



University of Eswatini
Institute of Distance Education

NEWSLETTER

“CHAMPIONS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION”

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Editor: Miss S Shongwe
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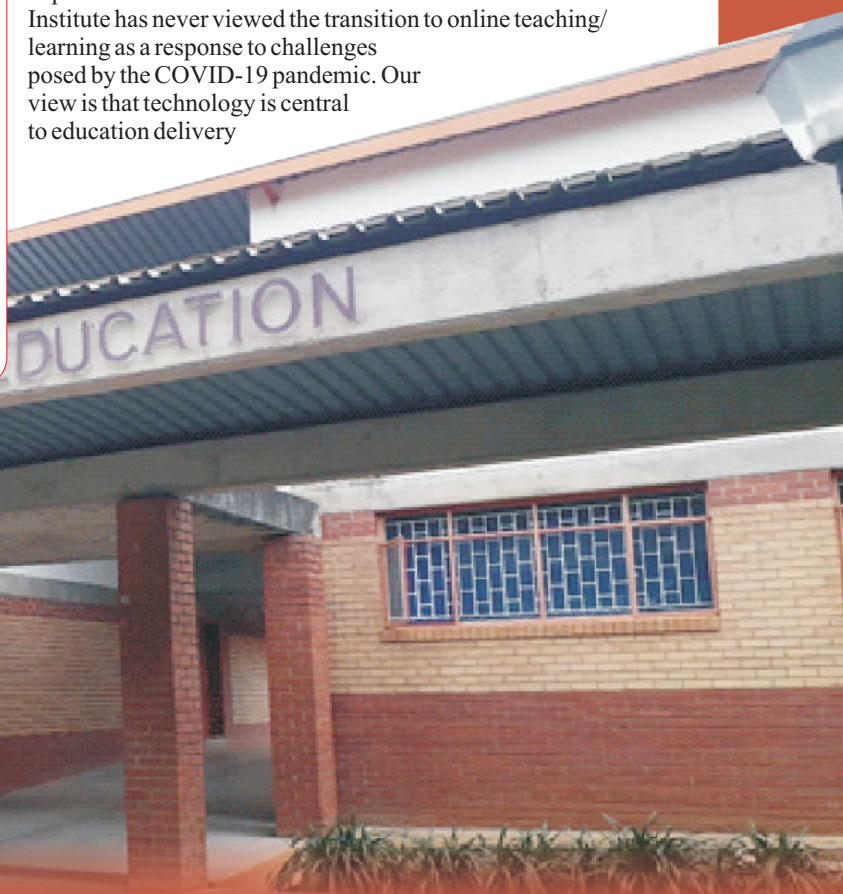
Foreword from the IDE Director



IDE Director: Professor C. Maphosa

I welcome you to the 22nd issue of the IDE Newsletter. This issue is published at the time we continue to entrench our online teaching/learning approaches. As an Institute, we have fully embraced blended learning. All our courses

are offered with a carefully designed mix of face-to-face and online approaches. The Moodle Learning Management System is the official digital learning platform for UNESWA and we expect all our course instructors to utilise the said LMS. The Institute has never viewed the transition to online teaching/learning as a response to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our view is that technology is central to education delivery





Foreword from IDE Director

CONTINUED FROM COVER PAGE

in the post-COVID-19 period. The 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) compels educators to be prepared to teach effectively and efficiently in the digital age.

Our move to online teaching, is hinged on deliberate plans of training and support for all course instructors. As an Institute we are well aware that effective online facilitation is only possible by training and supporting course instructors. Course instructors should understand and appreciate pedagogical and andragogic principles underpinning the utilisation of technology in education. Such an understanding and appreciation positions course instructors to make informed decisions about technology utilisation. Inasmuch as we train and support course instructors, it is also imperative for course instructors to invest in improving online teaching skills by studying courses on offer on different aspects of online teaching. The basic course is an online course design as this influences all other aspects of online teaching.

This issue is published as we celebrate a milestone achievement by the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini. The government, through the Ministry of Education and Training launched the National Open and Distance Learning (ODL) policy which was approved by Cabinet in 2020. A report on the policy launch is contained in this issue. The IDE was actively involved in the national ODL policy development process and is quite excited that there is commitment at the highest level to the importance of ODL as a viable and significant education delivery mode. As an Institute we are also excited about the UNESWA Senate's approval of the Revised IDE Policy Guidelines. The approved Guidelines provide the Institute with an expanded mandate, which is important in the enhancement of IDE operations.

The different presentations in this issue continue to buttress on our online teaching/learning initiatives. The article by Prof Esampally (IDE Coordinator Professor and Academic Studies) foregrounds the issue of Open Educational Resources (OER) in online teaching and learning. Online learning connects the learners to learning resources and OER are available and freely accessible resources which should be utilised for online teaching/learning. The insights from Dr H. P Dlamini (Lecturer & Coordinator – Humanities) about distance education and how to improve distance education provisioning by benchmarking with other ODL institutions are well noted. The article by Prof Ferreira-Meyers (Associate Professor and Coordinator – Linguistics and Modern Languages) underlines the importance of utilising virtual spaces for knowledge exchange and professional development through webinars and online conferences. She has contributed greatly in online presentations thus lifting high the UNESWA and IDE flag, nationally and internationally. Dr Mafumbate (Senior Lecturer and Assistant Tutor – Education) shares very useful information about the psychosocial challenges induced by the COVID-19 pandemic and suggests ways of coping with the challenges. Our Law programmes continue to improve in operation and the successfully held Moot Court sessions, which I personally witness, are testimony of the high calibre of legal officers under training through distance education. We thank Mr Mavuso (Lecturer and Coordinator Law) and Dr D.C

Dlamini (Lecturer and Assistant Tutor – Law) and the entire team for working very hard in the implementation of the Clinical Legal Education course.

I am grateful for the feedback we got from the IDE students based in Botswana and we strive to improve our systems in to enhance their distance learning experiences. I commend the IDE academic staff members for their consistent involvement in research and publication, conference presentation, community engagement as well as funding application. As an academic Institute we have to claim our space in the academia and this is only possible through continuous professional development, knowledge generation and sharing.

I invite you to engage with all the articles in this issue as we seek to share our experiences and practices in the different facets of ODL provisioning. The COVID-19 pandemic is still with us with threats of new and more deadly variants. I, therefore, urge you to continue observing all the protocols and, most importantly, to get vaccinated.

I wish you a happy and restful festive period.

PROFESSOR C. MAPHOSA

PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR



Editor's Note

"Championing Online Distance Education"

Welcome to the 22nd issue of the IDE Newsletter. In this publication, we feature individuals who champion and promote distance education. Congratulations to Professor Maphosa, IDE's Director who recently completed a Master's degree in Open and Distance Learning with the University of South Africa and passed with flying colours. He attained a distinction (Cum Laude). Indeed, he practises what he preaches as he constantly motivates IDE staff members to continuously improve themselves. We also meet Dr HP Dlamini, our Coordinator for the Humanities Programme. She is currently on a sabbatical leave pursuing research.

From Botswana, we meet Ms Catherine Kgwakgwe, one of our students and she shares her journey in distance education with us. Mr Geina Dlamini, another student also encourages new students to be committed to their work and embrace distance education as they pursue their studies. IDE has had a series of workshops between October and November 2021. Professor K Ferreira-Meyers and Dr PS Dlamini take us through IDE's workshops on strengthening online teaching which were held with IDE Staff and IDE part-time lecturers.

Your comments help us to continuously improve our content. Please forward your feedback to; stshongwe@uniswa.sz.

Thank you.
Ms Sipiwe Shongwe



IDE DIRECTOR SCORES A FIRST CLASS



The IDE Director, Prof Maphosa has just completed a Master's degree in Open and Distance Learning with the University of South Africa. He did not only pass the degree programme with a distinction (Cum Laude) but also completed the three-year programme within two years. The IDE Newsletter Editor, Ms Shongwe visited the Director in his office to understand more about this exceptional achievement and he agreed to answer her questions.

What motivated you to study for a qualification in ODL?

I am an ODL practitioner and the ODL field is always evolving and there is a need for one to be up to date with changes in the field. I believe strongly in the importance of professional development for enhanced practice. Therefore, I took it upon myself to undertake a programme in ODL in order to improve my knowledge and skills in the Open and Distance e-Learning system that I preside over.

As a Director, you always have a very busy daily schedule and given the fact that you manage a very large institute, how did you manage to complete the programme of study?

The whole purpose of ODeL is to allow students the flexibility of studying while involved in other commitments of life. In lifelong learning, you do not separate learning from life. A great number of my students in IDE are full-time workers who are studying and as a full-time worker I also felt I could take up the challenge. So I decided to enrol for the Master's degree in Open and Distance and Learning. However, what made it possible for me to progress well in the programme was the ability to balance my time at home



IDE Director: Professor C. Maphosa

and during weekends. I had to strictly allocate time for my studies to ensure that I was able to give adequate time to my studies and it worked well for me. In any case, as a researcher I have always been creating time for my research work and in the same way I also created time for the new load of a degree programme.

What was the structure of the UNISA ODL programme?

The programme has course work (four modules) and a mini dissertation. Most students take two courses per year for two years and then do the dissertation in the third year. I took all the four courses in the first year and the mini dissertation in the second year.

Kindly give us a bit of information about the course content.

One of the modules was on management in ODL. The course was aimed at equipping students with management theories and techniques of running ODL institutions and units. There was also a course on theory and research in ODL which aimed at exposing students to theoretical underpinnings of open and distance learning as well as research skills. The curriculum development in ODL course assisted students in understanding curriculum broadly as well as developing ODL curricula and online courses. The other course was Technology in ODL which encapsulated the role and actual use of technology in



ODL delivery.

What was the mode of delivery for the programme?

The programme was offered online. The course content was delivered online and made extensive use of the discussion, research and presentation approaches. Some live virtual sessions were also utilised in the different courses. The course instructors were effective online learning facilitators, so the teaching, cognitive and social 'presences' were felt in the online engagements.

How were you assessed in the different courses?

Almost all online activities were assessed as they contributed to a continuous assessment mark. There were also assignments in all the courses; the assignments required wide reading, interpretation and application of concepts learnt. All work was submitted through the Turnitin anti-plagiarism software and this enhanced academic integrity of the work. Summative assessment was in the form of a detailed critical-reflection portfolio in each one of the courses.

What did you learn from the programme and how would you apply this to IDE?

To be honest with you, this was a very rich programme. I learnt so much from each one of the four content modules. In the management module, for example, I benefitted very much from the systems thinking in management. An ODL institute such as IDE is made up of many units and the different units should work coherently together for the attainment of larger institutional goals. Units should be empowered to plan their activities and reflect on the activities in planning and implementation. Self-reflection leads to growth. I also learnt under systems thinking that an institution is a self-organising entity. This means that change should be driven by the internal players by addressing their felt needs. Institutions may be rendered redundant if they do not adapt to new ways of operating in response to changes in the outer world.

In the Curriculum Development module I was exposed to practical involvement in online course development. There are different models of online course development and one should be able to follow one model or a combination of models in designing online courses. The steps followed in online course development should be very clear from the beginning of the development process.

