



Institute of Distance Education Newsletter

Issue 11– December, 2015

Institute of Distance Education

IDE Taking University and Professional Programmes to the People

From The Desk of The Director

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I am pleased to write this Foreword for the first edition of the IDE Newsletter for the 2015/2016 Academic Year. This Newsletter, as usual, contains several informative, educational and interesting articles, which in great part demonstrate the IDE's activities that have been undertaken in pursuit of its Vision of becoming an International Centre of Excellence in Distance Education, Access, Delivery, Practice, Research and Life Long-Learning.

The period between the release of our last newsletter in May 2015 and the current one has been a very busy one for the IDE. We successfully hosted the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA) Conference in September, ran several workshops for UNISWA staff members on Open Educational Resources (OER's) and also held workshops for our course writers on preparing course modules in Blended format.

We are happy also that the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Professor Asha Kan-



Professor CWS Sukati, IDE Director

war, visited IDE and presented a well-attended Lecture to UNISWA staff members on OERs. She was also the main keynote speaker at the DEASA Conference where she presented a paper with the title: 'Widening Access to Education in the Commonwealth: What have we Learned?'

IDE Staff members also continue to improve their qualifications, and I am happy, on behalf of the IDE Team to welcome one staff member who recently completed her Ph.D degree. On a sad note though, the Institute will lose Dr Sharyi Chakanyuka at the end of December 2015, who is going on retirement. She has been on-

e of the pillars of IDE and a very active member of the Institute. All of us at IDE will miss her, but we wish her all the best in her future endeavours. As the examinations for the first Semester of the Academic Year 2015/2016 draw close, we wish to advise our students to work hard on all their courses, use all the examination tips (including those that appear in this newsletter) they get.

Enjoy reading our newsletter and if you have any questions, comments, views, criticisms and suggestions on it or any of our Institute's activities, please feel free to communicate this directly to me or to any of my Team Members in IDE.

CWS SUKATI

REKINDLING THE FRENCH FLAME

The week of 19-23 October was a busy one. Two experts, Prof. Robert Bouchard (University of Lyon, France) and Prof. Liliane Ramaraso (University of Antananarivo, Madagascar) came to Swaziland on a mission with main three objectives: to assist the University of Swaziland in re-introducing French, to reinforce the training of French Teachers and to help the National Curriculum Centre to develop French materials.

OPEN EDUCATION RESOURCES (OER) MATTERS... *by Dr SR Dlamini and Ms NT Vilakati*

Brief Report on Open Educational Resources Workshops

A series of workshops on Open Educational Resources (OER) was convened from 12 to 19 October, 2015 at the University of Swaziland (UNISWA). The workshops were fully sponsored by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), under the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) Project. A total of 85 participants attended the OER training, with the highest number of academic staff from the Faculty of Health Sciences. Other academic staff members were from the UNISWA Faculty of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences; Faculty of Science and Engineering; Faculty of Education; Faculty of Humanities; Faculty of Commerce and Faculty of Social Sciences and staff members were from the UNISWA Institutes, Centres and the Library.

The following were the intended outcomes of the workshops for both the UNISWA academic staff and Ministry of Education and Training Management:

- * Sensitize MoET , UNISWA management and staff on a wide array of existing OER include programmes which could be repurposed for delivery to UNISWA students;
- * Alert MoET , UNISWA Management and Staff on the potential benefits of OER in enhancing access to quality tertiary education;
- * Share with MoET , UNISWA Management and Staff good practice examples of OER development and utilization by credible worldwide universities;
- * Review already available educational policies that support the use of OER at institutional level with an aim of formulating new policy directions for UNISWA; and
- * Repurpose existing OER programmes for delivery to students in some faculties of the University;

Highlights of key issues:

During the workshop sessions, the following issues were highlighted by both session facilitators and participants:

- * That Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have reshaped access to knowledge and education, wherein one of the most prominent influences of ICT in education has been Open Educational Resources (OER);

Since OER is an expansive topic area, throughout the workshop sessions, participants were challenged to arrive at some consensus, at institutional level on what is meant by OER. The UNESCO (2002) definition was referenced, that OER are digitized materials offered freely and openly for educators, students



nts and self-learners to use and reuse for teaching, learning and research.

- * That open licensing seeks to ensure that copying and sharing of resources happen within a structured legal framework that is more flexible than an all rights reserved copyright restriction. To this end, an OER Copyright and Licensing toolkit was disseminated to the academic staff as a guide for Higher Education Institutions interested in creating and using OER.

