

**Exploring Students' Experiences of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
Facilitated Feedback: A Case Study of Business Management Education Students at a
Higher Institution in KwaZulu-Natal**

BY

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree in
Master of Education
Social Science Education
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DECLARATION

I, Anyanwu Clinton Chidiebere, declare that this dissertation is my own work, and has not been submitted for any degree at any other university.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research report to my lovely wife,

Mrs Anyanwu Stella Ezinne

And

To my parents

Mr and Mrs Anyanwu Canice Anaelechi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Most of all let me thank the Lord God Almighty, for giving me his grace, strength, good health and wisdom which proved essential for the completion of this research project. Truly his mercy endures forever and never fails. In this respect, I wish to express my heart-felt gratitude to the following excellent people who in one way or the other have been instrumental to the success of this research work. I am very grateful to:

- My supervisor, Dr. Ngwenya Jabulisile Cynthia, for her continuous support, guidance, encouragement and understanding during the course of this research study. Thank you for imparting confidence in me.
- My co-supervisor, Dr. Khanare Fumane Portia, thank you for your encouragement and inspiration, most importantly being there for me always.
- To my lovely wife, Mrs Stella Ezinne Anyanwu, thank you for your support.
- My parents, Mr and Mrs Anyanwu Canice Anaelechi, for giving me the opportunity to further my education. Papa, your advice to me to look unto God and to have patience has proven to be successful.
- I wish to thank my brothers and my sisters for their prayers and support.
- Also, I wish to thank my friends both in Nigeria and in South Africa.

ABSTRACT

The changing context of higher education (HE) in an era of rapid technological and economic changes internationally, and in South Africa presents new challenges for lecturers and students. As an aspect of the challenges, the need for the integration of technology in teaching and learning in South African schools had received pivotal attention. Presently, there is widespread interest and research into the role feedback plays in education and modes of providing feedback to students in higher institution. The focus on the experiences of using email in teaching and learning has not been sufficiently explored. There is a major gap in terms of understanding the experiences of higher institution students of using e-mail feedback in teaching and learning in higher institutions.

Hence in this study the focus is to explore students' experiences of email facilitated feedback in Business Management Education at a Higher Institution. The study examines the use of e-mail as a teaching tool for providing feedback to Business Management Education students. In the study, students' experiences of using e-mail feedback method in Business Management Education are explored in order to understand how useful and accessible e-mail feedback is as a teaching tool. The study further looks at what influences the use of e-mail facilitated feedback had on students' learning of Business Management Education.

This study uses a qualitative case study design and located within the interpretive paradigm. Ten Business Management Education students at a higher institution in KwaZulu-Natal Provinces, South Africa made up the study participants and provided the source of data for this study. The ten students are in their 3rd and 4th year of study. Students from the Institution had access to mains electricity, and the whole institution is served by a Local Area Network (LAN) which is constantly accessible to the students for academic and learning purposes.

Findings from this study reveal that students have differing experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback. While majority of students have positive experience of e-mail feedback, some had challenges using e-mail facilitated feedback. Findings further revealed that the use of e-mail facilitated feedback in Business Management Education did not take into consideration the gaps in terms of levels of prior knowledge and literacy in basic computing and internet applications across the student population. In addition, students did not receive prior orientation on how to access and the uses of the e-mail facilitated mode of feedback that is used in the Business Management Education school.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

BED HONS	BACHELOR OF EDUCATION HONOURS
CHE	COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION
DoE	DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
E-MAIL	ELECTRONIC MAIL
HE	HIGHER EDUCATION
ICT	INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY
LAN	LOCAL AREA NETWORK
SMS	STUDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
MCQ	MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTION
UNESCO	UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANISATION
E-REVOLUTION	ELECTRONIC REVOLUTION
EMAIL ID	ELECTRONIC IDENTITY
IT	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
E-EDUCATION	ELECTRONIC EDUCATION

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter serves to orientate the reader to the study. The chapter provides the background and the overview of the study. The rationale for embarking on the study, the statement of purpose and critical questions guiding the study are outlined. The chapter goes on to provide a brief overview of the research design and the methodology adopted in the study. The scope, the ethical considerations and limitations of the study are also outlined. The chapter concludes by providing an outline of the structure of the chapters to follow.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Feedback is a multifaceted concept with multiple definitions offered by literature. Some authors (Mostert & Quinn, 2009; Iron, 2008; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Naidoo, 2007) view feedback as powerful influence in the improvement of learning. Moreover, these authors, Mostert and Quinn (2009) and Naidoo (2007) maintain that providing feedback to students during teaching and learning can lead to students' academic improvement. Sadler (2010) describes feedback as a means to expedite the learning process as well as teaching performance. This suggests that for teaching and learning to take place in its expected way, effective feedback is needed (Hattie & Gan, 2011).

Feedback as an integral part of the teaching and learning process is an educational tool for improvement which enhances teaching and learning (Haggins, Hartley & Skelton, 2010). During the process of teaching and learning, feedback helps teachers to identify gaps in students' learning and recommends the way to close the gap (Higgins, Hartley & Skelton, 2010 & Iron, 2008). This is in line with Ngwenya (2012) who states that the purpose of feedback is to discover the gap and to provide information that will help learners to close the gap. In addition, the Council on Higher Education in South Africa (CHE) describes feedback as the practice of giving response to the students upon completion of task, and informing the student about what needs to be done next (CHE, 2003). Therefore, what is evident from the discussion is that feedback should identify learners' problems and provide information on how to improve in their learning.

Feedback is any information, procedure or activity which affords or enhances student learning based on comments relating to their learning (Iron, 2008). According to Ngwenya and Maistry (2012), feedback serves as a two-way communication between the student and the lecturer. It serves the central purpose of supporting students to develop logical skills. Therefore, in order to equip students with knowledge about their studies, there is a crucial need of providing students with feedback on their assessment task.

Although the mode in which feedback has been communicated has not been static, the method of providing feedback to students has been evolving with time from traditional, modern to the integration of technological devices. For example, oral/verbal feedback; written feedback and electronic mail feedback are different ways that are being used to provide feedback to students in higher institutions.

Furthermore, talking about changes in feedback communication, literature by different authors from different countries show that the main barriers to the effective use of feedback in teaching and learning are the methods of providing feedback to students (Mostert & Quinn, 2009; Iron, 2008; Naidoo, 2007). This has led to many criticisms and questioning about feedback effectiveness to improve students learning. Students complain of illegible handwriting when giving feedback in written form. Students do not understand well all the information when given feedback verbally (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). On the other hand, lecturers see provision of feedback to students as time-consuming and challenging (Mckinmm, Jolie & Cantillon, 2003). Due to lack of time on the side of the lecturers, sometimes feedback is provided to students when it is no longer helpful to them, and feedback is sometimes not well detailed (Black & William, 2006 & Taras, 2006). They also complain that students are not making use of both written and oral feedback provided to them.

Thus, because of feedback complexities which have led to misconceptions of feedback effectiveness in teaching and learning, providing students feedback through e-mail facilitated feedback method is assumed to be the answer to increase in the rate of feedback delivery in teaching and learning. It is the assumption that e-mail facilitated feedback method is believed to be the response to speed-up feedback delivery in teaching and learning. Also, that e-mail facilitated feedback method delivers prompt messages, and also that integrating e-mail in

teaching and learning may contribute to limiting many challenges encountered in the feedback process (Mckinmm, Jolie & Cantillon, 2003).

Nevertheless, the term e-mail feedback method shows the processes by which human feedback is delivered (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). E-mail feedback has many advantages over other forms of communication like verbal feedback method and written feedback. One of the advantages of e-mail feedback is that it is fast and delivers information instantly (Livingstone, 2012). This suggests that lecturers integrating e-mail in their teaching can produce interactive course materials containing activities; send prompt feedback to students, animations; simulations and can stimulate a great deal of interaction in classrooms (Li, 2000). All these can improve learning and are often more enjoyable and meaningful for students. Therefore, the study focuses on e-mail facilitated feedback method as it is assumed to be the solution to speed up the provision of feedback to students in higher institutions.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The changing context of higher education (HE) due to technological and economic changes both internationally and in South Africa, presents new challenges for lecturers and students. South Africa is among the countries that has embraced and adopted technology. For instance the Department of Education draft White Paper on e-Education (Department of Education, DoE, 2004) outlines the main focus on teaching and learning for a new generation of young people who are growing up in a digital world and are comfortable with technology. Also, the Council on Higher Education (CHE, 2003) and the Department of Education (DoE, 2004) both stipulate the need for the integration of technology in teaching and learning in South African schools. Therefore, in the University, to be precise Business Management Education, the lecturers are using a particular kind of ICT called Subject Moodle in their teaching.

Modular object-oriented dynamic learning environment (Moodle) is an interactive site or channel where both lecturers and students can interact or communicate with one another to discuss issues concerning their modules. Furthermore, although in Business Management Education the lecturers use subject Moodle to teach, they can also use other forms of ICTs apart from Subject Moodle to communicate with their students, for example, lecturers in Business Management Education may communicate to their students through phone text messages, student management system (SMS) and the institutionalised electronic mail system.

The expansion of the application of technology in teaching and learning has been one of the major recent challenges in higher education (D'Andrea and Gosling, 2005; Gipps, 2005). However, owing to these changes and challenges in higher education, the use of e-mail is presented as a solution to many of the teaching and learning challenges brought about by the new HE landscape. As providing feedback to students' task is an important aspect in teaching and learning, therefore, this study is focused on the use of e-mail as a teaching tool for providing feedback to Business Management Education students.

1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The decision to choose this topic emanated from the period I came to the University to study for Bachelor of Education Honours. After my registration and selection of the modules which I intended to undertake in my Bachelor of Education Honours (BED Hons) in Social Science Education in 2011, information concerning some of the modules was sent to me through the university e-mail system known by then as Group Wise. Group Wise as it is called now is an interactive site designed by the University community, to enhance communication between the lecturers, staff and the students of the institution.

Through this particular channel, information such as readings, assignments and due dates, as well as other important information was sent to me through the same process. At that time it was very difficult because I knew nothing about this process of receiving feedback. Using e-mail and how to access the GroupWise was not even discussed during orientation. I missed the readings, the assignments due dates and other important information about my modules that was sent to me through the university e-mail system called GroupWise because I did not know about the process of receiving and sending feedback electronically and I was expected to know about the process. I was completely lost and confused, because at the time I did my BED degree the process of sending and receiving feedback was the traditional process of verbal and written feedback, where you have to submit your assignment to the lecturer on a hard copy. After a while, I realised that students actually receive feedback through the e-mail system. For instance, students receive feedback in Business Management Education and other modules through the same institution e-mail system known as GroupWise, Subject module. Examination results are being published online, even registrations are being done online, lecture time table and venues are also accessed online.

Although e-mail acts as filler to correct the misconceptions about feedback process as mentioned earlier, I have learned my own lessons, and I have never shared or discussed it with anybody. However, despite my lack of basic computer skills to use this system (E-mail facilitate feedback), I was expected to use the system to submit my tasks and receive feedback. No one knew or cares to know how I felt about it. Therefore, I assumed that I might not be the only student experiencing or feeling the same way, because it has not been raised and has never been discussed in classes how to use this new method of providing feedback. This prompted me to explore students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback in higher institution.

Moreover, the use of technology has been adopted in most sectors of the society to speed up productivity and efficiency. This is important because in this present society which we live in, the computer has gradually replaced traditional means of communication and is significantly impacting the way we communicate. Developments in information technology in the last decade have brought remarkable changes in the way feedback is provided in higher institutions. With the rapid development of computer and digital information technology (including multi-media technology, internet technology, mobile telecommunication technology and wireless network technology), internet facilitated technology is being applied more and more to facilitate communication and interactions. Therefore, teaching and learning cannot be left out. Hence, technology should be integrated as a way of providing feedback in Business Management Education and this may perhaps speed up communication or enhance teaching and learning.

There is a dearth of research on the experiences of Business Management Education students on e-mail facilitated feedback. Hence, this creates an opportunity for me to establish such experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback in Business Management Education and how it manifests in practice.

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To explore students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback in Business Management Education at Higher Institutions.
- To explore the influence of e-mail facilitated feedback on students' learning of Business Management Education.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions below inform and direct the study:

- What are students experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback in Business Management Education at Higher Institutions?
- How may e-mail facilitated feedback influence students learning in Business Management Education?

1.7 RESEARCH CONTEXT

The study was conducted in the School of Social Science Education cluster, in the department of Commerce Education at a higher Institution in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The Institution is situated in an urban area, with electricity, and Local Area Network (LAN) in and around the campus, with good road network which connects the city to other cities.

1.8 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

In this section I intend to make clear for understanding the key concepts within the context of my study.

1.8.1 Information and communication technology (ICT)

Generally, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is referred to as technology that enables activities such as gathering, processing, storing and presenting data. Basically, these activities also include collaboration and communication. In South Africa, the recent document from the Department of Education (DoE, 2013) states that understanding of ICT concepts are important to extend and develop our knowledge, skills and understanding. This suggests that continuous use of ICTs may bring improvement in the wider understanding of importance of ICT to human activities. In addition, Information and Communication Technology proficiency embraces both the mastery of technical skills and techniques. Also, ICT capability also includes the understanding of how it enables in solving everyday challenges, and applying the skills purposefully, safely and responsibly in learning (DoE, 2013). This explains vividly that integrating ICT in everyday life activities may assist the human society to achieve greater productivity.

In this study, the concept and capability of ICT is important to participation and engagement of students in the present day teaching and learning activities. The idea or meaning of ICT in this study is focused on integration of email as a kind of ICT activity to enable teaching and learning activities in higher institutions. From my perspective, I think that when teaching does not facilitate proper and effective interaction between the lecturer and the students; and among the students themselves, then reinforcement and motivation of knowledge suffers and students eventually will become passive learners. Many studies have shown that the integration of e-mail in teaching and learning encourages students' participation, motivation, self-confidence, collaboration and it makes teaching and learning flexible (DoE 2003; De Almeida, Delicado & Carvalho, 2012). Therefore, ICT in this study refers to e-mails received through Student Management System (SMS), Subject Moodle and the university institutionalise email system.

1.9 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This section provides an overview of the research design and methodology of the study.

Research design can be referred to as an approach or strategy of how to systematically collect and analyse the data that is needed to answer the research questions (Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2011). Also, research design can be described as the overall approach or plan adopted to assimilate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, thereby; making sure it will effectively address the research problem (Mugo, 2011). Furthermore, research design constitutes planning for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data (Mugo, 2011). This suggests that research design is to make sure that the evidence obtained enables one to effectively address the research problem as explicitly as possible. In this study a qualitative and interpretive approach is employed to explore experiences of Business Management Education students of e-mail facilitated feedback, and how this may improve students learning of Business Management Education. The focus of the study is therefore; to understand how things occur that is how Business Management Education students experience e-mail facilitated feedback. In other words, meanings and interpretations are negotiated with human data sources.

1.9.1 Research paradigm

This research study is located within the interpretive paradigm. The interpretive paradigm goals are to describe how members of the society make sense of their worlds, and how they make meaning of their particular activities or actions (Cohen et al., 2011 & and De Vos,

Strydo, Fouche & Delpont, 2005). The purpose of using interpretive paradigm in this study is to obtain an understanding of the word from an individual perspective through his or her experiences. Interpretive paradigm's purpose is to develop a better understanding of how people make sense of the context in which they live and work (Mugo, 2011). Therefore, the paradigm of interest in this study is interpretive paradigm.

1.9.2 Research approach

The qualitative research method of inquiry helps in understanding the social and the cultural context in diverse ways (Cohen et al., 2011). Therefore, I want to understand how students experience e-mail facilitated feedback as a method of providing feedback in Business Management Education. The reason or decision to employ this particular research design is because qualitative approach enables the researcher to understand a particular social situation or event through on going interaction. Additionally, qualitative research approach requires appropriate commitment in the everyday life of the setting. The data that emerge from a qualitative study are descriptive, which explains that data are reported in words rather than in numbers (Creswell, 2012). In addition, qualitative researchers collect in-depth information through multiple methods, usually interactive methods (Cohen et al., 2011).

This study is a qualitative case study, and as case study research is an in depth study of a particular situation rather than a comprehensive numerical study according to (Smith, 2012). Also, when we talk of a case study in research, it refers to a method that is used to condense a very wide field of research into one easily researchable topic.

There are numerous benefits of case study research design. One of the benefits of adopting a case study research is that, it allows one to focus on particular and fascinating case. Therefore, the purpose of employing case study approach in this study is because, case study approach permits me to spend quality of time in the field, get close to the participants and gain deep insights into the phenomena being explored (Creswell, 2012).

1.9.3 Sampling

Cohen et al. (2011) as well as Bertram and Christiansen (2014) argue that research sampling consist of various decisions about which people, settings, events or behaviours to incorporate in the study (Cohen et al., 2011; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Sampling is the process whereby researchers choose samples for their study (Mugo, 2011). This suggests that

sampling means taking any portion of a population or universe as representative of that population or universe. Therefore, in this study a convenient sampling is adopted. Convenience sampling is a process of choosing the nearest individuals as participants (Cohen et al., 2000). I therefore, chose a total number of ten participants those who are in their third year and fourth year of studying Business Management Education in higher institutions. The ten students were selected on the basis of convenience.

1.9.4 Data generation methods

The study employed face-to-face interviews, focus group interview as well as students' reflective journal to appropriately engage the participants to get comprehensive information (Creswell, 2012). The audio-taped interviews were transcribed and analysed and descriptive analysis techniques were used, as encouraged by Tesch (1990).

1.9.5 Data analysis and interpretation

Thematic data analysis is used by the researcher by way of not just counting explicit words or phrases but focusing on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data (Braun & Clarke 2006).

1.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Lincoln and Guba (1990) explain that qualitative researchers determine the trustworthiness of their findings by establishing that they are credible, dependable, confirmable and transferable. To make certain the credibility and validity of the findings in this research study, this study employed more than one method of collecting data, which means that the methods were triangulated.

To ensure for dependability in this research study, I strived to include clear research questions as well as clear explanations of the research design and analysis. Also, the presentation and the discussions of the findings were presented in a way that it actually represents the participants' description of the phenomenon explored in this study, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher.

To guarantee transferability in this study, I was able to provide adequate detail of the context of the research. This was done to help the reader of the research report to be able to decide whether the present environment is similar to another situation with which he or she is

familiar and whether the findings can reasonably be applied to the other setting (Shenton, 2004). The literature was discussed in relation to students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback method.

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

For this study, permission to conduct research was obtained from the institution where this study was conducted at a university in KwaZulu-Natal. Moreover, consent was obtained from the participants. In order to protect the identity of the participants, confidentiality and anonymity was steadily observed and ensured throughout the study.

1.12 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This research study is particularly located in Commerce Education. Although, the use of e-mail as a particular kind of ICT is being aimed, conversely the study does not in any way intend to take a Computer Education viewpoint. The study only wants to understand how these participants experiences use of e-mail in teaching and learning of Business Management Education.

1.13 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter one provides a brief overview of the research study. Also, it introduces the study by describing feedback as indispensable in any teaching and learning context. The statement of the problem as well as the rationale is presented. It also presents the research objectives and the key research questions which inform this research study. Finally, the chapter concludes by presenting the methodology employed in the research study.

Chapter two presents the literature search about issues relating to feedback and feedback method in teaching and learning and also the theoretical framework for the study. The chapter illustrates both international and national literature and in detail addresses and relate to how processes of communicating feedback has been evolving and also shows challenges facing traditional ways of providing feedback.

Chapter three explains the methodological positioning. The major sections of this chapter include an explanation of the research design and methodology, the sampling procedures followed to select participants for interviewing, and the procedure for data generation and

analysis. Ethical considerations and a model for ensuring trustworthiness were also be outlined.

Chapter four presents the results of the study and emphasise how students experience e-mail facilitated feedback.

Chapter five draws conclusions, it offers a general summary of the findings associated to students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback method as used in providing feedback to student in Business Management Education in higher institutions. Furthermore, recommendations are identified and future research directions are provided.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the review of related literature is provided in relation to students' experiences of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilitated feedback, particularly focusing on the experiences of Business Management Education students in higher education institutions on the use of 'electronic mail' in receiving feedback. The chapter starts with a brief discussion of some conceptualisations of feedback; subsequently I give attention to how individuals, particularly, how lecturers (senders) and students (receivers) view the use of e-mail as a method for providing and/or receiving feedback. Finally, I explore the ways in which e-mail-facilitated feedback might influence students' learning in higher education.

2.2 THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF FEEDBACK

In order to address the experiences of e-mail-facilitated feedback, one needs to have a clear understanding of multi-dimension conceptualisations or definitions of feedback, the increased attention of feedback in higher learning institutions.

2.2.1 Understanding feedback: an inclusive perspective

Literature shows that different authors hold different views or definitions of the term 'feedback'. Haynes, Smith, Dysthe and Ludvigsen (2012) describe feedback as a tool to enhance teaching and learning activities. Also, Ruiz-Primo (2011) regard feedback as information that helps students to improve in their learning. According to Dean, Hubbell, Pitler and Stone (2012), feedback helps students to improve their academic performance. Hattie and Timberley (2007) made similar comments that feedback is a powerful influence in the development of learning outcomes in teaching and learning process. The emphasis raised by the authors is that any form of feedback should be aimed at improving learning. This occurs when teachers and students talk about learning as it occurs and talking about feedback. As with all approached to learning, feedback should be multidimensional, non-evaluative, supportive, timely, specific, credible, infrequent, and genuine (Fyfe & Johnson, 2012; Shute, 2008; Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006).

Delgado and Prieto (2003) further add that the role of feedback in teaching can be describe as enhancing learning progress. In particular, as a way of informing the students of where and how their learning and performance can improve. This is in line with Wang assertion (2010) as well as Black and Williams (2006) who argue that feedback enhances and advances students' learning. Feedback is vital to inspire the kind of profound learning that is desired. Feedback importantly serves as information given to a student by an external person by way of informing the student about his or learning progress (Nicol, 2010). In this way, feedback can be seen as directed to improving students learning (Kumar & Kumar 2012).

Furthermore, Nicol, Thomson and Breslin (2014) as well as Yang et al. (2006) argue that feedback is communication which is as instructionally powerful and capable of identifying and informing students about the gap between where students are and where they need to be. These authors, therefore, simply emphasise the need for such communication because students are most likely to know what they have done well and what they did not do well.

