Some feedback on overseas visits in the Department of Educational Psychology

Prof Gert van der Westhuizen is continuing his research in the focus of dialogic learning. He attended a conference of EARLI special interest groups in Padova, Italy during July 2014. The theme was “Open spaces for interaction and learning diversities”. Gert’s paper was on epistemic primacy in mentoring conversations, and he also met with two staff groups of the University of Padua to discuss shared interests.

Dr Mabatho Sedibe has attended and presented a paper entitled: Diversity among Post Graduate Certificate in Education Students during a yearly Educational Excursion ” at the fourteenth international conference of the Diversity in Organizations, Communities, and Nations in Vienna, Austria in July 2014. Scholars and Professionals representing more than 37 countries were in attendance.

Prof Gerda Bender attended the International Summer School on Practice-Based Studies at the Warwick Business School (University of Warwick in Coventry, United Kingdom) from 1 to 5 September. The focus was on How to conduct practice-based studies in social and organisational research. Prof Bender reports: The International Summer School on Practice-Based Studies is an advanced studies initiative aimed at promotion of practice-based studies in multi-disciplines. The summer school was presented by Theodore Schatzki (University of Kentucky, USA), Silvia Gherardi (University of Trento, Italy), Jorgen Sandberg (University of Queensland, Australia), Michel Anteby (Harvards Business School, USA) and Barbara Czarniawska (University of Gothenburg, Sweden) who are leading scholars in the field. Participants were selected based on a demonstrable alignment of their research topic with the theme of the school and the expected benefits from attending the event. The programme included: An introduction to practice and why it matters; Manufacturing morals in practice; Studying practices in practice; during and after practice; and Practice and practical competence. The highlight to me was the focus on writing and publishing in the practice and the process led by Jorgen Sandberg. In his book with Mats Alvesson (Lund University, London) on “Constructing Research Questions” (2013) they develop a problematisation methodology for identifying and challenging the assumptions underlying existing theories and for generating research questions that can lead to more interesting and influential theories.

In a reflection on the learning experience she indicated that she has some familiarity with the practice-based approach and was interested in further scholarly exploration of the topic and learn about the most recent developments, strategies and consequences in practice-based studies in educational psychology, social and organisational research internationally. Based on the knowledge gained she would like to develop and promote practice-based studies integrated with research methodologies such as ethnography, ethnomethodology, action sciences and research in the educational psychology leadership field in South Africa. Participating in the summer school enhanced this vision and mission. She would like to become part of the international forum for the study, development and promotion of practice-based studies in organisation, education and policy sciences.