

## **Student Gabby Gaudreau and Professor Sonja Darlington Interview Former Beloit Professor Sadique Isahaku, PhD.**

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Sadique Isahaku, a former professor at Beloit College (2006) will return to the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) at Trondheim this May to attend his graduation ceremony.

Isahaku's dissertation is entitled "An Analysis of Dominant and Alternative Approaches to Education Reform in Sub-Saharan Africa: the case of Ghana." He worked under Magnus Haavelsrud, who taught at the University of Tromsø, which is the northernmost university in the world. Haavelsrud, a senior professor at Tromsø, is now an Emeritus scholar. Haavelsrud moved his International Education Program to the University of Trondheim from Tromsø, after he was offered a better position there. Following Haavelsrud's move to Trondheim, his students joined him, because when a professor leaves a university, the sources previously available for a program that he established no longer exist. Those students who transferred to Trondheim - including Isahaku - underwent an arduous conversion process with their credits from

Tromsø, and when these credits were accepted, Haavelsrud's program at the new institution began. Haavelsrud hopes that Isahaku will be his replacement in Trondheim sometime soon.

Isahaku discussed the process of delivering a dissertation at a Norwegian university with Professor Sonja Darlington and student worker Gabby Gaudreau. He explained that once a dissertation is completed and approved by one's advisor, an independent committee of three people is chosen by the School of Education. After the dissertation has been handed over to them, there is no more communication with the advisor and the candidate. A committee is picked based on the topic and is composed of a professor from the candidate's institution, a professor from another Norwegian university, and often a professor from a university abroad. The committee reads the dissertation and grades it, discerning whether or not it meets the highest scientific standards for publication. Then they file comments to which the candidate must later respond in public.

The candidate has two weeks' preparation time to address and integrate the committee's comments in the dissertation. If there is something seriously wrong with the dissertation, the institution is contacted. If improvements can be made without the need for an extension, and mainly editorial issues are involved, the candidate makes the necessary adjustments in the dissertation. Once the committee is satisfied with the dissertation's final draft, and revisions and edits are completed, it is determined that the dissertation is worth defending. The candidate then receives a letter from his institution. Isahaku explained that traditionally a toast occurs on this auspicious occasion, and the institution provides a bottle of wine.

Following the toast, the process of preparing for the defense begins. A candidate is given a topic by the committee and has two weeks to prepare for it...

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## **Updates from Professor Jingjing Lou**

"Despite dramatic urbanization in the past decade, China is still largely an agrarian society. According to the 2000 national census 64% of the total population resides in the countryside. Regardless of their absolute advantage in number, rural citizens are as a group marginalized and disadvantaged by China's household registration system, which limits mobility. Rural citizens likewise enjoy far fewer social, economic, and cultural resources and services than their urban counterparts.

Such a structural disadvantage, the cumulative product of over a century of state policies, has directly impacted the aims, content, resources, and access to schools in rural communities. This is why my research in recent years has been primarily focused on rural education, as I feel it speaks to the inequality in Chinese society, especially between rural and urban areas.

For this particular research project that I will carry on this summer, I am interested to investigate: 1) Why does the high dropout problem persist and even deteriorate in rural China after the state's great resources inputs in rural education in recent years? 2) What else needs to be done to help rural kids in addition to the provision of free education to all? And 3) What could education policy makers do to improve the current policies? Since many rural students take on a different career/academic and life path than their counterparts in the city, my research project will take an especially close look at 1) rural youths' perceptions about education and society, and how such perceptions have impacted rural youth's academic aspirations and life expectations, 2) current education and career options available for rural youth after compulsory education, 3) the dilemma between the previous two and resulting problems, such

dropout, and 4) possible solutions. China is a huge country and very diverse society. This is why I'll be visiting three different regions, the most developed coastal area of Zhejiang province, the less developed province of Henan (where Beloit College has its partner school, Henan University) in central China, and the least developed province of Shaanxi in Northwest China. I hope to draw conclusions that might be generalized to a big population after comparing rural society, rural school, and rural youth in these three regions."

Jingjing will also attend a conference in China. "It is organized by Evergreen Education Foundation, a California based NGO, which received a major funding from Gates Foundation a few years ago and has been building libraries in rural China since then. I got to know this organization back in 2007 when I was doing dissertation fieldwork in Northwest Shaanxi. I helped evaluate one of their library sites in a rural high school which is not far from my own research site."

## EDYS Senior Soukarana Stephens Works On His Thesis

“Before I started my internship in August, we had an all internees’ orientation and during the orientation, every program coordinator working with Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin came to tell us a little about their programs and what they do as program coordinators. As I sat there with four other interns and listened to each person speak, something caught my attention. All the people who talked claimed that their programs have 80 to 90 percent success rate, which surprised me at the time. I became interested in knowing how the program coordinators define success in their own terms and the tools they use to measure success,

because 80 to 90 percent seemed like a very high success rate for an agency that is a non-profit organization. I have worked and volunteered with many different youth development programs in the past, but I cannot say if I ever heard of such a high success rate in an agency like this one.

