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## 2016 Conference

Conference Theme: Technology enhanced open and distance learning and different facets of transformation within the post- school education and training sector.

The higher education environment has experienced a number of challenges and issues during 2015. The focus of the Nadeosa’s 2016 Conference will be on the transformational role of institutions in the open and distance learning environment to assist in finding solutions to some of the challenges and issues.

### Theme

Technology enhanced open and distance learning and different facets of transformation within the post- school education and training sector.

### Sub-themes

Sub-theme	Suggested topics
<b>Sub-theme 1:</b> Transformation for an effective and efficient post-school education and training environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Role of leadership in transforming the learning environment</li> <li>b. Role of academic institutions as change agents</li> <li>c. Role of students and student bodies as the next generation leaders</li> <li>d. Role of the community in the transformation process</li> </ul>
<b>Sub-theme 2:</b> Technology enhanced open and distance learning for an empowered society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Issues related to policy, quality and access</li> <li>b. Lessons from ICT-related impact studies</li> <li>c. Digital literacies</li> <li>d. Using OERs, MOOCs and mobile learning for effective learning and development</li> </ul>
<b>Sub-theme 3:</b> Policy, curriculum and quality requirements in transforming the education sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Policy review and implementation for transformation</li> <li>b. Curriculum design and development for transformation</li> <li>c. Quality requirements in an ODL model</li> <li>d. Business and community integration in curriculum design</li> </ul>
<b>Sub-theme 4:</b> Professional development for a changing and challenging post-school environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Academic development for a purpose-driven post-school education and training sector</li> <li>b. Academic development to facilitate changes in the economic, financial and technological environments</li> <li>c. Academic development for facilitators in an ODL model</li> <li>d. Creating value through return-on-investment.</li> </ul>
<b>Sub-theme 5:</b>	

Student learning and support

- a. Supporting the ODL student
- b. Supporting students through technology
- c. Supporting students with disabilities
- d. Supporting students through counselling services

## Design and development of coherent ODeL programmes - Workshop

The implementation of the NQF in South Africa provided two pathways towards developing programmes - one emphasising building up from Unit Standards and the other focusing on the design of Whole Qualifications. Most universities opted for Whole Qualifications in order to maximise programme coherence but national reviews by the CHE have indicated that programme coherence is a problem area. In an ODeL context, in which modularisation is a standard practice, coherence may be even more of a challenge. On the other hand, there has been a growing trend towards utilising technology to create personal learning environments and to encourage emergent learning - a trend that seems at odds with the notion of designing a coherent programme.

This full-day workshop will therefore problematise the notion of a coherent learning programme and explore ways in which it might be possible to reconcile general and personal learning journeys. The workshop will make extensive use of general supporting resources and specific examples which will be shared as OER (open educational resources) through a Google Drive folder. Therefore participants in the workshop will benefit most if they bring an internet-connected laptop with them. The workshop will be of most value to those already involved in programme design and related materials development or contemplating such involvement in the near future.

Abstracts and Presentations

**Aluko, Ruth; Mampane Ruth**

[Exploring Access to Teacher Education for Students with Disabilities Through Distance: Preliminary Findings](#)

This paper presents the initial findings of extensive research conducted to assess to what extent higher education institutions that offer teacher education through distance are responding to the country's policies on providing access to students with disabilities. As an initial study, the authors have interrogated how a South African higher education institution has responded to the country's policies on students with disabilities and what the nature of institutional resources and the forms of support accessible to distance education students with disabilities are. The University's distance education programmes have graduated over 34 000 students since their inception in 2002. However, it is only recently that it has graduated a student with legal blindness, as well as one with mobility impairments. For the study, the researchers adopted the qualitative research design, focusing on document analysis. Findings showed that the resources provided by the University for learning support involve teaching content and mode of delivery, personnel and physical infrastructure. The question is to what extent are these accessible to distance education students with physical disabilities who are registered for teacher education programmes? The researchers highlight obstacles that impede access to distance education for students with disabilities, and make possible recommendations.

**Amory, Alan; Welch, Tessa**

*Design for Interaction: The African Storybook Initiative*

The African Storybook aims to address the severe shortage of early reading material in African languages with a digital library of openly licensed storybooks, the tools to create, translate and adapt storybooks, and a growing network of African partners to encourage use. Fundamental to the initiative is that the means of production of the storybooks is in the hands of the communities that need them. Activity theory can both interpret and direct the implementation of the African Storybook.

However, most education today is mainly concerned with cognition and direct instruction, rather than social cognition and construction. The work presented here explores how the notion of mediation, which is part of activity theory, grounds not only the way in which the African Storybook Initiative is facilitating the creation of picture storybooks to support the development of reading in Africa, but also the redesign of technological tools for mediation. Fundamental to this approach is the concept 'object of activity'. The 'object of the activity' directs the design not only of a reading intervention, but of the technological expression of that project as well. In addition, the outcomes of the object of an activity are socially constructed through tool-mediated activity that is situated within an individual's culture.

