

**THE ADVANCEMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
BY MEANS OF eLEARNING
IN A CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENT**

by
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To

**YAHWEH
ADONAI
EL SHADDAI
ELOHIM
EL ROI**



UNIVERSITY
be the GLORY,
the POWER,
the GRACE.

Forever and ever.

Amen

FOREWORD

My sincere thanks and appreciation goes to the following persons and/or institutions that either formed an integral part, or gave valuable advice and support in the structure and research done in this study.

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School Helderkruijn and Kings Christian School who assisted me in deriving information on the National and Provincial policy regarding Christian and/or religious education in South Africa. I firmly believe that whenever God assigns a person to do something that would benefit His Kingdom; He supernaturally anoints that person to complete the task. He furthermore sends help to complete the task in the form of people, information and insight. Without the assistance I had from the people and institutions mentioned herewith, this research and eLearning environment would not have been a reality.

This dissertation was created in such a way as to assist Christian church leaders and congregations who might want to create their own eLearning environments. For this reason I included annexures such as the ADDIE model, Gagne's events of instruction and Instructional design as well as discussing instructional methodologies such as the ARCS model. Additional references, which enlighten the area of education by means of eLearning, are mentioned in the list of resources. This should assist both novices and students in the field of instructional design and/or Christian religious education to understand educational strategies when creating an eLearning environment.

I have a burning passion for the Word of God, and therefore for the effective, powerful teaching of the Word of God. Passion is the essential ingredient for powerful and effective instruction – passion for the resource and for those people who become inspired by it. It is my hope and ambition that when using the research and eLearning environment, you will be inspired by it.

Amerintia Human

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW

1.1 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

In recent years it became an important feature in Christian churches to educate churchgoers beyond the normal sermons on Sundays. For every Christian to grow in holiness, they need to be developed and grow under the rule of leaders (Shepherds Training Manual, page 5). A growing number of congregations divide their members in smaller groups, i.e. home cells, where they are taught in smaller, intimate circumstances. The main purpose of these home cells is to have fellowship with each other and to receive biblical and spiritual teaching. Meetings usually take place once a week. Home cells usually function under the authority of the church, and home cell leaders report to the leaders appointed over them as per the congregation specifications and structure. Home cells operate in conjunction with general church structures and do not function as a separate entity. Churches in the larger metropolitan areas make use of Bible schools where formal schooling takes place, usually during the week on an evening. The schooling usually takes place at the church building, and the pastor/s mostly acts as religious teachers and/or biblical instructors. The aim of these instructors is to enlighten the Word of God and to lead their fellow Christians into a better understanding of their stand in righteousness in the Lord God. It also became increasingly popular to invite guest teachers or lecturers to teach the congregation members.

Wise church leaders allow their leaders to share in the planning of teaching opportunities (Fischer, 1977:86). In congregations that

support home cells, these leaders are the home cell leaders who have been instructed by the pastor, and who are in turn expected to teach fellow home cell members. This kind of teaching might happen on a formal basis where all home cells are present, or teaching can be informal during home cell sessions, where specific learning materials are used, i.e. the Bible and prescribed course material. A home cell session usually takes the form of congregation members convening at a specific pre-agreed venue. During this meeting they initially attend to issues regarding emotional and physical needs, eventually culminating into the teaching of spiritual and religious matters from the Word of God.

The church is God's institution to be the instrument to hear his truth and demonstrate His Kingdom (Shepherds Training Manual, page 3), and must therefore strive to facilitate the numerous needs for schooling that might be required by congregation members.

Anecdotal evidence of personal experience gathered during conversations with congregation leaders indicated that not all congregation members have access to extra schooling, either because the opportunity does not exist, due to time restrictions, or the fact that not all congregation members used as teachers were formally educated to be teachers. Congregation members might feel uncomfortable dealing with spiritual matters in a closed environment, such as home cells, where they have to open up to other people, either by means of discussions, or by means of direct questioning. This is due to the fact that the family of God is made up of individuals from every walk of life with varying needs (Fischer, 1977:77). It is important that learning opportunities strive to accommodate the varying needs of all congregation members.

A point of concern gathered as anecdotal evidence, are that congregation members are used as teachers during formal teaching sessions even though they do not necessarily have the prerequisite knowledge to be able to handle questions directed at them during

the lesson/s, neither were they trained as teachers. They normally make use of prescribed workbooks and prepare on their own to give their weekly lessons. Questions asked might not be answered in depth, or answered without specific knowledge on the subject due to the lack of tuition received on the subject, thus the student/s might leave the class, either misled, or unanswered. It is important that congregation members, who are used as teachers in the congregation, receive teaching from their congregation leaders in order to fulfil the role of teachers. The education of the congregation members, used as teachers in the congregation, takes place by means of studying the Word of God, attending courses presented by the church authorities, and following in the footsteps of godly men. An example of the outcome of successful leadership is Joshua who developed into an outstanding leader under the tutorship of Moses. As a result of the tuition he received, combined with the grace of God, he did not remain one of Moses' lieutenants, (Sanders, 1994:145) but became a successful leader on his own. Lastly, church congregations might be disadvantaged if church leaders are ignorant of teaching methods and the presentation of learning material to the best advantage of the student. Ignorance of teaching methods might manifest in lecturing learning material by means of reading it from course material, instead of presenting the learning material in a way that would enhance the understanding and retention of the learning material. Enhancing the understanding and retention of learning material would include the use of standard education principles, such as gaining the attention of the learners, informing the learners of the objective of the learning material, stimulating the recall of prior learning, presenting the content, providing learner guidance, practicing the learning material, providing feedback, assessing the performance of the learners, enhancing retention and transferring of the learning material to the every day walk of the learners.

It is the responsibility of church leaders to equip and educate their congregation to be able to live in the world as witnesses even though they are not from the world. The term “not being from this world” refers to the fact that congregation members realise that they have a higher calling from God on their lives, that they must obey God’s commandments, and that they must strive to obtain eternal life, thus experiencing life on earth as a passing phase and striving to honour and love God foremost. “The instructions you have heard from me along with many witnesses, transmit and entrust to reliable and faithful men who will be competent and qualified to teach others also” (The Amplified Bible, 1987:2; Timothy 2:2). Information gathered by means of anecdotal evidence indicated that disinformation, or lack of Word-based information, will disable the congregation members to function in the world, or everyday life as Christians, and to work towards eternal salvation. “He who deals wisely and heeds [God’s] Word and Counsel shall find good, and whoever leans on, trusts in, and is confident in the Lord – happy, blessed and fortunate is he” (The Amplified Bible, 1987; Proverbs 16:20). It is the responsibility of church leadership to do as Nehemiah did when he recovered the authority of the Word of God in the lives of the people (Sanders, 1994:145). “So they read from the Book of the Law of God distinctly, faithfully amplifying and giving the sense so that [the people] understood the reading (The Amplified Bible, 1987; Nehemiah 8:1-8).

Of the utmost importance is that church leaders understand the needs regarding the religious education of their congregation members. It might be fruitless to educate what is not urgently needed or required; thus church leaders have to understand what the specific religious needs of their congregation members are. “Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, and look well to your herds” (The Amplified Bible, 1987; Proverbs 27:23). It must be noted however the leaders of the church also have the responsibility to teach what the Lord instructs them to teach from the Word of God,

thus, even though the congregation members might have specific needs, it must be met with Word-based education.

It is also important for church leaders to understand the general working and living conditions of their congregation members as well as the daily difficulties they have to deal with as Christians. One of the issues that have to be met and understood is that of time utilisation. Many congregation members feel that they do not have the time to be able to attend teaching sessions at the church, which may be accommodated by means of an eLearning environment that may address these needs. Furthermore, the congregation members will have access through the specific Christian eLearning environment to the teachings conducted and/or initiated by their specific congregation. Research need to be done in order to ensure the successful design, development and implementation of a Christian eLearning environment.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEMS

Based on the background outlined in paragraph 1.1, the research problems are rooted in the advancement of Christian religious education by means of electronic learning in home cells.

Emanating from the above are the following questions:

- What are the needs and interests of home cell members regarding spiritual education?
- How can an eLearning environment be designed to accommodate the spiritual and religious education of home cells in a specific Christian church community?

1.3 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims of this research are to assist Christian congregation leaders in:

- 1.3.1 Ascertaining the educational interests and needs of their congregation members beyond Sunday sermons.
- 1.3.2 Using an eLearning (electronic learning) environment as an educational tool.
- 1.3.3 Using the best instructional methodologies that would further the goal of educating home cell members in a congregation by means of an eLearning environment.
- 1.3.4 Determining the extent to which congregation members would be willing to be spiritually educated by means of an eLearning environment.
- 1.3.5 Determining the experiences of congregation members that have already accessed eLearning environments.

The main objective is to further spiritual and religious teaching to Christian congregation members in a home cell environment. The advancement of spiritual and religious teaching must be achieved in such a way that teaching will be available at all times, especially when it is not possible to reach congregation leaders at a given time. Teaching must be conducted in such a way as to benefit both the home cell member and the congregation as a whole; this means it must be beneficial to both the congregation member willing to attend larger teaching groups, and the individual congregation member that would prefer to be taught in private.

1.4 PERSONAL LIFE PHILOSOPHY OF THE RESEARCHER

Research done is based on a firm and steadfast believe in the daily influence and interest that God, the Father, Jesus Christ, the Son and the Holy Spirit have in the life of the Christian believer.

This dissertation and eLearning environment is based on the Christian Protestant belief. The New Oxford Illustrated Dictionary defines the term Protestant as: "member adherent, of any of the Christian Churches or bodies that repudiated papal authority and were separated from Roman communion in the Reformation (16th century), or of any Church or body descended from them..."(The New Oxford Illustrated Dictionary 1976:1 358).

1.5 ABBREVIATED RESEARCH DESIGN

Research will be done in order to determine the answers to the research problems mentioned in 1.4.

Research will be done incorporating a specific congregation, which will entail the systematic gathering of data and the methodological planning of the study. The methodology applied in this study will allow the researcher to focus on a particular situation, and the research will also attempt to identify the relevant processes influencing each other (Bell, 1993:8).

The research will include questionnaires that will endeavour to determine the specific needs of individual congregation members. Interviews with home cell leaders will determine what the educational needs in smaller groups, and/or the individual needs are regarding Christian religious education. The research will attempt to construct knowledge that will lead to improvement and change in the specific field of Christian education in a home cell environment. This knowledge will eventually culminate in the development of an eLearning environment.

Many data gathering methods will be applied to this study by a single researcher, which will include qualitative methods, such as observation, document studies, questionnaires and interviews. This

qualitative research will be conducted in real-life situations (Denscombe, 1998:31), where the real-life experiences of the participants regarding their specific needs on religious training and/or education will be studied.

The researcher in this qualitative study will be the main instrument for gathering and analysing data (Merriam, 1998:7).

Quantitative methods will also be used in the questionnaire, as it is important to determine what the specific religious educational needs are for different age groups and gender. It is also important to determine what the educational level of the participants are as it may have an influence on the eLearning environment.

As stated by Goddard and Melville (2001: 54-56), it is necessary to codify data, and, if necessary, depict it in different types of charts, e.g. pie chart, frequency distribution, etc. in order to analyse data. The research data collected by means of the questionnaire will be interpreted by coding it, and the data made easy to understand by means of using tables and charts. Coding is necessary in order to determine, as example, what the preferences are for a specific age group regarding teaching material that will be used in the eLearning environment. The interviews will be transcribed and made available in this dissertation as it is important to note the advice and preferences the home cell leaders of the specific congregation gave regarding the content of the eLearning environment.

The data assembled will aid the researcher in ensuring that the created eLearning environment will meet the standards and requirements of both the congregation leaders and the members of the specific congregation.

The research findings are reported in Chapter 5.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH

<p>CHAPTER 1</p> <p>GENERAL ORIENTATION</p> <p>1.1 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE</p> <p>1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEMS</p> <p>1.3 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES</p> <p>1.4 PERSONAL LIFE PHILISOPHY OF RESEARCHER</p> <p>1.5 ABBREVIATED RESEARCH DESIGN</p> <p>1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH</p> <p>1.7 ETHICAL STATEMENTS</p>
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CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4
<p>CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION</p> <p>2.1 INTRODUCTION</p> <p>2.2 FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION</p> <p>2.3 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION - TERMINOLOGY</p> <p>2.4 CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA</p> <p>2.5 CONCLUSION</p>	<p>ELEARNING METHODOLOGY</p> <p>3.1 OVERVIEW</p> <p>3.2 FEATURES & BENEFITS OF ELEARNING</p> <p>3.3 CHALLENGES OF ELEARNING</p> <p>3.4 PEDAGOGICAL DIMENSION OF ELEARNING</p> <p>3.5 APPLYING ELEARNING TO CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION</p> <p>3.6 OVERVIEW OF E LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE</p>	<p>RESEARCH DESIGN</p> <p>4.1 INTRODUCTION</p> <p>4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN</p> <p>4.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</p> <p>4.4 DATA ANALYSIS</p> <p>4.5 PARTICIPANTS</p> <p>4.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS</p>

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS

- 5.1 INTRODUCTION
- 5.2 DATA DERIVED FROM QUESTIONNAIRES
- 5.3 REACH WIDTH OF THE RESEARCH
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- 5.5 INTEREST FIELDS
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ELEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- 6.1 PRESENTATION
- 6.2 ANALYSIS PHASE
- 6.3 DESIGN MANUAL
- 6.4 DEVELOPMENT PHASE

CHAPTER 7

OVERVIEW, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY
- 7.2 CONCLUSION
- 7.3 DEFICIENCIES IN THE RESEARCH
- 7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH
- 7.5 FINAL WORD

LIST OF RESOURCES

1.6 ETHICAL STATEMENTS

Participants in research normally have certain generally accepted ethical rights. These are "privacy, voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality" (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:102). In this research all participants voluntarily gave their personal particulars in order to be contacted to complete questionnaires. However, when completing questionnaires, the participants were

not asked to furnish their personal particulars as this might deter them from completing the questionnaires in a totally honest and non-biased way. The confidentiality of the participants' answers in the questionnaires was therefore kept intact. Completed questionnaires and interviews were not at any stage linked to the identity of participants in this research. All participants in the research are volunteers who indicated that they would be willing to assist in improving Christian religious education in both their specific religious church environments, as well as in the broader Christian environment.

The data in this research is both credible and reliable. Credibility in both qualitative and quantitative research is associated with the authenticity and trustworthiness of the data and data analysis. Research is valid when it gives "an accurate and useful representation of the particular instance that has been studied" (Stake, 1998: 263). The data in this research is authentic in the sense that all data has been collected from participants that did not take part in any other similar research. The trustworthiness of the data is beyond reservation as all questionnaires are available for validation. The recorded data in this research is reliable as it accurately reflects the needs analysis of home cell members as represented by individual participation and by means of feedback given by the home cell leaders. (McMillan, 1992: 223).

Data were collected from two groups in the specific church congregation, i.e. congregation members involved in home cells, as well as individual congregation members that were not actively involved in home cells. Congregation members from all over South Africa also took part in the research, which enhances the reliability of the findings. It is evident that different data sources were used to come to the same conclusion (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 266).

CHAPTER 2

CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A literature review was done in Chapter 2 as the content of the eLearning environment will be based on Christian Religious Education. The literature review was done by means of an in depth study of recent material available on the topic and conducted by reading published material that is relevant to the research topic in order for the researcher to formulate a clear problem statement and hypothesis (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:22). The purpose of the review, the literature sources and the reviewing techniques (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:23), were kept in mind while doing the literature research.



2.2 FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Christian religious education was studied by means of a general literature research on the subject as well as an in depth study of the teachings of a specific congregation.

Christian religious education has as foundation the command to instruct or to teach from the Word of God. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (Spirit Filled Life Bible: 1991; 2 Timothy 3: 16-17).

The life of Jesus on earth and His teachings are the cornerstone on which Christian education is built. Any doctrine of the incarnation and any concern to root Christian faith in history must regard the ministry of Jesus on earth as a matter of supreme interest and significance (Dunn, 1992:23). The discipleship to which Jesus called was practical and not merely theoretical, social and not merely spiritual (Dunn, 1992:125), thus Christian Religious Education is based on not only the development of the spirit and soul, but also with the daily upkeep of the body. "Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil. It will be health for your flesh, and strength to your bones" (Spirit Filled Live Bible 1991; Proverbs 3:7).

It was noted by Swindoll (Swindoll, 1991:6), that it would make a difference if all God's people could get hold of the techniques and principles necessary for the cultivation of their own spiritual nourishment. Christian parents should teach biblical techniques and principles, according to the Word of God, to their children from a very young age. The Christian school should serve as a prolonging of the spiritual teaching in their parental homes in order to further and confirm spiritual education. Unfortunately we live in a broken world and such teachings are not always a priority. It is clear from the fact that we live in an imperfect world that the importance of Christian religious teaching is vital. These teachers ought to find inspiration in the Holy Spirit, and must constantly be motivated to grow in holiness. "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are full of age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Spirit Filled Live Bible 1991; Hebrews 5:12-14). These verses in Hebrews not only refer to the desire for spiritual growth when reborn, but also to consistent

religious teaching which would create a desire to commune with the Word of God.