I am doing this research because I want to work with disadvantaged youths and help them make positive choices in their lives. This research will help me see what it takes to be in the position of a program coordinator and the sacrifices they make to be able to do something they love. I want to identify what motivates each one of them to commit to helping

others, even when it takes so much time. I think it will help open my eyes on many different levels. For example, how I need to be patient when working with different age groups or people from different backgrounds. I hope to discover more reasons as to why I want to be involved in helping and working with youth and guide them to make positive choices in their lives.

As I thought about the high success rate of the programs in the agency, I could not help but wonder how they, the program coordinators, defined success. What counts as success and how they measure success?”

## Interview with Sadique Isahaku, cont.

A topic is determined by whether or not the candidate has covered all aspects of the dissertation topic, and then whatever issues are not well defined and/or appear to be absent in the dissertation are what the committee will have the candidate elaborate. It might even encompass recent news regarding the dissertation topic.

Isahaku’s topic was entitled “Potentialities and opportunities which conservative and alternative approaches present for the future.” For his preparation, he defined conservative and alternative approaches to educational reform and examined the relevance and benefits of his suggested alternative approaches.

On the day of the defense, a candidate presents before the public at an auditorium at the university. There is an announcement in the local newspaper prior to the event. According to Isahaku, among its many academic programs, NTNU includes fifteen different education programs that are interconnected. His studies were in International Education and Comparative Research. The delivery and defense of a dissertation has the potential to attract a big crowd. For Isahaku, he drew his audience from the over 260,000 inhabitants of the city, of which over 50,000 were students affiliated with the University. The majority of people in attendance were retired professors.

professionals in other fields, other doctoral students, and young students who are involved in relevant coursework. As Isahaku noted, the universities in Norway wish to integrate the community at large into academia, thus they invite the public as an audience. In his case, there were enough seats for 250 people, and a copy of the dissertation was distributed at the door to every participant.

During the defense, the candidate has half an hour to introduce the dissertation topic, and then is allowed fifteen minutes for questions. The presentation is formal, generally involving the use of Powerpoint. As part of his defense, Isahaku presented charts and graphs that illustrated a premise on which World Bank education policy is based, and investigated whether or not it remains valid. Isahaku believes that an investment in a person’s education should only be made if there is a return. In his presentation, he identified how elementary education for all has been provided at the expense of privatizing higher education in many African countries. Through his analysis, he pointed out that the argument by the World Bank that elementary education be privileged over secondary and tertiary education, which now incur heavy school fees for families, no longer has merit. This approach results in the children of the elite benefitting the most, because only

they can afford to pay fees to the system. Originally, those who were able to pass exams would receive free higher education, regardless of ability to pay. Now, the negative outcome has been that students who cannot afford higher education apply for scholarships to go abroad and study elsewhere.

These students who receive their higher education overseas, find better paying jobs than they would at home. Isahaku explained how the development of countries can be influenced by the amount of private unrequited transfers (immigrant remittances) that comes in from its professionals who are away. In recent years, this amount has exceeded both Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). This situation challenged him to rethink the cost/benefit analysis model which the World Bank has used to determine assistance to education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Isahaku noted that the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have both recognized the benefits to developing countries of private unrequited remittances. Both the WB and IMF monitor these remittances.

In his presentation, he emphasized that there should be alternative ways to finance education, such as loan funds controlled by a government, in order to manage interest rates. There has been a lack of success in this area, due to the inability to trace the whereabouts of graduates.

## EDYS Students Gain Teaching Experiences

"I part time student taught during the fall 2009 semester at Hackett Elementary School. I worked with Ms. Joan Ptacin in a second grade classroom all day on Mondays, mornings on Wednesdays, and occasionally on Fridays. The experience was great and Ms. Ptacin was an excellent teacher and mentor. The part time teaching experience was only a taste for what is to come this summer when I full time student teach on the North Island of New Zealand through the Minnesota-Morris Global Student Teach program. I've known for a while that I wanted to study abroad at some point but I did not want studying abroad to conflict with soccer in the fall or track in the spring. When I found out that I could student teach during the summer I was thrilled. I've heard nothing but great things about New Zealand from friends of mine who have studied or are currently studying there. I am excited to learn how teaching styles and the education system as a whole differ from America to New Zealand and how I can incorporate the strengths of both systems into my own teaching. I am currently

working on an honors thesis regarding the inclusion of native cultures in public education and how this inclusion differs between New Zealand and American schools. I hope that the information I learn while writing my thesis will help me to better understand the New Zealand system and styles of education before I begin my student teaching there."