Just as the object of activity is associated with learning to read (pedagogic design), so too are object of activity associated with technological artefacts for reading, creation and research (technological design). Other elements were included in the design in order to create an ecosystem of mediated technological artefacts to support learning to read. These include the use of responsive design (to create optimal viewing on diverse devices from mobile phone to desktop computers), consistent visual design across different technological platforms, multiple ways to engage with storybooks (digital or print formats, online and offline), and methods for long-term storage of the picture storybooks (app for Android and iOS phones).

The paper will argue that the use of a consistent theoretical framework informed the design of reading and the associated technological artefacts. The design created a coherent environment to stimulate imagination and mediate the development of literacy skills.

**Amory, Alan; Rahiman, Fatima; Mhlanga, E**

*[Jack be NIMB, Jackie be Quick: Learning Design and Information and Communications Technologies](#)*

This research is about understanding the roles that Information and Communication Technologies can play in education. Against the background of the role that ICT plays in the current education systems, the research identifies challenges; develops a model to better understand ways in which technology is used in teaching and learning; uses the framework to evaluate a number of reports that investigate the use of ICT in teaching and learning over the past five years; and identified successful uses of ICT in education. A well-funded, managed and supported school ICT environment is the foundation to support teaching and learning with technology. The developed framework, called NIMB (pronounced nimble), includes notions of learning (acquisition, participation and contribution), use of ICT in education (instructive, cognitive, mediative), and models for learning design (reproductive, interactive, conversational and transformative) evaluated teaching and learning outcomes (Bloom's modified taxonomy: remember, understand, apply, evaluate and create). The independent variable ICT in education mediated the contribution of the models for learning design variable and is, therefore, an important factor contributing to the development of higher order thinking objectives, such as creativity. Evaluations of international practices predominantly use a participatory approach, which made use of ICT to

foster all forms of thinking skills and objectives ranging from remembering to creation clustered around the notions of using technology as a cognitive tool. The most used models aligned with interactive and conversational approaches. Drill-and-practice ICT tools support memorisation of information and development of skills. However, ICT used to mediate learning fosters the development of higher order skills required to be creative. Successful practice, illustrated the use of participatory approaches, supporting outcomes ranging from remembering to creation with technology use as a cognitive or mediative tool. The inclusion of the NIMB framework with best practice distance education approaches are explored to develop a three-dimensional grid that supports technology mediated contemporary learning design.

**Chakanyuka, Sharayi**

[\*Professional Development of Facilitators in an Open and Distance Learning Model: The Case for the University of Swaziland\*](#)

The Certificate in Psychosocial Support offered by the University of Swaziland through the Institute of Distance uses the supported open and distance learning delivery mode in which learners are heavily supported by mentors (facilitators). A critical element of this model is the professional development of the facilitators which takes place at the beginning of every semester and is conducted by module coordinators. This paper examines the effectiveness of the professional development offered to the facilitators and the effect this has on the learners being supported. The study is qualitative using open ended questionnaires and focus group discussions to gather data from the facilitators, mentor supervisors, programme coordinator and module coordinators of the University of Swaziland. Initial results show that the training offered to facilitators at the beginning of every semester covers different aspects of the methodology, delivery strategies and specific module content. The training also covers issues pertinent to caring. The facilitators find the training useful for their role as facilitators. The modules are reviewed regularly so that in every training session there is something new which the facilitators find valuable. Newly recruited and continuing facilitators also benefit from the training.

**Coetzee, Myrina; Mbatl, Lydia**

[\*A Transactional Distance Perspective on the Management of Tutorial Support in Distance Learning\*](#)

E-tutorials are important for learning interventions, especially within ODL contexts. While there is a conscious move to make infrastructure for e-tutoring available to all in South Africa, access to the necessary technological infrastructure is relatively limited. This is the case at the University of South Africa (Unisa) where the need for face-to-face tutorials still exists to support students who do not have technological access to benefit from e-tutorials. Consequently, Unisa offers face-to-face tutorials for students who are in need of support. Whereas research suggests a positive link between face-to-face tutorials and academic performance, the attendance of tutorials at Unisa is poor and consequently the performance is also below standard. Using a case study research design, and grounded in theory of transactional distance, the study explored practices that influence tutorial attendance. The results show a strong relation between the structure of the tutorial program and student attendance. In addition, tutor characteristics make a contribution to tutorial class attendance. Recommendations are made with regard to measures for improving attendance of face-to-face tutorial sessions as a means to augmenting personalised learning.