Christian education however, does not only concern a deeper understanding of Christianity, but is a way of handling the creation of God, i.e. the earth and everything on it. Regular subjects like mathematics, geography, science, etc. must be taught on the principles provided in the Word of God in a Christian school. Life changes takes place through the faithful communication of the truths of God's Word by teachers who are empowered and called by the Spirit of God to teach the church the truth, that means not just telling the truth, but teaching the truth from the Word of God (Wilkinson, 1992:9).

2.3 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION – TERMINOLOGY

In order to fully understand Christian religious education the following terms need to be clarified:

2.3.1 SPIRITUAL

The New Oxford Illustrated Dictionary gives the following definition of the term spiritual: "Of spirit as opposed to matter; of the soul especially as acted upon by God; of, proceeding from, God, holy, divine, inspired; concerned with sacred or religious things" (The New Oxford Illustrated Dictionary 1978:1626).

Spirituality is a difficult term to define as the heart of the spiritual is inherently elusive and mysterious. Most of us encountered charismatic individuals who seem to have a unique depth to their being, a spiritual "something". Both the Hebrew and Greek words for spirit, 'ruah' and 'pneuma' respectively, are rooted in the notion of the intangible movement of air. According to John's Gospel, the Spirit of God, like the wind "blows where it wishes, and you hear the

sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from or where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (Spirit Filled Life Bible: 1991; John 3:8). In the Word of God we read that "God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Spirit Filled Life Bible: 1991; Genesis 2:7).

The term spiritual or religious has significance for political, emotional and values education. The discipleship to which Jesus called was not political in the sense that it saw its primary purpose as changing the political or economic system. But neither was it apolitical in the sense that it simply accepted the structures and conventions of the day and either ignored them or operated within them. Jesus very deliberately challenged several of these social structures and conventions (Dunn, 1992:125).

Literature defines spirituality in various ways, including the words of Webster and King: 'Spirituality is that category of being which is the form of the personal. It's coordinates are thought, freedom and creativity; its expression is through commitment, valuation and aspiration. It implies openness and self-transcendence within (humanity) in community (Webster, 1985:13). 'Spirituality refers to the lived quality of a person ... it is the way in which a person understands and lives within his or her historical context, that aspect of his or her religion, philosophy or ethic that is viewed as the loftiest, the noblest, and the most calculated to lead to the fullness of the ideal being sought' (King, 1985:137).

The starting point of encouraging spiritual development is the reality of a spiritual dimension to life to which pupils need to be awakened. Such a spiritual awakening, such spiritual nourishment will make possible a deeper understanding of religious reality; it will also promote the growth of spiritually mature persons likely to be socially responsible, caring and tolerant (Watson, 1992:114).

The Word of God puts emphasis on spirituality: "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Spirit Filled Life Bible 1991; Romans 8:6).

2.3.2 RELIGION

The New Oxford Illustrated Dictionary gives the following definition of the term religion: "Human recognition of superhuman controlling power and especially of a personal God ..., entitled to obedience and worship, effect of such recognition on conduct or mental attitude; particular system of faith and worship, as Christian" (The New Oxford Illustrated Dictionary, 1978:1 427).

Religion deals with what is fundamental in an attitude to life; it is concerned with what is of ultimate significance. According to Watson (Watson, 1992:1), basic issues such as an attitude to life can easily be ignored and religion is an area of knowledge, which bristles with difficulties: its complexity, controversial nature and emotive power can make it a minefield from which many consider it safest to keep well away.

Whitehead (1972:16), lay claim to the definition of religion as "what the individual does with solitariness". Being solitary runs as a refrain through his book, *Religion in the Making* (1972). 'Religion is solitariness; and if you are never solitary, you are never religious. According to Whitehead collective enthusiasms, revivals, institutions, churches, rituals, Bibles and codes of behaviour are the trappings of religion in its passing forms. These trappings may be useful, or harmful; they may be authoritatively ordained, or merely temporary expedient, but the end of religion is beyond all institutions, churches, rituals, etc. (Whitehead, 1972:16). Several Bible characters confined themselves to solitariness in order to seek the Will of God, including Jesus Christ, Peter, John and James. "Then

Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (Spirit Filled Life Bible 1991; Luke 4:1). "Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves;" (Spirit Filled Life Bible 1991; Matthew 17:1).

Religion, as we commonly use the word, stands for at least two distinguishable items, namely behaviour as actually observable, and experience, which may or may not issue in behaviour that is observable (Flower, 2003:2). For the Christian behaviour would be the result of a strive towards being like Jesus, following His life on earth, and following the instructions in the Word of God. Due to experience, the Christian will know that to act on the instructions in the Word of God shall be beneficial. "But love your enemies, do good and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High" (Spirit Filled Life Bible 1991:Luke 6:35).

Religion functions to mark the milestones in an individual's life; to give meaning to life; to provide a rationale for morality; and to bind families or communities together through shared experiences.

2.3.3 FAITH

The New Oxford Illustrated Dictionary gives the following definition of the term faith: "Reliance, trust, in; belief founded on authority; belief in religious doctrines, especially such as affect character and conduct, spiritual apprehension of divine truth apart from proof" (The New Oxford Illustrated Dictionary 1978:595).

According to the Word of God all people are dealt a certain measure of faith: "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each

one a measure of faith" (Spirit Filled Life Bible 1991; Romans 12:3). Watson (1992:50) defines faith as a gracious gift indeed, the bestowal and guarantee of a dynamic openness to life and to future, the first fruits of the Christian belief in the resurrection, symbol and token of our nature as creatures with a hope and a future.

2.3.4 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The New Oxford Illustrated Dictionary gives the following definition of the term education: "Systematic instruction, schooling, or training in preparation for life or some particular task; scholastic instruction, ..." (The New Oxford Illustrated Dictionary 1978:533).

The Protestant commitment to (religious) education has a long history, dating from Calvin's emphasis on the importance of the ability of every Christian to read the Bible for him/herself. Education involves initiating people into various forms of thought and activity in such a way that they are helped to become more knowledgeable, informed, understanding and reasonable. Education in religion then is a matter of helping people becoming more knowledgeable, informed, understanding and reasonable in the sphere of religion (Watson: Wilson, 1992:11).

Astley (1994) gave a broad definition of Christian religious education and Christian learning in his book 'The philosophy of Christian religious education' as the process whereby Christian learning takes place. Christian learning is to be understood as the learning of a person to become a Christian in adopting and deepening of his or her Christian beliefs, attitudes, values and dispositions to experience and acting in a Christian way.

Religious education must maintain a balance between 'knowing and understanding the experience of others and using that

knowledge to know and understand ourselves' (Watson, 1992:9). The great purpose of education should be to give people a greater reliance on the validity of their own inward and private experience rather than a distrust of it as so often appears to be the case. 'Mere knowledge without the capacity for thought makes for slavery rather than for the emancipation of the individual spirit which is the true end of education' (Watson: Priestley, 1992:35).

The Christian believes that education should be conducted within religious boundaries. It was Alfred North Whitehead (1970) who, towards the end of his book on *The Aims of Education*, concluded that 'the essence of education is that it be religious' (Watson: Priestley 1992:28).

Lee claimed that the aim of religious education is to be found in theology, as its task is to act merely as a delivery system to faithfully transport theological content and processes intact from educator to learner (Astley, 1994, 49). The term "Theos" refer to God and therefore, theology is the study and/or teaching of God.

The religious education teacher ought to have a special interest in spirituality, for this is the very heart of the religion. If there is not a message about the disclosure, invitation and challenge of the spirit, both human and divine, at the very heart of every religion it remains a question of what else matters in religion (King, 1985:138). Good teaching is the use of the moment, the Now, the Instant, for, quoting Whitehead, "knowledge does not keep any better than fish" (Whitehead, 1972). Henry Brookes Adams once said: "A teacher affects eternity; no one can tell where his influence stops." (Quoted by Van Loggerenberg, 2003:60).

What we learn affects what we become, not just in the narrow, mechanical sense of finding a job but as total persons. The effective teacher always teaches from the overflow of a full life. The law of

the teacher, simply stated, is this: "If you stop growing today, you stop teaching tomorrow!" (Van Loggerenberg, 2003:56). The Bible clearly states that the fruits of the Spirit, which grows in the believer when communing with the Word of God, will thus be visible in the life of the teacher that first of all commune with the Word of God: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Spirit Filled Live Bible 1991: Galatians 5:22).

Religious educators should recognise that agencies outside the school have for many children a decisive effect and or influence on their religious development (Watson: Wilkins, 1992:50). The Bible refers to the influence of others on the self on various occasions. Two quotations indicating the influence of friends on the life of an individual: "Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul" (Spirit filled Life Bible 1991; Proverbs 22:24-26), and "...the sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel" (Spirit filled Life Bible 1991; Proverbs 27:9b). Studying the Bible is an integral part of being a Christian and thus the cornerstone on which Christian religious education is built.

2.4 CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The public practice of Christian Religious education is influenced by legislation passed by the South African government and Gauteng Province regarding schools and state or state aided institutions.

The following extracts come from legislation issued by the South African government:

"Freedom of conscience and religion at public schools

Subject to the Constitution and any applicable provincial law, religious observances may be conducted at a public school under

rules issued by the governing body if such observances are conducted on an equitable basis and attendance at them by learners and members of staff is free and voluntary" (South African Schools Act, 1996, Volume 377:50). Public schools in South Africa are thus free to conduct religious observances but on condition it is not enforced, attendance must be free and voluntary.

In the constitution of the Republic of South Africa freedom of religion in state or state aided institutions is approved provided that attendance is free and voluntary and that the rules of the appropriate public authority are followed.

"Freedom of religion, belief and opinion

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion.
2. Religious observances may be conducted at state or state-aided institutions, provided that
 - a.) Those observances follow rules made by the appropriate public authorities
 - b.) They are conducted on an equitable basis; and
 - c.) Attendance at them is free and voluntary"

(Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996:15).

The South African Schools Bill concedes the freedom of religion by every learner and member of staff. Religious observances must however be free and voluntary and be conducted under the rules of the specific governing body.

"Freedom of conscience and religion at public schools

1. Every learner and member of staff at a public school shall have the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion.
2. Religious observances may be conducted at a public school under rules established by the governing body provided that such observances shall be conducted on

an equitable basis and attendance at them by learners and members of staff shall be free and voluntary” (South African Schools Bill, 1996:7).

From the above it is clear that the government does not prohibit religious activities at schools or state or state aided institutions, provided it is voluntary and is not violating the laws of the country. Various Christian schools arose throughout South Africa as the public practice of Christian religious education was not prohibited. Some of the key issues addressed in the mission statements of Christian schools are to know God personally and having a personal, meaningful relationship with Him and to know God’s laws and principles for life and being obedient to them. This includes the areas of personal relationships in the family and the schools, as well as issues of broader significance, such as public justice and a godly stewardship of the created world. Furthermore to know the created world through the understanding of sciences and math’s, to know God as the Creator, imaging Him, by being creative in all aspects of life and to know God’s plan for his creation by understanding the creation of man and his fall and redemption. In order to enhance Christian education in Christian schools it is important to know God’s calling relating to each person’s sense of identity and purpose in life (Watson: O’Keeffe 1992:97), and to acknowledge the Sovereignty of God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit. The aim of Christian schools is to establish in children a Christian wisdom in order to excel in meeting the challenges of life and to ensure that the child is developed as a three part being, i.e. spirit, soul and body, in order to glorify God.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The essential functions of religious education are descriptive in the sense that it describes alternative ways of understanding the human predicament and of making sense in the world; evaluative as it

enables students to develop a clearer understanding of the ways in which their own assumptions, prejudices and beliefs, influence their decisions in every aspect of life and finally integrative as it provides students with means, however rudimentary to begin with, of discerning possible links between the separate subjects courses which they take in school and the lives they have to live outside.

Christian educators are essentially shepherds. Shepherd leadership is whole-person leadership as it is not just a matter of thinking a certain way or doing things in a certain way but a fully integrated life, a matter of head and hand and hearts, a way of thinking and doing and being (McCormick & Davenport, 2003:5). The Word of God puts emphasis on shepherding leadership: "And I will give you shepherds according to my heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Spirit Filled Life Bible; Jeremiah 3:15).



CHAPTER 3

eLEARNING METHODOLOGY

3.1 OVERVIEW

The World Wide Web is used in an ever-increasing rate in order to study and complete academic courses, which resulted in a minor revolution in higher education (Germann & Krupar, 1998: 387). Greyling (1998:98) reported that during 1997 some 52 virtual universities already existed.

Delivery of education by means of an electronic environment is described by several terms in literature. Electronic Learning (eLearning) in this study will refer to the delivery of instruction primarily via the World Wide Web (WWW). Harasim (1989: 50) claims that eLearning is not really a variant of distance education or an extension of classroom activities, but that eLearning is a mixture of different preferred learning methods, delivered to the learner through the use of information technology, supported with educational instructional design and engaging content. Romiszowski (1997:33) describes interaction, using computers as a medium of deliverance, as any form of organised interaction between people, utilising computers or computer networks as the medium of communication.

3.2 FEATURES & BENEFITS OF eLEARNING

Various features and benefits of eLearning exist, which will be discussed briefly in the following paragraphs.

Interactivity between student and student, and student and lecturer is crucial in an eLearning environment and can be achieved by means of interactive tools like email, online forums, etc. Interactivity can take the form of support, feedback and guidance by means of communication strategies like asynchronous or synchronous communication (Khan, 1997:11). Asynchronous learning refers to interaction between instructors and learners intermittently with a time delay. Examples are self-paced courses taken via the Internet or CD-ROM, bulletin boards and email (Learning Circuits, 2002: 2). E-mail, listservs and bulletin boards are asynchronous communication channels which can be slow, but which are more convenient because all users can use these tools whenever he or she has time to do so. For controversial or sensitive topics it is also beneficial as anonymous e-mail or bulletin board entries might encourage debate, although it is a sensitive and hotly debated topic. Synchronous learning refers to an eLearning event in which participants are present at the same time and communicate directly with each other. Examples are videoconferencing, whiteboard and chat (Learning Circuits, 2002:21). Interactivity can be achieved by providing hyperlinks whereby the learner becomes engaged in activities of reading, linking, comparing, analysing, and so forth. "The idea of a virtual classroom is that everybody can talk and be heard and be identified and everybody can see the same word, diagrams and pictures at the same time" (Tiffin and Rajasingham, 1995: 6). Interactive learning can further take place by means of reading, searching and reviewing documents, pausing and reflecting on questions, and giving feedback on the questions, completing of forms, database searching, and so forth. Elements of

interactive learning in virtual classrooms can take many forms. Activities are presented that require students to read, search and review documents and links in a particular structured fashion to discover information. Questions are posed which require students to pause and reflect and possibly select from a variety of outcomes with feedback to particular responses and direct subsequent activities. Forms may be used to effect particular processing outcomes, for example, database searching, selection processes and simulation control. Interactivity results in feedback and reinforcement, which are two of the most important aspects in learning in general, including learning via an eLearning environment. Feedback involves providing learners with information about responses, whereas reinforcement affects the tendency to make a specific response again. Feedback can be positive, negative or neutral. Reinforcement is either positive, thus increasing the response, or negative and thus decreasing the response of the learner.

eLearning is multimedial and can include various multimedial elements such as text, video, graphics, sound and animations. Khan (1997:11) indicates that students can be taken on virtual, interactive tours to museums, experiments, simulations libraries or archives by means of eLearning. Sophisticated World Wide Web software allows for the creation of three-dimensional virtual world or virtual realities that are interactive and can be controlled by the user.

Virtual classrooms are open systems serving as international platforms whereby the student can move outside of the conventional classroom, unlike books or compact discs that are closed systems predetermined by the course designer (Relan & Gillani, 1997:43). Instructors can easily create online courses that are globally accessible (Van der Westhuizen, 1999:49).

eLearning is distance, and time and device independent. Relan and Gillani (1997:43) explain that virtual classrooms extend the boundaries of the classroom to any geographic location and are increasingly used to facilitate distance education programmes. Web based learning environments are also independent.

The World Wide Web (WWW) provides instant and virtually unlimited access to online resources and allows for access to several databases at institutions and organisations all over the world. These may be used, normally free of charge, by users at their own leisure, and if the need exists, printed out. The World Wide Web, which is part of the Internet, provides instant and virtually unlimited access to online resources. Online resources may be electronic versions of textbook or paper-based content. Instructors post content on the World Wide Web (WWW) for information access from many locations, reduction of printing requirements and the timely delivery of information (Van der Westhuizen 1999:52).

eLearning supports cross-cultural interaction and the development of virtual cultures. eLearning environments that are presented on the World Wide Web (WWW) are accessible worldwide and therefore Hedberg (1997:51) warns that virtual classrooms are filled with cultural biased lesson plans and culturally intuitive interfacing. Collis and Remmers (1997:86) identifies several barriers in terms of cultural differences, including problems of human language and vocabulary, differences in educational cultures and environments, teaching style differences and technical problems such as platforms, operating systems and hardware.

