Institute of Distance Education Newsletter

Issue 2—April, 2010

April 16, 2010

Inside this issue:

Foreword - Dr. C.W.S. Sukati
IDE Director

Dr. C.W.S. Sukati

Welcome once again to the second edition of the IDE newsletter in the academic year 2009/2010.

IDE has continued to expand and welcomes a new staff member, Dr. S. Chakanyuka who is the new Coordinator, Academic Studies. Her capabilities are not in doubt as she is an experienced educationalist, more specifically in the Distance Education area.

In this edition, of the IDE newsletter you will read a brief but enlightening article on 'research', based on an interview conducted with Professor Fowler who is the IDE Coordinator, Research & Evaluation within the unit.

IDE also held a workshop which served as a forum to orientate new staff mem -

bers and concurrently review the delivery mode used by the IDE.

IDE continues to make an impact in the region. At a recent Research & Publication Capacity Building Workshop organized by SADC CDE our staff member, Ms. N. Vilakati received a prize for having the best research proposal. We wish to extend our sincere congratulations to her for this achievement and encourage her to get many more prizes.

At this time of the year we saw it fit to give as much advice as possible on how to prepare for exams. Therefore, some of the articles have provided students with concrete advice on how to prepare and deal with the upcoming exams. I conclude my remarks by wishing all of you the best of luck in your examinations. Do please take these tips that are given in this edition of the IDE newsletter and **use** them.

C.W.S. Sukati

Take Note: Tips on writing examinations
BY: S. Chakanyuka (Dr) Coordinator, Academic Studies.

Do this before the examination

1. Make sure that the night before you have a good night's rest. Studying throughout the night confuses and exhausts you and weakens your concentration. You will not be as alert as you should be in the examination room.

2. On leaving home, make sure you have the following essentials; your UNISWA ID, at least three ball pens, a ruler, a pencil, facial tissues and calculator (if your examination requires

it).
3. Make sure you are men-tally, emotionally and physically ready for the examination. Mental readiness comes from thorough study in preparation for the examinations. Physical readiness is a result of adequate rest, sleep, food and exercise to ensure your body is fit enough to last each examination. Emotional readiness results from the strategies you have devised to deal with any problem arising from the examination. That one question you

were not ready for may upset you so much that you fail to focus on the four for which you are ready.

Students studying (Source: Internet)

Copy—Editor speaks to IDE Coordinator, Research & Evaluation about research and its importance

Kwaluseni— Professor Chris Fowler joined the IDE unit in September, 2009 as the Coordinator, Research & Evaluation. He has already made an enormous impact in IDE, especially in his area of expertise which is research. When requested for an interview he willingly agreed and gave an insightful opinion on the importance of research in IDE and what it means to the unit. Read all about it below.

Professor Chris Fowler

"We need to strive to be the best in our field and undertaking research will help us become the best."

Why is research important to IDE?

Most people do research because they have a question that needs answering or a problem that needs solving. For academics, research helps push back the boundaries of knowledge, and thus advances their discipline and informs their teaching.

Many of the full-time staff in IDE don't teach, so why is research important to them?

For IDE management to understand how well we perform, what challenges exist and how we can improve in the near future, we need our own, institutional, research agenda. Research, for example, provides the evidence we require to undertake and justify continuous improvements in the programmes we offer. So research helps us explain and describe what we do well and less well. Evaluation helps us decide whether the improvements we made have worked or not, and becomes evidence for future improvement, and so a virtuous circle driven by research and evaluation, is created.

From your observation thus far, could you give us one example of a challenge you see IDE currently facing with regards to research?

The challenge in IDE is that we have so few experienced researchers for others to learn from. So we need to build collaborative teams led by experienced researchers. This has already started with the formation of the IDE's Academic Performance Research (APR) Group led by myself and involving active participation from the Faculty of Commerce as well as IDE staff.

Despite the challenge you mention, does IDE have any plan(s) to promote and encourage research within the IDE unit?

We are planning a series of Staff Awareness and Research (STAR) workshops and seminars, where we can present our

research, regardless of what stage its at, for others to provide constructive criticism and support. Also experts from outside the University will be invited to talk about their research and we will encourage our staff to attend appropriate external conferences and workshops. However, let us be clear, building a research culture takes time, and won't happen overnight, but the most important antecedents are in place – bright and motivated staff!

