

First international Action Research Conference held at NMMU

Action Research: its transformative potential

The Action Research Unit hosted an international conference on 19 and 20 August, as well as two workshops on the 18th August. This is the first time that a conference focusing solely on Action Research has been held in South Africa, but the response indicates that this is a flourishing research niche area in the country. Papers were received from most of the universities in South Africa, as well as from other African countries and further afield – there was representation from the UK, USA and Norway, which was encouraging since the conference was only really marketed in South Africa.

The Action Research Unit invited the two leading proponents of this research genre, Prof Jean McNiff (York St John University and Honourary Professor, NMMU) and Prof Jack Whitehead (Liverpool Hope University and University of Bath) to be the keynote speakers. They also ran a workshop on *Writing for Publication* on the Wednesday prior to the conference, attended by over 40 people. It was interesting to note that the majority of the delegates were not from faculties of education, but from fields such as academic development, philosophy, art and design, music, law, ICT and others, indicating that this genre is growing in popularity across disciplines.

The Action Research Unit also hosted Dr Linda van Laren from UKZN on the 18th August who presented a workshop to share how she is integrating HIV & AIDS education into her undergraduate maths education programmes. Her research holds relevance for all teacher educators and other academics, in all subject areas, who are interested in infusing HIV and AIDS education into their curricula.

As a result of the conference, an Action Research Africa Network will now be set up on JISC mail and there are plans to create a special interest group at the next Heltasa conference in November. Heltasa will be hosted by NMMU in November 2011, according to Professor Cheryl Foxcroft, Dean of Teaching and Learning, and this will be another opportunity for the action researchers to showcase their work. ~ Lesley



From left. Prof Lesley Wood, Head: ARU, at the conference with key note speakers, Prof Jack Whitehead and Prof Jean McNiff



Tobeka presented a paper entitled, *Undergraduate student perceptions of the supervisor role and the research process: An unfinished story*, at the ARU conference. In this paper Tobeka reports on the first cycle of her journey to improve her practice as a research supervisor in order to add value to students' development as researchers by improving the quality of their experience of the research process.

Pictured left, Tobeka with Prof Jack Whitehead

Congratulations!

Shervani was invited to participate in a certificate programme on higher education management at Wits in August. We look forward to you sharing your new knowledge with us.

We are proud of you!

Teaching Practice INDABA

SITE held a teaching practice INDABA on 4 August 2010 which aimed at getting all stakeholders involved in teaching practice together to discuss the issues around the process; those that work and those that do not. "It is a platform to move forward", said Dr Noluthando Toni, Director of School. It also proved to be the opportune moment to introduce **Mr Skura Nofemele** as the faculty's Site Based Learning Coordinator, further evidence of the faculty's commitment to the teaching practice process and the value placed on the input from our school partners and other stakeholders.

Well attended by faculty staff members, school principals, students, teachers and DoE officials, the indaba offered an opportunity not only for stakeholders to express their experience of teaching practice from their unique involvement but also enabled the Faculty to assure stakeholders that their input is valued and taken into account.

Various presentations by schools on their views of teaching practice and how the process could be improved for their schools were given and offered valuable insight. Some common themes emerged, including:

- Students need to be exposed to schools from their 1st year; it is not possible to teach them everything, they have to learn *in situ* and gain experience
- To prepare students for schools, the right balance between theory and practical is essential
- Students need to be taught how to perform administrative functions, i.e. registers, prepare timetables, policy documents, financial skills, etc
- Schools need lecturers to be up to date with 'goings on' in schools
- Students must be 100% sure s/he wants to be a teacher. It is a calling and a passion, involving a lot of work (vs choosing it due to bursary)
- Discipline in schools is difficult for most students – more focus required
- Lack of communication between the students and faculty (timetable)
- Schools need the students!
- Students bring vitality and new ideas thus contributing to CPD of teachers
- Students need exposure to work ethic (professional behaviour, dress code)
- Communication is vital for all stakeholders

PAPER RECYCLING



Pam Austin recently initiated a get together with other interested members of staff to organise a "recycling initiative".