Learners can control their own learning as it is entirely up to the students' own preference which links on the World Wide Web (WWW) he or she decides to pursue (Relan & Gillani, 1997:44). McCormack and Jones (1998:22) explain that the combination of computer mediation, platform and geographic and temporal

independence help increase the feeling of control that students have over their learning experience, contributing to motivational levels.

eLearning environments allows for online assessment which saves time, reduce turnabout time and reduce resources (Van der Westhuizen, 1999:55). Online assessment evaluates the extent to which the students have attained the set outcomes. A number of assessment strategies are employed in eLearning environments, including portfolio assessments, performance assessments, negotiated assessments and authentic assessments. Results of online assessments can be stored in databases for examination and reporting and results are available online to students (Van der Westhuizen, 1999:56).

Adult learners often have full-time occupations and cannot attend residential courses, therefore eLearning allows for just-in-time, self-directed learning. Just-in-time learning refers to the fact that the person that needs training receives those skills and knowledge when it is required. Educational technology tools like the World Wide Web (WWW) best facilitate just-in-time-training (Van der Westhuizen, 1999:57). The recipient of online courses is not required to travel to courses, conferences or libraries and therefore the limitation of not being able to attend residential courses is diminished.

The use of eLearning environments encourages environmentally sound educational practices (Khan, 1997: 16) and allows the instructional designer to reduce the cost of learning materials. Expertly designed virtual classrooms may significantly reduce the amount of paper used for schedules, course programmes, assessment results and other administrative information that is normally presented in paper.

The most obvious advantage for using eLearning environments is that it can adopt all of the advantages of distance education over conventional education like convenient flexible learning in own time and place (Porter, 1997: 13). Students can control their learning environment to a large extent as they have the choice to study, when to study, the kind of feedback they give and require and the use of a range of mediums, privately or publicly, in which they can express themselves, e.g. email, discussion forums or web page publications (Van der Westhuizen 1999:54)

eLearning will benefit students who are used to being 'spoon-fed' on the basis that students can no longer be passive about their learning. This view is endorsed by Hawkes and Cambre (2000), who claim that in order to gain results, students must take responsibility for their own learning. Kershaw (1996) proposes that students will not automatically become conscientious, self motivated individuals and that success in fact depends on the level of interaction between students and lecturers that is required to stimulate good results. Not all students respond well to an eLearning environment. Cooper (1999) points out that independent learners have the potential to be successful in distance education, however those lacking in the skill to study independently will not react well in an eLearning environment. Courses should therefore be tailored specifically towards the different learning styles as students will react differently to the changing paradigma of learning, thus implementation should not occur across the board.

eLearning is effective for use in the training of individuals to complete forms, e.g. simple twenty-minute courses on how to correctly fill in an expense form and how it can save time.

When learners enter an eLearning environment for the first time they probably know how to use the World Wide Web. Even if they do not have this knowledge, the tools for accessing the web are fairly

simple, which makes the process practically effortless (McCormack & Jones, 1998:21).

eLearning can be used effectively as a replacement for existing classroom training, or as part of blended information technology and classroom based training solution. More and more companies are using eLearning as part of a blended training solution, reducing the high cost of classroom training with eLearning, while keeping the human contact of a classroom.

eLearning can be facilitated by various application modes which are at first hybrid or blended learning applications, where some of the elements are facilitated online, and other elements are facilitated in the face-to-face environment (Van der Westhuizen, 2002:[online], secondly “web-based” or “fully online” application modes where eLearning is used to substitute face-to-face teaching. Learners in eLearning courses usually never attend a lecture and never meet their facilitator face to face (Van der Westhuizen, 2002:[online]) Supplementation of traditional contact teaching is the third application mode where courses are taught face-to-face, but may be supplemented by additional learning material on the web (Van der Westhuizen, 2002:[online]).

eLearning saves learners money (Horton 2000:20). Learning facilities provided on the World Wide Web might be a fraction of the cost of enrolling at religious institutions and/or continuously buying recent books on issues that might be of interest. Connectivity by using ISDN, or ADSL lines ensure that a flat rate is paid by the user and takes the strain away from having to access the eLearning environment cost effectively.

eLearning is perfectly suited to inform learners or prospective clients about a product launch or interactions in a company environment. If the need exists to inform people of a new product that is due to

be launched, eLearning can be created once for a specific product and delivered in a single, unified message or by means of information to an unlimited number of learners simultaneously. Creating an eLearning environment once that will educate all employees, that is, new and existing employees, or to use the network correctly, can minimize the burden of common network support calls. A once off created eLearning environment can then be used on demand to inform and educate the relevant regulations of a company that have to be conferred to the employees. New and existing employees and/or company visitors will benefit by this eLearning environment. The only prerequisite for learners to access an eLearning environment is access to a personal computer or hand held device, such as PDA or mobile phone.

Online education is available to all students regardless of their location, age, ethnicity, gender, language, physical limitations, etc. Courses may be set up that contributions may be made anonymously, which is less inhibitive. Students may experience anonymous participation as being more secure and they may be more confident in participating in the learning process (Van der Westhuizen 1999:49).

3.3 CHALLENGES OF eLEARNING

Negative reports on eLearning mostly focus on badly designed eLearning environments rather than on negative aspects of online education as a concept (Van der Westhuizen, 1999:61). Some challenges that might face eLearning are briefly mentioned in the following paragraphs.

Nipper (1989:67) indicates that eLearning might pose a threat to learners who are unfamiliar with computers and who are unaccustomed to expressing themselves in writing. The critical success factors in an eLearning environment are different to those

in a traditional learning environment. One of the key factors are that students who have prior experience of using information technology will generally be more successful in a virtual learning environment than those who do not (Volery & Lord, 2000). Shabha (2000) extended this line of reasoning by noting that students over the next ten years will come from a wider age range and background and will have a greater variety of education experience.

Limited access to computers and modems (Davie, 1989:77) is detrimental to the success of an eLearning environment. Researching the accessibility of access to computers and modems in the specific market for which the eLearning environment will be created is therefore essential.

Connecting to the Internet ensue cost that must be met by the learner (McCormack & Jones, 1989:22). Broadband connections ensure speedy and efficient delivery of learning material via an eLearning environment. This type of connection is expensive and requires sophisticated hardware to execute well. The high cost occurred with this type of connection will cause not all students to be able to afford it, and subsequently not being able to use the World Wide Web (WWW) efficiently. Instructional designers will have to bear this in mind when creating an eLearning environment.

Connections to the Internet might be unreliable, slow or limited and might cause frustration, and failure of learning outcomes, as learning material cannot be accessed and downloaded in time to support efficient learning.

Hardware limitations can result in the "small window" problem that holds that computers can only display 25 lines of text (Davie, 1989:78). This might cause a strain on the learning outcomes as the

inclusive concept of the learning material in general might be overlooked.

Teachers struggle to authenticate assignments in both traditional as well as in virtual classrooms (McCormack & Jones, 1998: 25-26). It is very easy to obtain learning material and information from the World Wide Web (WWW) and to edit it for submission.

The issue of isolation caused by eLearning has sparked a rigorous debate amongst researchers. The lack of interaction associated with eLearning is of prime concern to Cooper (1999: xxxvi), who remarks “electronic contact cannot currently sustain the qualities and multi-dimensionality of the kind of tutor-student relationship that real learning seems to require”. This opinion is further supported by Bourner and Flower (1997) who suggest that if technological developments are to be incorporated into higher education; this should be accompanied by increased human contact. Moore (2000) claims, from experience, that distance learners require a great deal of interaction, although mainly with the purpose of giving reassurance that everything is ‘going okay’. According to Michailidou and Economides (2003), the development of a virtual world motivates students to participate in the education process by exploring and playing with the lesson material. It can potentially provide an active, independent student centred and tutor facilitated engagement, which enables communication with other students and tutors that may not always be enabled within the traditional classroom setting.

Availability of user friendly web-design programs allows users, not educated as teachers, to create eLearning environments which may result in using no, or poor, education principles.

3.4 PEDAGOGICAL DIMENSION OF ELEARNING

At the root of educational endeavours lies pedagogy which refers to the theories, philosophies and strategies that interact to create learning environments considered to be educationally sound (Van der Westhuizen, 1999:75). Pedagogy can further be described as all of these strategies and methods that a teacher uses to ensure that his teaching is successful. A person's pedagogy embodies the beliefs held about students, the attributes of the media technologies and the essential qualities of the relevant content (Bronack and Riedl, 1998:165). The technology tools used for the delivery of distance education do not determine the teaching and learning that will take place in the virtual teaching-learning situation (or any other teaching-learning situation for that matter). Rather, it can be assumed that didactical and pedagogical principles that are sound for conventional teaching will probably be sound for online education too. Jones (1998: 1 689) states that it is important to understand that the World Wide Web (WWW) cannot guarantee learning, and it is the pedagogical learning dimensions that are designed and built into web-based instruction that determine the worth and effectiveness of the World Wide Web (WWW) as instructional medium.

The Instructional Events of Gagne (Annexure G) are best used coupled with the analysis of the potential web-based instructions as guideline in Instructional Design, which may result in the design and development of virtual environments that may be on the brink of a new frontier in education (Ritchie & Hoffman, 1997, 138).

Traditional teaching and learning skills need to change in order to get maximum benefit from eLearning (McFadzean, 2001); hence lectures are posed with the task of developing a new model of effective teaching. Many researchers have attempted to lay down criteria for successful online teaching, although findings are mixed.

McFadzean (2001) concentrates on the psychological aspect of learning, purporting a need to shift from behavioural and cognitive approaches (whereby the learner controls the learning) to a humanist approach, where learners can take control of their own learning. The humanist approach suggests that the aim of education is to assist students to achieve self-actualisation and consequently the role of the learner shifts from information provider to supporter – encouraging students to feed their own curiosity. The key message here is that students are not spoon fed, but rather shown the way. Moore (2001) extends this basic outline by proposing tactics to get learners to successfully take control. This student-focussed approach is not supported across the board. Research carried out by Learning Peaks (2001) implies that in an online environment the role of a lecturer focuses more on administration than teaching.

3.5 APPLYING eLEARNING TO CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In the following paragraphs some of the features and benefits of eLearning is applied to Christian religious learning.

eLearning is expanding fast as a workable way of delivering education (Mantyla & Woods, 2001:1), thus it should be readily accepted as a means of assisting Christian believers in their daily communion and growth as children of God. Accessing the Word of God is becoming increasingly difficult in today's ever demanding working environment. However, it is at the work place that most people require answers instantly, life giving answers which can be provided by means of electronic instruction based on the Word of God. The basis of creating a Christian eLearning environment will be the same as for general education principles. General education principles such as Gagne's events of instructions or the ACRS Model that can be found with this dissertation as Annexures G and H.

During the last ten years, the Internet and the World Wide Web have fundamentally altered the practice of distance teaching and learning (Anderson & Elloumi, 2004: ix). Conventional course material used in the past are being replaced by communication technologies which has infiltrated all levels of education by policy, but also by replacing or supplementing conventional course delivery (Murphy, Walker & Webb, 2001:2). Thus it also became necessary to facilitate Christian religious education, not only on a general level, but also on a more personal level as such in the eLearning environment.

eLearning is a recent, but rapidly developing field (Aldrich, 2001:4). Congregation members of all age groups are currently faced with the information barrage from the World Wide Web. A younger congregation member might feel more comfortable with the rapidly developing and changing field of eLearning and sees it as a challenge, whilst the older generation congregation member might have to be urged to use the created Christian eLearning environment as they might feel intimidated by electronic media. However, the Internet is currently an accepted mode of delivery for teaching and learning (Abbott, 2001:2), and should therefore be accepted as such by the Christian as mode of religious instruction.

eLearning has certain definite advantages over traditional face-to-face teaching. It facilitates deep learning and provides access to "rich multi-sensory learning experiences" (Van der Westhuizen, 2002" [online]. Multi sensory learning experiences will enhance the spiritual experience of the Christian congregation members accessing an eLearning environment as it is at times difficult to understand the time in which the Bible was written, and therefore to apply the specific meaning of the text to this day and age. Furthermore learners are exposed to real-world data, get a more thorough learning experience and develop better thinking skills (Horton, 2000:22) when interacting within an eLearning environment.

Interacting with real-world data is especially important for the Christian as the validity of Bible based, life instructions, and come clearer to the front when underwritten by real life experience of others.

eLearning also provides access to web-based resources, such as e-mail facilities, the storing of information and collaborative tools such as discussion forums (Horton, 2000:19). Discussion forums should encourage fellow Christians to respond to the needs, and to share in the joy of a fellow Christian, whether it be emotionally, financially or merely work related and/or to discuss their own experiences. Sending e-mail to the respective church leaders of a congregation can also be of the utmost importance to the well being of a congregation as needs, grievances and such could be addressed instantly. Success depends on the church leaders answering the messages promptly.

eLearning facilitates self-directed learning (Van der Westhuizen, 2002: [online]). This means that learners can learn on their own, at their own pace, at a time and place that suits them (Lautenbach 2000:24). Due to the ever-increasing pressure of coping in this world, the Christian needs a learning mechanism that would facilitate learning at a convenient time and place. It is important for Christians to continue learning, as being imperfect creates a strive to holiness and the likeness of Jesus Christ throughout their earthly existence. Lifelong learners are people who continue learning throughout their lives (Patel, Kinshuk & Russel, 2000: [online]). Lifelong learning refers to all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence within a personal, civic, social, and/or employment related perspective (European Commission 2001:9). This need can be perfectly met by means of an eLearning environment where motivational Bible based learning material is displayed.

eLearning facilitates interactivity and communication as stated by Van der Westhuizen (Van der Westhuizen: 2002: [online]. Communication is vital in the Christian community, not only on issues such as seminars and teaching sessions, but also for the individual that needs to interact with fellow Christians regarding daily matters, whether it is on spiritual matters or on issues such as health or the rearing of children. Sharing religious experiences as well as daily life experiences in a Christian eLearning environment will ensure that learners benefit from each other's experiences (McCormak & Jones, 1998:141).

Group interactions between learners are facilitated by the use of discussion forums even though learners need not even be in the same geographical area (Passerini & Granger, 2000:3), as quoted by (Lautenbach, 2000:15). Recently countries are drawn together, functioning as one entity in areas such as warfare, economics, and the like. Functioning in partnership is also true in creating learning material, sending religious messages and communication between Christians all over the world.

eLearning can be facilitated by various application modes which are hybrid or blended learning, web-based" or "fully online" application modes and supplementation of traditional contact teaching (Van der Westhuizen, 2002: [online]). The "web based" or "fully online" application mode above will be used in the creation of a Christian eLearning environment – providing it serves the overall purpose of different learning modules. Furthermore supplementation of traditional contact teaching will be used with the specific congregation where current and additional learning material will be available on the eLearning environment.

eLearning can also be asynchronous or synchronous. The eLearning environment created will have a component of asynchronous learning where the user of the learning environment will be able to

communicate by means of email. The user will be prompted to post questions that refer to his/her specific life circumstances. The user will also be able to post learning experiences that he/she experienced.

According to Khan (1997:11) eLearning is multimedial and can include various multimedial elements such as text, video, graphics, sound and animations. Using the multimedial elements of eLearning will be beneficial in designing a Christian eLearning environment as recordings of congregation teaching sessions and sermons can be accommodated on the eLearning environment in order to make it accessible to all congregation members.

Relan and Gillani (1997:43) indicate that eLearning is distance and time independent. It is of importance to the specific Christian congregation to ensure that learning material is accessible to all congregation members regardless of distance and time. Learning material in a Christian environment is not of a passing phase as the truths and teachings proclaimed stays applicable throughout the ages. Learning material will stay applicable even if all congregation members do not access it simultaneously.

The World Wide Web (WWW) provides instant and virtually unlimited access to online resources and allows for access to several databases at institutions and organisations all over the world. This will be an advantage for the Christian believer in retrieving additional information in order to study the Word of God even though the WWW will have to be accessed with the utmost care in order not to be misled by incorrect, non biblical teachings.

Christian adult learners mostly have full-time occupations (except for church officials) and cannot attend courses at their congregation at all times. Being able to log onto an eLearning

environment created for their specific Christian congregation will be beneficial as they will be able to do so at their own time and pace.

The aim when designing a Christian eLearning environment and using the features of the World Wide Web (WWW), for the specific congregation, will be

- to enable the users to become aware of a spiritual interpretation of life from a Christian perspective,
- to assist the users in their search for answers to the fundamental questions about the meaning and purpose of life,
- to help them understand the relevance and challenges of the Christian religion,
- to lead users to increasing stature in Christian character,
- to enable users to encounter Jesus in their lives,
- to assist users in developing a good knowledge of the Bible and a real love of God's Word as a blueprint for their lives,
- to present Christianity as a lifestyle, and
- to explain the Biblical principles of this lifestyle (Watson: O'Keeffe, 1992:99).

