



*Innovation in Open and Distance
Education*

**NADEOSA Conference 2008
Abstracts Booklet**

Adekanmbi, Gbolagade – University of Botswana. (Venue: D5 – 18th August @ 16:15)

Challenges to Innovation in Tertiary Distance Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

The first university graduates by distance education in Nigeria and Zambia were recorded in 1927 and 1949 respectively, their programmes of study were in the humanities and their main medium of instruction was print. Some eighty-one years later, the preponderance of programmes in the arts, education and related subjects, with tangential forays into science and technology, has been observed in the provisions in sub-Saharan Africa. On the medium of instruction, there is still a romance with print, in spite of the tremendous possibilities offered by modern technology. While distance education itself, a non-traditional approach to teaching and learning emerged as an innovation, hindrances to the promotion of other forms of innovation have been seen, with the two instances just highlighted pointing to the nature of challenges. In addition to these, the challenges faced by conventional provisions also impact on distance education. For example, Tettey (2006), in a research carried out for the World Bank, has explored the subject of staff retention in African universities, noting such issues as attrition due to an aging professoriate, cumbersome appointment procedures, stressful promotion processes, enrolment policies not backed up by capacity, and the problem of large classes. Instances of, and hindrances to innovation in distance learning, apart from the traditional adherence to print, include the digital divide, the low development orientation of distance education programmes, a tendency to replicate existing conventional programmes and often, the tendency to replicate the traditional restrictive admission practices. There are also issues with the initial low level of research and publications in the field, an area which has now witnessed some notable developments. This paper aims to discuss these and related issues, and suggest ways by which challenges to innovation in tertiary distance education in sub-Saharan Africa can be addressed.

Akoobhai, Binaben - RADMASTE Centre, Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand (Venue K102 – 18th August @14:15)

What Do Science Educators Learn from 'At Home' Practical Activities?

Learning involves engaging in personal construction and meaning making (Hewson et al 1998). For a subject such as science which is abstract the learner needs to be offered a tool for providing the personal construction to make the concepts easier to understand. Thus the provision of practical work (which provides this tool) should be crucial to the learning of science concepts.

For learners studying science at a distance this poses a problem. Many distance education institutions throughout the world provide this experience by providing a week long session where all the practical activities are done. The socio-cultural theory stresses the importance of the community and the context within which the knowledge is acquired. Therefore the situated nature of learning needs to be examined. The microscience system, developed at RADMASTE (Research and Development in Maths, Science and Technology Education) Centre, Wits University, may be the answer to the

problem mentioned above. Doing practical work at home, situates the learning close to the classroom where the educator teaches.

This system uses small-scale equipment which is cost-effective, versatile, convenient and robust, and demands no special infrastructure. Working on a small scale is now the norm in many branches of science: it costs less, it is safer, there is less damage to the environment, etc. To investigate its effectiveness as a tool for providing practical work experience for students studying science through distance education, it was used by 25 FET educators who registered for the ACE (Advanced Certificate in Education) course at Wits University.

The research aimed to look at the educator's attitude towards practical work before and after the use of the kit at home, their experience in using the kit at home and what they learnt from 'at home' practical work activities. For this presentation the findings of what the educators learnt 'at home' will be presented in detail.

The results obtained in this study may be used to reflect on how science courses offered in the future, at a distance, can be designed to integrate practical work experience.

Aluko, Ruth - Unit for Distance Education, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria. (Venue: Auditorium – 18th August @ 14:15)

Measuring Success: The Impact of an Advanced Certificate in Education (Education Management) Program on the Professional Practice of Graduates

This article emanates from an operational research that draws on findings of an impact study conducted into the effect of a previous Advanced Certificate in Education (Education Management) program on the professional practice of graduates. The study used the mixed-methods approach. Findings reveal that expectations of the majority of graduates were met, while they indicated that the program was beneficial to their personal developments, professional practice, schools, learners and colleagues. Suggestions for improvements included introduction of subjects taught at school as areas of specialization, involvement of school principals in students evaluation, visit to schools by the organizers, and exposure of students to the practicality of the program, which could be developed as portfolios towards its end. However, the research was a reactive approach as the program has since been re-worked because the university felt it was not good enough and due to the problems identified by the HEQC. Presently, the re-worked program now has full accreditation, and as a pro-active approach, the university has introduced a comprehensive research project to trace the holistic success of the program.

Baloyi, Phineas Gezani - Rotterdam High, Mopani District, Limpopo Province (Venue: D6 – 19th August @ 15:45)

Research Development In Open And Distance Education : Mopani District Perspective (Limpopo Province)

The paper will explore and discuss research development in an open and distance education at rural areas of Mopani District in Limpopo Province.

Research development in open distance education has never been researched indepth. These have persuaded the researcher to do one and he will share his experience with the audience. The researcher has been involved in open and distance learning throughout his teaching career.

