



# Lentšú La Sechaba

THE VOICE OF THE CE COMMUNITY

Winter: Volume 10 – July 2021

## Students' responsibility to re-imagine a positive future for South Africa

Ben van der Merwe (Lecturer: Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences)



As the only African University on the University Social Responsiveness Network (USRN), the University of Pretoria (UP) takes responsibility for developing socially conscious and active citizens. We want the alumni we send into the world to be interested in using their knowledge and skills to positively impact their communities and the country as a whole.

To confirm its commitment to integrating social and environmental responsibility across its offerings, the Department of Business Management

has created two exciting modules dedicated to providing students with the mindset, knowledge and skills needed to accept responsibility for demonstrating active citizenship in South Africa and globally.

The first of these modules, Responsible Management, is a second-year module providing students with in-depth knowledge of the social and environmental challenges in the business environment, and how organisations in South Africa and globally work towards solving those challenges.

The Responsible Management module is followed by a capstone module at the third-year level, titled Responsible Leadership. Leaders are influential when collaborating with stakeholders to build an appealing vision of the future, and work with stakeholders to realise this vision and create impact. The dominant narrative regarding the future of South Africa and Africa is mainly negative. This negative narrative makes it significantly harder for leaders and their stakeholders to articulate a vision of the future

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with the power to inspire people to collaborate towards creating positive change. The Responsible Leadership module is designed to encourage students to reflect on the social and environmental realities of South Africa with the emphasis on creating positive alternatives for the future of South Africa.

The module places a strong emphasis on re-imagining the future of Africa and South Africa. This will encourage students to explore various future scenarios in imagining their projects and responses to social and environmental challenges. Students will be encouraged to use the work of prominent economists,

sociologists, futurists and utopian Afro-futurists when re-imagining an alternative future for South Africa and the African continent in general. The module challenges students to use creative thinking techniques to break away from the primarily negative view of the future of Africa and South Africa.

Constructing and articulating an appealing future to work towards is only part of effective leadership. The critical question regarding whether any real progress has been made in addressing social and environmental challenges remains. In view of this, students are encouraged to critically consider the actual impact of social

projects and will be given a set of tools that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of projects.

They will go out in the field to measure the social impact of projects and to help them understand the difference between having a robust and optimistic vision of the future and the actual construction, implementation and management of projects with a specific focus on creating a real impact in communities.

This is a crucial step to enable our students and graduates to work towards a positive, alternative view of the future as active citizens and responsible leaders in South Africa.



# Editorial letter

Dr Eugene Machimana  
Senior Education Consultant: Community Engagement



In 2020, similar to in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic is continuing to cause mayhem, leading to the closure of some community organisations, rampant ill health and even deaths among community members. In the midst of these challenges, the University of Pretoria (UP) prides itself on its ability to continue with community engagement (CE) interventions. Since the onset of COVID-19 some CE interventions have been conducted on virtual platforms in adherence to the COVID-19 regulations and guidelines. It is in the best interests of us all to ensure that UP and its community partners are protected against the coronavirus while they are engaged in projects.

We have reached mid-year and CE at the UP is going from strength to strength. Thank you to all the staff members, students and community partners of the UP for all the work you are doing to build a cohesive society in the present conditions.

The results of the UP's CE interventions were evident in the relief it brought many communities that had been destabilised by COVID-19. It is encouraging that UP students are living up to the expectations of global citizens by implementing projects beyond the borders of South Africa. Owing to COVID-19 the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) was significantly accelerated, enabling students to collaborate with the international world on virtual platforms.



As regards the principle of global citizenship, it is worth noting that CE is not limited to current UP students. The alumni actively continue to contribute to building the UP CE brand by making meaningful contributions to communities. Both current students and alumni are responsive to and responsible for building a better society for all.

The views expressed in this editorial letter are confirmed in the articles that appear in this edition of the newsletter.

