Towards Designing Modules in Higher Education for Student Success and Epistemological Access in a Hybrid Teaching and Learning Environment

Peter Oluwaseun Merisi[1] & Thamsanqa Abednigo Ndlovu[2] & Dagogo William Legg-Jack[3]

[1]Academic Developer, Centre for Teaching and Learning, North-West University, South Africa
[2]Educational Technologist, Centre for Teaching and Learning, North-West University, South Africa
[3]Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Directorate for Learning and Teaching Development, Walter Sisulu University, South Africa
Correspondence: Peter Oluwaseun Merisi, North-West University, South Africa.
Email: 40663655@nwu.ac.za

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Abstract: This paper argues that, since epistemological access is at the centre of research on teaching and learning process in higher education, particularly in the South African context, it is therefore important to pay attention to how a hybrid module is designed such that it caters for such access for our students. It further argues that we will be doing ourselves a great harm if such an arduous task is perceived to be the sole responsibility of the subject matter experts (academics) and instructional designers alone, as this requires collaborative contributions of academics, educational technologists, instructional designers, academic developers, and student academic advisors. The involvement of the student academic advisors in the design process is to ensure that student experiences and voices are taken into consideration during the design process. The focus of the paper is narrowed down to the role that the overview page of a hybrid module plays in enhancing epistemological access for students. Hence, dual emphasis is placed on how accessibility and usability should be ensured in the design of the overview page of a hybrid module such that it encourages epistemological access for students. To achieve this, this paper provides an instructional guide on designing the overview page of a module to cater for accessibility and usability in ensuring epistemological access for our students in a hybrid learning environment.

Keywords: Hybrid Teaching and Learning, Usability and Accessibility, Learning Management Systems, Epistemological Access, Higher Education

1. Introduction

Owing to the historical background of the South African nation, access to education has occupied a central place in research, particularly research on higher education in South Africa. However, scholars have successfully differentiated between physical access to the universities or other higher education institutions (HEIs) and epistemological access (Merisi & Mgqwashu, 2022), and Ndlovu and Merisi (2022)

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stressed that physical access will be meaningless if students do not have epistemological access (EA). Thus, HEIs were advancing the cause of EA for all students, but all efforts were halted by the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

Due to the pandemic, all institutions, including HEIs in South Africa were locked down, as it was the case across the globe. In the South African context, attempts were made to safe the academic year (2020), and all HEIs were required to adopt an emergency and contingency plan for continuity. This plan therefore forced most of the institutions to migrate into online teaching- an emergency remote teaching and learning approach. It is referred to as emergency, because one, it was to save an emergency, two, there was little or no time for adequate preparations for adopting such an approach. Although this approach succeeded not only in saving the academic year, it also prepared the stage for the adoption of online teaching and learning across the HEIs in the country. One of the advantages of this ERTL is that many academics felt that it helped them to identify technological- pedagogical opportunities which they explore over the years (Merisi & Pillay, 2020).

As academics continued with the online teaching culture, the lockdown which was imposed due to the pandemic was relaxed and HEIs across South Africa were mandated to give physical access to a limited number of students to return to their campuses, particularly those who have challenges with connectivity and lack of infrastructures that can enable them to attend lectures online. Hence, we are faced with a situation where some students have access to the campuses and can therefore attend lectures, tutorials, practical classes in contact (face-to-face) mode, while there are other students on the other hand, who are connecting online. This therefore necessitated the majority of HEIs in South Africa to adopt the hybrid teaching and learning modality. What is this hybrid teaching and learning?

