ODL COMMUNIQUÉ 17, 9 JUNE 2010

AN OVERVIEW OF THIS WEEK'S COMMUNIQUÉ

1. *The pedagogy of the impressed: how teachers become victims of technological vision*
2. *Feedback on the Senate meeting of 2 June and next steps*
3. *Report back on the issues of intellectual property, copyright and the use of social networking sites for teaching purposes*
4. *ODL repository and blog*

1   *THE PEDAGOGY OF THE IMPRESSED: HOW TEACHERS BECOME VICTIMS OF TECHNOLOGICAL VISION*

A colleague of mine, Dr Leonie Steyn (DCLD) brought an article to my attention which I really enjoyed reading. The article is titled "The pedagogy of the impressed: how teachers become victims of technological vision" (Convery, A. 2009). The article is available at http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~content=a908688652&db=all (accessed 6 June 2009). Before I briefly discuss some of the points Convery (2009) makes, let me clarify my own position. After last week's communiqué some staff members who are passionate about the use of technologies at Unisa, felt that I was overly negative about the possibilities to effectively teach using a variety of technologies in the context of Unisa. Some colleagues felt that Unisa does *not* have a "technicist" approach to using technologies and that answering questions regarding the curriculum and pedagogy *precedes* deciding which technologies to use of technologies at Unisa. I confess that I may err on the side of the overly cautious, and articles like this one written by Convery (2009) does raise my levels of awareness of the "hype" and "cyber-evangelism" (Convery 2009: 35) that often accompany the drive to naturalise the use of technologies.

Let me state it blatantly – I have seen many brilliant uses of the use of a range of technologies, internationally and in the context of Unisa. I personally have done research on the effectiveness in the use of online learning experiences, and the evidence I found *do* point to the wonderful possibilities the effective *and* appropriate use of technologies hold. Reading an article like the one written by Convery (2009) does make me aware (again) of the way evidence is presented to "prove" the effectiveness use of technology in increasing the success and satisfaction of students.

The first point that Convery (2009:26) points to is that the effectiveness of the use of technologies, like Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), should be seen in the broader context of the environment in which it is used, the support by educators and other staff, careful preparation and follow-up.

Convery (2009:26) quotes a number of the reports on the use of technologies which, although the users were excited and satisfied, report that the potential of the technologies to increase the effectiveness of the learning is "less clear". We are often seduced by "authoritative statements" (Convery 2009: 27), and the "optimistic rhetoric" which hide the "gap between the rhetoric and the reality" (Convery 2009:28). "We are invited to make mechanistic links and accept the technology as a solution for the *symptoms* (a lack of attention in the classroom) rather than look more deeply at the *causes* of disaffection" (Convery 2009:30-31). Often "well-intentioned technology enthusiasts… colonise [the] educational discourse… The unfortunate casualties of this fanciful theory building are teachers who then become squeezed by being expected to demonstrate in practice the success of this untested (but much celebrated) educational technology" (Convery 2009:33).

Convery (2009:39) closes his article by protesting "the simplistic rhetoric of makeover politics" in which technology is the portrayed as *the* saviour for all our educational ills. He pleads that we should ensure the quality of educational ICT research and to reject "seductive but disabling rhetoric" in order to consider educational use of technology within their human context and educational complexity" (Convery 2009:39).

2   FEEDBACK ON THE SENATE MEETING OF 2 JUNE AND NEXT STEPS

All the proposals of the different ODL Task teams served at the Senate meeting of 2 June. Among the recommendations that were approved were:

- A Curriculum Policy for Unisa which will guide curriculum development at Unisa.
- The proposal for a 7 year CESM directed curriculum and learning development cycle.
- Initiatives to foreground ODL as proposed by the Institute for Open and Distance Learning (IODL).
- A small working group consisting of representatives from HR, DCLD, IODL and other stakeholders to propose an integrated continuous professional learning framework in ODL for all staff at Unisa.
- Interested departments and colleges will be invited to an exploratory conversation on the development of a number of higher certificates at Unisa.
- A range of alternative assessment practices. A smaller task team will be convened by the Deputy Registrar and will develop quality standards and guidelines regarding the processes and systems required to sustain and grow these alternative assessment practices.
- The definition and conceptual framework for student support at Unisa, as well as clear guidelines regarding the effective and appropriate use of video conferencing and satellite broadcasting in supporting students.

- All academic staff at Unisa to undergo mandatory professional development in the effective and appropriate use of virtual learning environments (VLEs).
- Various initiatives to further explore and support student success and retention.

The higher admission requirements as proposed by ODL Task Team 1 were *not* accepted but referred back for further consultation and research. It is also necessary to clarify the content and implications of the proposed "extended curriculum" and increased learning support that these students will receive.

For the duration of the Soccer World Cup the different initiatives will come to a temporary halt and will resume again in the week of the **12th of July.**
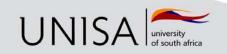
3 *REPORT BACK ON THE ISSUES OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, COPYRIGHT AND THE USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES FOR TEACHING PURPOSES*

On Tuesday 1 June a small informal group of interested staff met to explore the implications of the use of social networking sites for teaching on intellectual property and issues of copyright. The conversation was very engaged and it would seem as if there is a need for guidelines to provide direction to academics who would like to use social networking sites which are beyond the Unisa firewall.

Some of the issues that were raised were:
- Can Unisa lecturers use Unisa's name and logo on external websites?
- Can Unisa study materials be posted on these external sites even though unchanged?
- What happens when a lecturer establishes such a site in support of his or her teaching initiatives and then leaves the services of Unisa?
- Are these sites official?
- Is there any way or necessity to quality assure these initiatives?
- How are students using these sites supported with technical inquiries?

Senate (2 June) has approved the principle that a small working team is convened to explore the different issues and provide the STLSC in August with feedback and if possible, recommendations. The ODL Coordinator will convene a team of interested representatives. If you are keen to be part of this team, please forward your details to prinsp@unisa.ac.za.

4 ODL REPOSITORY AND BLOG

All the ODL task team reports, the overview of the recommendations of the STLSC and other ODL documents are available on the Unisa Library's Institutional Repository at http://uir.unisa.ac.za/dspace/handle/10500/3072 (accessed 6 June 2010). The repository is updated on a regular basis and if you register on the repository, you will get notifications of any new uploads.

You are also most welcome to comment on this (and previous) ODL Communiqués on the Unisa Staff website. On the right hand side of the Unisa Staff website, you will see a section titled "Important links" under which you must then click on "Blogs". On the blog page, you will notice two links namely "E-connect" and "Open Distance Learning". If you follow the latter you will be able to read and comment on the ODL Communiqués.

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