Furthermore users will be assisted in understanding that as Christians a call to discipleship is a call to the imitation of Christ. Users will also be provided with an opportunity to access Christian Biblical perspectives instantly via an eLearning environment.

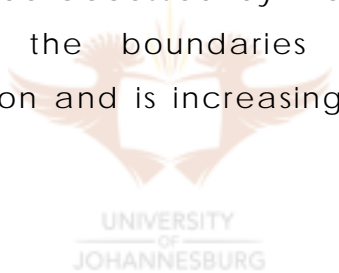
3.6 OVERVIEW OF eLEARNING ENVIRONMENTS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

In order to successfully create a Christian eLearning environment it is essential to study eLearning environments currently available on the World Wide Web. There are literally hundreds of eLearning environments/websites listed by different search engines. A few of these and other websites that were considered as eLearning environments were evaluated by means of the following criteria:

accessibility, appearance, content, functionality, links supplied (additional information) and the relevance of the site. The link that proved the most useful in studying eLearning environments was http://www.elearningawards.eun.org/ww/en/pub/elearningawards2004/showcase/top_100.htm.

3.6 CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that Electronic learning provides instant and virtually unlimited access to online resources, and allows for access to several databases at institutions and organisations all over the world by means of the World Wide Web (WWW). This fact enhances the opportunity to develop, design and host eLearning environments on the WWW. Additional information on eLearning topics can easily be accessed by means of hyperlinks. Electronic learning extends the boundaries of the classroom to any geographic location and is increasingly used to facilitate distance education programmes.



CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

An important aspect of this research is that the development and design of the eLearning environment was done only after Chapter 5 on the research results was completed.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research will be done in a specific congregation, which entails the systematic gathering of data and the methodological planning of the study. The research applied in this study allowed the researcher to focus on a particular situation, and the research also attempted to identify the relevant processes influencing each other (Bell, 1993:8)

The research includes questionnaires that determine the specific needs of individual congregation members, as well as interviews with cell group leaders that will determine what the educational needs in smaller groups and/or individual needs are regarding Christian religious education. Knowledge will be constructed that will lead to improvement and change in the specific field of Christian education at individual and congregation level. The aforesaid will culminate in the development of an e learning environment.

Many data gathering methods will be applied to this study by a single researcher; (Swart, 1994:162) which will include qualitative methods, such as observation, document studies, questionnaires, interviews, and the actual usage and evaluation of the e-learning environment created. The aforesaid will be conducted in a real-life situation (Denscombe, 1998:31) where the real-life experiences of the respondents regarding their specific needs on religious training and/or education will be studied.

The researcher in this qualitative study will be the main instrument for gathering and analysing data. (Merriam, 1998:7)

Qualitative research was used in this research as it is important to determine what the content and structure of the eLearning environment must be. The content and structure are determined by the results in Chapter 5 of the qualitative research. In qualitative research, the data gathered are not analysed by using a statistical, quantitative method, but rather by using qualitative methods. This type of data is successful in describing small numbers of people (Welman & Kruger, 1999: 186). The researcher aimed to address small groups, i.e. home cell groups, in the different congregations by interviewing home cell leaders of the specific congregation, having participant's complete questionnaires, and by comparing information in the respective home cells.

Any qualitative data are the result of a process of interpretation (Denscombe 1998: 208). The data in this research were interpreted by means of a consistent standard set by the researcher, and was interpreted by the researcher only. The researcher must select a particular approach to analyse and interpret the data. The researcher can use either "ethnographic summary" or "systematic coding through content analysis" (Welman & Kruger, 1999:201). The data in this research was studied by means of systematic coding through content analysis.

Transferability in qualitative research refers to whether other researchers can apply the findings to other contexts or replicate the research by using other participants. The transferability of the findings in this research are definitely transferable as church leaders can use the information obtained from their congregation members regarding their spiritual needs in order to ensure that they fulfil their shepherd task in their congregation. The research will also enable congregations who are interested in using the Christian eLearning environment to understand the needs of the general home cell member as depicted in the specific congregation.

4.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research was done with a specific congregation, which entails the systematic gathering of data and the methodological planning of the study. The research methodology applied in this study allowed the researcher to focus on a particular situation, and the research also attempted to identify the relevant processes influencing each other (Bell, 1993:8).

The method of researching the specific congregation was chosen for the specific congregation for what it can show about Christian religious education in the specific congregation as a whole (Merriam, 1998:33). In qualitative research dependability refers to the extent to which the researcher's categories and explanations correlate to what is actually true. Dependability relates to how consistent the findings are (Krefting, 1991: 221). The findings in this research are consistent, as the same questionnaires were used for different Christian congregation members and their respective church leaders, and therefore dependable. Consistency was created furthermore when interviewing by means of using a set standard of questions, and

was done by the researcher only. Information derived by the questionnaires was scientifically studied and analysed.

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis begins with a review of the plans or proposal upon which the work is centred (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993:233). This is to ensure that the process is consistent with the original research question. In this research paragraph 1.6 indicates the structure of this research. The data was read and re-read on a continuous basis throughout the research.

In order to analyse data it is necessary to codify it, and, if necessary, depict it in different types of charts, e.g. pie chart, frequency distribution, etc. (Goddard & Melville, 2001: 54-56) The research data collected by means of the questionnaire herewith will be interpreted by coding it, and the data made easy to understand by means of using tables and charts. Coding is necessary in order to determine, as example, what the preferences are for a specific age group regarding teaching material that will be used in the e learning environment. The interviews will be transcribed and made available in the this dissertation as it is important to note the advice and preferences the cell group leaders of the specific congregation gave regarding the content of the e learning environment.

Analysing qualitative data requires an approach that would ensure that the interpretation of the data is easy. The research data collected were interpreted and the data made easy to understand by means of using tables and charts. The interpretation is available in Chapter 5 provided within this research document.

The data assembled will aid the researcher in ensuring that the created e learning environment will meet the standards and requirements of both the leaders and the members of the specific congregation.

Data was analysed by the department of statistics of the University of Johannesburg, i.e. Statcon. The completed questionnaires were taken to Statcon where an interview took place with a representative of Statcon. The researcher had to answer questions such as what she was attempting to achieve with this research and what the ultimate goal was with the questionnaires. The researcher explained that the ultimate goal was the design and development of a Christian religious eLearning environment for a specific congregation. The proposed outcomes of the research were studied whereafter the data was analysed by STATCON. During a second and third interview the data was discussed and received by the researcher.

The data in this study were analysed by means of:

4.4.1 Observations

Observations were made objectively and non-biased by the researcher during formal religious education sessions. The observation data required served merely as a record of the behaviour of the congregation members and the content of topics taught.

This information was used as confirmation of the behaviour of congregation members during formal learning sessions, the willingness of members to contribute to class discussions and to ask questions, as well as to record the interest of members in various religious topics in order to determine the content

and length of topics used in the planning and designs of the eLearning environment.

4.4.2 Document studies

Document studies were done by means of gathering course material that was presented by a specific congregation during the years of 2004 and 2005. The above program/s and course material were studied by the researcher and is available for verification on request. The course material was used as reference to the interest and educational needs of congregation members and to determine what topics must be included in the eLearning environment.

4.4.3 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are effective instruments for gathering data from many participants (Wilkinson, 2000:42), and was therefore used in this research to ensure that as much as possible information were retrieved, not only from the specific congregation, but also from the congregations representatives at large.

When compiling a questionnaire, a researcher can find either 'factual information' or 'opinion'. The latter can create difficulties since the participant is the only one that can answer truthfully (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:119). The majority of the data in this research was based on factual information and on personal preferences of congregation members regarding education topics. The value of the contribution of truthfully taking part in the research was brought under the attention of the participants. They also realized that the research was conducted in order to further spiritual education. Factual information was gathered regarding

instances such as frequency of attending services, reading the Bible, spending time studying the Word, spiritual educational needs, and personal particulars such as age, gender, etc.

A questionnaire is attached in Annexure B that was used for both church leaders and congregation members of the specific congregation, as well as with congregations throughout South Africa. The participants had to complete the questionnaire by indicating yes or no, or by choosing from a list. The questionnaire was constructed by the researcher on the principles of finding information that will assist in the planning and design of a Christian eLearning environment. The questionnaire was examined by a professor at the Statcon division of the University of Johannesburg. Annexure A consists of the initial form used as introduction to obtain participants at the South African Theological Seminary (SATS).

4.4.4 Interviews

Interviewing entails "direct personal contact with the participant who is asked to answer questions" (Bless & Higson Smith, 1995: 106). The researcher made appointments with the minister/s and congregation members of the specific congregation. Interviews were held in such a way as not to influence the participants in any way.

Furthermore interviewing requires the ability to talk and listen. When planning the interview, the researcher has to keep in mind the data, which is essential to know, the venue of the interview, the reporting and recording of the interview and the transcriptions and analysis of the interview (Wilkinson, 2000: 48). The researcher did audio recording, transcription & analysis. The venue of the interviews differed according to the needs or preferences of the participants. The transcription of

an interview with one of the home cell leaders can be found in Annexure D. The data derived from interviews were not used in order to develop and design the eLearning environment, and does not form part of the research design, but was considered as anecdotal and subjective evidence.

The method used in this study was that of a 'semi-structured' interview (Denscombe, 1998:113), in which the interviewer had a structured plan of investigation, i.e. a set of pre-determined questions, but the participant was expected to talk most of the time in a "natural, conversational way" (Babbie, 2001:259). The interview focused on obtaining qualitative data.

The use of interviews is often criticized because of the effect of leading questions: often, the way a question is phrased or the way in which an eyewitness is probed can influence the answer given by the participant (Kvale, 1996: 154). The researcher in this study tried under all circumstances not to influence the participants either by leading questions or by means of eye contact. A comfortable relaxed atmosphere was kept throughout all interviews, which ensured that the participants were not influenced in answering questions or giving their opinions.

4.5 PARTICIPANTS

It was requested that the different participating home cell leaders should hand the questionnaires to members of the home cells on their own discretion, thus the participants were chosen randomly by the researcher. The researcher did not choose members on purpose for the contribution that they would be able to make to this study. Representatives of congregations nationwide completed the questionnaires themselves. Thus the sample they constituted can be regarded as representative of

Christian congregation members throughout the country (Welman & Kruger, 1999:62).

4.5.1 Specific congregation

Congregation members from the specific congregation that were actively involved in home cell groups and those not actively involved in home cell groups were used as participants. Members of the congregation included non-active members who are listed at the church as congregation members, but who do not take part in home cell activities. The congregation members not actively involved in congregation activities were contacted via e-mail. Only members that supplied the church administration with e-mail addresses were contacted.

Home cell participation represented members actively involved in meeting once a week, excluding Sunday sermons and/or other church activities. All home cell leaders in the congregation, as supplied via a list from the church administration, were contacted to participate as participants in this research in order to ensure a representative research base.

Congregation members from both these categories were chosen on purpose as to determine the specific needs of both groups. The assumption is that non-active members might become active members if they are able to participate on their own time, at their own place, and also in private through an e-learning environment, thus obtaining value through it.

4.5.2 Congregations nationwide

Members of Christian congregations nationally were contacted by means of the document in Annexure A, in order to be used as participants in this research. These members indicated during a conference of the South African Theological Seminary (SATS) that they would be willing to participate. The congregation members mostly constituted of pastors and/or church leaders. This group were chosen as participants in order to compliment the participants of the specific congregation and to achieve representation of the broader Christian community in South Africa.

4.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Participants in research normally have certain generally accepted ethical rights. These are “privacy, voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality” (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995: 102). In this research all participants voluntarily gave their personal particulars in order to be contacted to complete questionnaires. However, when completing questionnaires, the participants were not asked to furnish their personal particulars as this might deter them from completing the questionnaires in a totally honest and non-biased way. The confidentiality of the respondents’ answers in the questionnaires was therefore kept intact. Completed questionnaires and interviews were not at any stage linked to the person of respondents in this research.

All participants in the research are volunteers who indicated that they would be willing to assist in improving religious and/or church education in both their specific religious environments and a broader Christian education. Four hundred and thirty two congregation members of the specific congregation were asked via e-mail to complete the questionnaire. Participation is

voluntary and participants had to either e-mail the questionnaire to the researcher or send it by regular mail. In this research all participants voluntarily gave their personal particulars in order to be contacted to complete questionnaires. However, when completing questionnaires, the participants were not asked to furnish their personal particulars as this might deter them from completing the questionnaires in a totally honest and non-biased way. The confidentiality of the respondents' answers in the questionnaires was therefore kept intact. Completed questionnaires and interviews were not at any stage linked to the person of respondents in this research.

Permission was given by the church board of the specific congregation to contact congregation members. A covering letter accompanied the questionnaire that explained to the congregation members the ultimate goal of creating an e learning environment for the specific congregation.

Participants from congregations all over South Africa indicated that they would be willing to take part in the study and were therefore contacted likewise. The purpose of the research was explained to these volunteers during a conference at the South African Theological Seminary in October 2004.

All respondents completed the questionnaire by simply typing/or drawing an "x" next to the relevant answer. Any of the participants has the right not to complete the questionnaire. The contact details of the researcher were listed on the questionnaire in order to inform the researcher of any change regarding their voluntary participation. Anonymity of the participants in the questionnaires was guaranteed by omitting questions regarding their names, addresses and personal particulars. A voice recorder was used during interviews with the cell group leaders of the specific congregation. The researcher tried at all times not to

mention their names during the interview in order to protect their anonymity. Not one of the participants was under the age of eighteen; therefore no consent from parents and/or guardians was necessary regarding participation in the research.

Participants completing the questionnaire risked no harm when partaking in the research as they were not physically contacted, but had to complete the questionnaire in their own private circumstances and return it via e-mail or regular mail.

Interviews took place either at the premises of the church or at the individual homes of cell group leaders and thus they were at no stage under threat of physical harm. Please take note that the venue where the interview took place was a personal choice by the respondents. The researcher is competent to relate and communicate with fellow Christians in both the specific congregation and with members of congregations nationwide, as she is an active member of the congregation, and was so for the past 11 years. Research was in no circumstances done under sensitive situations, as it is a priority for most Christians to be able to learn more from the Word of God. Furthermore questions were not directed in order to embarrass participants in a personal capacity but to further a Christian e learning environment. All participants are from a Christian background as they belong to Christian congregations.

The data in this research is both credible and reliable. Credibility in qualitative research is associated with the authenticity and trustworthiness of the data and data analysis. Qualitative research is valid when it gives "an accurate and useful representation of the particular instance that has been studied" (Stake, 1998: 263). Data in this research is authentic in the sense that all data has been collected from respondents that did not take part in any other similar research. The trustworthiness of the

data in this research is beyond reservation as all questionnaires are available for validation. The recorded data in this research is reliable as it accurately reflects the needs analysis of both pastors and congregation members. (McMillan, 1999: 223)

Data will be collected not only from a specific congregation, but also from sources all over South Africa, which enhances the “reliability of the findings” in this study (Mouton, 1996: 156). Thus different data sources were used to come to the same conclusion. (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 266)



CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports the findings of the research. Data was collected by means of questionnaires, document studies, observation and interviewing.

The research findings are of the utmost importance to the instructional development and design of the eLearning environment in Chapter 6.

5.2 REACH WIDTH OF THE RESEARCH

The participants that participated in the completing of questionnaires mostly consisted of home cell members of the specific congregation.

5.2.1 Home cells: specific congregation

The home cell leaders were individually contacted by telephone to arrange a time and date when copies of the questionnaire could be delivered to them. These questionnaires were delivered by hand, and either collected by the researcher, or delivered by the home cell leaders to the offices of the specific congregation. The home cell leaders had to hand the questionnaires to their home cell members during a meeting in order to complete it.

Questionnaires were handed to 29 home cell leaders, of which 15 home cell leaders returned the completed questionnaires to the researcher. This constitutes 52% of the home cell leaders that returned the questionnaires.

5.2.2 Congregation members in general: specific congregation

A covering letter with the questionnaire as attachment was sent by e-mail to 432 (four hundred and thirty two) of the congregation members of the specific congregation. The congregation members were requested to complete the questionnaires online and return it either by e-mail or regular mail to the researcher. Of these 17 completed and returned the questionnaires, whilst 88 was returned to the researcher as undeliverable. This constitutes 5% from the general congregation that returned the questionnaires.

5.2.3 Representatives of congregations nationwide: SATS

During a conference of the South African Theological Seminary 42 (forty two) representatives indicated in writing that they would be willing to take part in the research. The document that was used to make initial contact with the representatives can be found in Annexure A. The representatives returned 23 completed questionnaires. This constitutes 55% of the representatives of congregations nationwide that returned the questionnaires.