Thank You Professor, for your time. Talking to you has been an absolute delight.
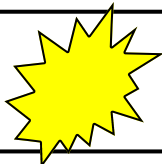
Newest addition to the IDE family

I am the latest addition to the IDE family. I am a proud mother of two children - a young lady and a gentleman. I have wide experience in education at secondary, teachers' college and university levels. My university experience spanning over seventeen years is all in distance education.

I am Zimbabwean and love sharing what knowledge I have with others.

Dr. Sharayi Chakanyuka

Laugh a little...

Teacher: Did your father help you with your homework?

Student: No, he did it all by himself

(Drum Magazine: Feb, 2010).

The Reading Habit in Africa

Producing diverse and interesting material would entice the existing readers to want to buy and read more general books WRITES

G. N. Nsibande

Let me begin this article by posing a key question—W*hy does the reading habit appear so weak in Africa?'* This is the question which is often debated when discussing the reading habit in Africa. This article aims to highlight the main reasons which have contributed to the underdeveloped reading pattern in Africa.

In this instance the 'weak' reading habit refers to the buying and reading of books. It could be argued that Africans **do** read but it is the habit of purchasing and reading books and magazines for leisure, which needs to be developed. In support of this statement, (Chakava 1996:11) says '….it is important that diverse reading materials are produced in order to maintain the existing readership by motivating them to read beyond textbooks towards general books.'

In other words the lack of expansion when creating and producing a variety of genre has contributed to the weak reading habit.

We must take cognizance of the fact that if there is a low number of readers this inevitably limits the growth of the book market. It's important that a target market be expanded in order to buy these general books. Therefore, the challenge is to maintain and extend the existing readership levels to other literary genres so that the people of Africa become zealous readers.

Another contributing factor which is intertwined with the challenge of the lack of diverse reading material is the fact that the African book industry is dominated by textbook publishing. This results in the book industry being unable to expand towards incorporating general books. 'Africa is dominated by school text book publishing … while the role of the textbook market in sustaining an ailing book sector on the continent should be acknowledged, it is true that sustainable book development lies

beyond textbooks. It is also true that concentration on textbooks in schools has happened at the expense of general book development.' (Wafawarowa, 2001:11).

Recommendations:

- Leadership should be exemplary and be seen to be astute readers and promoters of reading.
- Procure donor funding in order to develop local writers who will create more culturally relevant reading material.
- Research on reading – numerous research areas are devoted to understanding the history, psychology and other aspects of reading as a society.
- Eradicate poverty – if poverty is eradicated, people could afford to buy books for leisure, thus strengthening the reading habit.

Source: Internet

BE CAUGHT READING

(Swaziland Reading Association)

IDE Holds a Workshop to Plot the Way Forward

Kwaluseni—On March 18, 2010 IDE held the first of what is envisaged to be a series of workshops which are aimed at discussing IDE plans for current and future long term projects.

Coordinator, Academic Studies, Dr. Chakanyuka coordinated and facilitated this workshop.

The Director highlighted the objectives of the IDE workshop as follows:

- to familiarize IDE Staff on the structure of IDE, its objectives, policies & operations;
- to discuss the current IDE delivery mode and get information on how other DE Institutions do business and what can be learnt from them.

- to discuss, create and critique IDE's policies, practice and operations visa-a-vis good practice elsewhere and determine where there are gaps; and

IDE personnel listening attentively during the workshop. Seated from the left hand-side is Mr. J.M. Shongwe, Mrs. S.R. Dlamini and Professor C. Fowler,

- to provoke IDE to make recommendations for improvements on IDE's policies, practices and operations for further consideration by the IDE Academic Board and Senate.

Presentations delivered during the workshop were namely; *Overview of IDE: Structure, Operations and Policies, Material production, Student Services Support, Academic Studies, Distance Learning Technology Pedagogical Evaluation of IDE modules, Distance Education as practiced by Zimbabwe Open University.*

The presentations prompted much discussion amongst staff members, conclusions were made and suggested improvements put forth.

IDE & Adult Education collaborate and deliver impressive presentation in Maputo

By N. Vilakati Coordinator, Materials Design & Development

From the right: Prof. C Fowler, PL Biswalo, N Vilakati pictured whilst attending a workshop on Technology for Innovation and Education in Developing countries (TEDC) at Eduardo Mondlane University. The latter two academics delivered a paper titled: 'A pragmatic approach towards transformation from traditional media to online learning environments.'

