008). Integrating assessment with learning: What will it take to make it work? In C. A. Dwyer (Ed.), *The future of assessment: Shaping teaching and learning* (pp. 53–82). Routledge.

Yafele, S. (2025). Navigating higher education student success: Reflective narrative lessons from a South African university. *The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 20(2), 136-154.

Yang, H., & Romero-Hall, E. (2024). A pilot study exploring interaction and student satisfaction in asynchronous courses in higher education. *TechTrends*, 68(4), 761-770.

Yang, M. (2025). Comparing academic and non-academic support services: Mechanisms impacting academic performance. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 26(3), 83-104.

Yardley, S., & Dornan, T. (2012). Kirkpatrick's levels and education 'evidence'. *Medical Education*, 46(1), 97–106. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2923.2011.04076.x>

Youde, A. (2020). I don't need peer support: Effective tutoring in blended learning environments for part-time, adult learners. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 39(5), 1040-1054.

Zawacki-Richter, O., Marín, V. I., Bond, M., & Gouverneur, F. (2019). Systematic review of research on artificial intelligence applications in higher education – Where are the educators? *International Journal of Educational Technology in*

Higher Education, 16(1), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-019-0171-0>

Zimba, O., & Gasparyan, A. Y. (2023). Designing, conducting, and reporting survey studies: A primer for researchers. *Journal of Korean Medical Science*, 38(e403), 1–11.

ANNEXURE A: Ethical Clearance (College of Economic and Management Sciences [CEMS])



College of Economic and Management Sciences_CRERC

Date: 07/08/2024

Dear: Mr Lazarus Makhuvele

Ref #: 3878

Name: Mr Lazarus Makhuvele

Student #: 42013372

Decision: Ethics Approval from 07 August 2024 to 06 August 2027

Researcher: Mr Lazarus Makhuvele

Unisa Main Campus, Preller St, Muckleneuk,

Pretoria

42013372@mylife.unisa.ac.za 0647572663

Supervisor: Dr Tebogo Molotsi molottk@unisa.ac.za

Co-Supervisor: Dr Ronny Shibiti Shibir@unisa.ac.za

Investigating the effectiveness of learning and development (L&D) provided to e-tutors in an ODeL institution

Qualification: MCom in Business Management

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the College of Economic and Management Sciences_CRERC, for the above mentioned research study. Ethics approval is granted for three years.

The **low risk application** was **reviewed** by the College of Economic and Management Sciences_CRERC on 10 June 2024 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College of Economic and Management Sciences_CRERC.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.

ANNEXURE B: Permission Certificate (RPSC)



RESEARCH PERMISSION SUB-COMMITTEE (RPSC) OF THE SENATE RESEARCH, INNOVATION, POSTGRADUATE DEGREES AND COMMERCIALISATION COMMITTEE (SRIPCC)

19 September 2024

Decision: Permission approval
from 12 September 2024 until 06
August 2027 (Aligned to the
institutional ethics certificate)

Ref #: 2024_RPC_076
Mr Lazarus Nyiko Makhuvele
Staff#: 42013372

Principal Investigator:

Mr Lazarus Nyiko Makhuvele
Department of Human Resource Management
College of Economics and Management Sciences
UNISA
42013372@mylife.unisa.ac.za; 0647572663

Supervisor: Dr Tebogo Molotsi; molottk@unisa.ac.za; 0834582134

Co-Supervisor: Dr Ronny Shibiti; shibir@unisa.ac.za; 0815870331

Investigating the effectiveness of learning and development (L&D) provided to e-tutors in an ODeL institution.

Your application regarding permission to involve Unisa staff, students and data in respect of the above study has been received and was considered by the Research Permission Subcommittee (RPSC) of the UNISA Senate, Research, Innovation, Postgraduate Degrees and Commercialisation Committee (SRIPCC) on 12 September 2024.