Another important issue that also emerges from the literature is the issue of feedback as being judgmental. Naidoo (2007) and Rowntree (2013) indicate that feedback is not entirely judgmental in a negative way, but have strong confidence that it will help students to adjust in later performances. Simply, feedback provides students an opportunity to learn from their mistakes.

In addition, feedback has been described by several authors as capable of improving students' thinking as well as academic performance (Yang et al., 2006; Shute, 2008; Race, 2001). Yang et al. (2006) also contend that feedback improves students' self-awareness and his/her enthusiasm for learning. His explanation differs from that of Nicol et al (2014) in a sense that for him, feedback provides students with information about possible options or approaches that would be useful for them to improve in their learning. Yang et al. (2006) argue that feedback transforms students' thinking or the students' behaviour towards learning. Although, Valerie and Princeton's explanation of feedback differs from that of other authors in a sense that for them feedback not only helps students to understand, but encourages students to think. Shute (2008) equally indicates that, among the importance of feedback, it is that feedback provides information regarding some aspects of students' academic progress. Also, Brookhart (2008) defines feedback as any form of information that is provided to the students to inform the student if an instructional response is right or wrong. What the

foregoing assertions imply is that feedback permeates all aspect of the teaching and learning process, given that feedback provides necessary inter-connects between what is taught or input and what is learnt or expected output.

Haynes et al (2012) describe feedback as motivational. They argue that feedback can improve students' motivation and confidence. Also, Duijnhonwer, Prins and Stokkings (2012) add that feedback is a kind of instructional practice for improving the students' motivation and skills. Huett (2004) maintains that the role played by feedback in the teaching and learning process is not only about information processing, but involves feedback having an influence on the learner's affective and motivational processes. A recent study by Ferguson (2011) found that the students' belief of feedback is simply for confidence and motivation purposes.

The above discussion has focused on the definitions or explanation of the term "feedback" and what it entails generally. What is evident is that there is no single way in which feedback can be defined. In the next section I focus my attention specifically on the views about feedback in higher education particularly in South Africa, the context in which this study is located.

2.2.2 Feedback in higher education

In this section, I intend to focus my attention on the general view of feedback in higher institution, and students' expectation of feedback.

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) in 2006 outlined purposes and objectives of the council monitoring and evaluation programme which primarily focuses on assessment feedback and student learning in higher institutions (CHE, 2006). Feedback assists students to understand the subject being studied and gives the students clear guidance on how to improve in their learning (Bar, Tews & Robling, 2005). In higher institutions, feedback is important as it is strongly and consistently related to achievement than any other teaching behaviour; this relationship is consistent regardless of grade, socioeconomic status, race, or school setting (Oyedemi, 2012). Its ability to influence and impact on the education system reform process has also been emphasised (DoE, 2006).

According to the Council on Higher Education in South Africa (CHE), feedback in higher institutions is regarded as the practice of giving response to the students upon completion of

tasks, and informing the student about his/her academic standing, and indicating what needs to be done next (CHE, 2006). Consequently, CHE (2006) states that providing effective feedback to students is assumed to be equally as important as giving the student assessment tasks. The desire to initiate improvement and standards as well as measure their attainment is one of the strongest driving forces in educational reform; the standards are in form of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (DoE, 2013). From the above discussions, what is evident is the understanding of the importance of feedback in assisting the students do better in their learning in higher institution.

Huett (2004) argues that feedback in higher institutions needs to involve the two parties (lecturer and student). He further suggested that feedback in higher institutions has to be a harmonised system of lecturer-student communication that has to involve one-on-one discussions. This view is also supported by Nicol (2010) who proposes that feedback as used in higher institution should be conceptualised as a dialogical and contingent two-way process that involves coordinated lecturer-student, and student-student interaction. Feedback in higher institution needs to involve more conversation, explanation and negotiation between student and lecturer, as it can help equip the students with a better appreciation of what is expected of them. Similarly, Rae (2008) contends that students' involvement in feedback processes can therefore be seen as indispensable in teaching and learning. The role of feedback is vital in all learning contexts; therefore feedback is very important in the development of competences. Rae (2008) further indicates that involving students in feedback process means providing the students with opportunities to develop their understandings of academic terms and appropriate practices. This view is also supported by a study conducted in higher institution by Higgins, Hartley and Skelton (2002) who found that the students value one to one interactions with their tutors and are encouraged intrinsically. However, the study concludes that feedback as used in higher institutions of learning is for building students self-confidence which will help students to adjust in later performances. These authors, therefore, simply emphasise on different views of feedback in higher institutions and students expectations on feedback in the context which they are in. The next section focuses on modes of providing feedback in higher institutions in general.

2.3 MODES OF PROVIDING FEEDBACK IN HIGHER INSTITUTION IN

GENERAL

In this section, I intend to discuss different modes of providing feedback in higher education institution and in general. The authors (Brookhart, 2008; Rae, 2008; Lochtman, 2002) are of the view that in higher education and in general, feedback has been provided to the students through more than one mode. According to the Council on Higher Education, there are three modes of providing feedback which includes oral/verbal, written and electronic mail (CHE, 2003). Similarly, Fabrice (2010) argued about the introduction of new pedagogical tools which can enhance both lecturers and students in teaching and learning activities in higher education institutions.

Brookhart (2008) contends that feedback can be delivered to students in many modalities. Also, Lochtman (2002) argues that feedback can be made available to students in higher institutions through writing, face-to-face, or electronically. Additionally, Rae (2008) contends that feedback, whether in form of written or verbal can be made available to students through various means. In addition, Brookhart (2008) states that some kinds of assignment lend themselves to a particular mode of feedback.

2.3.1 Verbal/oral feedback

Race, Brown and Smith (2005) explains verbal feedback as a lecturer/teachers' oral remarks about the appropriateness or the precision of a student's task/ statements. According to Carless (2006), verbal feedback as a mode of providing feedback is used when we communicate our message verbally to whoever is receiving the message. Race et al (2005) also contend that verbal feedback is important in teaching and learning in higher institutions as it improves students learning. These views are also supported by Nicol (2010) who contends that verbal feedback function very well in the teaching and learning in higher institution and in general. This arises because verbal feedback motivates students to improve useful and critical reflections on their work. Verbal feedback motivates students to critical thinking because lecturers are able to pose questions and to encourage students to challenge their reflections (Nicol, 2010). A different view emerged in the literature that some tasks lend themselves specifically to verbal feedback and no other mode can be appropriate to it, for example, observing and commenting as students do mathematics problems as seatwork (Brookhart, 2008).

Swinson and Knight (2007) and Race et al (2005) argue that the benefits of verbal feedback as a mode of providing feedback include the following: “it is easy and simple and saves a lot of time; It allows feedback on the spot, so if the receiver is not 100 per cent sure what the message meant, then that feedback will be answered right away” (p.27). Also, Swinson and Knight (2007) add that verbal feedback allows instant message and helps in avoiding time wasted. Equally, verbal feedback brings personal warmth and friendliness and develops a sense of bonding because of this contact between lecturer and student.

Conversely, there are some disadvantages of using verbal feedback as a method of providing feedback (Swinson and Knight, 2007). They are as follows. “When giving feedback verbally, the receiver may not be able to remember all the information and this can lead to the receiver forgetting some important part of the information”. Also, responses on the spot might not be carefully thought of, this is because some students are very shy to speak before others; this might lead to them withholding some information (Swinson and Knight, 2007). Moreover, “using verbal feedback more or less different meaning might be sent by manner of speaking, tone of voice and facial expressions” (Swinson and Knight, 2007). Therefore, it is a general belief that in any teaching and learning context the mode through which feedback is provided to the students contributes to the effectiveness/ineffectiveness of such feedback. This suggests that any mode used in providing feedback in education (higher institution) should be effective enough to effect positive changes in the students’ learning notwithstanding the mode of provision. The above discussion has focused on the definitions, advantages and disadvantages of verbal feedback and what it entails generally. Next section, the focus is on written feedback as another mode of providing feedback in teaching and learning.

2.3.2 Written feedback

Lochtman (2002) explains written feedback as one of the effective modes of providing feedback to students in higher institutions. This mode of providing feedback tends to be utilised after a task has been completed and it involves written comment only. Hyland (2008) argues that this mode of providing feedback to students is so crucial that it can improve teaching and learning significantly.

Hyland and Hyland (2006) indicate that providing written feedback to students’ task is assumed as one of the lecturer’s most important responsibilities, as it is important in every normal teaching and learning context. The role of written feedback has largely been seen as

useful. Hyland and Hyland (2006) further argue that written feedback is useful because, it is a means of channelling responses and instruction to facilitate progresses. Additionally, Brookhart (2008) argues that certain tasks lend themselves to a written feedback mode as a specific mode to provide feedback. For example, reviewing and writing comments on students' written work.

On the other hand, Swinson and Knight (2007, p. 23) argue that written feedback as a mode of providing feedback has the following advantages. "Written feedback allows for permanent records, which something oral feedback does not have". Also, written feedback fortifies and makes clear a verbal message. It allows for lasting records, so it is good for making references". However, written feedback as a mode of providing feedback is not void of criticism.

Hyland and Hyland (2001) argues that the disadvantages related with written feedback are that, unlike other forms of feedback, written feedback can take a considerable amount of time to produce. With written feedback, feedback is not immediate. Hyland and Hyland (2006) assert that feedback is very important in teaching and learning activities. This suggests that a delay in receiving feedback can result in certain unfavourable issues such as slowing down the academic progress of the students. Furthermore, among the disadvantages of written feedback is poor writing skills. Fyfe et al. (2012) concur and adds that poor writing skills can hamper the effectiveness of the written feedback. This suggests that if the writer cannot write efficiently then there is a high possibility that a lot of people are going to misinterpret the information (Hyland & Hyland 2001). This can be a very negative thing and can come with a great deal of severe consequences. Hyland and Hyland (2006) maintain that written feedback is sometimes limited to people who have sight. The blind students or the visually impaired students, for instance cannot make use of written feedback.

The discussions highlighted the meaning, advantages and disadvantages of written feedback as a mode of providing feedback to students in higher institutions. Also the above discussions have focused on written and verbal feedback as modes of providing feedback and their effectiveness and what they entail. In the next section, the discussion focuses on information and communication technology.

2.4 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

In this section, the researcher intends to discuss Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in general. Also, the researcher aims to explain different technologies used in higher institutions of learning.

Generally, ICT is known and described as an acronym that stands for Information and Communications Technology (UNECESO, 2011). It is important to know that there is no generally accepted definition of ICT; this is because the concepts, methods and applications involved in ICT are constantly developing on an almost daily basis. Therefore, it is challenging to keep up-to-date with the modifications which happen at such a fast pace. Furthermore, Marumo (2007) as well as Cele (2006) argue that the C in the middle of IT is significant because it highlights the inclusion of communication between devices used in the technology.

Zhao and Frank (2003) describe ICT to comprise communication skills or application, which incorporates: radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems. Also, it includes other various services and applications related with these e.g. video conferencing and distance learning. ICTs naturally are frequently defined in relation to a specific context, such as ICTs in education, health care, or libraries (UNESCO, 2011). The term ICT is considerably common in the phrase used to define a range of technologies for gathering, storing, retrieving, processing, analysing, and transmitting information (Marumo, 2007 & Cele, 2006). From the above discussions, what is evident is that there is no universal definition of the concept ICT. As suggested by Marumo (2007), the concept ICT can be defined differently in different contexts where it is used as a vital tool for service delivery. Therefore, next section focuses on the selected kinds of ICTs most relevant for this study.

2.4.1 Different kinds of ICT

According to, Wilson-Strydom, Thomson and Williams (2005), there are three categories of ICTs that are used in education and in other areas, namely: Information Systems, Control Systems and Communication Systems.

2.4.1.1 Information systems as a kind of ICT

Wilson-Strydom et al. (2005) argue that the type of ICT used in this category is a computer, mainly the focus is always on managing the institutional data and information, for example (spread sheets and databases).

2.4.1.2 Control systems as a kind of ICT

Wilson-Strydom et al. (2005) maintain that this type of ICT is made up of software and hardware and carries out sets of programmed lessons or computer controlled systems. Particularly this type of ICT is used for input, processing and out-put of data: for example, (computers, tape-recorders and laptops, cell phones, tablets). This view was supported by Houghton, Yeh, Nworie and Romero (2013) that the use of technologies such smartphones, tablets PCs, computers, electronic communication tools, and social media are increasing in many instructional settings.

2.4.1.3 Communication systems as a kind of ICT

This type of ICT is known as communication systems, particularly the output of ICT is the successful transport of data from one place to another (Wilson-Strydom et al., 2005). Also, ICTs in this category include combined emailing, printers, scanners, photocopiers; televisions with built-in internet connections, and web browsers and mobile phones with internet and digital cameras, laptops, table computers that have mobile internet access and built-in handwriting recognition. Wilson-Strydom et al. (2005) indicate that this type of ICTs also supports activities which include gathering, processing, storing and presenting data electronically. Essentially, these activities also involve collaboration and communication. What is evident from the discussion above is the emphasis on ICTs. Also, it is vital to establish that this study is only going to focus on “email” as a form of ICT used in teaching and learning in higher institutions of learning. Therefore, next section focuses on some perspectives about the use of e-mail globally.

2.5 THE USE OF E-MAIL GLOBALLY

In this section, I intend to discuss the use of email globally. It is important to state that through the cause of the discussion on email, the term ICT and E-mail is used interchangeably.

E-mail is known globally as a particular type of information and communications technology (Brooks & Menachemi, 2006). Electronic mail as generally referred to as email or e-mail is a method of exchanging digital messages from an author to one or more recipients. Presently e-mail systems are based on a store-and-forward model (Virji, Yarnall, Krause, Pollak, Scannell, Gradison & Østbye, 2006). Also, as a type of ICT e-mail servers accept, forward, deliver, and store messages, in this case, neither the users nor their computers are mandatory to be online concurrently; they need connect only briefly, typically to a mail server, for as long as it takes to send or receive messages (Virji et al., 2006).

Beninajarian, Abdullah and Bolong (2011) point out that electronic mail are used generally for any electronic document transmission. It uses technology to communicate a digital message over the Internet. Therefore, the users use e-mail differently, based on how they think about it. There are many software platforms available to send and receive e-mail. Popular e-mail platforms include Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo! Mail, Outlook, and many others. Brooks and Menachemi (2006) describe e-mail sites as an electronic location where contributors, participants or users of such sites can post and / or read messages either singly or as developing themes presented under different subject headers or threads. Brooks and Menachemi (2006) explain e-mail sites as where subject of conversation or where something that is being discussed, examined, or otherwise is dealt with. Rahman (2008) asserts that e-mail is the most popular means of communication, and it is interactive in nature. Therefore, e-mail may be used as an educational tool for teaching and learning, where students can share, discourse issues concerning their modules and projects.

The use of e-mail varies from organisation to organization. Beninajarian et al. (2011) maintain that e-mail has being widely accepted by the business community as the first broad electronic communication medium and was the first 'e-revolution' in business communication. E-mail is very simple to understand and like postal mail, email solves two basic problems of communication in business community: logistics and synchronization. Additionally, Beninajarian et al. (2011) further state that in business community the local area network (LAN) based email is also an emerging form of usage for business. It allows the business user to download mail when offline, it also allows the small business user to have multiple users' email IDs with just one email connection.

Brooks and Menachemi (2006) as well as James (2007) remark that school communities and other organisation use e-mail. E-mail users in these communities use it to associate with each other as a medium for communication. The degree of which e-mail is used varies across users. In other words, users of email use the medium differently. Brooks and Menachemi (2006) believe that people attach various meanings to influence how they use the medium. Similarly, Collis, Peters and Pals (2000) argue that while one person might use e-mail to communicate with their friends or fellow students on a weekly basis, another may use it to keep in touch with family members on a daily basis. The situational setting (for example, a student will find him or herself in a different situation than a stay at home mom) in which the user finds himself or herself shapes how and what e-mail will be used for.

A body of literature (DoE, 2013; Rahman, 2008; James, 2007) point that proper understanding of e-mail is something that needs to deepen and broaden our knowledge, skills and understanding. This means that constant use of e-mail may bring development in the broader understanding of importance of e-mail in teaching and learning (DoE, 2013). However, the increasing use of e-mail in all parts of society makes confident, creative and productive use of e-mail. Collis et al. (2000) add that e-mail capability embraces not only the mastery of technical skills and techniques, but also the understanding of how it assists in communication.

The mastery of using e-mail for communication purposes has been described as an essential skill for life. Brooks and Menachemi (2006) argue that in our society e-mail is used in solving everyday challenges of communication, and to apply these skills purposefully, safely and responsibly in teaching and learning it can help students in their academic work and the lecturers in their administrative work. This suggests that integrating e-mail in everyday life activities may assist the human society to achieve greater productivity in their various activities.

2.6 FEEDBACK THROUGH E-MAIL FACILITATED METHOD

When teaching does not facilitate proper effective interaction between the teacher and the students; and among the students themselves then reinforcement and motivation of knowledge suffers and students become passive learners. Research has shown that the integration of e-mail in teaching and learning promotes students participation, motivation, self-confidence, collaboration and it makes teaching and learning flexible (Curtis & Lawson,

2001). E-mail has been described by many authors as a high-speed method of transferring information, and it is used to facilitate speed delivery of feedback (Collis et al., 2000). Also, Collis et al (2000) claim that e-mail is capable of providing a genuine and conducive learning environment for the students to study. While Berk (2009) asserts that to cover up the gap created by students' shyness in asking questions in class, e-mail facilitates and coordinates computer-mediated communication between lecturers and students.

Arguing on the use of e-mail in teaching and learning in higher institutions, Iron (2008) argues that e-mail as a means of supporting students' learning, enables students to be involved in the teaching and learning activities. Students can be able to interact with the outside society and bring more information to the classroom. Studies have shown that students do better in academics when they integrate e-mail in teaching and learning activities; students see teaching and learning more flexible when they incorporate e-mail in teaching and learning (Warschauer, 2004; Holt, Oliver, McAvina, 2002). Furthermore, Rahman (2008) describes e-mail as one of the important channels for communication which enhances the sending, sharing and receiving of feedback.

Warschauer (2004) carried out a three-year study in a higher institution, on the use of e-mail for teaching purposes within two courses forming part of a psychology degree. The courses were first year 'Psychology and IT' course, which was taught entirely via e-mail and a second year 'Cognitive Psychology' course, parts of which were taught by email and part by lectures, some of which were supported by emailed summaries. The findings of the study revealed that the email method was felt to have been successful, as was confirmed by generally positive student feedback. Also, Smith, Whiteley, and Smith (1999) conducted a similar study in another higher institution. The study was on the examination performance of two successive student cohorts on a multiple-choice question (MCQ) paper. The findings of the study indicate that in one cohort the poorest part-time students performed better on material taught by email than by lectures, while in the other cohort the result showed that there was some evidence for lectures supported by emailed 1000-word summaries producing better performance. Yu and Yu (2002) found "empirical evidence supporting the usefulness of e-mail as a promising aid to promote student cognitive growth pertaining to computer knowledge and skills" (p. 123).

Tao and Boulware (2002, p. 28) suggest that e-mail communication benefits teachers by “identifying instructional focus and taking advantage of instructional moments to fit the developmental needs of their students in authentic situations”. They also find that email inspires learners, encourages dependable communication and creates new learning opportunities. However, the discussion has been on feedback through e-mail facilitated method. Next section focuses on lecturers’ experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback.

2.7 LECTURERS’ EXPERIENCES OF E-MAIL FACILITATED FEEDBACK

Feedback that took place in a teaching and learning environment should be seen as a two way communication, which involves a lecturer and a student. Both parties (lecturer and student) have different experiences of the feedback given as well as the process of providing feedback. In this study therefore, understanding the experiences of the parties involved in the feedback process is of paramount importance and indispensable.

Cox, Preston and Cox (2000) explain that lecturers have positive experience of e-mail integration in the classrooms. It is further noted that lecturers’ experiences of e-mail use as fun, easier, and motivating. Cox et al. (2000) further explain that lecturers’ positive experiences of the use of e-mail in classrooms are that it makes teaching more diverse and also improves presentation of materials. This suggests that e-mail in the classrooms makes lessons presented more interesting and teaching quite easier as e-mail enables the lecturer to source for materials from internet to enhance their teaching. Also, Kosoko-Oyedeko and Tella (2010) assert that e-mail aids lecturers to teach and supports them to consolidate and develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. In addition, the integration of e-mail in the classroom gives more power to the lecturer in school, giving the lecturer more prestige, making the lecturers' administration more efficient and providing professional support through the Internet.

However, Yunus, (2007) conducted a research study on Malaysian ESL teachers’ use of ICT in their classrooms; found that teachers viewed ICT as having the potential to support new learning experiences within their contexts. This indicates that lecturers/teachers believe that e-mail as a kind of ICT used in the classroom has the potential to transform teaching and learning. A similar study by Waite (2004) shows that teachers in schools show great interest and motivation to learn about the potential of e-mail.

In contrast to the above discussion, Jones (2004) found that it has been a poor slow uptake of e-mail as a form of ICT in schools by the majority of teachers due to lack of competences. Research study conducted by Bingimlas (2009) reveals that the learning potential of e-mail as a kind of ICT has not being realised, for the reason that many teachers are not familiar with ICT and do not use e-mail in their teaching activities. It is further noted that lecturers have a strong desire for integration of ICTs in the classroom but it faces too many challenges. For example, some lecturers lack confidence to teach with ICT resources including the use of e-mail, lack of competence and also lack of access to acquiring computer skills. Waite (2004) argues that lecturers believed that time and curriculum is the major constraints to technological innovation in the classroom. According to Sánchez and Alemán (2011), higher education institution lecturers need time to learn new skills in order to adapt to the new method of providing feedback to students in higher education. Also, lecturers need time to inquire about technologies, time to find out about resources, plan, and try out new approaches to teaching and learning (Karasavvidis, 2009). Sánchez and Alemán (2011) further add that lecturers should be giving time to reflect upon experiences and consolidate learning. In addition, they need time to share those experiences with others. However, what is evident in this discussion is that lecturers have different experiences of e-mail integration in the classroom teaching and learning. Hence, the next section focuses on students' experiences of e-mail feedback method.

