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educational resources where one can find free online journals, courseware, textbooks, California Digital Library, Open Educational Resources Gateway, etc. One can reach its Website/Gateway at [www.library.uniswa.sz/er](http://www.library.uniswa.sz/er)

(iii) **Provide the knowledge beyond local boundaries:** Once the Course materials have been developed as OER, the other participating institutions/countries can have access to quality materials that they can adopt and adapt as necessary without duplicating effort. A suitable example is that a Lecturer at the University of Ghana, Medical College, developed a simple procedure for a Caesarian section and video taped it. It is now being used in the Netherlands. Similarly a Lecturer at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Ghana, who also happens to be a world authority on the buruli ulcer has developed on OER module which is being used by the World Health Organisation and the University of Michigan (Asha Kanwar, 2015b).

(iv) **They are Mobile Technology:** One of the most popular technology platforms in the developing world today is the mobile phone. Linking the issue of access and reuse of OER with the increased availability of affordable cell telephony is a key development. Online facilitates learners to interact with their peers and benefit from their interaction through their online tools provided. As such the learners/students can develop a collaborative approach to learning and share their thoughts among themselves through their smart phones. Further the students and teachers get a chance to communicate with each other virtually via discussions, chats, etc.

Thus, the Open Educational Resources platform allows all students access to all courses/course modules/educational resources through OER based online. The students can study their modules according to their convenient time, place and pace. The OER platform allows the learners to receive all their registered course modules of a program on their smart phones. Further to improve their comprehension, they can access other related materials in the website using their smart phones.

On these lines the IDE, UNISWA is planning to introduce a new joint program of M.Ed in Educational Leadership in collaboration with Commonwealth of Learning (COL) through OER based online system from January 2017. The IDE, UNISWA prides itself in pioneering its vision of achieving to provide technology/OER based education through on-line teaching-learning system. The IDE, UNISWA proposes to create a platform/repository to provide electronic based educational resources in place of providing printed course modules. Thus the learners receive the benefits of OER electronic based education at the comfort of their homes through online. This actuates the much talked about the vision of anywhere, anytime learning. However, the production of OER based course modules and offering the programs through online is a challenge on the part of IDE, UNISWA.

## UNISWA Students Sensitization Workshop

By Dr SR Dlamini

On Thursday 17 March, 2016 the COL specialist responsible for the VUSSC Project, Mr John Lasperance, facilitated a sensitization workshop session for selected students who will assist in creating awareness amongst their peers on OER. Student representation was drawn from all three UNISWA campuses. During this workshop, each student received an OER handbook titled, 'Open Educational Resources (OER) Guide for students in Post-Secondary and Higher Education' with basic information which pertains to what they need to know about OER. They were privileged to be the first higher education students to receive such a handbook, with currency of knowledge on OER, as the latest Commonwealth of Learning (COL) 2016 publication. They were further introduced to the concept of OER, discussed potential benefits of OER to students and had a practical hands-on activity to navigate links to repositories that are relevant to their different disciplines.



COL Representative, John Lasperance, helping a student locate OER online.



## IDE Taking University and Professional Programmes to the People

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## Institute of Distance Education Newsletter

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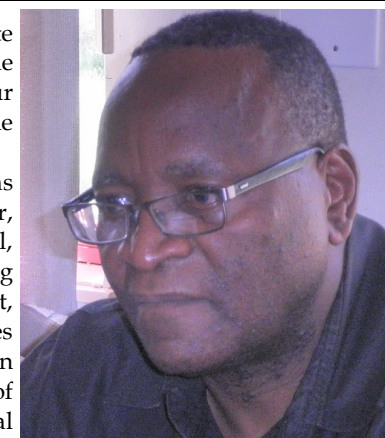
Institute of Distance Education

### From The Desk of The Director

I am pleased to write this foreword for the second edition of our IDE Newsletter for the 2015/2016 Academic Year.

This newsletter, as you will soon discover, contains several useful, informative and interesting articles, which in great part, demonstrate IDE's activities that have been undertaken in pursuit of its Vision of Becoming an International Centre of Excellence in Distance Education Access, Delivery, Practice, Research and Life-Long Learning. It further contains some short educational articles that talk about Open Educational Resources (OERs) which, with the help of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the Institute has been publicising and sensitizing the University Community about. As the authors of our teaching materials continue to write, we are seeing more and more OERs included in our teaching materials.

One of the articles in this Newsletter talks about the delivery and installation of the e-learning equipment that has been donated by the ROCOT.



Professor CWS Sukati, IDE Director

We at IDE are proud to have received this "state of the art" equipment and are confident that the blended learning approach to teaching and learning that we have often talked about will begin in earnest in August 2016. We thank everyone who assisted us in getting this equipment. With our blended learning approach, we shall be admitting and registering more and more students each year in our Institute, in fulfilment of our vision and mission of opening up access to University Education in the country.

It is also my pleasure, on behalf of the IDE Team, to welcome one new staff member, Professor Chandraiah, Essamp-

ally, who recently re-joined the Institute. We know that with his vast experience, knowledge and expertise and industriousness, he will make our Institute to be the Powerhouse in the Region that we want it to be.