-Anna Blankschien

"I came back to Beloit College to complete my teacher certification requirements after 6 years of my graduation. I left Beloit with a BA in Psychology in 2003 but realized Education was really my thing so here I am again. I had been teaching out of the country for 4 years and got a MA in Elementary Education during that time, however, it is my first time getting certified in to teach in WI, which is why I took the student teacher seminar. It has been great to share the little I know with other student teachers who are just starting. I taught ESL in Beloit last school

year and I am currently teaching ESL in Whitewater. Being bilingual has helped me get jobs, the need is definitely there."

-Sandra Ramirez

"This fall I student taught four sections of Freshman US History at Beloit Memorial High School. It was a challenging, but very rewarding experience. I was lucky to work with many helpful teachers at Beloit Memorial, especially my supervising teacher, Jennifer Zart. I was definitely challenged to working with students who were diverse culturally, economically and educationally but I was lucky enough to bond with some great kids. I hope to use my experience to teach in either Chicago or Washington DC."

- John Tryneski

## Interview with Sadique Isahaku cont.

Isahaku maintained that it would be very beneficial if candidates were permitted more flexible opportunities to pay their school loans. He explained that because education is an investment by a country that is educating its people, the government expects graduates to be useful citizens to the nation. Isahaku further described how graduates are reaping the benefits in other places. He suggested a repatriation of the percentage of the taxes that foreign nationals pay in their new countries of residence, whether they have accepted citizenship or not. Essentially, the money would be sent back to re-invest and develop the education systems in the countries from which they received free public education. As a result, it would also be a significant contribution to the revolving loan fund, which would help new students achieve higher education.

As an example, Isahaku stated that there are approximately 30,000 Nigerian doctors and about the same number of pharmacists living and working in the US, who received free public education in Nigeria.

After presentation of the dissertation, candidates spend forty-five minutes discussing their topic and taking inquiries from the audience. Then, there is an hour long break. After the break, the defense portion of the event begins. This takes a total of three hours. During the defense, the candidate interacts with a first opponent, a second opponent, and the defense administrator from the local university. Isahaku's two opponents were external reviewers from South Africa and Sweden, respectively. The first opponent focuses on the theory and methodology and engages the candidate in a series of basic questions. The second opponent deals with the content, and essentially attacks any weak spots in the dissertation. Everything that occurs is

recorded, and in very rare cases, candidates do not make it past the opponents. Isahaku said that his toughest question, regarding the content of his dissertation, involved ethical issues related to the 'brain drain' in African countries. He also received tough questions on his novel idea of tax repatriation—his idea being that graduates who work and live abroad ought to pay some part of their taxes (tax repatriation) to their home countries as a return on the investment in the free public education they received from their home countries. Isahaku's tax repatriation idea was well received by his opponents and by members in the audience. Now Isahaku said there needs to be movement from his research on his defense to a policy and action/implimentation platform from which, for example, the Norwegian government would find a way to begin encouraging African countries to seek tax repatriations. There should be a global institution just like the WTO that will be responsible for monitoring tax revenues from immigrant professionals who did not get their public education in the countries they now live and work. A percentage of such revenues should then be repatriated to their countries of origin, as available data already indicates that private unrequited transfers already exceeds ODA and FDI.

Before finishing up the conversation with Isahaku, Darlington and Gaudreau found out that Norwegian and English were the primary spoken languages in Isahaku's defense. The second opponent also questioned Isahaku in Swedish. After the three hours of public discourse, the committee announced the result—Sadique Isahaku had passed his defense. Official congratulations were followed by a public reception. The dissertation introduction and defense process was an all day event, which ran from 10:15 am until 5 pm. At

8 pm, there was a dinner sponsored by the University of Trondheim.

The European Ph.D. process is certainly intimidating. Isahaku concluded by saying it was one of the most challenging days of his life. Isahaku is currently a local entrepreneur and also does evaluation work for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Education For All (EFA) by 2015 initiative.

A toast on behalf of EDYS to Dr. Sadique Isahaku!



Mr. Isahaku during his defense processional

## EDYS Student Miranda Mueller Provides A Response Essay to An Article in H.E.R.

EDYS 102 spring 2010 had students reacting to the scholarly articles in Harvard Educational Review (HER) about what Obama's election entails for education. Miranda Mueller's essay entitled "Education for Freedom: The Role of Community and Compassion in the Milton Public Schools" is in response to San Francisco State University's professor Jeffrey M.R. Duncan-Andrade, who wrote an article in HER on various types of hope that are promoted by schools. Hokey hope, mythical hope, and hope deferred are all concepts that Duncan-Andrade considers forms of "false hope," while material hope, Socratic hope, and audacious hope are all types of hope that he considers a part of "critical hope." Miranda's paper is focused on challenging the kind of mythical hope that encourages students to

think that they can achieve anything they want and trivializes the challenges that exist.

