



NEWS

January 2012

Criticality, Creativity and Connections: In Pursuit of Educational Innovations

2012 EASA Conference success!

The EASA/OVSA Conference, hosted by the Faculty of Education (NMMU), was held at the Mpekweni Beach Resort from the 17-20 January 2012. Attended by about 120 delegates representing the higher education institutions in South Africa ensured a range of interesting and inspiring papers being presented on the conference theme 'Criticality, creativity and connections: In Pursuit of Educational innovations'.

The conference commenced with a welcome cocktail function and book launch, affording the delegates an opportunity to socialise in a relaxing and welcoming environment. The function was presided over by the convenor of the conference Prof Naydene de Lange and colleagues' professors Lesley Wood and Alette Delpont.

A wide range of papers covering a selection of topical and relevant issues pertaining to the conference theme were presented over the following two days, with programme curriculum review meetings taking place after the presentations.

The three keynote speakers were each a highlight; being exceptionally well received by all present. Prof Catherine Odora Hoppers presented an extremely insightful paper entitled *The Scholar, the Citizen and Critic: Towards Ethical Reasoning*, whilst Professor Piet Naude presented a paper entitled *Criticality, creativity and re-connections: In Pursuit of Educational Excellence* and Dr Salim Vally presented his paper entitled *Critical Pedagogies in South Africa: Lessons from the past, intervening in the present and preparing for the future*. The papers enabled the delegates to ponder over key issues and concerns affecting education at this juncture in our country's history.

At the EASA award ceremony Dr Lynn Webb mesmerised the audience with her riveting presentation on the use of creative approaches to address the language impasse in South Africa. Recipients of EASA awards included Dr Carien Lubber De Beer (University of Pretoria) for emerging researcher, Professor Raj Mestry (University of Johannesburg) for the research medal award and Professor Naydene de Lange (NMMU) for the medal of honour. And, Prof Lesley Wood is the new incoming EASA Chair for 2012!



A Pirates of the Caribbean evening afforded delegates the opportunity to dress up as their favourite pirate and to enjoy an evening of song and dance together. Pictured is Logan (centre) with Mathabo (right) and Joe Wood (left).

All delegates congratulated Prof Naydene de Lange and her team from the faculty (Nonnie, Alette, Tulsie, Lesley, Sindi, Tobeka, Christina, Ndileka and Logan) for an exceptionally well co-ordinated and well managed conference, of a very high standard and which provided much food for thought.

"We did such a good job that I think whoever follows after us will have a tough time matching our standard! People were very impressed," remarked colleague, Sindi Mbokodi.



From left: Dr Carien Lubbe-De Beer (Emerging Researcher), Prof Naydene de Lange (Medal of Honour) and Prof Raj Mestry (Research Medal).

The following papers were presented by NMMU colleagues at the EASA conference:

Dr L Athiemoolam – *Empowering principals to conduct and present action research projects: A case study*

Dr CM Dali & P Singh – *Need for humanising andragogy to develop principals' emotional intelligence competency of self-motivation*

Prof L Wood & Mrs B Govender – *An action research approach to improving school leadership*

Dr MC Khau – "Who am I?" *Using auto-ethnography and self-study to understand my teacher self within sexuality, HIV and Aids Education*

Dr MC Khau, Mrs NC Mazomba & Mr SIV Mazomba – *Learning to remember and remembering to learn: using memory-work as a social justice tool in education*

Dr S M Mbokodi – *Exploring Shepard and Rose's empowerment module of parental involvement to transform teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement*

Prof MM Botha – *Supervisor experiences in intercultural postgraduate research supervision relationships*

Prof AC Delpont & Mrs A von Wildemann – *Teaching philosophies and classroom discipline: Exploring teachers' connections creatively*

Prof N de Lange & Prof L Theron – "Well I guess I saw the whole HIV teaching in a different way": *Reflections on teacher competency in a challenging context*

The impact One has...

Being placed at one of PE's impoverished schools has not held back 2011 B Ed IP graduate, Lincoln Jansen. Despite only having been in his post at Arcadia Primary School since the start of the 2012 school year, he has already immersed himself into his new school community and is making a difference.

Lincoln says he became aware almost immediately of the scale of learning disabilities many of his learners struggle with and their desperate need for remedial education. In discussions about this with the School Principal, he remarked just how much of what he learnt, specifically during the *Remedial Education* module, he is putting into practice in his classroom.