In the Technology in ODL module emphasis was placed on the role of technology in learning. I learnt that pedagogy should be considered first and technology comes in to advance a particular pedagogical thrust. I

was exposed to new online learning theories such as the Community of Inquiry, online collaborative learning and connectivism. The said theories assisted me to understand how to learn by utilising technology. Of importance was the need to enhance the different forms of interaction in online learning.

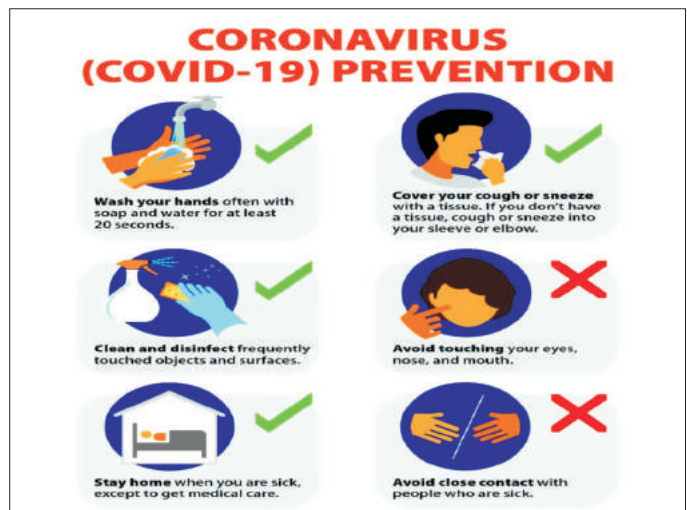
All what I learnt is easily applied in the numerous professional development programmes that we run as IDE in enhancing the capacity of our course instructors. The development of the Postgraduate Diploma in Open and Distance e-Learning to be offered by IDE comes handy in formalising capacity building for ODL practitioners in Eswatini and the region.

Would you encourage IDE staff members to take the programme?

Professional development is at the heart of any profession if one is to remain relevant. I, therefore, encourage IDE staff to undertake different courses related to their areas of ODeL delivery. There are a lot of MOOCS which are very rich and useful in developing the capacity of ODeL practitioners. I certainly encourage and appeal to University Management to support professional development initiatives by staff members. A skilled worker is an asset to any organisation and the benefits to an organisation are priceless.

How do you feel about scoring a distinction in this programme?

I am really elated by my achievement. The Coordinator for the programme indicated that they had never encountered such high marks since the inception of the programme. Scoring marks above 80% in all four courses and getting an overall 80% mark is great by any standard. I am quite thrilled by this and it came as a result of hard work and self-discipline, together with high levels of multi-tasking.





RESEARCH - THE LIFELINE OF ACADEMICS

By: Dr HP Dlamini Lecturer and Coordinator - Humanities - IDE

The IDE Newsletter Editor, Ms Shongwe has a very pleasant one - on - one conversation with the young, exuberant Dr HP Dlamini to unpack Dlamini's journey in her career path. Here is what Ms Shongwe unearthed of Dr Dlamini's career and personality.

Ms Shongwe: Dr Dlamini, you are the coordinator for humanities at IDE. Please share your academic journey.

Dr Dlamini: Thank you for this question. It has been a long journey that required a lot of patience, endurance and sacrifice. The road to a PhD degree - "Doctor of Philosophy", is a long meandering one. After four years of taxing undergraduate studies in which I was subjected to broad base disciplines in the Humanities including TRS, English Language and Literature and History, I finally graduated in 2008 with a Bachelor of Arts in Humanities. This called for a celebration and my family was over the moon. But the burning desire for further knowledge acquisition pushed me to take a Master of Arts degree in History, which I completed in 2012. The call to become a teacher compelled me to undertake a postgraduate certificate in teaching at the University of South Africa. As a female scholar I thought I should position myself as a role model to others by attempting a PhD degree. So I

sought and obtained admission in the University of Pretoria which has over the years been consistently ranked as the second best university on the African continent. My admission into a PhD programme was contingent on writing an acceptable PhD theses proposal. It took me a whole year to do so and I found myself combing the archives in Eswatini, South Africa and the UK. I mined tons of primary documentation which I combined with other sources to write my PhD thesis which was successfully defended in 2016.

Ms Shongwe: I understand that you have acquired all your academic achievements through distance education. What are your thoughts with regards to Distance Education (DE) in Eswatini?

Dr Dlamini: Let me say that distance education is an instrument of skills training and intellectual upliftment. Distance education is an indispensable partner in man-power development in the Kingdom of Eswatini. The university culture in this country positioned me to acquire my education through the Distance Education mode of learning. However, at the end of the day I can conclude that there was no major difference in the quality and quantity of work that IDE and full-time students were subjected to. Elsewhere on the continent, DE is reserved



exclusively for workers who do not have abundant time for full-time studies, because of professional exigencies. As an IDE student in the University of Eswatini I was not a worker but a full-time time student in the practical sense of the word. So I spent almost 80% of my undergraduate academic career searching for knowledge. The advantage of the DE system of education for me lies in the fact that I developed an independent spirit of learning and research. Textbooks were my best companions and I truly devoured them.

It is this spirit of independent learning that constituted a stepping stone for me to pursue post graduate studies and to ultimately become a producer of knowledge. There is a dictum in the university system which reads: “publish or perish”. You cannot publish scholarly works if you have not developed the attitude of independent reading. For one thing, reading and writing is a habit and it must be cultivated during the nascent stage of one's academic career.

If you miss acquiring the habit of reading and writing, you will be unable to publish a single article even if you have multiple PhDs. I, therefore, owe a lot to the DE culture of independent reading and writing. There is a negative side of Distance Education which I must point out. Some students in this mode of learning are not genuinely committed to anything academic. They want to get a degree at any cost, even through unorthodox means by refusing to read and working independently. They believe that by depending on handouts from course instructors, they can make good scholars. This is not true. What happens to them is that, the University fails to transform them.

Ms Shongwe: Given that in the past year, many academic institutions migrated to the distance education mode, what (in your opinion) would be the best way to adopt distance education?

Dr Dlamini: My response to this question is simple, every unforeseen situation otherwise referred to in technical parlance as “force majeure” creates its own responses and culture. We were attacked by COVID-19, a global pandemic. Responses all over the world were very similar. Initially there were school shut-downs everywhere and multiple Distance Education techniques were employed. A new education culture was born. However, at one point COVID-19 cases began to recede, the traditional face-to-face mode of

education started bouncing back. Let me be very clear on one fact, the Distance Education system of education is universal and serves particular societal needs. The face-to-face system of education is beneficial and desired by society because it relieves many of parental obligations of child care and supervision. It should always be recognised that human beings are social animals. They always want to come together and interact in a classroom and other social spaces. Face-to-face education is the remaking of our humanity and we cannot be deprived of being human beings. We must socialise in order to discover our humanity. No matter what the circumstances, DE can never replace face-to-face education and vice versa.

Ms Shongwe: Is there a country or institution that we can learn from, in terms of fully implementing DE programmes?

Dr Dlamini: Let me make a point straight away that Distance Education is not cheap. For it to be effectively implemented Distance Education must stand out as an autonomous institution that is well funded in terms of infrastructure and personnel and it must mutually coexist in some form of symbiosis with full time lectures of the university system. The system of Distance Education in Abuja (Nigeria) is a mammoth organisation with its own autonomous personnel that coordinates that type of education in Nigeria and it is financially stable. The same is true of the Distance Education in Ghana and the University of South Africa which I happen to have first knowledge about. You cannot learn in Distance Education by just reading books, Distance Education lecturers need to go on sabbatical to other Distance Education institutions to learn and see how they operate. The running of Distance Education programmes goes hand-in-hand with resources and knowledge.

Ms Shongwe: Please share where you are at now and areas/discipline you intend to influence

Dr Dlamini: Thank you very much for this question which I am ethically bound to answer. Knowledge acquisition, production and proliferation is a continuous process. There are gaps in our curriculum which need to be filled through research. Since the “Rhodes must fall campaign” in South Africa which unleashed the campaign for the



decolonisation of the disciplines, African scholars were challenged to establish decolonisation epistemologies. I, therefore, found myself in a cohort of scholars studying the curriculum in Eswatini, South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda and the UK in the spirit of itinerary or nomadic scholars. This task is not easy because we are compelled to demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that it is possible to decolonise subject disciplines. It is a real challenge because most of the textbooks that inform our scholarship are authored by Eurocentric scholars or Africans who are Eurocentric. The big question that is staring us in the face is how to be Afrocentric and decolonise subject disciplines.

Ms Shongwe: Kindly encourage our readers to embrace distance education

Dr Dlamini: Distance Education is imposed by the very nature of society. Workers cannot be full time students. Since Eswatini is a developmental country EmaSwati workers who want to improve their skills have no choice but to take up Distance Education . We need a critical mass of highly educated workers in Eswatini to move this country forward through the instruments of DE. The more educated you are the more functional you become.

WEBINAR AND VIRTUAL CONFERENCE ORGANISATION AND PARTICIPATION

**By: Professor Karen Ferreira-Meyers,
Coordinator – Linguistics and
Modern Languages**



**Professor Karen
Ferreira-Meyers**

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of new skills, in particular those of online presentation, communication and collaboration. I used to regularly travel to and participate in

international conferences. How could I continue to share knowledge and learn from colleagues all around the world once the pandemic hit? Easy, really, well at least once I understood that so much could be done online. Including the fact that some aspects of participating in webinars were even more beneficial to me than what I did previously.

What then are webinars? They are basically seminars that are held online. Online or virtual conferences have the same objectives at face-to-face ones: scholars get together, discuss their research, network and collaborate.

So, the scholarly endeavours continue during and beyond Covid-19.

On 15 June, I was invited to hold a webinar for the UNESCO Chair on Open Distance Learning (ODL) Webinar Series. My one-hour webinar was entitled: "Does online equate to flexible in the teaching and learning of languages?"

In it, I focused on objectives and strategies of teaching and learning of languages, on whether online environments allow effective language teaching and learning, on what flexibility entails and on whether going online (during the Covid-19 pandemic) equates to flexibility. With regard to flexibility, we need to note that it can be built in at different levels (flexible delivery, flexible curriculum, flexible programmes, flexible usage of tools and devices, flexible assessment, etc.). For example, when it comes to flexible delivery - there are various advantages, such as the fact that flexible models of delivery can:

- allow individuals to learn where and when it suits them;
- offer employers (such as universities) training that can accommodate business demands and work patterns;
- be economically viable for the provider and make best use of available staff;
- increase participation in learning;
- meet the access needs of a wide range of



learners;

- make the best use of accommodation;
- develop more adaptable and responsive staff;
- build learners' confidence and independence;
- respond to the preferred learning styles of different learners;
- increase retention and attendance;
- improve achievement and success rates, and
- enable staff within your own organisation to gain new knowledge and skills.

While we have moved swiftly into flexibility of delivery (or at least more flexibility than pre-Covid-19), we are yet to tackle issues of curriculum flexibility. According to Jonker, H., März, V., and Voogt, J. (2020), in their Curriculum flexibility in a blended curriculum (*Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 36(1), 68-84. <https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.4926>), curriculum flexibility is conceptualised in terms of adaptability and accessibility of the curriculum to students' needs and capabilities.

