# ODL COMMUNIQUÉ 57, 20 APRIL 2011

## IN THIS ISSUE:

## 1    THERE BE DRAGONS HERE – EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED LEARNING IN A DEVELOPING WORLD HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

Welcome to this *first* video podcast! To watch the video, click on the icon on the left. Depending on the time of day and connectivity speed, the podcast may take some time to download. But you may want to read the background to this recording provided below first…

A small Unisa team consisting of Prof Peter Havenga, Dr Leonie Steyn, Dr Mpine Makoe, Mr Jason Ming Sun and I was privileged to visit the University of Leicester during 2010. During our visit the University of Leicester invited us to present a progress report on developments at Unisa at the *Follow the Sun Learning Futures Online Festival* last week. The Festival was a fully online event with over 100 participants spread across the world. The conference platform used was *Adobe Connect*.

If you click on the icon above, you will be able to see a *live* recording of our presentation during the conference. On the right hand side of the screen are our PowerPoint slides. In the top left corner you will see Kishwar Anwar from Pakistan who presented in the session prior to ours, as well as the live cam where you will see me. In the middle left you will see the names of some of the people who were online during our presentation and in the bottom left-hand of the screen you will see the chat-box. The recording is approximate 20 minutes long. We've decided to share this recording with all of you *because it is not perfect*. You will hear me stammering and fumble. You will see how people participated in the char box, etc.  (Continue on next page…).

UNISA | university of south africa

This is an example of what have become possible using computer conferencing tools. Although *Adobe Connect* is licensed software in the same league as *Elluminate* and *Wimba*, there is Open Source Software available such as *BigBlueButton* which is already available in the Unisa context.

Computer conferencing allows lecturers (from the comfort of their offices or at home) to do a live broadcast to students wherever they are on an agreed-upon time –whether at regional facilities, at their homes, etc. Students should just have access to the network and be able to join the conference. The session can then either be pre-recorded and broadcasted or presented live and recorded at the same time. *Immediately* after the broadcast the broadcast can be posted on myUnisa, and/or sent to students as an attachment. Students will be able to copy the recordings onto DVDs, or phones or IPods.

Even when students don't have web cams, or microphones, they will still be able to hear and type questions and/or remarks to lecturers in the chat-box.

When you watch the recording you will pick up many errors which are the result of doing an unscripted presentation. To be quite frank with you, when I watched it again I was a bit frustrated (and embarrassed) with watching the end result and realised that I should have scripted the recording. It would just have been more professional. But on the other hand, at least this shows you some of the pitfalls of a live recording… And hopefully when you use computer conferencing, your recordings will look better than mine! ☺

I would like to thank Jason Ming Sun (Academic Portal and System Design) who assisted with the recording and ensuring that everything went well during the presentation!

## 2    CELEBRATING ODL AT UNISA

At the Senate Tuition and Learner Support Committee on Monday 18 April, a proposal was approved to create a central database and diary of all ODL events at Unisa. This will allow us to optimise institutional communication strategies and platforms, prevent possible overlaps and ensure that when planning ODL events, that individuals, departments and colleges have access to a central updated repository of events and invitees.  The diary and database will be administered by the Institute for Open and Distance Learning (IODL). We are in the process of finalising procedures and will communicate the contact details and processes as soon as possible.

This initiative should *not* be seen as an attempt to dampen the enthusiasm around ODL or to create a new bureaucracy where individuals, departments and colleges must first get permission to host or organise an ODL event – *on the contrary.* But anyone who has organised an event just to find out that the envisaged event clashes with other events will be able to share the frustration, disappointment and often the wasting of energy and resources!

UNISA | university of south africa

The idea is to therefore create an institutional ODL diary on the internal staff home page of Unisa where anyone will be able to post events or access a database of events, ODL experts and invitees. I really think this will be a huge asset and help us also to realise how much is actually happening at Unisa already!

Thanks to the IODL who is willing to provide the institutional home for this initiative!