Hybrid teaching and learning is a pedagogical approach that combines in-person (face-to-face or contact) instruction with computer-mediated instruction (O'Byrne & Pytash, 2015). Hybrid teaching and learning as a medium of instruction can be executed either synchronously using real time meeting sessions or asynchronously with students at different locations and times (Siegelman, 2019). This implies that, in synchronous hybrid learning, students in class learn simultaneously with those online from their respective locations. Although hybrid teaching and learning tends to offer great benefits, it also has its challenges. These challenges are of dual categories namely, synchronous and asynchronous. Accordingly, the challenges associated with synchronous hybrid hinge on pedagogy and technology involved (Raes et al., 2020). This therefore frames the focus of this paper, which is to provide instructional guidance on designing a hybrid module that promotes epistemological access for all students. Although there are various aspects to consider when designing a hybrid module, this paper places emphasis on the role that the overview page (OP) or information page (IP) plays in a hybrid module and how academics, instructional designers, educational technologists, and other stakeholders such as academic developers and student academic advisors can ensure that the contents of the OP is developed in such a way that it can enhance, not only physical access, but epistemological access for students. Thus, the paper begins by defining the concept of hybrid teaching and learning, outlines its benefits and challenges and then provides the instructional guidance on the design of a hybrid module for epistemological access.

2. On Defining Hybrid Teaching and Learning

In literature, there seems to be diverse definitions of what hybrid learning means, hence, the multiplicity of the actual description of this mode of instruction. Although hybrid and blended learning have similar component, often, these two are frequently confused or assumed to be the same (Boora et al., 2010; Sumandiyar et al., 2021). Blended learning as defined as a flexible and effective instructional model that combines online learning experiences and the traditional approach of face-to-face (Stein & Graham, 2014). In addition, Gruba and Hinkelman (2012) described blended learning as learning activities that uses about forty-five percent of the total time on online mode whilst the rest is based on face-to-face. Furthermore, blended learning as described by some scholars is the combination of the traditional face-to-face learning method with digital or online learning method (Dziuban et al., 2018; Hrastinski, 2019). The implication is that in blended learning, some classes are held based on face-to-face meetings whilst others are replaced with online (Aji, Ardin & Arifin, 2020). That is, both face-to-face and online instructions on blended learning are held at different times (Steele, 2021), which makes it different from hybrid learning approach.

Hybrid learning, according to O'Byrne and Pytash (2015), is a pedagogical approach that combines in-person with computer-mediated instruction. Sumandiyar et al. (2021) describe this mode of instruction where the teacher employs the use of video conferencing hardware and software to teach students who attend class online as well as those who study from their homes. Hybrid learning as a medium of instruction can be executed either synchronously using real time meeting sessions or asynchronously with students at different locations and times (Siegelman, 2019). This implies that, in synchronous hybrid learning, students in class learn simultaneously with those online from their respective locations. On the other hand, hybrid learning may include asynchronous components such as e-learning exercises and pre-recorded video instruction to supplement face-to-face classroom sessions (Sumandiyar et al., 2021). According to these scholars, a well-designed hybrid learning mode of instruction combines the best aspects of face-to-face and online learning to make education more accessible to a broad range of students (Sumandiyar et al., 2021). To achieve success in hybrid learning, Boyarsky (2020) argues that the elements of hybrid courses must be designed to the learning format. Hybrid learning creates room for students to benefit from the best practice of incorporating face-to-face classroom experiences, experiential learning objectives and digital course delivery (Ilgu & Jahren, 2015; Sumandiyar et al., 2021), hence, so many benefits are attached to this mode of instruction.

2. Benefits of Hybrid Learning

Hybrid learning has several benefits when compared to the conventional mode of instruction. Firstly, it leads to increased students' participation in the learning process through the integration of innovative approaches such as efficient and more appropriate use of audio-visual materials (Abi Raad & Odhabi, 2021). Others include the use live video conferencing platform features like polls and quizzes, interactive virtual games, and a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning (Boyarsky, 2021). These innovative approaches promote learners' engagement with course materials thereby enabling them to become active participants of the learning process (Abi Raad & Odhabi, 2021). This is confirmed in a study that found that a hybrid learning model can make students more active in learning after studying at home (Sumandiyar et al., 2021).

Secondly, hybrid learning affords both the teacher and students flexibility. According to Garcia, Redel and Martiny (2021), hybrid learning offers the possibility of greater spatial and temporal flexibility compared to the traditional format.