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## Matters of interest

- The next Community Engagement Forum will be held on Wednesday, 28 July 2021.
- Visit the University of Pretoria's online Community Engagement Management System (CEMS) for updates on community project opportunities.
- Casual Day will be celebrated on Friday, 3 September 2021.
- The Unit for Community Engagement invites you to report on community engagement activities by submitting articles for publication in the next newsletter (Spring 2021).

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# How to evade the feared application tracking system(ATS)



**Marile Roos**  
(Projects:  
Manager  
Employability  
and Training –  
Career Services  
Office)

**A**re you currently looking for a job? Do you feel that your curriculum vitae and cover letter are inadequate or are not even being read by prospective employers? Repeatedly receiving job application rejections without any feedback can be extremely disheartening.

Due to the volume of applications received, many companies, in particular the larger ones, use an Application Tracking System (ATS) or 'Curriculum Vitae Robot' to sort applications before they even reach human recruiters. ATS software is used to organise and filter job applications to make the selection process more manageable for recruiters. Many applications are therefore discarded based on a predetermined set criteria. If you have applied for a position online during the past decade, it would be reasonable to assume that your application was subjected to ATS software. For those seeking employment, it is imperative to be aware of the use of ATS systems in the recruitment process and to inform themselves on how to approach the application process in an ATS-friendly manner.

## TIPS TO CONSIDER:

### Overuse of formatting

It is best to keep your CV formatting simple. In order for the ATS software to scan your CV, it will convert it to a 'simple text-only' file and remove all elaborate formatting. In certain instances it will also mix up the content in a way that makes it impossible to scan the relevant information, which may lead to your CV being rejected.

- Avoid the use of different fonts, in particular the less common ones, and use capitalisation sparingly.
- Avoid the inclusion of tables, graphics, logos and photos.
- Avoid the use of columns.
- Avoid hyperlinks and rather paste the URLs.
- Use standard bullets.

### Use of key words

It is very important to review the job description and to strategically include the key words in your application, since those are the words the ATS tracking system will most likely be searching for. However, you should make sure that you also give specific examples of your accomplishments, skills and work experience.

### Avoid applying for many vacancies in the same company

The ATS software will be able to pick up applications for various vacancies received from the same applicant. You are therefore advised not to randomly apply for many vacancies. In the case of roles that are very similar, you can apply, but should make sure that each application is modified for the specific position applied for. Randomly applying for any role will create the impression that you lack awareness of your specific skills, or that you are not really interested in a particular position.

### Choose the right file type

Save your CV and cover letter in word format, which is currently considered to be the more user-friendly file type when ATS software is used. It is important to take note of the instructions regarding applications. If the company requests a specific type of format, for example PDF, this criterion should always be adhered to avoid the rejection of your application.

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# Annual KTG project: Unleashing potential

Thabang Ngwenya (Director and Co-Founder of  
Keep That Gold Shining)

**K**eeP That Gold Shining (KTG), in collaboration with the Community-based Project module (JCP) of the University of Pretoria, will host a Mathematics competition as part of the annual KTG Mathematics Accounting and Physical Sciences (MAP) competition project. Grade 10, 11 and 12 learners from mainly Soshanguve (eMakhosini Combined Secondary School), Winterveldt (Tswaing Secondary School), Slovo (Father Smangalis Mkhathshwa Secondary School), and Hammanskraal (Makgetsi Secondary School) will be tutored by at least 100 JCP students.

At least 100 learners will be involved in this programme, which is open to

all high school learners. The primary objective of this programme is not to encourage learners to compete with each other, but rather to motivate them to take part in a competition.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, the MAP competition will use a hybrid approach (online and contact). The programme will not be limited to Mathematics tutoring as the JCP tutors will go the extra mile to also assist learners with other subjects and will help Grade 12 learners to complete university applications.

This year the programme will incorporate robotics with the aim of teaching basic coding skills. Although the JCP tutors will conduct some

virtual sessions using Google Meet and Zoom, WhatsApp will be used as the primary form of communication between learners and their tutors. The Mathematics programme will cover algebra, functions, analytical geometry, trigonometry and number patterns.