2.8 STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF E-MAIL FACILITATED FEEDBACK

Rowe and Wood (2008) argue that in teaching and learning context, the issues of feedback do not end only with lecturers and the institution's management body, who provides feedback to the students. It is further stated that it is important to take into consideration how students' are involved in the feedback process. Researchers in this field suggested that when students are actively involved in choosing and evaluating strategies, considering assumptions and receiving feedback of their performance improves (Rae, 2008; Guskey, 2003 & Dillenbourg, 1999). Related to this is a study by Ferguson (2011) on students' expectations of a kind of feedback they want, the study revealed that students in higher institutions preferred feedback that is timely and personalised regarding their specific piece of work. This feedback needed to be positive, clear and constructive with a focus on acknowledging their successes and guiding them towards future improvement. The study revealed that in higher institution student's desired feedback to contain a certain amount of positive comment and also be

delivered to them on time. The study concludes that students always seek feedback which will support them to involve with their subject in a deep way.

Findings from a study done by Warschauer (1995) revealed that students value interacting or discussion through e-mail more than face-to-face interactions. The finding shows that students experience face-to-face interactions as involving lecturers taking control of the discourse, while on-line interactions were more democratic, with students controlling the discourse more. Equally, Flynn, Concannon and Campbell (2006) and Bailey and Garner (2010) state that e-mail facilitated feedback in general provides students with clearer information on the quality of students' work. This suggests that e-mail facilitated feedback brings along clarity in information provided by the lecturer to the student.

However, Flynn et al (2006) contend that immediate feedback on students' work motivates, and reinforce student to do more and better than they did. Furthermore, Ferguson (2011) maintains that when students receive feedback on time, such feedback enable students to take a stand to judge how well they have done or have understood a particular topic or a particular concept. Effective and timely feedback could result in students restructuring of thoughts and skills. These findings from different studies (Flynn et al 2006; Yu & Yu, 2002) reveal that students acknowledged and embraced the integration of e-mail in the classroom and have positive experiences of integrating ICT (e-mail feedback) in teaching and learning. Also, the findings of the study conducted by Yu and Yu (2002) make known that students believe interacting with the lecturer directly involved more hierarchal encounters in which lecturers took control of the discourse, while on-line interactions were more democratic, with students controlling the discourse more.

Although, several authors have written about students' positive experiences of e-mail feedback, on the contrary are the findings of the study presented by Holt, Oliver and McAvina (2002). The study show that online discussion did not work well" claiming that one of the reasons being lack of participation of the students. It was further revealed that students prefer face-to-face interaction over online interaction. The reason being that, they considered online discussion inferior to face-to-face interactions. Students believe that it is easier to resolve issues face to face between lecturers and students or student to student. Equally, another study by Guardado and Shi (2007) reveals that some of the students shy away from the demand to express and clarify meaning; and turn online peer feedback into a one-way

communication process, leaving a high percentage of peer comments not addressed. These findings show that notwithstanding positive comments on e-mail feedback as contributing to students' academic achievement, students still value fact-to-face interaction with lecturers and fellow students. Therefore, next section focuses on the influence of e-mail feedback on student learning.

2.9 INFLUENCE OF E-MAIL FEEDBACK ON STUDENT LEARNING

In this section, the researcher focuses and discusses the influence of e-mail facilitated feedback method on students learning.

Guardado and Shi (2007) report that, the lack of proper channels of interaction between lecturers and students has resulted in the consequences of denial of providing effective feedback to students and interaction between lecturer and student. Therefore, Yu and Yu (2002) further explain that the integration of electronic mail in the teaching and learning may serve as the answer to revive and reignite the channels of interaction between lecturers and students, and students to students; and to speed up feedback delivery in teaching and learning. This view was supported by the Department of Education in South Africa. The Department of Education Draft White Paper on e-Education (2004) states its focus on learning and teaching for a new generation of young people who are growing up in a digital world and are comfortable with technology. The paper explains that, while the use of e-mail will not replace lecturers/teachers, it will enhance the quality and reach of their teaching and reduce the time spent on administrative chores (Draft White Paper on e-Education 2004).

The advantages of integrating e-mail in the classroom have been recognised (Bär, Tews, & Rößling, 2005). Integrating e-mail in classroom teaching and learning will not only improve the quality of teaching; but improve the quality of interaction and communication between student to students, and students to lecturers (Bär et al., 2005). This suggests that the availability of communication channels may help reduce the feelings of loneliness of students who might have challenges in making progress in his or her studies (Jaffer, Ngambi & Czerniewicz, 2007). Moreover, through e-mail, the student can present a problem and here and there receive feedback from lecturer or peers; because e-mail is capable of reducing feedback delays (Baninajarian et al., 2011). This suggests that with the integration of e-mail in teaching and learning, methods of teaching and learning can take new shape.

The findings presented by Yu and Yu (2002) on a study about e-mail integration in the classroom reveal that there is a statistically significant difference in student academic performance by incorporating e-mail, as one of the most accessible, convenient, and easy to use computer-mediated communications, into a classroom setting. It is further noted that e-mail is a promising aid to promote student cognitive growth pertaining to computer knowledge and skill. Similar to that is a study conducted by Guardado and Shi (2007), the finding shows that email-feedback, while eliminating the logistical problems of carrying papers around, retains some of the best features of traditional written feedback, including a text-only environment that pushes students to write balanced comments with an awareness of the audience's needs and with an anonymity that allows peers to make critical comments on each other's writings.

A similar study was conducted by Postholm (2007) in one British University on the advantages and disadvantages of e-mail as a kind of ICT as a mediating artefact in the classroom. The study found that making available e-mail as a kind of ICTs as a mediating artefact in classroom, particularly as a communication channels will help reduce the feelings of being alone or in isolation of students who are experiencing challenges in making progress in their study.

In addition e-mail allows for large amount of information that would be very difficult to communicate by telephone and allows people to retrieve their messages at any given time provided they have access to related services such as internet connection (Oyedemi, 2012). In the same way, it shows that with the use of e-mail, large amount of information can easily and conveniently be sent out to students.

However, Bailey and Garner (2010) argue that by using e-mail it is fast and easy to communicate information. Sutherland (2004) further states that what one needs are access to a computer and the internet and you are ready to stay connected with family, friends and the electronic community. Similarly, Iron (2008) argues that e-mail speeds up the provision of messages, and it allows one message to be sent to thousands of people all over the world. With these in mind, what is evident in using e-mail is that a large number of students can be contacted at once.

Feedback can be sent at anytime, anywhere and any size as far as the sender and the receiver are connected to an internet server (Jaffer et al., 2007). E-mail has been described as enhancing students' independent learning skills. Sutherland, Armstrong, Barnes, Brawn, Breeze, Gall and Triggs (2004) argue that engaging students with e-mail activities like collaborating online with other students about their modules is important because it increases the general ability of students. Furthermore, Sutherland et al. (2004) contend that the significance of integrating e-mail in classrooms is to make the values of independent learning clear to students and help them to examine how these are enhanced through the learning. Likewise Hassini (2006) who described e-mail as helpful, states that by sending lecture notes and outlines ahead of each lecture (or weekly) to students can help absent students to follow the progress of the course.

Hew and Brush (2007) adds that students' learning with e-mail provides them with great opportunities to be competent and familiar with the use of the internet in the classroom. Furthermore, Michaelsen and Sweet (2011) argue that the use of e-mail provides great opportunities for the students to have access to so many other sources of information online. Reeves and Hedberg (2003) further argue that learning with e-mail can be an effective means of preparing students for the task ahead. Also, it will help make them better graduates with skills of technology competent as much as sufficiently knowledgeable. In addition to that, students who are actively involved in learning with e-mail will actively and innovatively develop and adapt technological advances in learning (Reeves & Hedberg, 2003).

In the same way, Thorpe and Godwin (2006) state that the use of e-mail in the present day classroom context for teaching and learning should not be seen only as a strategy to integrate Information and Technological tools in the education processes; as it serves many other purposes. For example, it serves the purpose of connecting students to lecturers and also students to students; at same time preparing students for proper adaptation in the era of technology.

Czerniewicz, Ravjee and Mlitwa (2007) maintain that teaching and learning becomes flexible when using ICTs resources, tools and applications which involve the use of internet, other media and telecommunications. They went further to say that integrating tools that helps in accessing information; interaction among lecturers and students and the online environment will also contribute in making teaching and learning more flexible. Moreover, the use of e-

mail in teaching and learning focus also on collaborative learning; and production of learning experiences (Wang, 2010).

Williams and Mckercher (2001) explain that the use of electronic communication tools in the classroom could make teaching and learning more effective. Likewise, Harrington (1999) as well as Thorpe and Godwin (2006) argue on the effectiveness of e-mail in a changing classroom environment. According to these authors, students can seek information from the wider society, update their knowledge about any concept being discussed in the classroom, and bring such information to contribute during teaching and learning activities in their various classrooms. Similarly, the White Paper on e- Education in South Africa (2004), point out clearly that e-mail allow the environment where teaching is transformed and where learning is an on-going and in creative processes. The paper further argues that this requires a change in teaching and learning methodology in higher institutions in which lecturers and students will have access to high quality, relevant and diverse resources, beyond what school libraries are currently providing. This suggests that e-mail in the classroom enhances means of communicating and collaborating between lecturers and students and provides greater opportunities to create and present new knowledge.

Bose (2003) contends that e-mail facilitates student/learner centred learning. It helps in promoting proficiency in Information technology skills, personal employability and corporate competitiveness. This suggests that students/learners become responsible for their own knowledge. This can be possible when the particular student/learner engages with the feedback he/she receives from lecturers and fellow students. Also, Allan and Lewis (2006) maintain that e-mail in the classroom offers students such skills that are needed in the present day society like in the academics, business, communities, government, more especially it offers students skills of critical thinking and problem solving and the ability to work collaboratively. Therefore, it could mean according to the above that integrating e-mail in our classrooms make learning more accessible, more attainable to the students.

Stromquist and Monkman (2014) explain that integrating e-mail in teaching and learning is a way of bringing education opportunities closer to the people in the work place, communities or home; for those who are unable to attend school due to some cultural or economic barriers, they can now have education at their door steps. This suggests that integrating e-mail in the teaching and learning eliminates some key access restriction to education which could be

such as geographical location or scheduling conflicts. Other studies (Debusse, Lawley & Shibli, 2008; Cross & Adam, 2007) argue that integrating e-mail in teaching and learning activities stimulates educational interactions, both cognitive and affective. Allah (2008) explains that e-mail beyond enhancing expanding educational access, computer-mediated communications suggested significant potentials for effective new learning for students who make use of e-mails, because e-mails provides increasing learning access/opportunities for group learning. Making e-mail available for student during teaching and learning, stand the chance of having numerable access/opportunities to improve the quality of students learning, students will have access to many learning materials. Jarmon, Traphagan, Mayrath and Trivedi (2009) contend that using computer mediated collaborative learning in the classroom teaching and learning leads to higher levels of skills development and it enhances self-learning. What is significant in these arguments is the emphasis on the advantages of e-mail facilitated feedback method. The next section focuses on disadvantages of e-mail facilitated feedback.

Recent research by Allah (2008) indicates that e-mail faces technical and practical challenges during the process of given e-mail feedback. Allah (2008) further explains that e-mail depends on the availability of some factors to function such as electricity and internet availability, which suggest that without the availability of those factors e-mail will not function and students will miss their feedback. Also, it is further noted that students who are not familiar with computer may find it time consuming and may get frustrated with the method. He further argues that students frustrated with the method could result in them not taking the process seriously, the students may not participated in any on-going process whether it is to review papers or give e-mail feedback to peers.

Equally, Livingstone (2012) argues that there are clear dangers in the use of e-mail to send students feedback. They believe that providing feedback to students through e-mail may lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretation of information therefore creating more problems. However, as Allah (2008) advises that rushing into conclusion to adopt new trends without careful planning before and during e-mail feedback session can negatively influence students' performance. Allan and Lewis (2006) further add that although e-mail has somehow succeeded in eliminating the long standing physical and technical barriers of access to learning; it still create new barriers like internet service being stack, and constant busy signals which delays working with e-mails. This recommends that e-mail or the integration of ICTs

in classroom teaching and learning is a good idea but it has to be done with proper planning, and the training of students on how to use it. Haykin (2009) as well as Hew and Brush (2007) argue that when talking of access to technology in classrooms, it is more than merely the presence of computers or availability of technology in a school. They argued that it involves providing the proper amount and type of technology and training which will enable both the lecturers and students to use such technology.

However, Hew and Brush (2007) as well as Gipps (2005) argue that among the challenges of using e-mail in teaching and learning is lack of sufficient resources such as sufficient computers sets for students to use, resources to train both students and lecturer. Haughton et al. (2013) state that these technologies are being used in education to support various academic activities.

In education, many problems are associated with the misuse of these technologies mainly in instructional context. Recent research by Grajek and Arroway (2012) reveals that activities such as checking/texting of e-mails, browsing the internet while lectures are going on are becoming common disturbances in higher education. These views suggest that when teaching using technologies such as e-mail, lecturers in higher institutions must be conscious of the possible hindrances it can bring to the learning process. Similarly, Allen and Seaman (2010) maintain that some adverse effects of technologies like e-mail in today's classroom teaching and learning are that it can take away valuable learning time, it can be overused, and it can also turn educational practices, experiences into games for students.

A different view from other views above is that of Hara (2000), she argues that many students learn best by physically and mentally interacting with their peers and lecturers while studying. If most of the discussions and giving of feedback are done electronically, these students' needs are not being met. However, technology should be used as something to complement the classroom curriculum, but should not be used as the only source of learning. Hara and Kling (2001) argue that students experience different level of frustrations during computer mediated instructions. For example, logging into computer, some students lack necessary computer skills. Hara (2000) describe frustration as a significant factor that inhibits students' education opportunities. This suggests that any form of frustration that students encounter during their use of any technological appliances in learning processes could hinder their academic performances. Moreover, in this kind of environment where

students are away from the normal traditional way of providing feedback, students being frustrated using e-mail facilitated feedback could be a major obstacle for integrating e-mail facilitated feedback method.

Furthermore, Livingstone (2012) as well as Warschauer (2004) assert that lack of computer skills or lack of internet service can cause social exclusion. The emphasis on this section indicates that although e-mail has some positives for using it in teaching and learning, it also has some negatives attached to its use. Meanwhile, the subsequent discussions is on theoretical frameworks of the study.

2.10 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section I intend to discuss the theoretical framework for this study. Therefore, this study presented one theory as the theoretical framework which is used to explain students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback

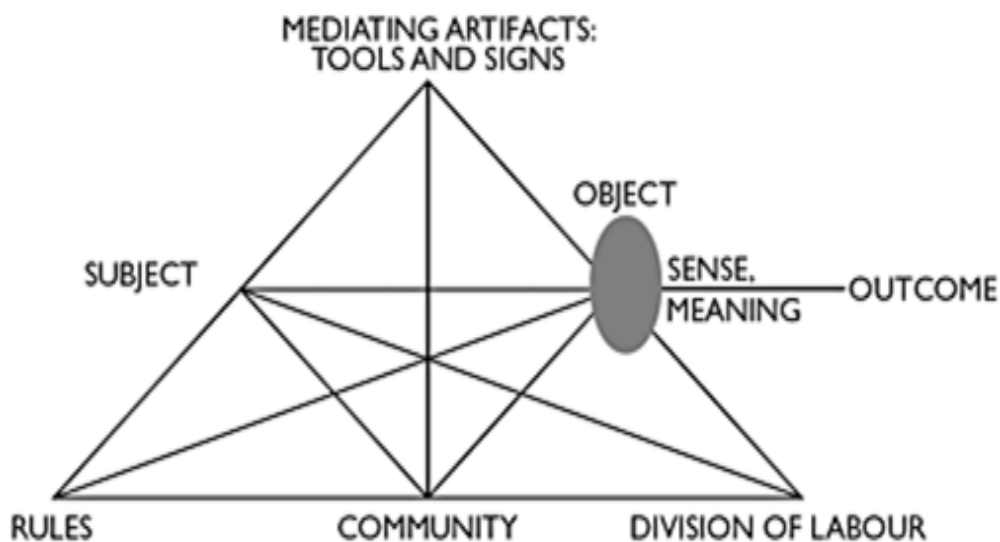
2.10.1 Activity theory

Hashim and Jones (2007) contend that activity theory is a theoretical framework for the analysis and understanding of human interaction through their use of tools and artifacts. Activity theory as a research framework originated from Soviet psychologist in 1920 (Nardi, 2001). Vygotsky (1978) claims activity theory to be a socio-cultural lens through which researchers can analyze human activity procedures. An activity as claimed by Nardi (2001) could always contain various artifacts, for example (instruments, signs, procedures, machines, methods, laws, forms of work organization). Activity theory was employed to frame this research. Activity theory and assessment for learning was employed to show readers and people who would be interested in this study the importance of integrating electronic e-mail in providing feedback in Business management. A Russian Psychologist and founder of activity theory Vygotsky (1896- 1934) argues that activity theory is capable to be used in determining the extent of integration of human activity and awareness within the environmental context. In this study, the researcher tends to interview students at the higher institution, which is in this case their natural setting. The target groups are Business Management students, from whom the researcher wants to understand their experiences of electronic feedback.

Mezirow (1997) asserts that activity theory is transformative, which means that He sees activity theory as a transformative theory which is used as a process effecting change by what one learns. With this in mind, activity theory is used in this study to properly understand the students' experiences of receiving feedback electronically in Business management as a transformative process of twenty first century. Mezirow (1997) believes that, for the essence of transformation to be achieved properly, there should be a joint contribution of power and resources to be used in a particular way as a means to achieve meaningful transformation. Hence, the researcher through the use of reflective journal, focus group interview, face-to-face interaction, aims to understand electronic mail feedback and how it has improved or not, the provision of feedback and student learning of Business Management Education.

Mezirow (1997) argues that the importance of activity theory is that it offers an expressive framework for information and communication technology (ICT) integration, which enables the concerned parties (students) to fully understand the integration of electronic mail into the teaching and of Business Management Education, and how it can relate to a motivating activity. The activity theory principles enabled in this study the classification of cognitive (intensions and objectives), physical (activities in which students engage in when integrating ICT), and social tasks (the involvement of concerned parties) during ICT integration process.

Figure 1: The structure of the activity theory



(Engestrom, 1987).

In the diagram label figure 1 above, shows Engestrom activity theory (1987). Hashim and Jones (2007) writing on activity theory, they inferred that Activity theory sees the integration of technology as tools which mediate social action. Hashim and Jones (2007) describe these tools, or artifacts, as instruments, signs, language, machines and computers, meaning that the relationship between individuals and their environment are being considered through the component of community. Hew and Brush (2007) maintains that the relation between subject and community is mediated by rules and the relationship between object and community mediated by the division of labor. Furthermore, Hew and Brush (2007) contend that Engestrom's activity theory explains the principles which involve subjects (participants) towards achievement of a set goal or objective. ICT is a broad concept, this study intends to develop a particular way of understanding e-mail as ICT used in Business Management Education, and how it is used in the provision of feedback for the students. This study also focused on exploration so as to properly understand the challenges facing the use electronic mail in providing feedback to students in Business Management Education. Engestrom (1999) explains that the activity is undertaken by human beings who are motivated towards achieving a particular goal in life or eager to solve a particular problem. Engestrom (1999) further states that the main purpose being regarded as the object and is mediated by tools involving the community. At the same time, Cultural factors are merged together with social factors, that is, division of labour, rules, and established procedures to achieve an outcome. These procedures are explained as follows:

2.10.2 Subjects

In activity theory, those who make use of ICT (e-mail) properties are regarded as subjects (Kaptelinin 1996; Kuutti, 1996). Students are regarded as subjects because they make use of ICT equipment like cell phones, computers, and internet access to social networks including Subject Module, Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, 2go and more. They receive and share electronic mails through one or more of the above ICT equipment. So for this study the researcher is more concerned and wishes to understand how the issue of providing students feedback through electronic mail can improve students' learning of Business management Education in higher institution.

2.10.3 Objects

Integrating ICT (e-mail) in the teaching and learning activity is not without any intention, the main reason for integrating e-mail is for transformation. In activity theory, the term object refers to all motives, aims, and objectives leading to ICT (e-mail) integration. Marumo (2007) made similar comment by contending that new application, new practices, new policies and transformation in teaching and learning practice through which ICTs are utilized are said to be the motives for integrating ICT in teaching at higher institution, hence called objects in activity theory. Kuutti (1996) observes that in activity theory objects are referred to as aims and objectives of the institution for integrating ICT (e-mail) in teaching and learning activities of the institution. Kuutti (1996) further maintains that objects are to be considered and viewed as students' experiences of electronic mail feedback.

2.10.4 Community

To understand the term 'Community' as used in activity theory, Kuutti (1996) argues that ICT (e-mail) is effectively integrated if its activity involves non-governmental organizations, consumers, government organization, and individual. In this study, community is being divided into two functional groups.

Firstly, community as people which includes the entire student in the institution, with this in mind, the institution and all its properties forms part of the community.

Secondly, community as practice includes all pedagogies, didactic integrative discovery, and opportunities for dialogue where students can say their mind about the integration, structures and processes concerning the integration process. The students' degree of control and responsibility over e-mail is also regarded as community of practice. The people as referred in this theory includes stake holders, government sectors, non- governmental organization; those who have the objective and use the same tools to achieve their goal, they also contribute to the effectiveness of the integration of e-mail in higher institution.

2.10.5 Division of labour

In education, teaching and learning is a process and not an event. Teaching and learning is not an event in the sense that it does not end but continues. The continuation of the process of teaching involves different parties, also the integration of ICT into teaching and learning in higher institution involves different parties who are able to contribute towards the success of ICT integration in teaching and learning of Business Management as a learning area in higher

institution. The research intends to understand how the integration of ICT in the provision of feedback to students improves their learning of Business Management.