**Combrinck Martin; Van Vollenhoven, Willie**

[\*Computer-assisted Assessment: An Old Remedy for New Challenges in Open Distance Learning\*](#)

Worldwide student numbers at universities are growing fast. Yet there is still a huge challenge to provide access to students. One way of accommodating more students in higher education institutions is by means of open distance learning (ODL). ODL is not new in South Africa (SA) with University of South Africa (UNISA) as one of the well-known ODL universities in the world. However

there are also some other universities in SA that offer ODL programmes. North-West University (NWU) is one such university that has quite a large component of open distance learning. Currently 34 000 students are enrolled at the university for open distance learning programmes.

Assessment for such a large number of students becomes a challenge and specifically during examination times when lecturers get hundreds of scripts to mark. Such large numbers to assess can also have an impact on the quality of the assessment. The Unit for Open Distance Learning (UODL) is responsible for the delivery and operations of all ODL programmes and assessment practices at the NWU. Because of the pressure lecturers experience when marking these large volumes of scripts the UODL decided to implement computer-assisted assessment. Computer-assisted assessment is a broad concept that can involve a number of things but the UODL decided to make use of objective type questions (mainly multiple choice questions [MCQ]) as a starting point in the development of a computer-assisted assessment strategy. These MCQ are answered on a special template which are marked by a scanner or optical marker. In the literature this approach is generally called computer-assisted assessment. This is not a new approach in assessment but it will be the first time that it is used at the UODL. The main reason for using this approach is that it will help to alleviate the pressure on the lecturers when marking such large numbers of scripts. This computer-assisted assessment strategy was implemented in 2015 and therefore the purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences and perceptions of lecturers with regard to the use of computer-assisted assessment in an open distance learning context.

The researchers identified a qualitative approach as the best means for conducting this study. The reason for this is because the data gathering technique of an open ended questionnaire employed will seek to elicit responses reflecting the experiences and perceptions of key participants in the implementation process, in this case the lecturers at NWU who implemented computer-assisted assessment in their modules. A purposively sample was selected from lecturers who implemented computer-assisted assessment in their open distance programmes. Thirteen lecturers from the Faculty of Education Sciences and three from the Faculty of Health Sciences (specifically School of Nursing) participated in this open-ended questionnaire.

The research showed that although the implementation of computer-assisted assessment at the UODL was relatively small, it has the potential to expand. The data clearly indicated that this project could be rolled out to more subjects and in doing so create more time for lecturers to focus also on other activities such as research.

**De Jager, Henk**

[\*Measuring What is Important for Sustainable Growth and Development – A Balanced Scorecard Approach for Institutions of Higher Learning\*](#)

The development of higher education institution requires a rapid transformation in their supply of quality education and teaching to a broader client base. To meet this challenge it seems that higher education systems will need to undergo a process of diversification and modernisation.

In order to respond to these new demands institutions of higher learning will have to build their own management and leadership capacity and systems to measure the performance of these institutions at all levels. For this reason, a performance indicator system (also known as a 'scorecard or 'dashboard') for higher education seems to be desirable.

Several studies indicated that most institutions of higher learning, use only **accounting models** to measure the overall performance of the institution and lack a broad based approach to measure performance of the institution on various levels. There are also no clear indication of any efforts made to development broad based performance indicators.

In today's competitive environment financial performance measurements are not sufficient to measure organisational performance as financial data are historical and lack predictive validity. Financial performance rewards in most cases wrong behaviour, it reports on activities that already had occurred and is many times insufficient to provide managers with a guide to improve future operations which can create institutional sustainability in delivering quality education and teaching. It focuses on inputs not outputs and does not capture business challenges which can affect the efficiency of the institution until it is too late.

The general consensus in numerous studies is that financial performance indicators alone are limited in representing only that range of factors that create organisational excellence and sustainable growth. Financial data summaries the results of past action and non-financial performance measurements concentrate more on activities which will be the drivers of future financial performance, quality education and teaching and therefore sustainability. In this regard, the work done by Kaplan & Norton suggests that organisations developed a set of more comprehensive additional measurements to use as leading indicators or enablers of financial performance and future sustainability.

**Gous, Ignatius GP**

*Developing a Personal Information Management Systems and Strategies Program (PIMSS): Mind, Brain and Education Science in Action*

Based on the Mind, Brain and Education Science, this workshop is a theory-rich as well as hands-on experience on how to manage masses of information to be learnt every day, something most people and especially distance education students struggle with.

Every two days people create as much information as was created from the start of the human race until 2003, according to Eric Schmidt from Google. We are faced with an information overload as never before. There are three ways people may react to this.

- They may ignore it and attempt to have it pass them by.
- They may drown in it, and drift aimlessly at sea.
- They may learn to manage it, by creating systems and strategies to help them choose, discern, sort, store, retrieve and use information in ways whereby they live meaningful lives and in the process construct new knowledge, solutions and answers.

Students do not know how to learn, and in spite of new insights in how brains learn, still use inefficient, ineffective and even harmful learning strategies and habits. Lecturers should embrace the scholarship of teaching and learning, in order to teach content as well as the ability to master and remember the content.