The project will be split into Phases A, B and C (May, June, July, August and September). During the first and second phases (Phases A and B), tutors will spend much time presenting the sessions and doing assessments to evaluate the learners' progress. One of the exciting assignments that tutors will facilitate is a programming game, which will expose the learners to some programming skills.

# Breastfeeding awareness campaign during the COVID-19 pandemic

Dr Thifhelimbilu Irene Ramavhoya, Ms Phumudzo Mamphwe, Mrs Helga Lister and Prof Karien Mostert (Faculty of Health Sciences)

## Health Awareness Day for Pregnant Women



## Breastfeeding

Figure 1: Breastfeeding demonstration

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, level four students from five departments in the school of Health Care Sciences conducted a two-day breastfeeding awareness campaign for the benefit of pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers at the Daspoort Clinic as part of their community engagement (CE) activities. The

information was presented to the mothers who brought their children to the well-baby clinic and pregnant women waiting for antenatal care. Various guest speakers also promoted breastfeeding. Demonstrations involved the use of props such as balloons and dolls (refer to Figure 1), and afterwards pamphlets were handed out to everyone.

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This article includes information on breastfeeding received from four departments, namely occupational therapy, nursing, human nutrition and physiotherapy.

### Information pamphlets for pregnant women

Students from the department of nursing compiled a pamphlet for pregnant women that contains information on preparation for breastfeeding; what to expect when breastfeeding; and breast / nipple conditions.

The pamphlet explains the discomfort a mother will feel during the first few days after starting to breastfeed her child, and how to hold the baby to alleviate discomfort. If discomfort lasts for more than two weeks, there could be a problem, for example improper latching, a clogged milk duct or mastitis. Pregnant women were advised to start breastfeeding their infants within one hour after birth to help them latch easier and ultimately improve the outcome of breastfeeding, which is a healthy baby.

A demonstration of how to prepare their nipples was done for pregnant women with flat or engaged nipples. A pregnant woman with flat or indrawn (inverted) nipples must test for protrusion by rolling the nipple between her thumb and index finger.

If the nipple remains inverted, a cold cloth can be used to stimulate it. If these stimulation techniques are

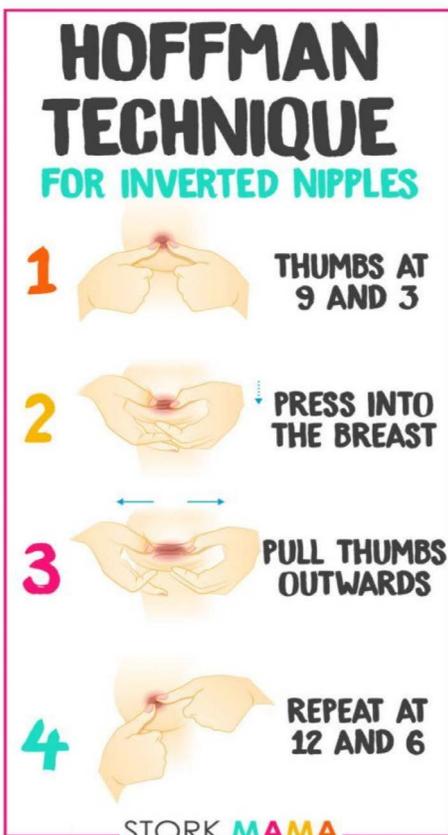


Figure 2: Hoffman technique

unsuccessful, a breast pump or nipple extractors can be used to help draw the nipple out. The Hoffman technique can also be used, as demonstrated in Figure 2. To reduce discomfort, especially in the case of first-time mothers, the nipples must be 'toughened' by rolling them between the thumb and index finger at least three times a day for 5-10 minutes on the first few days of breastfeeding.