Reclam Recycling Works donated a number of bins in which your paper waste can be placed (*please, no plastic, cans, etc!*). They will collect these regularly and recycle the paper.

So, please join us so that we can play a meaningful role in 'going green'...

Thembi Ludidi kindly offered to be the 'Recycling Coordinator'. Direct any queries / comments to her (x2053).

Getting started with the integration of HIV & AIDS education into specific disciplines

Lecturers at higher education institutions have a vital role to play in the teaching and learning of HIV and AIDS education. It is crucial that we give students all the information they require about sexuality and relationships but integration of HIV and AIDS education does not necessarily imply addressing sexuality education directly. It is possible to consider a broad range of topics through integration by looking at issues of gender, poverty, stigma, discrimination, working with statistical data and myths related to HIV and AIDS.

In a workshop held recently, the Action Research Unit invited **Dr Linda van Laren**, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, to share her experiences of integration of HIV education into modules with pre-service mathematic education students - however her work is relevant for any discipline in education and other faculties. The invitation was tendered as part of an initiative headed up by Prof Lesley Wood and the AR unit and seed funded by NMMU niche area funding to transform curricula at NMMU to make it more relevant for preparing students to live and work in a world characterised by HIV and AIDS.



Dr van Laren (*pictured alongside*) has published her work in this field and offered good insights to HIV education as she shared how she was able to consider how she goes about the teaching of HIV and AIDS education within mathematic education modules. The workshop was interactive and enabled each participant to formulate an individual 5-step plan in order to begin critically reflecting on and improving their own practices.

NEWS

IDEA 2010 CONFERENCE IN BRAZIL

Logan Athiemoolam presented a paper at the 7th World Congress of IDEA 2010 in Belem, Brazil from the 17th to the 25th of July. The paper entitled *The Incorporation of drama and theatre-in-education in a module on English methodology for teacher trainees: A case study*, which was well received by those in attendance, focused on a detailed reflective account of how drama and theatre-in-education were incorporated into an English methodology module for teacher trainees to teach English at Intermediate phase level (grades 4-6).

The conference, which is the biggest drama-in-education congress in the world, attracted 1200 delegates from 50 countries representing all the continents. The conference theme *Live, Living Diversity! Embracing the Arts of Transformation* affirmed two interlinked priorities for the 21st Century: the necessity to celebrate and practice cultural diversity as a guarantee of living participatory democracy and the significance of embracing pedagogies based in the arts and our languages, knowledge and skills of transformation to democratise our world and communities so that we can have a sustainable human future.

IDEA 2010 was hosted by the city of Belem in Para, north of Brazil, one of the principal gateways to the Amazon. Belem, one of the world stages for contemporary debate relating to the environment and sustainability, is located in a region of extraordinary cultural diversity. The city of Belem do Para was selected by the IDEA 2010 World Congress organisers to guarantee that contemporary world issues on the globalisation of culture and the devastation of the Amazon would permeate the debates during the Congress on the roles of theatre language and culture in cultivating a new educational paradigm and human action for the 21st century.



Logan with delegates Sara from Peru and Josef from Columbia

To guarantee an authentic experience and an intimate participatory world congress the conference was based in the community, inside schools and within the fishing and artistic district of Icoaraci and in the Federal University of Para. The conference thus included indigenous native Indian communities from outlying islands, descendents of African slaves, incorporating their unique and scintillating marimba sounds and vibrant and colourful songs, music and dance synonymous with this region of Brazil. Although the *lingua franca* at the conference was Portuguese the organisers made a concerted effort to provide adequate translation facilities.

