

**An evaluation of the influence of e-learning in adult education with special reference to
the employees of Parliament RSA**

by

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Declaration

I, Fikile Mbuli, do hereby declare that the Dissertation: **An evaluation of the influence of e-learning in adult education with special reference to the employees of Parliament RSA**, is my own work in both design and execution, and that all used or quoted sources have been duly acknowledged by means of referencing.

SIGNATURE

DATE

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ABSTRACT

This study was devoted to researching the effectiveness of e-learning, in terms of the reported experiences of the Language Services section employees in Parliament RSA. At present, the internet is seen as a successful and influential educational tool in both academic and corporate institutions. Academically, it has been adopted for e-learning methods of teaching and learning. It is perceived as a cost-effective method of providing lifelong education. It is important to know about the pros and cons of e-learning in adult education and compare them with the experiences of the people who are and have been engaged in adult education. To create an adult education skills development framework that can be used successfully in e-learning, it is important to get information about and from the people concerned regarding their learning experiences. To understand more about the influence of e-learning, this study administered a questionnaire to the employees of the Language Services Section of Parliament who participated in the pilot learning programmes offered by Parliament. The questionnaire was designed to gather structured responses from the participants in the inquiry. The results were studied and applied to draw recommendations for what can be improved in the programme to promote and endorse continuing learning experiences as is the aim of the in-house programme offered by Parliament. The study also has relevance in terms of a discussion of issues that arise in the literature on adult education, which were located as part of the study.

Key Terms

E-learning effectiveness; Learning skills; Internet and communication technologies; Adult education and e-learning; E-learning programme; E-learning benefits; E-learning methods; Cost-effective education; Smart technologies; In-house programmes; Flexible learning; E-learning assessment; Development programmes.

Abbreviations

SDP: Skills Development Plan

SDF: Skills Development Framework

ICT: Information Communication Technology

NA: National Assembly

NCOP: National Council of Provinces

LOD: Legislation and Oversight Division

LPs: Language Practitioners

LSS: Language Service Section

SPSS: Statistical Package of Social Sciences

WBT: Web-Based Training

TABLE OF CONTENTS

KEY TERMS	IV
ABBREVIATIONS	V
CHAPTER 1: GENERAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY	8
1.1 INTRODUCTION	8
1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT	9
1.3 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	9
1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	10
1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	10
1.6.1 <i>Data collection for this study</i>	12
1.6.2 <i>Data analysis</i>	12
1.7 LIMITATIONS	13
1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	13
1.9 DEFINITIONS	15
1.10 EXPOSITION OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY	17
<i>Chapter 1: Introduction</i>	17
<i>Chapter 2: Literature Review</i>	17
<i>Chapter 3: Research Methodology</i>	17
<i>Chapter 4: Findings of the Study</i>	18
<i>Chapter 5: Interpretation of the Results and Recommendations</i>	18
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	19
2.1 INTRODUCTION	19
2.2 E-LEARNING AND ADULT EDUCATION	20
2.3 E-LEARNING ISSUES.....	25
2.4 ADVANTAGES OF E-LEARNING IN ADULT EDUCATION	31
2.5 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SUCCESS OF E-LEARNING	35
2.6 E-LEARNING IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES.....	37
2.7 E-LEARNING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.....	37
2.8 CONCLUSION	39
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	40
3.1 INTRODUCTION	40
3.2 METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN	41
3.3 POPULATION SAMPLE AND THE SAMPLING TECHNIQUE	41
3.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT	42
3.5 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE.....	42
3.5.1 <i>Pilot study</i>	42
3.5.2 <i>Questionnaire distribution</i>	43
3.6 DATA TREATMENT AND ANALYSIS	44
3.6.1 <i>Descriptive statistics analysis</i>	44
3.6.2 <i>Data interpretation</i>	44
3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	45
3.7.1 <i>Permission for inclusion as participant</i>	45
3.7.2 <i>Anonymity</i>	45
3.7.3 <i>Confidentiality</i>	45
3.7.4 <i>Rights of participants</i>	45

3.7.5 <i>Informed consent</i>	45
3.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF DATA	46
3.9 CONCLUSION	46
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY	48
4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	48
4.2 REPORT OF RESPONSES FROM EACH QUESTION ASKED.....	48
4.3 WHAT EMPLOYEES ENJOYED THROUGHOUT E-LEARNING PROGRAMME.....	66
4.4 EMPLOYEES' EXPERIENCE OF COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE OF THIS STUDY	69
CHAPTER 5: INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	73
5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	73
5.2 ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY	73
5.3 CONCLUSION	88
REFERENCES.....	90
APPENDICES.....	98

CHAPTER 1: GENERAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Act 200 Section 29 (1) (a - b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa – (1) everyone has the right (a) to a basic education, including adult basic education; and (b) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). Therefore, the government has a responsibility to provide education to its citizens. For the populace to participate in the advancement of the nation, they mostly need education to enable them to understand what is expected of them. The 1994 general elections were intended to introduce a contemporary egalitarian order in South Africa, which showed an inclination to reconcile past dissonance in order to institute a culture that has a basis in democratic values and fundamental human rights. The new cadre of politicians who entered Parliament for the first time in 1994 inherited an institution that was designed to keep the majority of South Africans outside the “corridors of power”. In order for a reversal to take place, learning and accepting of new challenges must be achieved; by doing so, they will be able to build an effective people’s parliament. Employees’ performance plays an important role in the actualisation of the vision of the Parliament of RSA.

The employees of Parliament work full-time and also have other responsibilities outside their Parliament jobs. In their quest to improve their skills through education, e-learning may be considered as a way of helping their competence and knowledge as it promotes flexibility for an adult learner in that they can study anywhere as long as they have access to a computer and internet connection, thus reducing time constraints for the learners. They won’t have to wait for their lectures and or assignments or have to send them back for grading purposes by mail. Through e-learning, they are better able to use their spare time and have results faster and more conveniently. This research is focusing on the influence of e-learning in promoting education of the employees of the Parliament of RSA in the Language Services Section. In particular, the research focuses on the identification and evaluation of how e-learning can affect adults in their education, while having the flexibility to study while they are working or

during their break hours as long as they will be able to manage their work properly so as not to interrupt the jobs that they're supposed to accomplish.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Parliament offered an in-house study programme to its staff, who took part in the study programme during their own time. In 2011, a pilot programme was set up to assist staff in the Language Services Section, in particular, to develop skills in general management, leadership, people management, public financial management, project management, and economics. It is these participants who are the subject of this study. While exploring and examining certain issues in relation to adult education and to e-learning, in particular, and relating these issues to the experiences of the participants in the research, the study wishes to recommend a proposal that can promote an improved and successful practice of the e-learning education – with special reference to Parliament in this case. In light of the question/problem of how to design an effective programme as far as learners are concerned, it was considered necessary to conduct a research study to consider the different influences and benefits of e-learning for the employees in the Language Services Section of Parliament, as well as to develop considerations of where improvements in the programme can be made.

1.3 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of e-learning in enhancing the skills of employees of the Parliament of RSA in Language Services Section – who have been chosen as respondents in this study as Parliament is concerned with fast-tracking the upgrading of language practitioners.

1.4 THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study also aims to explore and examine certain issues in relation to adult education more generally, by examining issues that have been located from a review of the literature. Considering this literature, the study looks at the different influences, benefits and disadvantages of e-learning education that can be used to help recommend a proposal that will promote an improved and successful practice of e-learning education in empowering employees in Parliament– in the Language Services Section, as well as in other sections (when the programme is extended).

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following are the research questions that the proposed research seeks to address:

1. How did the employees of the Language Services Section of Parliament benefit from using e-learning?
2. What are the frequently used forms of e-learning as used by the respondents of this research?
3. What are some of the issues related to adult education that may negate the possibility of a successful e-learning programme?
4. How can e-learning be productively used to improve adult education in Parliament RSA?
5. Have the employees of the Parliament developed their skills from the (pilot) programme of adult education that has been offered?
6. Are the employees more successful in executing their responsibilities utilising what they have learned from the programme?

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research that has been carried out is a quantitative research, which makes use of a questionnaire that was specifically designed for the purpose of being able to gather structured responses of the participants in the inquiry. The quantitative research design was chosen because of it can be analysed statistically. The research approach used in this study allows me, as a researcher, to do specific observations and elevate them to somewhat broader, more general statements theatrical statements, as advised by Burney, (2008, p. 5) and by Borrero, Douglas and Amelink (2009, pp. 53-66). In this case, this was done by considering issues that arise in the literature on e-learning in adult education, and by relating the results of the study to such issues. The data collected using the quantitative research approach helps to quantify the participants' opinions, attitudes and behaviours; and this made it easy to find out how the participants' responses relate to some of the issues identified from the literature review. It also made it possible to interpret the results so as to offer recommendations for the improvement of the Parliamentary initiative (set up for Language services employees and

later to be extended to others). In other words, following Burney's (2008) definition of induction, I believe my study offers some general insight into adult e-learning success factors, as well as challenges, while being attentive to the specific experiences of participants as studied through the questionnaire.

The Language Services Section employees who participated in the learning programme offered by Parliament are the population of this study. There were 163 employees who participated in the programme. I chose not to draw a sample from them but to distribute my questionnaire to all of them. (There was no rationale for selecting only some of the population, as the questionnaire was easy to distribute to them all.) The participants in this study consist of the employees, both male and female, in the lower and middle management level and specialists. They were selected because they had been participating in an in-house adult education programme offered by Parliament RSA from June 2011 until the end of November 2012 (18 months). The reason for choosing the Language Services Section for this study is that Parliament is offering the learning programmes to this section in particular to fast-track the upgrading of language practitioners from Grade B to Grade C. These were customised courses, with the intention that the courses would be extended to the other sections and the rest of Parliament if the programme proved to be a success.

The participants in this study are a sub-set of people from the Legislative and Oversight Division, which consists of 250 employees from the Research, Committee and Language Services Sections. The Language Services Section is the biggest of the three sections and comprises the following units: Reporting, Translation and Interpreting. It has 200 employees, of whom only 163 participated in the learning programme, which is 81.5% of the total number of employees. All the programme participants (163) were identified and given the questionnaires. The only criterion taken into consideration is that the respondents should be staff who had partaken in the e-learning programmes because they are the subject of the research. The partakers comprise of managers, professional employees and administrative employees.

It should be noted that I am familiar with the operations of the Language Services Section because I have acquaintances and friends in this section. This was likely to be a factor that would improve the response rate of people responding to the questionnaire that was distributed. The questionnaires were distributed to the 163 employees in the same section and had a hundred percent response rate. As far as the process of organising the programme is

concerned, the Parliament subsidises the employees to enrol at Stellenbosch University. This is done to comply with the skills development policy, as well as to promote the effectiveness and efficiency of the work done by Parliament. Enrolment is voluntary and the employees do not attend full-time. They get modules on-line and they have access to the institution's services, such as the library and computers. They keep contact with the lecturers through different types of communication methods, such as e-mail, telephone and the use of short message systems. The employees sometimes form study groups if they need to and they also ask the lecturer to come and address them as a group if there is a need. They have on-line assessments. They have access to Parliament's computers and internet. The questionnaire was constructed to offer some additional insight into these processes (see Appendix 2).

1.6.1 Data collection for this study

A self-administered instrument was used to collect data. The questionnaire was developed using the Likert scale approach, as well as other forms of questionnaire development methods, including mainly closed-ended questions, but also some open-ended questions. Sources consulted for creating the questionnaire in terms of questionnaire design included the following: Punch (2003); Sapsford (2007); and Babbie (2011). This survey approach is a suitable method for this study considering the work environment of the said population. The method makes it possible for the respondents to complete the questionnaire at a time and place that is convenient for them.

The questions in the questionnaire are formulated in such a way that they reflect the objectives of the study in relation to the research questions specified earlier. The questions asked are basically focused on the benefits of the use of e-learning and current weaknesses of the system to make it possible to draw up recommendations from their responses. To achieve the first objective, the questions are asked with regard to the benefits being enjoyed from the use of e-learning. To achieve the second objective, the questions are asked on the perceived weaknesses of the use of e-learning. Some questions are asked on specific recommendations, in order to address the weaknesses. This forms the foundation of the information on what can be improved.

1.6.2 Data analysis

In analysing the data, in the case of the closed-ended questions, the data is grouped in a range of categories in conformity to the questions itemised, such as their expectations before their e-learning education and their confidence after the e-learning experience. Cross tabulation

was done to provide a basic picture of the interrelation and interaction between two variables. The data was analysed using SPSS.

In the case of open-ended questions, participants were asked at various points in the questionnaire and also specifically in Question 16 (which was set as an open-ended question) to offer comments on their experiences during the e-learning education. They were also asked to express their feelings about filling in the questionnaire and whether or not it helped them to think further about the issues. (This was a final request to participants.). The responses were analysed in order to locate different types of responses on the part of the respondents. The data is analysed by comparing some of the responses and also offering details of what the respondents said in their own words.

1.7 LIMITATIONS

Firstly, this research is only conducted on the Language Services Section of Parliament to examine the experiences of those who participated in the e-learning programmes. A further study to be undertaken should involve additional employees of Parliament – when the programmes are extended to other sections and divisions. Secondly, due to workload and time constraints, participants could see the participation in this research study as an inconvenience and that could give them the impression that they are under no obligation to complete the questionnaire.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is intended to help to align the Language Services Section employees' adult education programmes with issues connected with e-learning. The proposed recommendations on the use of new and more effective e-learning methods are aimed at helping the employees of Parliament when it comes to upgrading its educational intervention methodologies. My plan is to pass on the findings of this study to the Parliament's Library Service so that these findings can be cascaded to the department dealing with the skills development of the employees in Parliament, with the hope that they will use the recommendations of this study for the next programme's approach, which will start after Parliament has finalised the evaluation of the benefits of the previous programme that was

offered to the Language Services Section for 18 months. It is my hope that they will show interest the recommendations of this study and put them to action.

Another significance of the study is that it may assist in reducing the costs of providing education to employees of Parliament whilst complying with the skills development Act (No. 97 of 1998), which provides for learnerships that lead to recognised occupational qualifications and also provides for financing of skills development by means of a levy-grant scheme and a National Skills Fund. (Skills developments Act, 1998, p. 2). It is the intention of this proposed study to provoke other scholars and researchers to conduct some more in-depth studies on each type of e-learning option/alternative that can be used in the continuation of adult education, with special reference to the field of Parliament.

1.9 DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are used during the thesis, as taken from a number of sources that are cited under the bibliography section of this paper.

- 1.9.1 E-Learning -“Is a learning program that makes use of an information network such as the internet, an intranet or extranet whether wholly or in part, for course delivery, interaction and/or facilitation”. (Mikre, 2011, p. 2).
- 1.9.2 ICT - Mikre defines ICT as “the computer and internet connections used to handle and communicate information for learning purpose”. (Mikre, 2011, p. 2).
- 1.9.3 Adult education - refers to the “activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception define them as adults” (Merriam and Brockett, 1997, p. 7).
- 1.9.4 Parliament of RSA - parliament refers to the National Assembly (NA) and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP). Mezey (1979, 6) defines a ‘legislature or Parliament as a democratically elected body of people that acts collegially and that has at least the formal but not necessarily the exclusive power to enact laws binding on all members of a specific geopolitical entity’.
- 1.9.5 Skills development framework - it is the underlying structure that targets the development of all employees and future employees in public education to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of quality education (National skills development framework for employees in public education, 2006, p.1).
- 1.9.6 Blended learning - it is the courses that combine face-to-face classroom instruction with on-line learning. (Hiralaal, 2012, pp. 316-328).
- 1.9.7 Cyberspace - is the imaginary place where electronic messages exist while they are being sent between computers. (Oxford advanced learner’s dictionary).
- 1.9.8 Web-based training - “It is the integration of instructional practices and Internet capabilities to direct a learner toward a specified level of proficiency in a specified competency. (Conrad, 2000, p. 11).
- 1.9.9 Asynchronous e-learning - on-line learning that takes place anywhere and anytime it is needed. Hrastinski defines asynchronous e-learning as the type of learning that takes place using media such as e-mail and discussion boards and

it supports work relations among learners and teachers (Hrastinski, 2008, pp. 51-52).

- 1.9.10 Bandwidth - refers to the amount of information that can be carried through a phone line, satellite feed or other internet hook-up in a fixed amount of time (Webopedia).
- 1.9.11 Development - refers, in this context, to the development of applications by a programmer for specific platforms using a programming package (Webopedia).
- 1.9.12 Academic competency - basic academic competencies are the broad intellectual skills essential to all fields of college study. They provide a link across the disciplines of knowledge although they are not specific to any particular discipline". (Delana, 2010).
- 1.9.13 E-learning for adult education - E-learning for adult education according to Gudanesu (2012) is the presentation of technology based education to higher education learners. It makes continued education possible without having to go and attend classes.
- 1.9.14 Distributed learning - is the learner-centred approach where students use various information technologies such as video, satellite broadcasting and web-based multimedia formats to learn (Bates, 2000).

1.10 EXPOSITION OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter as set out above sets the scene for this study. It introduces the problem and outlines the major aspects that the study is going to examine. It includes the information on the problem of study, purpose of the study, research questions, research design and methodology, limitations and delimitations, significance of the study and definitions of terms. It covers the whole structure of the research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter of the dissertation, the main concern will be the discussion of different literatures that exist on the topic of adult e-learning, in order to examine the key elements of the subject of the inquiry. Some crucial issues identified in relation to my research topic are located and I also discuss the gap that is intended to be filled as the research is brought into completion. The chapter focuses on reviewing the core literature on e-learning in adult education. An overview of e-learning is given, including its purpose, function and the processes involved in this somewhat non-conventional form of learning in relation to more traditional approaches to learning. A discussion about its advantages is given, along with the issues that research in various countries has come up with regarding the adoption of e-learning and how it is experienced. It deals with what other researchers have found out about e-learning. The literature review offers a path for comparing what other researchers have suggested regarding e-learning with what the respondents of this study have experienced. It also looks at how other developing and developed countries deal with e-learning education to make it a success, thereby being able to evaluate how to accomplish specified goals efficiently considering both its effectiveness and usability (Ardito et al., 2004; Ardito et al., 2006; Costabile et al., 2005, pp.270-283).

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter covers the methodological strategy, design, the presentation of the sample (and population), the method used to gather data and data analysis for this research. A pilot study was done in this study to see how long it takes to complete the questionnaire and to reveal deficiencies to make improvements before time and resources were expended on the main study. Eight questionnaires were given to the people who were going to be part of the study; meetings were held to discuss questions that were not clear, as well as to answer questions.

The questionnaire was shortened after it was discovered from the pilot study that it took long to complete. This was done to ensure that the respondents did not get discouraged from completing the questionnaire. The research method used is presented in headings which have further sub-headings. This chapter gives direction towards the intended goal.