Beyers, R.N. – Young Engineers and Scientists of Africa, In Association with African Advanced Institute for Information Communication Technologies, Pretoria. (Venue D6, Music Room – 18th August @ 15:15)

Providing the Framework for the ‘Hub School’ Concept

This paper will focus on the identification of the social and educational value of deploying a ‘Hub School’ in a community to provide access to shared resources based largely on the Ulwazi Principle of digital inclusion. Having addressed the issue of access to information the concept goes on to include further value-add layers for the benefit of the whole community.

Broad radio networks which are installed and maintained by local community entrepreneurs can provide the basic access layer. The educational value interconnecting schools is to create virtual interactive classrooms with access to shared resources such as teachers and other electronic content. Mesh technologies can be used to extend the reach of such a network to teachers and learners homes creating connected learning communities. The presence of Digital Doorways, MobilEd servers and other technologies can provide an interesting platform for applying the concept of a living laboratory for the benefit of the whole community.

Bulman, Fiona - Distance Education and Education Development Consultant Phelamanga Projects and Mark Dent Programme Director - Environmental Management Centre for Environment, Agriculture & Development (CEAD), University of KwaZulu-Natal. (Venue: Auditorium – 18th August @ 16:15).

Building an understanding of “the larger whole”.

In a 2006 NADEOSA conference paper the process of developing authentic tasks for the Protected Area Management coursework Masters programme was presented. This distance programme, aimed at mid-career professionals, has now been running for six months using a combination of reflective journal writing and cumulative assessment. This paper seeks to explore the extent to which this innovative strategy is achieving the integrated learning process that lies at the heart of the curriculum and materials design.

The writers argue that the process of resubmitting the case study and position paper after each module, supported by the reflection journal activities, is enabling the students to reach deeper levels of learning and at the same time creating “awareness of the larger whole”. (Senge et al 2005)

Bushney, Melanie and Meyer, Marius – Unisa (Venue: K102 – 19th August @ 14:45)

The Relevance Of Learner Profiles To Promote Learner Support In Distance Education

Learners are at the centre of an outcomes-based learning system. Although good

progress has been made over the last decade to transform traditional curriculum and teaching strategies to an outcomes-based system, it is debatable whether the needs of learners have been adequately inculcated in this transformation process. Learner needs can only be sufficiently addressed if the designers and facilitators of learning programmes purposefully address the needs of learners as encapsulated in user-friendly learner profiles. Learner profiles should present both qualitative and quantitative data that are directly infused into learner support strategies and action plans.

The purpose of this research project was to determine the relevance of learner profiles to promote learner support in distance education. Secondary objectives were to identify the impact of biographical variables on learner needs and expectations such as gender, language, employment status and career expectations.

Learners studying two human resource development modules in the Department of Human Resource Management at UNISA have been requested to complete a learner profile questionnaire. The questionnaire covered biographical variables and a qualitative section requesting information about learner needs and expectations.

By carefully analysing learner profiles, coupled with the expressed needs of learners, the data presented academics, administrative and support staff with multiple opportunities to offer needs-based learner support. The paper concludes with recommendations highlighting the key categories of learner profile data that are translated as critical learner support information. Finally, actions are proposed for a high quality learner support within the framework of a flexible, open and outcomes-based higher education system.

Clark, Paul – Open University (UK) – Keynote Address (Venue: Auditorium – 19th August @ 09:00)

“Pedagogy and Technology in Higher Education: the Experience of the UK Open University”

“In almost every university today one finds experiments, either isolated or more centrally co-ordinated, in the field of technology enhanced education. The structure of such education may be in conformance with a pedagogic theory (for example “social constructivism”); in others it represents a test of empirically derived relationships. The Open University of the United Kingdom (OU) has had 40 years of experience in using electronic media as essential elements of its mode of instruction. This paper presents a reflection on the principal stages in this experience and on the contemporary transformations of the relation of pedagogic theory and the use of technology in order to pose some questions on how the relation will evolve over the next decade.”

Dhanarajan, Gajaraj - Wawasan Open University, Malaysia – Keynote Address. (Venue: Auditorium – 18th August @ 12:30)

Abstract to follow.

Du Plessis, Andries - Department of Information Science, UNISA. (Venue: Auditorium – 19th August @ 12: 45)

Open Distant Learning and the Long Tail: Rethinking exclusion, space and place

In light of its changing role as a distance education provider, the addition of a building at UNISA's main entrance is aimed at controlling physical student access to its Muckleneuk campus. Similarly, efforts to develop a virtual learning environment (VLE) draw attention to challenges facing all learning institutions, regardless of their current model of delivery. With the launch of *myUnisa*, steps towards the establishment of a Learning Management System (LMS) based on the SAKAI platform have been taken, which signal UNISA's intent to continue using technology in innovative ways following the institutional merger with Technikon RSA and VUDEC. Universities across the world are faced with continuous technological changes, which explain their ongoing attempts to find synergy with their delivery models. This positional paper touches on aspects related to the virtualisation of course delivery at UNISA. It argues that *despite* the digital divide UNISA should strive to increase its Information Communication Technology capacity (ICT) in order to offer complete online qualifications. By defining its Open Distance Learning (ODL) strategy to incorporate complete online courses the reach of African knowledge can be expanded through the Long Tail effect. This paper furthermore proposes that cognisance needs to be taken of the latest developments in e-learning, i.e. social network learning. In light of the growing importance of social networks generally, also in the workplace, developments in network learning necessitate an understanding of social networks in order to ensure lecturers are capable of ensuring inclusivity, meet student expectations and manage to leverage value through peer-collaborative learning. In a modern knowledge-driven economy reliant on ICT and characterised by the importance of vast networks, this is particularly important considering two of UNISA's areas of focus: African knowledge production and African Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

Fresen, JW, A. van der Bank, J. Hendrikz - University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa. (Venue: K102 – 18th August @ 15:15).