Figure 1 represents the origin of the participants that took part in the research by returning completed questionnaires. The home cell members of the specific congregation were by far the most participants, with the participants from the South African Theological Seminary slightly more than those of the general congregation.

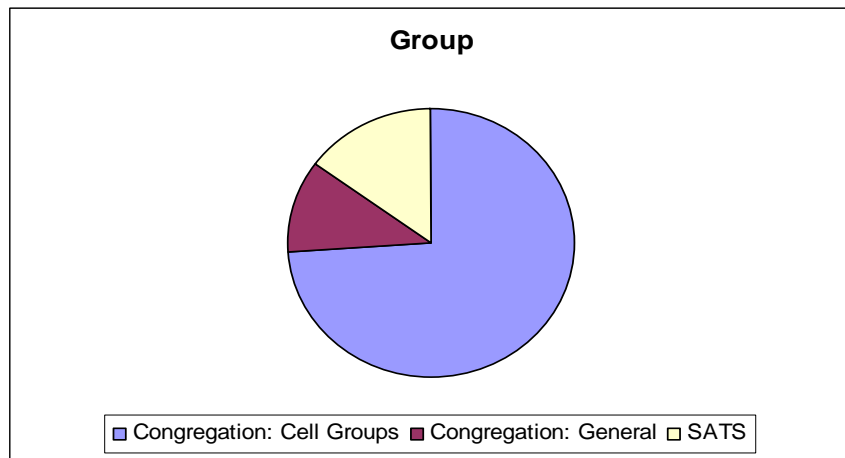


FIGURE 1
ORIGIN OF PARTICIPANTS

5.3 BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

5.3.1 AGE REPRESENTATION

It was important to research the age of the participants, as it had a direct influence on the content and design of the eLearning environment in Chapter 6. In the age 36 to 49 years were the most representation by the participants, followed by the age groups 35 or younger, and 50 years or older closely associated.

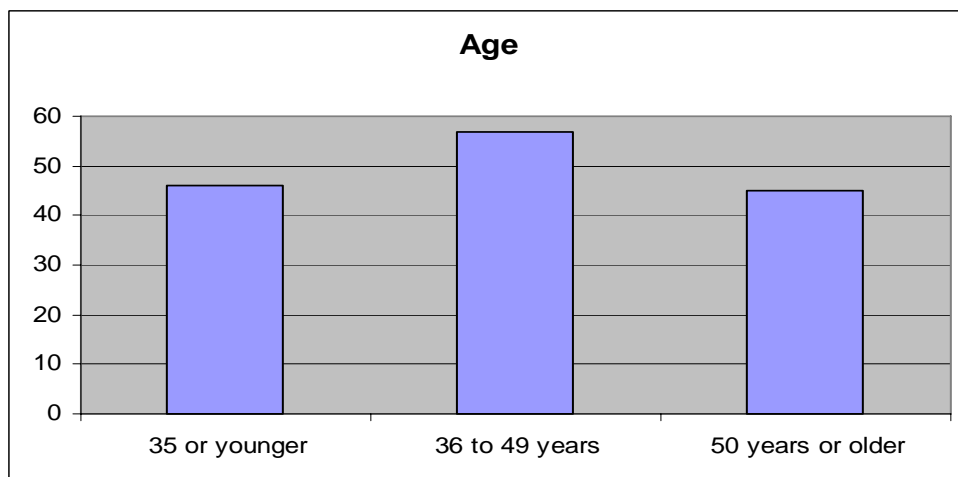


FIGURE 2
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

5.3.2 GENDER REPRESENTATION

The gender representation of the participants is nearly equal, with female representation slightly more than that of male representation.

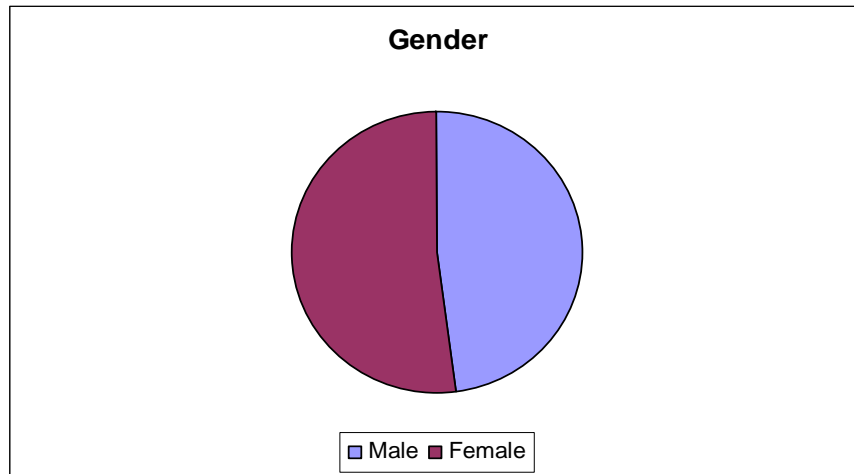


FIGURE 3
REPRESENTATION OF GENDER

5.3.3 LANGUAGE PREFERENCE

In order to ensure that the preferred language of all participants will be used as communication language in the eLearning environment, the researcher deemed it important to enquire from participants what their home language is, and in what language they would prefer to be educated. It is interesting to note that even though a small percentage of the participants were speaking English at home, almost three times as much preferred English to be the language used for educational purposes.

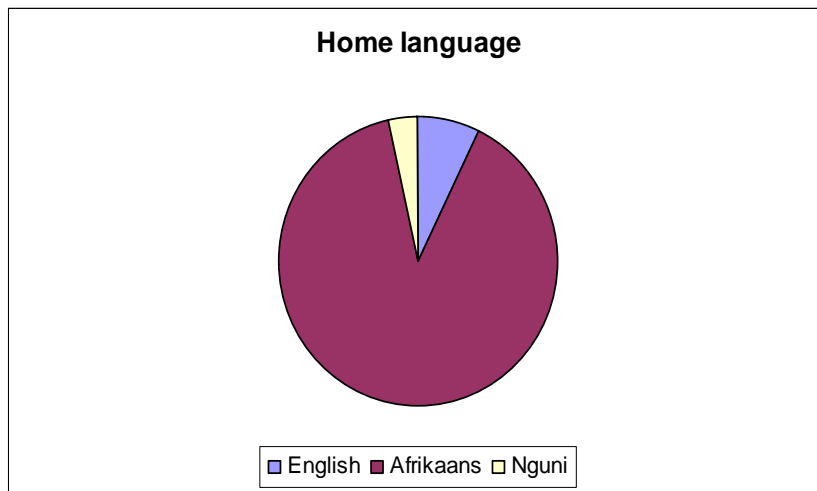


FIGURE 4
HOME LANGUAGE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

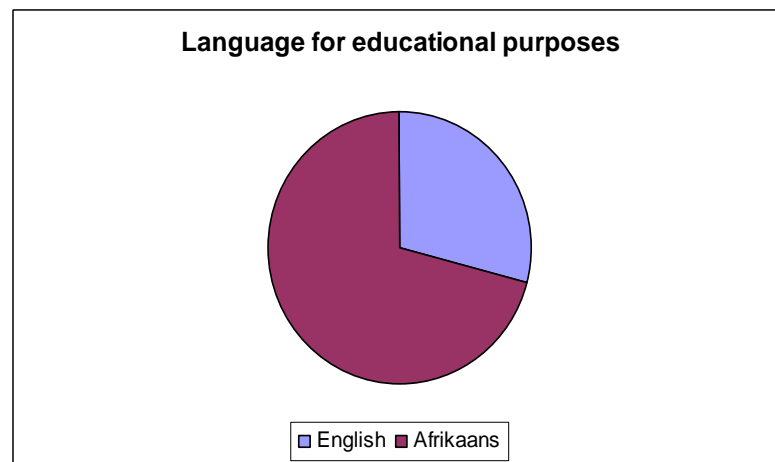


FIGURE 5
LANGUAGE PREFERRED FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES

5.4 INTEREST FIELDS

It is important that the learning material in the eLearning environment will catch and hold the attention of the home cell members, as well as that of the congregation member in general. The interests of the participants were researched and the data were depicted in various tables in descending sequence. These interest fields were kept in mind when the eLearning environment was developed and designed in Chapter 6.

TABLE 1
TOP 5 INTEREST FIELDS IN GENERAL PREFERENCE

POSITION	INTEREST FIELDS
1	Holy Spirit
2	Spiritual Growth
3	Inner Healing
4	Jesus
5	Prayer

The interest field that is going to be used for the first learning material on the eLearning environment is important in order to further the success of Christian religious education. Various interest fields were used in the questionnaire and topics were researched in commercial Christian bookshops, as well as in the bookshop of the specific congregation. Further the researcher gathered interest fields through the experience of using study aids in studying the Word of God. The interest fields are listed in Table 2 as it was used in the questionnaire in Annexure B.

TABLE 2
INTEREST FIELDS USED IN THE RESEARCH

ANGELS	HOLY SPIRIT
BACKGROUND: BIBLE	HUMOR (CHRISTIAN VIEW)
BIBLE STORIES	INNER HEALING
BIOGRAPHIES	JESUS
BODY	MARRIAGE
CHILD EDUCATION & THE BIBLE	PARENTING
CHRISTIANITY	PRAYER
DAILY DEVOTIONALS	SCIENCE
DIVORCE	SERMONS
END TIME/S	SOUL
FAITH/BELIEVE	SPIRITUAL GIFTS
FAMILY	SPIRITUAL GROWTH
FORGIVENESS	SPIRITUAL WARFARE
GOD	SPORT
GRACE	TONGUE/SPOKEN WORD
HEALING	WISDOM
HISTORY (BIBLICAL)	OTHER

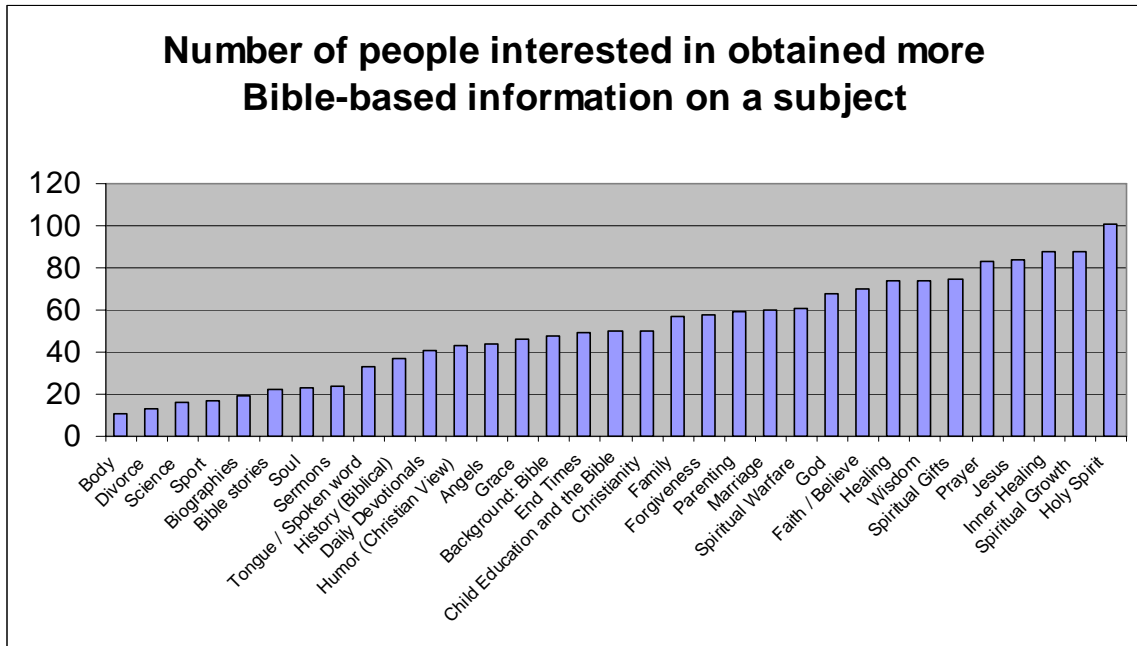


FIGURE 6
INTEREST FIELDS IN PREFERRED, ASCENDING SEQUENCE

In order to successfully launch an eLearning environment that will be relevant to both male and female home cell members, it is important to know whether there is a significant difference in interests between male and female congregation members. Figure 6 shows the interest fields of both male and female. All interest percentages lower than 40% were omitted. The interest fields of the females is slightly more, i.e. 16 interest fields greater than 40%, than those of the male group with 14 interest fields greater than 40%.

From the response of the male participants, five interest fields, in descending sequence, emerged as of interest to the age group.

TABLE 3
TOP 5 FIELDS OF INTEREST TO MALES

POSITION	INTEREST FIELDS
1	Holy Spirit
2	Spiritual Growth
3	Jesus
3	Inner Healing
4	Faith/Believe

Table 4 (in alphabetical sequence), indicates the interests of the male participants. Interest percentages lower than 40% were omitted.

TABLE 4
MALE INTEREST FIELDS
ABOVE 40%

		Want more Bible based information
Christianity	Count	31
	%	49.2%
Faith / Believe	Count	35
	%	55.6%
Family	Count	26
	%	41.3%
Forgiveness	Count	27
	%	42.9%
God	Count	31
	%	49.2%
Healing	Count	33
	%	52.4%
Holy Spirit	Count	47
	%	70.1%
Inner Healing	Count	39
	%	58.2%
Jesus	Count	39
	%	58.2%

Marriage	Count	28
	%	41.8%
Prayer	Count	33
	%	49.3%
Spiritual Gifts	Count	33
	%	49.3%
Spiritual Growth	Count	41
	%	61.2%
Wisdom	Count	36
	%	53.7%

From the response of the female participants, five interest fields, in descending sequence, emerged as of interest to the age group. As the female group was slightly more represented in the participants in general, is it important to note their preferences in the eLearning environment, as they will make up more than half of the users of the eLearning environment.


TABLE 5
TOP 5 FIELDS OF INTEREST TO FEMALES
 JOHANNESBURG

POSITION	INTEREST FIELDS
1	Holy Spirit
2	Prayer
3	Inner Healing
4	Spiritual Growth
5	Jesus

Table 6 (in alphabetical sequence) indicates the interests of the female participants. Interest percentages lower than 40% were omitted.

TABLE 6
FEMALE INTEREST FIELDS
ABOVE 40%

		Want more Bible based information
Child Education and the Bible	Count	31
	%	41.9%
Faith / Believe	Count	35
	%	47.3%
Family	Count	31
	%	41.9%
Forgiveness	Count	31
	%	41.9%
God	Count	37
	%	50.0%
Healing	Count	41
	%	55.4%
Holy Spirit	Count	54
	%	71.1%
Inner Healing	Count	49
	%	64.5%
Jesus	Count	45
	%	59.2%
Marriage	Count	32
	%	42.1%
Parenting	Count	33
	%	43.4%
Prayer	Count	50
	%	65.8%
Spiritual Gifts	Count	42
	%	55.3%
Spiritual Growth	Count	47
	%	61.8%
Spiritual Warfare	Count	36
	%	47.4%
Wisdom	Count	38
	%	50.0%

For the purpose of this research the participants were divided into three age groups, namely 35 years or younger, 36–49 years, and 50 years and older. Interest fields smaller than 40% were omitted. In the age category 35 years or younger, the following five interest fields, in descending sequence, emerged as of interest to the age group.

TABLE 7
TOP 5 INTEREST FIELDS
AGE GROUP 35 YEARS OR YOUNGER

POSITION	INTEREST FIELDS
1	Jesus
2	Marriage
2	Parenting
2	History (Biblical)
3	God

Table 8 (in alphabetical sequence), indicates the interests of the age group 35 years or younger. Interest percentages lower than 40% were omitted.

TABLE 8
INTEREST FIELDS OF THE AGE GROUP 35 YEARS OR YOUNGER

		Want more Bible based information
Angels	Count	21
	%	48.8%
Child Education and the Bible	Count	21
	%	48.8%
End Times	Count	20
	%	46.5%
Faith / Believe	Count	22

	%	51.2%
Family	Count	23
	%	53.5%
God	Count	26
	%	60.5%
Healing	Count	24
	%	55.8%
History (Biblical)	Count	16
	%	62.2%
Humour (Christian View)	Count	18
	%	40.0%
Inner Healing	Count	23
	%	51.1%
Jesus	Count	29
	%	64.4%
Marriage	Count	28
	%	62.2%
Parenting	Count	28
	%	62.2%
Prayer	Count	24
	%	53.3%
Spiritual Gifts	Count	24
	%	53.3%
Spiritual Growth	Count	25
	%	55.6%
Wisdom	Count	24
	%	53.3%

In the age category 36 to 49 years, five interest fields, in descending sequence, emerged as of interest to the age group.

TABLE 9
TOP 5 INTEREST FIELDS
AGE GROUP 36 to 49 YEARS

POSITION	INTEREST FIELDS
1	Holy Spirit
2	Inner Healing & Spiritual Growth
3	Jesus
4	Prayer

Table 10 (in alphabetical sequence), indicates the interests of the age group 36 to 49 years or younger. Interest percentages lower than 40% were omitted.