In a case study, students were taught personal information management systems and strategies based on the interdisciplinary field of Mind, Brain and Education Science, with the aim to encourage self-directed life-long learning. This enabled them, amongst other things, to "binge learn", with the aim of applying their knowledge more effectively. The results of the case study were then translated into distance tuition in a course taught at the University of South Africa. The program is delivered via QR Codes on phones and tablets, making it easily available to students and adults worldwide. The results are promising for student success, with better retention and pass rates.

**Hiralaal, Anita**

*Blackboard as a Tool for Social Change*

E-learning is a socialising experience that makes the people who create the society. Therefore, to enhance this socialising experience, I want to demonstrate how I involved my students for a period of five weeks in an online Blackboard discussion board activity to explore whether Blackboard can

be used as a tool for social change in students. I show how I attempted to expand my students' social skills to act like involved participants by responding to each other's remarks and working co-operatively in an e-learning environment. In an attempt to transform my students thinking and develop them towards becoming social critics who can think, challenge, take risks and thereby believe that their actions will make a difference to the larger society, they were afforded the opportunity to record their reflections about the activity in an online Blackboard reflective journal. To document a personal thought process, I reflected on whether this new pedagogy could be a process through which students learn to critically appropriate knowledge existing outside their immediate experience. My reflections led me to believe that while this online activity did contribute to the development of students' social skills, changes in my pedagogy require extensive revision and more in- depth thought.

**Isabirye, Anthony Kiryagana; Dlodlo Nobukhosi**

*Barriers to the Implementation of Transformative e-Learning Technologies at a University of Technology*

**Aim**

The paper examines the perceived barriers towards the adoption of e-learning strategies in higher education, locating the institutional context within the broader framework of national and international policy drivers which link e-learning with the achievement of strategic goals such as widening access to lifelong learning, and up-skilling for the knowledge and information society.

**Methodology**

The study followed a qualitative research approach through in-depth interviews whereby the participants were traced through the snowball sampling technique. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for content analysis through iterative and reflexive procedures.

**Results**

While recognising the desirability of reaching out to techno-savvy students and engaging in innovative pedagogical approaches, many academic staff continue to prefer traditional lectures and are sceptical about the potential for student learning in online settings. Extrinsic factors in terms of lack of time, training and support serve to decrease motivation and there are also fears of loss of academic control to central administration.

**Conclusion**

It is vital to have a fully articulated e-learning policy strategy which aims to have a 'transformative' rather than just a 'sustaining' effect on teaching functions carried out in universities of technology. In other words, rather than just facilitating universities to improve their teaching, e-learning should transform how university faculty currently teach.

**Mafenya, Patrick Nkhangweleni**

[\*Shifting the Goal Posts from Traditional Instruction to Online Learning: Experiences from the University of South Africa's Signature Courses Pedagogy\*](#)

Relatively little research appears to have been carried out to ascertain lecturers' perceptions and experiences about student assessment using technology in open distance learning, yet this fundamental knowledge is important if we are serious about making changes in our practice. This study purports to fill the void that exists in this area and confines itself to academics teaching Signature Courses at the University of South Africa (UNISA), a distance education university. In this study the researcher had sought to elicit their views on the way in which the Signature Courses not only differ from other more conventional courses but also the impact it had on lecturers' and students' experiences of teaching and learning. Following this assertion, the method of

investigation selected for this study is qualitative in nature and employs an interpretive-social constructive approach. The researcher judged that such an approach would allow greater opportunity to understand, from as well-rounded a perspective as possible, the phenomenon under investigation. The findings revealed that technology-enhanced learning, lecturers' attitudes towards the use of ICTs, lack of experience and skills to use online technologies, and organisational readiness for e-learning affect the proper implementation of the signature courses at Unisa.

**Makgabo, Connie**

[Role of Academic Institutions as Change Agents](#)

The African continent has a large number of languages, roughly one third of the world's linguistic heritage. Although the situation of the indigenous languages of Africa is in general healthy, presently and in the immediate future, coupled with the great diversity of languages, Africa also has a diversity of situations of linguistic loss. For example there has been a language shift as a result of settlement in the urban centres in South Africa. Therefore due to the threat of language loss and transformation, the government through the department of education introduced the policy stating that all African languages should be taught in schools. Realising the need to preserve a language in the phase of a transformed university, this paper examines the effectiveness of the methods used to present courses in African languages in South African academic institutions. This study is based on a self-reflection approach. I am examining the current strategies of teaching the African languages at universities that are seemingly ineffective and might not render the academic institutions as agents of change with regard to transformation. Based on my experience and observations as a language teacher, and testimonies of fellow language teachers from other academic institutions, I would like to suggest other methodologies of teaching and presenting African language courses that should improve the effectiveness.