I am pleased to inform you that permission has been granted for the study. You may invite Unisa employees to participate in an online questionnaire: e-tutors from various colleges. You may also access the following demographic information of participants: Level of education or qualifications as part of the data collection.



University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

ICT will act as the gatekeeper of the study.

Adherence to the National Statement on Ethical Research and Publication practices, principle 7 referring to Social awareness, must be promoted: " Researchers and institutions must be sensitive to the potential impact of their research on society, marginal groups or individuals, and must consider these when weighing the benefits of the research against any harmful effects, with a view to minimising or avoiding the latter where possible."

The personal information made available to the researcher(s)/gatekeeper(s) will only be used for the advancement of this research project as indicated and for the purpose as described in this permission letter. The researcher(s)/gatekeeper(s) must take all appropriate precautionary measures to protect the personal information given to him/her/them in good faith and it must not be passed on to third parties. The dissemination of research instruments through the use of electronic mail should strictly be through blind copying, so as to protect the participants' right of privacy. The researcher hereby indemnifies UNISA from any claim or action.

Note: The reference number **2024_RPC_076** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants and the Research Permission Subcommittee.

Kind regards,



Dr Retha Visagie – Deputy Chairperson

Email: visagrg@unisa.ac.za, Tel: (012) 429-2478

Prof Lessing Labuschagne – Chairperson

Email: llabus@unisa.ac.za, Tel: (012) 429-6368



University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

ANNEXURE C: UNISA Research Ethics 3rd Party Confidentiality Agreement

1



UNISA RESEARCH ETHICS 3rd Party Confidentiality Agreement (Transcriber, Co-coder, Statistician and/or Fieldworkers)

A. INSTRUCTIONS

Please read through the entirety of this form carefully before signing.

After completing the required fields, please sign the form. After this form has been signed by the transcriber, co-coder, statistician or fieldworker, it should be given to the principal researcher for submission to the relevant UNISA Research Ethics Committee.

The transcriber, co-coder, statistician and/or fieldworker should keep a copy of the *Confidentiality Agreement* for their records.

B. CONFIDENTIALITY OF A RESEARCH STUDY

Confidentiality is the treatment and maintenance of information that an individual has disclosed in a relationship of trust and with the expectation that it will not be divulged to others in ways that are inconsistent with the understanding of the original disclosure (the informed consent documentation) without permission. Confidential information relating to human participants in a research study may include, but is not limited to the personal information listed below:

- a) information relating to the race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, national, ethnic or social origin, color, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental health, well-being, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth of the person;
- b) information relating to the education or the medical, financial, criminal or employment history of the person;
- c) any identifying number, symbol, e-mail address, physical address, telephone number, location information, online identifier or other assignment to the person;
- d) the biometric information of the person;
- e) the personal opinions, views or preferences of the person;
- f) correspondence sent by the person that is implicitly or explicitly of a private or confidential nature or further correspondence that would reveal the contents of the original correspondence;
- g) the views or opinions of another individual about the person; and
- h) the name of the person if it appears with other personal information relating to the person or if the disclosure of the name itself would reveal information about the person.

Form adapted from the confidentiality agreement developed by the University of St Thomas IRB, retrieved from <https://www.stthomas.edu>

As a third party you will have access to research information (e.g. audio or video recordings, DVDs/CDs, transcripts, data, etc.) that include confidential information. Participants have revealed information to the researcher(s) since they have been assured by the researcher(s) that every effort will be made to maintain their privacy throughout the study. That is why it is of the utmost importance to maintain confidentiality when conducting your duties as a transcriber, statistician, co-coder and/or fieldworker during the research study. *Below is a list of expectations you will be required to adhere to in your role as a third party in this study. Review these expectations carefully before signing this form.*

C. THIRD PARTY EXPECTATIONS

To maintain confidentiality, I agree to:

1. Keep all research information that I collect or that is shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing this information verbally or in any format with anyone other than the principal researcher of this study;
2. Ensure the security of research information (e.g. audio or video recordings, DVDs/CDs, transcripts, data, etc.) while it is in my possession. This includes:
 - Keeping all data and/or transcript documents and digitized interviews on a password protected computer with password-protected files;
 - Closing any programs and documents when temporarily away from the computer;
 - Keeping any printed transcripts or data in a secure location such as a locked file cabinet;
 - Permanently deleting any digital communication containing the data.
3. Not make copies of research information (e.g. audio or video recordings, DVDs/CDs, transcripts, data, etc.) unless specifically instructed to do so by the principal researcher;
4. Give all research information (e.g. audio or video recordings, DVDs/CDs, transcripts, data, etc.) and research participant information, back to the principal researcher upon completion of my duties as a transcriber;
5. After discussing it with the principal researcher, erase or destroy all research information (e.g. audio or video recordings, DVDs/CDs, transcripts, data, etc.) that cannot be returned to the principal researcher upon completion of my duties in this study.

Name of 3rd party involved in research activities: Dr Wilbert Chagwiza

Research activity responsible for (transcribing interviews, co-coding of data, statistical analysis, collecting data, etc.): Statistical analysis

Title of Research Study: Investigating the effectiveness of learning and development (L&D) provided to e-tutors in the field of Accounting Sciences in an OdeL institution.

Name of Principal Researcher: Mr. Lazarus Nyiko Makhuvele

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have reviewed, understand, and agree to adhere to the expectations described above. I agree to maintain confidentiality while performing my duties as acquired

Form adapted from the confidentiality agreement developed by the University of St Thomas IRB, retrieved from <https://www.stthomas.edu>

by the principal researcher. I recognise that failure to comply with these expectations may result in legal action.

Signature of 3rd party



Date 2024/05/03

Print Name Wilbert Chagwiza

ANNEXURE D: Questionnaire

Title of the study:

Investigating the effectiveness of learning and development (L&D) provided to e-tutors
in an ODeL institution

Researcher: Lazarus Makhuvele

QUESTIONNAIRE TO E-TUTORS

Section A: Consent

I have read the participant information sheet, and understand the study's purpose, methods, possible advantages, and expected inconveniences. I am aware that my participation is voluntary, and I can withdraw from the study at any time without incurring any penalties. I understand that my participation in this study will remain anonymous, but that the results may be used in writing dissertations, research papers, journal articles, and/or conference proceedings.

1 Do you consent to participate in this research study?

1. Yes	
2. No	

(If "No" proceed to end of survey)

Section B: Background information

2 Are you currently appointed as an e-tutor at the University of South Africa (UNISA)?

1. Yes	
2. No	

(If "No" proceed to end of survey.)

3 What is your highest qualification?

1. Diploma or equivalent	
3. Bachelor's degree or equivalent	
4. Honours degree or equivalent	
5. Master's degree or equivalent	
6. Doctoral degree or equivalent	

7. Other (please specify)	
---------------------------	--

4 How many years of experience do you have as an e-tutor?

1. 0 to 1 year	
2. 2 to 3 years	
3. 4 to 5 years	
4. 6 to 7 years	
5. 8 to 9 years	
6. 10 or more	

5 Which college are you appointed in at UNISA?

1. College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences (CAES)	
2. College of Accounting Sciences (CAS)	
3. College of Economic and Management Sciences (CEMS)	
4. College of Education (CEDU)	
5. College of Human Sciences (CHS)	
6. College of Law (CLAW)	
7. College of Science, Engineering and Technology (CSET)	

Section C: CPD training

6 Did you complete the Centre for Professional Development (CPD)/MyUnisa training?

1. Yes	
2. No	

7 Which of the following training interventions did you attend? (You may choose more than one option)

1. Orientation (Understanding Unisa from the perspective of the policies)	
2. Roles of an E-Tutor in ODeL (Understanding the Role of an E-Tutor in an ODeL Environment)	
3. Pedagogies in ODeL (Applying Basic Pedagogical Skills in an ODeL Environment)	
4. Social and Experiential Learning (Designing Social and Experiential Learning Experiences for an Online Environment)	
5. Online Learning Environment (Understanding the Online Learning Environment and Applied Competencies in the Use of Basic Teaching and Learning Tools)	