Compelling reasons for OER at UNISWA:

- * There has been a rapid rise in enrolments with no concomitant rise in resources. Like other higher education institutions in a developing country context, UNISWA is structurally under-funded. As a result, lecturers are often required to do more with less.
- * There are too few or outmoded learning resources but even when the resources or textbooks are available, they are often too expensive to consider, yet OER are usually free to be used.
- * There is under investment in curriculum and learning materials design which ultimately makes teaching approaches not to be developed.
- * Some of the research outputs by academic staff are not easily accessible. Yet easy access to research publications can be promoted through open access journals.

Support for OER adoption:

- * Support of partner institutions by organisations such as the Commonwealth of Learning (COL);
- * Advocacy and promotion of OER as a vehicle for improving the quality of teaching and learning stakeholders to have a good grasp of both conceptual and practical OER issues;
- * Policy implications are to be discussed in order to inform new institutional policy directions and or strategies for the integration of OER development and utilisation.
- * Sustainable business models that justify and illustrate the use and benefits of OER to institutions as well as through availability of online learning platforms and repositories.



Distance Education Association of Southern Africa

DEASA 50TH AGM & CONFERENCE IN SWAZILAND

The Institute of Distance Education, UNISWA, together with Emlalatini Development Centre and Adult Education Department, UNISWA, hosted The 50th AGM & Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA) Conference at the University of Swaziland from the 18-20 September, 2015. There were more than 60 delegates who attended and participated in this two day conference which brought together academics, policy makers, practitioners and scholars from SADC countries and beyond, involved and experienced in matters concerning ODL.

The theme for this Year's conference was **'Celebrating 50 years of DEASA widening access to education: A reflective lens.'** In keeping with DEASA's practice, the conference was expected to make a 2015 DEASA Swaziland Declaration on ODL in meeting regional educational and developmental needs in the SADC Region.

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Swaziland, Prof. C Magagula welcomed Delegates before the Conference was officially opened by The Minister of Education and Training, Dr Phineas Magagula.

The sub themes that Keynotes addresses and papers were presented under were: *Leadership, Capacity Building/Development, Policy, Quality Assurance, Information and Communication Technologies and The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).*

It was great to see a lot of professionals from different disciplines all together in one place, including Prof. Asha Kanwar, President and CEO of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL).

The Conference Dinner was a success and was held at UNISWA Refectory, New Wing. Delegates got a chance to mingle in a relaxed mood with delicious food and quality entertainment.

Following the end of the Conference was an excursion that took all participants to Mantenga Cultural Village where Delegates, I am sure, still have good memory of the event. It was interesting to see the 'inner child' of Professionals released at the Village, especially when the traditional dance by the Cultural group took

place.

A big thank you is extended to the conference sponsors, exhibitors, paper reviewers, parallel session chairs, presenters, authors and rapporteurs for making the event successful. Without you guys we couldn't have achieved the conference objectives. Another big thank you goes to the Director of The Institute of Distance Education (IDE), Prof. CWS Sukati, his Organising Committee for the Conference and everyone involved in the preparation for this big event, for their tireless work and commitment. You guys were awesome!



Prof. Asha Kanwar- Main Keynote Speaker at the DEASA Conference



The Minister of MOET and the Vice Chancellor with DEASA Executives

Take the Driver's Seat in the Exam Room

By Ms N. Mabuza- Coordinator, Students Support Services



After all the sweating during the course of the semester, it is now the time to show everyone what you are made of. This is said without any doubt for as the good student you are you have done your part, that is attending lectures and tutorial, participating in consultations with other learners, doing your own reading and writing tests and assignments. Surely speaking what more could be expected from you?

Notwithstanding the fact that we come from varied backgrounds in terms of values and beliefs, one needs to mention that this is one of the times when we remember that we have a Supernatural power. Those believing in God will seek His intervention calling upon Him "to do the rest." Others will be calling upon *emaShabalala* to intervene to name a few.

I would like to take this opportunity to give you that assurance that the supernatural power you believe in will certainly make provision only for those that have done their part. They will take the driver's seat in the exam room. The power is in you, take it and use it. Remember though that no miracles will happen, "you reap only what you have sown." However, Student Support Services has this advice for you:

General exam taking tips to keep you in control

- * Come mentally, physically and emotionally prepared including supplies (student ID, two pens/pencils, eraser, ruler and other resources required).
- * Arrive early as late arrival may bring you unnecessary panics.
- * Keep a positive attitude by trying to stay relaxed throughout the exam. If you feel nervous take a few deep breaths.
- * Read instructions carefully to avoid penalties. Do not assume you know them.
- * Try to focus on your own paper(s), wondering eyes may lead to wondering mind.
- * Take a preview of the whole paper. This will enable you to budget your time properly. As you go through the questions you may prepare a mind dump (making notes of key issues you think you might forget.) This will enable you to see which questions you will score the most.
- * Start with questions easiest to you and those with high points for you to score.
- * To make sure you are on track with the question, read the entire question carefully and highlight key words before you attempt them as it will help you focus on the central point.
- * Our handwritings may let us down, try to write as legibly as you can.
- * Do not worry if others finish before you.
- * Review your work before submission.