As the Examinations for the Second Semester of Academic Year 2015/16 are drawing closer, I wish all our students the best of luck in their examinations. I urge them to be serious with their school work and use all the examination tips that they get and those that appear in this Newsletter. Do enjoy reading our Newsletter and if you have any questions, comments, views, criticisms and suggestions on it, or on any of our activities, products and services, please feel free to communicate this directly to me or to any of my Team Members in IDE. Since we haven't received any questions, criticisms, suggestions on our operations – does this mean that all is good???

Professor CWS Sukati

### Director Attends High Level Roundtable Meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The Director of the Institute attended a High Level Roundtable for Vice Chancellors and Heads of ODL Institutions in Bangi, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The roundtable was organized by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the Asia e University on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of March 2016. Four critical issues were covered in this roundtable. These were Leadership in ODL Institutions, Quality Assurance, the Role of Technology in ODL and Sharing Best Practices.



## Open Educational Resources as an Answer to New Demands of Higher Education

Keynote lecture by Dr TJ Bliss, Hewlett Foundation

Contact: [tjbliss@hewlett.org](mailto:tjbliss@hewlett.org) or <http://tjbliss.org>

### The Hewlett Foundation

A professional visit to the University of Swaziland was made by a high profile delegation from the Hewlett Foundation on 18 March, 2016. Members of the delegation were as follows; Mrs Lisbeth Levey who is a Senior Advisor to the Hewlett Foundation; Ms Dana Schmidt, a Program Officer in the Global Development and Population Program and the Education Program as well as Dr TJ Bliss, a Program Officer in the Education Program. Leading the Hewlett team was Mr John Lesperance, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) Education Specialist responsible for the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). A keynote lecture was presented by Dr Bliss on behalf of the team. He began the lecture by giving a brief background on the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation as follows:

– The Hewlett Foundation was founded in 1966 by William Hewlett (of Hewlett Packard). In 2001, when William Hewlett died, he bequeathed most of his wealth to the foundation. Total current assets of the Foundation amount to \$8.6 billion. Grants in 2013 amounted to \$225 million (via 634 different grants and contracts).

– The foundation has 6 Programs which are Education, Environment, the Global Development and Population Program, Performing Arts, Effective Philanthropy, as well as Special Projects [such as on Community Leadership, Nuclear Security, and Cyber Security]. Through such a wide range of programmes the Foundation achieves its mission which is to ‘Help People Build Measurably Better Lives.’

### A technical argument for OER

Dr Bliss introduced Open Educational Resources (OER) through a technical argument that they allow for sharing and educating at an unprecedented scale. He related OER to traditionally accepted educational practices, that is, educators have always shared any of the following with their students: knowledge and skills; feedback and criticism; as well as motivation. Similarly, students in turn tend to share with their lecturers some of the following: questions, assignments and any other evidence of learning. He declared that ‘where there is no sharing, there is no education.’

He noted that what makes the advent of OER to be groundbreaking is their associated creative commons licences which allow for sharing. He then listed the bundle of permissions that define an OER under the 5R’s as follows: **Reuse** – or to copy verbatim; **Redistribute** – to share with others; **Revise** – to adapt and edit; **Remix** – to combine with others; and **Re-tain** – to make, own and control copies.



Dr Bliss of Hewlett Foundation

### An evolving global OER landscape

Key OER initiatives were mapped as follows:

- MIT OCW – Open courseware for 2180 courses, with 60 containing complete video lectures
- OpenStax – A repository of 16 books, with Physics holding 16% market share and Biology holding 5% market share in the US.
- BC Campus – A repository of 38/40 textbooks completed in the Arts and Sciences, 20 on deck in trade skills areas. \$2 M in funding from BC Ministry of Education.
- California – Has a goal of 50 textbooks – 5 completed, with complete faculty showcases to promote adoption.
- CK-12 – Has 88 flex books, focusing especially on STEM and CK-12 Braingenie (math and science practice materials).
- OHSU – First charter school with a stated mission of adoption of OER as primary material and commitment to openly license and share any materials produced.

Based on this unfolding open textbook in higher education initiative, Dr Bliss highlighted the main advantage which is that open textbooks meet lecturers where they are in that they are already familiar with the value of textbooks in enhancing education.



COL Education Specialist with Hewlett Foundation Team

### OER research to drive our practice

– Research studies by the OER Research Hub were cited as a case in point. They have focused on conducting and disseminating research on the impact of OER on teaching and learning.

– The GO-GN Global OER Graduate Network has also engaged in research for building a network of graduate-level researchers focused on questions related to OER and open education in general.

– UNESCO is also involved by promoting OER awareness and policy development in the developing world.

– Similarly, the OECD –also promotes OER awareness, research and policy development within the OECD member countries.

– Recent research on open textbooks includes a Multi-Institutional Study of the Impact of Open Textbook Adoption on the Learning Outcomes of Post-Secondary Students by Fischer, Hilton, Robinson, and Wiley, which has been accepted by the Journal of Computing in Higher Education.