# 3    ÜBERMENSCHEN AT UNISA

There are super-humans at Unisa without whom Unisa will cease to exist. These super-humans claim to make Unisa what Unisa is. They are responsible for the good in Unisa's past. They will be responsible for the good in the future of Unisa. The malfunctioning of some departments and/or misdirected interventions are done or caused by the 'other' – the non-super-humans. These Übermenschen at Unisa often complain  about the 'other' – whether with regard to their job descriptions, the amount of leave they are allowed to take, their travelling, their fringe benefits, their… whatever.

This past week I was confronted with a very sad e-mail that really made a huge impression on me. It is from someone at Unisa who feels that his or her qualifications are just never on par with those of the Übermenschen at Unisa. His or her department or role is just not taken seriously or considered to be as valuable as the department and/or roles of the Übermenschen. Somehow encountering the Übermenschen at institutional meetings always makes him or her feel that he or she is a lesser quality professional, a lesser quality human.
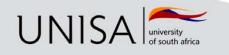
These Übermenschen are found everywhere – among academic staff, among regional staff, among professional staff. Very often (I would like to believe) they do not realise that their claims and statements hurt and dehumanise. The answer is not to expose those who make these claims. Many of us may have made such claims and may have looked down on 'the other' – whether students, regions, academics or professionals.

Taking ODL forward must start with an acknowledgement that no one has the only or full answer to the challenges we face. All of us only have partial and very context-specific insights. We all have (often skewed) assumptions and beliefs that shape the way we see each other and the world around us. Let us be reminded of the gnat in Aesop's Fables…

> A gnat settled on the horn of a Bull, and sat there a long time. Just as he was about to fly off, he made a buzzing noise, and inquired of the Bull if he would like him to go. The Bull replied, "I did not know you had come, and I shall not miss you when you go away."
>
> Some men are of more consequence in their own eyes than in the eyes of their neighbors.

(Aesop's Fables, http://ancienthistory.about.com/library/bl/bl_aesop_gnat_bull.htm)

# 4 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LEADERS AND MANAGERS – BY DAVID STRAKER

*Original article available at:*

http://changingminds.org/disciplines/leadership/articles/manager_leader.htm

What is the difference between management and leadership? It is a question that has been asked more than once and also answered in different ways. The biggest difference between managers and leaders is the way they motivate the people who work or follow them, and this sets the tone for most other aspects of what they do.

Many people, by the way, are both. They have management jobs, but they realize that you cannot buy hearts, especially to follow them down a difficult path, and so act as leaders too.

**Managers have subordinates**

By definition, managers have subordinates - unless their title is honorary and given as a mark of seniority, in which case the title is a misnomer and their power over others is other than formal authority.

**Authoritarian, transactional style**

Managers have a position of authority vested in them by the company, and their subordinates work for them and largely do as they are told. Management style is transactional, in that the manager tells the subordinate what to do, and the subordinate does this not because they are a blind robot, but because they have been promised a reward (at minimum their salary) for doing so.

**Work focus**

Managers are paid to get things done (they are subordinates too), often within tight constraints of time and money. They thus naturally pass on this work focus to their subordinates.

**Seek comfort**

An interesting research finding about managers is that they tend to come from stable home backgrounds and led relatively normal and comfortable lives. This leads them to be relatively risk-averse and they will seek to avoid conflict where possible. In terms of people, they generally like to run a 'happy ship'.

UNISA | university of south africa

**Leaders have followers**

Leaders do not have subordinates - at least not when they are leading. Many organizational leaders do have subordinates, but only because they are also managers. But when they want to lead, they have to give up formal authoritarian control, because to lead is to have followers, and following is always a voluntary activity.

**Charismatic, transformational style**

Telling people what to do does not inspire them to follow you. You have to appeal to them, showing how following them will lead to their hearts' desire. They must want to follow you enough to stop what they are doing and perhaps walk into danger and situations that they would not normally consider risking.

Leaders with a stronger charisma find it easier to attract people to their cause. As a part of their persuasion they typically promise transformational benefits, such that their followers will not just receive extrinsic rewards but will somehow become better people.