Design and Development of an Advanced Certificate Programme for Distance Education

The University of Pretoria offers three distance education programmes in the Faculty of Education for teachers in rural areas. Due to the lack of access to technology, the primary delivery mode is paper-based learning materials. The Advanced Certificate in Education (Education Management) was due for a major re-design of the entire programme, after having been in circulation for five years.

This paper reports on various strategies that were adopted to ensure that the newly designed programme would meet not only Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) standards, but also international standards. Although only 2% of the students in the target population have access to the internet, it was decided to adopt a "push technology" approach, by providing optional electronic support in the form of a CD-

Rom. Electronic support was provided to academic writers of learning materials in the form of an MS Word template which standardised the layout and technical aspects of the learning guides.

After being evaluated internally and by SAIDE, each module was evaluated by critical readers in the appropriate field. The entire programme was sent to an international panel of evaluators, who provided a favourable review. The programme was approved by the HEQC in February 2008 and launched in April 2008. The lessons learnt in this re-curriulation process will be reflected on and shared during this presentation.

Gatsha, Godson - BOCODOL/SADC-CDE. (Venue: D5 – 19th August @ 10:00)

ODL research and capacity building in the sub-region: Southern African Development Community – Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE) achievements and challenges

This paper takes a historical and narrative approach as it traces the conceptualization and implementation of a unique ODL initiative in the region. It also advocates for collaborative measures through the established initiative in order to promote the attainment of EFA and the MDGs in the SADC region. ODL in the region is a major issue that has attracted national, regional and international attention. The ODL issues and challenges that exist in the region cannot be ignored.

The existence of inadequacy in ODL research and capacity in the SADC region has resulted in a number of organisations being set up to address the issue. SADC-CDE is one of such organisations. The establishment of SADC-CDE was an initiative of COL and the Botswana Government on behalf of the SADC region. Since inception in 2005, SADC-CDE has made remarkable progress including building research and publication capacity in the region. Whilst a number of achievements were made, challenges still prevail. These challenges are a reason for collaborative engagements in order to promote the attainment of the EFA and the MDGs in the region. The challenge of tackling the ODL issues in the region requires collaborative engagement of practitioners, policy makers and other stakeholders. Without such collaborative engagements, the attainment of EFA and MDGs will remain an unachievable dream as those who are unable to attend conventional learning institutions will remain disadvantaged and unreached by formal delivery systems. It is therefore an open question for debate on where we want to go as a regional bloc. The debate may appear to be chaotic, however it is the assumption of this paper that great things emerge from unstable and chaotic situations and that as we journey collaboratively through conversations that make a difference, SADC-CDE will achieve what we dream as a regional block.

Gatsha, Godson - BOCODOL/SADC-CDE. (Venue: D5 – 18th August @ 17:15)

Perceptions and experiences on formative assessment of secondary school courses delivered through Open and Distance Learning in remote settlements of Botswana

The purpose of this study was to assess how distance and open learning methods and processes of formative assessment enhanced academic performance of remote distance learners. All secondary school courses including those delivered through Open and

Distance Learning mode are examined by the Botswana Examination Council. The questions that arise are; what types of formative assessment are given to remote distance learners? How have remote distance learners perceived and experienced the formative assessments during their distance learning?

A qualitative case study approach was used. The findings of this study were mixed. Participants differed with others saying that formative assessment was very good and easy whilst others were of the view that it was difficulty and inadequate. The delay in assessment feedback was experienced by all learners. Issues of monitoring and evaluation were also cited as being inadequate and as such learning support through assignment assessment was viewed as being inadequate. Hopelessness and fear of failure characterised most participants. However the official records of pass rates in the 4 courses indicated that something was working despite the participants' perceptions. Suggestions on effective learning support through formative assessment of secondary school courses delivered through ODL is made in this paper.

Hendrikz, Johan - Manager: Distance Education, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria. (Venue: D5 – 18th August @ 14:15)

Mobile phone technology as an instrument for student support in Africa

The University of Pretoria runs a distance education programme for more than 16 000 teachers to upgrade their qualifications. The speaker will use the experience of the distance education programme to illustrate the use of cell phones as an instrument for student support.

The realities with regard to the availability of computers in deep rural South Africa and other African countries and the challenges facing providers/sponsors to make computers available, have shaped the University's e-learning strategy to accommodate the technology profile of the distance education students.

A brief overview will be given of the technology profile of the students. The changes in cell phone technology will also be illustrated.