Chapter 4: Findings of the Study

This chapter presents the direct findings of the study in relation to the quantity of the respondents' responses. Tables are presented to specify results for specific sections of the questionnaire. The results of this are used as a basis in determining the proper approach in the hope of administering a more effective and successful way of learning for Parliament to take into consideration for its e-learning programmes.

Chapter 5: Interpretation of the Results and Recommendations

This chapter offers an analysis and interpretation of the findings of the study. It also presents information on which variables were used in the analysis. Furthermore, it provides some discussion on the significance of the responses that were given to the open-ended questions – although respondents did not all comment when given the opportunity to do so via open-ended questions. This chapter also gives recommendations which can be used to endorse a proposal that will promote an improved and successful practice of the e-learning education for the employees in the Language Services Section, as well as other sections/divisions. The recommendations are based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The internet as an educational tool offers a global open platform for information storage and display in text, graphic, audio and video format as well as communication tools for synchronous and asynchronous interaction (Keegan, 2000, p. 90). Nowadays, the internet is a very powerful tool that is being used by almost all the people in the world (“Internet World Stats”, 2013, para. 2). Knowledge development in the information age is a technologically aided activity (Garrison & Anderson, 2003, p.18).

According to Merriam and Caffarella, an adult learner can be defined as an education participant who wishes to continue with their education (1999, p. 47). Meanwhile, due to new technologies being invented throughout the time, the need for education arises for the adults who are demanding to learn what could be beneficial to them. My research is set in the context of recognising that the employees of Parliament have to learn in order to be able to keep up with the times and do their work properly and efficiently. However, due to the demand in time, a staff member will not be able to just go to class to satisfy the need to learn, thus, e-learning for adults is a very reasonable and efficient solution to these types of issues and the need to learn, not only in South Africa but in other countries as well.

Times are changing for higher education, with regard to producing learning and expanding education using technology-mediated learning. E-learning has been identified as one of the objectives of curriculum renewal (Hiralaal, 2012, pp. 316-328). According to Noesgaard (2008, pp. 1-2), e-learning software is not a recent discovery in the education field; it can be traced back to the 1950’s from the work done by Skinner. It was used earlier with computers to run the Lemonade Stand program to teach basic concepts of supply and demand. It had also been home used to teach children math in Vic 20 computers. In the 1980’s, universities used networked computers to assess and teach students mathematics. E-learning is making studying possible for almost everybody who has a desire and the means to do so. Education can be accessible regardless of distance and time constraints – although we need to keep in mind that it will also depend on the availability of resources. According to Whelan (2008, pp. 53-70), there is a new extreme change that is brought by information and communication

technologies on school practices, distance education, as well as in government and public sector policies and commercial and economic growth throughout the entire world. Access to ICT is becoming an intensely important factor in distance education.

According to Murray (2001, p. 1), e-learning has the potential to transform how and when employees learn and can potentially integrate learning and work since employees use the same tools and technology learning as they use for work. E-learning is an option to any organisation looking to improve the skills and capacity of its employees. The knowledge and skills of the learners can be advanced through the provision of e-learning programmes, thus creating life-long learners at the same time. There is growth of interest in the use of smart technologies such as smart phones and tablets which provide fast access to information. According to various studies in South Africa and elsewhere, the smart technologies have proved to be competent in many areas and have shown qualities of great diversity. They have proved to be useful and time saving (Shim et al., 2011, pp. 657-672; Georgia State University). The Parliament of the Republic of South Africa offers a learning programme to their staff in the Language Services Section. The views and opinions of the staff members that have taken part in the learning programme can help in addressing problems and challenges they experienced during their studies and make it possible to provide an adult education skills development framework that can be used to improve the use of e-learning in empowering people for further learning. This study is exploring how e-learning influences the education of the employees in the Language Services Section of Parliament RSA, advancing their work skills and also motivating them to become life-long learners. In this chapter, I focus in particular on: e-learning and adult education; e-learning issues; advantages of e-learning in adult education; factors influencing the success of e-learning; and e-learning in developed countries compared to e-learning in developing countries.

2.2 E-LEARNING AND ADULT EDUCATION

It is indeed evident that in the present time, the internet is considered one of the most powerful tools for fostering education. In the past, learning using the internet has been referred to as Instructional Technology and as such is defined as “the theory and practice of design, development, utilisation, management and evaluation of processes and resources for learning” (Seels and Richey, 1994, p. 129). According to Ellis and Vigar-Ellis, (2008, p. 26), the method of classroom teaching and learning is now being replaced by the method of teaching and learning that takes place anywhere. This is because in-house programmes which do not involve classrooms are being offered in South Africa and most of the

companies/institutions all over the world. E-learning is making it possible for teaching and learning to take place not only at a prescribed specific venue, but anywhere and at anytime. Time, responsibilities, work, and distance are no longer excuses for not taking part in education anymore. It has become a normal practice to use internet for education, and universities have to conform to this trend in order to be relevant to their students (Engelbrecht, 2003, pp. 20-31).

E-learning is a process that facilitates and opens a wide range of options for effective teaching as a result of its potential to bridge the transactional distance between teachers and students. It is one of the central components in providing the necessary support and platform for a student's deep learning experience towards self-directed learning. It refers also to methods of teaching and learning that enable students to connect and interact quickly and efficiently to enter into regular discussions and dialogues and to form virtual communities in cyberspace (Naidoo, 2011, pp. 106-120). Learners get to interact with their educators at anytime and can get to connect with other learners which make the process of learning much easier and less time consuming. In this way, the student learns to be independent from the teacher and to get information through various resources.

Students do not have to rely solely on the learning content that the teacher gives to them, they can supplement it with the information they get from other sources of information and be able to share it with their peers. In his study done in South Africa, Naidoo (2011, pp. 106-120) emphasises that knowledge needs to be properly maintained, it must not be seen as a teacher's possession where students just have to absorb it as it is given to them by the teacher. He says most students tend to just absorb what's being taught to them by the teacher because they have to rather than understanding and learning because they want to. The research in the present study looks further into seeing if sharing with peers in an in-house programme is an effective learning tool and ascertains how it operates according to the experiences of the employees of Parliament RSA who were the respondents. According to Matodzi et al. (2007, p. 71), who are writing on the basis of research in South Africa, e-learning treats learners as problem-solving adults and teaches them a wide variety of technical and business skills through the internet. The present study is looking to see if this applied to the employees of the parliament, that is, whether or not they learned technical skills as well as business skills. The research includes questions relating to what sort of skills they were developing.

Adult learners can be seen to be facing different challenges compared to traditional learners because of their job demands and personal responsibilities. According to a study conducted by Egenti and Omoruyi (2011, p. 138), adult learners experience a number of challenges during their studying such as time constraints, increasing mental demands, poor economic or financial base, poor learning environment and lack of encouragement from spouse and employers. E-learning can be the answer to many adult learners by putting them in control of their own learning. Learning needs time and commitment which most adult learners cannot afford to give because of their personal and social responsibilities. It is recognised in the present study that different types of ICTs help employees of Parliament to share information which would rather be difficult to be accessed by one individual at a given time because of time constraints and even financial constraints. The study looks deeper into which communication technologies are being preferred by the employees in the Language Services Section.

E-learning is known for its ability to provide flexible learning opportunities to adult learners. It makes it easy for adult learners to participate in the discussion-oriented online course at their convenient time and also enables them to access course materials from their computers at home. It gives learners enough time to think in-depth when responding in writing compared to verbal responses (Ismail, Gunasegaran, and Idrus, 2010, pp. 276-281). Further investigation was conducted in the present study to determine how and to what extent this applied to the employees of Parliament and how they experienced the learning programme in terms of these considerations.

It is also suggested in the literature that using sources of information from all over the world produces high quality education. Singh and Agarwal suggest that students and teachers can access information from different experts online that can be used in their learning environments. According to them, the implementation of e-learning based adult education leads to the attainment of a global standard of education, optimum utilisation of limited educational resources and improved educational standards which may attract experts to guide students. Digital storage, processing and transmission of information, improved quality of teaching and improvement in educational standards are regarded as strengths of e-learning based adult education (Singh and Agarwal, 2011, pp. 28-31). This study examines learners' appreciation of the quality of the teaching and of their adult learning experience via the in-house Parliament programme. It is clear that technology now globally available is making it possible for educators to offer information to learners in a variety of ways. Through e-

learning learners learn to teach themselves and they are able to contact the educator whenever they need them. Education institutions need to make sure that they provide technology that is suitable for the success of e-learning programmes. A variety of tools is available to choose from to facilitate e-learning and create a virtual learning environment. More personalised educational opportunities, such as a highly customised learning experience and different kinds of interaction that enable students in the most appropriate ways to learn for themselves need to be offered by the institutions (Ellis and Vigar-Ellis, 2008, p. 31).

According to Ruiz et al. (2006, pp. 207-212), more and more learners are getting used to or prefer e-learning methods to traditional teaching methods. Adult learners with their responsibilities can find it difficult to juggle between the workplace and classrooms to attend. In a manner of speaking, it is very exorbitant for adult learners if they still need to travel, contact educators or even purchase books to satisfy their learning demands. Thus, it is very evident that e-learning as seen in higher education studies, government, corporate, and military environments is a very effective means of education. The usefulness of the method of e-learning has been seen as good as, if not better than, traditional instructor-led methods, such as lectures in contributing to demonstrated learning. E-learning methods are seen as cost-effective, cutting costs sometimes as much as 50%, compared to traditional instructor-led learning. Also, students do not see e-learning as replacing traditional instructor-led training, but as a complement of it, forming part of a blended-learning strategy. The rate of satisfaction with e-learning by learners increases because of its ease of use and access, navigation, interactivity and user friendly design as compared to traditional learning.

E-learning assessments are different from traditional learning assessments. Broos (2009, p. 17) states that the teaching staff plays an important role in the e-learning environment. They need to know how the e-learning teaching style differs from a face-to-face teaching style. Development programmes for teachers are an important part of the learning organisation to make sure that the teaching staff members are properly prepared to deal with technology-based teaching methods. According to Ardito and Costabile et al. (2006, pp. 270-283), e-learning equipment needs to be user and content friendly in order for learning to be a success. Since usability plays a significant role towards the success of e-learning software, an e-learning environment or tool should be evaluated considering both its usability as software and its didactic effectiveness. In this study, the employees have to indicate their feelings of their initial e-learning experiences and the assessments criteria.

Esterhuysen, writing about the use of e-learning technologies in South Africa with special reference to distant education and e-learning, argues that in order for educators to be able to use the e-learning technology effectively and efficiently, they need to be well-trained and be prepared on how to use it. They need to know its ups and downs so they will be able to answer all questions to be raised by the learners. Personnel who possess appropriate distance and e-learning skills and knowledge, the creation of necessary structures to roll out distance education and e-learning at organisational level, and the willingness to provide both the electronic systems and the training that is needed to empower people to use these systems to their benefit, are very important resources for the success of e-learning. The success also lies on the willingness of the learners to persevere (Esterhuysen, 2009, pp. 118-123). For learning to be smooth, faster and effective learners need to be prepared to teach themselves during the e-learning process; they must not always rely on the educator for all the instructions. This study also pursued questions relating to this in asking employees of Parliament about their experiences.

It is important to appreciate that learners need to make an effort to enhance their skills pertaining to technology. They must be prepared to be taught, learn and practice ICT skills. They should always keep in mind that e-learning and technology are always in sync with each other. According to Eijkman and Herrmann (2009, p. 35), learners see value in having effective e-learning environments available to them and are motivated to shift their mental models and learn the associated skills and they also have a desire to enhance their ICT skills. Again, this study in relation to employees of Parliament examined how learners indeed felt about the enhancing of their ICT skills as a result of their participation in the e-learning programme. It is also worth mentioning Juhary's caution that institutions need to establish guidelines and policies of developing e-learning contents. This helps in dealing with aspects of copyright and security of contents (Juhary, 2010, pp. 55-62). The institution needs to have the sole right to distribute and reproduce its e-learning products. No one can make changes on the content that is intended for the learners except the content developer, and that preserves the quality of the information. This applied too to the Parliament in-house programme, where provision was made for this.

Access to a computer and the internet is important for the success of e-learning. Institutions need to have enough computers with internet available to students. Some institutions offer computers at a payment arrangement to their students to encourage access to computer and the internet. According to a study conducted by Mbatha and Naidoo, (2010, pp.170-184)

internet users in South Africa for the year ending 2008 were estimated at 4 590 000; for the year ending 2007 there were 4 070 000; for the year ending 2006 the number was 3 830 000 and for the year ending 2005 the total number was 3 600 000. Communication technology is seen as a potential source of empowerment, both locally and globally. It encourages dialogue, in terms of which e-learning enables students in cyberspace to connect and interact quickly and efficiently. A well-designed multi-media computer programme is better than a less talented, ill-equipped and not so enthusiastic teacher (Neethling, 2007, pp. 78-93). E-learning provides a well-prepared lesson which provides consistent information no matter how many times a student has to go over it in order to understand it. E-learning courses are not inferior to formal classroom courses; the instructor needs to know how to teach using the e-learning method. According to Bonk et al. (2003, pp. 54-85), the guidance and moderating skills of the instructor are important for the success of online learning.

2.3 E-LEARNING ISSUES

2.3.1 Communication Technology

There are always issues connected to adult learning. Some of the issues identified in the literature relate to the problems of distance and time. These are experienced by students who live or work miles away from the institutions where they are registered. E-learning can be an answer to this. But this is only if there is data access coverage for these learners (Shim et al., 2011, pp. 657-672, Georgia State University). Some institutions give students internet quotas and sometimes the given megabytes are not enough for a student to do all the work they need to do on the internet and it becomes an expense to get more megabytes (Evala and Gachago, 2012, pp.152-167). In the case of the present study, the employees had unlimited access to the Parliament internet - 24 hours a day. On weekends and holidays the employees are allowed to go to the office to use the computer and the internet and also to have their group discussions whenever they need to. There are rarely incidents of internet cut-offs in the Parliament so the employees never have problems in accessing the internet.

2.3.2 Assessment

Assessment of the students can also be an issue when it comes to monitoring of the assessment sessions (Shim et al., 2011, pp.657-672). Some institutions have standard rules that only specially approved machines can be used to access learning material that is classified or if assessment requires an invigilator to be present (Noesgaard, 2008, p. 1-9, University of Victoria). Different types of e-learning assessments, according to Macdonald

(2002), can be used so that learners can choose the best type for them which will help them learn with ease. This research in the context of South Africa examines the employees' feelings towards the assessments and how they felt that about engaging in collaborative work, problem-solving and resource-based learning.

2.3.3 Learning and Teaching Materials

Evala and Gachago, writing in the context of e-learning, note that some institutions in South Africa have limited computer facilities and restrictions on the use of some networks which lead to students failing to participate in on-line group discussions on a regular basis (Evala and Gachago, 2012, pp. 152-167). Ellison, (not dated), with reference to the United States of America, makes the point that access to the major research library and information on the course subject field is another issue since all courses require the examination of journals on the topic under study, research papers and extensive readings. This study also considered whether or not the employees in the Language Services Section had access to institutions and libraries that are in partnership with their institution.

2.3.4 Examination Venue

Some issues connected with e-learning relate to those arising during the examination periods. Some institutions expect the learners to go to their exam centres for examinations, which sometimes becomes a problem for learners with regard to directions and even distance. In the case of the employees of Parliament, this was not an issue as the employees who were partaking in the learning programme received emails to access links for their exams/assessments from their learning institution. The duration for the assessment was stipulated; once the learner opens the link, they had to finish the assessment within a stipulated time.

2.3.5 Learning Systems

Relevant knowledge needs to be employed into the institution's products, processes and services so that it is easily located by its students in order to sustain its competitive advantage (Ellis and Vigar-Ellis, 2008, p.8). The institution's products and systems need to be user-friendly so that the information in those products can be easily accessed by the learners. Difficulties in using the institution's products can cause learners to be discouraged and think of their learning as difficult. According to Engelbrecht (2003, pp. 20-31), a lot of e-learning initiatives done in South Africa could not produce the good results that were expected to be

produced because of the emphasis put to its technological nature, rather than to the learning objectives, good learning design, the management of its learning events, choosing of appropriate technology and adoption of e-learning by educators and learners.

2.3.6 Structural Support

Institutions need to make sure that the people responsible for planning e-learning strategies have a high standard of knowledge of what needs to be done. The cost for the implementation of a new process can be very high, but that does not permit for short cuts to be taken by the institution. Lecturers can have good quality information for their students, but if the process employed in the implementation of e-learning is not compatible with the method of delivery, it can be useless.

Ill-planned implementation of e-learning by an institution can lead to a disaster. Much detail needs to be taken into consideration before implementing it. A lot of expertise needs to be employed, such as people to assist learners with their educational challenges and the availability of learning resources, such as the internet, intranet and knowledge management resource; and that can cost the institution a lot. The employees of Parliament would benefit from these resources. Noesgaard (2008, p. 4) says that it is not just the production of learning material that is costly, but also the acquiring, hosting and maintaining of an LMS. Similarly, Esterhuyse (2009, pp. 118-123) is of the idea that there must be structural support that is principally responsible for the development of a distance education system, which budgets for the implementation thereof and that is responsible for the organisation-wide roll-out or implementation of the system. Without the structural support, the experimental phases will always be a failure.

2.3.7 Systematic Plan

Matodzi et al. (2007, p. 73) state that for the skills of the lecturers to be used to the best advantage of the learners, the institution needs to have a good systematic plan so that the skills which the lecturers have are used to their best purpose. Implementation of e-learning needs a lot of time to plan the strategy, which can be costly for the institution. Lecturers need to be trained and the technology staffs needs to be employed so that the system can be effective and successful. The present study investigates what could be regarded as an effective and successful system so that recommendations can be made for improvement.

According to Engelbrecht (2003, pp. 20-31), the learning effectiveness of e-learning of any course is seen as less dependent upon the enabling technology than on the skill with which the learning developer uses the available technology to construct learning experiences appropriate to the learners and the learning content.

2.3.8 Trained Instructors

It is clear that it is necessary for lecturers to get training on e-learning so that they don't bring teaching and learning theories that do not translate well into e-learning. Lecturers need to be able to differentiate between the e-learning method of teaching and the traditional method of teaching. When lecturers plan lessons for the e-learning method they need to be aware that they need a different method of preparing such lessons, which is not the same as that of a traditional learning method. Lecturers need to be trained on e-learning methods in order to be able to present their lessons in an effective way. The training of lecturers to use ICTs should eliminate resistance by them to use e-learning methods (Mugurura, 2010, pp. 1-4). They also need to be aware that e-learning can also be challenging and needs a lot of their time. The lecturer needs to collect a lot of information from different sources so that the information can be meaningful and easily understandable to someone who is learning it far from the class and the lecturer. This study looks at what the employees of Parliament think of their learning programmes curriculum, if it was (more or less) teacher-centred or learner-centred.