Adapted from Dr Lynn Miller (2008) *How to Study*.

Registration and its Significance in IDE

By Dr S. Dlamini- Coordinator, Humanities

Student B was seated still in front of the Kwaluseni Refectory with her eyes fixed on the floor and her left hand supporting her head when Student A joined her.

Student A: Hi friend, are you aware that the exam registration

has started? Let's go and register now.

Student B: No friend I won't be registering for exams.

Student A: Why?

Student B: I have serious family problems *mngani*, making it practically impossible for me to continue with my studies.

Student A: Oh that's too bad! But you were doing so well, is there no other way?

Student B: I wish there was *mnganami*, but unfortunately there isn't. Right now I am going to the office of the Director, Academic, to hand in my application for withdrawal from studies.

Student A: Do you really need to do that?

Student B: Yes friend, as a repeating student if I abscond from my lessons, I am sure to be discontinued from the programme.

Registration and what it means

The Oxford Dictionary meaning that is relevant to the gist of this article is that registration is the action of recording your name for official purposes. In light of this, registration could be seen as a process in that it announces your presence in a course, a programme and in an institution. It is the process that qualifies you to be a student in an institution in a particular period of time. This therefore means if you decide to withdraw from a programme, you must make sure that you annul your presence using stipulated procedures. Failure to do that has serious repercussions.

In the conversation above, student B knew that there is a procedure to follow when withdrawing from studies while student A had no idea. Most students in IDE are like student A. They don't know the University regulations and practice with regards to very many issues and this affects them badly. I have seen students committing very serious mistakes some of which had caused them to discontinue from programmes or to repeat. In this article, I chose to talk about mistakes stemming from your registration that could cause you to be discontinued from a programme.

Withdrawal without written approval of Senate

When students decide to withdraw from studies, according to regulations 040.88(a) and (b) (University of Swaziland, 2014/2015: 74) they annul their registration by writing a letter seeking Senate's approval. Once Senate grants them the permission to withdraw, they could be considered officially withdrawn from that programme. Repeating students who just disappear without Senate's approval are given the result 'Fail and Discontinue' at the end of an academic year. Student B averted that situation by submitting a letter where she was applying for withdrawal from her studies. Furthermore, first year students who just disappear from the institution without Senate's permission still get a Fail and Discontinue. A non-repeating student who abandons classes without Senate's permission is awarded a Fail and Re-apply.

With all this information, a word of warning would be: '**Do not abandon classes without Senate's permission.**' Good people, enjoy your UNISWA, IDE student status while it lasts.



Communication Strategies for Online Teaching: A Challenge to Academic Tutors

By Prof. S Rastogi- Professor, Research and Evaluation

The Institute of Distance Education (IDE) is busy with the process of opening 'Online Learning Centres' for distance learners in some High Schools of all four regions of Swaziland. This dream is going to be a reality with the help of foreign grants for electronic instruments to be installed and cooperation by local High Schools for providing their infrastructures to install the same. It will provide much relief to the students coming to IDE from long distances for human support by Academic Tutors on Saturdays and Sundays in the face to face sessions. They will get same academic support online by coming to these online learning centers on a day and date of their own choice.

Because the online teaching format is still new, it is common that instructors have provided academic support in the Face to Face sessions before they start teaching online courses. Face to Face academic support and online academic support differ greatly in the processes of course planning and delivery. Many of these differences are time-related. In Face to Face traditional academic sessions, information presentation is verbal and sequential. Presentations have time restraints. Information is presented period by period. Students hear the same thing at the same time usually only once. In face to face academic counseling sessions the interaction is always direct, synchronous, verbal, and typically one to many. Students can ask questions and receive answers instantly; instructors can evaluate or simply sense students' level of understanding instantly. The instructor controls the student turn-taking in discussions.

In online courses information presented is often text-based and non-sequential. Fortunately, such information is stored online in the Central Monitoring System (CMS) to be established at the Institute of Distance Education (IDE) and will be always available. Most course information is presented to the class from day one with instructions given as to what time to access particular modules or information. Students access information at a time convenient to them, which times can differ from student to student. In an online class, however, the instructor and students usually do not see each other. The interaction is many to many in both asynchronous and synchronous discussions, and thus can

be hard to follow. In asynchronous discussions, there is a delay in getting feedback from peers or the instructor. In synchronous discussions, often there is a typing delay when fingers do the talking. It can be cumbersome to impose structure to the turn-taking in online discussions. But, as discussed above, online discussions can be archived and accessed multiple times.