Nipple aftercare was also taught. This involves wiping the nipples with a clean cloth and lukewarm saltwater after breastfeeding to prevent infection of both the infant and the mother. Mothers were advised to keep their nipples dry and wear appropriate soft clothing to prevent chaffing. Nipple cream should be applied after cleansing to soothe and protect the skin. However, nipple cream should not be applied before breastfeeding as the taste will deter the baby from latching and drinking properly.

Breast massage is another technique taught to mothers in order to increase milk production. To encourage blood flow to the breasts, a warm cloth must be put on the breast before massaging. Milk flow can be encouraged by rolling the breast between fingers and compressing from the back to the front towards the nipple, as demonstrated during the campaign. This should be done before breastfeeding or the use of a breast pump and can also be done to prevent engorgement. Milk extracted in this way should be stored safely to be given to the infant.

Various conditions that can hinder the breastfeeding of newborns were discussed and the women were told how to diagnose and manage them at home. Engorged breasts is one such condition and occurs when the breasts are overfull and become large, firm and warm. This could happen when the baby drinks less milk than the mother's body produces. Treatment for this condition is a hungry baby who drinks enough to empty the breasts. Engorgement can be prevented by expressing milk when the baby sleeps and breastfeeding frequently, even though it may be painful. Cabbage leaves can be applied as a cold compress to lessen swelling and pain (refer to Figure 3). However, since cold compressions can decrease milk supply, they should not be left on too long. Apply the leaves for 20 minutes or until they are warm and discard them after use.



Figure 3: Cabbage leaf treatment

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Physiotherapy students prepared handouts and videos on good posture to teach pregnant women how to protect their backs while sitting or lying during breastfeeding. Another aspect covered during the campaign was the positioning of the breast and the baby during breastfeeding. Physical activities and specific exercises to maintain health during pregnancy and prepare for the birthing process were also taught.

### Information pamphlets for breastfeeding mothers

The pamphlets compiled and distributed by the occupational therapy students contained information on changes that occur in the body; the benefits of breastfeeding for both the mother and the child; the therapeutic value of breastfeeding; how breastfeeding can be important for babies who are not developing normally; the challenges that mothers may face; occupations that may be disrupted during this time; and the importance of self-care for mothers.

Stress, anxiety and lack of sleep can affect the mother, the child and the process of breastfeeding, and it is essential to practise self-care during this time.

The Department of Human Nutrition designed a poster and leaflet containing short, simple messages that were shared with the mothers. The education was aimed at breastfeeding mothers and included advice on how to get started after the baby's birth, as well as information on the composition of breastmilk and why it is best for both mother and baby.

The meaning of exclusive breastfeeding was explained and the mothers were told how to continue breastfeeding even after six months