Thirdly, hybrid learning offers greater accessibility to teachers and students at both local and international levels (Boyasky, 2021). The implication is that hybrid learning bridges the gap between geographical location for students so they can learn (Abi Raad & Odhabi, 2021). In hybrid learning, students can access lessons no matter their physical ability or location, and virtual learning is a more cost-effective option for many students (Boyarsky, 2021), without losing the advantages of the traditional approach (Nagaeva, 2016; Alsalhi et al., 2019; Garcia et al., 2021).

Fourthly, hybrid learning creates room for interaction between learners and learning materials in an online environment exclusive of the presence of a teacher which allows students to develop self-learning skills that dovetails to an improvement in the quality of education (Taylor, 2017).

Fifthly, hybrid learning can provide students with educational / scientific materials in a quick, simple and understandable form (Ndioho et al., 2021).

Sixthly, the organisation of group learning activities is possible in hybrid learning, and this allows students to be liberated as well as afford them greater freedom of expression (Albarrak et al., 2021).

3. Challenges of Hybrid Learning

Despite the affordances of hybrid learning, this mode of instruction is said to be encumbered with challenges and criticisms (Thomas & Treat. 2021; Ilgu & Jahren, 2015). These challenges are of dual categories namely, synchronous and asynchronous. Accordingly, the challenges associated with synchronous hybrid hinge on pedagogy and technology involved (Raes et al., 2020).

3.1 Pedagogical Challenges – Teachers Perspectives

In relation to pedagogy, some scholars declare that teachers involved in hybrid teaching are required to change their teaching style significantly to create room for new technology (Cain, 2015; Ramsey et al., 2016; Raes et al., 2019). The implication is that this kind of learning requires a new kind of set-up that highly influences the pedagogical and learning design (Weitze et al., 2013), hence, a demand is placed on other methods of teaching and different learning activities (Bower et al., 2015). Teachers are expected to provide a similar high quality learning experience for both virtual and on-site students because the educational experiences of students are highly dependent on the dexterity of the trainer to manipulate the various technologies provided within the domain of hybrid learning (Raes et al., 2019). In a study, it was highlighted that technological set-up can ruin a hybrid learning experience. Language teachers in a workshop revealed that, no matter how they are technologically prepared for their lessons, technology-related glitches impair their whole experience (Szoke, 2021). A study reported that teachers have been more concerned with attending to those who study online than those who are on-site (Haningsih & Rohmi, 2022).

3.2 Pedagogical Challenges – Students Perspectives

Students in hybrid learning also experience pedagogical challenges. Evidence from research has shown that students experienced difficulties related both to the instruction and methodological aspects of teaching (Lorenzo-Lledó et al., 2021). Also reported in literature are the findings of some scholars that onsite students and those who learn remotely experience the lesson differently in the hybrid synchronous situation (Beatty 2007, 2019; Szeto 2014; Zydney et al. 2019). The study by Ramsey et al. (2016), for example, reveals that learners who study virtually feel a significant sense of distance towards their teachers than their classmates who study at the lecture venues. Abi Raad and Odhabi (2021) attribute this to the reason why teachers and students may feel out of touch and isolated, as this mode of instruction does not require both parties to stay at the same venue. Corroborating this, a study found the feelings of isolation as a significant problem among students in hybrid learning (Doghonadze et al., 2021), and this in turn leads to loss of interaction between teachers and students (Ilgu & Jahren, 2015). Other hindrances associated with hybrid learning are that virtual communication makes it very difficult to understand verbal and body cues which are mostly used by teachers in the traditional classroom (Abi Raad & Odhabi, 2021). This is alluded to in a study by Haningsih and Rohmi (2022), where students who studied online indicated their preference for face-to-face learning compared to virtual, because the former makes it easy for them to understand whatever is being taught as well as avail them the opportunity to share ideas with their peers and ask their teachers questions directly on what they do not comprehend. Besides, Snart (2010) puts it that one of the greatest challenges of hybrid learning is that it places less emphasis on sound pedagogy but adheres to business logic. This implies that the focus of hybrid learning if profit-making rather than being efficient and capable of meeting students' outcomes and enhancing the learning process (Abi Raad & Odhabi, 2021).