The practical use of cell phones in the distance education programme will be discussed. This will include the application of this technology for administrative as well as academic purposes. Examples will be given of both types of applications. This will include results of pilot projects on the use of cell phones in student support.

Kok, Illasha – North West University, Potchefstroom Campus. (Venue: D6 – 19th August @ 10:00)

Quality assurance in practice

Quality assurance in Higher Education receives much attention at institutional and national level. The Council on Higher Education has developed and published criteria through the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). Established systems cover full organisational and content-related quality assurance at higher educational

institutions. However, few of these systems have thus far developed a focus on the evaluation of the programmes governing distance education and open learning.

The School for Continuing Teacher Education (SCTE) at the North-West University: Potchefstroom Campus, currently offers three main distance education and open learning programmes, with over 25 000 registered teacher-students. Well-established practices have been developed. Quality assurance is considered a priority at the SCTE, therefore four programme evaluators have been appointed in 2007.

In an article published in 2007, Lockett clearly states that the quality assurance system in South Africa is accountability-driven and backward-looking. In distance education and open learning at the SCTE there is a definite need for an improvement-driven and forward-looking system of evaluation. As provider we need to address all the separate elements that constitutes a course to provide teacher-students with a programme of excellent quality that will improve their competencies.

The approach followed by the SCTE shifts the focus of evaluation for quality assurance to evaluation of the programme and its effect on the teacher-student. There is no ready-made instrument to measure the quality of education. At the SCTE the programme evaluators are focusing on the development of a quality assurance process that includes process evaluation, outcomes evaluation and impact evaluation. This process is done at four levels as suggested by Kirkpatrick (1998) in *Evaluating training programs – the four levels*. The aim with the quality assurance in practice is to assure a high quality transformative learning experience for all our teacher-students.

Lephalala, Mirriam - Unisa . (Venue: Auditorium – 18th August @ 15:15)

Markers' commentary to students' writing: rethinking the assessment of argumentative essays in ESL-ODL context

Language practitioners in higher education institutions are confronted with a central curriculum related dilemma in the assessment of written essays: How to incorporate formative assessment into teaching processes, while simultaneously guiding and directing future teaching in English Second Language and Open Distance Learning contexts? This paper evaluates the effectiveness of resubmitting a revised essay assignment in a distance-teaching context. Factors considered include the challenges of implementing a revision assignment in a distance-teaching context and the level of improvement in terms of content and form on the revision assignment. A qualitative analysis of markers' commentary of original and revised essays determines the extent to which the comments were formative. The findings show that before it is possible to understand how students make sense of the markers' comments, it is first essential for markers to understand how they construct feedback themselves. The article suggests the need to hold formal and continual training workshops of both markers and students to enhance formative assessment practices. Such training will empower markers to be more reflective and to provide feedback that is more accessible and appropriate to ESL students in an ODL context. Students too can benefit from the exposure where

assessment processes are demystified

Madiope, Maria and Martinus van Rooy – Unisa. (Venue: Auditorium – 19th August @10:00)

Rethinking Assessment in an Open Distance Learning context: The case for Online use at the University of South Africa.

Assessment at The University of South Africa has been there but it was done in a more traditional way. Distance education lecturers often complain that the large number of students and the nature of distance education restrict them to the use of pen-and-paper assessments however Unisa is encouraging alternative assessment methods to assess students. In order to address the limiting and limited assessment methods the Unisa senate tuition committee mandated the Centre for community training and development to offer a short course in assessment for all lecturers. The course was registered as a short learning programme “Conduct Outcomes Based assessment in Higher Education and Open and Distance learning”. A survey was taken in the form of questions that were posted online were lectures were expected to discuss assessment theory, planning and conducting assessment and how they are implementing assessment in their subjects now and how they can incorporate alternative assessment methods in ODL environment.

The aim of this paper is to report on the discussions that took place in the “Conduct Outcomes based assessment in Higher education and open and distance learning course amongst lecturers and critically analyses these discussions in the light of the necessity of rethinking assessment of students in an ODL context.

Makina, Blandina – Unisa. (Venue: D5 – 19th August @ 11:45)

Learner Scaffolding Through Dialogue: A Distance Education Case Study

Although Distance Education (DE) has been acclaimed for providing access to higher education for students who were previously denied this privilege, this formal admission has not been matched with provision of substantive access to ensure success. This is partly because of the remote transactional distance that reduces dialogue between lecturer and student. As a result, the retention and throughput rates are low. This article is based on a study that was conducted on a group of student teachers registered for the Advanced Certificate in Education course at Unisa. The aim was three-pronged: to establish the students’ perception of the Study Guide that was developed for the course, to determine their engagement with their compulsory assignment which is set in Multiple Choice format and to gain insight into their study habits. Data was gathered by means of three instruments, namely a questionnaire, interviews and lesson observation. On the whole, the course material was found to be relevant to the students’ needs and they applied appropriate study habits. However, they experienced problems in understanding certain study units and in choosing the correct options when completing the Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) assignment. The article also makes recommendations for DE courseware designers which could be implemented to improve the throughput rate.