TABLE 10
INTEREST FIELDS OF THE AGE GROUP 36 TO 49 YEARS

		Want more Bible based information
Child Education and the Bible	Count	22
	%	43.1%
Christianity	Count	21
	%	41.2%
Faith / Believe	Count	27
	%	52.9%
Family	Count	23
	%	45.1%
Forgiveness	Count	23
	%	45.1%
God	Count	23
	%	45.1%
Healing	Count	26
	%	51.0%
Holy Spirit	Count	39
	%	72.2%
Inner Healing	Count	34
	%	63.0%

Jesus	Count	32
	%	59.3%
Prayer	Count	30
	%	55.6%
Spiritual Gifts	Count	29
	%	53.7%
Spiritual Growth	Count	34
	%	63.0%
Spiritual Warfare	Count	24
	%	44.4%
Wisdom	Count	25
	%	46.3%

In the age category 50 years and older, five interest fields, in descending sequence, emerged as of interest to the age group.




TABLE 11
TOP 5 INTEREST FIELDS
AGE GROUP 50 YEARS AND OLDER

POSITION	INTEREST FIELDS
1	Holy Spirit
2	Inner Healing
3	Spiritual Growth
4	Prayer
5	Tongue/Spoken Word

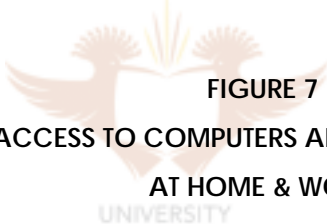
Table 12, (in alphabetical sequence), indicates the interests of the age group 50 years and older. Interest percentages lower than 40% were omitted.

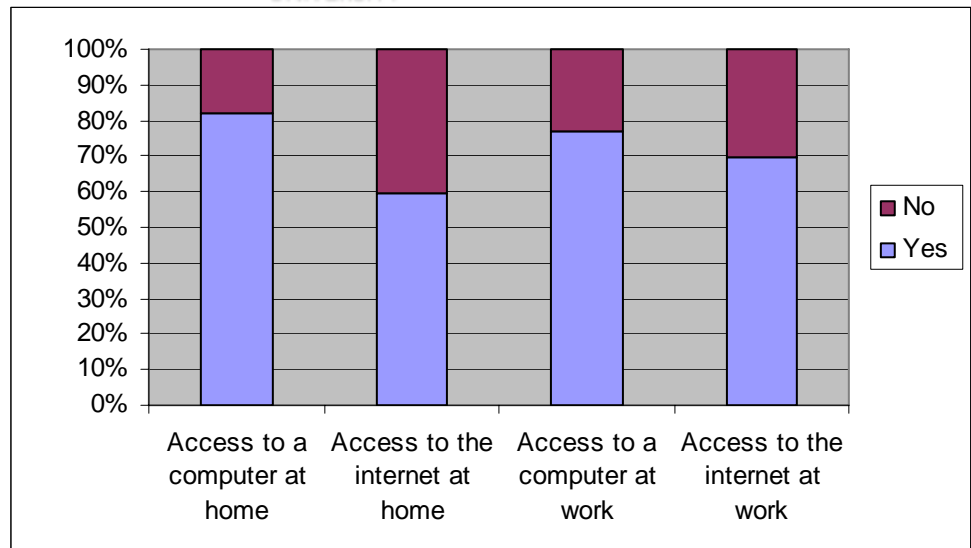
TABLE 12
INTEREST FIELDS OF THE AGE GROUP 36 TO 49 YEARS

		Want more Bible based information	
Faith / Believe	Count	20	
	%	48.8%	
Forgiveness	Count	19	
	%	46.3%	
God	Count	18	
	%	43.9%	
Healing	Count	23	
	%	56.1%	
Holy Spirit	Count	34	
	%	81.0%	
Inner Healing	Count	30	
	%	71.4%	
Jesus	Count	22	
	%	52.4%	
Prayer	Count	28	
	%	66.7%	
Spiritual Gifts	Count	22	
	%	52.4%	
Spiritual Growth	Count	29	
	%	69.0%	
Spiritual Warfare	Count	20	
	%	47.6%	
Tongue / Spoken word	Count	9	
	%	57.1%	

5.5 ACCESS TO COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET

Most participants have access to both a computer and the Internet at work and at home. From the participants 60% have access to the Internet at home, while 70% have access to the Internet at their workplace. This data will influence the eLearning environment in Chapter 6 to the extent that some participants will be able to connect to the Internet at their work and not at home. This means that the eLearning environment will probably be used during office hours for those participants. It must be noted that it is only a marginal difference of 10% of the participants that has access to computers and the Internet at work. The average for access to Internet and computers at home is still above 60% and thus it should not influence the partaking of the participants.

**FIGURE 7**
ACCESS TO COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET
AT HOME & WORK

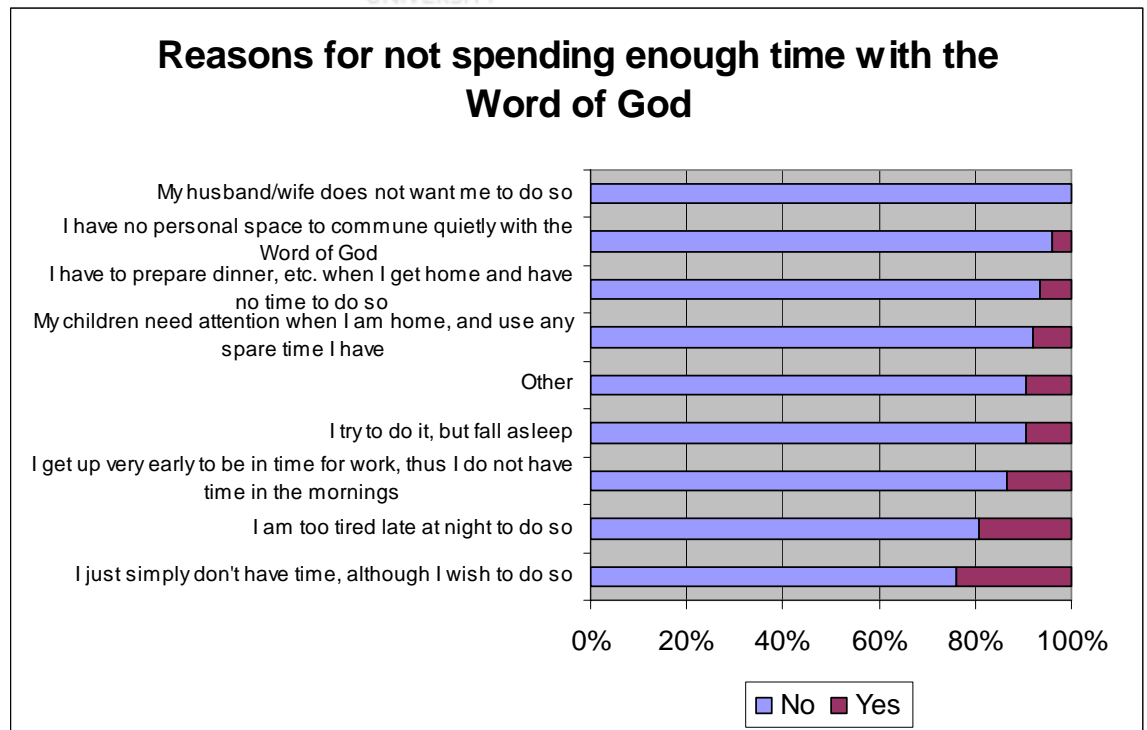


5.6 AVAILABILITY OF TIME

It is important to ensure that the length of the learning material meets the requirements of the congregation members. The participants were allowed to mark more than one reason for not spending enough time with the Word of God.

Figure 8 that indicates the reason/s for not spending enough time with the Word of God is listed below. It seems that time is the restricting factor, as well as the fact that participants seem to be too tired at the end of their daily chores to spend time with the Word of God. The eLearning environment should aid participants in spending time with the Word of God, as they should be able to use it during the day, i.e. during their lunch or tea breaks.


FIGURE 8
REASONS FOR NOT SPENDING ENOUGH TIME WITH THE WORD OF GOD



5.7 ELECTRONIC MEDIA

The answer percentages of the participants on some of the questions asked regarding electronic media.

TABLE 13
ELECTRONIC MEDIA

HOME CELLS	CONGREGATION IN GENERAL	SATS
Would you be able to read more from the Bible if you could access it electronically at work?		
26% indicated Yes.	41% indicated Yes	38% indicated Yes.

HOME CELLS	CONGREGATION IN GENERAL	SATS
Would you communicate with fellow congregation members and/or your minister(s) via a chat room?		
63% indicated Yes	63% indicated Yes	73% indicated Yes

How would you prefer to receive information regarding home cell sessions/lectures/courses? By e-mail?		
55% indicated Yes	88% indicated Yes	70% indicated Yes

How would you prefer to receive information regarding home cell sessions/lectures/courses? By printed media/hard copies?		
51% indicated Yes	12% indicated Yes	30% indicated Yes

5.8 FEEDBACK TO HOME CELLS OF THE SPECIFIC CONGREGATION

The researcher briefed the home cell leaders of the fifteen home cells that returned completed questionnaires in writing of their respective research results. An example of the research results that each home cell will receive can be found in Annexure E. The home cell leader will now have the opportunity to discuss the research results of his specific home cell with the members and thus encouraging them to access the eLearning environment.

5.9 DOCUMENT STUDIES

The adult Christian education activities of a specific congregation were studied by means of document studies, observations and interviews. This was done in order to understand what was of interest to the congregation up to date, and what topics and/or interest fields they already covered. The researcher also used the information derived from studying documentation and attending the various courses to aid the design of the contents and structure of the eLearning environment. It became clear that those congregation members attending the courses were committed to do so and was willing to spend their time communing with God. This commitment should be beneficial for the use of an eLearning environment as those same congregation members probably belongs to home cells where they will advocate the eLearning environment once they have used it.

Various other education activities focusing on the youth are part of the congregations' activities, but were not dealt with, as it does not serve the purpose of this research. Secondly the wider Christian education field on the World Wide Web was studied in order to ensure that the creation of the eLearning environment meets the general and specific needs of the average Christian.

During the period of January 2004 and June 2005 the following courses were presented at the specific congregation.

5.9.1 PRE-MEETING

This course was presented on Monday evenings. The course was presented on 2 occasions and was presented by the ministers of the congregation. A total of 98 congregation members attended the course. The members were issued with notes covering every week's lesson. The minister went through the notes with the congregation members attending and explained course material in detail. Additional references from the Word of God were given during the discussions. The ministers used transparencies, whiteboard and Power Point presentations. The course was presented in an informal setting with the congregation member's voluntary making remarks and/or adding value to the lessons. Members had to complete questions on every weeks lesson in writing, and the minister went through the answers before the start of the next session on the following Monday. Congregation members were allowed to add value to the answers on the questions if they so wished. Course material included the four spiritual laws, i.e. God loves you and have a wonderful plan for you life; man is sinful and separated from God, Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation and how to accept Jesus as Lord and Redeemer. Subjects such as rebirth, principles of deliverance, the assurance of faith and the Power of the Word were taught.

5.9.2 MEETING

This course was presented during a weekend camp, starting on Friday and ending on Sunday during four occasions and was presented by the ministers assisted by various other members of the congregation. Informal address took place, although the congregation members were seated opposite the minister as in a formal sermon. The congregation members

sang hymns and/or religious songs before and after the sermon, and were divided in smaller groups in order to discuss the various topics presented. The minister's used Power Point presentations in order to highlight the main issues addressed during the sermon. Deliverance was done by means of prayer sessions where intercessors assisted the minister/s. Personal time communing with the Lord was occasionally given where congregation members split up and spent time with the Word on their own. The main objective of the weekend course was to assist congregation members in obtaining a personal meeting and subsequent personal relationship with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Topics discussed during the course of the weekend were God's fatherly love, the decision of the Son, face to Face with God, what Jesus did at the cross, I sinned against God, the faith to save souls, the twelve origins of curses and deeper into His Spirit.

5.9.3 POST MEETING

This course was presented on Monday evenings at the premises of the church. The ministers of the congregation presented the course on 3 occasions. A prerequisite to attend this course was attendance of the meeting course. The course consisted of the following topics: how to conquer the world, how to speak to God, social life, the Word is the fountain of life, sexuality, the church as refuge, a balanced life, baptism as a step of obedience and the influence of music on our lives.

5.9.4 LEADERSHIP SCHOOL 1

This course was presented on Monday evenings at the premises of the church and was presented by the minister/s of the congregation. The following subjects were addressed

during session 1: foundations, salvation, rebirth, the Bible, prayer, baptism, faith, the Holy Spirit, laying of hands and the overcoming of obstacles. Learning material in session 2 consisted of the family, family members and their appropriate roles, protection of self-image, strengthening communication in the family, strengthening of marriage love, God's blessing on the family, inner healing of the marriage couple, the leader and the family and life in affluence.

5.9.5 LEADERSHIP SCHOOL 2

This course was presented on Monday evenings at the church premises and was presented by the minister/s of the congregation. Subjects that were dealt with during session 1 are: the power of a vision, the cell vision, preparation to lead a cell, structure and development of a cell, methodology of a cell, strategies for success, motivation for cell growth, problem solving in the cell, how to choose a leader team and leader and disciple relationship. During Session 2 teaching included setting God's Power free through your intercession, the key to effective intercession, strengthening of the ministry, evangelism and the will to do service.

5.9.6 PRAYER AND INTERCESSION

This course was presented by Adonai Prayer School on a Monday evening at the premises of the church. The course was presented in the form of a lecture in a formal classroom setting during the first half of every session. The presenter stood in front of the class. The congregation members were seated in rows, one row after the other. Congregation members attending were listening intently to the speaker and made no comments during the lecture.

During the second session the lecturer divided congregation members in groups. The groups gathered in the classrooms at the church where they had the opportunity to talk to each other, and to the allocated group leader. Some members participated freely in the conversations, although some members kept out of the conversations and were merely spectators.

Course material was presented in written format and included the following: what prayer is, praying in the spirit, developing a personal prayer time, the Lord's prayer, intercession, how to have clean hands and a pure heart, watchmen and group Intercession.

5.9.7 DELIVERANCE

This course was presented on Monday evenings at the premises of the church. The course was presented on one occasion and was presented by Pastor Denise Champion of Dwelling Place Ministries.

The course consisted of the definition of demons, scriptures concerning deliverance, believers dealing with demons, demonic oppression definitions, kingdom of darkness definitions, prayer for release of Freemasons and their descendants, how demons enter, prayers of Exodus, freedom from captivity, exposing evil spirits from God's Word and discernment.

5.9.8 PROPHETIC COURSE

This course was presented on Monday evenings at the premises of the church. The course was presented on one occasion, and was presented by Brunhilde du Toit. The course

was presented in the church building with the speaker below the pulpit talking informally to the congregation members attending. Notes on the specific session that was discussed during the evening were handed to the members. The speaker discussed these notes and added more information as she went along. During the second session of each evening the members were divided into groups and had the opportunity to witness the working of prophetic revelation/s.

The course consisted of the 5-fold ministry, dreams and visions, repentance and restoration in the cup of remembrance, submission, banners, flags and ribbons, colours and their meanings and how to handle prophecy.

5.9.9 HOLY SPIRIT

This course was presented on Monday evenings at the premises of the church on two occasions during 2004. A minister and senior member of church presented the course. During 2005 the course was presented during Sunday evenings as part of the Sunday school classes, and attendance were not compulsory.

The course was presented in the following modules: background, how to receive His Power, God's majestic presence, why the Holy Spirit manifest His presence, physical signs when the Holy Spirit ascends on other, what happens when a person is slain in the Spirit and why does it happen, prerequisites to be reached by God, the essence of the expansion of God's Kingdom, why Jesus come to the earth, Satan's Kingdom, God's Kingdom, the ministry of Jesus, the purpose of God with us on earth and in the specific congregation, anointing, when the anointing can be transferred, the gift of tongues, what the gift of tongues is,

why God decided to give tongues as a spiritual gift, what the gift of tongues is not, the different types of tongues, how it works, the uses of tongues, misuses of tongues, how to receive the gift of tongues, spiritual gifts, healing, pre-requisites for healing, how to do healing, gifts of ministry, spiritual warfare, warfare and house cleaning.