The week long conference comprised a well-balanced range of workshops, papers, roundtable discussions and special interest groups. Some of the themes that were interrogated in the special interest groups included drama-in-education in the context of primary, secondary and teacher education, special needs inclusion and art therapy, gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity and peace, human rights and democracy amongst others. The workshops included sessions presented by the indigenous native Indian communities on sacred music and dance, storytelling, the art of embroidery, drumming, the mixing of Amazonian herbs for the creation of perfumes and toy making. The international theatre festival IDEA that was held in the evenings showcased a selection of contemporary plays from a variety of countries including Israel, Thailand and South Africa. These pieces were specifically chosen as they provided significant commentary on issues affecting peace and stability in the world at large.

The warmth, hospitality and camaraderie experienced by all the participants during the week long conference will surely be indelibly imprinted on their minds for years to come. The next IDEA conference will be held in Paris in 2013. ~ Logan

Research Briefs

IGPME Conference

Lyn Webb attended the 34th Conference of the International Group for the Psychology of Mathematics Education in July, held in Brazil at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte. Lyn delivered a paper entitled *Dialogic teaching in multilingual mathematics classes: a case study*.

A highlight was being able to personally hand a copy of her PhD thesis to examiner Prof Stephen Lerman, thanking him for his positive remarks and input. Lyn also re-connected with Prof Jackie Sack and obtained permission to use her 3-D Visualization Methodology with 4 B Ed IP students for their 2010 research projects.

As a direct result of the conference and the contact made with Prof Russo (Buffalo University), Lyn has been invited to collaborate with UKZN and University of Zululand on a 3-year Math Literacy Research project.

US-Aid ILEP programme

Congratulations to student, **Ms N Stamper**, on being offered a six-month scholarship to participate in the US-Aid ILEP programme. She will be in America from the 4th of January to the 20th May 2011. Well done! ~ Lonnie

Prof Tilla Olivier retires

We bid farewell to Tilla

The faculty hosted a retirement function for Tilla on Friday 27th August at Madibaz Fine Dining. Tilla is leaving the institution after a long and illustrious career spanning over 25+ years during which she has contributed immensely to teaching and learning, research and engagement. Reminiscing of the years brought up fond memories and raised more than a few chuckles!

Thanks to the evening's MC, Nonnie Botha, and speakers, Denise Zinn, Noluthando Toni and Laetitia Greyling.



Geniet jou aftrede... kom kuier gereeld!

News from George

Our PFET students went on a visit recently to “Just Water”, a production factory in George. Apparently the factory has a problem disposing of waste.

Their lecturer, Ryno Duvenage (*at the back in the photo*), set them a project to design ways to solve the waste disposal problem. He says that they have come up with quite innovative suggestions, which the factory could very easily implement. He remarked, “Isn’t it lovely to be young and have such unbridled imagination!”

~ Paddy Esselaar



donation

Ron Saayman, of Heinemann Publishers, delivered a donation of materials to our Resource Centre this month:

- Life Sciences for Gr 11 (Learners’ Book and Teacher’s Guide)
- Life Sciences for Gr 12 (Learners’ Book and Teacher’s Guide)
- Physical Sciences for Gr 12 (Learners’ Book and Teacher’s Guide)

Many thanks, the B Ed FET and PGCE students will make good use of these books. ~ Lilda



<http://www.keepflying.co.za/>

Reminder

National Symposium

HIV&AIDS and Education Research

Rationale:

The purpose of this Symposium is to continue building a network of researchers in the field of HIV and Education, by formally launching a ‘community of practice’ in HIV&AIDS and Education; to reflect on 10 years of HIV&AIDS and Education Research, and to consider the way forward in the next decade.

13-14 September 2010, North Campus Conference Centre

As part of the National Symposium, the organisers will be screening the South African premiere of acclaimed film, *Courage & Hope: African teachers living positively with HIV*.

The screening will be facilitated by Claudia Mitchell and be attended by special guests, Beldina Atieno and Martin Ptoch (teachers).

Further information: Michelle at michelle.myles@nmnu.ac.za