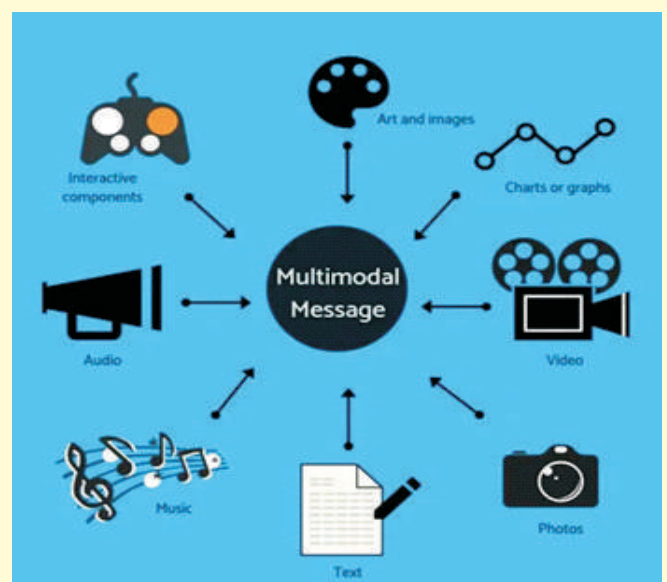
With a flexible curriculum, learners are provided with more opportunities to regulate their learning process and the learning environment (Collis and Moonen, 2001; Hill, 2006). Cheong (2013) argued that the nature of 'flexibility' revolves around learners: what choices are available and how they affect their learning, while Tucker and Morris (2011), described a flexible curriculum as something which can be positioned anywhere along a continuum with flexible curricula at the one end and traditional fixed curricula at the other. This means that there are degrees of flexibility.

I concluded my webinar with the idea that educational institutions need to develop and diversify infrastructure, increase collaboration and provide flexible learning pathways. Universities and other institutions of higher learning have to create more agile and flexible systems for digital pedagogy and low-tech innovations. This is to give learning opportunities to students who are disadvantaged when it comes to financial resources, learning abilities and access to the internet, such as many still are in Eswatini.

Collaborations with public-private partners are useful and can be of assistance when it comes to ensuring the quality of accessing innovative technologies, infrastructure and digital skill training.

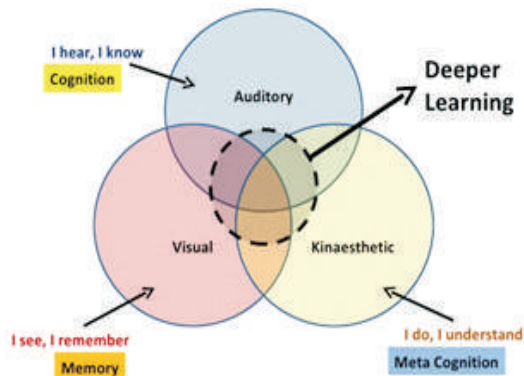
A few days later, on 23 June, I presented a keynote speech at an international webinar organised by an Indonesian university. This time my focus was again on flexibility, but more precisely flexibility in the teaching and learning of languages through the use of OER (Open Educational Resources) and the multimodality approach. As we know, technologies have been widely applied to the teaching and learning of various disciplines, including language education. The quantity, quality, diversity of technologies integrated into language learning is significant (Chen et al., 2020; Slavuj et al., 2017) and the use of language learning apps is steadily increasing (e.g. Duolingo or Babbel). Smartphones and tablets have become essential devices in language classrooms – even more so when it comes to online/virtual learning. This has led to TELL: Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (Chen et al., 2020; Godwin-Jones, 2011). It is good to know that some of these technologies used to teach and learn different languages are open source.

In this particular talk, I also spoke about multimodality. The visual below shows what multimodality means: I am sure that it is not difficult to understand how much the teaching and learning of languages can be improved by using different modalities. It helps us to construct





Multi-Modal Learning



knowledge by allowing learners to become their own agents of learning (choosing which modality suits them best) and it caters for learner diversity.

On the 22nd of June, I was invited to form part of a panel discussion organised by the Association of African Universities (AAU). The main objective of this 3-hour long discussion with colleagues from all over Africa was to share thoughts and ideas on how to deal with the challenges presented to us on a daily basis.

Authentic Online Assessment

Assessment – a webinar series organised by the Centre of Excellence in Learning and Teaching and the Institute of Distance Learning

By: Professor Karen Ferreira-Meyers, Coordinator – Linguistics and Modern Languages

In the brief report below, I share information regarding the webinar series on authentic online assessment organised by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) and the Institute of Distance Learning (IDE).

UNESWA stakeholders felt it important to learn more about authentic assessment and how it could be undertaken online. For this reason and with the main objective to share knowledge on authentic online assessment as well as experiences from the different faculties within the university, Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) and IDE staff members sat down to collaboratively devise a webinar series.

The first webinar was held on 16 August 2021. Its objectives were as follows:

1. *define and discuss concepts (assessment, constructive alignment, authentic (online)*

assessment);

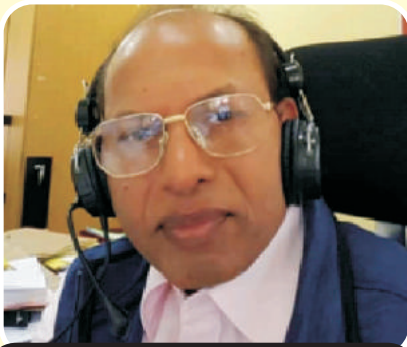
2. *identify challenges related to authentic online assessment;*

3. *propose possible solutions;*

4. *note specific points that need further discussion.*

Professor Fowler made a presentation entitled “What is assessment and constructive alignment?” and Professor Ferreira-Meyers one which carried the title “What is authentic assessment and challenges and solutions relating to authentic online assessment”. Then Prof. Fowler facilitated a question and answer session. The conclusion of the session as well as a way forward were presented by Professor Ferreira-Meyers.

In the meantime other four webinars were held. Speakers were invited from various UNESWA faculties to share with the wider university community their challenges and their successes in moving authentic assessment online.



**Professor Chandraiah
Esampally**

Open Educational Resource (OER)-based Online Teaching and Learning at the Institute of Distance Education

By: Professor Chandraiah Esampally: Professor and Coordinator-Academic

COVID-19 resulted in the biggest disruption that the education sector experienced in recent history as institution of learning were closed during the pandemic. Hence, millions of Higher Education students worldwide were affected. Crisis generates creativity. The silver lining in closures was the global acceptance and appreciation of Open Distance and eLearning.

A study conducted by the Open Educational Resources (OERs) Foundation and Commonwealth of Learning (COL) in May 2020 found that over 75% of the respondents expressed a demand for OER-based online courses (Kanwar, 2015a). Evidently, this is the time for Open Distance and eLearning (ODEL) Community to play a role in helping to main-stream ODeL through appropriate policies, practices and investment in ICT infrastructure. This also means adopting a targeted approach for vulnerable students, who cannot afford access to education through technologies (Kanwar, 2015b). Realising the absence of ODeL governance and coordination at ministerial level, the Government of Eswatini, in consultation with COL and Uneswa, recently developed a “National Open and Distance Learning Policy”. This will be used for expanding access to education which strengthens the existing ODeL system in the country.

Due to the rapid technological changes, IDE has constantly been seeking technology solutions that are Affordable, Accessible, Available and Appropriate (AAAA) to its diverse student community. As part of this, IDE has been promoting networked OER-based Online Teaching-Learning Systems to increase access to teaching and learning and to improve the quality of education.

Open Educational Resources (OERs).

According to UNESCO, “Open Educational Resources (OER) are 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.” OER form part of 'Open Solutions', alongside Free and Open Source Software (FOSS), Open Access (OA), Open Data (OD) and crowdsourcing platforms.

OERs have an open license, which allows adaptation and reuse without having to request this from the copyright holder. OERs can be repurposed and reused to suit different needs and could be available in any medium, print, audio, and video. They can be fully self-contained textbooks, videos, quizzes, learning modules and more.

Some Important Developments in OER and Online Learning

We have seen a global movement towards collaboration in the development and sharing of content. Let us now look at some key developments in the last decade that have had a lasting impact on the way we think about teaching and learning.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) Open Courseware (OCW) initiative, in which teachers placed their lecture notes online for free use, inaugurated the movement globally. The Open University UK's Open Learn followed by placing existing self-instructional materials online. Another shift took place when the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) took a different approach by building capacity to develop



courses collaboratively using free authoring tools (Daniel, Kanwar and West, 2007). COL and UNESCO have been working for several years now to promote the development and use of OER. The 2012 World OER Congress was organised jointly in Paris to mark the tenth anniversary of the term OER, with generous support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

Today, the OER movement is resulting in a multi-directional flow of knowledge. We have usually seen a one-way flow of knowledge from the developed to the developing world. OER presents an opportunity for a global exchange of knowledge, as we have learnt from the work of OERAfrica. For instance, a lecturer at the University of Ghana, Medical College, developed a simple procedure for a Caesarian section and video-recorded 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 developed an OER module which is being used by the World Health Organization and the University of Michigan (www.col.org).

OER-based Online Teaching and Learning at IDE

Advanced technology tools and applications enable students to have access to a global network of education and knowledge and repositories as they can access links to other websites. When students have an easy access to the World Wide Web, they are equipped with current knowledge, skills and attitudes to take full advantage of new opportunities readily available to them.

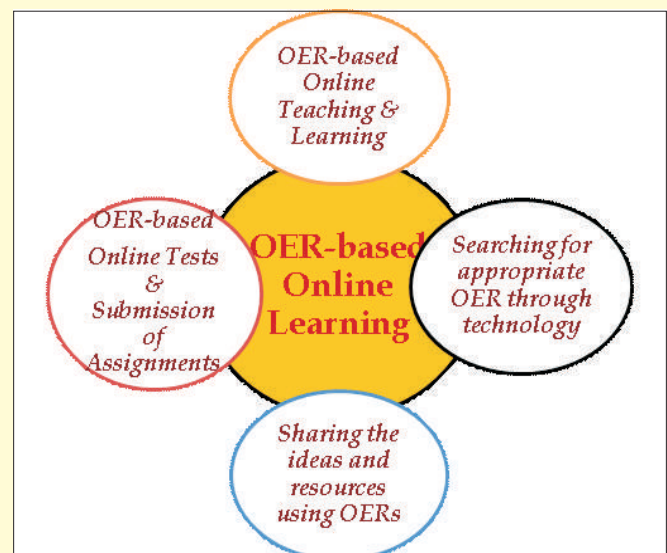
In this regard, IDE has joined the OER movement and has been contributing in fostering awareness and use of OER. IDE has already entered into advanced generation of Open Distance and eLearning that is characterised by OER-based online delivery. It is enabled learning by multimedia interactive content, with online communication and support.

IDE, in collaboration with COL, has been facilitating training to its teaching staff on OER-based Online Teaching and Learning. This move is to strengthen digital teaching/learning system which is made up of many learning tools and applications that support and empower teachers and students in

OER-based online learning.