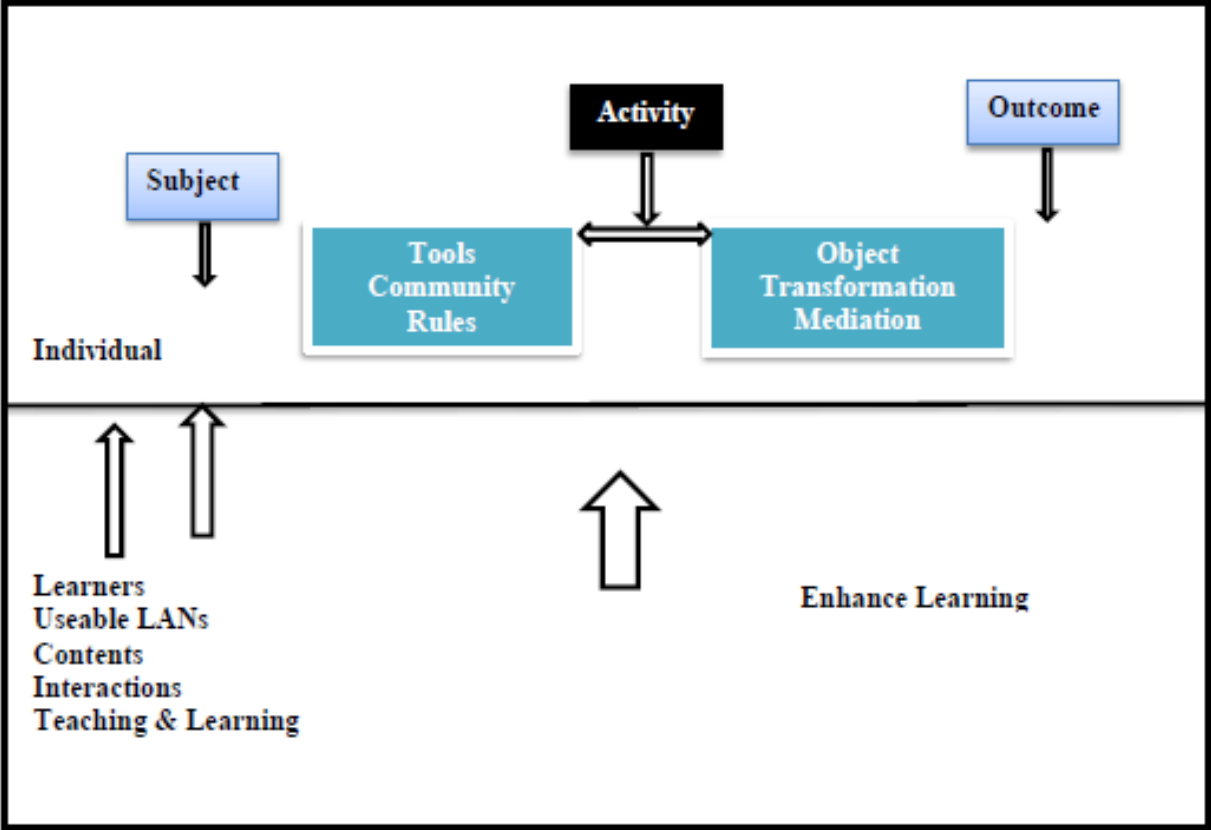
2.10.6 Outcomes

The integration of electronic mail in providing feedback is based on the hope that it might bring about deeper understanding in the way feedback is given to students in Business Management Education in higher institution. The researcher intended to explore this notion so as to properly understand what improvement the integration of electronic mail has brought to the learning of Business Management Education. These include the successes, challenges, and obstacles which the students encountered when using this system (electronic mail) in their learning. However, there are a prediction that goes on round that the integration of electronic mail in teaching and learning may bring outcomes such as speedy delivery of feedback, active- learning, and learner- centered learning, collaboration, problem solving, and motivation (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Iron, 2006).

2.10.7 Rules

Rules as described in activity theory cover standards, conversations, and social relations within a community (Nardi, 2001; Kuutti, 1996). Iron (2006) describes rules to be procedures and policies which mediate between the Institution and the community. In that sense, this could be South African department of education policy on ICT integration in higher institution. The policy which stipulates the need to achieve the 2020 vision of integrating ICT in all South African schools. Kaptelinin (1996) contends that rules maybe describes as transformative teaching strategies which are e-mail mediated and capable to be used to integrate e-mail feedback into teaching and learning of Business Management Education. With this in mind, this study intend to understand how rules are been applied in e-mail integration process.

Figure 2: Activity system
(Mlitwa and Kachala, 2009)



In figure above, the model shows the integration of activity system in progress. Activity above is e-mail integration, lecturers are assumed to represent individuals responsible for the integration process and they are expected to deal directly with the students whom the lecture. From the model above, the process of teaching and learning involve three parties, lecturers, students, and the institution authority forms the community. Naidoo (2007) argues that technology at this stage may be regarded as an indifferent tool which exists to achieve user purposes.

2.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter made use of different literature in reviewing students' experiences of electronic mail facilitated feedback. However, I managed to locate several sources both national and international that mainly focus on e-mail as well as feedback. The chapter and its contents provide other researchers' ideas on integrating e-mail in the classrooms and also explanation of the theoretical framework which is activity theory. The chapter specified and categorised various modes of providing feedback in higher education, influence of email in students learning. It also discussed both lecturers and students' experiences of integrating e-mail in teaching and learning. Therefore, next chapter focuses on design and methodology of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter looked at the literature review and the theoretical framework that guide this study. In this chapter, the research methodology is discussed. The chapter also discusses the approach that was adopted for the research study in the light of the critical research questions the study sets out to answer. It further discusses the design of the study, detailing the data generation methods, sample and sampling techniques, methods of data analysis, research ethical considerations and research limitations and finally a conclusion. This study is aimed at acquiring information about students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback in Business Management Education at a Higher Institution.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- What are students experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback in Business Management Education at a Higher Institution?
- How may e-mail facilitated feedback influence students learning in Business Management Education?

Research design is a planned approach of exploration of how a researcher will systematically collect and analyse the data that is needed to answer the research questions (Cohen et al., 2011). Furthermore, Cohen at al. (2011) explains that it is a routine plan that is employed by researchers to answer questions reliably, objectively and accurately.

However, Cohen et al. (2011) describes methodology as the systematic, theoretical analysis of the practical methods employed to a field of study. Methodology offers complete and detailed information of the theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles related with a branch of knowledge. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) also argue that the account of methodology differs in the sense that methodology does not promise to give solutions but it offers the theoretical approach for understanding which method, or methods, practices are suitable for application to a particular case.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGMS

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) assert that different beliefs and values inform any research study. Consequently, this study identifies and discusses three main different paradigms that represent educational paradigm and they are: Post-positivism, critical paradigm and interpretive paradigm. Post-positivism as a research paradigm that was founded on the assumption that there is one truth about the world, and that the humanity in general can never come to know it entirely. Thus, the goal of post-passivism as a research paradigm is to describe, control and predict (Mugo, 2011).

On the other hand, critical paradigm sees reality as formed by social, political, cultural and economic and other forces at work (Cohen et al., 2011). This suggests that critical paradigm is based on the assumption that the world is characterised by unequal power relations (De Vos et al., 2005). Also, research in critical paradigm is dedicated to bringing about some kind of social change or social transformation that will assist those groups who are understood to be disadvantaged, have little power or few opportunities or choices open to them (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

In addition, interpretive paradigm aims to describe how members of the society make sense of their worlds, and how they make meaning of their particular activities or actions. Therefore, interpretive paradigm purpose is to develop a greater understanding of how people make sense of the context in which they live and work (Cohen et al. 2011 & De Vos et al. 2005). Hence, the paradigm of interest in this study is the interpretive paradigm.

3.2.1 An interpretive paradigm

This study was guided by the interpretive paradigm which seeks to understand the subjective world of human experience (Cohen et al., 2011). The interpretive paradigm is founded on the belief that human beings construct meaning in their world, which is constructed as a result of the interaction within his/her environment. Also, interpretive research paradigm assumes that people are active agents for their own knowledge; they create and associate their subjective meanings as they interact with the world around them (Creswell, 2012). Interpretive researchers' effort is to understand phenomena through accessing the meanings participants give to them (De Vos et al., 2005).

Moreover, an interpretive paradigm highlights the importance to put analysis in context (Smith, 2012). This suggests that the interpretive researcher is involved with understanding the world as it is from subjective experiences of each individual. I therefore considered the meaning of the Business Management Education students in relation to e-mail facilitated feedback as life experiences. This is in line with Somekh and Lewin's (2005) definition which states that interpretive research paradigm as providing insight into the way in which a particular group of individuals make sense of their situation or phenomena they encounter in their social interaction. Consequently, given that the research study is located within the interpretive paradigm, and that its result or findings are descriptive rather than predictive, the qualitative research methodology as discussed in the following section is chosen in agreement with the research paradigm.

3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

This study is located within the qualitative research approach. Some relevance or values of qualitative research describes an understanding of the actual human interactions, meanings, and the processes which constitute real-life settings (Cohen et al., 2011). In this study, I intend to understand deeply the students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback through on-going interactions.

On the other hand, qualitative research "provides an in-depth and detailed understanding of meanings, actions, non-observable as well as observable phenomena, attitudes, intentions and behaviors"(Cohen et al., 2011, p. 47). The qualitative research approach gives voices to participants and probes issues that lie beneath the surface of presenting behaviours and actions (Kumar, 2005). Hence, the qualitative methodology is considered appropriate for this research study. This is because qualitative approach assisted me in gathering in-depth information from the participants about their experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback.

3.4 QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

The research strategy adopted in this study is that of a case study. A case study is an in depth examination of a particular example of a phenomenon. Moreover, case study provides both the researcher and reader of research report a unique example of real people in a real situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Case study enables the readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply presenting them with abstract theories or principles. Additionally, the term case study is not restricted to social science research but used in many practical contexts.

Thus, case studies can be used in educational research to examine the characteristics of a group of individuals, but not of a large sample of population (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). To arrive at a generalisation, the study was extended to include a number of schools as a sample.

In addition, case study is used to gather in depth information about an individual person, group, community or event. As an approach with interpretive methodologies, case study has numerous values attached to it, which are as follows:

- Case study research can be conducted by a single researcher and can imply to gather useful information, from a small group within a class, to the whole school, from family backgrounds, capabilities, attitudes and relationships (Cohen et al., 2011).
- Case study is used to gather data about an individual person, group, community or event (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).
- This case study was done in one higher institution in KwaZulu-Natal. An in-depth study was conducted into students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback method.

In addition, a case study provides very comprehensive information about a specific subject that would not be possible to achieve through another type of scientific method (Cohen et al., 2011). A case study approach provides a detailed description of the situations in the research study involving people, events, and how their interaction with their environment is shaped (Cohen et al., 2011). Also, the significance of adopting a case study in this study is because it has the ability to yield a huge amount of information needed for the study.

3.5 RESEARCH SITE AND CONTEXT

The study was conducted in the department of Commerce Education at a University in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. I chose this University for this research study because I am a registered student of the University. Also, the University offers Business Management Education and a variety of programmes of study ranging from bachelor programmes to postgraduate studies. The University is situated in an urban area, with electricity, and Local Area Network (LAN) in and around the campus, with good road network which connects the city to other cities. The ratio of computers in the University computer hall is 4:1 (four

students per computer system). There are three blocks of lecture halls with many classrooms and with internet access to accommodate all students.

3.6 SAMPLING

According to De vos et al. (2005), sampling means taking a part of a population and seeing it as representative of that population. Furthermore, the sample of this study was convenient and intentionally limited to Business Management Education students at a University in KwaZulu-Natal. Also, convenience sampling is a situation in which a researcher takes advantage of a natural gathering or easy access to people they can recruit into study (Remler & Ryzin, 2014). Cohen et al. (2011) add that convenience sampling may be described as choosing the nearest individuals as participants. Therefore, I chose Business Management Education students in one higher education institution in Kwazulu-Natal province as participants because I considered them as convenient sources because of the following points below:

- Most of the students and I belong to the same football team and play soccer together almost every day; therefore, this gives an opportunity to have access to them conveniently.
- We use the same gym facility centre together on a daily basis; this also gives me access to meet conveniently.
- Most of the students reside close to my residence, therefore making it more convenient for me to meet them without much difficulty.

Moreover, Remler and Ryzin (2014) add that convenience sampling is a sampling method in which people are sampled simply because they are convenient sources of data for researchers. Cohen et al. (2011) contend that convenience sampling is when the most convenient chances or accessible elements of the population are selected. Therefore, in this study, convenience sampling is adopted in targeting the population sample that most likely yielded the most valuable information on electronic mail facilitated feedback in Business Management Education. Adopting convenient sampling techniques in this study, I decided what needs to be known and set out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information and were convenient to find. In this research study, convenience sampling was relatively quick, easy and available in terms of sampling participants for the study.

3.6.1 Brief description of sampled population

The data of this study came from Business Management Education students, at a University in KwaZulu-Natal province. The participants of this study are in the 3rd and 4th year of their study. These participants are Ten (10) in number and were conveniently sampled in order to acquire in-depth responses regarding their experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback.

This sample of participants is indicated in Table 1

Table 1: Indicating participants' demographics

NAME	AGE	LEVEL\YEAR	SPECIALISATION
Miss M	22	3rd year	Business Management Education
Mr T	24	4th year	Business Management Education
Mr L	26	4th year	Business Management Education
Miss TN	23	3rd year	Business Management Education
Miss Z	25	3rd year	Business Management Education
Mr G	23	4th year	Business Management Education
Miss Q	22	4th year	Business Management Education
Mr P	22	3rd year	Business Management Education
Mr S	25	4th year	Business Management Education
Miss A	24	4th year	Business Management Education

3.7 DATA PRODUCTION METHODS

In this section, I intend to explain the data generation procedures for this study. As a qualitative study and data generation methods for qualitative research study can be time-consuming. Therefore, to ensure information that is richer and deeper insight into the phenomenon under study the following methods were followed to generate data:

- Reflective journal
- Face-to-face interviews
- Focus group interviews

However, before setting out to generate data I started by informing all the participants about the nature and purpose of using the methods. In this case, I obtained the participants' prior information in the consent letter earlier and thereafter proceed with their full consent. After receiving participants consent, the research process started with writing of reflective journal.

3.7.1 Reflective journal

Reflection is a process through which a person reflects on his or her experiences of practice in order to describe analyses, evaluate and so inform learning about practice (Hsieh, Jang, Hwang & Chen, 2011). Reflection is important because it is a process, and also an in-built part of learning for all people (Hubbs & Brand, 2005). Also, as a process of analysing, reconsidering and questioning experiences with broad contextual issues, reflection is important as it helps one to examine and interpret experiences so as to gain a new understanding (Murray & Kujundzic, 2005).

However, adopting a reflective journal as a method of data generation provides a quick look of the inner workings of the minds (Hubbs & Brand, 2005). Reflective journal as a method of generating data can serve as a “medium for the student to define, question, and interact with concepts, ideas, values, beliefs, and feelings” (Hubbs & Brand, 2005, p. 22).

Therefore, reflective journal writing is considered important for this study because it helps students to think freely and write in their own words. It is important to note that this journal writing is free from concerns about technicality issues for example, punctuations and spelling (Hsieh et al., 2011) One of the advantages of journal writing is the absence of face-to-face interaction of the researcher and the participants (Murray & Kujundzic, 2005). Due to the absence of face-to-face interaction the participants are encouraged to put their opinion, feelings, and experiences in writing without holding back. The reflective journal is always available and ready as participants will hand in their entries immediately once completed.

Hubbs and Brand (2005) maintain that reflective journal writing is in contrast to questionnaires. As students are not answering questions rather, they are writing what they feel and experienced without fear of being right or wrong. Also, the advantage of journal writing is that it yields 100% rate of results (Hubbs & Brand, 2005). This suggests that reflective journal writing copies are always returned and every copy containing useful data without any copy ruined. Therefore, student reflective journal was considered as being

capable of connecting the students' understanding and feelings. With this in mind, reflective journal as a method of generating data for this study was considered to be important and appropriate.

Therefore, the participants were asked to log seven entries. The reason was to make sure that proper and enough detailed information about the phenomenon under study was collected. The focus of each of the entries was given as follows:

- Entry 1 focused on participants meaning of feedback.
- Entry 2 to 5 focused on participant experiences of different methods of providing feedback as listed below: Verbal feedback, written feedback and Electronic feedback (e-mail feedback).
- Entry 3 entails participant experiences of electronic feedback.
- Entry 4 electronic feedback to inform errors.
- Entry 5 electronic feedback accompanied by marks.
- Entry 6 Immediate electronic feedback.
- Entry 7 Delayed electronic feedback.

The journal entries were available and ready as soon as students handed in their entries immediately upon completion.

3.7.2 Interviews

Interviews have an advantage over other methods of data generation because it allows for greater in-depth understanding of phenomenon under study (Cohen et al., 2011). Creswell (2012) identifies the interview method as one of the most valued sources of case study information. Also, conducting a good interview is in some ways like participating in a good conversation, listening intentionally and asking questions that focus on concrete examples and feelings rather than on abstract speculations, which are not likely to provide meaningful information (Remler & Ryzin, 2014). It is for this reason that focus group and face-to-face interviews were perceived to be most appropriate and consequently applied in this study.

3.7.2.1 Face-to-face interviews

Face-to-face interview or one-on-one interview as it is sometimes referred to, is a contact between the researcher and the participant (Cohen et al., 2011). Creswell (2012) asserts that face-to-face interviews is a data generation process in which the researcher asks questions as well as records answers from only one participant in the study at a time. According to De vos et al. (2005), face-to-face interviews is a process of getting to know what motivates another person. Creswell (2012) contends that face-to-face interviews are data generation methods which involve a conscious exploration of another person's interest, passion, experience, most important relationships and stories. Therefore, face-to-face interview as a method of collecting data is useful when a researcher is investigating a topic that is very personal to participants. The benefits for adopting face-to-face interviews as a data generation technique includes the ability to gain empathy and participants' trust, as well as a deeper understanding of responses. The ten participants were interviewed separately during face-to-face interview process. The interview with each participant took place in an environment conducive for conducting face-to-face interview. Each interview with a participant lasted for about 45 minutes.

Face-to-face interviews were used in line with the suggestion (Cohen et al., 2011). This was to validate other methods of data generation or to go deeper into the experiences of respondents. Face-to-face interviews were also used importantly for this study as a way to follow up students' reflective journal in order to go deeper into the responses and their reason for responding as they do.

3.7.2.2 Focus group interview

Creswell (2012) asserts that focus group interview is a process of collecting data through interviews with a group of people. The researcher uses this method of data generation because, it is advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information and when interviewees are similar to and co-operative with each other. Furthermore, focus group interview was considered vital in this study, as it encourages debate and proper engagement between the participants which also assist in data generation. Focus group interviews were conducted only once and in one of the classrooms at one University campus in KwaZulu-Natal province. The focus group interview with the ten participants lasted for about 60 minutes. The focus group interview was conducted after face-to-face interviews.

3.7.3 Data analysis

Remler and Ryzin (2014) indicate that qualitative data analysis involves the organization and interpretation of materials such as field notes, interview transcriptions, video or audio recordings and documents. McMillian and Schumacher (1997) add that qualitative data analysis is a systematic procedure of selecting, categorising, comparing, synthesising and interpreting data in order to give proper explanation of a single phenomenon of interest. Additionally, it is important in this study to state that, this study adopt thematic data analysis. Thematic data analysis is used by the researcher by way of not merely counting explicit words or phrases but focusing on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Findings relating to identified themes are collected, analysed and then discussed. To analyse the data I took various steps or stages as the case may be:

- First of all, I began with reading all the data/journal responses, interview transcriptions and also writing down notes when and where necessary.
- Then the thickest and richest of journal responses and interview were selected and I recorded assumptions as well as perceptions in the margin.
- Data of similar topics were then grouped together, to outline conceptual resemblances and determine patterns.
- All the topics were then abbreviated as codes and then assigned a descriptive heading and changed into categories. The list of categories was reduced by grouping corresponding topics under well-matched headings.
- Each category was abbreviated and assigned a particular code for identification.
- Later, all the data materials that link to each category were collected and initial analysis was done which enabled me to generate the themes.

The data categories were also grouped into two themes. Also, from each theme emerged sub-themes and different categories (Marshall & Rossman, 2010; Hopwood, 2004).

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

In qualitative research the goal of trustworthiness is to support the argument that the research findings are “worth paying attention to” (Lincoln & Guba, 1990, P. 290). Shenton (2004) asserts that trustworthiness in qualitative research is an idea or a way of proofing that the

evidence for the research reported is sound and when the argument made based on the findings is strong. Also, it is important that a qualitative researcher's tool should be channelled towards trustworthiness and should include issues such as credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability (Shenton, 2004). This suggests that all research must respond to procedures or standards that can be used to assess trustworthiness of the project in mind (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Therefore, to maintain and ensure trustworthiness in my research, I employed different approaches to enhance trustworthiness. Therefore, this study seeks to satisfy the four mentioned criteria below.

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to an evaluation of whether or not the research findings represent a credible conceptual interpretation of the data from the participants' original data (Lincoln & Guba, 1990, p. 295). In qualitative research, credibility means that the findings of the qualitative research study that was conducted are acceptable and trustworthy from the perspective of participants (De Vos et al., 2005). Therefore, addressing the issues of credibility in my research study, I took much time and effort to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon under study is being presented (Shenton, 2004), and used multiple methods (triangulation). Triangulation is a strategy to increase the validity of a study by bringing in more than one source of data that provides richer and more multifaceted data (Cohen et al., 2011). I used different methods to improve the validity and also to create more in-depth understanding and to see to what extent differences would emerge from the data (Cohen et al., 2011). This suggests that to ensure credibility researchers attempts to produce findings that are acceptable and resounding (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). In order to ensure credibility and to promote confidence that I have accurately recorded the phenomenon under study I made the following provisions:

- I first invited the participants for a meeting in order to familiarise myself with them.
- Appropriate research methods were adopted and explained (triangulation).
- A sample method suitable for the research study was adopted (Convenient sample method).

However, I also employed different ideas to ensure credibility which included the use of audio tape recording during data generation and my supervisors acting as independent co-

coder. Findings and analysis were also discussed with my supervisors to have a comprehensible set of findings linked with the theory and the literature reviewed.

Furthermore, after generating data in the first phase and during the second phase, the findings which emerged in the early stage were made available to the study participants for them to examine if it was actually what was said and meant by them. This I considered necessary to enable me avoid imposing personal ideas on the data (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

3.8.2 Dependability

Dependability is an assessment of the quality of the integrated process of data generation, data analysis, and theory generation (Lincoln & Guba, 1990). This study recognised that the meeting of dependability criterion is difficult in qualitative research study. Addressing the issues of dependability in this research study, I employed peer review strategy; I used clear research questions and clear explanation of the research design. I also considered the issue of ethical concerns which is important in qualitative research, thereby, obtaining ethical clearance from the university and obtaining consent from the participants. Equally, throughout the period of this research study, I tried as much as possible to maintain anonymity and confidentiality in the reporting of the findings (De Vos et al., 2005).