2.3.9 Self-Motivation

Because of limited interaction with the instructors, learners need to be self-motivated in order to be able to complete their studies (Shim et al., 2011, pp. 657-672). According to Evala and Gachago (2012, pp. 153-167), lecturers have time constraints to update the information on-line and are expected to encourage students to participate in on-line discussions as they are not compulsory. Garrison (2011, p. 10) says that, according to past research done by Dewey and Childs (1981) in New York, we need to understand that there is a relationship between personal interests and experience and societal values, norms and knowledge which is frequently manifested between the teacher and student. In the case of the in-house programme of Parliament, the study examines the student's initial experiences of e-learning, which also offers additional ideas regarding how they feel about taking up learning opportunities in future.

2.3.10 Instructional Activities Management

It has been reported across South Africa that many e-learning programmes have failed to achieve the success and levels of payback that were anticipated because many initiatives did not give enough attention to learning objectives, good learning design, management of the e-learning event, the selection of the right technology or the adoption of e-learning by educators and learners. This is because on-line communication is very demanding and time consuming for lecturers since students expect a quick response through e-mails on their lesson related questions (Engelbrecht, 2003, pp. 20-31). Learners need immediate feedback from the lecturers after submitting projects and assignments, which can be stressful to the lecturer.

2.3.11 Traditional Classroom and E-Learning Methods

There is an issue of lecturers who have been in the academic environment for a long time with great success in traditional classroom-based education who are set on not changing. They feel that they know what they are doing and that going through training for e-learning teaching is a waste of their time. On the other hand, there are students who express sorrow about the loss of face-to-face contact with their lecturers. They are not confident enough to believe that they can make it without having to listen and ask questions from the lecturer in front of them (Hiralaal, 2012, pp. 316-328). This study investigates the issue of confidence in the case of the Parliament employees who were respondents in the study.

According to some of the international literature, students engaged in e-learning courses may feel that e-learning is taking away the instructor from them and they have relied on him for a long time. Some may feel that they are then forced to purchase personal computers in order to keep up with the work. There are people who had been out of school for a while and were never exposed to computers and technology who feel threatened by them. Hindrances of the distance learning are the learner's inexperience with technology, lack of competence of technology, less social and cultural interaction which leads to human touch not being taken into account, incompatibility of the course work with technology, and the commitment of time and energy in developing the system (Lawson, 2008, p. 202). The older generation needs some getting used to technology compared to the younger generation as it intimidates them. Other than being cost-effective for the learner, e-learning programme development can be

costly for the institution. This study examines what is working for the employees so that it can be easy for the institution to cut costs of educating the employees, by eliminating what is not necessary for its employees.

2.3.12 Information Developers

Some authors argue that the tools developed for online learning remain stuck in a teacher-centred past, even though e-learning is supposedly learner-centred in approach. Institutions need to invest in people with special knowledge for the development of the e-learning system. It is not only the old generation learners who are struggling with technology; it is also the old generation educators who need to find their way around technology. Educators are also still in need of help on how to utilise emerging Web technologies (Bonk, 2003, pp. 54-85). The employees in this study were asked how they found the curriculum: was it more or less learner- or teacher-centred?

Ellis and Vigar-Ellis (2008, pp. 24-42), writing in the context of South Africa, suggest that sharing of information amongst the institution's staff is important. If the information developers work together within an institution, it will be easy to achieve high quality information that is well coordinated and easily understood by learners as they progress to different levels of their education. The information developers need to learn that the sharing of information amongst fellow colleagues is power, rather than be greedy with what you know and never get to get some positive criticism from them. E-learning instructors need to be creative, hardworking and be strongly motivated. They have to be eager to try new technologies to in order to gain experience; be open to new ideas from their colleagues and have good relations with people in order to be able to work well with their students and colleagues. For e-learning to be a success, the instructor needs to have thorough knowledge of his or her field of specialty and be willing to work in a team (Johannes et al., 2007, pp. 448-505). The present study does not concentrate on the instructors' perspectives as such, but looks more from the perspective of learners in relation to the quality of the teaching.

I have now identified some of the issues that e-learning encompasses. With those stated in this chapter, for this study it is important also to make it a point to emphasise the implementation of continuing learning. While to some, this may be considered as an issue, this study wants to make the readers understand that in real life, we implement only once, but we deliver many times. (Forrester, 1991, pp. 1-35) says: "Through long cascaded chains of

actions, each person is continually reacting to the echo of that person's past actions as well as to the past actions of others."

2.4 ADVANTAGES OF E-LEARNING IN ADULT EDUCATION

Using e-learning, just like any other thing, has both its advantages and disadvantages. This study emphasises that the advantages to be discussed are delivered from three points of views: learner, trainer and company. From the learner's point of view, as cited in "Learning Innovative Technologies newsletter," written in the context of the United States (2011), the advantages of using e-learning include the active participation of learners and "self-assessment during and at end of course". An organisation can have benefits in using e-learning by acquiring what is updated and recent in terms of operating the institute. Fit topics and subjects using e-learning may include digits and figures, visual charts, info graphics and or diagrams, as well as videos and audio presentation. Almost everything that calls for an interactive learning and training can be fitted with this method of training delivery. E-learning enables the learners to interact and influence each other during their flexible learning experience through audio, face to face chatting and video and web conferencing. It promotes self-motivation and discipline in learners. Learners get to assess their knowledge level before, during, and after training when preparing for their assessments and examinations (Shim et al., 2011, pp. 657-672). This can be assessed to make one's work become easy and convenient. It saves time, energy and effort. This could be very helpful to individuals and companies in terms of uplifting training and boosting their achievements. E-learning has been shown to be a good learning method. It has been shown to have a lot of advantages for learners who are working during the day, as well as full-time learners. According to Engelbrecht (2003, pp. 20-31), e-learning makes it possible for the learners to learn on their own from their computer at home or at work and communicating with other learners and their lecturers in a 'virtual' space.

E-learning has created an earner-learner market in opposition with the learner-earner market solving a problem of increasing costs of higher education, accommodation and food costs, which used to be a barrier for adult learners. It has made it possible for people to be able to earn money whilst studying, other than having to choose between going to school full-time and working for a living. The Parliament of RSA is giving its employees the chance to study whilst continuing with their jobs. It is making it easier for people to improve their education

level, thus improving the quality of life. The differences between traditional and long distance universities are gradually disappearing due to e-learning. The quality of education from different universities can be estimated at the same level because of the adoption of technology in teaching and learning. There is an increased variety of learning institutions available for people to choose from than before. There are no qualifications that are regarded as inferior just because they are from a traditional education institution or distance education institution.

The e-learning method respects differences in learning styles and pace. Some people used to feel intimidated when having to keep up with the rest of the class's pace. E-learning allows the learner to choose the best and easy method of learning the content without feeling inadequate and embarrassed in the privacy of their own space. It affords the highest levels of flexibility and convenience for students because it is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week and its content is consistent in a way that human instruction can never be. Learners can access their learning content during the time convenient to them. E-learning advantages include convenience and portability, cost and selection, flexibility, retention greater collaboration and global opportunities. It also encourages collaborative work amongst learners, as well as learner-centred and active learning. It exposes learners to interaction and engagement with other students where students can motivate each other. E-learning students do not feel isolated since they can interact with fellow students whenever they need to. According to Matodzi et al.(2007, p, 71), e-learning equips students with the skill to work together in problem-solving, tracking their progress and their abilities, building a personalised learning path based on their particular goals and maintaining links to the present time articles.

As can be seen from the literature examined, e-learning creates a platform for the delivery of training and it has an effect in the creation of opportunities that will enhance and transform the learning experience for both a student and a teacher. It diminishes the transactional distance between students and institutions, interaction between students and between students and lecturers and give students access to their course material regardless of time and location (Mbatha and Naidoo, 2010, p. 170-184). There is no distance that separates the learner from getting to the learning material. E-learning cuts the learner's costs of travelling to meet with the instructor, as well as travelling to meet with fellow learners for discussions. According to Esterhuysen (2009, pp.118-123), e-learning is cost-effective in a way that the cost of working time lost during participation in distance education is saved by not attending residential

learning. Employers do not have to put up with absenteeism at work. The employees do not mess up their chances of getting promoted at work just because they are unreliable and always absent to attend classes. The income of the learner does not get affected because of absenteeism from work. In case of this study, the employees of Parliament pursue their studies whilst their working time is not affected. Murray (2001, p. 1) in the context of the United States, states that employers are most interested in the potential of e-learning for just-in-time, modular learning. E-learning bridges the gap that has traditionally separated learning from work. It encourages the integration of work and studies in the work place. It makes it possible for a learner to practice the job's skill whilst studying. People get opportunities to become specialists in their work sections through on-line studying. This benefits both the employer and the employee. This is relevant to this study in that the Parliament upgrades its employees in their job positions from time to time and e-learning helps to improve the chances for every employee to be in a position to be promoted.

Hiralaal (2012, pp. 316-328) says e-learning encourages learner-centred teaching where most of the focus is on the student's needs. It also encourages active exploratory inquiry-based learning, learners learn without being forced to do so. It promotes creativity, critical thinking and informed decisionmaking on the part of learners. It makes students become independent and have a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Unlimited access to information via web links created in the online classroom makes it possible for learners to create and present new knowledge that is of high quality, relevant and diverse. Students get to identify their weak points immediately due to the immediate feedback that is provided on on-line assessments and the lecturer is able to provide immediate support to the learner (Lawson, 2008, pp. 201-202), states that learners get to be in control of their own learning, in a way as they access the material they really need and bypass or review what they already know. The content is delivered from a central source and is consistent. Technology-based learning allows learners from different locations throughout the world to connect and learn from each other. Learners can form study groups without having to meet in person. Subject-matter experts have enough time to prepare the learning material without having to be at the mercy of a specific classroom based, time and location. That leads to provision of high quality information that is passed to the learners.

According to Neethling (2007, pp. 78-93), computer assisted courses bring the possibility of working through the course when and as it suits the learner. He states that not everybody interested in learning has the time or the inclination to do it in a formal teaching/classroom

context. E-learning has made education less rigid, more flexible and able to offer learners the choice of attending class or learning independently without the help of an instructor. As long as there is power supply and internet this “teacher” never falls ill, feels down, does not get angry if the learner repeats the same mistakes, never loses hope, and keeps on rewarding learners with positive feedback after every small achievement. E-learning provides flexibility in a way that makes it possible to deliver the content that the learner needs to learn at that point in time, in a form that that particular learner finds easy to understand and in an amount that matches the time the learner has available. It can be seen as a convenient method of learning because it makes tracking learners’ progress and their accomplishments, building a personalised learning path based on learners’ goals, maintaining links to current articles and providing a variety of content delivery or learning modes easy. It makes it possible to redesign learning around the needs of the learner. E-learning can also solve the problem of the shortage of lecturers due to the requirements for lifelong learning (Matodzi et al., 2007, pp. 69-93). The present study looks into this issue from the perspective of how learners (in Parliament) experienced the effectiveness of their learning experience.

In a study done by du Plessis (2012, p. 2), who concentrated on the Unisa distance education students, “e-learning gives access to educational resources from outside the institutional resources on global and instant bases”. Learners do not have to rely solely on their institution’s resources for information. E-learning also provides a quick and easy way to create, update and revise course materials through low-cost, off-the-shelf software; provides location-and-time-independent delivery of course materials; increases interaction with students through e-mail and discussion forums and gives the ability to serve a large number of students at a potentially reduced cost. Opportunities to create on-line learning communities that work together in their learning endeavour and assisting the learning process of adults who can share work-related experiences are benefits of e-learning. Learners can construct knowledge, share and debate it on-line (Bonk et al., 2003, p. 54-85). As stated earlier, e-learning favours the need to shift from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach. Singh and Agarwali (2011, p. 28-31) state that students can gain access to lectures of noble laureates, world’s leading subject experts, etc. without being able to meet them face-to-face. Learners can listen to a lecture that is taking place in a far away location from them and benefit without spending a lot of money travelling to the particular place. It is possible for learners to get their questions answered without having to be in the same room as the person answering the questions.

A number of research studies that have been done in the field of education in most parts of the globe show that a number of students use social media in their everyday lives. Different forms of networks, such as facebook and blogs are available to be used to enhance preparation, engagement and learning (Evala and Gachago, 2012, pp. 153-167). Experimenting with different ICTs in education helps to improve the quality of distance education and to eradicate the lack of interactive social learning that is always present in a traditional classroom setting (Engelbrecht, 2003, pp.20-31). The employees in Parliament have to get used to using different ICTs and not only rely on the types they use every day at work as this will give them the opportunities to easily interact and improve the quality of their education. The use of these networks provides a space where success and failures in studies can be shared, discussions and communication between students and between students and lecturers is made possible. Course related information reaches the students quicker and more conveniently (Evala and Gachago, 2012, pp.153-167). E-learning solves the lecturer and space shortage problem for most of the institutions and people who want to learn. The education institutions can enrol a large number of students without having to worry about the shortage of lecture halls and lecturers to teach the large numbers of students. Furthermore, a real benefit of e-learning is that it provides learners, educators and companies with availability and repetition as it can be accessed anytime. With e-learning, employees can search a keyword instead of having to read everything from start to finish. With this, they will learn how to find and access the information that they need. Again, this study looks at some of the benefits as experienced by the employees of Parliament – while also looking at how the programme can possibly be improved.

2.5 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SUCCESS OF E-LEARNING

According to Bhuasiri et al. (2012, pp. 843-855), the success of e-learning depends on a number of factors. The learner needs to be computer literate and be motivated to learn in order to enhance the standard of learning through the e-learning method. The environment needs to be conducive, give access to the information and provide interaction opportunities between the instructor and the learner, which increases learner's participation in educational activities. The characteristics of the instructor play a big role in the success of e-learning teaching. A good relationship between the instructor and the learner, the instructor's teaching

style and the knowledge of technology by the instructor are very important components in the success of e-learning. Mahmud (2010, p. 155) points out that training programmes to improve computer literacy and language proficiency among teachers and students before embarking in e-learning can improve the level of motivation, which can lead to the success of e-learning education. He says the programme designers need to take the students' feedback into consideration when designing and implementing e-learning systems. Hwang et al. (2010, pp. 31-33) suggest that policy decision-makers need to support and be interested in e-learning. Effective delegation of responsibilities and the proper guidelines of implementing the system, as well as sustainable financing of ICT in education are the important factors that lead to the success of e-learning.

The pamphlet entitled "The ideal set up for an effective classroom learning experience must have the following traits" (Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy, 2011) offers an ideal for adult literacy and adult education more generally as follows:

- The teacher must be able to accurately assess the specific learning needs and interests of the learner
- The teacher must be able to develop proper and measurable learning objectives based on the identified needs, interests and skill levels of the learner.
- The teacher must be able to design the appropriate sequential activities to be conducted in teaching in order to attain the teaching/learning objectives.
- The teacher must be able to collaboratively work with the learner in order to select the right materials, resources and methods for instruction.
- Finally, the teacher must be able to properly evaluate the entire learning/teaching experience and afterwards make the necessary adjustments to pursue further effective learning (Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy, 2011).

To summarise, the adult learning theory, which can include e-learning, presents the assumption/hypothesis that the educators' function in the learning process is no longer to serve as content distributors to the students. Under the adult learning theory and through the e-learning process, the role and function of the teachers has been redefined making them more of *assessors and facilitators of learning* (Ruiz, Mintzer, & Leipzig, 2006, pp. 207-212). The teachers' job in facilitating learning therefore, based on the adult learning theory, is no longer 'spoon-feeders' of knowledge and information, but more assessors/evaluators of the students'/employee's competencies and skills.

2.6 E-LEARNING IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

The introduction of e-learning can enable learning opportunities for a vast number of students who are otherwise prevented from joining tertiary and university education because of lack of physical infrastructure (Mugarura, 2010, p. 14). The Parliament of the Republic of South Africa is giving its employees a chance to study using on-line methods and they do not have to worry about transport costs to any university. The physical infrastructure is thus not an issue in this case. Anderson and Gronlund (2009, pp. 1-16) nevertheless emphasise that a *proper technical internet infrastructure* brings more success in the e-learning education system than if such an infrastructure is not in place. This study looks to see how this is effected in the Parliament programme. E-learning in developed countries underwent changes so that relevance to certain contexts where it was to be applied was included from the beginning. The developed countries put effort on challenges relating to individuals' characteristics, technological, course and contextual challenges, which makes their e-learning systems be more successful (Anderson and Gronlund, 2009, pp. 1-16).

In other words, there needs to be a focus on specific challenges in order to improve the process of e-learning. This study therefore explores the challenges that the employees were faced with during their study period. It is also worth mentioning that in the Republic of Korea there is an ICT policy for quality education that is put in place. This was officially discussed at a national level to bring education reform. To improve teaching methods, promote science and technology education and to prepare for an information society, computers were introduced from elementary to secondary school level (Hwang et al., 2010, pp. 22-30). In South Africa likewise, the Parliamentary in-house programmes represent a national initiative.

2.7 E-LEARNING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

E-learning is slowly becoming popular in many countries. According to Mugarura (2010, p. 14), the developing countries do not have all the advantages that the developed countries have when it comes to the success of e-learning. The developing countries are still in need of access to high speed internet, uninterrupted electricity, inexpensive low bandwidth satellite technology and adequately trained personnel. Access to internet in Africa alone is less than

10%. According to Sullivan (2012, 05.11), there is growth of internet usage in South Africa due to the use of cellphones, laptops, computers and tablets. Ninety percent of South Africans access the internet from their handy phones, which means that all services that are presented online have to be offered on mobile phones as well. The rate of use of the internet in Bangladesh is one of the lowest in the world because a lot of learners do not own personal computers and are not confident about their computer literacy skills. The employees of Parliament were asked in the present study to indicate whether or not they had or owned computers during their study period and what other technical facilities they could make use of. It is recognised that limitations in connectivity which cause downloading the web contents slow (which affects the eases of learning and discourages learners and results in lack of self-motivation) can be a factor in the success of e e-learning education as Mahmud (2010, p. 152) explores in his study of Bangladesh. Whether or not and to what extent technical issues were a problem for the participants in the study are explored accordingly. This will also cast light on the extent to which South Africa can be considered more or less “developed” in terms of learners’ experience of the availability of e-resources (in this case in relation to the employees of Parliament RSA).

According to Bukhari (2011, p. 3), developing countries have a problem of having experts from the developing countries designing e-learning courses for learners who may not be in a position to easily understand because of their low level of knowledge and language. Besides lack of or low level of knowledge, some learners are disadvantaged by their culture, their mindset and lack of awareness for the change. Moreover, Mahmud (2010, p. 153) states that lack of awareness is also a problem in the developing countries like Bangladesh, where a high percentage of people still think that the traditional mode of learning is the best and some are afraid to try new things because of their belief that what they know and have is the best for them. The learners need to be in control of their learning and be able to make appropriate decisions independently of their teachers. The employees in this study are asked to indicate if they missed the presence of the instructor during their studies, and how they managed the e-learning situation.