Presentation highlights on IDE Future and progress to date

- IDE pilot-testing the Moodle Learning Management System with some courses from each of the collaborating faculties (Commerce, Humanities, B.Ed Adult Education and B.Ed).

- IDE looking into creating course web pages for all IDE courses.

- To develop tools and platforms to provide students and staff with an environment through which they can interact/collaborate in order to enhance performance and allow for collaborative learning with peers and tutors.

Staff Training:

1. IDE collaborates in web-content development activities with other educators through online networks and collectives such as the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) in order to build capacity in designing e-learning activities

2. Some IDE staff actively participate in international conferences on e-learning to be exposed to best practise examples throughout the region and internationally.

3. Some staff are taking formal continuing staff development programmes in learning technologies, educational tech -

nology, quality assurance and research.

Conclusion:

UNISWA for now has basic infrastructure to run an interactive e-learning system. IDE plans to use Moodle and other technologies to drive its multifaceted Learning Environment, particularly to benefit the majority of IDE learners. IDE **does** recognise the fact that there is a challenge with access and plans to set up a computer laboratory for distance learners which will be accessible to working adult learners too. All should be rest assured that IDE will continue to use the strategy of enhancing a Community of Practice with a shared vision of implementing an effective web-supported learning environment.

IDE Director Facilitates Sessions at Publication Workshop & Conference held in Botswana

Botswana - Between March 1-6, 2010 IDE participated in a SADC-CDE Research & Publication workshop/conference.

Participants in attendance were from numerous SADC member countries which included Botswana, Malawi, Swaziland Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The IDE Director, Dr CWS Sukati was one of the facilitators, alongside; Dr. S. Modesto and Dr. Mhudu who are both from Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL).

Well articulated presentations were delivered during the one week workshop/conference. Titles of the presentations were; *Characteristics of Good Research; Spelling out the Research Problems; How to Write a Publishable Journal Article; Quality Checklist in Final Journal Articles; and Effective Presentation Skills & Design Principles.*

Dr. Sukati, facilitating a session. during the workshop/conference.

In the examination room

Source: Internet

1. Be Cool, Calm and Collected. Compose your-self. Pray silently for God's guidance, peace and ability to remember **what you studied**. Divine intervention happens to those who have prepared adequately for the examinations. **DO NOT BE ANXIOUS.**

2. When asked to do so, open your paper, read through it once before you start writing.

3. Read it through again and note the questions that you would like to answer.

4. Plan your answer to each question instead of rushing to answer because this usually results in producing an answer without structure.

5. Allocate equal time to each question and stick to the time allocation. If you are answering three questions in three hours, allocate about one hour to each question. This should include 5 minutes for planning and ten minutes to revise your answer at the end.

6. Attempt all questions required and at the end, revise each question. If you revise a question immediately after you complete writing it you may fail to notice some errors you made because the information is still fresh in your mind.

7. **Aim to do your best.**

A Students Perspective on Studying & Examinations
S. Mabuza—Humanities, Year 4

As the exams are approaching, I saw it fit to share with you some of the study methods I consider to be the best ways of achieving good exam results. They are as follows:

1) **Group work**—*This method enables you to seek clarification from classmates on issues which are unclear to you as an individual. The group discussions enable us as peers to share our experiences in ways that we understand in an informal set up.*

2) **Cross night(ing)**—*This method is discouraged and rightly so, but when faced with the pressure of exams, one often finds it tempting to resort to cross night (ing), especially after the late night group discussions. The danger with studying throughout the night though, is that you may feel tired during the exam the next day and not write a good paper due to fatigue.*

3) **Using past exam papers**— *This method is great because it really gives one an idea of the structure of the exam questions, the number of sections as well as the allocation of marks for each question. I have found that familiarising oneself with these past papers goes a long way in ensuring that one is indeed prepared for the examination. Of course if a question identical to one in a previous paper appears and you have studied for it, it becomes a big bonus.*

'Motivation' plays an essential part of studying. This motivation to study stems from the mere fact that one has enrolled in IDE in order to pursue his/her studies. Therefore, doing well can only be accomplished through studying. Being able to proceed from each level gives one a sense of achievement and is a great motivator to study. In addition, there are more opportunities if you have a qualification. For instance, it could mean employment, promotion, better salary, more knowledge being acquired etc. But most importantly that sense of inner self development is what gives one a sense of pride. Even though exams always make me very nervous I realise that they are there to test our ability and capabilities. So let us continue to study and achieve our goals.