The frequency of interaction in these two situations also varies. In a face to face class, instructors and students usually interact usually during class meetings and during office hours. An online class instructor, on the other hand, is often available 24/7 throughout the course via web or email. Real-time interaction may also occur through instant messaging or chat rooms. In a face to face academic counseling session, when there are confusions or changes, clarifications to be made and announcements, information reaches the whole class during class meetings. In online class, however, there is usually a delay for the clarification or announcements to reach all students at once because they do not always access the course website at the same time.

There may be some proven strategies for time management in teaching an online course. The academic tutor must write concisely and clearly. If one student finds a sentence unclear, the instructor will need to spend valuable additional time responding in order to clarify the misconception. Five or ten minutes of additional time for polishing a message or task instructions before distributing or publishing may save hours in clarifying later. The text on screen should be short. A long content cannot be read fully as it does not appear on screen for a longer time. Each paragraph should be short. The supplementary material may be placed on a side bar. But, this cutting and making short should not make the text ambiguous. The text should be scannable with a meaningful title as well as meaningful headlines and sub-headlines. The key words, phrases and links should be highlighted. The information has to be listed using bullets or numbers in place of a long paragraph. This information may be organised in an easy to follow order.

The material may be divided into weekly modules and the dates for start and end of each module may be stated clearly. The course presenter may like to write a "read me first" document for each module. In this portion of the module, the instructor should provide guidelines on how to use the other material in the module. Often there are multiple folders or documents in each module. A document titled "Read Me First" is hard to miss and will significantly

reduce confusion among online students.

The module writers can overload students by providing too much information online. Making non-essential information optional can focus student attention on the more pertinent information and avoid overwhelming some students while giving others opportunities to explore beyond course requirements.

It is essential that academic tutors should be explicit and emphatic about the time requirement in the syllabus. Instructors usually spell out their rules regarding assignment due dates and participation in their syllabi. In an online course, because the instructor cannot read the syllabus to the class, it is even more important to direct students' attention to course guidelines and policies. The distance learners often have full-time jobs, it helps to set the deadline at midnight Sunday or Monday so that they can have the weekend to work on their assignments. The academic tutor should be clear about the turn-around time for responding and stick to it. The turn-around in distance education is important because when receiving feedback or guidance on assignments late, students may sometimes feel lack of support which could minimise their confidence. Asynchronous discussions, which can increase the interactivity of the online learning environment when well used, are highly popular in Web-based courses. However, the time distributions for live classroom discussions and asynchronous discussions are vastly different. Instead of a sequential presentation of cases for discussion in the traditional classroom, an online instructor might present multiple discussion topics at the same time over a longer period of time. Keeping each topic open for discussion for a week allows students to find time during the week that is most convenient for them to participate.

The academic tutors may increase their work efficiency by taking an advantage of technical tools available with the headquarters. It may include E-learning tool kit, customized discussion forums, etc. It saves Tutor's time and energy in specifying and reinforcing participation rules. The Tutor may like to utilise other resources as well. It may include sharing course ideas and materials with departmental colleagues. It will create a sense of community among them and provide collective wisdom from time to time. He may make use of the resources available on the Internet. Managing time in teaching online courses can be an enormous challenge for online instructors. The Academic Tutor and his students can enjoy the convenience of online teaching and learning without getting lost, feeling overwhelmed, or sacrificing the instructional quality and overall learning outcomes if they follow the above cited tips.

COL VISITS IDE

COL PRESIDENT AT DEASA ANNUAL CONFERENCE, UNISWA



COL President, Professor Asha Kanwar, delivered the keynote address at the Annual Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA) Conference, hosted by the University of Swaziland on 18 September 2015. Her keynote, *'Widening Access to Education in the Commonwealth: What Have we Learned?'* highlighted DEASA's role in the evolution of Open and Distance Learning and offered four lessons learned: Strengthen systems, conduct robust research, embrace openness and promote ODL for Development.

On the 27th - 28th July 2015 the Institute of Distance Education hosted Dr Jessica Aguti who is the Education Specialist at the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). During this day, she met with Honourable Minister of Education, Dr Phenius Magagula and other Officials in the Ministry of Education. He also met the Vice Chancellor of UNISWA, Prof. Magagula. Later that day she had a meeting with IDE staff members where each IDE unit presented its programmes so as to give her an idea of the everyday operations of the Institute.