## Crafting a UNISWA Open Educational Resources Policy

By Dr Shokahle Dlamini & Ms Nokuthula Vilakati

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL), under the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) Project, sponsored a workshop aimed primarily at drafting a University of Swaziland (UNISWA) Open Educational Resources (OER) Policy. A team of 12 participants attended this workshop which ran from 14 to 16 March, 2016. Participants were from the Faculty of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences; Faculty of Education; Faculty of Health Sciences, Faculty of Humanities; Faculty of Science and Engineering; Faculty of Social Sciences, the Institute of Distance Education and the Information and Communication Technology Centre. The workshop was a follow-up to a series of workshops on Open Educational Resources (OER) convened from 12 to 19 October, 2015 to sensitise UNISWA management and staff on a wide range of existing OER, including programmes which could be repurposed for delivery to UNISWA students.

### Workshop outcomes

The intended outcomes of the workshop were to:

- enable management and staff of UNISWA to demonstrate basic understanding on OER and their potential to widen access to education and enhance educational quality;
- identify specific ways in which OER can be harnessed to enhance access to education and improve curricula in Swaziland;
- enable the target group to demonstrate greater awareness of the contexts; rationale and processes of developing sustainable Institutional OER Policies; and
- motivate and guide participants to develop a template and draft components for an Institutional OER Policy.

### Its highlights were:

During the first day of the workshop, participants were introduced to the concept of OER. This was essential because most of these participants had not taken part in the sensitization workshops convened in October, 2015. This introduction included a discussion on the value of OER (Why should UNISWA use OER), how we can adapt OER and the principles for Open Learning.

Such discussions were further informed by a paper titled ‘Establishing the potential use of OER at UNISWA’ which was presented by Dr SR Dlamini, an IDE participant. One of the aims of the paper was to demonstrate UNISWA academic staff understanding of OER and their potential to promote access to and enhance quality of education. Another was to share the various

attempts by UNISWA to promote the use of OER by its academic staff for teaching and learning enhancement as well as to suggest how the use of OER could benefit staff and students at the University.

This paper gave some of the compelling reasons for embedding OER at UNISWA, one of which was the exorbitant prices of textbooks in the UNISWA bookshop yet OER provide free access to a variety of learning resources.

On the second day, participants were informed about the criteria to use when evaluating OER. They also compared different models that can be adapted while fostering an enabling OER friendly policy environment, informed by emerging policy issues; Open Access publishing protocols and new policy directions. It was on this day that a draft policy development exercise began.

On the last day, the policy drafting exercise continued with a deliverable of a draft OER policy and a map of a tentative work plan which served as a way forward.



(Front row –Left to Right) John Lesperance, COL Representative and Dr Ephraim Mhlanga, Programme Specialist SAIDE, with UNISWA staff after mapping an OER policy drafting and validation work plan at Esibayeni



## WELCOME BACK PROF. CHANDRAIAH ESAMPALLY



We at IDE take this chance to welcome back Prof. Chandraiah Esampally to the Institution. Prof. Chandraiah is not new to UNISWA and also IDE as he has worked before as Associate Professor and Coordinator Academic Studies from October 2002–September 2007. He was a member of Academic and Administrative Staff Promotions Committee, Research Committee, Admissions Committee, Library Committee and different Faculty Boards. He published 33 Journal Articles in reputed national and international refereed journals and contributed articles to Research Books in areas of **Accountancy, Finance and Distance Education**. He edited 7 text books, 2 at intermediate level and 5 at undergraduate level in the area of Accounting and Entrepreneurship. In addition, he has participated and presented papers in national and International Seminars/Conferences and was a resource person for some workshops / orientation programs both in India and abroad. Further, he has organized some national and International conferences/seminars/orientation programs.

IDE is extremely proud to have him back and hopes his return will see the Institution growing from strength to strength.

**WELCOME BACK PROF.**

## IS THE BLENDED LEARNING APPROACH THE BEST OPTION FOR UNISWA, IDE? *By Dr GN Nsibande*

The University of Swaziland (UNISWA) and the Institute of Distance Education (IDE) operate as a Dual Modality Institution. This means it involves the use of two teaching and learning systems and or methods, which are namely; Distance Education (DE) and the Conventional fulltime face-to-face lectures (CF2F). Here, the blended learning approach is the chosen teaching and learning option.

The delivery modalities used for content delivery are namely; CF2F instruction and print based in the form of Self-Instructional Materials (SIMs), commonly referred to as modules. Now, with the gradual transition from written text (print) to the web based format, IDE utilises the third teaching and learning device called e-Learning Technologies. These three delivery modalities are merged and used primarily to help eliminate the distance between instructor and the Distance Education (DE) Student when teaching and learning occurs.