FINAL EXAMINATIONS TIMETABLE IS OUT!!!

The final examinations timetable is out now. You must check the timetable to ensure that the courses you are writing this semester are all reflected on the timetable. If you have any clashes do the following: -

1. Take note of the days and times when you have clashes

2. Write the information down clearly

Go and inform Mr. R. N. Masuku the Director (Academic) and he will organise how you will write the clashing examinations.

It is your responsibility to ensure that necessary arrangements are made where you have clashes.

This timetable will not change anymore. Study it carefully and copy down the dates, times and venues of your examinations. Continuously refer to the main timetable every day just to make sure you do not miss an examination.

I wish you success in your examinations.

S. Chakanyuka (Dr)

Coordinator, Academic Studies

IDE Student S. Mabuza

Results of the Peer Wellness Mentoring (PWM) Evaluation Session

Mrs. L.D. Vilakati (Senior Coordinator, Student Support Services)

The Peer Wellness Mentoring (PWM) programme was offered and facilitated by the IDE Student's Support Services Unit. The Coordinator, Research & Evaluation (Professor C. Fowler), led this particular session which dealt specifically with the evaluation aspect of the PWM programme. The whole programme is composed of six sessions and the last session, which was regarded as a celebration was held on 27/01/2010.

Highlights of the sessions

The first three sessions were led and facilitated by the Coordinator, Student Support Services. These three sessions dealt with the identification and discussion of eight dimensions of wellness. Other PWM related topics were presented by team facilitators who were:

Mrs. J.H. Nkosi on '*Social Intelligence*.'

Ms. N. Vilakati on '*The value of key competences alongside academic qualification.'*

Professor C. Fowler, made two presentations on the '*Buddy System* **and E***valuation*.'

Dr S. Chakanyuka on '*Goal setting*.'

Mrs T. Mamba, on **'S***piritual Wellness.'*

Results of the Evaluation Session

1. Students thought the programme was well organised, the objectives were clearly articulated and quality presentations were delivered.

2. The students valued the content (particularly the peer mentoring sessions). They perceived it as being well balanced (satisfying both aca-

3. From a critical analytical viewpoint participants felt the programme would make a positive difference in their lives.

4. Many of the students had 'emotional wellbeing' issues but the kind and extent could not be established.

5. Students emphasised the importance of acquiring social skills like listening, sharing and presentational skills.

6. The students valued the interactive sessions are prepared to actively participate in this programme as future facilitators - this is very encouraging and goes against the prevailing notion that the students are generally passive.

7. Students recommended that UNISWA full-time students would also benefit from the PWM programme.

Interview focusing on the way forward - 2010/2011 academic year

When questioned about what the PWM programme will focus on next academic year, the Coordinator, Student Services Support was kind enough to give us a sneak preview and reveal that the next sessions will focus on **The role of a peer in setting a goal that will enhance academic excellence for personal development and reaching out to others in a peer wellness mentoring relationship.**

"T*he PWM programme will advertise and invite a new intake in the next academic year and the PWM graduates will be invited to support the lead facilitators whenever necessary'* she explained.

N.B. UPDATE

The time for the writers' workshop is drawing closer and the preparations for it are well underway. The workshop dates are June 27 - July 3, 2010.
The venue of the workshop will be Nhlangano Casino Royale in the Shiselweni district.

A BRIEF ON THE MODULE WRITERS' WORKSHOP

IDE hosts a Module Writers' Workshop on an annual basis. The main objective of this workshop is to provide a forum for the authors' to have ample opportunity to write and improve the quality of the IDE modules. It also presents a chance for writers' to produce modules in the new courses IDE offers, revise the modules if necessary and write any outstanding modules.

Tackling exam questions

S.R. Dlamini, Program Coordinator, Humanities

ENJOY YOUR FORTHCOMING EXAMINATIONS

1) PLANNING

Always plan your work especially if you are writing essays. Planning enables you to produce a more organized piece of work. Bear in mind the fact that, "Facts and ideas in disorder **cannot** be conveyed to another's mind without loss and are hardly likely to carry much meaning even for the possessor" (Marwick, 2001:196). Furthermore, planning allows you to organize your thoughts such that they are in conversation not only with the question but also with the works of various authors who have written on the subject.