Research has highlighted criticisms associated with hybrid learning as a mode of instruction because of the impediment for students pursuing this type of instruction (Abi Raad & Odhabi, 2021). It is further added that for such disciplines as the sciences where learning incorporates theoretical and practical activities meant to instil hands-on competencies and skills (Abi Raad & Odhabi, 2021), hybrid learning presents significant challenges in meeting such requirements fully due to both time and logistical constraints (Raes et al., 2020). Besides, hybrid learning falls short of providing students with the essential social skills required by students to navigate life (Abi Raad & Odhabi, 2021), as well as limits the physical interactions between learners, and these interactions are necessary for students' social development (Raes et al., 2020). This is suggestive of the findings which reported that students in hybrid learning feel very much isolated, and this poses a significant problem among learners (Doghonadze et al., 2021). According to Smith (2021), when learners are deprived of access to daily interaction with their classmates and recreational activities, their mental health can suffer. Thus, the question arises, as to how effective hybrid learning is, in achieving learning outcomes, since complete education system should inculcate on its recipients, cognitive and social skills needed to tackle daily life's challenges and tap into existing opportunities (Abi Raad & Odhabi, 2021).

Also, another challenge reported, as related to hybrid mode of instruction is that students show more preference to classroom instruction compared to online because it provides learners with the benefit of language learning (Sanpanich, 2021). This notion is confirmed by Paul and Jefferson (2019) who indicated

that classroom learning provides more motivation, encouragement, and direction that is lacking in the virtual learning environment. Besides, in the conventional approach to learning, students acquire better understanding of what is taught because of the exchange of information and experiences through body language and gestures among others (Nazara & Febriana, 2016).

Computer literacy is confirmed to be another challenge in hybrid learning as students tend to use computers and technology to get access to course materials, complete their tasks, plan their studies, and interact with teachers and peers (Sanpanich, 2021). This is corroborated with an argument that students must have adequate technology skills and confidence to have a satisfactory learning experience in a hybrid mode of instruction (Eliveria et al., 2019). Consequently, it is expected that students in hybrid learning acquire enough computer skills to aid the operation of specific systems, web-based programs or applications as required in their courses (Sanpanich, 2021). Besides, students also need to be exposed to and be familiar with technologies because this may help them find comfort and confidence in learning and increase students' productivity in a hybrid learning environment (Sanpanich, 2021).

3.3 Technology and Other Challenges

Technology and other related challenges are said to impede the effective implementation of hybrid learning globally. Technological challenges are often experienced by students who study remotely compared to those at learning venues, hence, the question as to what the most effective technologies are available for boosting the social presence of remote students (Zydney et al. 2019). A study conducted on hybrid revealed the following challenges namely; unstable internet connections, inadequate computer labs, lack of computers/laptops, and general technical problems (Doghonadze et al., 2021). It is also noted that digital inequality exists in hybrid learning, where not every student may have access to hardware and software infrastructure required to participate in their lessons (Rathi, 2021). Digital inequality, according to David et al. (2020, p. 4), reflects that "internet and mobile network access varies greatly in low-income countries". As of January 2021, the global average of internet penetration is kept at 59.5% (Johnson, 2021). The definition of digital divide by Block (2010) further includes the gap in access to technology based on income, race, ethnicity, gender, age and geographic location. Mossberger, Tolbert and Stansbury (2003, p. 38) argue that the problem of digital inequality does not only relate to internet access or technological solutions, but rather the ensuing information gap which prevents the development of technology-related competencies such as "the use of mouse and typing", using email, locating information on the web, and using word processing and spreadsheet programmes. Consequently, this gap inhibits equal access to quality learning experience such as is obtainable in hybrid, information sharing and job opportunities (Block, 2010), and this ultimately limits an individual's ability to compete in the future tech-heavy job market, participate in today's information society, and contribute to a technology-dependent economy (Solomon, Allen &Resta, 2003).