**Manhivi, John; Zikhali, Joyce**

[Impact of ICTs on Children's Educational Opportunities: A Case of a Rural Secondary School in Masvingo-Zimbabwe](#)

This case study explored current educational reforms, challenges and opportunities of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in rural day secondary schools. The sample was made up of one school, two school administrators, seven teachers, five education officers and twenty 'O' Level students randomly selected. The data were collected through the use of semi-structured interviews and observation. They were presented using vignettes from participants, and analysed using content analysis. The study established that students were ignorant of ICTs and their impact on education. Teachers were facing difficulties in the work of ICT and in embracing modern technology. They were computer illiterate and had no skills in ICTs because they were not trained in these things. Those teachers who managed to use their own resources to obtain courses in ICT often took it as a mileage to transfer to urban schools because rural day secondary schools were viewed as less desirable. There were challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers in computer sciences and other ICT related subjects, lack of telecommunication networks, internet, computers and geographical isolation. This study thus recommends partnership between the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and other line ministries, NGOs and donors to ensure equitable access to ICT programmes and E- learning to rural day secondary schools and to promote its economic blue-print, the Zim-Asset. It further recommends that the Government should quickly broaden equitable access to Information and Communication Technologies to all its citizens regardless of geographical location.

**Maseko, Vusi**

*Are TVET Colleges Ready to Harness the Benefits of Technology Enhanced Learning?*

Can Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges transform the current educational landscape into an effective and efficient post-school education and training environment? Can TVET colleges dare to venture into technology enhanced learning (TEL) in open

and distance learning (ODL)? Is TEL in ODL the exclusive domain of universities? Does TEL in ODL amount to transformation? This paper establishes what is going on in the TVET sector with regards to TEL and questions whether TVETs have systems in place to harness the new markets opened up by using TEL. This article critically looks at the efficiency and effectiveness of systems TVETs have in place for TEL. Under consideration is the implementation of TEL and a determination if such implementation will result in tangible benefits for TVETs and the market they service. Are TVET colleges responding adequately to the call of the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training? Is TEL improving the responsiveness of TVETs and thus entrenching their relevance in the new world order. Are TVET colleges the change agent to free the masses from the locks of poverty, restrictive cultural issues and the lack of educational infrastructures for them to make educational progress in South Africa?

**Mihai, Maryke**

[\*Lessons for ICT-Related Impact Studies\*](#)

One of the challenges faced by institutions involved with distance education is to respond to the rapid development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) by exploring ways and means of integrating these technologies in their teaching and learning strategies so that the quality of distance education could be enhanced. At the same time institutions in the field of distance education are experiencing the need to include at least some form of contact teaching within their distance education delivery strategies. Such a development creates the challenge of ensuring equivalence in the standard of teaching across sites. The Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria has been offering distance education programmes in post-graduate teacher training for a number of years and is constantly researching new innovative ways of improving its distance education programmes. The researcher participated in a research project that evaluated the effect of the use of innovative Information and Communication Technology in a cluster of secondary schools in Mpumalanga. A school developed an ICT learning environment that is innovative by integrating interactive whiteboards and computer technology with interactive communication technology. Through adopting this approach the leading school was able to reach out to rural schools in the area in the teaching of Science and Mathematics to address the critical shortage of skilled teachers in these subjects and to improve the quality of teaching offered to students. Useful insights were gained that could be used within distance education environments.

**Mofana-Semoko, Mailane**

[\*The Use of Information Communication and Technology \(ICT\) in Social and Literacy Practices Within the Two Community Councils of the Seneke and Kana Constituencies, Berea District, Lesotho\*](#)

The study proposed to find out how literacies were practiced or used at grassroots level, in order to enhance Post-literacy (PL) training.

The study applied the New Literacy Studies (NLS) conceptual framework through ethnographic case study in selected communities to find out who did what kind of literacy activities, with whom, on what occasions and using what kinds of texts for these purposes.

The study used the socio-cultural approach to literacy taken from the NLS movement literature, which regarded literacy practices as embedded in social practices and which put emphasis on the need to address people's needs in their own setting.

The methods of data collection used included direct observation, participant observation, documentary analysis, in-depth interviews and conversations, as well as focus group discussions. The data collected generated the themes one of which was the use of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) in literacy practices. The data analysis and reporting was done following LeCompt (2000) approach, explained as step-by-step analysis, according to research questions through five stages.

The findings were presented in the three case studies of 'Tum's story in stonemasonry literacy practices, in private domain', 'the story of Marabi Piggery Association of Women Entrepreneurs (MPAWE) literacy practices in the community and family settings' and 'the case study of Seneke and Kana community councils' literacy practices'. The use of technology, particularly cell phones was becoming a common feature of literacy practice. Thus PL recommendations should be extension of existing activities.