This sparked the idea to approach part-time lecturer and remedial education specialist, Dr Danny Ah-Hing, to see if she would be prepared to deliver a short series of presentation workshops to his colleagues, many of whom do not have remedial education knowledge. These would be around remedial education and the simple ways in which teachers can help learners.

In his email request to her, he commented, "the very things which you taught me, I am now having to put into practice, your module is no longer something abstract to me, it is relevant in every context of my professional life".



Front from left, Ms G Loggenberg (Principal), Dr Danny Ah Hing and Lincoln Jansen

The culmination of emails and meetings? Their first workshop was held last week, with two more set to follow. The first workshop introduced what barriers to learning are and how they impact on the learner, and was attended by all the staff. "Their enthusiasm and participation was fantastic!" said Dr Ah-Hing.

The topics for the next two workshops are: phonics and spelling and how to identify problems, and attempts at helping the learners; and reading-comprehension skills (how to identify certain reading errors, how to try and rectify them and how to improve comprehension skills), which will also be linked to Maths and problem-solving.

If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping in the room with a mosquito – African Proverb

In addition to delivering the workshops, Dr Ah-Hing is trying to source paint for one of the empty classrooms that they aim to convert into a library as it currently has graffiti all over the walls.

And, even though Lincoln's class also has some choice graffiti on the walls, he is trying hard to make his domain as conducive as possible to learning, "It is a blessing to be at Arcadia Primary, as I too completed my primary schooling there, so I know what it feels like to be in those very benches".

Dr Ah-Hing remarks, "I am very proud of him. He is really an excellent example of what we as a faculty want to send out into the schools".

Lincoln and Danny, we are proud of you both!

briefs

Our Iron(wo)man does it again!

Prof Les Wood (below right) completed the East London Half Ironman in 6h12min, winning her age category and setting a new course record! The race consists of a 1.9 km swim, 90 km bike and 21.1 km run. *Well done Les!*



'n opwindende Kersfees!

Naydene spent a wild Christmas with her son's white water rafting on the Zambezi!



Off we go! Naydene (back left), Edrich (front left) and Heinrich (front right)

Office moves into 2012



Student Assistants extraordinaire! Gishma with Jaco and Lukhanyo, who were invaluable during December and January office moves at SC.

Off Campus Tutor Training 2012

B Ed Honours

Dr Kathija Adam, Head of Programme

Tutor training for BEd (Hon) modules to be taught in Missionvale and eight off-campus centres got the team to an early start this year. Five module coordinators (MC's) and a total of thirty-two tutors engaged in discussions at two training sessions, one held at South Campus and the other in Durban.

The training of tutors involves an induction into the philosophy of the department as well as introduction to the requirements of the course content and the various assessments, deadlines and intervention measures.

The forum provided MC's and tutors opportunity to interact on matters related to the quality delivery of the modules and the chance to develop a working repertoire as later semester interactions will be mostly telephonic or through email and fax.



Dr Kathija Adam (left), with Ms Judy Summers (centre, Durban Centre PA) & Mr Happy Moodley (right, Durban Centre Manager)

Tutor comments below reflect the various experiences at the training sessions:

"Its wonderful to be back again, to meet the new MC's and to get a sense of what's required before I have to teach."

"The new material is exciting and I must admit that I learn so much every time I teach on the programme."

"This will be a new module for me. Having the tutor training gives us the confidence we need and allows us the opportunity to ask the questions we need."

"I find the tutor training stimulating and refreshing because of the new developments in the courses I teach."

"We were asked to write a test as we walked in. I've forgotten how students feel when we do that to them."

A particular thanks to all MC's, Neville Rudman, Sherwin King, Ntosh Yamile and the Centre Managers and their staff for their support.

NPDE (360)

Neville Rudman, Head of Programme (pictured with tutors Qcobile Lingani & Mabel Ntengwana)



This year we embarked on a different model of training; we trained in Kokstad for all the ex-Transkei centres (Mbizana, Lusikisiki, Qumbu and Kokstad) and again in Port Elizabeth for Missionvale and Graaff-Reinet tutors. These split-venue offerings presented a logistical challenge, but I am happy to report that we achieved the outcomes required for the successful delivery of the NPDE programme over the next semester.