3.8.3 Conformability

Conformability is a measure of how well the research findings are supported by the data collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1990). Shenton (2004) maintains the concept of conformability is assumed to be the researchers' comparable concern for objectivity. Shenton (2004) argues that "steps must be followed to ensure that the research findings are the results and ideas of the participants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher" (p. 72). Therefore, Lincoln and Guba (1990, cited in Khanare, 2009, p. 40) affirm that there are four recognised ways that can be followed to achieve conformability and they are as follows:

- Having someone to critically question one's interpretation.
- Developing themes and to search for negative instances and alternative instances.
- Developing a second set of 'judgment-free' notes before developing categories.
- Conducting an audit of data generation and analysis strategies.

Therefore, for the period of this study, I tried to implement a neutral position and completed analysis without a bias to influence data. I ensured that the presentation and the discussion of the findings represent and reflect exactly the participants' description of the phenomenon explored in the study. Additionally, I followed different ways in doing so, including spending time reading the transcriptions made from the audio-tape recordings as well as in matching patterns by considering conclusions in terms of predictions from the theory and the relevant literature studied. In order to minimise my biasness, I had a discussion about analysis with my supervisors and findings of the research were finalised subsequently (Conrad & Serlin, 2005 cited in Khanare, 2009). My aim was to represent the voices of the study participants.

3.8.4 Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which the findings of this present research study can apply or transfer beyond the bounds of the project (Lincoln & Guba, 1990). Transferability in a sense reveals the idea that captures the traditional conception of generalisability. To address transferability, I have described the process of coding and giving insight into how the data were analysed. Shenton (2004, p. 70) argues that there are five recognised ways that can be followed to achieve transferability and they are as follows:

- Stating any restrictions in the type of people who contributed data.
- Stating the number of participants involved in the research study.
- Stating the data generation methods that were employed.
- The length and number of the data generation session.
- The time period over which the data was collected.

Therefore, to address transferability for this study, the distinctive features of transferability were addressed through the progression of sample selection. I discussed the literature in relation to students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback, particularly in Business Management Education. Then the theoretical framework, that is, the activity theory, was sufficiently defined as well as the ways in which data were guided by this theory. Also, a thick explanation of the findings has been provided, with verbatim quotes from the participants.

3.9 TRIANGULATION

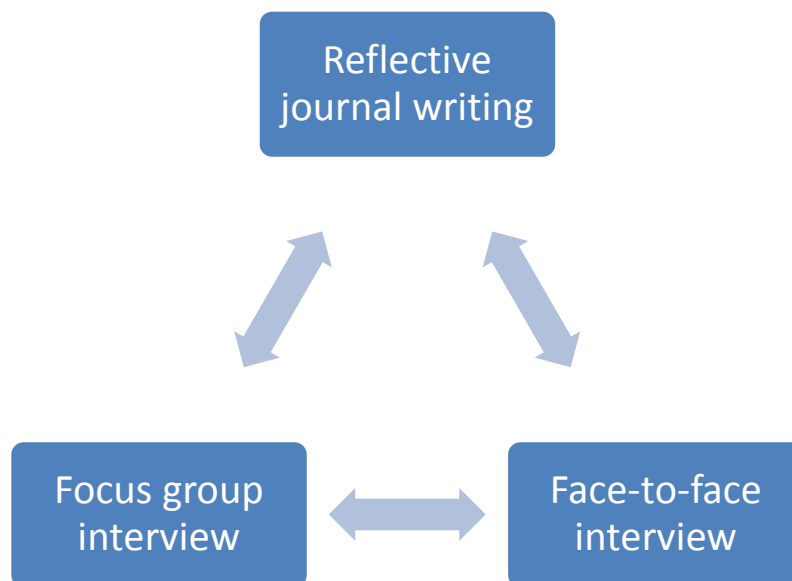
The use of two or more methods to study human behaviour is called methodological triangulation which elicits a richer description of the phenomenon under study.

Figure 3 shows combination of different methods used to collect data. After familiarising with the study participants and after briefing them what the study is all about, I began collecting data using the first research method as shown in figure 3 below which is reflective journal writing.

The second phase of data generation, I used the face-to-face interviews method to collect data from the participants individually.

The third phase involves focus group interview. I used the focus group interview method to collected data from the participants in a group.

Figure 3: Indicating methods of data generation used



Triangulation particularly, refers to the use and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2012; Cohen et al., 2011; De Vos et al., 2005). Cohen et al. (2011) add that triangulation in research increases confidence in interpretation. Similarly, Creswell (2012) asserts that case study draws its strength through the collection of evidence from more than one source. He further states that the reasons behind the use of different sources of evidence are for triangulation. Therefore, as a powerful research technique, triangulation can facilitate authentication of data through cross-

corroboration from two or more sources. In this study, journal writing, focus group interview and face-to-face interviews were used. Hence data collected from these combined methods were triangulated for validation of the result.

3.10 RECONTEXTUALISATION AND LITERATURE CONTROL

In this present study, I continually attempted to set the scene ensuring the linking of the existing theory and literature. This was my attempt to present the insights from the data in the context of established and reputable knowledge (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). This is an effort in this study, to find those features in the data that corroborate literature and/or that maintain distinctive contributions to the specific realm of the research (Khanare, 2009). Furthermore, as a result of the literature control multiple perspectives, similarities and differences are identified that serve to recontextualise the findings.

3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In qualitative research, there are some ethical considerations that should be maintained and upheld. According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), moral integrity of the researcher is a critical feature of guaranteeing that the research process and a researcher's findings are trustworthy and valid; and also making sure that measures are kept that can be used to assess trustworthiness. Therefore, in an attempt to reduce bias in this research study the following ethical considerations were applied and maintained:

- Ethical clearance approval from the university (Appendix A)
- Signed consent forms were obtained from all the participants.

Prior to this the purpose and the process entailed in this study was explained in detail to the participants. For instance: Initial and formal meetings were held in the institution's library during a lunch break before the research process. During the meeting, all about the research were explained to the participants; the nature of the research, the process and the purpose of the study. The participants were also invited to ask questions for clarification if there is anything confusing that they were experiencing during this stage. Letters of informed consent were issued to the participants. It was assured in the letter that their participation in this study will not compromise their studies or student status as Business Management Education students in the higher institution.

- Confidentiality and anonymity were promised to all the participants in this study. Also the participants were formerly notified that their participation is completely voluntary and that they could at any point withdraw from the participation. Cohen et al. (2011) describe the rights of participants as informed consent, anonymity, privacy and confidentiality. The researcher was aware of these rights and they were acknowledged by the researcher while moving into the field to collect data.

3.12 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations in this study are linked to the sample size, language and the use of reflective journal in data generation.

3.12.1 Sample size

The study was limited to Business Management Education students, those who are in their third and fourth year of study in university. Therefore, the absence of other students from other levels of study and from other departments has been a limitation, yet the willingness and availability of the other students provided an opportunity for in-depth discussions.

3.12.2 Language

Language speaking was identified to be a limitation in this study. This was evident because, I am an international student with a foreign accent while the research participants were all local students. Sometimes the participants and I find it difficult to understand each other's word accent. To deal with the language barrier as limitation, during the subsequent interviews participants were presented with the data gathered and translated in earlier interviews for them to confirm the accuracy.

3.12.3 Data generation technique (Journal Writing)

Some irresistible issues emerged during data generation. During the writing of reflective journal the initial time (i.e. two weeks) given to the participant to write and submit their reflective journal was not enough. In agreement with them (participants) they took more time for writing and returning of their responses. However, the purpose was to use the journal responses as a way to open up other activities (like, face-to-face and focus group interviews).

3.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a detailed explanation of the research design and methodology that was used to collect data in the study. The chapter further recognised the appropriateness and positive aspects of utilising a qualitative approach. The methodological strategy, and the data generation and analysis procedures were discussed in detail. Furthermore, the limitations of the study have been presented to ensure credibility. Chapter Four presents the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter explained the research methodology used in the study. This chapter presents the findings of the study. It is also aimed at linking the study to the chapter two and the theories underpinning the study. The findings are presented with direct quotations from the reflective journal, in-depth semi structured face-to-face interview and focus group interviews of the participants. For each key research question, themes were identified and discussed.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In this section, analysis of data was based on the data generated from ten participants. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed into textual data. After that the transcripts were read through, coded the data and organised it into themes. Finally, the findings were grouped into two themes to answer the research questions. Each theme is being supported by verbatim quotes from the students' responses. The two themes with regard to students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback were:

- Students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback.
- Influence of e-mail facilitated feedback on students learning of Business Management.

4.3 STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF E-MAIL FACILITATED FEEDBACK

For this theme what was found from the data is that there was not only one experience but students have multiple/varied experiences. These experiences fit into the categories of negative and positive experiences. The analysis of data from reflective journal, focus group interview and face- to- face interview indicated that students have varied positive experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback. Therefore, the discussions are based on the sub-themes of positive and negative experiences.

4.3.1 Students positive experiences of electronic mail feedback

In the context of this study, positive experiences are considered to be anything positive that the students experienced from using e-mail feedback. In the light of this, students' responses show that e-mail-facilitated feedback enhances constant communication with their lecturers.

However, students' positive experiences of e-mail came from the following categories: e-mail enhances communication; e-mail feedback as convenient method; time saving; access to vast information.

4.3.1.1 E-mail enhances communication

The students participating in this study reported that e-mail-facilitated feedback increased communication, in which many people can share and talk about the feedback. The students acknowledged and embraced various networks in which they communicate about their feedback. For example, feedback was communicated through institutionalised electronic system. Also, the institution communicates feedback using personal and social networks, including, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, BBM, 2go, ChatON, yahoo mail and Gmail. The significance of enhanced communication has been reported by one of the participants as follows:

“I have school e-mail account, it is compulsory for every student to have e-mail account linked to University e-mail system (to get my feedback)”

Another student participant emphasised the importance of compulsory e-mail because they can therefore receive feedback and communicate broadly. The response also indicates that interaction between students-to-students and other members of the school community (lecturers and school managers) are essential, as shown below:

“Communication between the students, lecturers and the school managers is very crucial, and to maintain good communication I think it will be through e-mail. I think it was the reason it was made compulsory for every student to have e-mail account linked to the school e-mail system”.

What emerged clearly from the excerpts above is that feedback could be communicated broadly and widely because of the e-mail both institutionalised and personal social networks. Participants also point out that e-mail facilitated feedback promoted continuous feedback, particularly involving students, lecturers and school managers.

“Communication through e-mail is the only means that can offer smooth and easy access to stay in contact with members of the school community”

“I prefer electronic mail feedback amongst other methods because it is the only method that I know can offer free and constant communication to students, lecturers and school management”.

“E-mail makes communication easier for both lecturers and students; it opens ways for lecturers and students to communicate easily using the school online web interface”

From the students’ responses above, it is evident that communicating feedback brings about positive experience. Significantly, e-mail-facilitated feedback was communicated using variety of formal and social networks. This, therefore, made feedback to be ‘compulsory’ and ‘constant’, according to the participants.

The above findings in this study corroborate with the Council on Higher Education (CHE, 2003) and the Department of Education (DoE, 2004) which both stipulate the need for integration of technology in South African schools to speed up the way teaching and learning are being done, with main focus on the provision of feedback, and the maintenance of communication between lecturers and students. In the same way, the findings of this study also concur with Rahman (2008) as well as Warschauer (2010) who describe e-mail as an important channel for communication which enhances the sending, sharing and receiving of feedback.

Moreover, the findings in this study support the study conducted by Rahman (2008) who argued that email is a very important communication channel. E-mail opens up a way where contributors, participants or users post and/or read messages presented under different subject headers or threads. The student participants indicated that receiving feedback through e-mails (eg. Facebook, Twitter, Gmail, WhatsApp, etc.) enhance communication in relation to the topic under investigation. However, Marumo (2007) argues that teaching and learning activity is not without any intention, the purpose for integrating e-mail in teaching and learning is for transformation. Moreover, in activity theory, the term object refers to all motives, aims, and objectives leading to e-mail integration (Kuutti, 1996). Therefore, the finding reveal that the object for integrating email in the classroom which is for transformation or transforming how communication takes place between lecturer and student,

and student to student is achieved. This is so because, according to the participants they confirm that receiving feedback through email, communication between student and lecturers, and student to students has improved positively.

4.3.1.2 E-mail feedback as convenient method

E-mail does not only enhance communication, but it does it in more accessible way. The findings reveal that receiving feedback through e-mail was reported to be more convenient. E-mail feedback method is convenient in terms of factors like accessibility.

Students that revealed e- mail can be accessed from anywhere and anytime. Students can also access their feedback from wherever they are. One participant affirms that:

“E-mail feedback is good because if you look at the number of students in a class it is not so easy for one lecturer to reach to them one-on-one as and when needed; but with e-mail the lecturer can send feedback to all at the same time without meeting them face-to-face”.

Also, another student participant stated that:

“Electronic mail feedback is easily accessible and convenient; when it is being sent to you, you can get your feedback at anytime and anywhere without any form of challenges, and you can immediately reply if there is any need to reply”

From the participants responses it implies that students have open access to their feedback twenty four hours of a day. The findings indicate that the use of e-mail in sending feedback has proved undisruptive from any form of difficulties which means that one can receive and respond to feedback anytime and any day irrespective of the persons' location.

The participants' responses indicate that e-mail feedback is convenient because it reduces power imbalances in class. The findings indicate that those students who cannot talk because of shyness can talk to their lecturer freely through e-mail. The findings reveal that providing feedback electronically is the most convenient method to give feedback to students. This is in the sense that some of the students who are shy and not bold enough to ask questions in class

or contribute to the classroom discussion can through e-mail ask or contribute their own opinion to the discussions. One of the student participants indicated that:

“I cannot speak up in class not because I do not know what to say but I feel others might be thinking ill of my way of speaking; but e-mail is so convenient that I say what I want to say and how I want to say it”

Although students had difficulty in responding and participating in class discussion, giving answers through email facilitated feedback created a non-threatening learning environment, especially to those learners who needed more clarity but could not ask questions because they are shy to talk in class. Supporting the findings, Sutherland (2004) asserts that e-mail has been broadly used in many developed countries. In the same way, Nicol and Thomson (2014) agree with the findings in this study by stating that the significant aspect of the use of e-mail is that it is capable of providing a genuine and conducive learning environment for the students to study Business Management Education.

Therefore, the findings indicate that e-mail facilitated feedback method is convenient, thereby serving as a bridge between those students who are shy and cannot ask questions or contribute in class to comfortably ask and answer questions conveniently. The findings correspond with Berk (2009) who said that to cover up the gap created by students' shyness in asking questions in class, e-mail is capable of coordinating computer-mediated communication between lecturers and students. The finding is in line with the theory of this study which is activity theory. In activity theory, those who make use of e-mail or ICT properties are regarded as subjects (Kaptelinin 1996; Kuutti, 1996). In addition, students are regarded as subjects because they make use of email and ICT equipment like cell phones, computers, and internet access to social networks including Subject Module, Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, 2go and more. They receive and share electronic mails. Hence, the object or aims of integrating email in the classroom teaching and learning which is to transform and improve the subjects (Students) are being realised. The finding also is in line with Mezirow (1997) who believes that, for the essence of transformation to be achieved properly, there should be a joint contribution of power and resources to be used in a particular way as a means to achieve meaningful transformation. Meanwhile, as the students and their lecturers share and receive feedback through email activity is taking place. The students also are

learning new ideas and skills which is the main idea for the integration of email in teaching and learning.

4.3.1.3 Time saving

Student participants emphasised the use e-mail facilitated feedback, the participants claim that e-mail facilitated feedback is convenient because it saves a lot of time. E-mail is fast and it is time-sensitive information, including feedback updates can be received within minutes and not days or weeks. Participants' responses confirm that e-mail feedback is beneficial because of time saving and speed delivery of feedback. The findings show that e-mail feedback method as a means of saving time. The participants considered e-mail feedback as the fastest way of receiving and sending of feedback. As it is important that students should receive their feedback as at when needed, it will definitely enhance and improve their study. Student participants confirm that:

“I prefer e-mail feedback to other ways of providing feedback because electronic feedback is fast, it's not time consuming. You can receive your feedback wherever you are; and reply immediately wherever you are”

“The e-mail feedback is fast it does not take time to receive feedback. It is very fast; in fact e-mail is the fastest way of sending and receiving feedback. Also it can be used to send bulk messages to students at the same time”

What is evident from the data is that information passed through e-mail does not consume a lot of time to get to the recipients.

Therefore, from the participants' responses it shows that e-mail facilitated feedback is fast for delivery of feedback to students. The findings indicate that large amounts of information can easily and conveniently be sent out to students by using e-mail feedback method.

From the participants' responses it is evident that e-mail feedback does speed up the delivery of feedback to the students. The findings corroborate with Flynn, Concannon and Campbell (2005) that with the use of e-mail, large amounts of information can easily and conveniently be sent out to students. Additionally, the findings also agree with Bailey and Garner (1994) that using email is fast and easy to send and to receive information. Also, the findings

correspond with Iron (2008) who argues that e-mail speeds up the sending and receiving of messages. It allows one message to be sent to several of people at once. From the data it is evident that e-mail facilitated feedback method is a convenient method for providing feedback. It is more convenient in a way that it speeds up the delivery of feedback to students and it is not time consuming. The finding corresponds with the theory of this study, in activity theory there is always an expected outcome. Therefore, the integration of electronic mail in providing feedback is based on the hope that it will bring about transformation in the way feedback is given to students in Business Management Education in higher institution. Consequently, the division of labour in activity theory proves to expedite the provision of feedback to students in this study.

4.3.1.4 Access to vast information

E-mail facilitated feedback as reported by the student participants provide more access to vast and diverse information. The participants recognised and embrace the integration of e-mail facilitated feedback and its contribution to their study of Business Management Education. The student participants acknowledged various accesses to study materials which they have by using e-mail facilitated feedback. For instance the students receive prompt notice of information from lecturer and vast access to various study materials (e.g., materials like journal articles, e-book, maps, charts, videos and audio clips animations and rich graphics). The significance of vast access to information which e-mail facilitated feedback offered has been reported by the participants as follows:

“E-mail facilitated feedback is very advantageous because when lecturers post notes or information on the site, we do receive notification”

“E-mail also grants us access to other materials which help us in our study. For example, I do download some charts, graph, video and audio clips related to Business Management”.

Other student participants emphasised the advantageous nature of using e-mail facilitated feedback. The participants claim that e-mail facilitated feedback gives them (the students) access to be in contact with the lecturers irrespective of where they are located. Also, the participants indicate that even when their lecturer is not in the same geographical location with them, through e-mail they always stay in contact. The student participants also

commented that e-mail facilitated feedback is beneficial because it links students from different institutions.

“Sometimes you find out that some lecturers are not based on our campus, maybe they are visiting lecturers from other universities, e-mail gives you access to communicate with them so far as you are connected to each other and have internet access; instead of waiting for the day they will be on campus”

“E-mail facilitated feedback provides access for us to share experiences on subject matters with other students from other campuses like, DUT, UNISA. E-mail facilitated feedback method is a very advantageous method because it enables students to be able to have easy access to the internet and search for important materials in order to complete a certain task”

From the responses above what can be deduced is that students recognised the importance of e-mail facilitated feedback in classrooms. The student participants acknowledged that integration of e-mail facilitated feedback in the classrooms has broken the limitation of access to feedback and other valuable materials. The students can access feedback and search for information concerning their modules beyond the limit of their classroom and their school campus.

The data from this study revealed that e-mail facilitated feedback enhances students access to information related to their modules. It is clear from the participants in this study that e-mail facilitated feedback allows the students access to assorted materials and information which assists student to do research for their assignments. Also, findings show that e-mail facilitated feedback offers a wide range of communication opportunities to users. The findings indicate that e-mail facilitated feedback enables communication between students and other members of the school community (Students, lecturers, Management staff) and extends such communication channels to outside the school campus. Additionally, this study clearly reveals that e-mail facilitated feedback offers to the students a free and constant communication, vast access to information making communication convenient and much easier for members of the school community to be in contact with each other through the use of e-mail facilitated feedback. This is in keeping with Hassini (2006) who described e-mail as helpful. Hassini (2006) argued that sending lecture notes and outlines ahead of each lecture

(or weekly) to students can help absent students to follow the progress of the course. Also, the findings agree with Brooks and Menachemi (2006) and DoE (2013) who argue that in our society e-mail is used in solving everyday challenges of communication, and to apply these skills purposefully, safely and responsibly in teaching and learning it can help students in their academics. However, Kuutti (1994) in activity theory argue that e-mail is effectively integrated if its activity involves the community at large, that is if it involves both non-governmental organizations, consumers, government organization, and individual. Therefore, the finding shows that email enables the students' vast access to information. The finding indicates that the use of email provides the students' access to interact, communicates, and to share feedback with members of the community.

4.3.2 Negative experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback

In this section, findings indicate that students do not only have positive experiences of e-mail feedback but also various negative experiences. The data shows complexity, divergence, multiplicity and contradiction of experiences. The participants' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback are contradicting because the same participants who were singing praise of e-mail facilitated feedback also complained that it is stressful and challenging due to the following factors, delayed response and context.

4.3.2.1 Lack of basic computer skills

The participants indicate that e-mail facilitated feedback is very stressful. The students do not understand how it functions because it is a new way of providing feedback. The responses indicate that because e-mail facilitated feedback is an innovative way of providing feedback, students are struggling with it to check their feedback. Student participants' responses reveal that:

“This way of providing feedback is a new method to the students. Many students are not aware of this system; and they are having frustrations in checking their feedback from their lecturers”

Also, another participant explained that:

“Because it is a new way of giving us feedback, I find it hard to check or send email, it is quite complex for me to understand because am not familiar with a computer”

The responses show that students are not comfortable with the new method of providing feedback. It is clear from the data that the students are under stress because they do not understand the new method of providing feedback to them. They miss their feedback and other valuable information. Findings reveal that some students do not possess necessary computer skills to be able to operate computers and check their e-mail facilitated feedback. The students' lack of computer skills made them to miss their e-mail facilitated feedback sent to them by their lecturers, because they cannot log into computers to check their e-mail facilitated feedback. This study reveals that this new method has done to the students great harm than good; because they miss their lecturers' feedback sent to them through e-mail. The responses below are evidence of the findings:

“I do not know how to operate computers, and this made me not to be checking my e-mail facilitated feedback over a long period”.