**Mpofu, Nhlanhla**

[What Can We Still Offer? Understanding Student Support in Distance Education Teacher Preparation Programs](#)

Most literature underscores that there is general high student attrition in distance education. Such literature emphasises that lack of relational and academic support is largely to blame for the attrition in distance education. Literature on students support in distance education seems to indicate an institutional responsibility to curbing attrition. Realising that the previous assertion is an incomplete understanding of factors that influence attrition in distance education, the present study focused on understanding the self-efficacy qualities that students require to complete their degree programs. The research was theoretically underpinned by Bandura's self-efficacy theory. The study used a quantitative approach. The study's population comprised of 1800 distance education students at University X. Stratified sampling was used to select 360 students who were respondents. Data was collected using a 10 itemed Likert scale Generalised Self-Efficacy questionnaire. Exploratory factor analysis was used for data analysis. The results indicate that students require coping, proactive, ingenuity, problem solving and tenacity as self- efficacy dispositions to complete their distance education studies. From the study's findings, it is recommended that student support research in distance education focus on nurturing students' self-efficacy dispositions that enhance their academic performance.

**Naidoo, R; Ramdass, K**

*Blended Learning of a QA Course in an Engineering Department at an ODeL Institution*

A study was performed on the teaching and learning of a QA course in an engineering department at an ODeL university during the years 2012 to 2015. The course was taught using ODeL methods during 2012 to 2014. In 2015 the course was taught using Blending learning methods. Very little research has been performed on QA teaching and learning at an ODeL institution. However research has been performed on the traditional teaching of QA at traditional university. Developing teaching and learning materials using technology requires different modes of delivery and requires unique approaches to curriculum development and pedagogy compared to traditional QA delivery. The study explores strategies applied by ODeL lecturers in the designing and communication of a QA course to optimise student engagement and scores. The methodology adopted a transactional theory framework. A mixed method approach was used to analyse data. The quantitative data consisted of all students in the 2012-2014 and 2015 years of study. The 2012-2014 scores were attained by teaching using ODL methods only. The 2015 teaching were performed using a blended learning approach. The qualitative data consisted of a random sample of 20 students in the 2015 year of study. The results were statistically analysed. The hypothesis tests indicated a significant difference in the 2012-2014 and 2015 scores at a 95% level of significance. The results indicate a trend of improvement of scores from 2012-2014 to 2015. The scores improved from 12% during 2012-2014 to 85% in 2015. Qualitative analysis suggests some strategies employed that impacted on the 2015 scores were student support, assessment and assignments and constant changing of the learning material and frequent communication with students. The study develops a model for the teaching and learning of a QA course in an ODeL institution.

**Ndou, Thuli**

[Academic Skills Shortage in Selected Higher Education Institutions in the KwaZulu-Natal Region](#)

The study intended to examine the challenge of academic skills shortage in South Africa as presented in the selected institutions of higher learning in the KwaZulu-Natal province. As a result of academic skills shortage, the delivery and execution of core academic functions such as teaching and learning, research as well as community engagement suffer due unreasonable workload that may results to inability of academics to cope with their work demands. The study employed a qualitative research approach and data was collected through semi-structured and in-depth interviews with fifty (50) participants; including line managers and human resources practitioners. Data collection focused on academic skills shortage, disciplines that experience skills shortage, academic labour turnover and recruitment and selection process of academics. Data analysis was conducted through the use of thematic analysis.

The results revealed that the institutions are confronted by academic skills shortage in most academic disciplines, but the shortage was more significant in the Science, Engineering and the Accounting disciplines. As a result, the human resource department finds it difficult to fill academic positions in these fields/disciplines. Therefore, this has led to increased reliance on foreign academic talent. In additional, the results revealed that the institutions under study are faced with higher labour turnover which could be attributed to uncompetitive salaries for academic staff, lack of retention strategies, poor job satisfaction and stringent academic appointment and promotion criteria. In summation, the study gestured to the need for revision of human resources practices and policies.

**Ngubane-Mokiwa, Sindile**

*Designing Accessible MOOCs for Blind Students*

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) were designed to enhance access to education to all that desire it. The open access drive seeks to promote free and equitable access to basic, higher, formal and informal education. The main aim of MOOCs is to de-institutionalize education moving it from the formalized class to the open platform where there are no admission requirements. The second aim of MOOCs is to provide access to lifelong learning for those who want to learn for the sake of knowing and developing their competencies. MOOCs are offered to anyone with access to a computer and reliable Internet connection. Though anybody can offer a MOOC, there are pioneers of MOOCs like Coursera which offered more than 1000 courses from 112 universities in 2015 and edX which has offered more than 500 courses from more than 40 universities. This paper provides an analysis of literature on the accessibility of MOOCs to blind people. It uses qualitative content analysis to determine scholarly contributions that have been made in the subject of MOOC accessibility for blind people. Fifteen academic articles were sourced through formidable search engines. Specified inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to select the articles that were analyzed to answer the research question: What strategies can be employed to enhance the accessibility of Massive Open Online Courses for blind students? Findings are discussed and recommendations are made towards making MOOCs more accessible for blind students.