A study conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in New Zealand, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and India revealed that socio-cultural factors such as gender inequalities, and the perception of parents constitute barriers to hybrid learning (Singh, 2021). The study further highlighted that financial and infrastructural limitations, a lack of support for educators, and technical challenges such as lack of consistent electric power supply in underprivileged communities all pose challenges to the effectiveness of hybrid learning (Singh, 2021).

Though many studies, including those cited above, have identified the challenges of hybrid teaching and learning, their findings are primarily around the general technical problems and unavailability of technical tools and unstable connectivity. One area that has been neglected in these studies is the challenge with the module with regard to its design, its specific need-based technologies, and the impact of these on student access, success and retention- EA in the specific module in the HEIs. Hence, this paper argues that until attention is given to module design, particularly how the overview and information page can enhance success, epistemological access and retention, our efforts to hybridize teaching and learning will remain a futile enterprise.

4. On Designing the Overview Page of a Hybrid Module

In most of the Learning Management System (LMS), when students log in to any module, the first page they engage with is the overview page. Thus, this page becomes vital to students, first for those who have used the LMS before and second, for those who are using the LMS for the first time. According to Mpungose (2020), most of the students in South Africa experience or engage with the LMS for the first time when they get to the university. Therefore, this page is vital in guiding students on what to do or how to move forward navigating the module. When educational technologists and lecturers are designing the module on the LSM, it is paramount that they pay attention to this landing page as it provides students with the introduction to the module and should help in guiding them. It is therefore important for us to use the overview to clearly articulate the overall design of the module to the students.

The overview page should be designed such that it clearly shows how to get started and where to find different components of the module. According to Naim (2021), this section should show clearly what the students should do first, present the students with a guide to explore the module site, with detailed navigational instructions for the entire module. To help guide the students, a button that indicates the 'Start here' link to students is vital, which will take the students to the starting information. Such a button or link will help guide or lead the students on what to do next. The overview page should also provide students with the information to assist them comprehend the aim of the module and how the learning process is planned and carried out. In a hybrid module element such as module modality, schedule, assessment criteria, types of learning activities and modes of communication may be included in the overview. According to Onyema, Deborah, Alsayed, Noorulhasan, and Sanober (2019), communication is vital for every student to be successful in the module, and this may be student to students, student to lecturer or lecturer to student communication. Therefore, the overview and introduction should provide all the communication expectations. Different universities have deferent policies that students should comply with when enrolled for a module. The overview page and introduction provide a good space to familiarise students with the university policies before they start with the actual teaching and learning process within the module.

Hybrid learning requires students to use different technologies for them to be successful in the module (Warren, Reil, Herdan, & Lin, 2020). Therefore, this information needs to be provided to students very early in the module introduction and overview. Educational technologists can write all the needed hardware and software that the students will need in the module and how these technologies can be obtained. Hybrid learning may require different skills from students depending on the level of such students (Xiao, Sun-Lin, Lin, Li, Pan, & Cheng, 2020). The inclusion of all the digital literacy skill

expected from the students in the overview page might help the students to succeed in the module. Furthermore, adding information about where students can get institutional support for capacitation is vital. Park and Kim (2020) argue that social presence is important in hybrid learning, which includes students and lecturer introduction. The overview and introduction page should have an introduction from the lecturer and students so that students can get to know their lecturer and build a sense of connection between students and a lecturer. Moreover, students introducing themselves can create a welcoming learning environment and a sense of belongingness. The introduction can be done in different ways, such as ice breaker or a short video clip.