In view of the transforming context, IDE started preparing OER-based course materials. In the case of the Bachelor of Nursing Science (Completion Programme), in collaboration with COL, the Faculty of Health Sciences, after the training, engaged in preparing OER-based course materials for IDE students. They also engaged in OER-based teaching by extracting relevant OER materials from various sources and posting them onto the student portal of the Moodle LMS. Similarly, some teachers from other Faculties, who have been teaching IDE students, are engaged in OER-based instruction. As such, IDE is moving from print-based course modules to OER-based online course material mode of education, whereby students depend mostly on OER-based online materials. Furthermore, we are moving from manually written and printed assignments to OER-based online submission of assignments. The institution is also strengthening its ways of conducting OER-based online tests and assessments using the Moodle LMS as shown in the Figure below.

OER-based Online Teaching and Learning at IDE



OER-based Online Teaching and Learning – This takes place through participatory technologies, such as blogs, wikis and social media. This new model of teaching and learning encourages the sharing of knowledge and resources.



Searching for Appropriate OER through Technology

– This action focuses on student behaviour, where OER materials are a by-product of their learning rather than a starting point, which improves the quality of learning.

Sharing ideas and resources – This focuses on group support as the learning is a cognitive process. The peer group shares the OER resources willingly within a connected community.

OER-based Online Tests and Submission of Assignments

– It focuses on the active knowledge-construction process. Students build their own understanding based on the OER material available to them and write tests and submit assignments.

Though the OER-based online teaching and learning is at the nascent stage, IDE is striving to

strengthen the system by focussing on the following three aspects: (i) Connectivity – to increase access to electronic devices; (ii) Content – to provide quality education; and (iii) Capacity building – to provide effective OER- and technology-based online teaching and learning.

As part of capacity building, IDE will soon offer a Certificate in Online Teaching for educators, which is a short duration programme. The purpose of this programme is designing and developing online learning courses. This programme further strengthens the OER-based online teaching and learning in IDE.

As such this system enhances the quality of teaching & learning - as the OER-based online teaching-learning system is based on the principle of “Research-based Teaching and Enquiry-based Learning”. (Esampally, 2019).

COVID-19 DRIVEN PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES:



Dr Racheal Mafumbate
Senior Lecturer
& Assistant Tutor - Education

A Wellness Perspective

By: Dr Racheal Mafumbate

We conducted a study that explored experiences of students, lecturers and support staff in higher learning institutions in Eswatini regarding COVID-19 pandemic over one year

and eight months. Our research investigated associated psychological stress as well as subjects' state of wellness in their working environment. Furthermore, the study investigated the associated psychological stress as well as subjects' state of wellness in their working environment. In this regard, the study highlighted some stress management strategies which are normally adopted to enhance individuals' wellness. A purposive sampling method was used to select forty (40)

participants whose age ranged between thirty and sixty years and consisted both men and women.

It is worth mentioning that even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, workers in developing countries had been experiencing some stress and burnout due to unfavourable working conditions which negatively impacted on their wellness. Later, this situation was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

When COVID-19 struck early in 2020, it is safe to say, no one anticipated the repercussions of the pandemic in the education sector. Education institutions had to be closed as a measure of curbing the spread of the virus. There was a total shutdown which nobody envisaged. While the extended schools' closure was a huge disruption in the school year, it taught us that learning can continue through distance education and blended learning which leans



more on digital means of teaching/learning. Consequently, this had an effect on student-teacher relationships (that is crucial for student support), success and retention (Clarkson, 2014).

Rationale for this Study

The study is significant in the field of wellness of individuals as well as emotional intelligence and was expected to bring awareness of indicators which hamper enhancement of wellness. Furthermore, the study is significant in assisting institutions of higher learning to design and develop emotional intelligence programmes, which enhance resilience and communication skills.

Additionally, the paper is expected to add new knowledge on the relationship between COVID-19 and the concept of emotional intelligence in view of the fact that educational institutions still experience increased learning disruptions due to COVID-19. In addition, in Eswatini, there have been protest actions which also contributed to closure of academic institutions. Therefore, enhancing effective communication skills for lecturers when interacting through digital platforms with their students is essential. What then are the aspects of human life to consider when addressing the effects of COVID-19 in institutions of higher learning?

Wellness Dimensions

COVID-19 is a crisis that magnifies psychological stress, which was already prevalent amongst employers and employees in their various work environments. In institutions of higher learning stress is evident among students, lecturers and non-academic staff members. Psychological stress subsequently affects their wellness in their career, socially, emotions physically, intellectually as well as spiritually.

Now you may ask, why so much variants of wellness? Let us begin with intellectual wellness. This is the degree to which one engages in creative and stimulating activities. It entails access to the use of resources to expand knowledge and focus on the acquisition, development, application, and articulation of critical thinking. In this regard, an intellectually sound person uses available intellectual activities, cultural activities and resources to expand his/her knowledge. For many

professionals, the intellectual wellness area was drastically disturbed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Emotional wellness is conceptualised as, awareness and control of feelings. It constitutes a realistic, positive and developmental view of the self, conflict and life circumstances. It determines an individual's ability to cope with stress and includes maintenance of fulfilling relationships with others (Huang and Liu, 2020). When one is well equipped in this dimension, one will have the ability to motivate oneself and persist in the face of adversity/frustrations, delay gratification and suppress impulsiveness.

Social/environmental wellness involves the need for personal identity and a feeling of belonging and getting along with others. It entails being comfortable and willing to express one's feeling, needs and opinions. Social/environmental wellness determines supportive, fulfilling relationships, intimacy, interaction with the social environment as well as contribution to one's community (Ohnishi et al., 2008). Yet, the onslaught of COVID-19 meant that physical socialisation was history, due to required preventive regulations which enforced social distancing (WHO, 2020). This went against the benefits of the Ubuntu principle which is ingrained in us as Africans and so much cherished in our societies.

Physical wellness includes physical activity, nutrition and self-care and it involves preventative and proactive actions to ensure wellness of one's physical body. This dimension is achieved when an individual pursues activities that enhance physical health and avoids activities that are detrimental to his/her physical well-being. The facets of physical wellness include regular physical activity, nutritional responsibility, sufficient relaxation and sleep, self-care and safety awareness (Van Langen, 2010).

Hettler (2018) espouses that achieving wellness means finding a balance in the six key areas (career, social, emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritually) as these overlap in human life. These six distinct dimensions are intertwined and they empower people to contribute meaningfully to their environment and community. They enable us to build a better living space and social networks,



thereby realising an equilibrium and attainment of anticipated lives.

Stress

Having discussed the extent to which COVID-19 disrupted various aspects of normal life, let us focus on stress, a condition that most employees and learners suffer from, due to COVID-19. Stress is any type of change that causes physical, emotional or psychological strain caused by your body's response to anything that requires attention or action. Everyone experiences stress to some degree. However, the way you respond to it makes a big difference to your overall well-being (Baba, 2020).

If someone knows his/her internal state of emotion, it enables self-control and increases empathy for others. Therefore, managing stress relies heavily on emotions. Self-control or self-management of emotions can prevent one from reacting in anger, anxiety and gloom. In turn, such control allows us to be active in our work environment and life (Huang and Liu, 2020). It is crucial to note that, being aware and recognising emotional wellbeing of others is emotional intelligence and a stress management skill which enhances wellness in individuals.

What then is emotional intelligence? This is one's capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions and handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically. People with sound emotional intelligence have the ability to recognise their own emotions and those of others, use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior, discern between different feelings, label them appropriately and adjust emotions to adapt to environments.

How to Cope with Stress *(Managing Relations)*

Relationship management is the ability to be aware of one's emotions and those of others and to manage the interactions with others successfully. This ensures clear communication and effective handling of conflict (Clackson, 2014). Furthermore, socially-skilled people tend to have an ability to build good rapport with people (Baba, 2020).

Self-motivation

Self-motivation is the force that keeps pushing an

individual to go on – it is our internal drive to achieve, produce, develop, and keep moving forward. When you think you are ready to quit something that you are pursuing, or you just do not know how to start, your drive, pushes you to go on. Profoundly self-motivated people blossom with innovative difficulties and appreciate learning (Clarkson, 2014).

Self-awareness

Self-awareness is the ability to accurately perceive our own emotions in the moment and understand our tendencies across situations. This entails being aware of different aspects of self, including traits, behaviours and feelings.

Empathy

This refers to sensitivity and understanding of, the mental states of others. Thus, the ability to see the world, including one's own behaviour, from another person's point of view is linked to the display of empathy.

Integrity

Integrity is the practice of being honest and showing a consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral, ethical principles and values. Thus, it is a way of handling one's emotions but, more important, a way of cultivating one's emotions on effective harmony (Huang, and Liu, 2020). In this regard, an individual must promote achievement of “wholeness”, that is wholeness values, wholeness as a person, wholeness in the sense of being an integral part of something larger than the person -the community, the corporation, society, humanity the cosmos.

**PREVENT THE
SPREAD OF
COVID-19**



Emotional signs of psychological stress

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression or anxiety, mood swings • Anger, irritability, or restlessness • Feeling overwhelmed, unmotivated, or unfocussed, • Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much • Racing thoughts or constant worry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems with your memory or concentration • Making bad decisions • Compulsive behavior • Low sex drive |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Research Findings

Responses from participants reveal that stress and psychosocial risks arise from poor work design, organisation and management, as well as a poor social context of work. These result in negative psychological, physical and social outcomes such as work-related stress, burnout or depression, ineffective communication and lack of support from management or colleagues. Some participants indicated that they were overwhelmed by:

- COVID-19 related challenges, the unplanned closure of institutions of higher learning;
- Difficulties in meeting physical distancing requirements in the classroom, particularly given student numbers and classroom sizes;
- The responsibilities of constantly be reminding students to properly wear their masks as well as maintaining social distancing;
- Preparing for the return of students to classrooms in the middle of a pandemic.

With regards to 2021, subjects of this research cited the following challenges:

- the never-ending almanac for semester 2 which stretched from October 2020 to October 2021;
- disturbances [when the institution was opened] due to on-and-off demonstrations which were held nationwide and in the institution;
- [for facilitators in the pre-pandemic face-to-face teaching mode] having to quickly adapt to online teaching, facing poor cooperation from students whilst trying to make up for lost time.

Conclusions and recommendations

While social distancing may make people feel safer, it can also increase their feelings of isolation, stress and frustration as well as infringing on the

principle of Ubuntu. Furthermore, findings point to the necessity of addressing the public's perceived susceptibility and emotional reactions about experienced COVID-19 challenges and other disturbances within work places. Individuals expressed that these situations brought about: i) a sense of shock and chaos; 2) gradual adjustment to the new reality, and 3) fears and concerns for themselves and their loved ones

Given the psychological effects of COVID-19, there is need for students and lecturers to be involved in communication skills workshops. Individuals must be encouraged to track their stressors and design how to respond to them by developing healthy responses, establishing boundaries, learning how to relax/self-care, talking to a supervisor and finally, getting psychosocial support.