2.8 CONCLUSION

E-learning is developing in all areas and access to computers is becoming easier daily. More and more people are becoming aware of the usage and convenience of the internet. The greatest advantage remains the possibility to work through the course at your own pace and whenever you feel like it. It is the sophisticated and fastest means of learning. This literature has presented the issues that need to be taken into consideration when adopting an e-learning programme and indicates that a lot needs to be considered for e-learning to be a success. Institutions and organisations need to invest in planning for the development of their e-learning programmes in order for them to be effective. This study aims to contribute to making the e-learning experience a success as far as possible for future studying employees of the Parliament of RSA, by focusing on benefits, as well as challenges that can be identified from the study, with a view of giving recommendations for improvement in the Parliamentary programmes, not only to the people in the Language Services Section, but to other divisions as well.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to describe the research method used in the study, presentation of the sample, method used to gather data, the instruments used and data analysis for this study. The major part of this study concentrated on the participant's experiences during their e-learning education. This research is based on the influence of e-learning in adult education, with special reference to the employees of the Parliament of RSA.

According to Sibanda (2009, p3) the quantitative research method can be used to generalise from specific cases, predict future results or to make enquiries on casual relationships. The sample in this study is a small portion of very big institution. The results of this study will be used to make some predictions regarding the likely future results of the programmes that are still to be offered by Parliament RSA to the employees in other sections and divisions. The quantitative research method is used in this study to determine the effectiveness and predict outcomes of e-learning education for the employees of Parliament RSA. It is the intention of the researcher to be unbiased and use appropriate instruments in collecting and analysing data.

3.1.1 Characteristics of Quantitative Research

According to Anderson (2006, p.4) quantitative research is objective, measurable, uses instruments, has value-free, unbiased facts and tests theory. In this study, the researcher uses numbers to analyse data and is separate from the population. Pre-determined instruments, numeric data and large numbers are used when collecting data in the quantitative research method (Fischler, 2014, p.14). According to Denscombe (2003, p.250) the researcher should be detached and try not to influence the data that is collected, which is the case in this research.

3.2 METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

The quantitative research method is used to determine the influence of e-learning on adult education in the Parliamentary education programme. The population of interest in this study is the Language Services Section – all those employed who had undergone e-learning via the in-house programme offered by Parliament from June 2011 until the end of November 2012. The researcher chose this population because they are the only section from the whole of the Parliament of RSA that has done the learning programmes yet. The learning programmes will be rolled out to the rest of the employees of Parliament if the initial one becomes a success. This is a very small portion of the rest of the employees and the researcher saw it fitting to include everyone who had participated in the learning programmes. Quantitative research explains phenomena by collecting numerical data that is analysed using mathematically based methods. It helps in stating what is the case in real the world, rather than what ought to be (Sukamolson, not dated).

The quantitative research method suits this study because there is a definite sample to work with - the employees of the Language Services Section. Quantitative research is associated with methods such as questionnaires and observation. Close-ended questions are the sources of quantitative data (Denscombe, 2003, p.254). The questionnaire that was used had some open-ended questions, but consisted of largely closed-ended questions. A pilot study of the questionnaire was conducted on a limited number of participants who also became respondents in the main study.

3.3 POPULATION SAMPLE AND THE SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

As stated in chapter one, a decision was made in this study to give the questionnaire to all the participants in the Language Services Section who had taken part in the learning programmes offered by the Parliament. All the individuals in this section who took part in the learning programmes received the questionnaire (that is, 163 people). The Language Services Section, which has Reporting, Translation and Interpreting Units, consists overall of 200 employees, of which 163 participated in learning programmes; and they all received the questionnaire. The method of questionnaire administration is not time consuming and is inexpensive – hence it was possible to distribute the questionnaire to all the participants who comprise of

managers, professional employees and administrative employees. This means that, in effect, the sample was equivalent to the population (namely, the participants in the Language Services Section who had participated in Parliament's in-house e-learning programme).

3.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

A questionnaire with close-ended and open-ended questions was used to collect the primary data for this study. SPSS was used when analysing the quantitative data. A narrative account expressed the (qualitative) data concerning people's experiences of completing the questionnaire.

3.4.1 Close-ended questions

According to Denscombe (2003, p.258) it makes good sense for the researcher to build the design of the research by sorting out the categories and their respective numbers. As far as the closed-ended questions were concerned, similar responses were counted and then the percentage of the participants who gave each response was calculated. This was interpreted in terms of the relevance of the numbers in relation to the issues that were being investigated. This was followed by further analysis of the data by doing some cross-tabulations on some of the variables.

3.4.2 Open-ended questions

According to Roberts et al. (2014, p.2), open-ended responses provide a direct view into a respondent's own thinking and don't give leads to the respondent. There were few open-ended questions to get information about the respondents concerning their enjoyment of the e-learning experience and their feelings regarding the experience, as well as their feelings with regard to completing the questionnaire itself. Their responses were grouped together and interpreted.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

3.5.1 Pilot study

The aim of a pilot study is to examine certain issues minutely, such as to check if the instrument is valid before embarking in a large-scale research. A pilot study was done on a few people who were part of the targeted population. After collecting the questionnaires from

the participants of the pilot study, there was a need to make some changes on the questionnaire because it was too long and this could have discouraged the participants from completing it. Some of the questions needed to be modified in order for the participants to understand what was being asked. The data collected during the pilot study was not suitable to be incorporated into the main study.

3.5.2 Questionnaire distribution

For this study I chose not to use interviews as a method of data collection as these are restricted to individuals at a particular location. The self-administered questionnaire which was used to collect data could be administered to all people in the Language Services Section with ease. Also, the kind of data that I intended to collect was such that it could be obtained by setting specific questions (mainly closed-ended ones) for the respondents to fill in. In the few instances where the participants' sense of their overall experience and enjoyment of the course was required, some open-ended questions were used. As far as the process of collecting the data was concerned, the participants were made aware of the study through word of mouth, mostly by the people who had done the pilot study. The participants were individually contacted with the help of the managers and other employees. The questionnaire was given to 163 employees of the Language Service Section of Parliament who had participated in the learning programmes. The respondents were supposed to be anonymous; they were not to provide their names in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was prepared in English and each participant got a printed copy which was accompanied by an informed consent letter that the respondents had to read and sign. It was stated in the letter of informed consent that they were not to use their work time to complete the questionnaire. The survey form consisted of some open-ended questions to incorporate a qualitative component and mainly closed-ended questions which were answered within the same framework. The participants were required to tick the box next to their answer in the case of the closed-ended questions and write comments on the space provided in the case of the open-ended questions. The participants were given a timeframe of one week to complete and return the questionnaires. Out of the 163 questionnaires issued, a total of 163 were completed (100%). The team managers assisted with the distribution and collection of questionnaires and with convincing the employees to respond as the results of the study could assist Parliament when the learning programmes are extended to the rest of the sections/divisions. The response was very positive and the few employees who had not filled in the questionnaire were asked again if they would agree to do so, and they did. However, in

most of the returned questionnaires, the spaces provided in the comments sections were not completed. Nevertheless, since the comments sections were optional and also only meant to offer an opportunity for people to explain their fixed-choice answers, this was not problematic. The few comments that were obtained in participants' own words to certain questions proved helpful as they provided some glimpse of these participants' overall experiences of the course.

3.6 DATA TREATMENT AND ANALYSIS

3.6.1 Descriptive statistics analysis

Questionnaires were analysed using the statistical package of social sciences (SPSS). This tool limits the chances of missing some variables out and also allows for the easy and quick coding of data into the computer and into the statistical programme. Descriptive statistics analysis was used to provide a summary about the sample (which in this case was equivalent to the population, namely, the participants in the Language Services Section who had undergone e-learning via the in-house programme). Cross tabulation was used in this study to show the relationship between the variables. Frequencies were used to show how often each value or group of values occur.

Similar responses were counted and then the percentage of the participants who gave each response was calculated. This was interpreted in terms of the relevance of the numbers in relation to the issues that were being investigated. This was followed by further analysis of the data by doing some cross-tabulations on some of the variables.

3.6.2 Data interpretation

In the case of open-ended questions, after reading the data, the content and context was analysed in order to get a sense of the similar issues that the respondents have so that these could be compared. The information was reduced into a limited set of attributes with common issues/themes. The issues were grouped to offer an indication of how the respondents saw the various issues and expressed them in their own words.

There were few open-ended questions to get information about the respondents concerning their enjoyment of the e-learning experience and their feelings regarding the experience, as well as their feelings with regard to completing the questionnaire itself. Their responses were grouped together and interpreted.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.7.1 Permission for inclusion as participant

The participants received a letter from the researcher informing them about the study and its aim. The participants were made aware of the person to contact regarding the study and they had to give their signatures to show that they give the researcher permission to include them as participants.

3.7.2 Anonymity

The participants in this study were made aware that they are not supposed to identify themselves for the purpose of proper and honest response. This was done to encourage them to respond honestly without the fear of becoming victims. According to Wiles et al. (2006, P.4), confidentiality and hiding identity makes participants stay anonymous

3.7.3 Confidentiality

According to Smith (2003, p56), the participants should be told how their data will be used. The participants in this study were told that the information they give will be treated confidentially and the answers will be used only in aggregate for the purpose of creating a research report.

3.7.4 Rights of participants

The participants were made aware by the researcher that they had a right to terminate their participation if they felt the need to do so and that there would be no penalty for that action.

3.7.5 Informed consent

As Corti et al. (2000, p.1) point out;

Research should, as far as possible, be based on participants' freely volunteered informed consent. This implies a responsibility to explain fully and meaningfully what the research is about and how it will be disseminated. Participants should be aware of their right to refuse to participate; understand the extent to which confidentiality will be maintained; be aware of the potential uses to which the data might be put; and in some cases be reminded of their right to re-negotiate consent. (Corti et.al, 2000, p.1)

In this study the researcher wrote a letter inviting the participants to participate in the study. The letter stated the aim of the study; let the participants know that there are no identified

risks in participating and no compensation; and the participants had to be 18 years and above to be able to take part in the study.

3.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF DATA

Since the pilot study was conducted before the main study and corrections were made, it is likely that the respondents were able to understand what was asked in the final questionnaire. As stated by Galafshani (2003, p. 599), the means of measurement must be accurate and must measure what it is really meant to measure. In this case, the questions were put in as simple a way as possible, with the help of the piloting process, so that they would be understood by the respondents. This was meant to ensure that what I believed was being asked in each question (and measured through the question) was seen in a similar way by the respondents – thus increasing the chances of validity (Park, 2006, p. 128). Furthermore, the questions in the questionnaire were relevant to the purpose of the study, which was to get information that was going to be used to form the framework of the adult education programmes of the employees from the Language Services Section and from other divisions. The piloting of the questionnaire (pre-testing) was also done in an effort to ensure reliability (that is consistency of responses with the same or similar respondents when asked at a different point in time). As Park (2006, p. 128) notes, pre-testing is a mechanism that increases the likelihood of reliability (whether or not the question will produce a consistent response) as it improves the design of the questionnaire.

3.9 CONCLUSION

The method and design used in this study allowed for certain conclusions to be drawn that could in turn form the basis for contextual recommendations. This was done by doing a pilot study to try to ensure that the respondents understood what was being asked regarding their pre-e-learning expectations; their initial experience of e-learning; their possible development of confidence and skills along the way; resources available and used; and their conceptions of assessment criteria employed for the measurement of their learning. The data collected was intended to offer an indication of the influence of e-learning in adult education in this study, as well as what challenges were faced and where there is room for improvement.

The research design was set up so that data/information gathered would be helpful in understanding how the employees in the Language Services Section of Parliament benefited from the e-learning programme in terms of improving their quest for knowledge, especially in relation to common work practices and skills, as well as how they experienced issues identified in the literature. This research study has briefly tackled the current literature information available, which has been initially derived from selected sources and references. The research being undertaken via the empirical study also emphasises the relevance and significance of this study and what impact it can potentially create in Parliament.

The following chapter will make a straightforward reporting in terms of information with regard to the responses that were collected.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter indicates the responses made in numeric figures and percentage. It is a direct report on 163 responses of the questionnaires that were distributed.

4.2 REPORT OF RESPONSES FROM EACH QUESTION ASKED

Table 1: Distribution of employees according to gender

Gender	N	%
Male	54	33.1
Female	108	66.3
Unspecified	1	0.6
Total	163	100.0

Table 1 above presents the distribution of respondents, which is the total number of employees in the Language Services Section who participated in an e-learning programme, according to gender. The table indicates that there are 163 employees in the section who participated in the e-learning programme, of which 33.1% are males and 66.3% are females. (One respondent did not specify his/her gender.) This distribution could be the result of the education opportunities that the females are now enjoying, which allows them to enter the workforce.

Figure 1: Percentage distribution of employees according to highest educational qualification

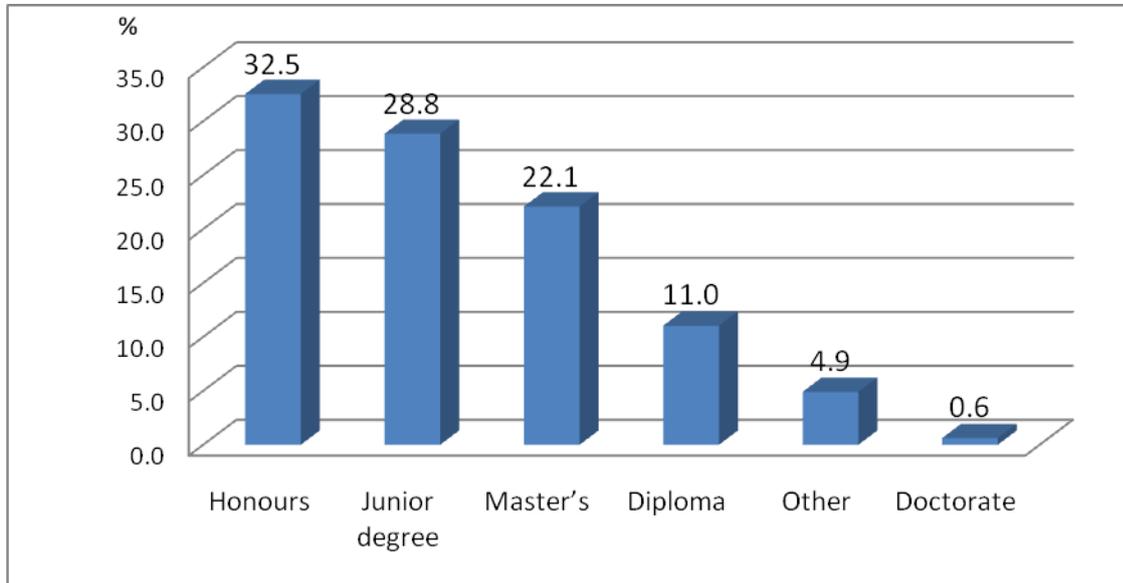


Figure 1 indicates that most employees in the Language Services Section have honours degrees as their highest educational qualification (32.5%). This is followed by employees whose highest level of education is a junior degree (28.8%), followed by those with diplomas (11.0%). Only 4.9% do not have any tertiary qualifications and about 0.6% have a PHD degree. There is a higher percentage of employees with tertiary education than those with no tertiary education, which can be a result of flexible learning opportunities provided by e-learning. It also shows that more and more people are embarking on adult education and are able to adapt to positive changes that the department has implemented. Since e-learning provides opportunities for everyone to work on collaborative groups and participate on the discussion-oriented online courses at their convenient times, it is possible that the lowest percentage of employees with diplomas and lower than diploma qualifications can be improved. The employees in the Language Services Section are sometimes expected to work in groups to complete assignments and projects during their studying. This motivates them to work harder on their education. It seems that more and more employees are becoming aware of e-learning education and are taking advantage of it. This shows that Parliament can invest in training employees who have the potential of staying in the division for a longer period of time, by providing in-house learning programmes (in this division as well as other divisions.

E-learning can improve the number of more qualified people who work at the Parliament of RSA.

Table 2: Distribution of employees according to years of educational experience

Years of educational experience	N	%
Less than 5 years	59	36.2
6 to 10 years	84	51.5
11 to 15 years.	14	8.6
16 to 20 years	6	3.7
Total	163	100.0

In Table 2 above, 59 respondents have educational experience of less than 5 years, 84 respondents have an educational experience of 6 to 10 years, 14 respondents have an educational experience of 11 to 15 years and 6 respondents have an educational experience of 16 to 20 years. More employees have a low number of years of educational experience, which can be attributed to the fact that e-learning programmes have helped them complete their education faster and more effectively than before the in-house programmes started.

Table 3: Distribution of employees according to number of years of work experience

Years of work experience	N	%
Less than 5 years.	53	32.3
6 to 10 years.	53	32.3
11 to 15 years.	44	26.8
16 to 20 years	13	7.9
Total	163	100.0

In the table above, 53 respondents have a work experience of less than 5 years, another 53 respondents have a work experience of 6 to 10 years, 44 respondents have a work experience of 11 to 15 years and 13 respondents have a work experience of 16 to 20 years. Employees with many years of work experience are fewer than those with a lower number of years of work experience, which could be the result of the introduction of the in-house programmes offered in the Parliament. The e-learning programmes act as an incentive for the employees to stay longer than before the programmes started being offered.

Table 4: Distribution of employees according to how they found out about e-learning

Statements	N	%
My manager told me about it	41	25.0
It was advertised at the university	40	24.4
My colleague told me about it	29	17.7
Other	53	32.3
Total	163	100.0

In the table above, 41 respondents found out about e-learning through their managers, 40 respondents found out about it from an advertisement at the university, 29 respondents found out through their colleagues and 53 respondents found out through different sources. The findings of how the employees found out about the programmes show that the managers encourage and support them to study further. The university which offers these programmes supports the Parliament's initiative by advertising the programmes. The employees also encourage each other to take part in the e-learning programmes.

Table 5: Distribution of employees according to most convenient form of e-learning

Form of e-learning	N	%
Internet	132	80.5
Short message service	3	1.8
E-mail	28	17.1
Total	163	100.0

In the table above, 132 respondents consider the internet, 3 respondents consider the short message system and 28 consider e-mail as the most convenient forms of e-learning for distance education. These findings show that the employees in the Language Services Section prefer to use the internet and e-mail during their studies because they have access to the internet and e-mails when they are at work; they do not have to use their resources, such as phones, which could be an extra expense for them.

A. Pre-learning education.

Table 6: What employees thought about e-learning.