5. Technological Choices in Hybrid Module Design

Technology used in a module plays a crucial role in achieving the learning objectives. Hybrid learning requires different technologies to enhance T&L. Wekerle, Daumiller and Kollar (2022) argue that technology used in any module should be used to address the learning objectives. However, according to Oliveira, Feyzi Behnagh,Ni, Mohsinah, Burgess and Guo (2019), most lecturers use technologies just because the technology is trending or popular, yet not assisting in the achievement of the learning outcomes. According to Van Alten, Phielix, Janssen, and Kester (2019), there are cases where technology used in the module does not help in achieving the learning outcomes but hinder the learning process. There is therefore a need for a collaborative work among the educational technologists, instructional designers, academic developers, student academic advisors and lecturers to ensure that the technology used or selected in the module will help in addressing and achieving the module learning outcomes.

According to Raes, Detienne, Windey, and Depaepe (2020), students' engagement and active learning is central to hybrid learning modality, whether face-to-face or online. When designing a module on the LMS, it is important to consider technologies that promote student engagement and active learning. These technologies should be selected based on their ability to help the students to actively engage in the learning process as compared to being passive observers and receivers of information (Pellas, 2018). Educational technologists working with instructional designers and the lecturer, should select technologies that encourage active participation in the module, allowing for continual interactions with the lecturer, course materials, and other students. Botha and Herselman (2018) also point out that it is important to consider bandwidth that will be required when using the technology. Given our context in South Africa, where access to internet and stable connection is limited, consideration should be given so that no student is disadvantaged. Thus, using technologies that requires high bandwidth might be difficult for some students to access.

Thus, it is argued in this paper that a single module can use different technologies. Resita and Ertikanto (2018) argue that students learn differently, and most students easily get bored if the module is much text-based. Educational technologists should therefore advise lecturers to use different technologies such as blogs, virtual worlds, videos, mobile technologies, games, social media, and podcasts. Since students might not be acquainted with some of the technologies, training is thus a necessity. Also, since online learning is part of hybrid modality, students might likely be exposed to different privacy challenges. Care must therefore be taken in the choice of technology to use, and it is important for educational technologists to ensure that the module design and technology usage promote students' privacy. As argued by Duin, and Tham (2020), students should be provided with the necessary steps to protect their privacy with the

technologies outside of the LMS, and this must be taken into consideration in module design and technology choices across all modules in all our higher education institutions in the country.

6. Accessibility and Usability

Accessibility and usability is central to student success in any module (Sadaf, Martin, & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2019). Thus, Nieves, Moya and Soldado (2019) argue that a module should be designed with accessibility and usability in mind for all students. Students are different so is the devices that they use for learning in the hybrid modality, therefore the design of the module should reflect such diversity. Hays and Handler (2020) in addition, argue that Universal Design for Learning (UDL) can be of greater help, in guiding the educational technologists and other stakeholders when designing a module on the LMS. Using the UDL principle can ensure that the design of the module demonstrates a dedication to accessibility and usability, ensuring that all students can readily explore and interact with course components.

A module must therefore be designed such that it is easy for students to navigate regardless of the gadget that is being used. Students should not struggle to navigate the module to locate and access different materials and tools. Therefore, navigation must be consistent, coherent, and efficient throughout the module (Hays and Handler, 2020). Readability forms one of the important elements of an accessible and usable module. The designer should therefore ensure that comparable information is grouped together, with headings indicating topic changes (Johnson 2020) and throughout the module, the heading and body styles should be consistent. White space or negative space is used around content to improve comprehension and reduce eye fatigue caused by long blocks of text or the use of numerous images (Johnson, 2020). Font style and size are chosen to maximize on-screen readability; relatively simple fonts are preferred over ornamented fonts, and font families are constrained to one or two. Xu, Zhang, Wang, Price, Wang, and Shi (2021) add that colours should not be used arbitrarily because they can cause distraction and a loss of readability. Thus, the designers should be aware of the importance of the use of a specific colour for readability's sake.

The design of a hybrid module requires that it meets the needs of diverse students by providing accessible text and images in files, documents, LMS pages, and web pages. Diverse students should be able to access content, complete activities, and interact with other students without struggling. In designing, the designers should consider the abilities of all the students that will participate in the module. To provide an accessible and usable module, it is vital to provide students with alternative means of accessing multimedia contents so that diverse student needs are met. For example, if there is a recording that is provided, that recording should be accompanied with a transcript for those who might want to read.