5.9.10 INNER HEALING

This course was presented on Monday evenings at the premises of the church, and presented by a minister of the congregation. The course was based on the book and video series, *Beyond Tolerable Recovery* by Ed M. Smith. A minister assisted by a senior member of church lead the course. In the case of the minister not being able to attend the sessions, a senior member of the church acted as leader. Congregation members gathered in an informal setting in a room at the church where they were able to watch the video on inner healing. The video was divided in different parts. Each week a new part was viewed, after which the minister discussed the content of the video and gave further insight to the attending members. The course consisted of the following: explanation of the term Theophostic (Theo = God and phostic = light), moving beyond tolerable recovery, out of the darkness into His wonderful light, the tree essential components of Theophostic ministry, cursed be the lies that bind, turning on the light, keeping record in the process, the Theophostic process, common myths that hinder the recovery process, what Theophostic ministry cannot do, evidence of true healing, what are the consequences of not healing, the role of the Theophostic minister, renewing the mind in moving from logic to experience, when the wound is self-inflicted, forgiveness and the divine outcome of truth and compassion, Theophostic ministry and the church, Theophostic ministry on you own,

what happens after the last session and the principles of demonic realities.

This course served as education, where after the congregation members that completed the course were able to apply the course in practice. It meant that people needing inner healing could contact the church office and/or ministers who allocated congregation members that completed the course to them. These congregation members functioned as counsellors. Counselling was voluntary, i.e. the congregation members had the choice whether to counsel other congregation members or not.

People that came for inner healing were not only members of the congregation, but also members of the general public and/or members of other congregations. This outreach of the church proved successful as several people came for inner healing. In the process of attending the course on inner healing, congregation members not only got healed, but the fruits of the inner healing also touched their families, friends and working relations.

5.9.11 ATTENDANCE OF CAMPS

Various camps were attended by members of the specific congregation where they were further educated, namely "Woord-in-Aksie" (Word in Action), Voluit vir Jesus, (Completely for Jesus) and Overcomers through Christ. Information on the camps is available at their respective websites, i.e. <http://fullyforjesus.com> and <http://www.wia.org.za>.

These camps formed an integral part of the salvation and outreach mission of the specific congregation, as congregation members attending the camps were redeemed.

Some of these congregation members became actively involved in the activities of the specific congregation as a result of their attending of the camp/s.

From the above in depth studies it is clear that Christian religious education is a reality in the specific congregation and that it must be addressed not only in the formal church structures, but also as teaching material that must be available at all times, and to everybody that might wish to have access to it.

The majority of congregation members in the specific congregation did not attend any of the courses; even though education is a priority in the specific congregation. It is due to this phenomenon that the creating of an eLearning environment might be useful in order to allow the vast silent majority of congregation members to be fed with Word-based teachings.

5.10 SUMMARY

The research findings in this chapter were used in the design and development of the eLearning environment in Chapter 6. The success of the eLearning environment depends largely on the relevance of the content material to the participants. In researching the participant, and especially members of the home cells of the specific congregation, the researcher retrieved data that determined the design of the eLearning environment.

Document studies of learning material previously used by the specific congregation assisted the researcher in determining the needs of the specific congregation regarding the content of the eLearning environment.

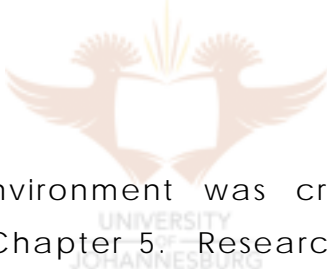
CHAPTER 6

ELEARNING ENVIRONMENT

6.1 PRESENTATION

The eLearning environment in this chapter was developed and designed with the specific congregation in mind. For the purpose of this study it will be presented as discussed with the church leadership of the specific congregation.

6.1.1 SUMMARY



The eLearning environment was created bearing in mind the research data in Chapter 5. Research on data collected from the specific congregation members determined what the specific needs of the home cell members are. The eLearning environment was created in order to ensure that Word-based information and teachings are available to the congregation members, whether it is newly compiled information, or whether it will be reproductions of the Sunday sermons. It is important to note that even though the research on interest fields in Chapter 5 determined the content of the first learning material of the eLearning environment, the learning material will always be according to the instructions from the Word of God, thus it will be Word-based information. The eLearning environment was designed in such a way as to meet the needs of the home cells and to assist the home cell leaders in supplying their home cell members with much needed information. The eLearning environment will assist the congregation leaders in the sense that

both the home cell leaders and the home cell members will be able to access information as soon as it is available on the environment. It will eliminate the lapse in time of implementing teachings via the copying, binding and subsequent distribution of hard copies. The eLearning environment will further serve as a communication channel for the congregation, either with the church leadership, or between congregation members. Forms needed to enrol for home cell activities, e.g. weekend camps, teaching sessions, hiking activities, new congregation members, etc. will be available on the e-learning environment.

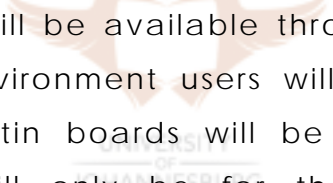
6.1.2 BENEFITS OF USING AN ELEARNING ENVIRONMENT BY THE SPECIFIC CONGREGATION

The main benefits of using an eLearning environment by the specific congregation are listed below.

The delivery of learning materials include accessing of Word-based teachings as well as information that needs to be communicated to the congregation members, e.g. teaching material, etc. Learning material will thus be available sooner and printing costs will be decreased. Retention of presented sermons will be enhanced and congregation members will be able to access additional information regarding the presented sermon. The eLearning environment will eventually, as it builds up, provide congregation members with a vast library of textual, visual and auditory material for their own self-directed research and learning activities. The eLearning environment will be used to deliver material, manage learning environments, and provide assessment of learning.

Improved communication with home cell leaders and members, improved communication with the general congregation members, saving costs on printing hard copies of proposed material that can be used by the home cells and providing the general congregation

member with information on courses that are used by the home cells. The eLearning environment will make use of a listserv whereby message sent to a single e-mail address will be sent to a list of all people listed in the listserv. E-mail addresses and names of home cell members will be listed on the listserv, as well as the names and e-mail addresses of congregation members not attending home cells, but who would like to have access to the teachings and information addressed to the home cells. Information that must be sent only to the home cell leaders will be effected through the listserv. The listserv will also be moderated in the sense that every message must be approved as appropriate before it is copied and sent to all other members. Communication between the congregation leadership and the home cell leaders and/or members will further be enhanced by means of e-mail communication, with or without attachments.



Announcements will be available through bulletin boards whereby the eLearning environment users will be able to access or post items. Two bulletin boards will be available, one that will be restricted and will only be for the use of the congregation leadership and administration, and the other will be open for posting by the home cells and congregation members in general.

The aim of the eLearning environment will not only be to allow the user to read, watch and listen to learning material, but also to interact. The congregation members must be able to answer questions, control devices and make choices. Active learning is critical, no matter what the methodology, platform, or content, or who the learner is (Alessi & Trollip, 2001:392).

6.1.3 COSTS

There will be no costs involved for the specific congregation regarding the analysis, development, design and implementation of

the eLearning environment. The specific congregation will however have to bear in mind that the eLearning environment will have to run on their existing space on the World Wide Web. The specific congregation, in obtaining the Web authoring system used by the researcher, might experience further costs. Any costs involved in obtaining such a Web authoring system as well as the hosting requirements, will have to be met by the specific congregation themselves.

6.1.4 FINANCIAL RETURN

The reaping of financial return is not relevant in the creating of this eLearning environment, as the goal is to reap eternal value. The congregation will however save money and time regarding the distribution of hard copies to congregation members.

6.1.5 DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE

The development schedule of the eLearning environment is closely linked to the time allocated for the research and studies, which was one year. As it is the purpose of the designer to do the instructional design of the eLearning environment only, the system design does not form part of this study.

6.1.6 TEAM EXPERIENCE

Research was thoroughly done in order to ensure the success of the eLearning environment. The researcher used computer programs such as Dreamweaver, Flash and Microsoft Office, and relied heavily on information derived from textbooks with information on how to use the programs and how to successfully create an eLearning environment. These textbooks used are listed in this research under the list of sources.

6.1.7 INTEGRATION AND MANGEMENT OF LEARNING MATERIAL AND INSTRUCTIONS

The eLearning environment will serve as a central place where learning material and instructions will be stored. This will include not only learning and course material but also be a primary source for the provision of information and communication. It will furthermore be the primary means by which the church leadership and/or church administration shall communicate with the congregation members, and engage in management activities such as keeping track of home cell members, ensuring that home cell leaders download information, electronic communication to home cell leaders, etc.

6.2 ANALYSIS PHASE

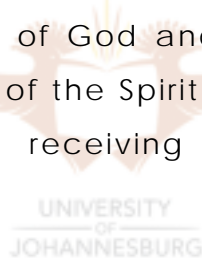
6.2.1 PARTICIPANTS



The participants of this eLearning environment are Christians who are members of a specific congregation. The eLearning environment will initially be developed specifically for adults. The participants are from as wide apart a viewpoint as charismatic to Dutch Reformed. The gender of the participants will be both male and female with an initial expected number of 450 congregation members using the eLearning environment; mostly those who are currently attending home cell sessions. The cultural group mostly prevalent in the congregation is those of white, middle class South Africans with common interest such as rugby, barbeque, love for their families and fellow Christians, but foremost love for God. Initially disabilities of congregation members in the specific congregation will not be met on the eLearning environment. The home language of the congregation members is mostly Afrikaans, even though they are bilingual. The time they have available to access the eLearning environment is limited.

6.2.2 LEARNING MATERIALS

The information contained in the eLearning environment will not be dogmatic, but will solely be based on the truths in the Word of God. The congregation members will use the eLearning environment against the background of their attending the Dutch Reformed Church. The learning styles of the congregation members were not researched and therefore it is assumed that all congregation members will be able to understand the teaching mechanisms used in the eLearning environment, which will be solid, basic instructions. The congregation members will access the eLearning environment to work successfully in their home cells, but also to grow spiritually. They will need Word-based teaching on subjects that is applicable to their everyday life. The congregation members are expecting to be fed with the Word of God and to grow spiritually. Their hopes are of obtaining fruits of the Spirit as well as understanding the gifts that God gives and receiving the peace that overcomes all reasoning.



The content of the learning material will be determined by the research done in order to keep the interest of the members of the specific congregation. It is advisable to regularly research the interests and needs of the congregation members. An example of what the content material in the first eLearning environment look like can be found in Annexure C. Linda Patterson of Fisherman's Village did this practical and Word-based teaching on the Holy Spirit. The content will be refined in the system design phase.

6.2.3 GEOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS

Geographically the participants will consist mostly of residents residing in the Helderkruijn and Wilropark suburbs in Roodepoort, which will have no significant influence in the design of the

eLearning environment, as tuition will be online, thus accessible from any location at any time.

6.2.4 BUDGET

Compiling a budget is not applicable in creating this eLearning environment as it forms part of this research, and will subsequently be used by the specific congregation. Costs that might have been encountered would have been regarding the acquisition of content, development of standards, scripting, screens, underlying models, graphics, video, audio, interactions, software testing, project management, clerical costs, manuals and/or instructions, travel and accommodation fees and other out-of-pocket expenses.

6.2.5 ACCESS

Access to the eLearning environment will be via the space on the World Wide Web that the congregation currently has.

6.2.6 USER COMPETENCY

Competency of the participants in this specific eLearning environment is not an issue as the basic requirement is to be able to read, write and to have the basic skills of using a computer and to access the World Wide Web. Competency further refers to the ability to use the relevant hardware and software efficiently, which, in this case is mainly to be able to use a personal computer and to access the World Wide Web (WWW), and subsequently the eLearning environment.

6.2.7 CONSTRAINTS

A constraint that currently exists is the effectiveness of the congregation's leadership to mobilise the home cells in order to use

the eLearning environment. Mobilising the home cells as such should not be too difficult, as membership of a home cell is voluntary. Mobilising the general congregation member might be a drawback in effectively using the eLearning environment. Currently the specific congregation is restructuring the home cell concept in providing structures whereby the home cell members first have to contact fellow congregation members before they contact the ministers. In the interview in Annexure D the home cell leader specifically referred to this and note it as a restraint due to the fact that in they eyes of the general congregation member the minister is his or her spiritual leader.

Initially the researcher will develop and upkeep the eLearning environment. To continue doing so on their own might be a limitation for the specific congregation, but one that can be overcome with relevant training.

Slow downloading speed is a constraint when developing electronic learning material. The speed with which the congregation members will download is unknown to the researcher, thus the eLearning environment will have to be developed for the most common denominator, i.e. the slow speed users. Using a low bandwidth will culminate in a basic eLearning environment where visual graphics, etc. will be limited. Where possible, alternatives will be provided for different bandwidth users. It is the aim of the researcher to develop an eLearning environment where the bandwidth of the typical user will be accommodated, and to deliver materials at a speed that users perceive as acceptable.

6.2.8 USABILITY

It might be that Christians other than members of the specific congregation will also use the eLearning environment. The environment will mostly be used by individuals, which can either be

home cell leaders retrieving information for their home cells to use, or individual home cell or general congregation members accessing the environment. It will be fairly easy even for a person not skilled in using the World Wide Web to access and use the eLearning environment. Help menus would be available throughout the environment, but home cell leaders might be able to quickly guide their home cell leaders in using the environment. The participants need to be able to go back and forth in the eLearning environment, as well as to obtain help and to exit at any stage. The eLearning environment will mostly be used at home. The eLearning environment will be created using a Windows platform, driven by individual personal computers. Access will be online, thus it will be developed for a lower bandwidth as not all congregation members have access to higher speed connections such as ADSL. However, features that require higher speed connections will be available, e.g. downloading of maps, graphics, extra information, etc. by selecting a button. It is important to ensure that learning material is available to all congregation members regardless of the connection speed available to them. Search engine indexing will be used as well as links to sites relevant to the specific topic.

6.2.9 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The goal of the program is to ensure the effectiveness of teaching home cells. The visual design will reinforce the message of the content by means of colour coding and the consistent use of symbols, menus and graphics. Permission to create such an eLearning environment was given by the church board to the researcher early 2005. Options will exist whereby congregation members will be able to address information that they would like to be queried as not factually correct. It is important to note that information and teaching material in the eLearning environment will have to be factually correct as the Word of God will be the source of information and discussion.

The information obtained in the Analyse phase will be used in the Design phase.

6.3 DESIGN PHASE

6.3.1 STYLE MANUAL

The look and feel of the eLearning environment was determined as follows:

Colour

The colour used in the presentation of every page is based on Exodus 26:1, where the Lord God instructed Moses to use blue, purple and scarlet as colours for the ten curtains in the tabernacle (Spirit Filled Life Bible, 1991: Exodus 26:1). The colour of the text will be black throughout the eLearning environment, except in the case of links created to other websites, which will be a different colour.

Logo

The logo of the specific congregation will be placed on the top at the right hand side of every page.

Font and text size

The font that will be used throughout the eLearning environment will be Tahoma. The text size will vary according to the text used on buttons, text used for headings and text used on a general page.

Headings

Different levels of headings will be indicated numerically, e.g. 2, 2.1 and 2.1.2, e.g. 2. HOLY SPIRIT, 2.1 MINISTRY GIFTS, 2.1.2 SERVICE.

Overall screen layout

The overall screen layout will basically be divided in three columns, one column horizontally on top of the page, spanning the entire width of the page, while the other two columns will be vertical columns. The two vertical columns will consist of a column to the left of the page that will contain the navigation buttons. These buttons will appear consistently throughout all pages of the eLearning environment in order to ensure that navigation will be familiar to the user. Buttons that are applicable on a certain part of the eLearning environment will be placed in the vertical column to the right of the page. It will be the aim of the developer to ensure that the user will feel familiar when using the eLearning environment, and that little time is wasted in navigating through the eLearning environment. The overall screen layout can be viewed in Annexure C where the prototype for the launch of an initial eLearning environment is located.

6.3.2 STYLE CONVENTIONS

Grammar, punctuation and spelling

The eLearning environment will use the grammar, punctuation and spelling as prescribed in the English spell checker for South Africa, created by the Potchefstroom University. All text will be spell checked before launching it on the eLearning environment.

Language

Gender-related language will be avoided as far as possible. Referring to the Christian in general, or as children of God will include both genders, as well as all ages. Except in specific cases when referring to a person, he (male) will refer to her (female), and visa versa. When using the names that appear in the Bible, the text will be in boldface, with the relevant Bible verse wherever applicable.

Graphics

When using graphics, e.g. the use of maps, the user will have the option to choose between a map with only the basic detail, and a map with more graphic details.

6.3.3 FUNCTIONALITY

Page restriction

A restriction of 40 kilobytes per screen will be enforced in order to facilitate fast downloads.

Use of keyboard and mouse

The user will have to use a mouse, as most of the navigation will be done by means of clicking on a button. The keyboard will mostly be used for interaction, completing documents and when mailing information to the administration of the congregation.

Download

The user of the eLearning environment will have the choice between downloading a version with text only, or an extended version of the eLearning environment that will include the use of colours, graphics, sound, etc. and the use of a smaller version, which will include only basic learning material, i.e. excluding colours, graphics, sound and so forth.

Sound

Sound will only be used when delivering a sermon, that is, the sermons will be available as the minister delivered it. The user will be able to listen to the sound whilst viewing a transcription of the sermon.