In contrast to the mythical hope that underestimates social ills, Miranda posits that her Milton English teacher, Mrs. Diestler demonstrated to her classes how Miranda and her classmates could provide "material hope" to help women and children at the local YMCA by "assembling the baby clothing, Q-tips, shampoo, diapers, hairbrushes, towels and strollers." As Miranda notes, "This type of classroom activity is empowering, both for advantaged and disadvantaged students, because it establishes a bond between them and others, teaching both that their actions can have a real impact on their communities and on other human beings."

To read Miranda's essay, follow this link and log into your Beloit email account:

<http://tiny.cc/LkTKk>

### ***Excellence in Teaching Symposium***

March 9th, 2010 – Moore Lounge, Pearsons Hall, 7 pm

Featuring a lecture by Deborah Appleman entitled "Liberal Education Behind Bars: Teaching and Learning with the Incarcerated."

Honoree: Greg Wallendal, '98

would overhear teachers use gross generalizations like "all of their parents are drunks" or "you know when it's pay day and they get checks from the casino because there is a line a mile long in the McDonalds parking lot and all of the kids show up the next day with new clothes" or "that family is no good. They're all members of the gang and are druggies. (meaning, not just a nuclear family, but extended family). For example, there was one family that I guess had a bad reputation. I was surprised to hear this, as I had a student with that last name in my class and his parents were some of the most attentive and involved parents. When I asked another teacher about this, she sort of dismissed this information and said that that portion of the family was trying to over come their name. I don't think it is right to judge a student and his/her family before you get to know them, especially when it is just based on their last name.

As I said, the majority of teachers at Lac du Flambeau were white. Although some of them did a great job trying to incorporate native culture and Ojibwe language into their class, I felt like there could have been more of a concerted effort. Ideally, it would be great for the majority of students to have teachers that are from the community, who they can relate to and look up to as a role model. I attended Ojibwe language and culture class with my students and witnessed such a transformation in my students when they were there. They were so inquisitive, interested and focused in that class. They could really relate to the content and would often share personal stories about learning beading from a grandma, or going trapping with a dad, or dancing in a powwow. If they could see themselves positively reflected in all aspects of their education, not just Ojibwe class, I think students would be much more engaged as learners and get a lot more out of their education."

## Prof. Sonja Darlington Interviews Student Teacher Lia Bengtson

1. *What did you learn about yourself by student teaching at Lac du Flambeau?*

"In terms of student teaching, I realized how much multitasking is required to keep a classroom functioning smoothly all day. Prior to student teaching, I preferred to focus all of my energy on one task and complete it well before moving onto something else. So, initially student teaching was very overwhelming, especially when I took over the class myself.

Student teaching also helped me figure out what my own teaching style is. There were times during my student teaching experience that were very trying, largely because my teaching style and philosophy of education and that of my cooperating teacher were so different. However, in retrospect, this helped me identify more clearly what I would and would not want to do in my own classroom.

I also realized that I prefer the city. I think it was good for me to experience living in a small town in a rural area, but ultimately, I will want to find a teaching job in a more urban area. I think that location can be very important because among many things, it determines what you can do in your down time. So, if things that you are interested in doing are unavailable, it's hard to find a release from the day."

2. *How did your ideas of teaching change as a result of teaching Native Americans in this region?*

"I came across a lot of really heartbreaking family/living situations that my students were experiencing, which were obviously affecting their behavior and performance at school. Education is not

just academics, but also teaching life skills i.e. problem solving skills, personal hygiene, conflict resolution skills, self-control etc. My students had Guidance class once a week and it addressed a different issue each week. I think the domestic violence topic was most surprising to me. The Guidance counselor gave her home phone number, the tribal police, my cooperating teacher's home phone number, and the school number. Then the class brainstormed safe places to hide, such as in a closet and under a bed. I think the saddest part, is that while they were brainstorming, it seemed that a number of my students were talking from personal experience. So, I realized things like where to hide in case of domestic violence is just as important to teach as math and reading. I also found it crucial to foster a positive and encouraging atmosphere for students. I knew this coming in, but seeing first hand how a positive or negative atmosphere affects students' self-esteem and behavior in class proved it to be critical."

3. *What would you like for students in EDYS 102 to know about the issues in Native American education, based on your experience in Lac du Flambeau? Any specific stories you would like to relate?*

"I think one of the most important things is to not prejudice or judge students. The majority of teachers at Lac du Flambeau were white, many of whom I felt had preconceived ideas and assumptions about their students. In passing, I