Makoe, Mpine Qakisa - Institute for Open and Distance Learning, Unisa. (Venue: Auditorium – 18th August @ 17:15)

Signing up for Mxit: Investigating virtual publics through cell phone instant messaging systems

Over the years, Open and Distance Learning (ODL) institutions have experimented with different technologies in their teaching and learning. The survival of these technologies that have been used in teaching and learning was based on their availability and access. Keegan (2005) argues that “it is not technologies with inherent pedagogical qualities that are successful in distance education, but technologies that are generally available to citizens” (p.3). The lack of infrastructure for computers and telephones has led to the rapid growth of wireless infrastructure. Subscribers of cellphone users in Africa increased over 1000% in 5 years.

Most people in Africa, even those who live in rural areas, are more likely to own a cell-phone than a television or a computer. The potential for using cell-phone for educational purposes is enormous in a country of limited access to electricity and telephone networks; poor roads and postal services; and fewer people who have expertise of using computers. Using cellphones is much more suited in distance learning because it can reach those students who live in remote rural areas. This paper will therefore, investigate the new virtual publics through exploring and investigating the pedagogical suitability of using “Mxit”, a most popular cellphone instant messaging system among young people. This will be done through examining the type of dialogue that students are engaged in when using “Mxit” and how best we can exploit and explore its potential for supporting students in ODL.

Masehela, Langutani - Department of English Studies, Unisa. (Venue: K102 – 19th August @ 15:45)

Intertextuality In ENN104G: Does It Exist Or Not?

Intertextuality, a notion in genre analysis first introduced by Kristeva in the early 1980s. This paper contends that intertextuality in business writing materials is not or implicitly acknowledged as argued by Bremmer (2008). The paper would then support Bremmer’s argument by analysing the presence or absence of intertextuality in ENN104G (Practising Workplace English), a business language module offered to students doing business programmes at Unisa. This module has no prescribed book but relies on its study guide, which is the centre of analysis in this paper; and recommended business language/communication textbooks. Before addressing Bremmer’s questions I would argue the importance of this notion in genre analysis and business language teaching and more importantly, how this could be imparted to students through open and distance learning (ODL) mode of teaching. The following questions will be addressed in this study: to what extent is intertextuality recognised in ENN104G study guide? how much intertextual support do the compilers of this guide provide to accompany sample texts and written tasks? How could the provision of intertextual support be of benefit?

Mays, Tony – South African Institute for Distance Education. (Venue: D5 – 18th August @ 16:15).

Innovation in programme design: running before we can walk in an Honours programme

This paper takes as its starting point the notion of Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:21), cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:3), that “ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions; these, in turn, give rise to methodological considerations; and these, in turn, give rise to issues of instrumentation and data collection” impacting not only on the practice of research but informing equally decisions made about teaching and learning. The paper therefore begins by exploring the author’s assumptions about programme design and the ways in which students learn and then illustrates how these assumptions have impacted on the author’s engagement with an Honours BEd programme offered by Unisa. Having charted a particular learning pathway within the programme, the paper raises some concerns about the gaps that exist between the curriculum as planned, practised and realised. Finally, the paper makes some suggestions about how programmes at the Honours level might begin to bridge the gap between where students are when they enter the programme and where they need to be by the time they exit in terms of the requirements of the revised Higher Education Qualifications Framework that comes into effect from January 2009.

Meyer, Marius - UNISA. (Venue: D6 – 18th August @16:15)

Online Learning At Unisa: An Investigation Into Learner Perceptions And Performance

The University of South Africa (UNISA) is the fourth largest university in the world with almost 300 000 students in different countries all over the world. Given the wide dispersion of students studying via distance learning, online learning has become a major driving force in the new distance learning approach of open and flexible learning.

The online learning management system is called myUNISA, not only to enhance the UNISA brand that is worth R157 million, but also to let the students take ownership of their own learning. The system belongs to them – they can access it any time of the day or night, and interact with one another, or the lecturer, or view their marks and submit assignments online. myUNISA is thus an electronic learning management system designed to help learners to connect with one another and with their lecturers.

This paper uses a case study on how the myUNISA online system was utilised in one module in the Department of Human Resource Management. It presents an analysis of both learner perceptions of the system, as well as a measurement of learner performance. The results of learner performance was measured in terms of year marks, examination marks, and consolidated into the final marks attained by students. A comparative analysis of learner performance showed that the active online students on average outperformed the traditional textbased students by a remarkable 24%. The paper concludes with guidelines on how active learner and lecturer engagement can optimise online learning in a distance education environment.

Mhlanga, Ephraim – South African Institute for Distance Education. (Venue D6 – 18th August @ 14:15)

Use of ODL in post-primary education in Africa: Extending basic education to include lower secondary education

This paper is a critical review of selected ODL interventions at post-primary school level in Africa. The purpose of the review is to show the state of ODL on the continent and shed some light on its potential to address problems of educational access, equity, and quality at post-primary school level in African countries. The experiences drawn from the various cases reviewed informed participants of the 2008 ADEA Biennale held in Maputo in May 2008 on the opportunities that exist to extend basic education to include lower secondary education through ODL strategies.