“Because I do not know how to use computers, so I cannot log into the computer and check my e-mail”

These responses raise the fact that students' lack of computer skills stood as an obstacle to students checking their e-mail facilitated feedback. Many students miss valuable information and feedback from their lecturers and peers because they cannot make use of the computer systems because they lack the necessary computer skills to do so. The finding concurs with activity theory. In activity theory rules as described, cover standards, conversations, and social relations within a community (; Kuutti, 2001). Similarly, Nardi (2001) describe rules to be procedures and policies which mediate between the Institution and the community, in this case if the rules are not properly followed, transformative agenda which is the driving force for the integration of email in classroom teaching and learning might not be attained. Therefore, the finding is in accordance with activity theory which is the theory of this study, because the students who lack basic computer skills are being left out of the transformative process, as they cannot make use of email both to share and to receive feedback.

4.3.2.2 Context bound

The data in this study revealed that there are many factors that limit access to feedback timeously as indicated in previous sections. These factors include availability of internet signals, electrical power supply and demand which shows that e-mail is context bound. Therefore, checking their feedback becomes problematic which in turn lead to students missing their lecturers' feedback as participants reported below as follows:

“Another challenge is the issue of network connection; if there is no internet or electricity is always difficult to access our e-mails”.

“The difficult part of e-mail facilitated feedback is that some time you discover that there is no internet, which makes it impossible to access our emails promptly”.

In addition, other participants revealed that e-mail facilitated feedback is context bound in the sense that you only receive lecturers' e-mail facilitated feedback if you are staying where there are network services. This is highlighted in the following participants' responses:

“The challenge with e-mail facilitated feedback is you will only receive your feedback if you stay on campus where there is internet access every hour”.

“If you are staying where there is no internet access and you do not have a smart phone/internet bundle you will not be able to access your e-mail facilitated feedback”.

The responses clearly indicate that e-mail depends on some factors to function. The students believed e-mail depends on the availability of some factors to function properly. This suggests that in the absence of these factors, e-mail may not be able to function and students will not get their lecturers' feedback.

From the data collected in this study, it has become clear that there are challenges in the integration of e-mail facilitated feedback. The responses unveiled some loopholes in the integration of e-mail facilitated feedback in the classroom which can demotivate the students from participating in the use of e-mail facilitated feedback. With respect to the findings, it was clear that some students are unhappy with this method of providing feedback because it

is new method. Also, this study clearly reveals that some students lack computer skills and there is lack of constant internet service and electricity.

According to the findings of this study, these factors cause delayed response and makes e-mail context bound. This correspond with Hara and Kling (2001) who conducted a study on a web-based distance education and discovered that students are frustrated with lack of prompt feedback, technical problems and lack of computer skills. The findings in this study concur with Hara (2000) who argued that students being unsatisfied with e-mail facilitated feedback method can significantly inhibit their education opportunities; this is because unhappiness of students could interfere with pursuing of goals and it is one of the factors influencing students' academic progress.

In addition, Allah (2008) argued that e-mail feedback faces technical and practical challenges during the process of given e-mail feedback; students who are not familiar with computer may find it time consuming and may get frustrated with the method. The stress of missing feedback and other valued information may lead them to emotional troubles because they feel being left out which can cause social exclusion due to lack of computer skills (Warschauer, 2004). Moreover, Haykin (2009) as well as Hew and Brush (2007) argue that when talking of access to technology in classrooms, it is more than merely the presence of computers or availability of technology in a school. They advise that it involves providing proper amount and type of technology and training which will enable both the lecturers and students to use such technology. This suggests that an activity is taking on by a human agent (subject) who is inspired towards providing solution of a problem or purpose (object), and facilitated by tools (artefacts) in collaboration with others (community). The organisation of the activity is controlled by cultural factors including conventions (rules).

However, based on the above discussions under this theme, and in the case of activity theory, the active role of e-mail-facilitated feedback in student experiences becomes important (Nardi, 1996). The student participants also reveal positive experience of e-mail facilitated feedback as convenient, something which I have discussed earlier. Also, the activity theory according to Haykin (2009) introduces as important the division of labour as essential historical development behind the advancement of mental functions. Facilitated by tools, work is also done in situations of joint and combined activity. The findings of this study show that tools create a good relationship between students, lecturers and members of the

University community. In addition, Kaptelnini (1997) believes that this experience is gathered in the structural properties of tools, in this case, shape and material, and also in the knowledge of effectively using the tool. In the case of this study, the accessibility of resources; for example (computers, internet, and electricity) supports an increase level of communication between students and lecturers. The findings of this study show that tools create a good relationship between students, lecturers and members of the University community. The findings of this study corroborate with Kaptelinin et al. (1995) who argue that activity theory is sometimes used to refer to an activity system as a socio-technical system which can be used as a foundation for more specific ideas. Therefore, the findings of this study suggest that, it is important for students to interact with each other as well as other members of the school community and other stake holders in education.

4.4 INFLUENCE OF E-MAIL FACILITATED FEEDBACK ON STUDENTS

LEARNING OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

In this theme what was found from the data is that there was not only one influence but students have varied influence of e-mail facilitated feedback method. However, the influence fits into the categories of negative and positive influence. The analysis of data from three data generation methods (reflective journal, focus group interview and face-to-face interview) indicated that students have varied positive influence of e-mail facilitated feedback. Therefore, the discussions will be based on the sub-themes of positive and negative influence of e-mail facilitated feedback method.

4.4.1 Positive influence of e-mail facilitated feedback

The responses indicate that e-mail facilitated feedback influence students' learning both positively and negatively. The participants' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback influence on students' learning of Business Management Education came from independent learning, timeous feedback, enhanced computer skills, and clarity of information and collaborative learning.

4.4.1.1 Independent learning

In any tertiary institution it is expected that students who enrolled in the institution should be able to learn from lectures delivered in the classroom and also learn independently (independent learning). This independent learning skill or ability is what the participants of the present study recognised as a positive influence for e-mail facilitated feedback. This is

because they believe e-mail facilitated feedback encourages and motivates students to engage in independent learning. The responses show that e-mail facilitated feedback gives students an interest in their personal education. The data revealed that e-mail facilitated feedback furnishes the students with information that helps them to study on their own. The participants acknowledged that e-mail facilitated feedback enables the students to engage with the feedback they receive to do corrections (without external help), and respond to the e-mail. The significance of e-mail to enhance autonomous learning has been reported by the participants as follow:

“Once I receive my e-mail facilitated feedback, I use it immediately to study on my own, because I can still recall what my lecturer told us during class”.

“When you receive e-mail facilitated feedback it motivates because the information is there to guide you to do more research for your assignment”.

“E-mail facilitated feedback helped us to study on our own and at our own pace. Whenever I receive e-mail facilitated feedback from my lecturer, I usually use the feedback to compare what I have already done, and then do the necessary corrections”.

Equally, other participants acknowledged that e-mail facilitated feedback is influential in a way that it enhances and motivates students to engage in autonomous learning. This was stated by student participants as follows:

“When I receive e-mail facilitated feedback from my lecturer I used the feedback to do my study as well as my assignment corrections. E-mail feedback has helped me to improve in my study”.

“It makes me to learn how to study on my own as an individual. So with the help of that slides and lecture notes you can do your own study”.

“E-mail facilitated feedback among other methods of providing feedback is the most appropriate, with the e-mail facilitated feedback you got, you may decide to stay in

your room and study and do necessary corrections with the feedback through your personal computer”.

Giving the foregoing responses from the participants, it is evident that the student participants appreciate and recognise the importance of e-mail facilitated feedback as having positive influence on their studies. The findings indicate that e-mail facilitated feedback enables the students to engage in independent learning. Students have the chances or opportunities to learn more on their own effectively and explore the world around them anytime and from anywhere (both inside the classroom and from their private rooms) using their personal computers. This study clearly reveals that the use of e-mail in education encourages independent learning in such a way that no other method of providing feedback could have done. The finding corroborate with Engstrom (1999) who explains that activity is undertaken by human beings who are motivated towards achieving a particular goal in life or eager to solve a particular problem. In this context, the subjects (students) make use of email because they are zealous to acquire skills that will enable them in doing independent study or learning.

4.4.1.2 Timeous feedback

The participants’ responses show that students do receive feedback from their lecturers on time and on a regular occasion. It was also indicated that the students usually respond to their email once they receive feedback on time. The responses indicate that students use the feedback they receive from their draft work to do amendments on their assignment with the expectation of improving the standard of their assignment. E-mail facilitated feedback tends to be helpful as it gets to the students in time and the feedback they get is central to learning and improving performance. This is highlighted in the participants’ responses that:

“I frequently receive e-mail facilitated feedback from my lecturer on time, I use the feedback to do my work and respond immediately”.

“I do get e-mail facilitated feedback from my lecturers without delay and I usually respond to the mail on time”.

“Whenever I send my draft work to my lecturer I do get e-mail feedback about my task on time and I use the feedback to do correction and make some changes in my work to improve the quality of my assignment”.

The responses indicate that the students frequently receive feedback on time from their lecturers. When the students receive feedback it enables them to do their corrections in time, while they can be able to recall and remember what has been taught in class by responding to feedback immediately. The participants reveal that feedback received on time is important to students as they need help on how to effectively improve in their task. Therefore, it suggests that students will be able to reflect on the feedback they received, on what they have learnt, what they still need to know and will be able to do more study. The finding validates the theory of this study in the sense that, in activity theory there is a prediction of expected outcome/s of transformation. As a result, in activity theory it is assumed that the integration of electronic mail in teaching and learning may bring outcomes such as speedy delivery of feedback, active- learning.

4.4.1.3 E-mail enhances computer skills

The students participating in this study reported that e-mail enables computer skills. It was revealed that some students who do not possess computer skills have recently through their participation in sharing and receiving e-mail facilitated feedback acquired some skills in computers. The participants explain that:

“I was not able to operate computer, check e-mail or type my assignment. Since I started participating in e-mail facilitated feedback I have acquired some computer skills and I can now type and send e-mails on my own”.

“E-mail facilitated feedback is very advantageous because it aids students in the ability to obtain computer skills”.

What is evident in these responses is that constant participation of students in e-mail activities enhances their computer skills.

Another participant reported that since the introduction of e-mail facilitated feedback, the students have acquired some computer skills like typing their assignment, preparing power

point and checking mails through their participation in computer activities. The student participants emphasised that:

“Before, I do not know anything about operating computers but since I started submitting and receiving feedback through e-mails, I have been able to develop some computer skills. I can now type my assignments, type and send mails electronically”.

“Now I know how to use Microsoft word, Microsoft excels and to design PowerPoint and check mails”.

From the data collected in this study, it is clear that students acquire computer skills through their involvement in some computer activities such as receiving of e-mail facilitated feedback and submission of assignments electronically. They gradually develop necessary computer skills that enable them to check their assignment.

According to the findings of this study, it is evident that students participating in computer activities like (sharing and receiving) of feedback electronically do acquire some computer skills. It was revealed that constant use of e-mail facilitated feedback, guides students towards acquiring some necessary computer skills like operating in Microsoft word, Microsoft excel, designing PowerPoint’s and checking of e-mails. The finding confirms the transformation agenda of activity and the integration of email in the teaching and learning. The object (purpose) of the integration of email is to bring in innovative way of providing feedback, and to transform the subjects (students) as they interact with email. Accordingly, in activity theory it is anticipated that integrating email as a tool for teaching and learning may bring outcomes such as students developing new skills, learner- centered learning, problem solving, and motivation (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Iron, 2006).

4.4.1.4 E-mail enhances online collaborative learning

The student participants of this study acknowledged and embraced the integration of e-mail in teaching and learning. It was indicated that the students understand quickly more about their module when having online discussion. For example, the students collaborate with each other through institutionalised electronic system such as ‘subject Moodle’; the students also share their ideas through this medium. From participants’ responses it show that e-mail facilitated feedback enhances online cooperative learning. The participants’ experiences show

that e-mail enables the students to read and comment on each other's opinion on subject matters through institutionalised electronic system such as the university "learning site". Additionally, the participants' responses indicate that students reading other people opinion and contributing to the on-going discussions on the university learning site helps the students to improve in their learning of Business Management Education. Student participants confirmed that e-mail feedback influenced student learning positively through collaboration:

"E-mail facilitated feedback is beneficial because it enables students to have group discussion and conversations online. For me I learn faster when doing online collaboration with others especially using the university learning site or subject Moodle".

"E-mail facilitated feedback has helped me a lot in my study because I usually read the response and contributions from both the students and the lecturer on the university learning site".

Another participant shows that e-mail has made the provision of feedback simple and easy for school community members, that is (lecturers, students and staff members). The response indicates that using e-mail many students can be contacted and connected for online discussion on subject matters immediately. The participant states that:

"E-mail makes work much easier for lecturers, students and the school management compared to other ways of providing feedback, using e-mail you can connect and reach to thousands of students within a short space of time and also open up a group discussion online; which it enables one to know other students' opinion on any issue we are discussing".

The student participants' responses show that they believed that e-mail facilitated feedback has helped students in their learning of Business Management Education especially through collaborative learning. As the students freely share ideas, read other peoples' comment and also contribute to the on-going discussion. The findings revealed that through visiting the institution learning site and reading other students' contribution online, the students learning has being influenced positively. Furthermore, Marumo (2007) argues that the significance of activity theory is that it offers a communicative framework for information and

communication technology (ICT) integration, which enables the concerned parties (students) to fully understand the integration of electronic mail into the teaching and how it can relate to a motivating activity. This meaning that email informs and motivates the students to develop an important skill (communication skill). Communication skill which is needed as a Business Manager in today's competitive society. This is also in line with the emphasis made in activity about division of labour. According to Mezirow (1997) who believes that, for the essence of transformation to be achieved properly, there should be a joint contribution of power and resources to be used in a particular way as a means to achieve meaningful transformation.

4.4.1.5 Clarity of information

The data from this study have revealed that information sent through e-mail is clearer and providing rich information to students. The participants' responses indicate that e-mail facilitated feedback provides clear information. The students no longer predict the words due to illegible handwriting or struggle to read the words. Most often, students complain of lecturers' illegible handwriting which leads to misinterpretation of information when provided feedback through written method. The responses below are confirmation of the findings of this study:

“Feedback provided through e-mail is clearer when compared to other methods of providing feedback to the students, sometimes you find difficult to read some lecturers' handwriting”.

“The information provided through e-mail is clearer, there is no room to guess about the alphabets, unlike written feedback; you may find it difficult to read due to the handwriting is not clear”.

One participant explained that e-mail facilitated feedback is preferred to other methods of providing feedback. It was indicated that e-mail facilitated feedback serve as a storage facility. This implies that information/messages can be stored and re-visited at any time without it being lost, (that is, as a reference source). E-mail provides clearer information than other methods of providing feedback as one may not comprehend all information given during lectures. Student participant confirmed that:

“I think I prefer e-mail feedback to other methods; e-mail gives information more clearly than other methods. For example, during class not everything that lecturer said I used to remember; I may remember few. But through e-mail the message will remain there for a very long time”.

The findings therefore reveal that students receive feedback that is clearer through e-mail facilitated feedback method. It is evident that e-mail enables the opportunity to read their feedback with clarity and can revisit the feedback for reference.

This study clearly indicates that e-mail facilitated feedback influences the students learning positively. As it makes information clearer for the students to read without stress, and improve in their learning of Business Management Education. E-mail facilitated feedback method also enables the students to engage with the feedback they receive, using the feedback to do corrections and respond to e-mail immediately through computers. The findings indicate that e-mail provides avenue for students to have online collaboration with each other and even other members of the school community. This is in line with Kaptelinin et al. (1995) who argued that the use of technology (e-mail) in teaching and learning is capable of bringing new opportunities for both students and their lecturers to improve in their teaching and learning. These actually develop the students' cognitive development. The findings of this study concur with these authors (Rahman, 2008; Iron, 2008) who contend that e-mail can as well advance students' ability of learning. The constant exposure on using email facilitated feedback improves the participant's technological skills and students' academic performance; as the students will engage and be motivated to search for more information relating to the given feedback. It is evident that e-mail feedback method has helped them to develop and improve on their study of Business Management Education as they constantly look forward to the feedback.

According to the finding of this study, e-mail facilitated feedback positively influences students learning of Business Management Education. It enables the study of Business Management Education to be more flexible. As the participants reveal that e-mail facilitated feedback makes information clearer for the students to understand the module and engage with the feedback they receive, using the feedback to do corrections and respond to e-mail immediately through computers. The finding supports the discussions about division of labour in activity theory. Also, in activity theory it is argued that the continuation of the

process of teaching involves different parties, also the integration of email into teaching and learning in higher institution involves different parties who are able to contribute towards the success of email integration in teaching and learning (Division of labour). The idea of division of labour enables the subject to specialise in every specific labour involved in. This will assure students' degree of control and responsibility over e-mail usage.

4.4.2 Negative influence of e-mail facilitated feedback

In this section, findings reveal that students do not only have positive influence of e-mail facilitated feedback but also a number of negative influences. The data indicates difficulty and a contradiction of influences. The influence of e-mail facilitated feedback are conflicting, because the same participants who were adoring the influence of e-mail facilitated feedback on their learning are also complaining that it is challenging due to the following factor: teaching and learning is displaced.

4.4.2.1 Teaching and learning is displaced

The participants' responses indicate various positive influence of e-mail facilitated feedback on students' learning. However, data from participants' experiences show that e-mail facilitated feedback influences students' learning negatively.

According to the responses, e-mail facilitated feedback sometimes left the students in doubt and confused. Data collected in this study indicates that sometimes students feel helpless after receiving their e-mail feedback. This is because there is no one to explain properly to them the content of the e-mail feedback they receive. The misinterpretations of the e-mail feedback also ensue, as was expressed by the following participants:

“Sometimes, when I receive e-mail feedback from my lecturers it always left me with many questions and in doubt and sometimes I end up interpreting the information wrongly”.

“Most often when I receive feedback I usually doubt and ask why the feedback is like this, because I cannot understand the content properly and there is no one to explain to me”.

Another participant states that e-mail feedback confuses and sometimes does not provide answers to questions straightaway.

“Sometimes I cannot understand why it is like the way it is and nobody can give me the answers that I want immediately”.

From the response, what has become clear is that students sometimes do not appropriately comprehend all the information in the e-mail feedback which they receive. Therefore, it leads to a misinterpretation of the feedback information. The participants also indicate that students do not get answers rapidly concerning the content of e-mail feedback they receive.

The findings therefore reveal that students keep information concerning their assignments to themselves. The participants’ responses also indicate that students consider feedback as a personal issue which is not supposed to be shared or discussed with a third party, this is because according to the participants, students feel very shy to be ridiculed or mocked by other students over their feedback. This is highlighted in the participant’s responses below:

“Even when I do not understand the content of the e-mail feedback, I usually keep it personal to myself”.

“I feel shy to show or discuss the feedback I receive from my lecturer with anyone or to other students especially when the feedback is not good, to avoid being teased”.

What is evident from the responses is that e-mail facilitated feedback can make learning impersonal hence feedback also becomes impersonal. The reports show that students prefer to keep e-mail feedback information which they receive to themselves to avoid being ridiculed by others. The responses also reveal that e-mail facilitated feedback provides students the opportunity to believe that feedback is a personal thing that should not be discussed with a third party and it easily leads to misconception of information.

As a result, the findings manifest the preference of verbal feedback by the students to e-mail facilitated feedback. The participants believe that interacting with the lecturer personally provide them with the opportunity to have extensive communication with their lecturer. Also, the students believe one-on- one contact enables the students to ask questions and

receive immediate feedback which gives way for clarity and the ability to comprehend issues better. It is evident from the participants that students believe e-mail facilitated feedback deprives them of the opportunity to have close conversation with their lecturers and fellow students. It was also revealed by the participants that students prefer oral method of communicating feedback to other methods because it furnishes them with the facial expression of the lecturer.

The following participants' believe that students could be convinced easily and also comprehend better through having direct contact or conversation with their lecturer,

“To me I prefer one-on-one contact to any other means of providing feedback, it gives opportunity to ask questions and receive feedback immediately”.

“E-mail feedback cannot provide us with immediate answers. Like you and me right now, I can answer your question, you can question me and we can talk one-on-one; have close conversation which can make me understand things better”.

“I prefer verbal feedback to other methods of providing us feedback, at least I will meet my lecturer directly and I will see the facial expressions”.

From the responses, what is evident is that students prefer individual interaction to e-mail facilitated feedback. The findings also reveal that face-to-face interaction enables students to ask further questions on issues concerning their assignment task and receive immediate answers, therefore creating room for proper understanding. They believe that face-to-face contact gives them an opportunity to see the facial expression of the person they are interacting with, and be able to read meanings from the facial expression. Therefore, according to the findings, the students prefer having private contact/verbal feedback to any other method of providing feedback in the teaching and learning of Business Management Education.

The findings in this study are in agreement with the findings of the study by Holt et al. (2002) which reveals that students considered online discussion inferior to one-one-one interaction, as the students believe that it is easier to resolve issues through direct contact between lecturers and students or student-to-student. However, contrary to this are the findings

presented by Yu and Yu (2002) that students believe interacting with lecturers directly involved more hierarchal encounters in which lecturers took control of the discourse, while on-line interactions were more democratic, with students controlling the discourse more. Also, Livingstone (2012) and Oyedemi (2012) both argued that there are clear dangers in the use of email to send students feedback. The authors believe that providing the students' feedback through e-mail facilitated feedback method that can lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretation of information therefore creating more problems. This implies that students have divergent experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback influences. Moreover, activity theory suggested that activity cannot be understood without first of all understanding the importance of artefacts in everyday life (Nardi, 1997). Activity theory is involved with practice, for example, doing an activity, which importantly includes the mastery of external devices and tools of labour activity. Conversely, communication through e-mail facilitated feedback appears not to be smooth amongst students who lack necessary computer skills and those students who stay off campus since they do not have computers and internet access at home. Even those who stay off campus, but have sophisticated phones that can receive internet do not have money to buy mega-bites to access internet.