During examinations, you demonstrate your understanding of your course content through: recollection of relevant and specific information, interpretation and analysis of this information, and through communicating the information in a very clear and precise

language.

2) PROOF-READING

Proof-read your work. This reduces the incidence of grammatical mistakes. Proof-reading is meant for you to clarify confusing statements, create a relationship between paragraphs by using transitions, and correct grammatical errors. During the proof-reading process, make sure that you have written your **Examination number,** the **course code and course title** and the **questions you have answered** on the front page of the answer folder. As an IDE student, make sure that your Examination number begins with a (**P**).

3) STUDY RESOURCES

In preparation for your exams, you are advised to read other materials in addition to your modules. Most of your lecturers keep on emphasizing in your study guides that a good reproduction of the module information cannot earn you more than **59% (D)**. make sure you read more books with relevant information and use this information to supplement the module material. The internet is another resource you could use.

Special Advice :

To avoid common causes of failures , especially in

HUMANITIES avoid the following:

4) THINGS TO AVOID:

- Providing irrelevant responses to questions

- Giving inadequate responses

- Giving general information

- Proving information that is factually inaccurate.

Farewell note

IDE Director & Staff,

It's been a pleasure working with all of you. I appreciate the support and cooperation you have given me during my years as the IDE administrator. I have no doubt that the professionalism you have always demonstrated will be extended towards my very able replacement, Mr A.T. Dlamini who returns to IDE to begin a new term as the Assistant Registrar. I am now going to be based at the General Office and look forward to seeing you there and assisting where I can.

Yours sincerely

J.M. Shongwe

IDE Assistant Registrar

A warm welcome to Mr. A.T. Dlamini who was cross transferred from the General Services Office to rejoin IDE and replace Mr. J.M. Shongwe as the IDE Assistant Registrar. Mr. Dlamini holds a MA in International Public Administration and is a seasoned administrator who over the years has made numerous contributions to UNISWA. Mr. J.M. Shongwe will be missed but he is wished the best at his new station. In the same breath the best of luck to Mr. A.T Dlamini who we are confident will add value to IDE.
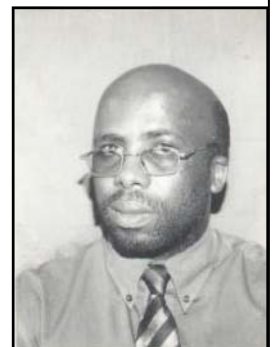
Mr. A.T. Dlamini

Editors Comment

*As Editor of this publication, I am extremely pleased and proud of the fact that our IDE student submitted an article **(Pg.5).** Admittedly, I had to twist her arm (and to some extent even beg), but it was worth it because our newsletter **has incorporated the voice of our students.** This gives me an opportunity to plead with other students to please submit articles which can be published in the IDE newsletter. Remember that this is a communication tool geared towards enhancing communication lines within IDE as a whole (students, staff, lecturers', tutors etc). I believe that this newsletter could very well begin the process of enabling us to communicate better amongst ourselves so we achieve our shared goal of creating a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning to take place.*

The best of luck to all of you in the upcoming exams.

G. N. Nsibande IDE. Office # 14

Free Flow of Information:

The Copy Editors Office invites ideas on how IDE staff and students could be better informed about activities happening throughout IDE. As a means of addressing the need, the Copy Editors Office will make every effort to provide information from each unit about important developments. For this purpose, space will be provided for each division and IDE students to make contributions.

Literacy Through Techonology
G.N. Nsibande

The South African Reading Association Conference was held at the University of Witswaterstrand late last year. Lucy Hagen who is the Project Consultant of a project dubbed 'M-Ubuntu' made a fascinating presentation on a techonological innovation which creates mobile learning.

Basically, M– Ubuntu is a literacy project which collaborates globally with any organization or socially minded individuals who are interested in sustaining and expanding the M-Ubuntu project. M - Ubuntu uses affordable, mobile phone technologies to address the teaching and learning literacy challenges. It has been described as *'a single platform with multiple functions– a channel for oral and written communication, portable to usable information, peer networking, medium, multimedia production device, and interactive learning machine.' (Abstract Booklet, RASA Conference).*

Pic: Mobile cell phone currently used in the M'-Ubuntu project.

Time to Reflect

*Get down on your knees everyday and say thank you. Even if you don't feel grateful all the time
practise it, and one day you will appreciate all the good things.
And that's one of the greatest gifts of all.*
(Kelly: 2009)