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PREVENTION





JOIN THE CLUB - CHOOSE DISTANCE LEARNING - LEARN WHY?

By: Gcina Dlamini - IDE B.Ed 3 student

Learning by distance allows you to fit study around work, social or family commitments. Of late, Distance learning is the most convenient way of studying. You can study wherever you live, in a rural or urban location, because of the convenience of course materials (modules) being available online and provided to you for your learning. Of course, on-campus university education has its perks, but distance learning (or distance education or DL, for short) has more benefits. Let us look at some benefits of distance learning:

Pursue a job along with studies: Most students who actually opt for distance education are those who do not want to give up their jobs, but want a higher education. Distance education comes with a blessing for such students. You can study during weekdays, when you are back from work or even in the middle of the night. You get to learn while you earn! In addition - who knows? One fine day, you can submit the certificate of graduation to your boss and enjoy a raise or a better job!

Interestingly, those of us who are fresh from high school are beginning to prefer distance learning as it allows us to work anytime you get an opportunity instead of waiting until you graduate. Remember, you have inherent skills that you want to utilise to empower yourself economically. Since the world out there is not waiting for you, you might be discourage from enrolling in a tertiary education institution that is solely face-to-face. However, with DL you can achieve both.

Economic viability: For any given programme, the fee of a distance education degree (online or otherwise) may be much more affordable than the fee of a conventional degree that is acquired through full-time study. Distance education also offers flexible terms of payment; it does not mean that it comes cheap, all it

means is that the fees are more affordable given flexible conditions of payment.

Saving on time: On another note, there is no time wasted on going to and from university, or waiting for a bus or kombi. In a distance learning programme, on weekdays your class is in your bedroom or study room, and the study material on your desk or e-material on your computer. Students who do not have enough time in their hands can turn to distance education as an option and pursue it from the comfort of their homes. The learner support services at distance learning institutions will train you on time management for effective learning.

Learn at your own pace: If you are self-disciplined, independent and self-motivated, it means that you have the essential characteristics to succeed in distance learning. These come in handy as they enable you to learn at your own pace. Self-paced learning is one of the benefits of engaging in distance education. It is a known fact that different people learn in different ways and at different speeds. In a classroom, when everyone is in one room, it is often difficult to have every student on board, on the same page at the same time. Some students are too shy to participate in class. This is where distance education has an advantage over learning that is confined to a physical classroom.

Since students are given course work material beforehand, you can study as much or as little as you want every day, as long as you complete your study material within the stipulated time. If you have doubts or queries, there are discussions forums, chat facilities with faculty and complete support from the distance education provider.

For instance, in my case I developed a study timetable that set a minimum hours per day for the days I have



assigned for study. This timetable is the backbone of my daily routine. If there happens to be a situation where I need to use the scheduled time for something else, I consider it equally important to replace the lost study time immediately (in a day or two). The winning trick here is planning ahead and being innovative.

Developing major skills: Perseverance and strong will are the keys to success. Distance learning does not mean everything is easy but it is very manageable. There is a siSwati saying that says “Ulibamba lishisa!!” [you persevere in difficulties]. Therefore, no matter the pressure you may feel, quitting is not an option, instead you should utilise the support systems that IDE offers you.

To note also is that nowadays, a Bachelor's degree is not enough for the modern world. Most of us have access to

the Internet and can learn about latest developments in various fields and disciplines. The world is moving at a very fast pace and we have to keep ourselves up-to-date on any subject. What is a better way of doing this, than with a Master's degree and further in-depth education?

Final piece of advice for distance learners!

Late evenings can be very comfortable for studies, but not on a regular basis, so be warned -, please, do not postpone any assignment! This is the common blunder students are prone to make. If your assignments are due in a month, start working on them immediately and save your notes that you can add on to them every day and voilà! your assignment is ready even before the due date.

“# BE THE CHAMPION!!”



Ms. Catherine Monifah Kgwakgwe

REACHING BEYOND OUR BORDERS -THE BOTSWANA EXPERIENCE

Distance Education opens learning opportunities for students

far and wide. As physical walls give way to online teaching and learning, the adage of living in a 'global village' is a reality. Ms Catherine Kgwakgwe, an IDE law student based in Botswana, narrates her journey with IDE to Ms Sipiwe Shongwe.

a Master's in Politics and International Relations from the same University.

I learnt about the Institute of Distance Education (IDE) at the University of Eswatini from Mr. Thabang Sekaba and Ms. Leungo Kaote who are my colleagues at the office. They learnt about the programme from a former LLB graduate of the University of Eswatini who is currently admitted and practising as an attorney in the courts of Botswana. The two were advised to search for the University of Eswatini website and apply online. We submitted our online applications. I was then admitted for the Bachelor of Laws (LLB), while my colleagues were both admitted for the Diploma in Law at IDE.

The main reason I was attracted to study with the University of Eswatini (IDE) was largely because it offers online sessions as classes are conducted virtually. The online learning experience has been amazing thus far. All courses have been conducted virtually through the use of Zoom, Google Teams and WhatsApp.

I decided to pursue my studies through distance learning with the University of Eswatini because of the following reasons:

The need to change my career path- having worked in the courts of Botswana (Magistrate Court, High Court and the

“My name is Ms. Catherine Monifah Kgwakgwe. This year, I am an international Student at the Institute of Distance Education -UNESWA, studying Bachelor of Laws (LLB). I live in Gaborone, Botswana and I am a Senior Executive Clerk of Court at the Court of Appeal of Botswana. I have worked as a Clerk of Court for a period of sixteen (16) years at the Magistrate's Court, the High Court and now at the Court of Appeal. I acquired my first degree in 2005, from the University of Botswana (UB) and majored in Political science and Public Administration. In 2008, I acquired



Court of Appeal registries) for sixteen years has empowered me with the relevant skills and experience of the court processes. This level of experience has also sparked a great level of interest to study Law and practice it.

Having a full-time job means that I do not have the luxury to leave work and pursue my studies on a full-time basis. My employer does not provide for opportunities for further studies, particularly where it relates to career change. I, therefore, took it upon myself to pursue my studies through distance learning. There is the added advantage of convenience. Distance education is convenient for me since I am working on a full-time basis, at the same time enjoying the comfort of my home.

IDE online classes are generally scheduled for weekends and sometimes in the evening on weekdays. This schedule is really convenient for me because there is no clash between my work and studies. Secondly, the cost of the programme is reasonable compared to tuition fees for the same programme in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region.

My initial experience with the IDE was to a large extent very smooth and welcoming. Firstly, I received an SMS that informed me that I had been admitted from the University and later an admission letter. I made contact with the IDE coordinator Mr. Mavuso, through an email address from the school website and he facilitated the process of registration, introduced me to the lecturers and my class mates on our WhatsApp group.

My view about distance education is that it is the future of learning. Distance learning at Eswatini is enhanced by online learning. While distance learning is historically known as learning that happens without students being present, IDE at the University of Eswatini for a certain period schedules face-to-face interactive sessions for resident students (in Eswatini) while international students continue to access all sessions online.

It is worth noting that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in changes to teaching and learning at the University of Eswatini as it has the world over. The pandemic compelled the institution to go fully online thus intensifying online learning particularly during the first semester, compared to the second semester of 2020/2021.

Distance learning has great benefits to me as a student because it is helping me develop the spirit of self-reliance, in the sense that I have to create a balance

between my studies, employment activities and my family responsibilities. Distance Learning is less costly since one has to pay school fees and internet (WIFI) as opposed to costs that are associated with being a full-time student. With distance education, one can arrange flexible and suitable time to study.

My experience has not gone without challenges. I experienced difficulty in the first semester, where some lecturers did not conduct online lessons for international students. This was largely because the face-to-face learning seemed to be the most preferred and predominant method of delivering content. This hurdle may also be attributed to the fact that we were the first international group of students who required online classes. This challenge however, did not occur in the second semester because, due to high COVID-19 infections, online sessions were mandatory.

Support from IDE has been amazing. As international students we are able to communicate with the administrative staff at the University through email and WhatsApp. Mr Mavuso, the coordinator, has facilitated communication with other Units such as the Finance office and the IDE IT Unit. It is also worth mentioning that IDE lecturers are very supportive to us as international students, they are always in contact with us through WhatsApp. I also appreciate support from my classmates, particularly class representatives who tirelessly ensure that I am always kept abreast with needed information".

The Future IDE Law Programme – Spreading Beyond Our Borders

Mr Mavuso, Coordinator Law Programme emphasised the importance of collaborating with other universities for the benefit of IDE students in countries that are outside Eswatini. Given the last experience, where an exam paper was delayed by a courier, IDE could establish examination centres in other countries which will also cater for practical sessions such as moot courts. Upper level classes for instance, have a practical component where students are expected to do moot court and use real-life cases.

Having international students means collaborating with Law departments so that they are exposed to real cases. This also addresses the three-pronged approach by UNESWA to increase collaboration with other academic institutions, enhance students' learning opportunities and since students will take cases pro bono, this will be part of community service.



In November 2021, IDE Law held the first Moot Court for LLB students.

Below is a pictorial collage of the two Moot Court sessions that were held by IDE Law



The IDE Law Programme held the first Moot Court with Year 4 Law students. Mr Mavuso, Coordinator for the Law programme informed this publication that this is a practical course which is part of Clinical Legal Education. At this level, students work with hypothetical cases and next year they will handle real cases where they will assume the role of attorneys. Mr. Mavuso added that IDE students have the advantage of experience in courts as opposed to those students who have never been to a court room. This, he said, is evident in the quality of the students' practicals.



Law 4 students after their Moot Court



Lecturers acting as judges during Moot Court



ESWATINI LAUNCHES THE NATIONAL OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING POLICY

By: Professor C Maphosa
IDE Director

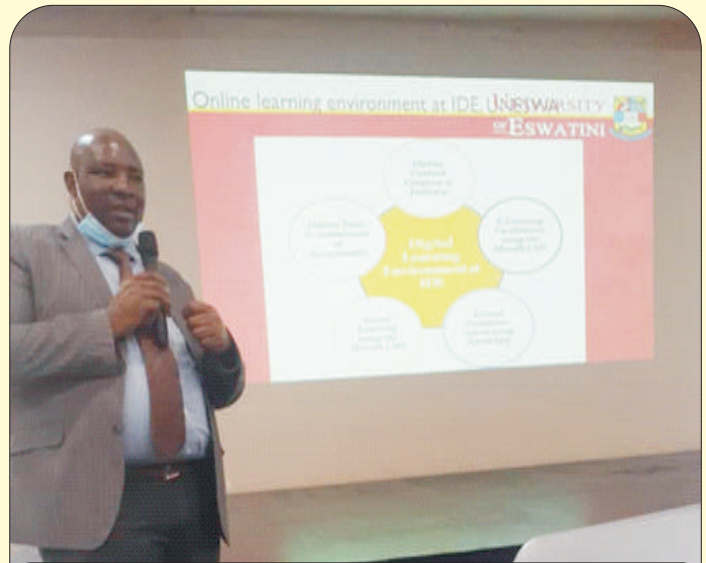
In an unprecedented development in Eswatini's educational landscape, the country now has a National Open and Distance Learning (ODL) policy. The Policy was officially launched by the Ministry of Education and Training at the Happy Valley Hotel on the 13th of October 2021. Mr. Stewart Bertram, the then Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Education and Training, delivered at Minister's speech at the policy launch.