**Ntho-Ntho, Maitumeleng Albertina**

*Role of Students and Student Bodies as the Next Generation Leaders*

Students bring to their learning environment a diverse range of backgrounds, experiences and expectations. When some have few formal qualifications, others have none and begin their higher education journey unprepared for the independent, self-directed learning that awaits them. When these dynamics come together in a distance learning environment where students are physically separated from teaching and support staff and other learners, the isolation, coupled with a weak sense of connection to the learning community, students struggle to maintain their motivation and engagement in learning. However, the very individuals, whom the distance learning policies, curriculum and procedures are meant for, do not have a voice in these important decisions that determine their lives. Literature on student participation informing this paper highlights positive outcomes from involving students as decision makers in their education. The aim of this conceptual

paper is therefore to advocate for student participation in decision making where their distance learning is planned, reviewed and implemented. It further recommends that attention be given to research on distance learning and that students, as today's leaders, be more involved both as active researchers and research participants rather than passive beneficiaries of distance education. This strategy paths student's greater participation when decisions about education at local, provincial and national levels are made.

**Ntuli, Zodwa**

*An Exploration Into e-Tutoring in an Open and Distance Learning Institution: A Tutor Perspective*

To enhance interaction between students and lecturers for learning support purposes, the University of South Africa (Unisa) introduced e-tutoring in 2013. However, there is a concern that student participation in this initiative is low. I deemed it crucial to get the views and experiences of one of e-tutors in this regard to find how in her view, students could be motivated and empowered to use technology to their benefit.

This paper reports on the results of the study which aimed at getting a deeper insight into the experiences and perspective of an e-tutor regarding e-tutoring at the University of South Africa (Unisa). I used Technology Acceptance Model (Davis 1989) as a theoretical framework to find out whether e-tutors and lecturers accepted and used e-tutoring to enhance interaction between themselves and students with an aim to support and empower the latter to take charge of their learning through engaging online. I interviewed one Unisa e-tutor. I used phenomenology. The question addressed was "What are your experiences of e-tutoring at Unisa?" The findings suggest that e-tutoring is considered useful. However, there is lack of communication between lecturers and e-tutors. This results demotivating active e-tutors and depriving students of effective online support. The study concludes that e-tutoring is useful. Communication between lecturers and tutors should be improved for motivation and benefit of distance students.

**Odafe, Esther N; Egwali, Annie O**

*Information Technology on Student Perception and Achievement of Mathematics as it Affects Distant Learning*

This study investigated Information Technology (IT) on students' Perception and Achievement in Mathematics in Edo State, Nigeria. An e-learning Open University where students were exposed to IT, and two Universities where students are not exposed to e-learning facilities via IT facilities were purposively selected. 187 students of mathematics education were used for the study. The design is e-learning post-test experimental. The e-learning application was designed for excellent online distance learning by allowing students to receive online course materials in different subject areas including mathematics. The experimental group was students exposed to the e-learning application while the control group is students exposed to the conventional classroom method, these served as treatment with a 100-item achievement test administered in mathematics. Results from the findings revealed that students exposed to the e-learning application facilities had a significantly better overall achievement because the IT facilities improved students' perception of mathematics. The research hereby recommends that mathematics students should be provided with laptops and encouraged with all that IT has to offer.

**Odafe, Ngozi Esther; Igbafe, Chinwe Eucheria**

*Emotional Intelligence: A Predictor of Mathematical Achievement in an Online Learning Environment*

As the wave for online programmes and degree increases in this dynamic age, it becomes imperative for administrators to predict level of academic success in a subject as seemingly abstract as mathematics. This study sought to assess the intrinsic factors of emotional intelligence (EI) and personality to determine the extent to which they predict grade point average (GPA), a determinant

of academic success amongst students in Open University available in Edo state. Using stepwise multiple regression, the study revealed that EI is a significant predictor of Mathematical achievement. Influence of positive personality as reflected in mathematical phobia significantly increased the variance ratio accounted for in GPA. Hence research conclusively noted that soft skills are pre-requisites to academic mathematical success and constitute useful profile of the online candidate future career in the sciences, engineering, Mathematics and as mathematicians.

**Phewa, MCN**

*Reconceptualizing Student Success*

The phrase 'access for student success' is a familiar one in the South African Higher Education (SAHE) sector since the formation of one national Department of Education in 1994, which resulted from the desegregation of the then 17 racial departments of education. Numerous initiatives to address this concept have been instituted in different ways by the Higher Education (HE) institutions. These have taken the form of student support programmes which have, *inter alia*, included access and/or foundation provision, academic development initiatives, career development and employment preparation programmes.