### Blended Learning Approach at IDE

To ensure we are all on the same page, in this particular article, I contextualise and point out the difference between 'supplementary' and 'replacement' modalities of blended learning. For IDE, it was decided that it is practical for students to supplement the contact teaching and learning sessions through the use of Print- Based and e-Learning Resources. The latter, which IDE does not practice, is where F2F contact sessions are replaced totally by online learning (Nsibande, 2014). The blended learning approach is a combination of teaching and learning being conducted via the three main delivery modalities cited previously. To support my definition of blended learning, I draw from the definition that describes it as a "complete rethinking and redesign of the educational environment and learning experience (Keppell, 2010 pg. x)." In this instance 'e-learning' and or 'online' learning are used interchangeably. This is because at UNISWA, IDE, it is mainly computers that are used as a platform to access the Learning Management System (LMS) called Moodle to facilitate teaching and learning (Nsibande, 2014).

E-learning (which is my preferred terminology) is not restricted to content delivery, but as per student- centred approach, it enables the recommended interaction between students as peers and or with their instructors through the Moodle chat forum.



*Dr GN Nsibande*

### Why choose the Blended learning approach?

IDE acknowledges that developing countries such as Swaziland may be negatively affected by limited funds which more often than not results in instructors inability to utilise ICT fully in their classes for teaching and learning purposes. In agreement with some scholars, print then remains a practical and economically viable option, even when e-learning (and other ICT tools) are integrated and typically used in education sector worldwide. "This justifies the decision to use a blended learning system at UNISWA and IDE" (Nsibande, 2014).

### Advantage of using E-learning as a teaching and learning tool

Amongst other reasons, the integration of e-learning into the traditional content delivery modalities (F2F and print) is intended to enhance the teaching and learning experience. Meaning, it has the ability to incorporate into the DE class the desired live and or humane ambiance of the conventional class has. This is achieved by using additional technologies such as; audio clips, cassettes, video clips, animations, virtual simulations - group chat discussions, hyperlinks to other external related websites and resources pictures from cameras or cell phones etc (Sukati, 2013). Moreover, I support the notion that these educational technologies do indeed heighten the classroom communication and concurrently assist students to internalise the relevant subject content being taught.

In a concluding voice and in alignment to the title of this article, I hope you agree that blended learning is a good option for UNISWA, IDE. The e-Learning platform is meant to help instructors with their pedagogic practice, not to substitute them. After all, they are the ones who create educational online courses and maintain the pivotal role of mediator and facilitator in all teaching and learning regardless of the delivery modality used.

## OER: Practical Applications through the African Virtual University (AVU)

*By Dr Karen Ferreira-Meyers*

The African Virtual University is a Pan African Intergovernmental Organization established by a charter with the mandate of significantly increasing access to quality higher education and training through the innovative use of information communication technologies.

A Charter, establishing the AVU as an Intergovernmental Organisation, has been signed so far by nineteen (19) African Governments—Kenya, Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Tanzania, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of Congo, Benin, Ghana, Republic of Guinea, Burkina Fasso, Niger, South Sudan, Sudan, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Ethiopia and Cape Verde. The AVU has its Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya and a Regional office in Dakar, Senegal with Host Country Agreements and Diplomatic Status with the two governments.

**Its Vision:** "The leading Pan-African Open, Distance and e-Learning (ODEL) network."

**Its Mission:** "To prepare learners, using Open Distance and e-Learning to better contribute to the development of the African Continent through provision of high quality tertiary and continuing education."

### **Its Core Values :**

"In seeking to achieve its vision and mission, AVU will be guided by the following core values:

- **Excellence** - AVU is committed to promoting excellence in teaching, research, scholarship and community engagement.
- **Innovation** - AVU is committed to the innovative use of information and communication technologies.



*Dr Karen Ferreira-Meyers*

- **Partnerships** - AVU is committed to expanding and supporting existing and future high quality partnerships.
- **Borderless Higher Education** - AVU advocates and supports in-country and cross-border education.
- **Accessibility for all** - AVU is committed to availability of education at all times irrespective of gender, age, race, religion, language and geographical locale.
- **Sustainability** - AVU is dedicated to securing alternative sources of funding.
- **Professionalism** - AVU is professionally committed to honesty, trustworthiness, equity, integrity, tolerance, team work and respectfulness.

Additional information can be found at [www.avu.org](http://www.avu.org).

### **My professional involvement**

I was approached by AVU in August 2014 to participate in their Applied Computer Science Program (ACSP) to coordinate the development of Stream 1 (General Education) courses. In total there are 6 streams, each with their own coordinator. This means that over the past two years (almost) I have coordinated the development of 24 draft modules and 1 video, more than 100 learning objects, the peer

review process and the finalization of modules.

The process is almost complete and the program will be rolled out through various African Universities in three languages, namely English, French and Portuguese. So, this is where my language skills in particular came in very handy.



*Dr Ferreira-Meyers presenting her paper on 'How to Write for the Distance Learner?'*

### **What have I learned from this experience?**

Many lessons can be learned:

- Module development is an intense activity that takes place over a length of time, with a variety of role players (instructional designer, author, coordinator, peer reviewer, language editor, editor, etc.). All collaborating to ensure the quality of the end product.

- Open Educational Resources (OER) are useful and widely used. The Applied Computer Science Program follows the Teacher Education Program which is also based on OER.

- Collaboration knows no borders, no age, no race: experts can be found anywhere and with the necessary funds, brought together to work on worthwhile programs and activities.