The National ODL policy Development Team

The Institute of Distance Education team of Prof Maphosa, Dr Mthethwa-Kunene and Dr P.S. Dlamini worked with other members from the Ministry of Education and Training in the national exercise, the policy development was funded by the Commonwealth of Learning and involved wider stakeholder consultation throughout the country. A major stakeholders meeting was held at the Happy Valley Hotel on 18 February, 2019. Dr Godson Gatsha, an ODL expert from Botswana, assisted in the policy development exercise, working closely with local team led by Mrs Fikile Mdluli, Chief Inspector, Tertiary Education.

The significance of a national ODL Policy

Every country that takes Open and Distance Learning (ODL) seriously should have a policy that informs ODL provisioning. It is, therefore, pleasing to note Eswatini recognises the importance of ODL as a mode of education delivery at all levels. The approval of the national ODL policy by the Eswatini Government in September 2020 and the subsequent launch shows a great commitment at national level to support the growth and expansion of ODL at all levels. The national ODL Policy mainstreams ODL in the country providing it due recognition and support. This is very important in view of the negative perceptions towards ODL held by some people. The importance of ODL as encapsulated in the national policy is considered within the global political agenda of enhancing access to education to all citizens of a country. The flexibility of ODL allows everyone to access education without any hindrances.



Prof Maphosa making a presentation at the National ODL Policy Launch

The major ODL players in Eswatini

The major ODL players in Eswatini, namely UNESWA, the Institute of Distance Education and Emlalatini Development Centre, were present at the national ODL Policy Launch and made presentations on the role they played in ODL delivery. Of importance to note in the presentations was how the two institutions embraced technology in ODL delivery. Prof Maphosa, Director of the Institute of Distance Education at UNESWA, made a humble appeal to Government to implement the launched policy by supporting ODL institutions and students. It was noted from the Director's speech that ODL students at UNESWA suffered from a myriad of challenges which required strategic interventions. Students had challenges in funding their studies and in acquiring electronic devices and data to access electronic learning.

Message from the Education Portfolio Committee

Members of the Education Portfolio Committee attended the policy launch and gave a strong message of support. The Education Portfolio Committee noted the importance of distance learning at all levels of education in the country, highlighting the significance of developing a positive attitude towards students studying through distance learning. The committee noted the inadequacy of physical infrastructure in the country to accommodate all learners hence the need for viable and alternative modes of delivery.

The National ODL Policy: Policy and Practice

We celebrate that the country now has an Open and Distance Learning Policy. This is a great development as it places the country in the league of nations, regionally and globally, that value distance learning. However, the major issue is in the implementation of the policy to achieve its objectives for the enhancement of education in Eswatini.

Once again, we thank the Government of Eswatini for the development and approval of the National ODL Policy.



Commonwealth of Learning (COL) -IDE Workshops in Pictures

COL sponsored three workshops organised by IDE.
Below are some pictures from the first workshop, held on 11-13 October 2021
(see also the article by Prof Ferreira-Meyers).



Professor Maphosa officially opening the workshop



Professor Karen Ferreira-Meyers moderating proceedings



Other pictures above: Participants in learning mode



IDE staff and part-time lecturers posing for a group photo



Training in Online Teaching

Strengthening IDE Staff for Today's Teaching/Learning Demands

**By: Professor Karen Ferreira-Meyers,
Coordinator – Linguistics and
Modern Languages**



**Professor Karen
Ferreira-Meyers**

The Project 1: Developing a Certificate in online teaching programme (short course) for educators' 3-day training workshop took place between 11 and 13 October 2021 at the Royal Science and Technology Park (RSTP), Phocweni, Eswatini. This training

is part of a COL-sponsored project supporting the development of a Certificate in Online Teaching programme (short course) which the Institute of Distance Education (IDE) of the University of Eswatini (UNESWA) wishes to offer to educators in the near future.

With support from the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the University of Namibia and University of Eswatini (UNESWA) are some of the institutions that had already started taking some of their courses online before the onset of the pandemic. The need for new communication and information technologies in education is omnipresent. It is even more necessary to support learners at a distance because of the negative impact of the pandemic which brought about the complete closure of education institutions, in particular during the first months. Supporting online teaching and learning became institutions of higher learning's first priority.

The purpose of the workshop was to assist module writers of the Certificate in Online Teaching and colleagues from Uneswa to get a better understanding of online pedagogies and principles (day 1 of the workshop) in order to develop learning materials (days 2 and 3 of the workshop). The specific objectives were that, by the end of the workshop, participants would have:

1. A strengthened capacity in online learning design by being exposed to some of the guiding principles and theories of online learning design;
2. Identified resources they can adapt for their certificate course on online teaching;
3. Enhanced skills of searching for OER;
4. Appreciation for the importance of integrating a wide range of learning resources in online learning;

During his welcome remarks, the IDE Director, Prof. C. Maphosa pointed out that the UNESWA blended learning policy had to be implemented with urgency at the start of the pandemic. The urgent implementation also meant that some staff had not been adequately trained. The current workshop is part of the endeavours to train staff on design and delivery of online teaching.

Prof. Maphosa highlighted some of the concerns that are raised about online learning by both students and the public, namely lack of confidence by the general public in the quality of online learning. Quality assurance therefore has to be one of the focal points of any workshop. In his conclusion, Prof. Maphosa thanked COL for supporting UNESWA and IDE in developing the required expertise to develop and roll out quality online courses in and outside the university.

Prof. Ferreira-Meyers shared experiences from Uneswa. She highlighted the importance of policy development and noted that the situation on the ground is often different from the ideal one (namely, first a policy, then its implementation). She noted that IDE, together with CELT, had organised a number of interventions aimed at supporting staff in the transition from face-to-face to blended and online learning. These include the following:

- Short online course TBL002: focus on theory, pedagogical principles and ICT integration.
- Short online course TBL003: focus on hands-on practice of Moodle features.
- Webinars: Q and A sessions, examples of «how to», discussion on particular topics (after participants had had practical implementation experience); most recent ones = a series on authentic online assessment.

All this used a scaffolding approach, was socio-constructivist/connectivist in nature, and provided ample opportunities for reflection, collaboration and team work. Prof. Ferreira-Meyers concluded her presentation on some 'thorny issues' which led to a discussion related to obstacles/disadvantages and opportunities/advantages of blended and online learning.

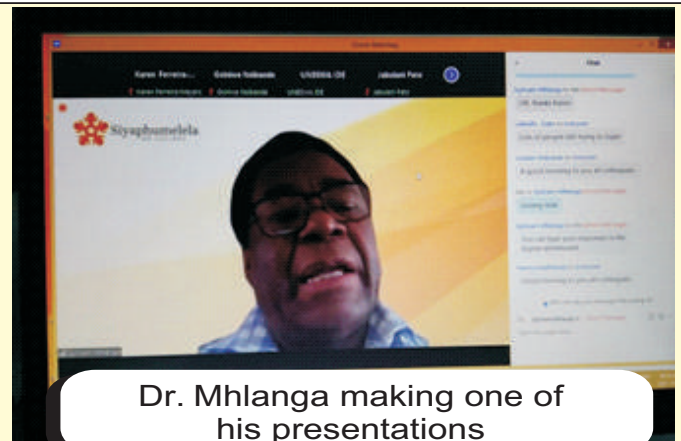
The facilitator, Dr. Mhlanga, made a presentation on theories and key principles that underpin online learning design and online facilitation (Behaviourism, Cognitivism, Constructivism and Connectivism). Some participants indicated that they were quite familiar with some of these theories; others that they actually use the



theories unconsciously. The key principles stemming from these theories can provide valuable guidelines in online learning design. The facilitator show how these principles include activity-based learning, student-centred education, collaborative learning and contextually relevant learning. The importance of teacher presence, cognitive presence and social presence was also pointed out by Dr. Mhlanga.

Participants were asked to view and discover an online professional development course (Design for Learning; developed by OER Africa which deals with online design theories;

<https://www.oerafrica.org/communication/design-for-learning/index.html#/>) and to review a short Learning Pathway on Online Facilitation, which illustrates how the three presences can be brought in an online course. In addition, a link was provided for another Learning



Dr. Mhlanga making one of his presentations

Pathway (short online course) developed by OER Africa on how to search for OER (<https://www.oerafrica.org/communication/find-open-content/index.html#/>).

Champions of the HIV Epidemic During the COVID-19 Pandemic

By: Gcinile Shongwe B.A Hums 4,
and Sisekelo Simelane B.A Hums 4

With the eruption of the Covid-19 pandemic everything hit a snag; a lot of progress made in many industries suffered and the fight

against HIV infections suffered an even bigger blow. The significant rise in new HIV infections is a call for concern in the country. The Kwaluseni inkhundla, which houses the University of Eswatini, Kwaluseni Campus, informal and industrial labourers, among other stakeholders in the area, took this matter into its hands. Matsapha /Kwaluseni (Manzini Region) serves as a melting-pot in the country with people from different backgrounds and origins living together, hence it has been flagged in a recent study as the



IDE Students during the Stakeholders' Meeting at the Kwaluseni Inkhundla



inkhundla with the highest rate of new HIV infections. Such alarming statistics drove NERCHA to host a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to help the government, the organisation and stakeholders identify key drivers of HIV infections in the Kwaluseni inkhundla.

The University of Eswatini, Kwaluseni Campus, is one of the major stakeholders of the Kwaluseni inkhundla, and thus it made practical sense to have a large group of participants coming from the University and IDE students took part in this event. Being part of the affected/infected demographic group, we were able to share and deliberate extensively on personal and secondary experiences that are deemed to play a vital role in helping to identify the key drivers of HIV infections in the inkhundla. A couple of valuable ideas and opinions were put on the table and informative debates were held. A lot was said about how an individual's background, financial standing, peer pressure (special focus on social media), lifestyle changes (having fun) and the degeneration of love relationships amongst others can be key drivers of new HIV infections.

As discussions drew to a close, solutions were offered, solutions we hope that the Ministry of Health in conjunction with Uneswa and NERCHA will implement, so that stakeholders will benefit immensely and indeed we shall champion the epidemic even during the pandemic.



IDE Law Lecturers Get Capacitated on the Development of Online Learning Materials



Dr. P.S Dlamini
Assistant Coordinator
– Instructional Design
and Development

**Courtesy of the Commonwealth
of Learning (COL)**

By: Dr. P.S Dlamini

online learning materials through support from the Commonwealth of Learning. Dr Patience Dlamini organised a three-day capacity building workshop which was held at the Mountain Inn Hotel from the 26th to the 28th of October 2021. The onslaught of COVID-19 and ensuing lockdowns increased the

The Institute of Distance Education (IDE), had a wonderful opportunity to capacitate its Law lecturers on the development of pedagogically sound

need to support students remotely and ensure successful completion of the academic year. This compelled the University to put its programmes online and support students remotely using technology. Like many other institutions in the region, IDE was not fully prepared due to the sudden onset of the pandemic.