E-learning perceptions	N	%
I didn't know about e-learning	14	8.5
I thought it was expensive	124	75.6
I thought it was waste of time	2	1.2
I thought it needed a person who is good with computers	20	12.2
I thought I needed to rely on a Smartphone.	3	1.8
Total	163	100.0

In the table above, 14 respondents did not know about e-learning, 124 respondents thought e-learning was expensive, 2 respondents thought the e-learning programme was a waste of time, 20 respondents thought it needed a person who is good with computers and 3 respondents thought they needed to rely on a Smartphone prior to their programme at work. The majority of the employees in the Language Services Section found that e-learning was a cheaper way of learning since they got most of the information from the internet, which was not difficult for them to do since they have access to computers at work. It was time saving for them because they did not have to travel to attend classes or be computer experts.

Table 7: Expectations of employees on using e-learning.

Statements	Expectations about E-learning.				Meeting employees' expectations about E-learning.			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
E-learning is cost-effective	5	3.1%	158	96.9%	5	3.1%	158	96.9%
E-learning to encourage inquiry-based learning	99	60.7%	64	39.3%	99	60.7%	64	39.3%
E-learning gets unlimited access to information	154	94.5%	9	5.5%	154	94.5%	9	5.5%

Statements	Expectations about E-learning.				Meeting employees' expectations about E-learning.			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
E-learning encourages effective teaching	99	60.7%	64	39.3%	99	60.7%	64	39.3%
E-learning makes it quick and efficient to enter into regular discussions and dialogues.	131	80.4%	32	19.6%	134	82.2%	29	17.8%
E-learning teaches technical and business skills through the internet.	150	92.0%	13	8.0%	151	92.6%	12	7.4%
E-learning solves the problem of work demands and personal responsibilities which result in less time for attending classes.	148	90.8%	15	9.2%	153	93.9%	10	6.1%
E-learning enables participation on the discussion-oriented on-line course at convenient times.	103	63.2%	60	36.8%	103	63.2%	60	36.8%
E-learning enables access to course materials from personal computers at home.	154	94.5%	9	5.5%	161	98.8%	2	1.2%

In Table 8 above, 5 respondents expected e-learning to be cost-effective and 158 respondents did not expect e-learning to be cost-effective when they started their distance education programme. Five respondents' expectations of e-learning to be cost-effective were met and 158 respondents' expectations of e-learning not to be cost-effective were not met – that is, they found that e-learning was cost-effective after realising that the information was readily available for them from the internet and that they can control their time of studying and the place where they want to learn.

Ninety-nine respondents expected e-learning to be inquiry-based learning and 64 respondents did not expect e-learning to be inquiry-based learning. Ninety-nine respondents' expectations

of e-learning to be inquiry-based were met and 64 respondents' expectations of e-learning not to be inquiry-based were not met. The respondents found that they were the ones who got the information needed for their studies, rather than relying on the instructor to give them all the information.

A total of 154 respondents expected e-learning to provide unlimited access to information and 9 respondents did not expect e-learning to provide unlimited access to information. One hundred and fifty-four respondents' expectations of getting unlimited access to information were met, whilst 9 respondents' expectations of e-learning not providing unlimited access to information were not met. During the e-learning programmes, the respondents could get any information they needed from the internet whenever they needed it; that changed the minds of those respondents who had not anticipated that.

A total of 99 respondents expected e-learning to encourage effective teaching and 64 respondents did not expect e-learning to encourage teaching. Ninety-nine respondents' expectations of e-learning encouraging effective teaching were met and 64 respondents' expectations of e-learning not encouraging effective teaching were not met. Some respondents had not thought that it would be possible to study without having to go class and without relying on the instructor, but after their experience with e-learning they learned that they did not miss being in class and having the instructor feeding them information all the time. They learnt a lot through self-teaching.

Of the 163 respondents, 131 respondents expected that e-learning would make it quick and efficient to enter into regular discussions and dialogues and 32 respondents did not expect that e-learning would make it quick and efficient to enter into regular discussions and dialogues. The expectations of 131 respondents that e-learning would make it quick and efficient to enter into regular discussions and dialogues were met; 3 respondents did not find that it was quick and efficient to enter into regular discussions and dialogues and 29 respondents' expectations that e-learning would not make it quick and efficient to enter into regular discussions and dialogues were not met. Some respondents struggled to use communication technology to enter into group discussions with fellow learners – this may be because of technological illiteracy.

A total of 150 respondents expected that e-learning would teach technical and business skills through the internet and 13 respondents did not expect that e-learning would teach technical and business skills through the internet. The expectations of 150 respondents that e-learning

would teach technical and business skills through the internet were met, 1 respondent's expectation of not learning any technical and business skills through the internet was met and 12 respondents' expectations that e-learning does not teach technical and business skills through the internet were not met. E-learning changed the mind-set of the respondents who did not think they could learn other skills through using the internet during their studies. Their studying using the e-learning method made them acquire skills that were not part of the syllabus.

On the other hand, 148 respondents expected e-learning to solve the problem of work demands and personal responsibilities, which results in less time for attending classes and 15 respondents did not expect e-learning to solve the problem of work demands and personal responsibilities, resulting in less time for attending classes. In this regard, 148 respondents' expectations that e-learning solves the problem of work demands and personal responsibilities, which results in less time for attending classes were met, 5 respondents' expectations that e-learning does not solve the problem of work demands and personal responsibilities, which result in less time for attending classes were not met and 10 respondent's expectations that e-learning does not solve the problem of work demands and personal responsibilities, which result in less time for attending classes were not met. The experience was not the same for all the employees. Some of them could not cope with their studies without going to attend classes; they needed the instructor, which may be the result of being used to the traditional method of learning. Some of them had a lot of work and personal demands which did not permit them time to study at their pace, so they had difficulties during their study period.

One hundred and three respondents expected e-learning to enable participation on the discussion-orientated online course at convenient times and 60 respondents did not expect e-learning to enable participation on the discussion-orientated online course at convenient times. The expectations of 103 respondents that e-learning enables participation on the discussion-orientated online course at convenient times were met and 60 respondents' expectations that e-learning does not enable participation on the discussion-orientated online course at convenient times were not met. During their study programmes, the employees appreciated that they did not have to leave what they were doing to go and attend group discussions at specified times. E-learning afforded them the opportunity to be flexible and do everything at their own time and pace.

One hundred and fifty-four respondents expected e-learning to enable access to course materials from personal computers at home and 9 respondents did not expect e-learning to enable access to course materials from personal computers at home. The expectations of 154 respondents that e-learning enables access to course materials from personal computers at home were met, 7 respondents' expectations that e-learning does not enable access to course materials from personal computers at home were not met and 2 respondents' expectations that e-learning does not enable access to course materials from personal computers at home were met. Even though more respondents enjoyed the benefit of accessing their course material wherever they were, some of them failed to do so. This might be because the systems of the institution are not user-friendly and also because the respondents lack knowledge of how to use the technology.

Table 8: Distribution of employees according to initial e-learning experience

Initial e-learning experience	Very		Somewhat		Not at all	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
User-friendly	127	77.9	36	22.1	0	0
Accessible	128	78.5	33	20.2	2	1.2
Interesting	143	87.7	8	4.9	12	7.4
Interactive	119	73.0	35	21.5	9	5.5
Provided useful material	151	92.6	9	5.5	3	1.8

In the table above, 127 respondents said their initial learning experience was very user-friendly and 36 respondents said it was somewhat user-friendly, which indicates that the e-learning technology for the employees' programmes was developed well and was easily understood by the employees whenever they used it. Whilst 128 respondents found that their initial e-learning experience made information easily accessible, 33 of the respondents said it made information somewhat accessible and 2 of the respondents said it was not at all accessible. This shows that there is still room to familiarise the employees with technology in order for them to be able to enjoy the benefits of the e-learning education method.

One hundred and forty-three respondents said their initial e-learning experience was interesting, 8 respondents said it was somewhat interesting and 12 respondents said it was not at all interesting, which could be the result of different levels of employees' experience with

technology. Those who find it easy to use technology would have found the e-learning experience more interesting than those who were struggling with the use of technology. One hundred and nineteen respondents said their initial e-learning experience was very interactive, 35 respondents said it was somewhat interactive and 9 respondents said it was not at all interactive. Most of the employees found that they could relate to the information of their programmes. It was not teacher-centred, but there were still a few who did not find it interactive, which might be due to the fact that they were not sure of how to handle the whole e-learning situation.

One hundred and fifty-one respondents said their initial e-learning experience provided useful material, 9 respondents said it somewhat provided useful material and 3 of the respondents said it did not provide any useful material at all. As some of the employees were not familiar with e-learning, it is possible that they did not know that they had the freedom to get information for themselves using the internet; they would find that what was provided to them was not enough, but did use the technology to get more information.

Table 9: Academic competencies of employees before and after e-learning programmes.

Period	Completely incompetent		Very little competence		Very competent	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Before	34	20.9	9	5.5	120	73.6
After	0	0	4	2.5	159	97.5

Table 9 indicates that 20.9% of the respondents who were completely incompetent academically prior to their e-learning experience were either a little competent or very competent after their e-learning experience. None of the 20.9% were still completely incompetent academically. Similarly, the number and percentage of those who were a little competent decreased from 5.5% before e-learning to 2.5% after e-learning. It is important to note that the decrease was a positive one since Table 9 indicates that none of the employees were completely incompetent after e-learning. This means that the 5.5% before e-learning was distributed among the slightly competent and/or the very competent. Hence, there is an increase of about 24% of the employees who reported very competent before and after e-learning. Table 9 therefore shows that e-learning helped the employees to feel that they were capable of learning without relying on an instructor. The more they were involved in e-learning the more people felt that they were academically more competent than before they started the programmes.

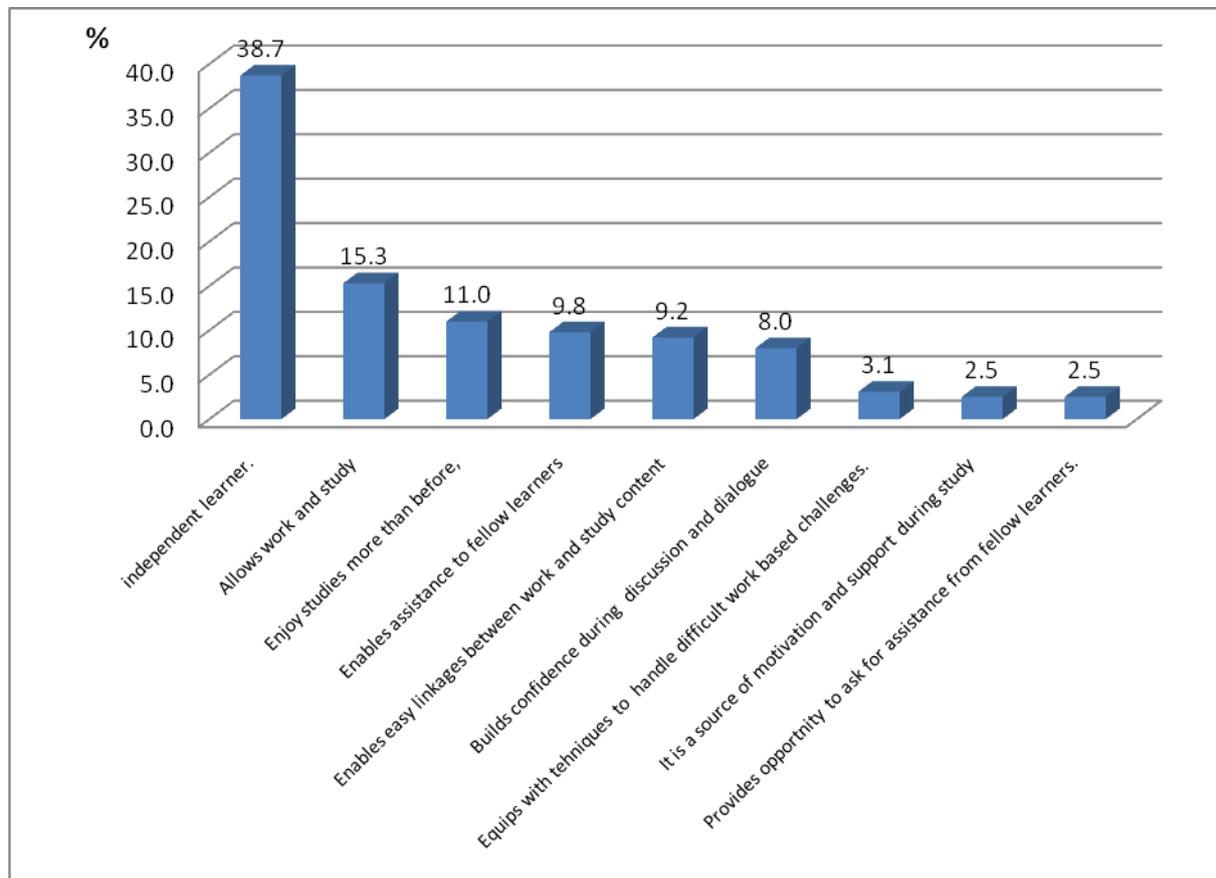
Table 10: Employees' satisfaction with e-learning.

Level of satisfaction	E-learning technology		Learning material		Learning content		Improvement of education standards	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Good	148	90.8	150	92.0	147	90.2	157	96.3
Fair	13	8.0	11	6.7	12	7.4	6	3.7
Poor	2	1.2	2	1.2	4	2.5	0	0
Total*	163	100.0	163	100.0	163	100.0	163	100.0

*Totals include item non-response

Table 10 indicates that in all selected e-learning aids and standards, such as e-learning technology, learning material, learning content and improvement of educational standards, the majority of employees are satisfied. Above 90% of the employees felt that e-learning technology, learning material, learning content and improvement of education standards are good, 90.8%, 92.0%, 92.0% and 96.3%, respectively. Only a minority of employees felt that these were fair or poor. As more employees prove to be computer literate, it is not surprising that the majority of employees are satisfied with e-learning and its benefits.

Figure 2: Percentage distribution of employees according to feelings about e-learning experience



When asked about how e-learning has influenced their educational experience, 38.7% of the respondents reported that they feel that they are independent learners; 15.3% feel that they are capable of working and studying at the same time; 3.1% feel that e-learning prepared them to handle difficult work-based challenges; 8.0% feel confident to be part of a discussion and dialogue groups than they were before; 9.2% feel that it is easy to relate the content of the study with their work; 2.5% feel that they can get a lot of motivation and support when they are studying and have doubt and difficulties; 11.0% feel that they enjoy their studies more than before; 9.8% feel that they are able to assist their fellow learners with their studies and 2.5% feel that they can ask for assistance from fellow learners.

From the table it can be seen that e-learning plays a significant role in boosting the standard of education of the employees, with a feeling that they can work independently, which leads to a higher level of confidence and a feeling of satisfaction. It gave them confidence to participate in discussions, to assist and to ask for help from fellow learners. Students do not have to solely rely on the learning content that the teacher gives to them, they can supplement it with the information they get from other sources of information, such as ICTs and be able to share it with their peers. It made it easy for a lot of employees to work and study at the same time, which helped them relate their learning content to their job and be able to handle hard work challenges better. This indicates that e-learning plays a big role in improving the skills and capacity of the employees of Parliament and in boosting their confidence during their studying. The gap that used to separate the learning and work is easily bridged through the e-learning method. The employees of the Language Services Section had a well-prepared e-learning programme, since they felt that they benefited from it in many different ways.

Table.11: Resources available to support employees.

Statements	Yes		No.	
	N	%	N	%
Someone to assist you with all e-learning education challenges.	13	8.0	149	91.4
Learning resources, such as the internet, intranet and knowledge management resources.	147	90.2	15	9.2
Access to your Institution (University or other) and other libraries that are in partnership with your Institution (e.g. UCT, UNISA etc).	156	95.7	6	3.7

Personal computer	89	54.6	73	44.8
Access to computer	162	99.4	0	0
Access to internet	160	98.2	2	1.2%

In Table 13 above, 13 respondents indicated that they had someone to assist them with all e-learning education challenges, 149 respondents indicated that they did not have someone to assist them with all e-learning educational challenges. One hundred and forty-seven respondents indicated that they had learning resources, such as the internet, intranet and knowledge management resources; 15 respondents indicated that they did not and 1 respondent did not indicate whether or not they had the learning resources with their e-learning study. One hundred and fifty-six respondents indicated that they had access, 16 indicated that they did not have access and 1 did not indicate if they did or did not have access to their institution and other libraries that are in partnership with their institution during their e-learning study. Eighty-nine respondents indicated that they had personal computers, 73 indicated that they did not have personal computers and 1 respondent did not indicate whether they did or did not have a personal computer during their e-learning study. One hundred and sixty-two respondents indicated that they had access to a computer and 1 respondent indicated that they did not have access to a computer during their e-learning study. One hundred and sixty respondents indicated that they had access to internet, 2 respondents indicated that they did not have access to internet and 1 respondent did not indicate whether they did or did not have access to internet during their e-learning study.

It is clear that the availability of different support resources makes the e-learning experience successful; the employees enjoyed access to a number of technological resources, although the majority of them missed having someone to go to when they experienced challenges. The availability of a person who could take them through their challenges would save them a lot of time.

Table 12: E-learning experience

Statements	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
There were limitations in using a computer at work.	152	93.3	6	3.7	1	0.6	0	0	4	2.5

Statements	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
There were limitations in using a computer during my studies.	98	60.1	35	21.5	0	0	7	4.3	22	13.5
E-learning is an expensive method of studying.	149	91.4	10	6.1	3	1.8	0	0	0	0
I cannot use a computer.	147	90.2	13	8.0	2	1.2	0	0	0	0
I used only e-mail to communicate and share information with my study group.	8	4.9	137	84.0	9	5.5	6	3.7	2	1.2
E-learning added value to the quality of my study programme.	0	0	2	1.2	6	3.7	12	7.4	14	8.1
I will apply the e-learning methods gained through e-learning to my work.	2	1.2	0	0	8	4.9	4	2.5	14	90.8
E-learning broke political barriers for me.	8	4.9	26	16.0	54	33.1	60	36.8	14	8.6
E-learning broke physical barriers for me.	0	0	0	0	8	4.9	143	87.7	11	6.7

Statements	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I did not feel deprived of face-to-face contact with the instructor.	0	0	35	21.5	2	1.2	37	22.7	88	54.0
The e-learning programme gave me the desire to enhance my ICT skills.	0	0	2	1.2	0	0	15	9.2	145	89.0
E-learning courses are not inferior to formal classroom courses.	0	0	0	0	20	12.3	37	22.7	105	64.4

In Table 14 above, 152 respondents said they strongly disagree that there were limitations in using a computer at work, 6 respondents said they disagree that there were limitations in using a computer at work, 4 respondents said they strongly agree that there were limitations in using a computer at work and 1 respondent is not sure whether or not there were limitations in using a computer at work during the e-learning study. Ninety-eight respondents said they strongly disagree that there were limitations in using a computer during their studies, 35 respondents disagree that there were limitations in using a computer during their studies, 7 respondents agree that they had limitations in using a computer during their studies, 22 respondents strongly agree that they had limitations in using a computer during their studies and 1 respondent did not say whether they did or did not have limitations in using a computer during the studies. One hundred and forty-nine respondents strongly disagree that e-learning is an expensive method of studying, 10 respondents disagree that e-learning is an expensive method of studying, 3 respondents are not sure whether or not e-learning is an expensive method of studying and 1 respondent did not say whether they did or did not think that e-learning is an expensive method of studying. One hundred and forty-seven respondents strongly disagree that they cannot use a computer, 13 respondents disagree that they cannot use a computer, 2 respondents are not sure whether or not they can use a computer and 1

respondent did not indicate whether they can or cannot use a computer. In short, the majority of the employees had a positive experience during their e-learning education programmes, which may encourage them and motivate them to engage with e-learning in future because they had computers available to them and they did not have to spend much financially on their studies since the Parliament sponsored their education and also because they got the information online.