## Delivery and Installation of Audio Visual Equipment for the Institute of Distance Education, by the Republic of China on Taiwan

By Mr Thembela Thwala

**T**he Government of China on Taiwan donated equipment and support to the value of about E 3, 000, 000.00 to IDE to enable her offer courses through blended online mode.

The project will enable lecture capture, whereby lectures are recorded and then uploaded onto the Learning Management System (LMS), enabling students to have access to the lectures from remote centres and anywhere they have access to the Internet. In addition, the project will enable IDE to offer lectures via video conferencing, where lectures at Kwaluseni Campus will be broadcasted to learning centres around the Kingdom of Swaziland so that students need not come

to the campus but attend live lectures at the centres.

Rotel, a Taiwanese company, was given the task of implementing the project and the first stage of the installation has now been carried out. This stage involved the delivery and installation of equipment in the audio visual room at IDE, and the equipment consists of two (2) Ultra High definition (4K) portable cameras, Video editing software, two (2) high end workstations for video editing, LCD TVs for video conferencing, video conferencing equipment to link two sites, LCD projectors, portable interactive teaching device, and twenty (20) computers to be installed in the remote centres for use by students.

## FAREWELL!!

Sadly on November 18, 2015 the IDE family had to say GOODBYE to

**DR. SHARAYI  
CHAKANYUKA.**



Dr Chakanyuka appreciating her gifts

To the IDE family she was a mother, friend, confidante, colleague, mentor – list is endless. Her farewell function was held at S&B Restaurant, Matsapha. IDE will miss her and wishes her all the best in her future endeavours.

## Time Ticketh Exceedingly Quicketh!

Not only have we done almost half the Semester but we are heading toward the, once again, fearful and extremely taxing time (to some) of examinations that will mark the end of the 2015/2016 Academic year. Some of the diligent students have no doubt been stretched already. Stretched to finish assignments and submit on time, stretched to give more time to studying and preparing for the coming examination. You who have not risen to the occasion yet, time is ticking, but if you can pull up your socks you'll be surprised at how much you can achieve in this time left.

**PREPARE AND STRETCH YOUR-  
SELF EVEN MORE TO PASS.**

## UNISWA Staff Training by the Taiwanese Experts on the New E-Learning System at IDE

**O**n 13–14 April, 2016, IDE staff and other UNISWA staff members were trained on how to use the newly purchased equipment donated to IDE by the Republic of China on Taiwan, at the IDE Computer Room.



Tony and Getty, the Taiwanese experts who facilitated the Training



The training, among others, was also attended by the IDE Director, Prof CWS Sukati.

At the end of the training that lasted two days and also after the completion of installation process of the equipment, a function to mark the new beginning of a 'new digital era' for IDE was held. The University Principals also attended the



function.

Getty, one of the training facilitators, in her address, marked that 'this is the start of the opening of many windows of opportunities [for Swazi students]. The new e-learning system will now allow closer interaction and monitoring between lecturers and students even though it will happen virtually online.'

With this equipment in place now, IDE envisage that her Distance Education Teaching mode will not only draw interest from local students but will also attract other International students to do online programmes with IDE. This indeed is going to increase UNISWA's revenue.

The Vice Chancellor, Prof Cisco Magagula, in his remarks, thanked the Taiwanese Government for the equipment and also training IDE staff on how to use it. He further thanked the Govern-

ment of Swaziland for having facilitated the request by UNISWA to have such a 'state of the art' equipment.

In the afternoon of that day the University Council Chairman, Prince Phinda, had a chance to see the installed equipment too.

He learnt from the Vice Chancellor and Professor Sukati,



through the assistance of Mr Thembela Thwala, how the machines operate and how this is going to assist Lecturers impart knowledge to students. The Chairman appreciated the fact that IDE's dream of teaching online has finally come true and hoped that the High Resolution cameras will not 'develop feet' at the selected centres. *Council Chairman, IDE promises you that there will be tight security measures taken at the centres!*

## Professor Fowler Visits IDE

By Prof. CWS Sukati



**T**he IDE was pleased to welcome Prof. Chris Fowler, in January this year. Chris is a former colleague of ours and occupied the position of Coordinator, Research and Evaluation.

During his visit in January, Prof. Fowler delivered an open lecture on Tuesday 21 January, and the title of his paper was, "Virtual Reality, Learning Scenarios, and Teaching Science to Learners from other cultures: Whose

reality?"

The thesis of his paper was that technology can be used to design culturally sensitive and authentic science education, but that not all technology was suitable or desirable.



**IDE Taking University and  
Professional Programmes  
to the People**



OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER): WHAT AND WHY?
By Prof Chandraiah Esampally

The advent and advancements in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have remarkably changed the teaching-learning system in education in general and in Open Distance Education System in particular. Now it is an era of technology based Blended Teaching-Learning System in education.

Nowadays people are frequently talking about OER and their usefulness in teaching-learning system. In this context, the author, based on his workshop experience held from 14 March to 16 March 2016 at Esibayeni Lodge, made an attempt to explore OER in general to raise comprehensive understanding of OER in terms of: What they are? and Why they are? First let us look at what are Open Educational Resources?