7. Implication for Designing a Hybrid Module in HE

This paper raises practical implications for educational practitioners and stakeholders on how to design modules that ensure access and usability for students in a hybrid learning environment. Thus, it raises implication for the active involvement of subject matter experts (academics), educational technologists, instructional designers, academic developers and student academic advisors. The essence of this collaborative task is to ensure that the student voice is evident in the process of designing a module for hybrid learning.

The first implication raised in this paper is for all the stakeholders mentioned above to position themselves as if they are students during the process of designing their modules. There is a need for them to think about the student experiences of the overview page of the specific module. The questions they can ask themselves is how does the OP otherwise known as the landing page assist students to easily navigate the module for access (both physical and epistemological) and usability (the ease of use of the privileged technology within the module)? To ensure usability and access, it is recommended that upon the completion of the module overview page, there is a need for student testing for evaluation purposes. Students within the module could be invited to navigate through the OP and any difficulty encountered at this stage could be reported for necessary actions and amends to allow for further ease of access and use.

The second implication concerns the involvement of the academic developers in ensuring that the OP of every module creates room for epistemological access for students within that module. During the internal programme evaluation such as the review of modules, programmes and curricula, it is imperative for the academic developers to place emphasis on the OP of such a module. Areas of concern could be whether there is constructive alignment between the module OP, the outcomes and assessment types and criteria. Does the OP have a calendar or reminder for assessments? Does it provide a tour guide for students to easily navigate the learning materials and other supports in place?

The third implication concerns the involvement of instructional designers and educational technologists in designing module for accessibility and usability in a hybrid learning environment. This paper raises the concern on the need for the educational technologists and instructional designers to place emphasis on the appropriateness of the chosen technologies within a specific module. They should ensure that the choice of the technologies in use is based on their values in terms of their capability to enhance the achievement of the outcomes and objects of the specific module that is being designed. In addition, the paper places emphasis on the role that the ETs and IDs need to play in ensuring that the technological choices in various modules do not only serve pedagogical purposes but benefit students in terms of accessibility no matter where they decide to learn from, and usability- the ease of use and which gadgets students can easily relate to and manipulate for effective engagement in the teaching and learning process. Thus, they should ensure that the technological choice in each module is need-based, meeting the need of the module outcome and that of the students.

The last implication concerns the involvement of the academic advisors in the design of a module for accessibility and usability in a hybrid learning environment. The paper raised a concern on the need for the academic student advisors to place emphasis on the importance of student voices and experiences in the module design process. This is to ensure that both the module content and technological choices do not in any way hamper student success, access and usability or in any way exclude any student. Since the nature of their work privileges them to be closer to the students than other stakeholders, they are in a better position to recommend the kind of gadgets that students are already familiar with in terms of easy access and ease of use in promoting epistemological access during the module design process.

8. Conclusion

This paper has clearly differentiated between blended learning and hybrid learning, two concepts that have been wrongly intertwined over the years. Furthermore, the paper has defined hybrid learning and outlined

the benefits as well as the challenges of this teaching and learning modality. The paper argued that most scholars whose research focus on the technical challenges of hybrid teaching and learning seem to have limited their findings to infrastructural challenges such as lack of connectivity, lack of computers, unstable internet, among others. It was however raised in this paper that one thing that seems to be missing in research on hybrid teaching and learning, particularly within the South African context hinges around the module design. This paper has argued that a well-designed hybrid module has the potential to increase epistemological access for students within that module. The emphasis in this paper was that the overview page of a module that is being designed on an LMS plays a key role in student access into the module, success in the module, retention within the module and epistemological access in all. Hence, the authors provided some basic instructional guidance that academics, instructional designers, educational technologists, academic developers and other stakeholders should put into consideration to ensure epistemological access for students within all our hybridised learning spaces. The paper concludes by reiterating that a module should be designed in a way that is easy for students to navigate and all information about opportunities that are in place to complement learning within the module should be made available in the overview page.

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