Units, lessons & modules

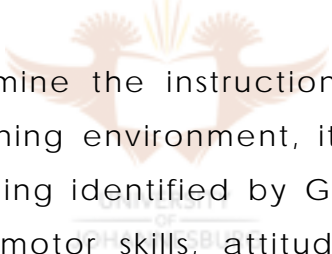
Units, lessons and modules will be outlined according to the preferences of the specific congregation as per the research results

indicated. The course content will be designed specifically for use with an interactive, electronic medium.

Navigation

Page control is of the utmost importance in structuring an eLearning environment. Therefore the design of this eLearning environment will be focussed on the consistent use of navigation buttons on every page of the eLearning environment. The users of the eLearning environment must be able to exit during any stage of using the learning package. According to Bruner learners can make better decisions regarding the sequence of their own learning (Alessi & Trollip, 2001: 51). Furthermore existing research shows that adults prefer interactive reference (Schaller & Allison-Bunnell: 2002).

6.3.4 IDENTIFYING TYPES OF LEARNING



In order to determine the instructional methodology that will be used in this eLearning environment, it is important to consider the five types of learning identified by Gagne, i.e. verbal information, intellectual skills, motor skills, attitudes and cognitive behaviour. Most of the learning that is going to take place in this eLearning environment will be attitude based and rule learning. Attitudes are demonstrated by choosing to do something, and applying rules and demonstrating principles demonstrate rule learning. (Alessi & Trollip, 2001: 499). Problem solving might occur in the sense that certain life principles and philosophies demonstrated in the eLearning environment might solve problems the users might have encountered. The users will not be able to converse verbally, but conversation will occur via e-mail messages, and the electronic bulletin board.

6.3.5 CHOOSING A METHODOLOGY

Combined methodologies will be used when creating the eLearning environment. Tutorials will be used for concept and rule learning. The general structure and sequence of a tutorial program is introductory section, presenting of information, question and response, judging of the response and feedback or remediation. Drills will be used for recalling information in the learning and teaching modules. Computers can be used to produce drills of much greater effectiveness than workbooks, flashcards, or teacher-administration drills. The program will be delivered via the World Wide Web and will therefore be considered as web-based learning.

6.3.6 DETERMINE AND COLLECT RESOURCES

Subject matter

The resource material needed for the launch of the eLearning environment, both regarding instructional methods and learning material, were collected by the researcher, and are listed in the list of resources at the end of this research document.

Information such as the registration forms for new home cell members and/or the registration form for new cell and/or congregation members, camps and other congregation activities, etc. were collected and can be found in the eLearning environment under General Information.

Delivery system resources

The resource materials relevant to the delivery system used by the designer were an Intel Pentium 4 laptop computer, and development software such as Dreamweaver MX, Flash MX and Microsoft Office were used in creating the eLearning environment. Books used can be found in the List of sources at the end of this research document.

The information obtained in the Design phase will be used for the Development phase.

6.4 DEVELOPMENT PHASE

Information derived from both the development and analyse phases were used in the development phase. The ultimate goal of this phase was to generate lesson plans and materials. Instruction, all media that will be used in the instruction, and any supporting documentation will be developed. In the development phase the strength of the Word Wide Web will be used to present information in multimedia format so that the learners' preferences may be met.

Interactions will be determined, which should be appropriate, creative, and innovative in order to encourage learners to explore further. During the development phase the following were achieved: construction and development of support content, script and program functional elements and the creating of graphics and supplemental learning guides.

6.4.1 TASK ANALYSIS

The goal of a task analysis is to determine an efficient sequence for learning the content (Alessi & Trollip, 2001: 492), and is used primarily for procedural skills. Procedural skills are not used in the eLearning environment, and therefore concept analysis will be done.

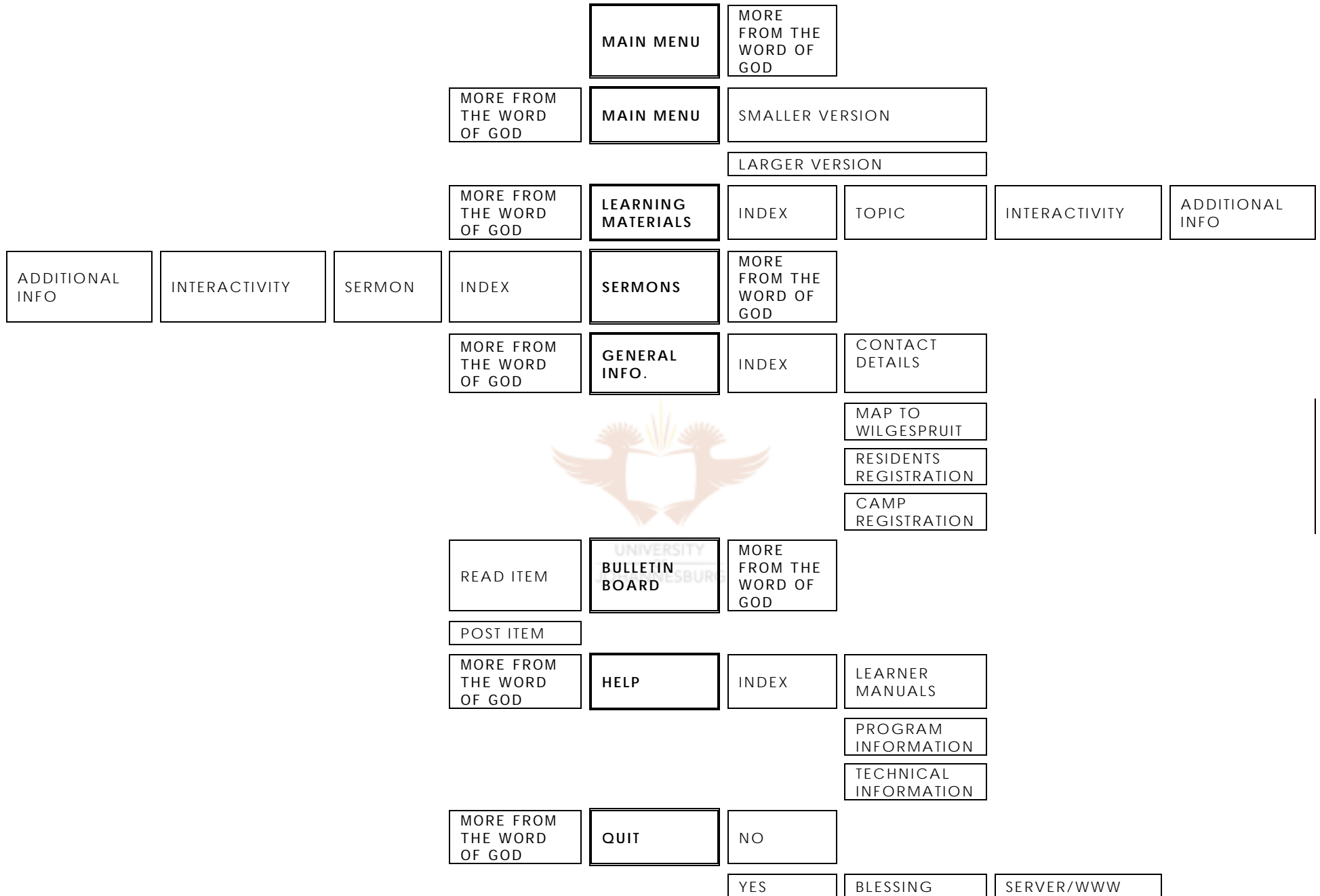
6.4.2 CONCEPT & STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

Concept analysis is generally used for declarative knowledge such as information, principles and rules (Alessi & Trollip, 2001: 494). The eLearning environment is an ongoing learning environment, but the

basic sequence of the learning material and interaction will stay the same. Thus the content of each learning module will differ, although the basis or framework of the eLearning environment will stay the same. The basic structure and concept analysis of the eLearning environment is listed on the following page.



STRUCTURE ANALYSIS



6.4.3 SUPPORT MATERIAL

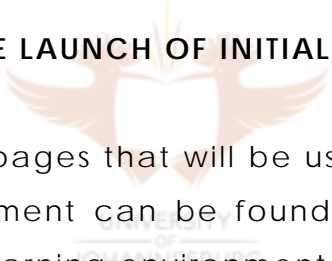
Learner- and instructor manuals

Learner and instructor manuals are included in the help section of the eLearning environment.

Technical manual

The technical manual will have the option to print the concept analysis and prototypes in the same manner as listed in this research document. This will be done due to the fact that the eLearning environment might serve as a prototype for other congregations to create their own eLearning environment. Diagnostic hints will identify common aspects that can go wrong and solutions that may solve the problem.

6.4.4 PROTOTYPE FOR THE LAUNCH OF INITIAL eLEARNING ENVIRONMENT



Prototypes of the pages that will be used in different sections of the eLearning environment can be found in Annexure C. The different sections in the eLearning environment include: the opening page or home page, learning material, sermons, general information, bulletin board, help and quit sections.

6.5 IMPLEMENTATION

The actual delivery of the instruction, in this case the eLearning environment is achieved in the implementation phase. The purpose of this phase is the effective and efficient delivery of instruction. In this phase the students' understanding of material and mastery of objectives must be supported. Transfer of knowledge from the instructional setting to the actual usage of it must be achieved.

In the implementation phase materials will be duplicated and distributed. The specific eLearning course will be installed and

maintained in this phase. Technical problems might occur which should be addressed, and alternative plans implemented.

6.6 EVALUATION PHASE

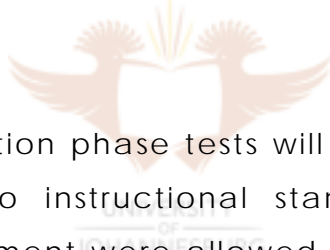
The efficiency of the instruction will be measured in this phase. However, evaluation should not only occur in this phase, but should be implemented throughout the entire instructional design process, i.e. within phases, between phases and after implementation.

Evaluation can be formative or summative. Formative evaluation was done during and between the phases and was an ongoing process. This type of evaluation was done in order to improve the instruction before the final version of the eLearning environment will be implemented. Formative evaluation was furthermore done to improve the course. Before parties other than the designer evaluated the eLearning environment, the following questions were asked during the formative evaluation: does this program make me feel excited, does this design meet the ultimate goal for the eLearning environment, will the user really experience what the instructional designer wants him/her to experience, is the application logically complete, does the program provide a solution to the identified learning need, is the content accurate, are the examples and instructional activities in line with the learning outcomes, is the content appropriate for the target population, are the instructional method and approach consistent with learning theories in the specific content area, o the learning outcomes adequately reflect what the learners need to learn, and are the concepts developed logically?

After the final version of the eLearning environment is implemented, summative evaluation will take place, thus the overall effectiveness of the instruction is evaluated. Decisions are often made about the instruction, such as whether to purchase an instructional package or

to continue or discontinue instruction. Summative evaluation is done to judge the effect of the course. The reviews received after testing the product will be taken seriously. If beta testers overlook something obvious, don't follow instructions, or skip reading all the text, then they have done a valuable job, since most of the users will do the same thing. Summative evaluation should answer key questions about the benefits and drawbacks of the program from the user's point of view, a total budget for the project, the expected benefits for the client and if learners achieve the outcomes of the eLearning environment.

The following were tested in the evaluation phase; form and function, usability, validation of content for accuracy and completeness, revision as required and/or necessary and the testing of the eLearning environment on various computers and network connections.



During the evaluation phase tests will take place to ensure that the design adheres to instructional standards. Persons testing the eLearning environment were allowed to give anonymous feedback, although most of them did not stay incognito. Being incognito will ensure that participants are absolute honest during evaluation.

CHAPTER 7

OVERVIEW, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The study started by establishing that there is a need for Christian religious education beyond the normal sermons on Sundays. A growing number of congregations are dividing their members in smaller groups, i.e. home cells, where they are taught in smaller, intimate circumstances. It was then established that the home cell leaders are in need of learning material that is readily available, in order to teach their fellow home cell members.

The aim of this study was to further spiritual and religious teaching to Christian congregation members in a home cell environment by means of an eLearning environment. In order to accomplish this task it was necessary to ascertain the educational interests and needs of congregation members beyond Sunday sermons and to use an eLearning environment as an educational tool combined with the best instructional methodologies that would further the goal of educating home cell members in a congregation by means of an eLearning environment.

The research problems that had to be addressed concerned the needs and interests of home cell members regarding spiritual education and the design of an eLearning environment to accommodate spiritual and religious education of home cells in a Christian environment.

Research in the cell groups was done by means of questionnaires to determine the preferred interest field of not only the individual cell group member, but also the congregation members in general. Qualitative research was used to determine what the content and the structure of the eLearning environment must be. During the research procedure it was clear that the home cell members, the members of the congregation in general and the members of congregations nationwide preferred the interest field of the Holy Spirit. Content on this interest field was researched and compiled in order to serve as the topic that was used at the launch of the Christian religious eLearning environment for the specific congregation.

In Chapter 2 a literature review was done to define the term Christian Religious Education. The foundations of Christian Education were discussed and terms such as faith, religion and religious education enlightened. This was important as it impacts the foundations of the study. Chapter 3 strived to enlighten eLearning regarding the features and benefits of electronic learning and researched the challenges of eLearning, applying the benefits of eLearning to Christian religious education. This chapter focussed on eLearning and the application of eLearning in Christian Religious Education.

The research design was established in detail in Chapter 4. Research findings derived in Chapter 5 were communicated to the different home cell leaders in writing. This was done in order to enable the respective home cell leaders to access his/her cell group and to determine whether he/she is on the right track regarding the provision of learning material and specific interests of the group. Research findings was discussed in detail in Chapter 5 in order to enlighten the

specific congregation regarding the interests of their home cell members. This can also serve as a starting point for other congregations when compiling learning material for their congregations. The research findings in Chapter 5 were important in the development and design of the Christian religious eLearning environment in Chapter 6. Chapter 6 defined, investigated and explained all the areas for implementation. This chapter also summarized and included all the aspects of the previous chapters. It is the purpose of this research design to serve as a starting point for other congregations that might be interested in creating their own eLearning environments.

7.2 DEFICIENCIES IN THE RESEARCH

The feedback from the home cell leaders regarding the return of the questionnaires was only 52 percent and the feedback from the general congregation 5 percent of all members contacted. The percentage of the home cell leaders of the specific congregation was low even though the researcher contacted them in person and per e-mail not less than twice in order to retrieve the questionnaires. This representation could be due to the fact that not all cell group leaders understood the benefit their own cell group would have in the use of the eLearning environment. Furthermore this representation confirms the fact that congregation members are restricted by time regarding their commitment to cell group activities, i.e. the completion of the research questionnaire.

It seemed that not all cell group members gave the questionnaires to their cell group members to complete. This could be due to either a lack of understanding of the importance on the enhancement of learning of such an

eLearning environment on the congregation in general, and more specific on their respective cell group members; or due to the ineffectiveness of the specific cell group leader.

The aims of this research went as far as the instructional design, excluding the actual system design. The system design of the eLearning environment and the implementation thereof would have brought any deficiencies in the actual design to the front as well as any recommendations in enhancing the eLearning environment. Comments, deficiencies or recommendations regarding the use of the eLearning environment do not form part of this research. These comments, deficiencies and recommendations might have assisted other congregations to enhance the design and implementation of their own eLearning environments.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that any future research on Christian religious education not only focuses on the home cell members, but also on the large, silent majority of congregation members that does not form part of the home cell environment. It was clear from research done in the specific congregation that not all congregation members form part of cell groups. The eLearning environment should serve not only to enhance the learning of the cell groups in the congregation, but also to enlighten and teach uncooperative congregation members in general.

The researcher should visit all cell groups individually, explaining the purpose of the research and the ultimate goal of the eLearning environment to the cell group members. It appeared that not all cell group leaders realized the

importance of the impact of an eLearning environment on their cell group members and on the congregation in general. Continuous research and contact with cell group leaders and their members should be kept in order to keep the learning content on the eLearning environment relevant to the general congregation member.

7.4 CONCLUSION

From the research done herewith it is clear that a need exists by congregation members to be educated beyond the Sunday sermons. Congregation members need to grow in holiness and to use the Word of God as a guideline in their everyday life. This can be achieved by assisting them by means of an eLearning environment where their specific needs are met. It must be noted that an eLearning environment created solely for the purpose of hosting an eLearning environment will not be effective. It will have to be custom made for the specific congregation regarding their needs and preferences. The eLearning environment will also have to be maintained on a regular basis and ongoing research will have to be conducted in order to determine whether it still meets the requirements of the congregation in question. An eLearning environment will perfectly enhance more traditional teaching conducted by church leadership. It can be used as an extended tool to further educate congregation members and/or to educate the congregation members on learning aspects not previously dealt with by church leadership.

I was blessed to research the advancement of religious education by means of eLearning in a Christian environment. A privilege that not only made me grow as a Christian, but one that also enabled me to understand the advantages of an eLearning environment and to experience the benefits of research itself.




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