WHAT ARE OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES?

Open Educational Resources (OER) are educational electronic teaching, learning and research materials which are free and freely available under open licence. One key difference between OER and other educational resources is that OER have an open license, which allows adoption, adaptation, reuse, remix and/or redistribution with no or limited restrictions. However, there are so many types of licenses and each license has some restrictions in using open educational resources. This paper is not going to discuss the details of types of licenses as it is an independent topic for a paper which we cover it in the next issue. This paper discusses the concepts of OER in terms of: What and Why?

Numerous definitions are there on the concept of OER but the important definitions are given below.

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation define OER as, "Teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and repurposing by others. Open educational resources include full course, course materials, modules, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials, or techniques used to support access to



Prof. Chandraiah Esampally

knowledge" (COL, 2015a).

UNESCO define OER as, "Teaching, learning and research materials in any medium, digital or otherwise, that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions." (COL, 2015b).

From the above definitions we can understand that OER are those teaching and learning materials that are openly formatted with no or some restrictions for use. Normally OER are made available in multi-media. It can be reused or remixed or repurposed to suit different needs and could be available in any medium – print / audio / video / digital / integrated format etc. As such it will be interesting for students as it is in different teaching-learning styles.

WHY OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES?

According to Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the digital divide across the world is still alive and wide. While in North America, there are over 80 Computer and internet users per 100 persons. In Africa and Asia the number of Computer and internet users is less than 10 per 100 persons (Asha Kanwar, 2015a).

In fact the benefits of OER were not realised until the increase in cost of education forced educational experts/institutions to explore new pedagogical avenues to teaching-learning system. When OER grew and met with initial success, many Universities/Educational institutions in the world have started offering their educational programs through OER based on-line teaching-learning system by creating their own instit-

utional platforms/repositories and making the educational resources/course modules accessible to the learners. For example, Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) has created its MIT Open Courseware Website/Repository where one can access a repository of MIT course materials. It includes course schedules, lecture notes/texts, tests and solutions and student work exemplars from a wide range of courses. This one can be reached at <http://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm> (COL, 2016a). Another example is that the UK Open University has created its Website/Repository, where one can find short courses for a range for post-secondary study options, written originally for distance education students. One can reach this repository at <http://open.edu/openlearn> (COL, 2016b).

Similarly many Universities/Educational Institutions have created their Websites/Repositories for benefit of their students to increase access to open educational resources/courses. As such we need Open Educational Resources for higher education because of the following advantages to the learners/students as well as educators:

(A) Advantages to the Learners/Students

The following are the advantages that accrue to the learners/students:

(i) **Cost Effective:** OER are cost effective because students need not to buy text books once they are placed into OER Repository with relevant activities and assignments. A study in the USA indicated that the cost of college text books in the United States increased 82 per cent between 2002 and 2013. The students in the USA spent about USD 1200 each on text books. Another study in the USA indicated that 65 per cent of the US students do not buy text books due to prohibitive costs (COL, 2015c). Thus the cost issue is a primary factor for promoting OER amongst the students and teachers. As such OER are one way to address the rising costs of education and to have the potential to facilitate new styles of teaching-learning system.

(ii) **Open Access:** OER would expand access to more educational resources as other relevant quality materials can be accessed through OE portals. Thus one can gain international perspective on a particular subject/course/journal articles on which he or she is more interested. For example the UNISWA has created a Gateway/Website to facilitate the lecturers, students and other UNISWA staff to access all (Continued on pg 12)

Writers Workshop for Proposed IDE-LLB Programme

The IDE-LLB writers workshop was held at the IDE Computer Lab on 09 April 2016. Participants involved Law Distance Education Lecturers from various Government departments and Attorneys.



The purpose of the workshop was to equip writers with the skills and knowledge required for preparation of IDE modules.

The strategy that was used for the workshop was the interaction mode which comprised of short presentations that were led by resource persons.



The presentations were also punctuated by 'question and answer' discussions.

IDE Year Planner: Mark Your Calendar

April 23, 2016 (Saturday)  
Education Tutorial Day

April 24, 2016 (Sunday)  
HUMS Study Day (3rd and 4th Years)

April 30, 2016 (Saturday)  
Make up day

May 1, 2016 (Sunday)  
Education make up day

May 2-6, 2016 (Mon – Frid)  
Study Week

May 7, 2016 (Saturday)  
CA Signing

May 9 – 29, 2016  
Second Semester Examinations

July 11 – 19, 2016  
Supplementary Examinations

IDE IN PICTURES



UNISWA staff at an OER workshop at Sibayeni



Dr Mhlanga, SAIDE, with UNISWA staff members



COL representative with FHS, IDE authors



UNISWA staff at a recent training session, IDE Computer Room



## Educational Book Publishers Hold Book Expo at UNISWA

By Dr GN Nsibande

On March 15 and 16, 2016 at the UNISWA, Kwaluseni Campus Ligcabo LeMaswati Emporium, the UNISWA based bookshop Van Schaik Bookstores, Swaziland, did a wonderful thing. They invited several well renowned publishers to display books which covered subject areas across the curriculum. Personally, I found it absolutely thrilling to be able to browse the various displays and peruse the books while discussing them with the respective publishing house representatives.