In total we trained 12 modules twice, preparing the tutors for the year two and three cohorts. Currently there are 850 2nd year and 500 3rd year students in the field. Ninety-nine tutors were trained!

One of the innovations at this year's training is the development of DVD's. Training, for a number of modules, was done in the Micro-Lab at South Campus. These DVD's may become a valuable resource for Tutors to refer to throughout the semester, and especially when we start working with the pipeline students.

"I felt so good inside my heart when the tutors got extremely hooked up with the concept of a humanizing pedagogy as introduced and integrated as a tool to hone in on effective teaching and learning strategies in my NPDE modules. This spells hope for better learning for South African school children, especially those in the rural areas." Dr Chris Dali (PNFP203 & 303)

A number of people who contributed to the success. The Centre Managers (Yolisa Magidela, Yolisa Dudula, Stompie Somtseu, Patricia Napier and Fanie Wellman) who ensured all tutors were in the right place at the right time. Patricia Napier who did a sterling job of arranging accommodation, lecture venues and catering requirements. The Module Coordinators, Chris Dali, Thandi Hlam, Didi Geduld, Sindiswa Gwaxula, Randy Foli, Ntombekaya Zahela, Lonnie King and Anita Gripper who spent four days away from home and worked after hours to ensure our success. Sherwin King (a PA of note!) who greased all the different training components to ensure a smooth flow from start to finish. It has been a long time since I have worked with such a committed and dedicated young man.



The Team! Front from left, Sherwin, Randy, Lonnie and Sindiswa. Back row from left, Neville, Didi, Thandi, Ntombekaya and Chris.

Did everything go off without hitch? Of course not! Complex processes like this never do ... but what was really good to see was the manner in which people got stuck in to resolve the challenges... this is what adds value to the team. Thank you all!

Action research features at two international conferences held at NMMU

Action Research Unit

At the recently hosted **SAHARA Conference**, 49 learners and 7 teachers involved in the MASILINGANE Project presented three workshops at the Youth Day on 30 November.

Learners from Douglas Mpoba High School in Motherwell presented two interactive workshops in which they creatively describe their experience and views of gender based violence by means of drama, poetry and song. They involved the audience by engaging them in thinking of ways to turn the tide on gender violence.

Learners from two primary schools, Empumalanga in Motherwell and Pendla in New Brighton, also shared their experiences of gender inequalities at a third workshop and gathered ideas on how to promote gender equality by asking the audience to represent ways to decrease gender inequality through drawings. Some of the children also participated in other workshops and activities at the youth day. The learners will present similar workshops at their schools in the new year, as part of their activities as peer educators for HIV prevention through a gender lens.



Douglas Mpoba High School MASILINGANE peer educators

The MASILINGANE project was funded by HIVOS and led by Prof Lesley Wood, with Cordelia Mazomba, Prof Naydene de Lange and Dr Mathabo Khau as projects associates.

A panel discussion entitled, *Improving teaching and learning in higher education through practitioner self-enquiry action research* was chaired by Prof Lesley Wood at the **HELTASA Conference** at the Missionvale Campus in December 2011.

The interactive discussion created a space for critical discussion of the notion of action research as a means of professionalizing and improving teaching and learning at tertiary level.

Each presenter described how they use action research methodologies to provide robust evidence to support their claims to having improved their own practice, and of having influenced the learning of colleagues and students.

Participants and peers attending this panel discussion were invited to offer their critical comment on the validity of the presenters' claims of having contributed to the growth of educational knowledge.

The panel members addressed the following aspects of educational practice:

Lesley Wood, NMMU: *Creating a living curriculum: an insider approach to curriculum development*;

Joan Conolly, DUT: *Nourishing novice and/or nervous self-study practitioner-researchers: safe spaces, trusted, critical friends, and journeys of awareness*;

Omar Esau, SU: *Preparing pre-service teachers to become action researchers*;

Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, UKZN: *Exploring critical issues in supporting Masters and Doctoral students' self-study research*; and

Mark Schofield, Edge Hill University, UK: *Enhancing academic development of novice researchers through the action research mode*.

Snapshots EASA Conference 2012...



Lyn, Logan, Naydene & Alette



Arr! Les & Joe enjoy the pirate evening



Ndileka



Delegates enjoy the deck in between sessions