On the 28th, Dr Jessica Aguti had a Public Lecture on: *'Preparing Teachers for Tomorrow,'* which was well attended. Part of her presentation touched on Global predictions on technology. She emphasised that since there is an increase in varieties of technologies that are introduced all the time, Educationists should be aware that Software will never replace teachers but teachers must be adept with technology. What does this mean to our Teacher Training colleges? It means that:

1. Teacher Training Colleges need to plan better for increase demand of courses to be taught and



Dr Jessica Aguti COL Specialist on Teacher Education

learnt by student teachers .

2. There is need to plan to teach new skills and competences.
3. Skills taught should be adaptable, agile, grit and self regulatory to be integrated into the curriculum through subject content, methodology, assessment , new courses for soft skills.

"Teachers need to integrate technology seamlessly into the curriculum instead of viewing it as an add-on, an afterthought, or an event" — Heidi-Hayes Jacobs

THANK YOU COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING

We would like to thank the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada, for donating a sum of £2430565.35 for staff development among school teachers with regards to the on-going research on Educational Technology and Classroom Management.

DEASA CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS



Dr Phineas Magagula



The Keynote Speakers: Prof. Bisanda and Professor Rastogi



The 2015 DEASA Local Organising Committee



A delegate making his remarks during the Conference at The Multi Purpose Hall

Delegates at the Registration Table before the start of the Conference



Conference Delegates at their Gala Dinner



The Elangeni Classical Tenor Boys and their Poet



UNISWA students, Nontobeko and Ntokozo who rendered a poem on the DEASA theme



2015 DEASA Conference Ushers

CONGRATULATIONS TO IDE PERSONNEL

Sincere congratulations are extended to Dr SR Dlamini, IDE, Coordinator, Humanities; Dr S Nyawo, IDE Tutor and UNISWA Full-Time Lecturer, Theology and Religious Studies and Dr GN Nsibande (LaMboni), IDE, Copy Editor, under the Materials Design and Development Unit. All three members of UNISWA staff successfully completed and obtained their respective Doctorates from The University of Johannesburg, The University of KwaZulu Natal and The University of Witwatersrand, South Africa respectively.

The focus of their research and titles are:

Dr S.R, Dlamini – **'The Church of the Nazarene, The State and Gender in the Evolution and Development of Nursing Training in Swaziland, 1927-2007.'**



Dr S. Nyawo - **'Sowungumuntfu kenyalo' - 'You are Now a Real Person:' A Feminist Analysis of How Women's Identities and Personhood are Constructed by Societal on Fertility in the Swazi Patriarchal Family.'**

Dr GN Nsibande - **'Face-to-Face, Print-Based or E-learning? A Case Study of ICT Integration in Alternative Instructional Modalities at the University of Swaziland.'**



It Takes Two to Tango

By Ms N Mabuza

It is certainly not the first time one has seen the above phrase (title of this article). What about it then? Well I have decided to use it to introduce the issue of responsibility. For every situation that occurs in one's life, whether by **NATURE** or **NURTURE** there are always options. The tendency is that we go for the quick fix without considering the long term consequences.

One other way of looking at responsibility is through a careful analysis of the term **Mutual**. At this point you may refer to any reference that you normally use to get meaning to words.....

I hope you will agree with me that the important thing about the meaning given is the action. The action taken in every situation by an individual is what makes the person responsible for the consequences of the action. All actions are by choice. The situation may not be by choice but the manner in which you respond to the situation is by choice. If it is so who then is responsible??? It is surely *myself, yourself and ourselves*.

Take a look at this picture:



Consider the long term consequences of the actions portrayed in these pictures...

**STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES
REQUESTS US ALL TO ACT
RESPONSIBLE.**

FHS Content Review Workshop

On 6 May 2015, IDE Materials Design and Development Unit hosted a Contents Reviewers' Workshop at the Faculty of Health Sciences in Mbabane.

Participants comprised of staff from the Faculty of Health Sciences, Mbabane. The facilitators for this workshop were Ms NT Vilakati, Coordinator, Materials Design and Development, Dr GN Nsiband, Copy Editor, and Ms LN Simelane, Copy Editor.

The purpose of the workshop was to make participants aware of their role as content reviewers and to know the importance of peer reviewing. The presentations and activities that revolved around the workshop outcomes were as follows:



To discuss the ODL Template

To clarify the quality assurance process in developing study materials

To use appropriate language to present Distance Education study materials

To review content of the Faculty of Health Sciences draft courseware.

The strategies that the workshop followed were presentations (which took part in the morning) and practical session (which was held in the afternoon). There were three papers presented during the workshop and were:

1. *The Quality Assurance Process in Developing DE Study Material* by Dr GN Nsiband;
2. *Appropriate Language to Use in DE Study Materials* by Ms LN Simelane, and
3. *Content Review of Draft Courseware* by Ms NT Vilakati.