The University of South Africa (Unisa) has not been omitted in taking on similar learner support initiatives. Unisa in its attempt to enhance student success offers academic development (AD) programmes such as the Science Foundation Provision (SFP), amongst others. However, academic development remains an ad-hoc activity being offered by different directorates working in silos and often times duplicating some of the services.

This paper aims to present a proposal towards developing an integrated model for learner support whose objective is to identify students' academic and career needs at the point of entry; refer them to appropriate learning and career development programmes; and thereafter enrol them in a job readiness training and placement programme (JRTP) in preparation for work-integrated learning (WIL) placements.

A mixed methods study was conducted, involving a diagnostic academic literacies assessment, student and employer questionnaires as well as focus group discussions. Participants were 'employers' of Unisa students who had been placed in WIL programmes with and/or without the career development and JRTP experience, and those that had been placed in other jobs not directly related to their qualifications and/or career needs through the JRTP programme.

It was found that most senior students view student success as obtaining a qualification, and being able to use such qualification in gainful employment.

**Preesman, Janine; Naude, Erin**

[Students and Facilitators Perceptions of the Education for Effective Nutrition in Action \(ENACT\) Online Learning Programme at Unisa](#)

Community Engagement programmes and online courses continue to grow in higher education settings. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nation have initiated an online pilot study in Education for Effective Nutrition in Action (ENACT) in collaboration with Unisa's College of Agricultural and Environmental studies. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to determine the perceptions of the facilitators and students using the online material provided by the FAO ENACT. The research question: "What are the students and facilitators perceptions and experiences of online learning in the FAO ENACT online pilot programme" underpins the study. The participants were selected using the following inclusion criteria: The students were required to be registered for Education for Effective Nutrition in Action (ENACT) online pilot programme at the University of South Africa and the facilitators that were

responsible for the implementation thereof. Data were collected through the utilisation of an online survey and face to face interviews with students. Further unstructured interviews were conducted with facilitators. The framework was chosen because of its ability to respond to the research question and objectives. This research attempts to highlight the students and facilitators experience of the FAO ENACT online pilot programme at UNISA using Collaizi' and Giorgi's data analysis framework. The findings will address a gap in the knowledge of what the students and facilitator's needs are in the FAO ENACT online pilot programme.

**Roberts, Jennifer**

*Future and Changing Roles of Staff in Distance Education: A Study to Identify Training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Needs*

Changes in higher education through changes in government funding, competition amongst institutions, the increased use of technology and a shift to learner-centred education are leading to changes in the roles of distance education academics. Clarity of roles and development of appropriate competency frameworks are essential for optimal performance of distance educators. Studies indicate that appropriate learning and development programmes, underpinned by relevant competency development, are required in universities. In-service (CPD) programs should offer convincing, no-nonsense and on-going training that deals with how to teach at a distance, not merely how to manipulate new instructional technology. This study investigates the current and future changing roles of distance educators at the University of South Africa (Unisa) as well as staff perceptions of the importance of each of these roles and training needs in order to address competencies required in these future roles. It forms part of a larger project which will focus on capacity and continuous professional development (CPD) processes that are necessary to train staff to be prepared for the changing roles. A mixed methodology was employed. Firstly a web-based survey was sent to a stratified random sample of Unisa academic staff to reflect generational cohorts, colleges, educational levels, length of service at Unisa, gender and various other demographic variables. This was followed by semi-structured interviews conducted with a purposive sample of 15 academic staff representative of the same demographics described above. Key results indicate that competencies in the roles of technology, instructional design and student support have emerged as crucial for distance educators.

**Sekudu, J; Raphalalani, A; Mohlala, G**

[Bright Site Project as a Social Work Service Learning Centre: Reflections from Supervisors](#)

Social work training in South Africa is based on the specific exit levels as stipulated by the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree that has been adopted nationally. This learning takes place within a structured course, where students have to achieve specified outcomes under the guidance of a practical supervisor, whose role is to ensure that the student is exposed to opportunities that will enable him/her to practice the specified knowledge and skills, followed by assessment and guidance until the desired outcomes are achieved. The Bright Site project was established for this specific objective at UNISA in accordance to the service-learning model proposed by the Council for Higher Education. The project is managed according to the stipulated legislative framework as determined by the CHE.

The social work supervisors attached to Bright Site Project are expected to perform the role of guiding the students regarding social work administration, education and also provide them with support. These supervisors also form an integral part of the social work student training as they guide the students to integrate theory and practice. This paper is focused on the evaluative reflections of social work supervisors attached to Bright Site Project regarding their role as a support structure within the ODL environment at UNISA. The evaluation forms completed by the supervisors will be used as the source of data that will be analysed thematically. The findings will assist in strengthening the supportive role of social work supervisors within the ODL environment.

**Sujee, Eva**

[\*Effect of Computer Technology on Learning in a Multilingualistic Language Class\*](#)

No abstract