Regarding respondents' use of communication strategies, 8 respondents strongly disagree, 137 respondents disagree, 9 respondents are not sure, 2 respondents strongly agree and 1 respondent did not indicate whether or not they used only e-mails to communicate and share information with their study group. Regarding e-learning and its quality widely speaking, 20 respondents disagree, 6 respondents are not sure, 12 respondents agree and 142 respondents strongly agree that e-learning added value to the quality of their study programme. One respondent did not indicate if e-learning did or did not add value to the quality of their study programme. Twenty respondents strongly disagree, 8 respondents are not sure, 4 respondents agree, 148 respondents strongly agree that they will apply the e-learning skills gained through e-learning to their work. One respondent did not indicate whether they will or will not apply e-learning skills gained through e-learning to their work. Since e-mail was not the only method of communication, the employees explored other types of communication technologies as the time went on and as they got more experienced with their learning method which added value to the quality of their education and made them realise that they can implement the skills they acquired during their studying to their everyday jobs.

Regarding the breaking of political barriers (such as getting promoted in a position because of cadre credentials than academic competence), 8 respondents strongly disagree, 26 respondents disagree, 54 respondents are not sure, 60 respondents agree, 14 respondents strongly agree that e-learning broke political barriers for them. One respondent did not indicate whether e-learning did or did not break political barriers for them. The fact that 54 respondents were not sure about the breaking of political barriers could mean that they are not sure if participating in the programme would help them with better job opportunities. Education empowers the individuals and can offer them a political voice; however some employees did not feel enlightened enough to feel a sense of achievement.

Regarding the breaking of physical barriers (such as getting in-touch with other fellow learners and instructors), 8 respondents are not sure, 143 respondents agree and 11 respondents strongly agree that e-learning broke physical barriers for them. One respondent

did not indicate whether e-learning did or did not break physical barriers for them. Thirty-five respondents disagree, 2 respondents are not sure, 37 respondents agree and 88 respondents strongly agree that they did not feel deprived of face-to-face contact with the instructor. One respondent did not indicate whether they did or did not feel deprived of face-to-face contact with the instructor during their studies. The employees could contact their instructors when they needed to, even though for a few of them it was not enough. Those who struggled with technology and joining on-line dialogues and discussions missed and felt deprived of physical contact with instructors and fellow learners.

Twenty respondents disagree, 15 agree, 145 strongly agree that e-learning programme made them to have desire to enhance their ICT skills. One respondent did not indicate whether e-learning did or did raise a desire to enhance their ICT skills. The fact that 145 strongly agreed is significant as it shows that, through the course, these participants increased their desire to enhance their skills. Twenty respondents are not sure, 37 agree, 105 respondents strongly agree that e-learning courses are not inferior to formal classroom courses and 1 respondent did not indicate whether they think e-learning is or is not inferior to formal classroom courses.

The majority of the employees are very confident with the qualifications acquired through e-learning and they became motivated to acquire ICT skills to help them in future when they embark on other e-learning programmes.

Table 13: Employees' experiences on assessment criteria used.

Statements	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Strongly Agree		agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Monitoring of the assessment is intimidating.	63	39	51	31	0	0	49	30
Assessment has strict time constraints.	0	0	20	12	9	0.6	134	82
It encourages applied knowledge.	0	0	8	0.5	18	11	137	84
It requires in-depth understanding of the content.	0	0	0	0	18	11	145	89
It discourages copying and cramming of the content.	7	0.4	39	24	16	10	101	62
I had enough time to think in-depth when responding to questions.	48	29	72	44	0	0	43	26
E-Learning assessment is difficult compared to classroom.	2	1	118	72	0	0	43	27

In Table 13 above, 49 respondents agreed, 51 disagreed and 63 strongly disagreed that monitoring of the assessment is intimidating. One hundred and thirty-four respondents agreed, 20 disagreed and 9 strongly agreed that e-learning assessments have strict time constraints. Forty-eight strongly agreed, 72 disagreed and 43 agreed that they had enough time to think in-depth when responding to questions. Employees felt uncomfortable with the way the assessments were conducted. Some of them felt intimidated, which may be because they were not used to the online method of assessment which sets them the time to start and finish using technology, with no one to help should they encounter problems after they login. One hundred and thirty-seven respondents agreed, 8 disagreed and 18 strongly agreed that the e-learning assessment encourages applied knowledge and 145 agreed and 18 strongly agreed that it requires in-depth understanding of the content. Seven respondents strongly disagreed, 39 disagreed, 16 strongly agreed and 101 agreed that the e-learning assessment discourages copying and cramming of the content. One hundred and eighteen respondents disagreed, 43 agreed and 2 strongly disagreed that the e-learning assessment is difficult compared to the classroom assessment. The majority of the employees in the Language Services Section believe in the quality of e-learning education and they don't see it as different to classroom education.

4.3 WHAT EMPLOYEES ENJOYED THROUGHOUT E-LEARNING PROGRAMME

One of the open-ended questions asked in this section was: Thinking about your e-learning experience in general, what have you enjoyed most throughout your education? Eleven respondents answered this open-ended question. The employees indicated that they enjoyed independence and privacy from the lecturers. Out of the total percentage of the employees who commented about their e-learning experience 50.4% (6 respondents) said, they enjoyed independence; others said they enjoyed independence from the lecturer. Comments received in this regard were: "I enjoyed privacy"; "I enjoyed being able to study without having to meet with my lecturer"; "I enjoyed independence"; "I enjoyed my independence from the lecturer and being in control of my time"; "I enjoyed independence, privacy and interacting with my colleagues during discussions. I enjoyed being in control of my education"; "I enjoyed learning new things on my own, in private and at my own pace".

Since the programmes were running concurrently with their work, two respondents (11.2%) felt that they were in control of their time; they did not have to attend classes and did not

have to meet with the lecturer. Comments in this regard were: “I enjoyed independence from the lecturer and being in control of my time”; “I enjoyed getting swift feedbacks and not interacting face-to-face with the lecturer”. They allocated the time for their studies as it suited them. After a long day at work they enjoyed doing their work in the comfort of their homes, instead of going to attend afternoon and evening classes. They commented that: “I enjoyed studying in the comfort of my home and not attending classes”, “I felt independent from the lecturer and being in control of my time”.

Generally, the employees said that they were not studying under pressure from lecturers and fellow learners. The experience gave them exposure to learn more about using the internet and other computer skills. They also developed skills and competences at their pace. Seven respondents (61%) who commented about their experience of e-learning said e-mail made it possible for them to get quick feedbacks from their lecturers. Comments received in this regard were: “I enjoyed learning computer skills, and sending and getting instructions via e-mail than calling or going to see the lecturers”; “I enjoyed privacy, and communicating through the email with my lecturer”; “I enjoyed getting swift feedbacks and not interacting face-to-face with the lecturer”; “I enjoyed gaining new technology skills on my own and having to interact with my lecturers by e-mail. It was easy to ask questions and communication was easy and quick”.

Two respondents (19%) found e-learning to be a difficult route to take. It is likely that those who felt deprived of interaction with the lecturer and those who needed to learn more about technology would find e-learning to be a difficult method of studying. They said the experience was difficult, most of the time they did not know what to do and how to get most of the information. Comments received in this regard were: “The experience was difficult, most of the time I did not know what to do and how to get most of the information”; “I enjoyed independence, privacy and interacting with my colleagues during discussions. I felt I was in control of my education even though there were times when it was difficult to figure out how to access some of the learning material using a computer”.

Table 14: Employees' perception of the e-learning curriculum

Statements	No	%
Learner-centred-based	31	19
Continuous assessment-based	21	13
Outcomes-based	15	09
Active exploratory inquiry-based	69	42
Critical thinking-based.	27	17
Total	163	100

In Table 14 above, 31 respondents described the curriculum as learner-centred-based, 21 as continuous assessment-based, 15 as outcomes-based, 69 as active exploratory inquiry-based and 27 as critical thinking-based. The e-learning experience made the employees become active and enabled them to think critically when acquiring the information. The curriculum concentrated on the learners getting the information on their own and demonstrating what they know.

Table 15: Employees' confidence in participating in future education programmes using e-learning methods.

Statements	No	%
Not at all confident	37	23
Fairly confident	6	04
Very confident	120	74

In Table 15 above, 120 respondents did not feel confident, 6 fairly confident and 37 very confident in taking part in education using e-learning methods. The table above shows that e-learning was a success with the employees in the Language Services Section. Even though a number of the employees preferred to use only a few of the types of communication technologies when they started with their e-learning education, which could have been the

result of lack of technology skills, they learnt a lot about technology skills throughout the experience. The majority of the employees who took part in the e-learning programmes felt confident to take part in future e-learning programmes.

4.4 EMPLOYEES' EXPERIENCE OF COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE OF THIS STUDY

Sixteen respondents answered this open-ended section (which was put as a final note of this questionnaire) regarding their experience of completing the questionnaire. The question was phrased as follows: We are interested to know also what your experience was of filling in this questionnaire. Did the questions help you to think further about any of the issues? Where the employees were commenting about their experience of completing the questionnaire, it became clear that some of the employees did not know about e-learning before they started doing the programme offered by the Parliament. Even when they were doing the e-learning programmes they were not aware of what it was about. They just did what was supposed to be done during their studying. When they completed the questionnaire of this study, they became perceptive of the issues that were mentioned in the questionnaire.

Eight respondents (50%) of the employees who commented about their experience of completing the questionnaire said the survey made them mindful of what e-learning is and what it is about. Comments received in this regard were “This questionnaire made me to be aware about e-learning. I had never given myself time to think about e-learning and what it’s about.”; “Filling in this questionnaire made me feel that I don’t know much about e-learning and its benefits to me as a learner”; “Filling in this questionnaire made me to understand the meaning of e-learning and distance education”; “This questionnaire taught me what e-learning is all about. I knew about e-learning and distance education and now I see how it really works”; “I feel I need to pay more attention to what e-learning is all about”.

Some of them expressed that completing the questionnaire was a learning experience for them as they learned about a lot of issues that are mentioned in the questionnaire. Some employees commented that they found it challenging to complete the questionnaire because they did not understand what was being asked. Comments received in this regard were, “This questionnaire opened my eyes. Filling in this questionnaire was a learning journey for me. I was not aware of a lot of issues that are mentioned in this questionnaire”; “It was difficult filling in the questionnaire because I don’t know much about what is being asked”.

This indicated that even though the employees had done e-learning programmes, there were still a lot of benefits of using e-learning that they did not know about. There were comments such as: “I realised that I can use the institution’s library computers and internet during my e-learning studies if I don’t have my personal computer rather than relying on my workplace computer and paying internet cafes”; “Filling in this questionnaire made me to realise that through e-learning I can be able to study further without relying on the programmes offered at work, I want to know about more benefits of e-learning”. If they had answered the questionnaire before starting their e-learning studies they would have had a different e-learning experience. The questionnaires made them realise how e-learning can really benefit them and help them enhance their knowledge and skills. They now understand what distance education and e-learning is and how it really works. Other respondents said the questionnaire made them realise that studying full-time and part-time are the same. In this regard, there were comments such as, “This questionnaire motivated me to study further after realising that preparations for assessments are not different from those of a formal classroom method. I had an idea that distance learning assessments are easier than those of formal classroom assessments. I feel that I know a lot about distance education than before filling in this questionnaire”; “It made me realise that education is the same, studying full-time and part-time is not different”. One of them expressed that they realised that they can use the institution’s library computers and internet during their e-learning studies if they don’t have personal computers rather than relying on the computers at work and paying for internet cafes. S/he commented that: “I realised that I can use the institution’s library computers and internet during my e-learning studies if I don’t have my personal computer rather than relying on my workplace computer and paying internet café”. More than half of the employees of the Language Services Section who commented about their experience of completing the questionnaire said the questionnaire motivated them to study further. “Filling in this questionnaire made me to realise that through e-learning I can be able to study further without relying on the programmes offered at work. I want to know about more benefits of e-learning. I feel motivated to study further using my computer skills”. This might be the result of the employees coming to understand what they are supposed to do during e-learning education. A few of the employees said they thought that distant learning assessments are easier than those of formal classroom assessments. Some comments with regard to assessments were: “Realising that preparations for assessments are not different from those of a formal classroom method. Had an idea that distance learning assessments are easier than

those of formal classroom assessments”. The questions about assessment criteria made them think about the experiences they had before and after e-learning education and they realised that there was no difference in terms of the amount of time and effort made preparing for them. The majority of the employees who filled in this section said they felt that they know more about distance education than they did before filling in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was seen to be an eye-opener for many of the employees who answered it. Some employees were not aware that they can add more information to the study material they get using the internet when they register for a programme. They used to rely only on the given information. Comments received in this regard were: “I was not aware that I can add more information to the study material I get when I register for a course. I used to rely only on the given information”. “I feel confident that I can study through distance education and get any information I need from the internet”. One employee from the Language Services Section said that the questionnaire prompted him/her to think further about e-learning: after filling in the questionnaire s/he realised that s/he needed to learn more about e-learning to make his/her future studies to be easier. As s/he put it: “After filling in this questionnaire I thought about my distance education I have been doing and realised that I need to learn more about e-learning to make my future studies to be more easier”.

Eight respondents (50%) of the employees who commented about their experience of completing the questionnaire stated that it was long, but very informative at the same time. Comments in this regard were: “I knew about e-learning and distance education and now I see how it really works”; “The questionnaire was long but very informative at the same time. I learnt a lot from the issues mentioned here”; “Filling in this questionnaire made me realise that I have been very ignorant about e-learning”; “I was not aware that I can add more information to the study material I get when I register for a course”; “This questionnaire opened my eyes”; “I feel that I know a lot about distance education than before filling in this questionnaire”; “Filling in this questionnaire taught me about e-learning issues that I never understood”; “I feel enlightened about e-learning and now I am motivated to study further through distance education”. They learned a lot from the issues raised and advantages mentioned. This indicated that the questionnaire was informative and would play a big role in the employees’ future decision-making about their education. It is worth noting that 14 respondents (85%) of the employees who commented on their experience of completing the questionnaire said that it made them realise that through e-learning they would be able to

study further without relying on the programmes offered at work. The knowledge they gained from completing the questionnaire gave them enough confidence to advance their education with or without the help of Parliament. They want to know more about the benefits of e-learning and it made them feel motivated to study further using their computer skills. The respondents also felt confident about their learning abilities and it inspired them to learn more through distance education. Comments received in this regard were: “I feel confident that I can study through distance education and get any information I need from the internet”; “I feel that I can learn independently of my lecturers and fellow students”; “I feel confident about my abilities in education. I am motivated to learn more through distance education. The sky is the limit for me”; “Filling in this questionnaire made me to realise that through e-learning I can be able to study further without relying on the programmes offered at work. I want to know about more benefits of e-learning. I feel motivated to study further using my computer skills”; “This questionnaire motivated me to study further after realising that preparations for assessments are not different from those of a formal classroom method”; “After filling in this questionnaire I thought about my distance education I have been doing and realised that I need to learn more about e-learning to make my future studies to be more easier”.

To summarise, respondents who chose to comment on their experience of completing the questionnaire provide an indication that a questionnaire (and this one in particular in the way it was designed) can help respondents to understand more about the topic that is being addressed. This means that both the researcher and the respondents can regard the use of the instrument as a learning experience: respondents expressed that they learned to appreciate the scope of the issues that were being asked and as a researcher I learned about respondents’ experiences in relation to all the questions posed.

CHAPTER 5: INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study set out to evaluate the influence of e-learning in adult education with special reference to the employees of Parliament RSA. As indicated in previous chapters, 163 questionnaires were distributed in the Language Services Section, and a 100% response rate was obtained.

5.2 ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

Table 1: Number and proportion of employees according to years of work experience and gender

Years of work experience	Male	Female	Total
5 years or less	20	33	53
	37.0%	30.6%	32.5%
6 to 10 years	14	38	53
	25.9%	35.2%	32.5%
11 to 15 years	13	31	44
	24.1%	28.7%	27.0%
16 to 20 years	7	6	13
	13.0%	5.6%	8.0%
Total	54	108	163
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The cross tabulation table indicates that there are more females than males who have less than 5 years of work experience and more males than females who have 16 to 20 years of work experience in the Language Services Section of Parliament. The majority of the employees in this section are females, which can be attributed to the benefits of e-learning allowing them to work and study at the same time. The table above shows that there are fewer overall employees with a high number of work experience years than those with lower

number of work experience years, which confirms that the Parliament gets new employees to replace the ones who leave the section.

It is therefore recommended Parliament offers incentives, such as bursaries for studying that can attract males and also tempt the rest of the employees into staying longer in the institution.