Over and above focusing on four cases of good practice in ODL, namely NAMCOL, BOCODOL, Mindset, and the Ethiopian Broadcast Project, the review also flagged ODL implementation in several other countries in Africa. Drawing from the experiences of these countries, the paper argues that ODL is gaining momentum on the continent as a strategy for broadening access, and has the potential to provide quality education to large numbers of learners. In spite of this optimistic view it presents, the paper also warns of the many challenges that African countries face in implementing such a strategy at systemic level. These challenges include addressing quality issues, achieving enough buy-in from stakeholders, overcoming constraints posed by limited bandwidth, and developing appropriate funding models that ensure sustainability of the innovations.

Based on the experiences of the reviewed cases, the paper recommends that for ODL to succeed in meeting the educational needs of millions of deserving learners on the continent, governments need to take full responsibility to plan, support, and facilitate implementation of such innovations at systemic level.

Mischke, GE – University of Pretoria. (Venue: D5 – 19th August @ 14:45).

The virtual classroom: Advancing African languages through online learning

New power struggles and new awakenings in South Africa have stimulated the interest of white South Africans to learn to speak an African language. Africans from the rest of the African continent have also started to enter South Africa in large numbers and they too feel the need to acquire some understanding of one of the indigenous South African languages. Moreover, the fact that South Africa will host the 2010 soccer world cup has exposed the lack of opportunities for tourists visiting South Africa to familiarise themselves with some phrases from indigenous languages. Even though nine African languages have been accepted as official languages in South Africa, expectations regarding the official advancement of these languages have not yet been met.

This paper reports on a Unisa project to advance, through the world-wide web, the

learning of indigenous South African languages. The project involves the design and development of a virtual classroom where African languages can be learnt free of charge by anyone, anywhere, at any time. The paper comments on the curriculum process; the use of a communicative approach to language learning (with an emphasis on language functions); and how the online environment has been designed to address different language skills on a single platform.

Ndereya, Charity - University of the Free State. (Venue: D6 – 19th August @ 11:45)

Learner Support: An Integral Part of Online Course Design

Information Communication Technologies enable universities to offer online courses, a context in which students do not meet lecturers for face-to-face learning support. Consequently, learner support must be integrated into the course design to ensure maximal learning development. Traditionally, learner support has supplemented the study package in order to enhance learning, while, with online courses, add-on learner support is not ideal due to the immediacy required by online learners. Online courses should be driven by sound pedagogical principles (Ascough 2002:1) in order to ensure an effective teaching learning process; e.g. constructive alignment (Biggs 2003:25). This constructivist principle guides course design and ensures that facilitation activities and assessment activities are designed to correspond with learning outcomes and are thus supportive in nature (Heydenrych (2004:18)). Such designs promote active learning (Grabinger and Dunlap 1995:19) and are comprised of support tools and strategies that ensure scaffolding, metacognition, and collaborative participation within the community of learners.

Ntuli, Zodwa - UNISA, Institute for Open and Distance Learning. (Venue: K102 – 18th August @ 17:15).

A reflection on the practice of openness and flexibility in an Open and Distance Learning institution: Case study - University of South Africa (UNISA)

This article draws on the experience of a cohort of 45 students who participated in the Certificate Programme for Distance Education Practitioners (CDEP) at the University of South Africa (UNISA). The purpose was to establish whether UNISA as a distance teaching institution of higher learning practises openness and flexibility in the delivery of its programmes.

There seems to exist a dilemma for Open and Distance Learning (ODL) institutions in their endeavours to meet the needs and expectations of their students through more openness and flexibility on the one hand, and ensuring that institutional policies are adhered to, for the smooth running of the programmes. For this study, the starting point was to find out what the UNISA Management, academic and administrative staff as well as students perceived openness and flexibility to entail. The study also investigated how these stakeholders experienced practice of openness and flexibility in this institution. To solicit that data a semi-structured questionnaires and interviews were used.

The study found that UNISA is open and flexible, but not adequately. It also found that not all UNISA students are aware of all available services and how to access them. UNISA should consider improving on the media it uses to disseminate information.

Pratt, Dee - Durban University of Technology. (Venue: D6 – 19th August @ 12:45)

The use of ICT for research development in the Humanities at a multicultural University of Technology

Research development is a key aspect of the Research Co-ordinator's role at a university. In the case of a newly-merged multicultural University of Technology in South Africa the task is complicated by the fact that the majority of our students come from communities where literacy is by no means a given, and a university background is rare. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that most of our academic staff are accustomed to operating in a Technikon setting, with the focus being on vocational training and Industry-related competences. As if this were not difficulty enough, the Faculty of Arts and Design has an ambivalent status in a University of Technology, in that its creative output is valued as PR but does not enjoy the same status - or monetary rewards - as traditional research. This paper will show some of the strategies which the author, as Research Co-ordinator, has used to build research capacity in the Faculty Arts and Design at the Durban University of Technology. The guiding metaphor is the "wave" model, which shows research as a dynamic transformational activity involving all levels of the university, as well as involving community engagement. This is in contrast to traditional views of research which represent it as an arcane activity carried out by an elitist minority. Some of the key tactics used in the approach described are the re-structuring of the faculty to include a postgraduate Research Centre and use of blended learning for both research administration and research capacity building.