PREPARING FOR EXAMINATIONS

By Dr Chakanyuka, Coordinator, Academic Services

October has come and gone and we are already in November. Examinations are now very very close. One major hindrance to success in examination is examination anxiety. This is defined as fear, apprehension or nervousness about examinations. The signs of this anxiety are many but I will refer to a few in this article: -

- ◇ Headache, muscle pain when studying;
- ◇ Overeating or lack of appetite;
- ◇ Disturbed sleep patterns;
- ◇ Stomach problems - indigestion, diarrhoea, "butterflies"
- ◇ Problems remembering;
- ◇ Difficulties in concentrating.

All these lead to poor results in the examinations.

What causes examination anxiety: In the case of examinations, this is caused by studying for an examination as well the writing of the examination.

How do I get rid of examination anxiety? UNISA has the following suggestions for its students: -

- ◇ Doing breathing activities to calm oneself;
- ◇ Muscle exercises to relax your muscles;
- ◇ Proper and thorough preparation for examinations;
- ◇ Proper time management- clear planning of how to manage time and get the best out of it; this entails being able to manage the competing demands on your time- work, study, family, social life. Procrastination is the thief of time and leads to poor results.

The EFT principle of time management

A. Exploration phase. This forms the huge part of your time from the start of a semester. During this phase you do the following:

- ◇ Explore and gain knowledge about a topic;
- ◇ Work through the syllabus;

- ◇ Complete assignments on time;
- ◇ Do additional reading in the library;
- ◇ Make summaries for intensive study later;
- ◇ Identify and clarify difficult concepts

B. Fixation phase. This forms the shortest time of your semester. During this phase you do the following: -

- ◇ Consolidate everything you have studied.
- ◇ Refine summaries made in Phase A
- ◇ Memorising the work

C. Testing phase. This is a phase during which you take time to stop and find out how much you have understood. You do the following:

- ◇ Asking yourself questions and answering them;
- ◇ Using study guides to formulate questions;
- ◇ Using past examination papers to practise answering questions;
- ◇ Joining study groups with colleagues for mutual support.

While all these suggestions are good, they highlight one key point - **PREPARE-**

- ◇ Have a study timetable which you adhere to **EVERY DAY**;
- ◇ Exercise, eat enough food and get adequate sleep every day;
- ◇ Have a positive attitude to you examinations so that you can comfortably cope with stress;
- ◇ Start serious revision for your examinations about one month before the start of the examinations;
- ◇ Use exercises in your modules as a way of testing your knowledge and understanding of your work.

May our good and loving God grant you success in your examinations this semester.

References

UNISA (2009). Exam Preparation. Retrieved from:

www.unisa.ac.za/contents/.../ExamPreparationwshopSep2009.ppt

In search of a sustainable model to facilitate access and use of the MOODLE platform for teaching and learning at the University of Swaziland

BY Dr SS Shongwe,
Department of Curriculum and Teaching
Faculty of Education

Moodle is an open source Web application designed for producing Internet-based courses and websites. It runs on nearly every available server platform, and can be used by anyone with a Web browser.

The name 'Moodle' was originally an acronym for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment. Moodle is a Web-based application that helps people create dynamic sites where learning communities can communicate and collaborate. Such communities may range from a university course or a secondary school class, to a professional association or company doing training. It contains a lot of tools and techniques and provides a variety of activity modules ranging from forums and chat rooms through quizzes and surveys, to workshops, lessons and assignments. Being open source and free, anyone can install it wherever one likes.

Moodle is underpinned by a belief that people learn best when they are together, and the Moodle development community strives to improve the capability of the tool so that it satisfies educational requirements around the world.

Moodle at UNISWA

Moodle is part of the University's centrally supported Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), and it is integrated with QL the University's student information system (SIS). The integration of Moodle with the University's SIS provides students with automatic access to their Moodle course sites once they have been fully enrolled.

As a teaching and learning platform Moodle can facilitate improvements in the learning experience for students by allowing a degree of flexibility and personalisation. It provides an ideal mechanism for accessing required course content, such as course handbooks, assessments briefs and other course hand-outs. Content made available via Moodle can be accessed at any time and from any location where the Internet is available. Moodle can host a variety of content from simple text and hyperlinks to more complex content like audio and visual materials.

Moodle can be used to enhance communication within a course using the announcement or email tools. These tools can be used to provide updates to participants on upcoming events/activities or changes to schedules and rooms. Further, interactivity and collaboration can be incorporated utilising tools, such as the real time virtual classroom and chats, asynchronous discussions forums, and individual or group assessment exercises.