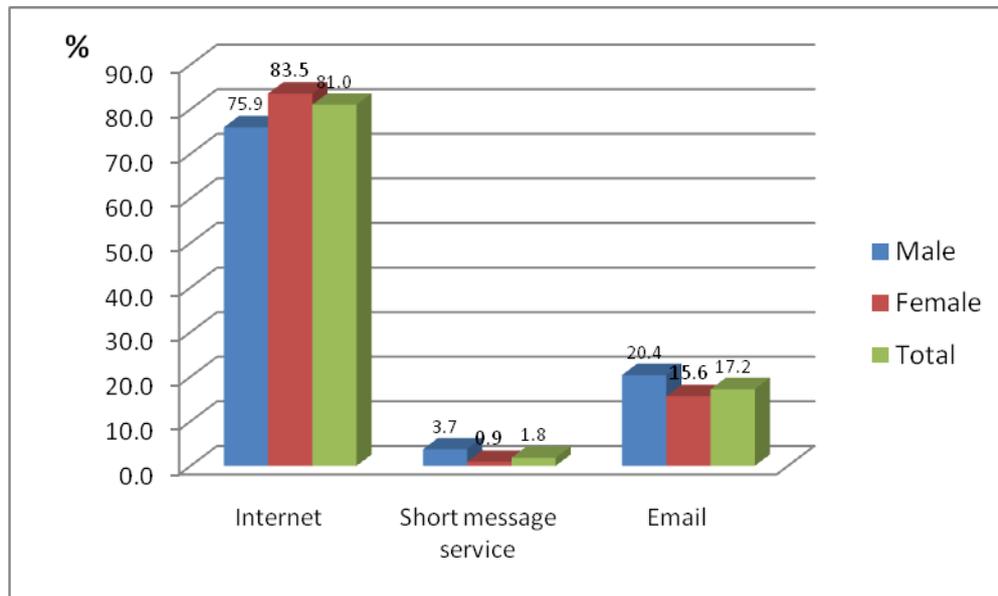
Table 2: Number and proportion according to years of work experience and highest educational qualification

Years of work experience.		Comparison between employees' qualifications and the number of years of their work experience						Total
		Doctorate	Master's degree	Honours degree	Junior degree	Diploma	Other	
F4	Count	0	3	17	14	15	4	53
	Less than 5 years	.0%	8.3%	31.5%	29.8%	83.3%	57.1%	32.5%
	Count	0	10	19	22	1	1	53
	6 to 10 years	.0%	27.8%	35.2%	46.8%	5.6%	14.3%	32.5%
	Count	1	12	16	11	2	2	44
	11 to 15 years	100.0%	33.3%	29.6%	23.4%	11.1%	28.6%	27.0%
	Count	0	11	2	0	0	0	13
	16 to 20 years	.0%	30.6%	3.7%	.0%	.0%	.0%	8.0%
Total	Count	1	36	54	47	18	7	163
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The cross tabulation for employees' qualifications and their work experience shows that there are more employees with fewer work experience than those with more work experience and the more qualified ones are amongst those who have more work experience. This indicates that Parliament should invest in its highly-qualified employees by offering additional e-learning programmes and assistance in order to be able to retain them. The second lowest percentage is of employees with qualifications less than a diploma, which can improve in the future through e-learning programmes. Parliament should provide ongoing training and

educational opportunities designed to help the employees because this can benefit both the Parliament and the employees: the Parliament can have highly-qualified, skilled and competent employees who do their job well and the employees can benefit by being able to work and study at the same time.

Diagram 1: Proportion of employees by gender and forms of technology considered convenient for e-learning.



Out of the total of Parliament employees who prefer the internet as a convenient form of e-learning, there are 83.5% females and 75.9% males. Compared to females more males prefer e-mail, which may be due to the fact that it allows them to do their work anywhere and at any time since they are culturally considered to have less home-based responsibilities than females and travel a lot. It is also evident that there is still room to teach the employees about the different types of technologies that can be used when participating in e-learning education since the majority of them only use a few (such as the internet and e-mail). E-learning proves to be an inexpensive method of learning since the employees can use the internet from the office and use e-mails/chat to get information and communicate with their instructors during the course of their studying programmes.

A number of employees prefer the internet and e-mail as forms of learning technology, whereas there are a number of learning technologies that can be used that the learners can benefit from. There is a need to train the learners about different types of technologies before starting their study programmes so that they have options and do not depend only on a few of them. ICT foundation courses should be offered for people who do not have basic computer skills so that they are in a good position to explore with different types of technologies during their study period, which can influence the success of e-learning. Self-efficacy leads to a positive attitude and confidence, which results in success.

According to Engelbrecht (2003, pp. 20-31), it has become a normal practice that universities use the internet for education. The internet is seen as a very popular information tool in different sectors. It is reliable for obtaining any kind of information - work, social, or education related. Shim et al. (2011, pp. 657-672) stated that there is a growth of interest in the use of smart technologies in the form of smartphones and tablets which provide access to information instantly. It is recommended that Parliament looks beyond skills and skills development to help its employees to approach different types of ICTs. Parliament could provide technology workshops and festivals so that the employees can become familiar with different forms of ICTs available for their education.

Access to the internet enables participation on the discussion-orientated on-line courses at convenient times, encourages enquiry-based learning, giving unlimited access to information and encourages effective teaching. The findings indicate that a lot of employees in the Language Services Section of the Parliament are not familiar with a variety of ICTs that can be used during e-learning education. According to Shim et al. (2011, pp. 657-672), smart technologies prove to be competent in many areas and have shown to be useful, time saving and have a lot of qualities of great diversity, which many employees of Parliament seem to be missing and can benefit from. A variety of technologies can enable them to interact and influence each other during their flexible learning experience through audio, face-to-face chatting, as well as video and web conferencing.

Becoming familiar with a variety of e-learning technologies can enable the employees of Parliament to participate in on-line learning communities and also share and debate work-related experiences with people who do the same work as them around the globe. Learners' inexperience with technology is one of the hindrances of distance learning (Lawson, 2008, p.202). A variety of internet networks should be used to cater for the different preferences of the learners. For the e-learning method to be successful, instructors need to be given training and support by their institutions, as well as by their colleagues (Evala and Gachago, 2012, pp. 153-155). The employees could make use of a person who is well-trained to assist them with technological challenges and introduce them to other types of networks that can be used during their studies.

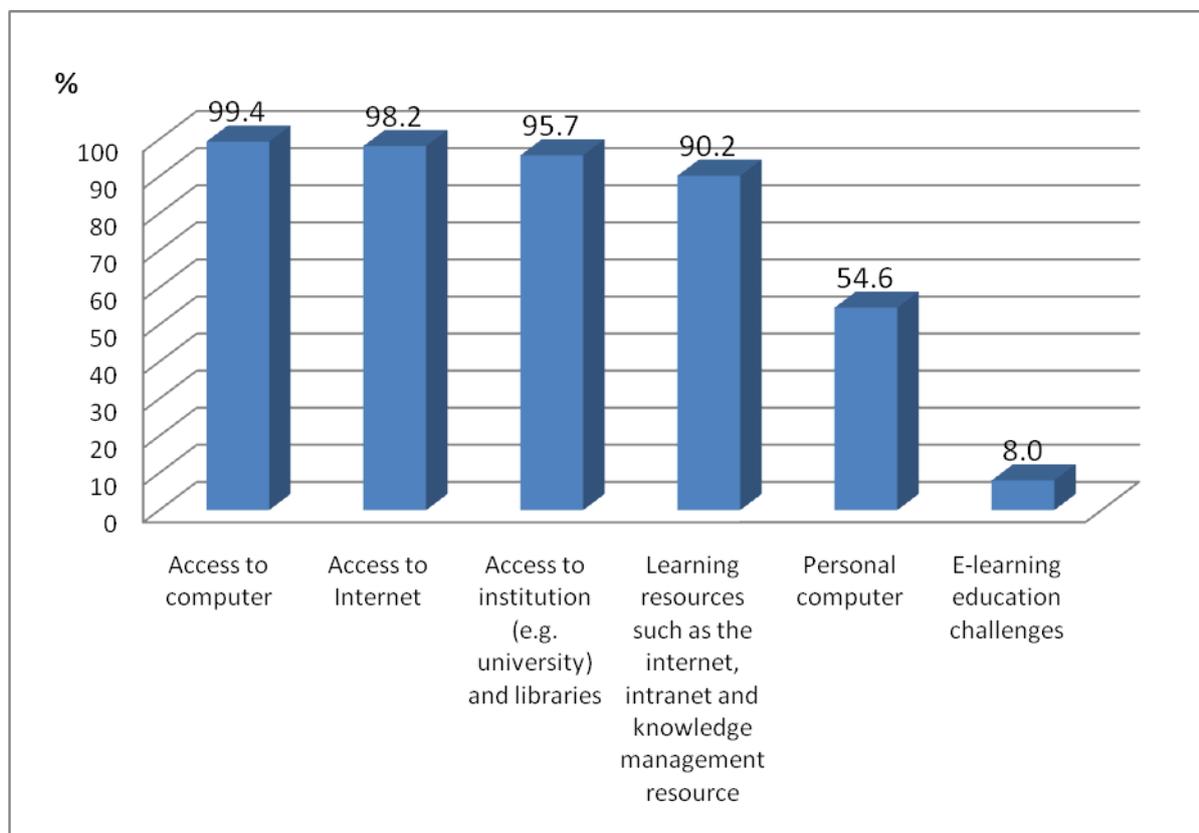
Table 3: Employees' academic competence before and after e-learning experience

Period	Completely incompetent		Very little competence		Very competent	
	N0.	%	N0.	%	N0.	%
Before	34	20.9	9	5.5	120	73.6
After	0	0	4	2.5	159	97.5

The academic competence of employees who were completely inept before their e-learning experience has improved. Academic competence is one of the benefits that e-learning provided to the employees of Parliament. The employees developed their skills from the (pilot) programme of adult education that has been offered and were successful in undertaking their responsibilities from utilising what they have learned from the programme. E-learning can be a motivating factor for the employees to study and become more qualified. This can be advantageous to Parliament because it can have employees who are specialists in their field and who can produce competitive work outcomes. The graph above indicates that e-learning programmes are a success with the employees of Parliament. It gave them the confidence to pursue their learning and bequeathed to the vast majority of them the feeling of competency.

As suggested by Murray (2001, p. 1), e-learning gives opportunities to people to become specialists in their work sections through on-line studying. It is not only the employee who benefits from this; the employer gets a satisfying work outcome from the employee. By investing in e-learning programmes, Parliament has the benefit of employees who excel in their jobs. The employees of Parliament benefited from using e-learning by becoming more competent than before they started the programmes.

Diagram 2: Proportion of employees by access to forms of selected assistance received



The employees had access to their learning institution and libraries that are in partnership with their institution and resources such as the internet, intranet and knowledge management resources. However, a lot of them did not have someone to assist them with e-learning challenges. This may be a hindrance for the success of e-learning because learners can get demotivated and give up their studying if they are faced with challenges that they can't handle.

Parliament can lose potential qualified employees by not investing in people with skills to assist the employees during their studies. This may also be an indication that Parliament is not aware that there is a need for a support team to be available to the employees who are taking part in the programmes sponsored. More employees who did the programme know how to use a computer since they own personal computers and do not have limitations to use work computers, thus helping them improve their competency at work. However, it is recommended that Parliament provides a strong support system for the employees who are studying to motivate them to do well.

Computers, the internet, libraries, the intranet and knowledge management resources are the most frequently used forms of e-learning that were used by the respondents of this research. Mahmud (2010, p. 154) suggests that the “introduction of schemes to buy computers at affordable price should be prerequisite for e-learning”. Even though access to Parliament’s computers was not a problem to the employees, it is recommended that the employees get subsidised computers so that they don’t rely only on the desktops in the office. This will also encourage them to learn to use a range of forms of technologies.

Table 4: Employees’ feelings about their e-learning experience

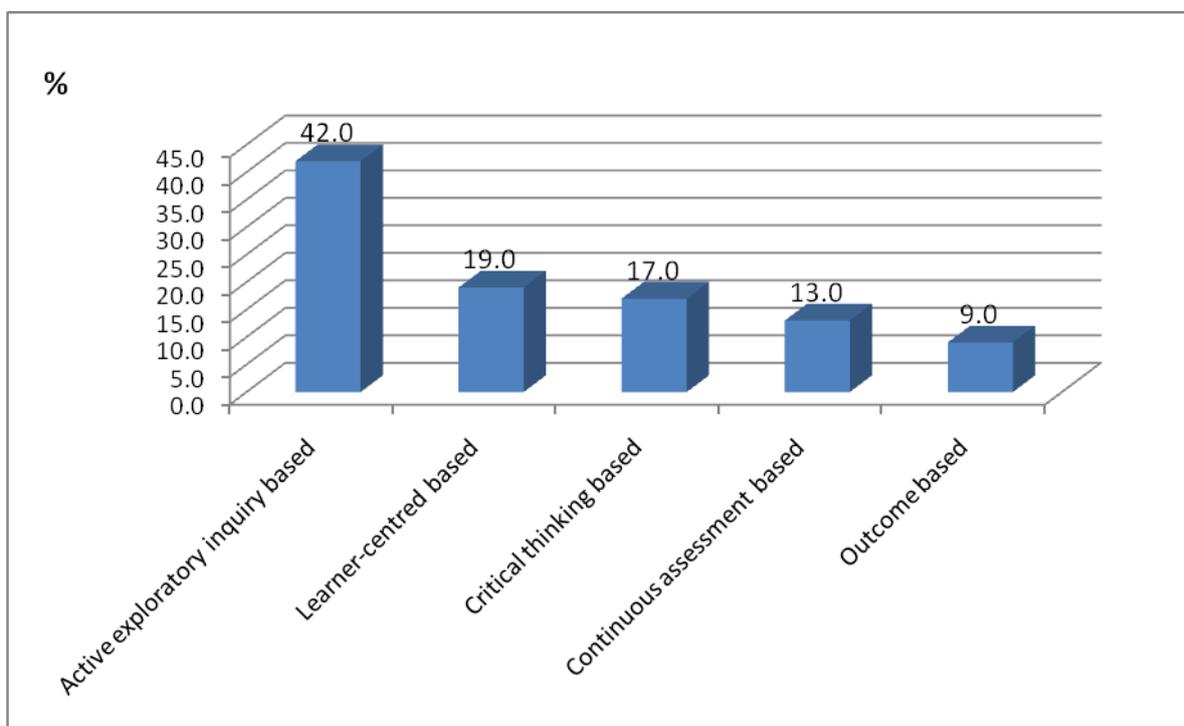
Statements	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
There were limitations in using a computer at work.	152	93.3	6	3.7	1	0.6	0	0	4	2.5
There were limitations in using a computer during my studies.	98	60.1	35	21.5	0	0	7	4.3	22	13.5
E-learning is an expensive method of studying.	149	91.4	10	6.1	3	1.8	0	0	0	0
I cannot use a computer.	147	90.2	13	8.0	2	1.2	0	0	0	0
I used only e-mail to communicate and share information with my study group.	8	4.9	137	84.0	9	5.5	6	3.7	2	1.2
E-learning added value to the quality of my study programme.	0	0	2	1.2	6	3.7	12	7.4	142	8.1

I will apply the e-learning methods gained through e-learning to my work.	2	1.2	0	0	8	4.9	4	2.5	148	90.8
E-learning broke political barriers for me.	8	4.9	26	16.0	54	33.1	60	36.8	14	8.6
E-learning broke physical barriers for me.	0	0	0	0	8	4.9	14 3	87.7	11	6.7
I did not feel deprived of face-to-face contact with the instructor.	0	0	35	21.5	2	1.2	37	22.7	88	54.0
The e-learning programme gave me the desire to enhance my ICT skills.	0	0	2	1.2	0	0	15	9.2	145	89.0
E-learning courses are not inferior to formal classroom courses.	0	0	0	0	20	12.3	37	22.7	105	64.4

There are a number of issues related to adult education that may negate the possibility of a successful e-learning programme e.g., limitations in using a computer, not knowing how to use a computer and the studies being expensive for an individual. From Table 4 above, it can be seen that the employees in the Language Services Section have a desire to enhance their ICT skills. They are also aspiring to apply the e-learning skills they gained through e-learning to their work because they are practicing in the office while studying since a lot of their learning content has to do with what they do every day at the office. Most of them do not feel deprived of face-to-face contact with an instructor because they use e-mails to keep in touch with the instructor at any time. It doesn't feel like they are missing out by not attending classes because they do all the practical work at the office. Nevertheless, a mentor would be

helpful for guidance when it comes to educational challenges and access to personal computers. A high level of motivation that can lead to the success of e-learning can be achieved by offering training programs to improve computer literacy and language proficiency to the employees before they embark on e-learning education (Mahmud, 2010, p. 155). The Parliament of RSA can achieve more through the programmes it provides to its employees if the employees can be offered in-house computer literacy courses to prepare them for the intensive use of computers during the learning programmes.

Diagram 3: Percentage distribution of employees according to perceptions of the e-learning curriculum

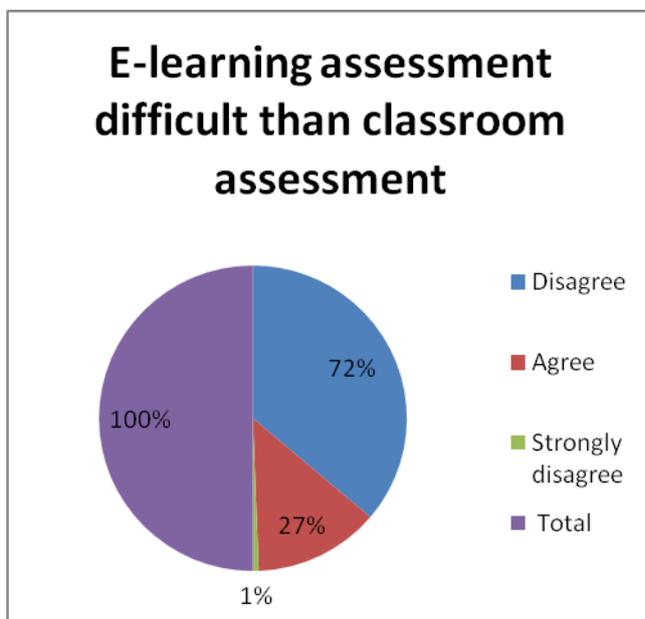


During the course of their study programmes the employees had to get a lot of information using a variety of sources, they had to be active in investigating and discovering knowledge on their own. The curriculum of their study programmes encouraged the critical evaluation of the information and was based on outcomes and continuous assessments. This is an indication that the curriculum of the study programmes was beneficial to the employees of the Language Services Section of Parliament because it encouraged self-teaching and offered them a chance to discover information from a variety of sources on their own.

With regard the issue of employees who still feel that they are deprived of the contact with the instructor, blended learning which allows them face-to-face interaction with their instructor is recommended. Hiralaal (2012, pp. 316-328) describes blended learning as the

method of learning that combines face-to-face classroom instruction with on-line learning. He suggests that this method of learning is more appropriate for the student-centred learning style. Self-paced, on-line interactions and individualised or one-on-one teaching environments can improve the influence of e-learning. The employees can benefit from the blended learning method. Murray (2001, p. 1) states that e-learning makes it possible for employees to learn and integrate studying and work since they use the same tools and technology when learning as when they are working. For e-learning to be productively used to improve adult education in the Parliament of RSA, the curriculum will need to undergo some changes, e.g. encourage critical thinking, be outcomes-based and, more importantly, be learner-centred.

Diagram 4: Employees' experience with assessment during e-learning programmes



Out of the total of employees who took part in the programme, 72% were not intimidated by the assessments. The employees think that the assessments on e-learning are not different from classroom assessment, which may be an indication that their programmes were properly structured and the learning content was enough to provide them with all the information needed during assessments. This shows that e-learning is not inferior to the traditional education method and is a fair option to everyone who is interested in pursuing their studies. This complements Table 4 where it was also shown that employees do not regard e-learning as an inferior option. There is no need for anyone to quit their jobs in order to be able to embark on studying; e-learning is bridging the gap between employees and education.