University staff was not adequately trained to use common technologies like learning management systems to design online learning programmes, to interact with students remotely and to manage effective assessment online. At the same time, students were barely accustomed to learning independently from home using technology. This gap posed a serious threat to the quality of online provision in the



University, especially given that COVID-19 continues to ravage countries, making emergency remote learning a common mode of provision for the unforeseeable future. Thus, the University is making significant investment in training staff to build a critical mass of capacity in online design and delivery. Twenty Law lecturers and five IDE staff members were capacitated on:

- The importance of pedagogy in the development of online learning materials

- The process of script-writing for video-based learning materials, screencasts and podcasts
- Supporting participants in drafting a script for video-based learning materials, screencasts and podcasts
- The search and use of OER, including possibility of developing materials to be used as OERs.



**Dr. Dlamini and Prof. Ferreira-Meyers facilitating the meeting;
(Right) Dr. Dlamini assisting some participants**



**Participants stressing a point; Prof. Ferreira-Meyers explaining the concept of a metaphor
and its use in designing online learning.**



Participants during the workshop



IDE RESEARCH OUTPUT FOR THE YEAR 2021

Journal Articles

DLAMINI, P., RUGUBE, T., MTHETHWA-KUNENE, K. E. & MAPHOSA, C. (2021). Developing a sustainable student support services framework for a distance learning institution. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 9(4), 49 – 64.

ESAMPALLY, C. (2021). New Paradigm at University of Eswatini: Is Blended Learning the Future of Teaching-Learning in the Digital Transformation Context? *UNESWA Journal of Education (UJOE)* 4 (1), 1 - 10).

MTHETHWA-KUNENE, K. E., RUGUBE, T. & MAPHOSA, C. (2021). Rethinking Pedagogy: Interrogating Ways of Promoting Deeper Learning in Higher Education. *European Journal of Interactive Multimedia and Education* 2(2) (in press)

MAPHOSA, C., VAN DEN BERG, G. & MUDAU, P. K. (2021). Assessment of the perceived usefulness of mobile phone technology for communication in learning by distance education students in a rural-based university. *African Perspectives of Research in Teaching & Learning*, 5(2), 45 - 61

MAPHOSA, C., RUGUBE, T., MTHETHWA-KUNENE, K. E. & DLAMINI, P. (2021). Interrogating factors affecting the choice and utilisation of online learning technologies for a higher education institution. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal* 8(9), 278 – 288.

MKHATSHWA, T., FERREIRA-MEYERS, K. and DLAMINI, P.A. (2021). The Transformation of Language and Communicative Behaviour in Eswatini, <https://www.covidsigns.net/post/telamisile-mkhatshwa-et-al-the-transformation-of-language-and-communicative-behaviour-in-eswatini>, 10 August 2021.

Book Chapters

BHEBHE, S. MAPHOSA C. (2021). Supervision of student teachers on teaching practice. In E. A. Alademerin, A. F. Tsikati M. Ngcobo *The Teaching Practice Handbook for Higher Education Institutions in Eswatini*. (in press)

DLAMINI, P.S. and KHUMALO, S. (2021). The place of instructional resources in teaching and learning. In E. A. Alademerin, A.F Tsikati, M. Ngcobo; *The Teaching Practice Handbook for Higher Education Institutions in Eswatini* (In Press).

FERREIRA-MEYERS, K. and DHAKULKAR, A.(2021). Can Open Science Offer Solutions to Science Education in Africa?. *Radical Solutions for Education in Africa*. Springer, Singapore, 2021. 149-174.

SIMUI, Francis, and Karen FERREIRA-MEYERS. (2021). Open Education, Open Learning and Open Teaching at the African University. *Radical Solutions for Education in Africa*. Springer, Singapore, 2021. 129-148.

FERREIRA-MEYERS, K., MOUSSAVOU, R., GAINZA, A. and ESSONO, (2021). M. Online Volunteer Networks in Africa: the case of TICE Afrique, http://www.wbnsou.ac.in/openjournals/Issue/2nd-Issue/July2021/3_Ferrieira.pdf, 9 pages, NSOU-OPEN JOURNAL, ISSN: 2581-5415, Vol.4 No.2 (July 2021), pp. 15-23.

IMPEDOVO, M.A. and FERREIRA-MEYERS, K. (2021). Authority, collective learning and agentic action in teaching: tracing a pedagogy from Franz Fanon, *Education in the North*, University of Aberdeen, aura.abdn.ac.uk, 19 pages.

FERREIRA-MEYERS, K. and DLAMINI-ZWANE, N. (2021). Intégration du numérique : l'impact de la pandémie de COVID-19 sur l'enseignement supérieur en Eswatini (Afrique australe), in *Revue internationale des technologies en pédagogie universitaire – International Journal of Technologies in Higher Education*, 18(1), pp. 212-220.

PITIKOE, S., FERREIRA-MEYERS, K., BHEBHE, S. and DLAMINI-ZWANE, N. (2021). Who moved my old cheese? Implications of COVID 19 to teaching and learning in Southern Africa, in *JoLTL - Journal of Teaching and Learning with Technology*, 10(1), pp. 64-79.

PITIKOE, S. and FERREIRA-MEYERS, K. (2021). The learning experience of a visually impaired learner regarding



emergency blended teaching and learning at a higher education institution, *pie (Perspectives in Education)* vol. 39, no. 1, pp. 340-352, March 2021.

LINAKE, M., MAPHOSA, C. & MTHETHWA-KUNENE, K.E. (2021). The Synergy between Paradigms and Research Approaches. In E. Adu & C. Okeke *Fundamentals of Research in Humanities, Social Sciences and Science Education*. Pretoria: Van Schaik

Conference Papers

DLAMINI, P.S (2021). Students' voices the silent voice in curriculum design and development in higher education. University of Eswatini International Conference on Education (UICE)- Virtual conference. 3-5 August 2021, Kwaluseni, Eswatini.

MAHLALELA, J, DLAMINI, P.S, SMITH , C, (2021). Developing a Work-based Learning Programme for Universities. SEFI 202 Virtual Annual Conference, 13-16 September 2021; Theme: Blended Learning in Education: Challenges, Enlightening and Lasting.

MAPHOSA, C., VAN DEN BERG, G. & MUDAU, P. K. (2021). Assessing the perceived usefulness of mobile phone technology for communication in learning by distance education students in a rural-based university. University of Eswatini International Conference on Education (UICE) - Virtual Conference, 3 - 5 August 2021, Kwaluseni, Eswatini.

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. and MKHATSHWA T. (2021). Papers presented: 1. Transforming face to face into distance/online oral and written interactions, and 2. Role of Sign Language interpretation in fighting sexual abuse of deaf women in Eswatini. 19-20 February 2021, University of Alabama Language Conference (University of Alabama, USA),

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021). FLANZ (Flexible Learning Association of New Zealand) international conference, 14-15 April 2021, paper presented: Does online equate to flexible?

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021). YEW Conference, international conference (UNESCO and UN Chair on Lifelong Learning, Youth and Work, Gulu University, 27-28 April 2021, paper presented: Doctoral students' supervision, COVID-19 impact and transition (27 April 2021).

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021). Peak Performances: Covid-19 and the Transformation of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. Critical Reflections on Experiences of Teaching and Learning in the Face of the Pandemic: Responses, Complexities, and the Implications of Covid-19 on Higher Education, International Conference, University of Johannesburg, 28-30 April 2021, paper presented: The Covid-19 pandemic and doctoral studies: supervisors' point of view (29 April 2021).

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021) NADEOSA international conference, Preparing for the future: Shaping Open Distance and eLearning in the Post School Education and Training, 11-13 May 2021, paper presented: Online doctoral student supervision in Africa (11 May 2021).

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021) ICEL international conference, Westminster International University in Tashkent (WIUT), 21 May 2021, paper presented: The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the teaching and learning of languages: the case of the University of Eswatini.

FERREIRA-MEYERS K., MKHATSHWA T. and DLAMINI P.A. (2021) international workshop in preparation of *Linguistic Landscape Journal* special issue, "The Linguistic Landscape of Covid-19: Transforming language, people, and place in a time of pandemic", 28 May 2021, paper presented (video): Covid-19 Era: The Transformation of Language and Communicative Behaviour in Eswatini.

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021). international pluridisciplinary conference *Werewere Liking: Stature d'une artiste complete*, 9-11 June 2021, paper presented: *Werewere Liking: une esthétique autofictionnaire ou autofictive?* (45 min-paper; 9 June 2021).

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021). AAU Webinar on staff promotions, invited guest speaker; 22 June 2021, paper presented: Staff promotions and equity.

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021). International pluridisciplinary conference "Quelles formations des enseignants aux TIC et quelles pratiques dans le cadre de la formation et des apprentissages en ligne des étudiants ?" 28-29 June 2021, organised by the Université de Béjaia in collaboration with LESMS and LAILEMM.



DR RAYMONDE MOUSSAVOU & PR KAREN FERREIRA-MEYERS (2021). (Université de Libreville-University of Eswatini) TICE Afrique ou comment compléter les formations des enseignants en Afrique ;

DLAMINI-ZWANE, NOMPUMELELO & FERREIRA-MEYERS, KAREN (2021). Southern African Nazarene University - University of Eswatini Les perceptions des étudiants de FLE de l'enseignement-apprentissage mixte/en ligne en Eswatini : le cas de deux universités (28 June).

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021). Institute of Distance Education, University of Eswatini. 29 June 2021. Comment préparer les enseignants de français à l'ère du numérique?

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021). 15th Quadrennial General Conference of African University Leaders July 5-8, 2021, Theme: The Future of Higher Education in Africa; paper presented on 6 July 2021: Mainstreaming e-learning and the digital divide.

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021). 4-6 August 2021, UNISA ODeL e-Conference, Theme: "Mediating Open, Distance and eLearning in the Advent of Global Crises", paper presented on 5 August 2021: The Digital Divide Revisited in Times of Crises.

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021). 24-25 August 2021, Colloquium on Assessment through Digital Platforms within Higher Education Studies, paper presented with Dr. Arfa-Kaboodvand on 24 August 2021: Rethinking formative assessment in times of Covid-19: a critical analysis of university assessment in Eswatini.

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021). 15-18 September 2021, International Conference Biofiction as World Literature/La biofiction comme littérature mondiale, KUL, Leuven (Belgium), paper presented on 16 September entitled : Biofictions of Jesus-Christ.

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021). International Conference Brachologie; Abidjan (Ivory Coast), 19-21 October 2021, paper presented: Dire l'essentiel en pédagogie brachylogique.

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021). 27-29 October 2021, International Conference Poclande; Nairobi (Kenya), paper presented : L'impact de la pandémie de la COVID19 sur l'enseignement et l'apprentissage des langues étrangères en Eswatini.

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021). International Conference EALA; Taipei (Taiwan), 30 October 2021, paper presented: Of the spiritual and the ancestral in Niq Mhlongo's Paradise in Gaza

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021). International Conference NWU (North-West University, South Africa), 3-4 November 2021, paper presented: How to motivate foreign language learners to embrace self-directed learning.