**People focus**

Although many leaders have a charismatic style to some extent, this does not require a loud personality. They are always good with people, and quiet styles that give credit to others (and take blame on themselves) are very effective at creating the loyalty that great leaders engender.

Although leaders are good with people, this does not mean they are friendly with them. In order to keep the mystique of leadership, they often retain a degree of separation and aloofness.

This does not mean that leaders do not pay attention to tasks - in fact they are often very achievement-focused. What they do realize, however, is the importance of enthusing others to work towards their vision.

**Seek risk**

In the same study that showed managers as risk-averse, leaders appeared as risk-seeking, although they are not blind thrill-seekers. When pursuing their vision, they consider it natural to encounter problems and hurdles that must be overcome along the way. They are thus comfortable with risk and will see routes that others avoid as potential opportunities for advantage and will happily break rules in order to get things done.

A surprising number of these leaders had some form of handicap in their lives which they had to overcome. Some had traumatic childhoods, some had problems such as dyslexia, others were shorter than average. This perhaps taught them the independence of mind that is needed to go out on a limb and not worry about what others are thinking about you.

*See the full [article](article) for a very interesting table contrasting leadership and management…*

# 5 WHAT ARE THE *ETHICAL* IMPLICATIONS OF NOT PROVIDING STUDENTS WITH PREVIOUS YEARS' EXAMINATION PAPERS?

At the Senate Tuition and Learner Support Committee (STLSC) held on Monday 18 April an interesting discussion followed on the tabling of the legal opinion on Unisa's position on providing students access to previous years' examination papers. The issue was (again) deliberated and opposing views mentioned the fact that when students have access to all of the previous years' examination papers, academic departments will soon run "out of questions" to ask…

Supporters of this practice mentioned the fact that by providing students with examples of previous examination papers create teaching opportunities and help students to assess their readiness for the examination.

It was then that a senior academic raised a very interesting point by asking: What are the *ethical* implications of keeping previous examination papers away from students?

The academic mentioned the fact that at residential institutions students have almost unlimited access to lecturers and can pose as many questions as possible to lecturers during seminars and lecturers. Students can find previous years' examination papers in their libraries, discuss these papers with fellow-students and visit their lecturers as often as necessary.

Students in a distance education context do not have this luxury. Many students balance work and personal lives, often neglecting their studies and trying to focus in whatever limited time they actually have. Providing students with previous years' examination papers therefore provide students in an ODL environment with a crucial opportunity to evaluate themselves as they prepare for the examinations.

*Most probably it is also possible to consider the following question:* What are the ethical implications of providing students with previous years' examination papers? Is there any negative or unethical implications? Do our qualifications lose their value and therefore result in our students not getting the value they have paid for? Are Unisa's qualifications of a lesser standard than those of other institutions because we make our examination papers available?

I must confess that I could not answer in the affirmative to these questions above. I sincerely think that it is more ethical to provide students with previous years' examination papers than to keep these papers away from students…

I realise that there are practical implications for academics setting new papers year after year. But if this is good teaching practice to provide students with previous years' examination papers, how can we provide appropriate support for academics to make the setting of examination papers 'easier' and more responsive to what and how the module is taught?

# 6    NO ODL COMMUNIQUÉ NEXT WEEK...

Due to all the public holidays till the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, there will not be an ODL communiqué next week.

If this period has special religious or cultural significance for you, I would like to wish you a blessed time with you and your loved ones.

For all of you who are taking leave in this period, I would like to wish you a wonderful and relaxing period! Come back safe and rested!

# 7    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](). The repository is updated on a regular basis and if you register on the repository, you will get notifications of any new uploads.

*Drafted by Dr Paul Prinsloo*
ODL Coordinator
Office of the Vice-Principal: Academic & Research, Unisa

19 April 2011

+27 (0) 12 4293683 (office)
+27 (0) 823954113 (mobile)
 prinsp@unisa.ac.za

**Disclaimer**: The opinions expressed in this ODL Communiqué represent my personal viewpoints and do not represent the viewpoint of any other member of the Unisa community.