Interestingly and in parallel with the blended learning notion and indeed the current digital era we are living in, the publishers offered many of their titles in print format as well as in electronic format.

The exhibition was designed so that lecturers got an opportunity to view titles which are relevant to their subject area. The invitation sent to all lecturers eloquently articulated the gist of the expo which was a request to them to "...join a conversation between lecturers and publishers about the latest prescribed textbooks... This is a chance for lecturers at the UNISWA to browse the latest academic titles for the students and also get a chance to meet various publishers..." (Van Schaik, Swaziland, 2016)

Publishers who were in attendance and had displays include: John Wiley, Book Promotions, Oxford University Press, Juta Publishers, Van Schaik Publishers, Lexis Nexia, Cengage and McGraw – Hill.

Bringing the issue of book publishing closer home, to me, attending this book display truly reminded me that, "globally there is emphasis on a knowledge based economy and 'books' are the necessary ingredient to ensure that this happens. If Swaziland supported the publishing industry and a variety of quality books and or genre were produced, it would ensure that there is a high number of educated people nationwide..." (Nsibande, 2006).

Thank you Van Schaik Bookstores, Swaziland for bringing this expo to UNISWA. Hopefully this book expo has whet the lecturers' appetite enough to order and buy those necessary books. What's more, we trust that even more publishers are inspired to come display their products next time.

"Without books, history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled, thought and speculation at a standstill"

Barbara Tuchman

## IS WRITING IN PLAIN/SIMPLE LANGUAGE A WAY TO 'DUMB DOWN' CONTENT?

*Advocating that Writing in Plain/Simple Language is the best way to teach Distance Learners through modules has brought controversy among Distance Education Authors...*

*Watch this space in our next issue !*

## Teaching Practice in the Institute of Distance Education

By Dr. Karen Ferreira-Meyers and Dr. Sipho Shongwe

### What is TP?

Teaching practice is an important event in the life of an aspiring teacher. It is a period that stretches from 5 weeks (for B. Ed. Year 3 and Year 4 students) to 10 weeks (for PGCE students) which can be stress-free (if you follow the rules and regulations) or stressful (if you decide to take your own route and not cooperate with all the role-players involved).

You probably already know that teaching practice refers to a temporary period of teaching in a school undertaken under supervision by a person who is training to become a teacher. But perhaps you are not so aware of the rules and regulations guiding teaching practice at UNISWA and in particular at IDE.

### TP Rules and Regulations

As a UNISWA student, the first port of call to find out about rules and regulations is always the UNISWA Calendar. The Special Regulations for Teaching Practice can be found on page 121 of the 2015/2016 University of Swaziland Calendar (Institute of Distance Education and Non-Credit Health Programmes).

In addition and to make things more comprehensible for you, the Faculty of Education has prepared a small booklet entitled **Teaching Practice Guidelines**, which IDE also uses as its basis for the Teaching Practice task. In it, you will find information about the aims of Teaching Practice; the roles and duties of the Coordinator, Supervisors, Head Teachers, Subject Teachers and the Student Teachers. It is therefore of utmost importance that you familiarize yourself with this booklet before starting on your Teaching Practice assignment.

### Importance of adhering to TP Rules and Regulations

One of the most important rules governing your teaching practice exercise is that 'you are to abide by all the rules and regulations of your school, the University and the Teaching Service Commission while on TP. These rules and regulations, as outlined in your Teaching

Practice Guidelines form part of the assessment criteria used by your Supervisors.

Some of these regulations and rules are included in the 'assessment' form used to assess your performance, while others are contained in your TP Guide. It is therefore of paramount importance to know and keep all of them as they are determining your success in the TP course. Sometimes your failure to adhere to these rules and regulations not only affects you but other students who will want to do their teaching practice in the schools in future.

### Examples of behaviour that leads to problems during TP

1. Deliberate delay or failure to submit teaching timetables on time to the Institute.
2. Failure to report changes to the time table to the Institute and Supervisors timeously.
3. Failure to report change of schools in the course of teaching practice to the Institute and the schools.
4. Unruly behaviour and truancy in the schools by practicing students.
5. Playing the 'hide and seek' game on Supervisors.

## THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND NEEDS AN OPEN UNIVERSITY

By Prof. Satish Rastogi

The History of Distance Education has witnessed many rapid changes in its approach to achieve the target of 'Need Based Mass Education'. It is because the Technological advancements are very fast and the Distance Education accepts and adopts the same to its approach. The correspondence education is first stage and it had in practice the cyclostyled lessons through post. Postal Correspondence was primary media supplemented with few days contact sessions during leisure time among the teachers and distance learners. This practice was supplemented with Audio/Video support when tape recorder and VCR came into existence. Later on, media like Radio, Television, had also joined the Distance Education.