A lot of the employees (82%) felt that they did not have enough time to think during assessments and that there were strict time constraints. There should be a variety of assessment options for adult learners such as:

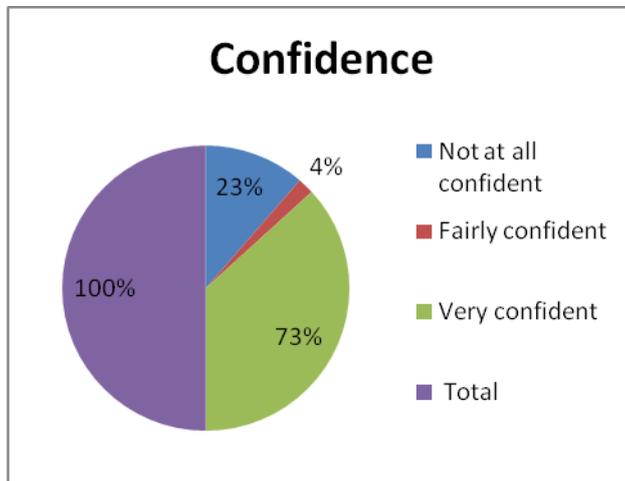
- an on-line method which is an in-depth knowledge assessment where learners can answer and return their e-mail responses within a specified period of time;
- assignment method where the learners can write an assignment and submit it for assessment; and
- sit-in examinations where the learners can go to an exam centre and write the exam under the supervision of invigilators.

Some people are intimidated by assessments and end up getting de-motivated from taking part in study programmes because of the fear that they will fail. Knowing that they have options when it comes to assessment time can lower their anxiety and make them feel confident that they can do it. E-learning assessments proved to require an in-depth understanding of the content and encouraged applied knowledge. Notably, a lot of employees (72%) do not see e-learning assessments as more difficult than classroom assessments, which is a good indication that the e-learning programmes were properly planned, presented and the content was not difficult for the employees to understand.

5.2.1 E-Learning Awareness

Before their e-learning experience, a high percentage of people had thought that studying was expensive and that they had to be computer proficient to be able to succeed in their studies. This indicates that factors influencing the success of e-learning, like technology awareness, enhancing basic technology knowledge and skills and attitude towards e-learning still need to be improved upon to ensure that e-learning is a success. Parliament can introduce programmes to teach about e-learning and its benefits to the employees. In that way, a lot of people will be motivated to learn more about using a computer to get technology skills and be willing to take part in the in-house programmes that are offered by Parliament.

Diagram 5: Employees' confidence in taking part in future e-learning education



Contrary to Bangladesh, which is one of the developing countries with the lowest rate of internet use, South Africa has seen an improvement in the use of internet over the past years and that has resulted in more people becoming confident with their computer literacy. A lot of employees feel very confident about taking part in education using e-learning methods because of the benefits it offers them. They get a lot of support and motivation from fellow learners and colleagues. The instructor is an e-mail away and e-learning enables them to study whilst their personal and job responsibilities are not neglected. There is sufficient bandwidth and connectivity for the employees to be able to download the web contents which is a motivating factor in the success of their learning. Even those who do not have internet at home have unlimited access to Parliament's internet.

The diagram above indicates that the employees of Parliament benefited from e-learning education. The e-learning approach brought benefits such as working privately and independently, which gave the employees confidence about their learning abilities. Their computer knowledge and technology skills improved and they can now search for information on their own. It was easy for the employees to get quick feedback and not to worry about having to go to the instructor's office every time they needed help. In addition, the more they knew about e-learning the more their studying became easier for them. E-learning taught them to look for information from different sources.

With sponsored data bundles from Parliament, the employees can benefit enormously since they will not have to only rely on the office internet. They can be able to complete their

assignments and research at home. This will boost their confidence in knowing that they can learn even when they are at home and be able to be in contact with their instructors whenever they need to.

With regard the final open-ended question in the questionnaire, the employees who completed this section indicated that they also benefited from completing the questionnaire for this study because it had some issues which most of the employees had never thought about and gave them a clearer picture of how e-learning works. There are a lot of benefits that come with using the e-learning method, which the employees came to know about after completing the questionnaire itself. Through e-learning, the employees realised that the institution's library and computers are available to them to use just like full-time students, which made them be more eager to pursue their studies further. Through the in-house programmes offered by Parliament, the employees learned that they have to prepare properly for the assessments as they would when studying full-time, which motivated them to think about studying further and not rely only on the programmes offered in Parliament.

It is recommended that Parliament creates a learner services centre where the employees can get all the information they might need about the programmes offered and what to expect if they take part, since some may just not take part for the reason that they don't know what is expected of them or because of fear that they will not afford it financially or do not have time to start learning.

5.2.2 Resources

The findings of this study indicate that many (91.4%) people did not have someone to assist them with challenges during their studying. It is thus recommended that there should be staff that is dedicated to e-learning support, so that when a learner encounters problems or challenges they know where to go for help rather than relying only on fellow learners. Furthermore, there should also be designated areas with computers and internet where the learners can go and do their study work rather than using the same work station. Many e-learning programmes fail to reach the high levels of success that are anticipated because of the lack of the management of the learning event, where learners can get de-motivated by not having someone to help when they need assistance. Broos (2009, p. 13) states that understanding of the importance of lifelong learning and also being able to learn effectively are essential for the success of education. The employees of Parliament missed the benefit of having a mentor to help them when they encountered problems during their studies. Of

course this does not mean someone to spoon-feed them. Even if the curriculum is learner-centred, guidance and motivation is important to lead the learners towards the right direction of acquiring information. Parliament can conduct workshops to teach the employees about the importance of lifelong learning so that the employees can be interested in learning programmes that Parliament offers to them. Naidoo (2011, pp. 106-120) suggests that learners have to be independent of their teachers and be interactive with the instructional content. They must not see knowledge as a teacher's possession. Mahmud (2010, p. 154) suggests that the "introduction of schemes to buy computers at affordable price should be prerequisite for e-learning". Even though access to the Parliament's computers was not a problem to the employees, it would be helpful if the employees can get subsidised computers so that they don't rely only on the desktops in the office. Parliament should have a human resource plan that will cover the following in the training programmes of employees:

- a) Guidance
- b) Training
- c) Mentoring
- d) Counselling
- e) Working resources
- f) Any other relevant assistance that the employee may require to make the learning process a success.

5.2.3 Possible Follow-Up Interviews

All the participants completed the questionnaire; but where spaces were left in the questionnaire for additional comments after some of the questions (see Appendix A) participants did not offer these. Also, for the open-ended question number 16, only 11 respondents offered an answer. Nevertheless, these answers did provide a sample of ideas in participants' own words as to the ways in which e-learning could be enjoyable, as well as how it could create challenges. Once the programme has been extended to the other divisions, it is recommended that respondents are encouraged – perhaps through some follow up interviewing of certain participants – to offer some richer perspectives on their experiences, and also on types of e-learning such as experiences of CD-ROM (audio or video) and web-based training. This needs to be followed up in further research.

5.3 CONCLUSION

This study used, as respondents, employees from the Language Services Section who participated in the learning programme that was offered by the South African Parliament from June 2011 until the end of November 2012 as a pilot in compliance with the skills development Act. To assist the skills development of employees in this section, various courses were offered in this pilot programme, namely: general management, leadership, people management, public financial management, project management and economics. The Skills Development Programme was set up to benefit employees from entry level to management positions. Since the courses that were evaluated in this study were meant to be a pilot, this study should be helpful in its recommendations also for the further courses being offered to the other divisions in future.

Based on the findings of this study, e-learning has been shown to have potential in the study programmes of the employees of the Parliament of RSA. These findings highlight the influence of e-learning in empowering the employees of the Language Services Section through study programmes that were made available to them. The employees in other divisions in Parliament can also similarly benefit from the learning programmes if Parliament offers them after the evaluation of the outcome of the pilot has been concluded.

For this report and recommendations to be noticed by the people responsible for constructing/managing the courses in the other divisions, the findings of the study will be communicated to the human resources department, which is responsible for course development, through the library services. Since this programme was the initiative of the Secretary to Parliament (CEO), the Parliament Management Team will be requested to identify potential employees that need to be fast-tracked through this skills development programme. Parliament has the career management, promotion and succession planning policies that will also assist in implementing these recommendations throughout Parliament. Since all the employees of Parliament share the same rights to the programmes being offered and since the employees in all divisions that are likely to do the courses are not that different from the respondents of this study (and also can benefit from courses in management, leadership, etc.), the same kinds of issues do arise in the other divisions.

It is my view that the recommendations that I offered will, for the most part, be applicable to the other divisions as well. The employees can likewise benefit from technology workshops so that they can be able to use different types of ICTs available to them for their education. Nevertheless, after the courses have been set up, further research can be undertaken to ascertain the extent to which the results that were derived from the Language Services Section are relevant to the rest of the departments and sections in Parliament. (Further studies may wish to make use of some of the questions in the questionnaire as developed specifically for this study, and piloted with respondents.). A high percentage of employees in this study (73%) are motivated to continue with their education in Parliament or privately.

It can be surmised already from the results of the study that it is clearly beneficial for Parliament to continue with e-learning education for its employees so as to facilitate better work outcomes and improvement in reaching their goals. This can be continued in further programmes, while I hope that some of my recommendations as set out above will also be useful to the management of all departments and sections in Parliament.

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APPENDIX A

COVER PAGE FOR THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Purpose: The purpose of this questionnaire is to evaluate the influence of e-learning on adult education with special reference to the employees of Parliament RSA.

Institution guiding the study: University of South Africa.

Confidentially: All information given will be treated confidentially. Answers to questionnaires will be used only in aggregate for the purpose of my creating a research report.

Risks or discomforts: There are no anticipated risks and discomforts if participating.

Terms of participation: There is no benefits/compensation, participation is voluntary and there will be no penalty in terminating participation.

Selection of participants: Everyone who participated in the learning programme in the division is welcome to participate.

Anonymity: A respondent is not supposed to identify him/herself for the purpose of a proper and honest response.

Speciality: This questionnaire forms part of an independent project for a qualification of the degree of Master of Education in adult education.

Answer: Make a cross in the boxes provided.

Questionnaire number:

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An evaluation study of the influence of e-learning in adult education, with special reference to the employees of Parliament RSA.

SELF-ADMINISTERED INSTRUMENT

This is a confidential questionnaire that will be used to elicit information to enable to finish academic studies.

Unit/Section	
Position	
Contact Details	
Date	

A. Bibliographical information

1. Gender

No.	Gender	Code
1.1	Male	1
1.2	Female	2

2. Please indicate your highest educational qualification.

No.	Qualification	Code
2.1	Doctorate	1
2.2	Master's degree	2
2.3	Honours degree	3
2.4	Junior degree	4
2.5	Degree	5
2.6	Diploma	6
2.7	Other specify	7

3. Please indicate the total number of years of educational experience.

No.	Years	Code
3.1	Less than 5 years	1
3.2	6 to 10 years	2
3.3	11 to 15 years	3
3.4	16 to 20 years	4
3.5	21 and above years	5

Any comment

4. Please indicate the total number of years of work experience in Parliament RSA.

No.	Years	Code
4.1	Less than 5 years	1
4.2	6 to 10 years	2
4.3	11 to 15 years	3
4.4	16 to 20 years	4
4.5	21 and above years	5

Any comment

B. E-learning and adult education

5. How did you know about e-learning?

No.	Statement	Code
5.1	My manager told me about it.	1
5.2	It was advertised at the university.	2
5.3	My colleague told me about it.	3
5.4	Other specified	4

6. From the table below please indicate what you consider to be the most convenient form/s of e-learning for distance education. You can tick more than one option below.

No.	Form of e-learning	Code
6.1	Internet	1
6.2	Face-book	2
6.3	Skype	3
6.4	Intranet	4
6.5	Short message service	5
6.6	E-mail	6
6.7	Other	7

If your response is other, please specify

C.PRE-E-LEARNING EDUCATION

7. If you think about the time before you started your distance education, how would you describe your perception about e-learning? You can tick more than one response.

No.	Statements	Code
7.1	I didn't know about e-learning.	1
7.2	I thought it was expensive.	2
7.3	I thought it was waste of time.	3
7.4	I thought it needed a person who is good with computers.	4
7.5	I thought I needed to have a smart phone.	5

Any other comment

8. What were your expectations when you started your distance correspondence using e-learning? You may tick more than one response. Then think about your study programme as you have experienced it and tell us whether the programme met your expectations or not.

No.	Statements	Did you have this expectation?		Did the E-learning met this expectation?	
		Yes (1)	No (2)	Yes (3)	No (4)
8.1	E-learning is cost effective				
8.2	E-learning encourages inquiry-based learning				
8.3	E-learning gets unlimited access to information				
8.4	E-learning encourages effective teaching				
8.5	E-learning makes it quick and efficient to enter into regular				

	discussions and dialogues				
8.6	E-learning teaches technical and business skills through the internet.				
8.7	E-learning solves the problem of work demands and personal responsibilities which result in less time for attending classes.				
8.8	E-learning enables participation on the discussion-oriented on-line course at convenient times.				
8.9	E-learning enables access to course materials from personal computers at home.				

Please comment on your expectations.

D. Initial experience of e-learning

9. Please indicate using the criteria below your initial e-learning experience.

No	Statement	Very	Somewhat	Not at all
9.1	User-friendly			
9.2	Accessible			
9.3	Interesting			
9.4	Interactive			
9.5	Provided useful material			

If your response is “somewhat” or “not at all” please indicate how these could be improved.

10. Please indicate your academic competence before and after your e-learning programme by using the scale below.

Period	1. Completely incompetent	2. Very little competence	3. Very competent
10.1 Before			
10.2 After			

More comment

11. Please indicate your satisfaction with e-learning on the criteria below.

	11.1 E-learning technology	11.2 Learning material	11.3 Learning content	11.4 Improvement of education standards
Good				
Fair				
Poor				

12. Thinking about your e-learning experience so far, which of the following describes the way you feel. You can tick more than one option.

No.	Statements	Code
12.1	I feel that I am an independent learner.	1
12.2	I am capable of working and studying at the same time.	2
12.3	E-learning prepared me to handle difficult work-based challenges.	3
12.4	I am more confident to be part of a discussion and dialogue groups than I was before.	4
12.5	I find it easy to relate the content of the study to my work.	5
12.6	When I am studying and have doubts and difficulties I get a lot of motivation and support.	6
12.7	I enjoy my studies more than before.	7
12.8	I am able to assist my fellow learners with their studies.	8
12.9	I feel that I can ask for assistance from a fellow learner.	9

Resource

13. Please indicate if you had the following within your e-learning study.

No.	Statements	Yes (1)	No (2)	Comment
13.1	Someone to assist you with all e-learning education challenges.			
13.2	Learning resources, such as the internet, intranet and knowledge management resources.			
13.3	Access to your Institution (University or other) and other libraries that are in partnership with your Institution (e.g. UCT, UNISA etc).			
13.4	Personal computer			
13.5	Access to computer			
13.6	Access to internet			

Any comment

14. Please mark the most appropriate answer below.

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
14.1	There were limitations in using a computer at work.					
14.2	There were limitations in using a computer during my studies.					
14.3	E-learning is an expensive method of studying.					
14.4	I cannot use a computer.					
14.5	I used only e-mail to communicate and share information with my study group.					
14.6	E-learning added value to the quality of my study programme.					
14.7	I will apply the e-learning methods gained through e-learning to my work.					
14.8	E-learning broke political bears for me.					
14.9	E-learning broke physical bears for me.					
14.10	I did not feel deprived of face-to-face contact with the instructor.					
14.11	The e-learning programme gave me the desire to enhance my ICT skills.					
14.12	E-learning courses are not inferior to formal classroom courses.					

Please write any comments that you have in relation to the statements above.

E. Assessment criteria

15. Please mark the most appropriate answer below.

No.	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree
15.1	Monitoring of the assessment is intimidating in nature.				
15.2	Assessment has strict time constraints.				
15.3	It encourages applied knowledge.				
15.4	It requires in-depth understanding of the content.				
15.5	It discourages copying and cramming of the content.				
15.6	I had enough time to think in-depth when responding to questions.				
15.7	E-learning assessment is difficult compared to classroom.				

16. Thinking about your e-learning experience in general, what you have enjoyed most throughout your studying?

17. Study the following curriculum checklist and tick the applicable descriptions, you can tick more than one description.

The curriculum was:

No	Statement	Code
17.1	Learner-centred-based	1
17.2	Instructor-centred-based	2
17.3	Continuous assessment-based	3
17.4	Outcomes-based	4
17.5	Active exploratory inquiry-based	5
17.6	Critical thinking-based	6

18. Do you feel confident in taking part in education using e-learning methods?

No	Statement	Code
18.1	Very confident	1
18.2	Fairly confidence	2
18.3	Not at all confident	3

Please provide reasons for your answer below.

Please note: I am also interested to know how your experience of completing this questionnaire was. Did the questions help you to think further about any of the issues? Please write any comments that you may have:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

APPENDIX B

19 Villa Marina

Beach Road

Mouillepoint

8005

27 November 2012

Dear Participant

My name is Fikile Mbuli; I am a student at Unisa in the department of Education. I am doing a study that forms part of an independent project for a qualification of a degree of Master of Education in adult education under the supervision of Professor Norma Romm.

I am inviting you to participate in a research project entitled: An evaluation of the influence of e-learning in adult education with special reference to the employees of Parliament RSA. This study was developed to ask you a few questions regarding the influence of e-learning in your education. It is hoped that this information can help to explore the benefits of e-learning to adult education.

The aim of this study is to explore the influence of e-learning in enhancing the skills of employees of Parliament of RSA and to provide an adult education skills development framework that can be used to successfully use e-learning in empowering the employees of Parliament. The results of this study will be shared with you.

There are no identified risks from participating in this research. This survey is confidential and participation is completely voluntary, you may refuse to participate without consequence. The questionnaire will take you about 45 minutes to complete. There are no costs to you for participating in this study.

You will receive no compensation for participating in the research study. Every effort will be made to preserve your confidentiality; responses to the survey will only be reported in aggregated form to protect the identity of respondents. Neither the researcher nor the University has a conflict of interest with the results.

Further information regarding the research can be obtained from my supervisor Professor Norma Romm at rommnra@unisa.ac.za.

Thank you for your consideration. Your help is greatly appreciated.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the above information, are 18 years of age or above and agree to participate in the evaluation study of the influence of e-learning in adult education, with special reference to the employees of Parliament RSA.

Signature _____

Date _____

Contact details: e-mail: fikile@dr-mbuli.co.za, Phone numbers: 021 4347369, 0837767880