On the other hand, Bodker (1991) in activity theory contends that focus of activity theory is on social factors and interaction between agents and their environments. This demonstrates the importance of the principle of tool mediation as central role within the approach. This suggests that tools shape the way every individual relates with his/her environment. Based on this, the students interacting with other members of the university community can give them the opportunity to share ideas. Also, through interacting with other members of the university, the students who lack proper information may be enlightened on issues surrounding their modules. Moreover, those who lack necessary computer skills might be encouraged to put more effort in acquiring those necessary computer skills that will enable them to relate with other students, as well as other members of the university community through online interaction/communication.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The two themes obtained from an analysis of the participants' responses which are students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback and influence of e-mail facilitated feedback on students learning of Business Management Education. Actually represents particular subsystems of activity assessment, and also inform the importance of integrating e-mail

feedback method as particular kind of ICT in South African higher education. The findings show that e-mail facilitated feedback offers a wide range of communication opportunities to students and lecturers, as well as other members of the university community. Thus, the findings unveiled some gaps in the integration of e-mail facilitated feedback in the classroom which can demotivate the students from participating in the use of e-mail facilitated feedback.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I presented the data and provided a detailed discussion thereof. In concluding this study, this chapter starts by providing the overview of the study. The chapter goes on to discuss the summary of the key findings of the study. The chapter also suggests recommendations including possibilities of future research. Limitations of the study are also highlighted.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This research is reported in this dissertation through five chapters.

Chapter one dealt with the introduction and background to the study and presented the research topic, problem statement, research questions, rationale and its settings.

In Chapter two the literature on students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback was reviewed. It addresses also the importance of feedback in students learning and set clarity on different methods of providing feedback in education. This chapter emphasises the advantage and disadvantages of integrating e-mail in educational settings. Moreover, chapter two also presented the theoretical framework of the study which is the Activity theory.

Chapter 3 discussed and explained the approach and design of the study. The study opted for qualitative research design including case study, and involving three data generation instruments: Students' reflective journal writing, face-to-face interviews and focus group interview were conducted with 3rd and 4th year students majoring in Business Management Education, and thematic analysis.

Chapter four presented and discussed the findings. This was done through key themes Students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback, Influence of e-mail facilitated feedback on students' learning of Business Management Education. The findings show that students have contradicting experiences of the use of e-mail feedback in providing feedback in education.

Chapter 5 presented a summary, recommendations of the study as well as the conclusion.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The purpose of integrating e-mail as a type of ICTs in education emanated because of the claim that information and communications technology (ICT) play a critical role in enabling inclusive and sustainable human development. Also, by providing the school community members (students, lecturers and staff members) not only with access to information and services, but also with opportunities to participate and contribute to the knowledge economy (UNESCO, 2011). In South Africa, the Ministry of Education and the Council for Higher Education took an active interest with strong effort for the integration of ICTs in higher institutions with the aim of providing quality education for all.

The aim of the study was to explore students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback method in Business Management Education at Higher Institution.

The research questions which guided my exploration were:

- What are students experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback in Business Management Education at Higher Institution?
- How may e-mail facilitated feedback influence students learning in Business Management Education?

Therefore, the summary of the findings focuses on:

- Students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback in Business Management Education at Higher Institution.
- Influence of e-mail facilitated feedback on students learning of Business Management

5.3.1 Students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback in Business Management Education at higher education institutions.

I explored students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback in Business Management Education at higher institution, through reflective journal writing, fact-to-face interviews and focus group interview. The findings of the study reveal that students have not only one experience of e-mail facilitated feedback but contradictory, conflicting or differing experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback. The study reveals that students have positive experience of e-mail facilitated feedback on the basis that e-mail facilitated feedback

enhances communication; e-mail feedback is a convenient method; time saving and access to vast information.

However, the findings also unveiled some loopholes in the integration of e-mail facilitated feedback in the classroom which can demotivate the students from participating in the use of e-mail facilitated feedback. With respect to the findings, it was clear that students have negative experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback. The findings reveal that students have some negative experience of e-mail facilitated feedback method due to the following findings: Lack of basic computer skills and Context bound.

5.3.2 Influence of e-mail facilitated feedback on students learning of Business

Management Education.

Through journal writing, face-to-face interviews and focus group interviews and in agreement with the theory of this study (activity theory) the interaction and collaboration of students and other members of the school community influence students' learning both positively and negatively. The findings of this study reveal that e-mail facilitated feedback influences students learning of Business Management Education both positively and negatively. The study indicates that e-mail facilitated feedback influences students' learning positively based on the following findings: e-mail feedback enhances independent learning; Timeous feedback and e-mail enhances computer skills and e-mail enhances online collaborative learning; Clarity of information.

However, the findings of this study also reveal that e-mail facilitated feedback influence students learning not only positively but also negatively. The study indicates that e-mail facilitated feedback influences students learning of Business Management Education negatively on the basis that: Teaching and learning is displaced.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- There should be an awareness campaigns in the university about the use of e-mail facilitated feedback method.
- There should be workshops or orientation campaigns for both the students and the lecturers, to properly train them on how to use e-mail facilitated feedback method.

- There should be more LANS (computer rooms) to accommodate the large number students in the institution.
- The Institution management should provide steady internet access and electricity which is needed to power effective use of e-mail feedback on campus.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This study has researched only on students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback. Using Business Management Education students as participants and focusing on Business Management Education. In this regard, a further and larger study is needed to be conducted on lecturers' experiences of e-mail feedback.

A further study that could cut across other institutions, employing a range of methods needs to be done on lecturers and students' challenges with the integration of electronic mail feedback method in education.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The study explored students' experiences of e-mail facilitated feedback in Business Management Education at higher institutions. The findings of the study reflected the responses from participants which indicate that students have both positive and negative experiences of e-mail feedback method as used in the teaching and learning of Business Management Education in higher institution. Also, the findings show that e-mail facilitated feedback method influences students' learning of Business Management Education positively and negatively. Furthermore, drawing conclusion of this chapter using the framework applied in this study; Activity theory is well structured and flows accordingly, relating and promoting to how lecturers and students and other members of the university community work together between the levels. Bannon (1991) contends that activity is a situation whereby the process of application is transmuted into an object to work towards the expected outcome. The sampled students made use of e-mail during and after teaching and learning activities in the institution. This suggests that the institution achieved their primary reasons for integrating e-mail in teaching and learning of Business Management Education, which was to promote free, fast and constant communication of feedback. The fact is that students now communicate conveniently with their lecturers, fellow students, and other members of the school community and also other stakeholders in the education sector. Feedback is being

provided to students on time, since integrating e-mail feedback method in the teaching and learning of Business Management Education.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A:	Ethical clearance
Appendix B:	Informed consent letter
Appendix C:	Journal writing
Appendix D:	Face-to-face interviews
Appendix E:	Focus group interview
Appendix F:	Editors' Certificate

Appendix A

Ethical clearances



10 March 2015

Mr Clinton C Anyanwu 211557877
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Anyanwu

Protocol reference number: HSS/1411/013M

Project title: Exploring students' experiences of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilitated feedback: A case study of Business Management Students at a Higher Education in KwaZulu-Natal

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Dr JC Ngwenya & F Khanare
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Morojele
Cc School Administrator: Ms T Khumalo

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Appendix B

Informed consent letter

Clinton. C. Anyanwu
School of Social Science
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Edgewood Campus
Student number.211557877
Email:211557877@stu.ukzn.ac.za
Phone: 0846440813

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Dear Participant

My name is Anyanwu Clinton Chidiebere and as part of the requirement for the completion of my Master's degree I am working currently on my dissertation titled; exploring students' experiences of information and communication technology (ICT) facilitated feedback (e-mail feedback). Many studies have been carried out on forms of feedback/ways of providing feedback. But a gap still exists as far as students' experiences of electronic feedback are concerned. Hence, it is of paramount importance to understand students' experiences concerning electronic feedback.

In this regard, you have been identified as potentially fitting into my research study group and it would be a great honor to me if you could participate in this study. Although, there is no payment for participating in this research, but you could benefit from the findings as it could contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of education.

I want to assure you that all the information you give will be kept undisclosed and also you are free to withdraw from participating at any time you feel uncomfortable. No information from you will be used at your disadvantage. If you have any query concerning this please feel free to contact my supervisors, Dr Ngwenya (ngwenyaj@ukzn.ac.za), Fumane Khanare (

khanare@ukzn.ac.za) or The HSSREC Research office (Ms P.Ximba, Tel.031 260 3587, and
E-mail: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za)

Thank you for your swift co-operation and assistance.

Declaration

I..... (Full name of participant)

Hereby confirm that I understand the full content of this documents and the nature of the research study and hereby give my consent to participate in the research project. Also, I fully recognize that am free to withdraw my participation from the research at any time I wish to. Finally, I consent/ do not consent to this interview being recorded.

Signature of participant

.....

Date.....

Appendix C

Journal writing and participants' journal writing schedule

The participants were asked to write down their experiences based on the following:

Entry 1: Focused on participants meaning of feedback.

Entry 2: Focused on the participants' experiences of different methods of providing feedback as listed below: Verbal feedback, written feedback and electronic mail feedback (email feedback)

Entry 3: Participant experiences of electronic mail feedback

Entry 4: Electronic mail feedback inform corrections (underlining errors)

Entry 5: Electronic feedback of assessment (accompanied by marks)

Entry 6: Electronic mail feedback to elicit information (immediate response)

Entry 7: Electronic mail feedback to prompt (deliberate delayed feedback)

Participants' journal writing schedule

Student T

Entry 1: Focused on participants meaning of feedback

Feedback is a compilation of criticism comments and opinions on something. These comments and opinions come from people who have the task of studying, analysing,

engaging in, and critically reviewing the material in which feedback is to be given on. Example, books, essays, teaching methods etc.

Furthermore, feedback can come in various forms such as verbal feedback, written feedback and with the fast growing technological world electronic feedback such as email.

Entry 2: Focused on participant experiences of different methods of providing feedback as listed below: Verbal feedback, written feedback and Electronic feedback (email feedback)

Verbal feedback

The most recent verbal feedback I experienced was in my education studies 320 lecture, where after we did a group presentation the lecturer gave us his opinion on the overall group performance of the presentation. Additionally, feedback was also received when the audience were the opportunity to give comments on the presentation. I categorise this as verbal feedback because the material that was being assessed was verbal, and the comments and the opinion were verbally given.

Written feedback

My experience of written feedback were when I applied to study at a university, I filled in a form with my details and attached my results from the previous term and sent it to the CAO office. The feedback of my application was a written letter to notify me that my application was unsuccessful and why I could not been enroll for that course.

Electronic feedback

The form of electronic feedback I have experienced with is the system of submitting assignments online, which is also known as turn-it-in. This was a requirement in our Business Management studies. I uploaded my assignment in an electronic form of a word document, the online application processed my test and it gave me feedback on whether I have plagiarised or not.

Entry 3: Participants experiences of electronic mail facilitated feedback

My experience with electronic mail facilitated feedback is Moodle, also known as learning site. The university online web interface that allows students and lecturers to communicate and interact online. In my experience, the lecturer would post articles on related topics that relates to the content we are currently studying and as the students we were required to engage in a chat forum and give feedback on the article/topic.

The chat forum was interconnected to the emailing system in such a way that whenever the lecturer posted any comment on the topic, the members of the group chat will receive email notification.

Entry 4: Electronic feedback to inform of corrections (underlining of errors)

The electronic feedback system is only reliable to a limited extent, when pointing out areas of corrections and underlining errors. It has its advantages however it has its minor disadvantages. The turn-it-in online application is able to tell where learners have plagiarised or failed to acknowledge sources of references. On the other side of the coin, are a few glitches that come with the turn-it-in program.

Entry 5: Electronic feedback to of assessment (accompanied by marks)

Makes it easy for students to communicate with their lecturers

Students are also able to submit as well as receive feedback (scores or marks) through the internet or electronic communication.

Entry 6: Electronic mail feedback to elicit information (immediate response)

Electronic mail feedback is in many cases immediate, however only for those who are permanently connected to the internet. If you are constantly connected to internet you will receive your feedback via email immediately.

Student NG

Entry 1: Focused on participants meaning of feedback

Feedback is the exchange of information and gathering of information either by the lecturer or students.

There are many types of feedback in which there is the verbal and non-verbal that works in the teaching and learning context.

Entry 2: Focused on participant experiences of different methods of providing feedback as listed below: Verbal feedback, written feedback and Electronic feedback (email feedback)

Verbal feedback

Is usually given by the lectures or teachers in the classroom during the teaching and learning whereby the teacher will use spoken words.

Written feedback

Is the kind of feedback whereby a student or learner is assessed and there after given comments on the assessment.

Electronic feedback

Is the kind of feedback whereby all assessment is done electronically, the internet, via email and the submission of assignment electronically.

Entry 3: Participant experiences of electronic mail facilitated feedback

I have a good experience in the electronic mail feedback because I found that the assignments do not get lost, they get to the lecture in the work produced.

If one does not understand the information talked about in class, notes can be sent in the internet for students to have access to them.

Entry 4: Electronic feedback to inform of corrections (underlining of errors)

They assist us in managing grammar and the way in which assessment have to be done.

I found that sometimes the feedback receive electronically isn't fair because it does not consider new knowledge and the way it marks someone's information can be wrong.

Entry 5: Electronic feedback to of assessment (accompanied by marks)

The allocation of marks is not fair and at times does not consider new development of information

It is explicit and somehow strict

Entry 6: Electronic mail feedback to elicit information (immediate response)

Ease access of information in the internet

Good way of communicating to one another

Appendix D

Face-to-face interviews and interview schedule

- 1) How do you normally receive feedback from your Business Management modules?
- 2) Do you have a school email account, yes I know it is obvious, it is just to confirm?
 - i. How often do you access your school email?
 - ii. How often do you receive this type of feedback from your lecturers and or tutors that is what do you think of the frequency?
- 3) Do you receive electronic mail from other people apart from your lecturers?
 - i. If yes – who are they?
- 4) What was your first experience with electronic mail feedback?
 - i. Now tell me what do you think about this type of feedback; how do you experience it, good, not good, difficult or challenging?
- 5) Now tell me has this type of feedback enhanced your communication with your lecturer or tutor?
 - i. If it has not, why do you think it has not? Or if it has, in what ways, can you tell me some instances?
- 6) How do you think this electronic mail feedback helps you to improve in your learning?
 - i. Do you think then that electronic feedback via e-mail has improved your learning?
 - ii. Tell me in which ways?
- 7) What do you think can be done better to improve the use of electronic feedback in Business Management Education?
 - i. How would you evaluate electronic feedback through e-mail in comparison with other type of feedbacks you have used before?

Face to face interview schedule

Student NG

Interviewer: How do you receive feedback from your assessment task?

Student NG: Normally I receive feedback mostly via e-mails, our lecturers do send us e-mail; sometimes the contents of assignment is attached to the emails. I also do receive through written.

Interviewer: Do you use computers in your school work?

Student NG: Yes I do

Interviewer: What aspects of your work do you normally do with computers?

Student NG: mmmm....it depends what I want to do, I use computer to type my work (assignment) and to check my e-mail if I have feedback from lecturer.

Interviewer: Do you have email account? It's obvious I know I just want to confirm.

Student NG: Yes I do

Interviewer: How often do you access your email?

Student NG: I do access my email maybe sometimes twice a day

Interviewer: How often do you receive electronic feedback from your lecturers/ tutors, or your peers?

Student NG: It depends on the module and the lecturer; some module may need constant communication with the lecturers. Some lecturers prefer sending student slides before classes and some prefer after classes, whichever way will determine the frequency of the feedback, maybe once or twice a week.

Interviewer: Do you receive electronic feedback from other people apart from your Business management lecturers?

Student NG: Yes I do receive electronic feedback from my peers both the once here and those from other Universities talking about their experience of some modules.

Interviewer: what was your first experience of this type of feedback?

Student NG: At first I was not use to it, and this made me not to be checking my emails for a long period of time. But now am more comfortable with it now than before.

Interviewer: what do you mean by not being used to it?

Student NG: Because I don't not know how to use computer then, so I can't check my e-mail because it New method and many students were not informed how to use it...eeeshi it difficult.

Interviewer: What do you think about electronic feedback? How do you experience it, good, not so good, difficult or challenging?

Student NG: I would say very good, it really makes life very easy and studying more interacting and convenient. If you are reading and you want to talk to your lecturer, maybe you need more idea or his/her opinion about a particular concept or topic all you have to do is send him/her mail electronically. Actually electronic feedback is very convenient and fast.

Interviewer: How do you think electronic feedback has helped you improve in your learning of business management?

Student NG: Like I said earlier, when I receive feedback from my lecturer I used that feedback to do corrections, because the feedback tells us how good we are, how we are doing at a particular moment and what we need to do next from electronic feedback receive we get all these information without even going to his/her office, or talking to him or her face to face. It has helped me to improve in my study.

Interviewer: Do you think electronic mail feedback has improved your learning? If it does/or not, in what way/s?

Student NG: Yes it has, because it convenient and fast. If you send mail to your lecturers and he/she replies with a short period of time, then you will have enough time to read and work with the feedback.

Interviewer: What do you think can be done better to improve the use of electronic feedback?

Student NG: I suggest that computer literacy be made compulsory module for all first year students to enable all students have basic computer knowledge and skills.so that they will familiarise themselves with the whole system.

Interviewer: How would you evaluate electronic feedback in comparison with other means of providing feedback you have used or know?

Student NG: electronic feedback is fast, convenient, it's not time consuming. You can receive your feedback wherever you are; and reply immediately wherever you are.

Face to face interview schedule

Student C

Interviewer: How do you receive feedback from your assessment task?

Student C: Basically it depends on the module. Sometimes I do receive feedback electronically if we submit such assignment electronically that is through e-mails, and sometimes we receive feedback through written, and or verbally. I cannot say this is a particular way in which I do receive feedback.

Interviewer: Do you use computers in your school work?

Student C: Yes I do use computer

Interviewer: What aspects of your work do you normally do with computers?

Student C: I always use computer to type my assignment, check my e-mails, also I use computer to chat online with friends.

Interviewer: Do you have a school e-mail account? Yes I know is just to confirm.

Student C: Yes I do have student email account and also yahoo and Gmail account

Interviewer: How often do you access your e-mails in a day?

Student C: I do access my e-mail almost every day, sometimes two to three times a day.

Interviewer: How often do you receive electronic feedback from your lecturers, tutors, or your fellow students?

Student C :I do receive electronic feedback almost every day, not only from assignments, like if am studying on my own and I came across a particular thing that I did not understand, what I usually do is to send my lecturers e-mail he also reply my e-mail.

Interviewer: Do you receive this type of feedback from other person/s apart from your lecturers? If you do who are they?

Student C: Yes.... I do receive electronic feedback from the school management, they management communicate to the students by sending information or messages electronically

the university e-mail system. Also I do receive feedback from my fellow students. We use to discuss things about our module when we are chatting. hahahahaha (laughing) for example when we are chatting on facebook, or whatsapp, even twitter and through other social network.

Interviewer: What was your first experience of using this type of feedback?

Student C: Yes I think it wasn't great at first, because it was new way of providing feedback to students and we were not taught about how

Interviewer: Tell me what do you thing about this means of providing feedback...Is it good? Not good? or.. Is it challenging?

Student C: I would say it's good for a change, we all need to upgrade. Somehow it's not good for some of the students; this way of providing feedback is an advantage if you stay on campus and if you stay outside the campus and has internet access, and sophisticated phones. But if you don't such phone and don't have internet access if you stay outside the campus it is a very big disadvantage to such situations.

Interviewer: Has this means of providing feedback improve /enhance your communication with your lecturers/ tutor, and even your fellow students?

Student C : Yes it has... you know sometimes you may need to see your lecturer as a student, you will go to their offices several times without seeing them, sometimes you will see them, only to be told that you didn't book appointment with them or they will tell you this is not my consultation time. But using this e-mail system all I need to do is to send him/ her email. If I need to seem him I will book appointment in the email.

Interviewer: How do you think this means of providing feedback help you in your learning?

Student C: This means of providing feedback actually is a learning itself. One need to know how to make use of computer before you can access or send emails. This means of providing feedback helps us to improve in our knowledge and skills.

Interviewer: What do you think can be done to improve this means of providing feedback (electronic feedback)?

Student C: If we can have a constant internet access, not internet that fluctuate Sometime may need to access your emails or send emails only to find out that there is not internet. Such situations can frustrate someone.

Interviewer: Has this means of providing feedback help you in your learning of Business management?

Student C : Yes it has... it makes you to learn how to study on my own as an individual... because our lecturers use to email to us the slides, so with the help of those slide you can do your own study. You study at your own pace; you chat and discuss ideas with other students.

Interviewer: How would you evaluate electronic feedback in comparism with other means of providing feedback you know or have used?

Student C: Electronic feedback regardless of the fact that it favours only those that have access to internet and sophisticated cell phones, it is perfect, it advances students uses of computer skills, it is fast, it makes information communicated clearer to understand. It is a good idea to use it as a means in providing feedback.

Face to face interview schedule

Student M

Interviewer: How do you normally receive feedback from your assessment tasks in Business Management modules?

Student M: I do receive feedback through e-mail, written, and sometimes verbally.

Interviewer: Do you use computer in your school work?

Student M: yes I do

Interviewer: What aspects of your work do you normally do with computers?

Student M: I use school computer to do so many things like to type my work, check my mails, and chat online.

Interviewer: Do you have a school e-mail account, yes I know it is obvious, it is just to confirm?

Student M: Yes

Interviewer: How often do you access your school e-mail?

Student M: Is daily, because my school e-mail account is connected to my cell phone, so every email comes to my cell phone. So apart from school computers which I use to check my emails I also use my cell phone to check my emails.

Interviewer: Do you receive electronic feedback from your lecturers / tutor or your peers through you school email account?

Student M: Yes I do, like in my module after tutorials; we do receive slides from our lecturer.

Interviewer: How often do you receive this type of feedback from your lecturers and or tutors – that is what do you think of the frequency?

Student M: Not really often it depends on how often you enquire for information, or there is information the management wants the students to know about then can send email to every student.

Interviewer: What was your first experience with electronic feedback like?

Student M: It was a little bit complicated judging from the high school that I went; we were not exposed to technological equipment that much. When I came here it was different, it was totally a new idea, but now I can say that am comfortable with it.

Interviewer: Now tell me what do you think about this type of feedback; how do you experience it, good, not so good, difficult or challenging?