Below are some ideas of the different ways in which Moodle can be used to augment learning and teaching of a course:

1. Provide access to electronic course materials such as hand-outs, presenta-



tions, assessment briefs and handbooks.

2. Deliver announcements relating to a course.
3. Facilitate online discussion using forums.
4. Allow electronic submission of assignments.
5. Give immediate feedback through tests and surveys.

In addition to its basic features, there are plans to enhance the functionality of Moodle via the integration of a number of applications. These include:

1. **Online Assessment Tool (OAT):** Online student assessment feedback tool.
2. **Turnitin:** Plagiarism detection tool.
3. **Video Conferencing:** Live, synchronous online classroom or meeting space.

My experiences with Moodle at UNISWA

It was by sheer chance that I discovered the availability of the MOODLE platform at Uniswa in 2013. I was attending a workshop organised by the UNISWA Institute of Distance Education on course writing. So far I have realised the following benefits of MOODLE:

- It's an open source
- great community
- customisable
- widely available
- it has loads of content available

These are current challenges:

- Lack of relevant adequate infrastructure (Computer laboratories at Uniswa)
- Poor connectivity (This is a country wide problem)
- Inadequate educator/learner ICT skills
- Inadequate on-site support (technical and non-technical)

Learning from the Past, Looking into the Future – An Institutional way forward

In late 2014, the ICT Department has intensified supporting faculty and learners with its new service focus and mandate as a result faculty and learners mostly embraced the

change. Overall, the system has introduced enhanced features, better navigation, a better interface, more flexibility in accessing information, and improved communication between learners and lecturers.

So, what are the key lessons we learned?

- First of all, Uniswa must allow time for planning and implementation of large-scale change. The lack of time to prepare has been the main source of problems and is undermining the effectiveness of MOODLE as a change agent.
- Careful coordination of the implementation process is needed so that all key stakeholders' are involved.
- Also, professional development and adjustment to a realistic workload should be taken into account for staff to better prepare themselves to lead the change.
- The institution must confront and challenge the idea that the process will be "just a conversion" early on. The change in LMS necessitates a change in the course development process, which must be given enough time, resources and support.
- The change management strategy should focus on identifying faculty needs and supporting them to make this new development model a reality. The goal is to empower faculty to develop and teach blended courses while maintaining the highest quality standards.

The University of Swaziland's Change Management Strategies should be drawn up to deal with the following issues:

- Becoming an effective change agent (as a unit and as a staff member)
 - Supporting faculty and learners in adapting to the change in LMS
 - Communicating continuously about the changes
 - Maintaining quality throughout the drastic changes in technology and processes
- Monitoring progress and assessing success or failure.

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MACMILLAN MANAGING DIRECTOR ON BLENDED LEARNING

By Dr GN Nsibande

Simunye - The Keynote Guest Speaker, Mrs. Busisiwe Simelane, Managing Director of the esteemed publishing house Macmillan, Swaziland delivered relevant, exactly right and inspirational remarks at the opening of the Simunye Writers workshop hosted by IDE between 5-11 July, 2015.

The key statements are highlighted in this brief article, with words of encouragement which she offered from the onset. She said, "...Like pioneers in any evolving field, you continue to light up new trails in distance education...which have made it possible for your institution to achieve high-quality academic and professional standards."

The link between Distance Education and E-learning

She proceeded to accurately describe and to a large extent explain the correlation between distance education (DE) and e-learning by stating that "the best form of taking distance learning is through internet or e-learning because this does not limit a student to time, space and location." Justification as to why to e-learning being a viable option was cited as its ability to enhance both the Teaching and learning experience. For instance, chat forums "video and audio clips can be embedded in the books so that learners can enjoy a much richer learning experience. It is also possible for continuous assessment to be done. This allows learners to interact with the text, and test their understanding."

Human Element

The importance of the human element in all teaching and learning was confirmed when she said "much as e-learning is praised and innovated, computers will never completely eliminate human instructors and other forms of educational delivery." This brought to fore the question why a sustainable strategy in any e-learning environment is critical? A possible response would be that, for our environment a practical approach is the implementation of a blended approach when developing content and publishing the DE educational materials.



Blended Course Learning Materials

Blended course learning materials can be considered as the best tools for providing students with what they need to acquire skills required in this rapidly changing world. Hence, the "purpose of these materials is to transform the way people find, consume and teach educational content, allowing students to learn the subjects they need through a blended approach," said the Macmillan, Swaziland, Managing Director.