Prinsloo, Rachel – Unisa and Jenny Glennie - SAIDE. (Venue: K102 – 19th August @ 11:45)

Workshop Title: Curriculum Responsiveness in ODL for Vulnerable Sectors of Society

This interactive workshop will contribute directly to the subtheme: Innovations in Programme Design and Materials Development. The Tswelopele Project, a social reintegration and re-skilling intervention for ex-combatants, will be used as an exemplar to explore the following five issues around curriculum responsiveness:

1. Conceptualizing and designing innovative programmes for marginalized and vulnerable sectors of society
2. Examining the usefulness of existing policy innovations such as RPL
3. ODL quality imperatives such as delivery modes, sustainability and scaling up
4. Exploring the resistances to transformation and innovation
5. Unpacking the tensions in managing donor and client agendas through commissioned research.

Thomson, Carol - School of Education and Development, Faculty of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal. (Venue: D5 – 19th August @ 12:45)

Sacrifice' and 'shame' in open and distance learning: Phenomenological insights from a South African context

This paper is contextualised within the field of post-graduate, continuing teacher education in South Africa, through part-time, mixed-mode learning. It draws on a broader phenomenological study into the experiences of students taking a one semester module, *Reading and Writing Academic Texts* (now *Understanding Academic Literacy*), specifically designed to promote students' academic literacy development in the Bachelor of Education Honours programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Using data related only to the embedded experiences of sacrifice and shame as students 'lived' their acquisition of academic literacy, this paper argues for greater cognizance of the 'lived' consequences for students of studying part-time through mixed-mode, essentially 'distance' models of delivery. Drawing on Discourse Theory (Gee, 1996, 1997, 2004) as an interpretive tool, it hopes, through illustration, to persuade practitioners in the field that a more sensitive and nuanced engagement with students' perceptions and experiences (through phenomenology as both a philosophy and a methodology) is crucial to any open/ distance learning project, since without a willingness to acknowledge the impact such models have on students' lives, and by implication the curricula they 'incarnate', such projects are seriously in danger of undermining transformation processes, and thus, potentially serve only to reproduce social relations and educational opportunity rather than transform them.

Tshibalo, A E - Institute for Curriculum and Learning Development, Unisa. (Venue: D5 – 19th August @ 15:45).

The Capstone Course: Its Potential for Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice

Suludo (2008) and Suresh Ram (2006) estimate that 60–70% of the graduates of institutions of higher education in many parts of the world, including South Africa, are unemployable. The need for an appropriate curriculum that will best nurture undergraduate students, prepare them for the world of work where they can demonstrate basic, undergraduate levels of competency across the breadth of the disciplines cannot be overstated. Educators from diverse disciplines realize that the challenges of the modern workplace require more than technical expertise and so, to prepare competent graduates, educators need to create learning environments that engage students in ways that help them to develop content expertise, and problem solving, collaborative and life-long learning skills. A problem-centred approach, based on the constructivist pedagogical assumption that learning is a product of social and cognitive interactions, can be used to achieve these development goals (Dunlap, 2005). The Capstone Course has been identified as a particularly beneficial strategy that can be used to address the challenges outlined above. This paper investigates the importance of Capstone modules or projects in higher education. The discussion includes a definition of Capstone courses, its rationale and purpose, its design, learning outcomes, assessment features, and its potential benefits and limitations.

Tsivhase, Azwinndini Christopher - Education Consultant – ICLD, Unisa (Venue: D6 – 18th August @ 17:15).

Quo vadis: Unisa tuition policy and the development of learning material

This article presents some findings from the case study investigating the function and effects of the Unisa tuition policy in the development of the study material. The specific area of investigation centres on the following questions:

- How do academics deal with curriculum issues as indicated in the Unisa tuition policy?
- How do education consultants plan for the good learning design as indicated in the tuition policy?
- How can the institutional structure provide a platform for the implementation of the tuition policy?

The article outlines the views and experiences of the various participants in terms of these questions and, it concludes by stating that, in distance education, the development and effective implementation of the good tuition policy should lead to the development of effective learning materials.

Tucker, Kim – Meraka Institute. (Venue: Auditorium – 19th August @ 14:45)

Workshop – Stories of Learning for the Design of Networked Learning Environments

Join us for an appreciative workshop to explore learning experiences of participants and discover the positive core of effective learning. Depending on numbers, the workshop will consist of small breakaways and two-way pair-interviews designed to surface factors associated with great learning experiences. We will conclude with a discussion on technological and pedagogical innovation in the design of possible on-line and blended learning experiences. Participants agree that their stories and discussion may be shared anonymously or otherwise under a free license on a public site such as Wikiversity and/or WikiEducator.

Van Niekerk, Louis J & Philip Higgs – Unisa. (Venue: D5 – 18th August @ 15:15)

Rethinking open and distance learning and, teacher development in Africa.