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021). International Conference SAMLA (USA), 4-6 November 2021, paper presented: Lettres de Bangwe (Editions Bora, Paris, 2020): giving Comorian women a platform to talk 2021

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021). International Pluridisciplinary Conference Spiritualité(s) et humanité : quête, pratiques, résonances (Ivory Coast), 17-18 November 2021, paper presented: Du spirituel et de l'ancestral dans le Paradis à Gaza de Niq Mhlongo

FERREIRA-MEYERS K. (2021). EUCEN ULLL Open Fora, 19 November 2021, paper presented: University lecturers and staff development in a post-pandemic world

Published Book Reviews

FERREIRA-MEYERS, K. (2021). Book review of *Embodying Contagion: The Viropolitics of Horror and Desire in Contemporary Discourse*. Sandra Becker, Megen De Bruin-Molé, and Sara Polak. Philadelphia: U of Wales P, 2021. 322 pp, *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Available online: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/jpcu.13056>

FERREIRA-MEYERS, K. (2021). Book review of *Lettres du Bangwe*, Editions Bora, Paris, 2020, Available online: <http://chroniqueslitterairesaficaines.com/les-lettres-du-bangwe-2020/karen-ferreira-meyers/>

FERREIRA-MEYERS, K. (2021). Book review of *Mhlongo, Niq, Paradise in Gaza*, Kwela Books, 2020, Available online: <http://chroniqueslitterairesaficaines.com/paradise-in-gaza-niq-mlhongo-2020/karen-ferreira-meyers/>



FERREIRA-MEYERS, K. (2021). Book review of Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages*, UK/USA: Cambridge University Press, 2018, in *New Trends in Social and Liberal Sciences*, 6 (1), pp.78-81, <https://doi.org/10.24819/netsol2021.07>.

FERREIRA-MEYERS, K. (2021). Book review of Fopa Kuete, Roger, 2020, *La Peur. Discours, formes et représentations*, L'Harmattan, Paris, ISBN : 978-2-343-19562-9, 232 p., in *Literator*, 42(1), a1777, <https://doi.org/10.4102/lit.v42i1.1777>.

FERREIRA-MEYERS, K. (2021). 10 August 2021 CELT-IDE Webinar Series on Authentic Online Assessment, part 1: facilitated + presentation entitled: What is authentic assessment and challenges and solutions relating to authentic online assessment

FERREIRA-MEYERS, K. (2021). 2 September 2021 CELT-IDE Webinar Series on Authentic Online Assessment, part 2: facilitated session presented by Dr. M. Arfa-Kaboodvan for the Faculty of Humanities

FERREIRA-MEYERS, K. (2021). 22 September 2021 CELT-IDE Webinar Series on Authentic Online Assessment, part 3: facilitated session presented by Dr. Ncube for the Faculty of Science and Engineering

FERREIRA-MEYERS, K. (2021). 12 October 2021 CELT-IDE Webinar Series on Authentic Online Assessment, facilitated session presented by Dr. M. Shongwe for the Faculty of Social Sciences

FERREIRA-MEYERS, K. (2021). 10 November 2021 CELT-IDE Webinar Series on Authentic Online Assessment, facilitated session presented by Ms. S. Nxumalo and Mrs. S. Gwebu for the Faculty of Health Sciences

Guest panellist: Professor K. Ferreira-Meyers

University of Mauritius Virtual Research Week 2021, 11 November 2021: presentation and discussion on New normal: what directions for research in educational technologies?

EUCEN ULL Open Fora, 19 November: presentation and discussion on Designing Flexible Learning for Adults e/merge Africa, 25 November 2021: presentation and discussion on Women as Education Technology Leaders

1. Keynote address Association of African Universities (AAU): Prof. K. Ferreira-Meyers
12 November 2021, keynote address entitled Building technology-based universities, now!

2. Invited guest speaker by ACELETACH (Cameroon, Chad, Ghana): Les littératures francophone, africaine et française: quelques questions vives : Prof. K. Ferreira-Meyers

13 October 2021, paper entitled Quoi de neuf ? Le 21^e siècle et les littératures francophones, africaines et françaises

ICELT-IDE Series on Authentic Online Assessment, facilitation by Prof. Karen Ferreira-Meyers.

Research Fellow, University of the Free State 2021-2023.

Commonwealth of Learning Supports IDE

The Institute of Distance Education received funding from the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) to conduct three projects from the period of October to December 2021. The first Project is on developing a Certificate in online teaching (short course) for educators. This course will be offered in the near future. Course Module developers including IDE staff and collaborators from the Faculty of Education, the Centre of Excellence in Learning and Teaching and the Library were trained by an expert who was provided by COL. They developed four courses: Module 1 Designing an online course, Module 2 Creating digital learning materials, Module 3 Developing online learning facilitation skills, and Module 4 Authentic Assessment. The courses were pilot-tested in November 2021. The feedback from the piloting exercise will be utilised to improve and finalise the course modules.

The two other projects were mainly about capacity building in offering courses online. The second project was about Capacity Building in Online Facilitation for ODL Practitioners working in a blended learning environment Workshop. The third project was on Capacity Building in Online learning materials development for ODL Practitioners. These projects benefitted UNESWA/IDE staff as well as non-UNESWA staff who work for the university part-time. In addition, educators from schools and some tertiary education institutions in the country benefitted through participating the piloting exercise for the first project.

The Institute is much grateful to the Commonwealth of Learning for the continued support.



THE INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION EXPANDED MANDATE - APPROVAL OF THE REVISED POLICY GUIDELINES

By: Professor C Maphosa IDE Director

The UNESWA Senate at its meeting of the 7th of September 2021 approved the Revised Institute of Distance Education Policy Guidelines. The approval of the revised policy guidelines offers IDE an expanded mandate. Prior to the approval of the revised guidelines the Institute would only offer academic programmes in collaboration with the full-time departments. Such an arrangement limited the Institute to offering programmes already in existence in the University. The stakeholders require diversified and market-driven programmes, which are not on offer in the University at the moment. With the expanded mandate the Institute can now offer programmes independently by entering into collaborative agreements with external partners. The identified programmes with partners will undergo the programme approval processes as stipulated by Senate. Of importance in the expanded mandate is to place emphasis on programmes that are modularised and have different exit points to accommodate the different stakeholders who require certificate, diploma and degree qualifications. The Institute shall invest in the offering short courses that result in the acquiring of micro credentials by stakeholders in different professions and fields.

Future plans in line with the expanded mandate

The Institute seeks to revise the Psychosocial Support Programme to a four year degree programme with multiple entry points. Prof Esampally is finalising the draft programme to be taken to the stakeholders soon, UNESWA, IDE enjoys very good working relations with REPPSI in offering the Psychosocial Support programme. Some specialised Law courses have been identified through consultation with stakeholders and these shall be developed and offered as micro-credential short courses in the near future. The Institute has finalised the development of an intensive and practical-oriented short course in online teaching and this will be offered in 2022 to educators within and outside UNESWA. The Institute continues to pursue partnerships with like-minded ODL institutions with a view to jointly offer academic programmes. A fully expanded IDE will be positioned to operate as a semi-autonomous College of Distance Education of UNESWA, with established academic departments and ultimately evolving to a full-fledged Open University of Eswatini.

IDE Holds a Send-Off for Two Staff Members

By: Ms Siphiwe Shongwe (Copy Editor)

Human resources are a major component to the success of every organization as it is people and not the buildings or paperwork that will accomplish the work. IDE has seen it prudent to honour the institution's staff members whenever the opportunity arises. And an opportunity presented itself when two staff members namely;

Mr J Shongwe (former IDE Assistant Registrar) and **Ms B Dlamini** (former IDE Technologist) were to be honoured for their input in the institution's development on their farewell occasion as they leave for other professional endeavors.

Mr Shongwe who is now the Assistant Registrar at the Luyengo Campus was appreciated for his expertise and experience in dealing with various registry-related issues. During his remarks, the Director Professor Maphosa stated that Mr. Shongwe would advise on how some things should be done based on his experience; he knew what works and what doesn't work. Mr Shongwe was there to assist and advise timely, even on issues from Senate he contributed with appropriate advice.

The Director also applauded Ms Bagecinile Dlamini for her invaluable contribution in promoting IDE's mandate. Ms Dlamini joined the IDE Team when the institute was strengthening blended learning; she came in with much needed expertise. This was the period when IDE established digital learning centres in three regions of the Kingdom. Even UNESWA's senior management applauded and supported this innovative approach to assisting students when they visited the three facilities. Ms Dlamini also managed the IDE Website; she introduced her creative flair so that it was vibrant, interesting and updated regularly. Hence, when she left, a gap was really felt as this was a position with a crucial function in IDE.



Mr Shezi and Prof. Maphosa present Mr Shongwe (centre) with a gift



Mr Shezi and Prof. Maphosa present Ms Dlamini (centre) with a gift

Growing in the Workspace

IDE Staff Urged to Pursue Academic Growth

Prof. Maphosa urged IDE staff members not to sit on their laurels and be comfortable with where they are at - academically. He encouraged staff to be more ambitious, set targets for themselves to pursue and grow professionally. Ambition, he said, is a good trait; if it was not for ambitious people, would still be leading the life of the Fourteenth Century. The Southern African region is facing the challenge of aging professors, there is a glaring gap that needs to be filled and so each one must see himself/herself as a professor in the future. He also emphasised the importance of remaining relevant in this dynamic academic environment. "The sun shines for those who wait for it", the Director said. "So improving on skills and knowledge is key in ensuring personal growth. As a teaching institution, IDE should include professors, doctors, Master's degree holders, to define and entrench our identity as a teaching institute. This also has a domino effect on our students who will be taught and graduate having gone through the tutelage of highly qualified staff".

Resources

The Director also emphasised the advantages of tapping onto expertise and advice of human resources that are already in the workspace. Advice, the professor said, is readily available in the workplace and individuals who are keen on personal growth should take advantage of information from colleagues.

The importance of coexisting with mutual respect in a workspace was stressed. This approach must be applied as different backgrounds and values mean that, at a certain point, we differ. We are implementing a system, he said, in which we should all pull our expertise together to achieve the best. For UNESWA, we have strategic goals which we work towards achieving. Therefore, we must work cordially as a collective to achieve the mandate of the University.

As students are our main stakeholders, we must ensure that they receive valuable experience during their time with IDE. When students derive maximum satisfaction from what we do, then we can rest, happy that we have delivered our intentions well. This should be achieved by every IDE staff member working for the common good of IDE and for students. This will ensure that you establish a legacy, so that when you leave IDE, you are remembered for your valuable contribution whilst you were with the institution.



Well Done!!

IDE Congratulates Dr T T Rugube



Dr TT Rugube, Coordinator and Lecturer – Multimedia, was celebrated for attaining her Doctorate. Prof. Maphosa stated that her achievement was no mean feat given her responsibilities of also being a mother. With IDE's blended learning approach, Dr Rugube's office is usually inundated with requests for training and coaching in online teaching and in navigating UNESWA's online Learning Management System (LMS). Dr Rugube was hailed for her dedication, perseverance and sense of achievement.