Authors were reminded about their obligation as distance educators and experts in their numerous subject areas to "create Blended Course Learning Materials; which gives both the credibility and leverage to help leaders harness these transformative tools...by creating a culture that enables your institution to forge new and better directions in creating these materials...with the amazing array of technologies and techniques you have an extraordinary capacity to develop, evaluate, and refine the materials your students need to succeed." Moreover, "you can play an essential role in cultivating an appreciation of this approach" she said. It was clarified that this meant that Writers were expected to take it upon themselves to create a conducive environment which permit the completion and usage of the DE learning materials.

Mrs. Simelane's concluding remarks aptly summarised the main aim of this particular IDE learning design workshop for creating blended course learning materials. In her words, she dubbed this workshop as a forum whereby Writers could "deliberate on this innovation [blended learning],

make an effort to combine existing ideas and new ideas in order to bridge old worlds and build new ones. This strategy will help mobilize the best of all worlds...online, face-to-face, print etc."

It would be amiss if IDE, UNISWA did not cease this opportunity to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Macmillan, Swaziland and indeed to the Managing Director in her personal capacity for the continuous support extended and humbly received by UNISWA. Rest assured it is not taken for granted.

NOTE: The brilliant remarks have been compressed here due to space limitations. However, rest assured that the IDE Copy Editor Office is happy to give them in full upon request. Plus they will also be made available in the report on this specific report. This is because these remarks can be used as a solid reference for any writer and academic..

References:

www.macmillan.digitaleducation.com

www.distance electronic learning

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Dr Karen Ferreira Meyers' Busy Desk

Dr Karen Ferreira-Meyers returned from her sabbatical leave on 16 September 2015. During her sabbatical, she was able to undertake quite a few interesting projects, apart from working as a Foreign Expert at the Shanghai Open University (SOU), Shanghai, China.

In addition to teaching five different groups of learners between September 2014 and June 2015 (Oral English (for university staff: administrative and academic), Written English (for university staff: administrative and academic), Beginners French (for University staff: administrative and academic), Academic English - mainly English for Business (for college and university students) and Beginners English (for children)).

She actively participated in two 2-week Visiting Scholar programmes which gave her the additional opportunity to learn from staff members at SOU and International Scholars in the field of Distance and Online Learning and Teaching.

Dr Ferreira-Meyers also attended various conferences and presented a one-hour paper at a two-day workshop organized by the English Department on Online Learning: *Current situation and developments of online English teaching in the world.*

In the past year Dr. Ferreira-Meyers was appointed

ed Accredited Expert ("Expert accrédité") from 2014 onwards, for the Dialogue d'expertise programme of the Agence Universitaire Francophone (AUF) and the Institut Français and Regional Project Coordinator for AUF as a Foreign Expert at the Project entitled Curriculum, Contextualisation Plurilingue et Formation des Enseignants (2013-2017) - CCPFE-AUF-BOI, S0195COV0401. This project specifically looks at teacher training programmes in the Southern African and Indian Ocean region and aims at offering enhanced training with regard to multilingualism and multiculturalism. A variety of research tools (survey, class observations, literature review) are used in this 4-year research project. In September 2015 a regional workshop was organized and as one of two Regional Project Coordinators, Dr. Ferreira-Meyers presented two papers, one on the preliminary research results for South Africa and one on the preparation of scientific articles about the research project.

At the end of September, the French Panel held a workshop to start revising the French JC curriculum. It was an opportunity for collaboration regarding the content of teaching and learning materials for French in Swaziland. This activity comes after an earlier one (2014) during which the French Primary curriculum underwent a similar process.



Dr Ferreira-Meyers making her keynote address

Recently, Dr. Ferreira-Meyers was one of five keynote speakers in the ISESTE conference held in Jakarta, Indonesia. Her keynote address presented on 13 October 2015 and entitled "Online teaching and learning at the level of elementary school teacher education" talked about the flexibility online learning programmes can offer, especially for teachers who are already working.

On 29 October, Dr. Ferreira-Meyers participated in the School of Languages Conference, held in Accra, Ghana. Her paper, "Regional project on multi/plurilingualism: state of (Francophone) affairs in Southern Africa", briefly traced the history of the research project, entitled Curriculum, Teacher Training and Contextualization of Plurilingualism, outlined the main landmarks of the project devoted to the analysis of the training of language teachers in a multilingual context in South Africa, Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion (France), Mozambique and the Seychelles and discussed

some of the findings after the first year of implementation of the project and recommendations.

In her conclusion, Dr. Ferreira-Meyers noted that the choice of a plurilingual education from an early age and development of skills required for lifelong learning of new languages are noteworthy, that people need to be sensitized about the importance of linguistic choices and that a focus should be put on multiculturalism and the important link between languages and cultures.

Remember!

One of the perks of being an IDE family member is that you can contribute to this Newsletter. To contribute updates and/or information you'd like communicated in the next issue of the newsletter, please forward your contribution in a Word format to:

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