The supply and demand for the requisite number of teachers, quality teaching and quality learning have taken centre stage of educational debates in Africa because of the increasing enrolment of learners and the chronic shortage of competent and qualified teachers. There is, therefore, an urgent need to ensure the provision of sufficient teachers to meet the demands of education systems and to ensure that all teachers are properly qualified and possess the relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes to teach effectively. This paper reflects critically on the role that open and distance learning (ODL) can play in upgrading and supplying more qualified teachers in Africa. In so doing it attempts to rethink the fundamental precepts and the self understanding necessary to realize an African Renaissance in teacher development on the African continent by means of establishing communities of inquiry and interpretation.

Van Rooyen, Annelien - Department of Financial Accounting, Unisa. (Venue: D6 – 19th August @ 14:45).

Introducing multimedia into a distance education Accounting module

International trends in open and distance education herald the use of technologies as essential for any distance education institution that wishes to remain relevant in an increasingly contested market. At the University of South Africa (Unisa), the fifth largest open and distance learning higher education institution in the world with almost 290 000 students, this is even more important as prospective national and international students demand a higher quality learning experience.

Although tutorial support and visits by lecturers have been offered to second-year Accounting learners at selected regional centres, the number of students attending these tutorials and discussion classes was very small compared to the total number of students registered for the module. The reasons for non-attendance vary from logistical concerns to difficulty in getting time off from employers. Research has shown that Accounting learners need to have contact with their lecturers. This paper shares findings from research on the integration of mobile phones and satellite broadcasts into an Accounting module at Unisa to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

The paper will

- provide a theoretical foundation for the effective introduction of multimedia technologies in a learning experience
- share research findings regarding the possibilities of using multi-media technologies in the teaching of second-year Accounting at Unisa
- provide insight into how students experienced the use of multimedia technologies in a pilot study in 2007 and 2008

Vilakati, Nokuthula - Coordinator Instructional Materials Design and Development Institute of Distance Education University of Swaziland. (Venue: Auditorium – 19th August @11:45

In this paper, the focus is on the design and development of Open educational resources through a project, the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, which brings together collaborative course teams. The paper looks at the benefits of such collaborative work for the team members, particularly in improving their skills in educational materials design and development. One such benefit is the practical hands-on experience that team members gain through creating assets such as interactive text, pictures and audio-visual elements. There are also benefits for the end-users of the content in small states like Swaziland, who do not have access to a wide variety of educational resources. The content offered as open educational resources tends to be designed with the end user in mind as well as be responsive to changing training demands of students. The paper then also evaluates how students responded to Open educational resources on communication skills in tour guiding.

Welch, Tessa and Ingrid Sapire – SAIDE. (Venue: K102 – 18th August @ 16:15)

The ACEMaths Project: Piloting a OER Materials Adaptation Process

Tessa Welch and Ingrid Sapire

Over a two year period, the ACEMaths project has produced, piloted and revised a six unit module entitled: *Teaching and Learning Mathematics in Diverse Classrooms* adapted from a UNISA module on teaching and learning mathematics. It will be released as an Open Educational Resource freely available for use by teacher educators on the OER Africa website at the end of August. But the project was not only about product, it was about process as well. It required of participants that they pilot the draft adapted materials in their institutions and contribute to research both on take up and on quality. The goal of the project was to pilot a collaborative process for sharing, adapting, and re-using learning materials for modules in teacher education programmes in an Open Educational Resources environment. The paper will describe this evaluated process, as framed by five dimensions which we regard as critical to any OER project – community of practice, materials, course design, copyright and technology. The paper will argue that an OER materials adaptation process does not necessarily have to use a technological platform for the process of development and adaptation, but that sharing of materials released under licenses that encourage reuse and adaptation and a strong community of practice to inform and test the materials are pre-requisites for constructive practice.

Zindela, Nomsa - Unisa. (Venue: K102 – 19th August @ 10:00)

Filling the Vacuum: Opening a Dialogue with Learners

This paper reports on an initiative by module developers to assist Open and Distance Learning students maximise their potential, take control of their learning, and improve the quality of the knowledge and skills acquired from their learning. In recognition of the importance for the University of South Africa (UNISA) to produce graduates that are ‘Fit for Purpose’ it is necessary to constantly review the ways in which students are engaged with their learning material, their lecturers and tutors. Given that not all students registered with UNISA have access to the internet and, as such, do not have ‘an open line’ to their lecturers, it has become necessary to devise innovative ways of creating an ‘open dialogic line’ with these learners.

In this paper one method used by a team of module developers in the Department of English Studies at UNISA to initiate dialogue, is presented. The module, Comprehension for Science (CSS101H), is a one year long reading skills course for first year students in the Science Faculty at UNISA. The course is skills based and aims at equipping science students with analytical and critical skills essential to access scientific texts.

At the beginning of the course, a feedback questionnaire was attached to each of the four assignments requiring students’ responses.

All assignments were assessed and a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the students’ responses was conducted.

The analysis has revealed key issues to inform subsequent work on course design, learner assessment, quality of assessment tools, strategic ways for learner support and quality throughput. This paper makes recommendations on how the students could be assisted to take control of their learning.

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Thank You – We Hope to See You All Next Year!