Student M: its good because if you look at the number of students in a class it won't so easy for one lecturer to reach to them one on one as at when needed but with e-mail the lecturer can send feedback to all at the same time without meeting the face to face. You can also communicate to your lecturer at any time, at your own convenient, let's say in a class, not everyone will like to ask question in class but I can ask question as I want in the email. Also the difficult part of electronic feedback is that some time you discover that there is no internet, which you cannot be able to access your emails because there is no internet. And also if you staying where there is no internet access and you don't have a smart phone you won't be able to access your electronic emails.

Interviewer: Now, tell me, has this type of feedback enhanced your communication with your lecturer or tutor?

Student M: Yes it has, because it open door for interaction with our lecturers, and also students to students. Before we have to go and book for appointment to see a lecturer, if you need any assistance from him/her. But now all I have to do is to send email to him/her, informing her/him about what I need.

Interviewer: Do you think that electronic email feedback has help to improve your leaning of Business management?

Student M: yes it has. You during lectures we may not be able get all the information our lecturers are giving to us, but with the help of email feedback we may request for the lecture notes, and ask question on issues that are not clear. So with all this assistance we are improving is our learning of business management modules.

Interviewer: What do you think can be done better to improve the use of electronic feedback in Business management studies?

Student M: I would say that chatting at the university learning site should be blocked, lets only concentrate on lecturer's opinion not so many opinions that comes from students, it's confusing.

Interviewer: How would you evaluate electronic feedback through e-mail in comparison with other type of feedbacks you have used before or you know?

Student M: Like I said before now, electronic feedback is one of the best ways of communication with students, because it's quick, fast, easy, comfortable, and you can use it anywhere.

Face to face interview schedule

Student D

Interviewer: How do you normally receive feedback from your assessment packs?

Student D: Sometimes it is through verbal, and written or electronically.

Interviewer: Do you use computers in your school work?

Student D: I do use computer for typing my assignment, send email and to check email

Interviewer: What aspects of your work do you normally do with computers?

Student D: to check emails and type my assignment.

Interviewer: Do you have a school email account? Yes I know is obvious is just to confirm.

How often do you assess your school email?

Student D: once and sometime 2 times a day.

Interviewer: Ok, how often do you receive this feedback, this type of feedback from your lecturers, tutors or even your peers?

Student D: it is not fixed but always

Interviewer: Ok, what you are saying is that the frequency is high?

Student D: yes, is high.

Interviewer: Ok, good. Do you receive electronic feedback from other people, apart from your lecturers?

Student D: Yes hmmm my fellow students and school management

Interviewer: What was your first experience with electronic feedback?

Student D: my first experience with electronic feedback was pretty good

Interviewer: Now tell me, how do you feel about this type of feedback? How do you experience it, good, not so good, difficult or challenging?

Student D: I feel relaxed because it convenient and comfortable, I use it to chat instead of makings calls

Interviewer: Now tell me, has this type of feedback enhanced your communication with your lecturers or tutors or even your fellow students?

Student D: yes it has

Interviewer: in what ways?

Student D: I feel calm and doing my school work in my room, at the same time searching for more ideas online sending emails to my fellow students and my tutor

Interviewer: How do you think this electronic feedback helps you to improve your learning?

Student D: yes it has

Interviewer: Ok. What do you think that can be done better to improve the use of electronic feedback?

Student D: teach students how to use computers

Interviewer: Ok, how would you evaluate electronic feedback through email in comparison with other forms of feedback you have used or you know?

Student D: Ok, I can say that is convenient and allows many students to chat and discuss online

Face to face interview schedule

Student Q

Interviewer: How do you normally receive feedback from your assessment packs?

Student Q: Eeeeh we receive feedbacks in varieties ways, for example the word of mouth, we can also receive feedback via sending emails and I can receive an email from lecturers and there is this site, it is the university learning. We are also encouraged to go and check every time.

Interviewer: Do you have a school email account? Yes I know is obvious is just to confirm. How often do you assess your school email?

Student Q: I assess it a lot, in fact we are encouraged to check it like 10 times a day, but forgive me, I only check it about two or three times a day.

Interviewer: Ok, how often do you receive this feedback, this type of feedback from your lecturers, tutors or even your peers?

Student Q: It is very often, like am doing computer science we are encouraged to go there, because our task and everything they are posted there in the wed site. At the university learning site, most of the stuff (learning materials) or even class activities we are obliged to go and check them there, because we can't all just go to our lecturer's office and sometimes he is not usually there, so is like the medium with which we get updated.

Interviewer: Ok, what you are saying is that the frequency is high?

Student Q: yes, is high.

Interviewer: Ok, good. Do you receive electronic feedback from other people, apart from your lecturers?

Student Q: Apart from my lecturers, yeah we do get feedback from other people like for example, the university as a whole and from other students , at the university learning site we do have the chance to chat with other students to get feedback about assignments, and what we are supposed to do and due dates.

Interviewer: What was your first experience with electronic feedback?

Student Q: I can't say that I suffered that much because I was doing computer science and therefore we are supposed to learn fast because it was gonna be the medium of communication, yeah.

Interviewer: Now tell me, how do you feel about this type of feedback? How do you experience it, good, not so good, difficult or challenging?

Student Q: Eeuh, You know everything has its pros and cons. I think the positives are higher than the negative that is what I think.

Interviewer: what are those positives?

Student Q: Ok, am gonna mention that. Like for example, like time, ok?

Student Q: maybe like am at home and I can't afford to come to school or maybe I can't come to school am still busy, I can just update something via the electronic web cite or what. And another case, like for example, maybe we are supposed to submit, the lecturers usually tell us to submit our work before 12 o'clock at night. So, is not like when you are asked to submit before 4 o'clock or 2 o'clock, so I can still work till 12 o'clock and then submit.

Interviewer: what of the negatives?

Student Q: aaaaaa, the negative just skip my mind but I can try to come up with some. For example you have issues whereby the systems are down in the university and you can't use be able to communicate in that way. Also, for example if am at home and I don't have BIS in my blackberry, so I can't communicate. So, am gonna be forced to use another place that is far.

Interviewer: Now tell me, has this type of feedback enhanced your communication with your lecturers or tutors or even your fellow students?

Student Q: yes it has indeed

Interviewer: in what ways?

Student Q: Before I do not know anything about operating computer but since I started submitting and receiving feedback through e-mails, I have been to develop some computer skills. Now I know how to use Microsoft word, Microsoft excels, and to design PowerPoint. And again for example you see lecturers have time, like consultation times, whereby you only

come to their office during that time, but by using electronic feedback, you can assess whatever you need at any time, because they can like assess internet wherever they are. They can check internet and respond as quickly as possible, so yeah that how we can get our responses anytime is needed.

Interviewer: How do you think this electronic feedback helps you to improve your learning?

Student Q: It helps me improve my learning, eish it has helped me a great deal. I can like explore or share with one experience that I have, like for example, if you are not sure about an essay, you can write it and send it to your lecturer to edit and tell you where you went wrong and where you need to improve and also where you are right. It will also save in your email, like for example I lost my flash drive where I saved my assignment, if I didn't save it in my email I would have started it from point A again.

Interviewer: That's good. Do you think electronic feedback via email has improved your learning?

Student Q: yes, like as I just said before, yeah.

Interviewer: Ok. What do you think that can be done better to improve the use of electronic feedback?

Student Q: Aaaaah, what can be done? Eish ideas, ideas, am really not sure how I can make suggestions for now, since like, ok if you stay on res or at difference residents here in campus and off campus, they can put WIFI so that people can assess internet. But it is disadvantageous to people that are staying at home because they don't have WIFI so they can't assess internet and I can't suggest that they should put it in our houses (laughs).

Interviewer: How would you evaluate electronic feedback through email in comparison with other forms of feedback you have used or you know?

Student Q: Ok, I can say that is convenient. Although it still new method of giving feedback, but like as I said everything got its pros and cons. Like sometimes you find that information you got via email is not necessarily satisfying, so you are always sending back messages to the lecturer and sometime he may feel like you are chatting too much. So, at this point is better face to face because if there are things that I didn't get, I can ask you to repeat it again. Also it is pretty good it help us to have some computer skills.

Face to face interview schedule

Student T

Interviewer: How do you normally receive feedback for you assessments?

Student T: sometimes, they do email us, some of the feedback yeah; there is this new website, I mean the university learning site, is a website that is meant for communication between the student and lecturers. They also post some of the feedback on that line

Interviewer: Do you use computers in your school work?

Student T: Yes I use computer always

Interviewer: What aspects of your work do you normally do with computers?

Student T: for typing my school work, mails and feedback from my lecturer

Interviewer: Do you have a school email account; yes I know it is obvious, it is just to confirm

Student T: Yes I do and a personal account as well

Interviewer: How often do you access your school email?

Student T: Maybe twice a day. But yeah, I visit them quite some time

Interviewer: How often do you receive this feedback from your lecturers? Or tutors and even your peers? How often do you receive a feedback?

Student T: Most of the time, after we have completed a certain task, they do send us emails and ahhhh, is not something that is eeh always done. There are certain task that are that there feedback

are sent through emails, not all of the task

Interviewer: Do you receive electronic feedback from other people, apart from your lecturers?

Student T: I don't think that I do receive feedback from other people, or maybe but I can't remember.

Interviewer: Your fellow students, do you share experience with them too?

Student T: I do but not always

Interviewer: Even the University do you receive any message from them?

Student T: Yeah yes I do receive some emails from the University, my school account is only meant for my school work, and then my personal account is for all other personal stuff. But my school account is only for the University and lecturers

Interviewer: Which means apart from your lecturers you also receive information from the university?

Respondent: Yes I do receive mail from the university management.

Interviewer: What was your first experience with electronic feedback like?

Student T: hahahaha (laughs), that one is quite hard. Firstly, the first time I had to send email, it was quite complex to understand of how am I going to type a message and how am I going to send after typing the message. Because since I was not familiar with a computer, you know like the icons are all over and I don't know which one to which to click and if I click this one what will happen. I was totally confused until I went to this ehhh, what is this mod; is a is a, let me ahh

Interviewer: Student module?

Student T: Yes is a module, that's aeee, computer literacy. It was there that I studied everything but before then, I was totally blank.

Interviewer: Ok, now tell me, what do you think about this type of feedback? Electronic feedback? How do you experience it? Good, not so good, difficult or challenging?

Student T: Electronic mail feedback is a very advantageous method because it enables students to be able to have computer skills. I can rate it good. But sometimes, is left especially with questions. Most of the time when I receive a feedback I will always want to know, why is the feedback like this? So there are some of which they cannot be answered because is going to take another time to type a message in order to answer on that question I

have after, I have received my feedback. So that's why, yeah is just good; yeah it can, is good in a way that I can be connected everywhere because I can receive email on my cell-phone. That how is good, is quit fast especially if we are both in front of our cell phone or in front of our laptop even though we are not at the same place as we are right now. That's what it's good for, but for the other side no

Interviewer: what is the other side?

Student T: that side that I cannot give me some answers. Like you and me right now, I can answer you, you can question me and we can like talk and on a conversation of which can make me understand things better, because you can answer me fast, after I have asked you a question.

Interviewer: Now, tell me, has this type of feedback enhanced your communication with your lecturers or tutors?

Student T: Yes, it's both some communication mmmm. There was this module, which our lecturer was from, I mean is not cited here in Edgewood campus, she was from Howard collage. The only way to contact her was from through email. So, yeah I learnt a lot, everytime I want to reach her or if there was a problem, or I want to get something from her, we were communicating through emails and by the time we see each other, we are going to start our conversation based on what we have communicated before through emails.

Interviewer: Ok, since you said it has enhanced your communication with your lecturers, in what ways can you tell me some instances, in what ways can you tell me some instances, in what ways has it enhanced your communication?

Student T: in many ways, like I do email my lecturer whenever am not clear about what is being discuss in class or about assignment.

Interviewer: Do you, just mmm mm anytime, any point you have a problem or challenge you do communicate with them immediately?

Student T: Oh yes, anytime, because like I said, I use to email her anytime, even at eleven in the night.

Interviewer: Ok? When you are studying?

Student T: Yes, any time am studying and I encounter a problem, I will take my phone and email her and say am having a problem of blablabla and she will reply. Mm, yeah, so it was quite good.

Interviewer: how do you think this electronic feedback helped you to improve your learning?

Student T: mmm, it helped me a lot, because lot of things, especially nowadays everywhere you go they tell you about technology, electronic and everything. It improves because now, I know how to type.

Interviewer: Ok, which means it did not only improve your communication, but it also improves your skills? Your technological skills?

Student T: Yes. Because, now I know how to type. An essay, an academic essay through electronically. I developed so many skills through electronic feedback.

Interviewer: mmm, that's good.

Interviewer: what do you think can be done to improve this electronic feedback?

Student T: mmmm. Ok, What I have realized about the electronic, I mean the computers is that, they are only programmed to only one language, which is English. So for me who is a Zulu and who is majoring with IsiZulu, sometimes I find it quite difficult to type IsiZulu on the computer because it just gives this underlining, this red as if everything is incorrect and I find it very hard to spot which word I have typed incorrect because everything seem incorrect. If they can install some other languages, I think that will be better.

Interviewer: How would you evaluate electronic feedback through email in comparison with other forms of feedbacks you have used before or you know?

Student T: Ok, I think if I compare electronic and verbal feedback, verbal feedback for me is the one. Because verbal feedback like I told you, u can answer and make me understand. Even if I don't understand what you are saying at the time, you will come up with some ways that will make me understand, because is verbal, and I can answer you, even though my facial expression by the time you are telling me something you will see that ok she is not understanding. But electronic feedback, sometimes, you can like write something if it is ambiguous that will give me a different like, a different thing from what you expected and by

that I can't answer, and I have been out of line from what you are asking, so by that I prefer verbal.

Appendix E

Focus group interview and focus group schedule

- 1) What is your understanding of feedback?
 - i. How do you receive feedback from your Business Management lecturers?

- 2) What do you about electronic mail feedback?
 - i. How often do you receive feedback through e-mail facilitated feedback or electronic feedback from your lecturers/tutors?
 - ii. Has electronic mail feedback enhanced your communication with your lecturers, tutors, and peers?

- 3) Do you think electronic mail feedback has improved your learning as a Business Management Student?

- 4) What are the problems or challenges you experience when receiving feedback through email?

Focus group interview schedule

Interviewer: You are all welcome, like I said this is all about my research the topic is exploring students' experiences of information and communication technology (ICT) facilitated feedback,

Interviewer: **What is your meaning of feedback?**

Student T: feedback is information about something in terms of being told what you are required to do and given helpful resources on how to attempt that particular thing

Student M: feedback is a compilation of criticism comments and opinions on something

Student N: exchange of information and gathering of information either from the lecturer to student or from student to lecturer.

Student D: I think feedback is comments or opinions given by some people who are giving a chance of studying something. For example, if you give chance to study assignment or books after doing that I will give opinion on it, and my opinion is feedback.

Student C: I think feedback to me is a result of something done. If you do some there must be a result, so the result is what I describe as a feedback.

Student G: feedback differs in context; you get a feedback from assignment, also get feedback from the school management when you sign a memorandum with the institution, even at our various home we receive feedback from our parents. Feedback is something that allows you to improve, to change, to continue with what you were doing, is a reflection, a mirror that shows you here you went wrong, and here you are right.

Interviewer: **In what ways do you receive feedback?**

Student C: I think the modern way now is electronic feedback, but back before we use to send and receive through written and verbal way.

Student X: Yaa the modern way now e-mail feedback, we use both cell phones to e-mail, whatsapp, Facebook.

Student NG: Yes. I think electronic feedback is the modern way for receiving feedback.

Interviewer: **What do you know about electronic feedback?**

Student T: I think electronic feedback has its pros and cons, that is it has advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages of electronic feedback is that it saves you much time, and money, for example if you are staying away from school campus, you can be communicating with your lecturer or tutors without coming to the campus, also for speed delivery of messages (feedback). And the disadvantages of electronic feedback is that it is only reliable at a certain stage, for example the turn-it-in system for submitting assignment, when it gives you the rate of plagiarism, it also takes into consideration phrases like “according to” it takes that as you plagiarise, but it is a common phrase which as one is aware of.

Student C: And one of the problems of Electronic feedback, I think is the turn-it-in which is used to check plagiarism %, if you paste your assignment in turn-it-in for the first time it will give some % of plagiarism, and when you come again it will include even your name, it will give you feedback that you plagiarise. For example in mathematics, last year I was fortunate to do mathematics 420, everything we did maths 420 was done using computer, we solve problems and search for answers on internet, but the problem was that there is only one answer in mathematics, it has been programmed to one answer, it doesn't mark the once we did, if your answers did not match the one that has been programmed then you are wrong, it doesn't look at the steps which we follow to arrive at the answers. I think that's one of the problems with electronic feedback. Also again, if you are at home and don't have electricity and network it won't be possible to access your feedback from lecturers and tutors, and even your friends. Despite the fact that electronic feedback is the fastest way of given feedback, it still has some challenges like the ones I mentioned.

Student N G: To me despite other challenges I prefer electronic mail feedback, why because it is fast, convenient, you don't have to go to the lecturers' office to book for an appointment, you stay in your room and send your draft or your assignment.

Student D: yes..even if you didn't attend class you can ask other students what was the topic on chatting may be on WhatsApp Or BBM, you can discuss the topic with your friends.

Student G: Amongst all other methods of providing feedback, e-mail feedback is the most convenient method, with the feedback you get you may decide to stay in your room and study and do corrections conveniently.

Interviewer: which means electronic feedback encourages or enables collaborative learning?

Student T: Yes it does a lot

Interviewer: **How often do you receive feedback?**

Student C: Quite often because basically these days when you submit assignment if there is a problem your lecturer will send you e-mail. Also there is a learning site called Moodle and the university learning sites our lecturers used to send us topics and open up discussions for each topics, where we discuss about each topic. It really facilitates our learning.

Student S: for me sometimes twice a week.

Interviewer: **Has electronic feedback enhanced your communication with your lecturers, tutors and fellow students.**

Student X: yes , because it very convenient and you can ask questions free unlike it the class hahahaha eish.

Student Q: I think it has especially it has reduce or better even remove the going to the looking and waiting to see lecturer.. now it is very easy just communicate through sending e-mail.

Student NG: Yes it has. Because most of time our lecturers are not in their office, maybe busy with one thing or the other. We send message to them so that when they are back to their office, they will be able to see their students messages and reply.

Student X: definitely it has, like when you receive your feedback with does read dots, to do corrections it's no longer difficult.

Student D: to me it does because with the feedback you can study on your own, like anything that I don't understand I usually ask my fellow student about it through WhatsApp or BBM, with a short while I will get suggestions.

Interviewer: Do you think electronic e-mail has improved your learning?

Student M: Honestly, I wouldn't say it hasn't rather I would say the moodle site has helped me in my learning, because that where some PowerPoint are being uploaded for students use, and for discussions, it also enable us to check for plagiarism.

Student NG: hmmm I will yes, because during assignment I usually submit my first draft, and I do get feedback electronically with red dot identifying errors. So with I focused my corrections on that and after marking I usually get good marks.

Student C: it has improved my learning in a big way, it improved my communication with my lecturer I do ask him questions whenever am confused with any topic, again I do my readings with the corrections and the power points notes e-mail to us.

StudentT: yes it has improved my computer skills, and the way I communicate with my lecturers and other students. Electronic mail feedback is a very advantageous method because it enables students to have group discussion and conversation online. For me I learn faster when doing online collaboration with others especially in the university learning site and subject Moodle

Student N: I cannot speak up in class not because I do not know what to say but I feel others might be thinking ill of my way of speaking but e-mail is so convenient that I say what I want to say and how I want to say it and I will also get more informations that I need as am not able to write down all that is been said in the classroom.

Interviewer: **What are the challenges, problems you experience using electronic feedback?**

StudentQ: Before now it was logging in especially the learning site, and also when reach to the schools websites I don't really know what again to do, I don't where to find the slides our lecturers has sent to us, I think it was quit confusing.

Student X: I think some of the learning site are not really user friendly, the computer interface I think was not made easy for navigation and for students who have basic comport skills to take advantage They need to contact some who is much more advance in computer skills, to take over.

Student G: Another challenge is the issue of network connection. If there is no network or electricity is always difficult to access our e-mails. Also many students still don't know how to use computers

Interviewer: In what ways do you think electronic feedback improve better your learning compared to other forms of feedback?

Student C: I think it in receiving feedback always and as at when needed. You don't have to go the lecturers office.. yes it very fast.

Student T: I think e-mailing is much better than other because its fast compares to other forms of feedback, and I can reply fast as much as I can, we can connect when we have conversations. If there is a problem or something confused about any assignment. I can e-mail questions to my tutors for clarifications.

Student G: And also some time you find out that some lecturers are not based here, many they in other universities, you can communicate with them without waiting for the day he/she will be on campus. It enables us to share experiences with other students from other campuses like, DUT,UNISA.

Student NG: it helps in studying alone that is ammmmmm eish yes independent student and collaborative learning.

Student X: E-mail feedback has helped me a lot in my study because I seem to read the response and contribution from both the students and the lecturer on the UKZN learning site.

Interviewer: In what ways do you think e-mail feedback can be improved to enhance your learning?.

Student NG: It should be friendlier, more graphical, and more reliable for assessing our work

Student Q: Before I do not know anything about operating computer but since I started submitting and receiving feedback through e-mails, I have been to develop some computer skills. Now I know how to use Microsoft word, Microsoft excels, and to design PowerPoint.

Interviewer: Apart from computer is any other computer equipment you use in assessing your e-mails?

Student D: Yes... For me and I think other students does, I use my cell phone to check e-mails

Student N: Yes... I do use my cell phone or my laptop to check my e-mails

Student X: Anyway I do use my laptop and cell phone to assess my e-mails, but the problem is if your phone is not an advance phone you cannot have access to your e-mails, and also if you don't have bundles for browsing you won't access my message

Appendix F

Editors' certificate

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28 NOVEMBER 2014

LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This serves to inform that I have read the final version of the dissertation titled:

'Exploring Students' Experiences of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Facilitated Feedback: A Case Study of Business Management Students at a Higher Institution in KwaZulu-Natal', by A.C. Chidiebere, student no. 211557877.

To the best of my knowledge, all the proposed amendments have been effected and the work is free of spelling and grammatical errors. I am of the view that the quality of language used meets generally accepted academic standards.

Yours faithfully



DR S. GOVENDER
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