

TAU Fellowship Research Report (Enquiry Group 1)

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Designing an Active Learning Component for the LLB to Develop and Strengthen Selected Graduate Attributes

1. Aim of the Project

This is a modified design-based research ('DBR') project aimed at creating an active teaching-learning component for a particular LLB course. The active teaching-learning component draws on the creative skills of law students and is focused on developing certain graduate attributes identified in the CHE Policy for LLB standards.

The initial objective of the project ('Project Lawclip') was to develop, implement and evaluate a first iteration of a teaching-learning component ('the Intervention') to better align the Corporation Law course in the UCT LLB curriculum with relevant CHE graduate attribute requirements. The Intervention consisted of the design, creation, production and publication of a short video clip (a 'lawclip') by small groups of Corporation Law students collaborating for this purpose. The Intervention, as a part of the Corporation Law course, is intended to link this LLB course in the UCT curriculum with the development and strengthening of the relevant CHE requirements amongst the student cohort. A further, longer-term objective of Project Lawclip is to investigate the use and effectiveness of the lawclips as a resource for internal legal education and teaching purposes by making these available to non-law students in the UCT Commerce and Engineering Faculties who are required to complete basic law courses as part of their curricula.

2. Processes/Methods

The project involved the first iteration of a modified design-based research ('DBR') project aimed at designing a teaching-learning activity with a creative component directed at the development of specific LLB graduate attributes. A teaching-learning design based on active learning was developed and implemented in an LLB course at UCT in the following steps:

1. Conduct a thorough literature review of the active learning approach and specific activities based on active learning.

2. Conduct a thorough literature review of the graduate attributes for the LLB as determined by the CHE and particularly the applied competencies of ‘knowledge transfer’ and the applied competencies of ‘self-management’ and ‘collaboration’ as delineated by the CHE.
3. Apply the findings in 1 and 2 in order to inform the design of a teaching-learning activity in the LLB programme based on active learning and the development of LLB graduate attributes.
4. Design the teaching-learning activity.
5. Implement the teaching-learning activity designed in step 4 during the first semester of 2018 in the Corporation Law course at UCT.
6. Evaluate the implementation in step 5 as the final step of the first iteration of the project.

The methodology I used is therefore a qualitative, intervention-orientated research strategy, namely a modified DBR model. As part of the first iteration of the development of the active learning component there was also an intervention in the form of an anonymous student evaluation in order to gather feedback from students regarding the efficacy of the design component in achieving its objectives and to make any changes necessary for improvement. These results will inform the development of the Intervention in subsequent iterations of Project Lawclip.

3. Outcomes

The ability to transfer acquired knowledge is an essential attribute of a law graduate, particularly the ability to transfer acquired legal knowledge to third parties who are not legally trained such as clients and members of the public or even to legal peers. Similarly, the applied competencies of self-management and collaboration are fundamental LLB graduate attributes for successful practice. The intended outcome of Project Lawclip is therefore to design an Intervention which will develop law students’ ability to transfer acquired legal knowledge and enable them to function effectively in independent and collaborative settings.

As previously stated, a long-term objective of Project Lawclip is ultimately to investigate the use of the lawclips as a resource for internal teaching and learning purposes by making these available to non-law students in the UCT Commerce and Engineering Faculties who are required to complete basic company law courses as part of their respective curricula.

As indicated above I conducted an anonymous evaluation (using Survey Monkey) in the 2018 LLB cohort which participated in the Project Lawclip intervention at the end of the first

iteration of Project Lawclip. The raw data and artefacts (evaluation reports and lawclips) generated are available upon request. An initial analysis of the student evaluation results indicates that the Intervention seems to have been well-received generally and the student feedback is largely positive. The students make specific reference to the value of the creative nature of the assignment, the efficacy of the active learning approach and the perceived strengthening of the identified graduate attributes. I am still in the process of analysing the findings in order to incorporate the data into the second iteration of the Intervention. This will be implemented in 2020 as I am on sabbatical in 2019. In my view there is currently sufficient evidence to suggest that Project Lawclip is an effective teaching-learning Intervention. It is based on constructivist learning theory (an active learning approach) and it appears that students have found it valuable, helpful and effective as a component of their curriculum. Accordingly I intend to proceed with the second iteration in due course as outlined in this report.

5. References

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