6. Moodle system (Marking within the LMS for integrated Tutors)	
7. Other (please specify)	

8 How many of the above-mentioned training interventions have you attended?

1. 0 to 1	
2. 2 to 3	
3. 4 to 5	
4. 5 to 6	
5. 7 or more	

Section D: Training evaluation

Reaction (Please indicate your perceived level of reaction in terms of the training interventions that you have attended)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
9 The objectives of the training were clearly defined.					
10 The topics covered were relevant to me					
11 The training objectives were met.					
12 The content was organised and easy to follow.					
13 Participation and interaction were encouraged.					

Learning (Please indicate your perceived level of change in knowledge after attending training interventions)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
14 The training assisted me to learn the desired knowledge, skills and attitudes of an e-tutor					
15 The training clarified my role as an e-tutor.					
16 I am confident in the use of myUnisa after attending the training.					
17 The training improved my online communication skills.					

18 The training improved my knowledge about ODeL pedagogies and processes.					
--	--	--	--	--	--

Behaviour (Please indicate your perceived level of change in behaviour after attending training interventions)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
19 I have put the knowledge that I have acquired to use.					
20 I am able to teach the new knowledge, skills, or attitudes to other e-tutors.					
21 I am aware that I have changed my behaviour.					
22 The training experience is helpful to my e-tutor work.					
23 The training helped me connect with my students.					
24 The training equipped me to be able to assist students with technology challenges.					

Results (Please indicate your perceived level of change in results after attending training interventions)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
25 I improved in terms of student interaction after attending the CPD e-tutor training.					
26 I improved the performance of students after attending the CPD e-tutor training.					
27 I improved the satisfaction of students after attending the CPD e-tutor training.					
28 I reduced the number of student complaints after attending the CPD e-tutor training.					

29 My ability to provide helpful feedback to students has improved after attending the CPD e-tutor training.					
--	--	--	--	--	--

Section E: Subject-specific assessment

30 Did you complete the subject-specific assessment?

1. Yes	
2. No	

31 How many subject-specific assessments did you complete?

1. 1	
2. 2	
3. 3	
4. 4	
5. More than 5 (please specify number)	

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements after completing the subject-specific assessment

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
32 The assessment criteria for the subject-specific assessment were clearly stated.					
33 Appropriate time was allocated for completion of the subject-specific assessment.					
34 The subject-specific assessment improved my understanding of the module content.					
35 The subject-specific assessment assisted me to help students solve module-specific problems.					

Section F: Training needs

36 Indicate training that you still need to perform your e-tutor duties satisfactorily. (You may choose more than one option)

1. Pedagogical training	
-------------------------	--

2. Theories of learning	
3. Online communication (Netiquettes)	
4. Online technology tools	
5. myUnisa platform (Moodle)	
6. Module specific (subject content) training	
7. Other (please specify)	

ANNEXURE E: Survey link

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=jluayqM-mUekPIUQOY56OwjSqGgGol5KifjuRD84M3RUNjNLNTk1MDJDRzA0TEg0NTNLVE5YVFBKVC4u>

ANNEXURE F: Editor's letter

Barbara Shaw
Editing/proofreading services
18 Balvicar Road, Blairgowrie, 2194
Cell: 072 1233 881
Email: barbarashaw16@gmail.com
Full member of The Professional Editors' Guild

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to inform you that I have done language editing, reference checking and formatting on the thesis

INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT (L&D) PROVIDED TO E- TUTORS IN AN ODeL INSTITUTION

by

Lazarus Nyiko Makhuvele



Barbara Shaw

05/03/2026