In 1969, the first Open University at Milton Keynes, London started to function with print material supplemented with Audio/Video support. The advents of Computer Technology, Internet, Satellite Communication and Mobile phones etc. have also contributed a lot to communication with distance learners. These advancements have brought rapid changes for making a quick and effective two way communication in a distance education scenario.

An Open University provides a chance to study through distance education mode with flexibility or openness. This openness provides students freedom to learn at their own rate, pace and time. An Open University may bring a new vision of independence for Distance Education as distinct from traditional education. The Open University of United Kingdom is the largest and most innovative educational organisation in the world. It is a leader in the large –scale application of technology to facilitate distance learning. The success of Britain's Open University was the major reason for the development of open universities in other countries.

An Open University not only overcomes the restrictive concept of place and time, but also eliminates the boundary of nations and nationalities. University of South Africa (UNISA) in South Africa is an example of the same. This is a distance mode Open University having its branches and Centers in many African countries. Tanzania Open University in Tanzania is also an example of the same. Asia is much enriched with Open Universities. India has alone fourteen open Universities catering for educational needs of local students in regional languages. There is no pressure and fear upon students to follow the rigidity of rules framed for conventional system learners.

In a dual mode system of Distance Education, like that at the University of Swaziland (UNISWA), the distance learners have to follow rules and regulations meant for conventional learners. Both, a distance learner and a conventional learner, has to follow and cover same syllabus in a prescribed time

limit and will appear in examination together on the same date and time and will write same question paper. If a distance learner fails to get pass marks even after three attempts, in one or many courses at any stage of study, he will be gracefully asked to leave his studies. His money spent, time devoted to study, and his efforts made till date, will give him no value or credit. These students need sympathetic treatment and deserve more chances to get at least passing marks in the concerned papers.

Swaziland is a small country with a population of 1,291,298 people (January 2016). There are 635,417 males and 655,881 females (<http://countrymeters.info/en/Swaziland>). 487,710 (37.8%) population is under the age of 15 years while between 15 to 64 years old are 757,036 (58.6%) adults. Only 46,551 (3.6%) of population is 65 and more. According to an estimate 702,909 (87.47%) persons of adult population in Swaziland are able to read and write. Accordingly about 100,692 adults are illiterate. Literacy rate for adult male population is 87.44 % (346,235 persons). 49,729 male persons are illiterate. Similarly, literacy rate for adult female population is 87.5 % (356,674 persons). 50,963 female persons are illiterate. Also, the youth literacy rates are 93.53% for males and 96.02% for females. The overall literacy rate is 94.77%.

This Youth group belongs to population between 15-24 years of age. An Open University is a Mass Varsity catering for a wide variety of educational needs of the mass. Above cited illiterate persons may acquire some skills which may help them to earn for their livelihood. They may learn carpentry or hair cutting or shoe repairing or a mason or may work as cleaners in rural areas where there is a dearth of such skilled persons. People look towards Manzini or Mbabane for such help and visit these places for such help after wasting their time and lot of money on travel expenses. The Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi in India and Tanzania Open University have many such programmes which may (if adopted in Swaziland) make a person skilled in some field and finally would help him to earn handsome money.

The literacy rate in Swaziland is very high and some of these literate persons may be in employment. They need staff development in their field. For example, Masters in Business Administration (M.B.A) Programme through distance mode may make a bank employee or businessmen more efficient in his/her work. There may be some youth unemployed and may acquire a Bachelor degree in any field of their choice to get a good job. In the beginning, the proposed Open University may borrow some programme from other Open Universities and start the business in Swaziland. The developed countries like Japan, China, South Africa, Canada, United Kingdom, and Australia etc. have also Open University systems in their countries and many of the people have benefitted with this offer. The developing countries like India, Fiji, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Sri Lanka etc. have a huge rush of aspiring students for their higher educational needs.

Some researches have shown that Open University products are not inferior to the product of Conventional Universities. Now it can be an opportunity for the Government of Swaziland to

frame legislation for an Open University in Swaziland. A High level committee may be formed which may comprise of some Educationists, Administrators, Legislators of Swaziland and some foreign experts in Open and Distance Learning system. This committee may like to visit some Open Universities in different countries to study their infrastructure and submit its report to the Government of Swaziland.

In the beginning it will be a onetime expenditure for building construction, Staff recruitment and necessary expenditures in purchasing equipment. But in the long run, it is a money earning business as it will give admission to a large number of aspiring students for different programmes. They will study at a distance by using Print Material in Self Instructional Material (SIM) format and some Audio/Video CDs. They can take academic counselling emailing their tutors or through peer group interaction among themselves. If needed, there may be some contact programmes also from time to time to meet and discuss questions, queries and confusions among themselves after self-learning through material supplied to them.

There are Open Universities and even Open Schools which do not accept Government grants for their expenditures. They have made fixed deposit with Banks which give Interest on these fixed deposits and Open Universities use this money for meeting their day to day expenditures including salaries for its employees. It is therefore evident that Swaziland Government has a bright scope of starting an Open University in Swaziland to meet educational needs of the Mass.

**"An Open University is a Mass Varsity with a flavour of Openness"**

*Sir James Maraj, First President of Commonwealth of Learning, Canada.*