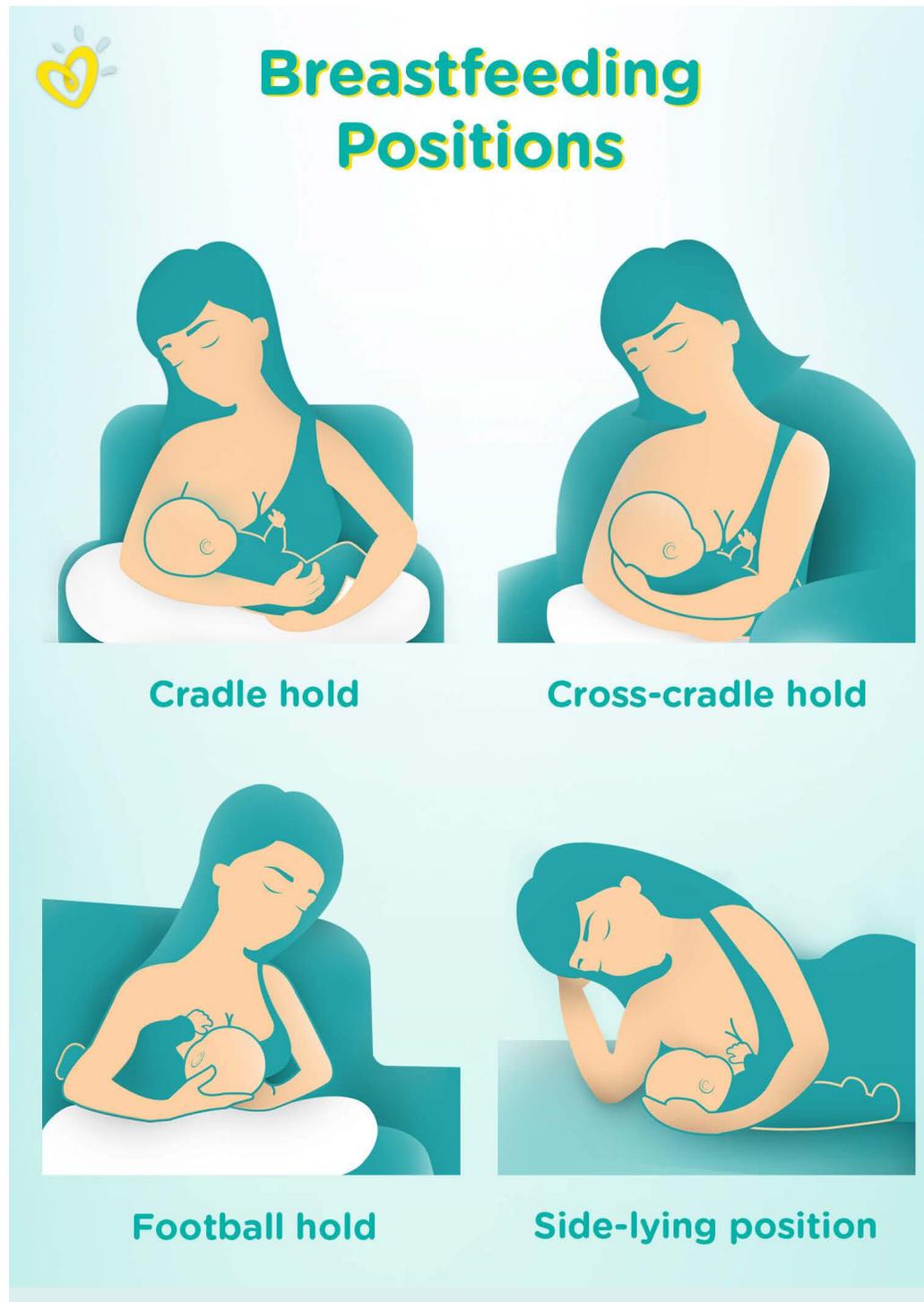


Figure 4: Breastfeeding positions

and longer. The students also spoke briefly about breastfeeding while living with HIV and the risk of mix feeding.

Information on correct positioning (Figure 4), the expressing and storing of breastmilk and what to avoid while breastfeeding were also included as part of the education. They were reminded to 'put baby to breast, not breast to baby'.

Despite the inconvenience caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the School of Health Care Sciences (CE) organised a successful breastfeeding awareness campaign. This campaign, which focused on the benefits of breastfeeding and the management of conditions affecting the breasts, offered a critical window of opportunity to emphasise the importance of breastfeeding to pregnant and breastfeeding women.

# Brewed and prepared at the Groenkloof Campus, University of Pretoria

**Aphilisiwe Phillips**

I am one of a group of former University of Pretoria (UP) students who believe that we attended the best university and received top quality teacher training. While still studying, we complained about UP's modules that we considered to be unnecessary, especially when comparing the structure of our course with what other universities were offering.

Little did we realise how courses such as JMD 351 (Methodologies of learning support) and JLD 400 (Learning support) prepared us for the realities we would face in the school environment! Those modules gave us a glimpse of what we would have to deal with once we were employed in the field. The JMD 351 module contained exciting content, and the practical part was fascinating. We enjoyed it thoroughly, especially during hands-on assessments of learners' perceptual skills with Dr Nkhensani Susan Thuketana as the module supervisor. It was indeed a pleasant experience to simultaneously do theory and practice.

When we started module JLD 400 in our final year, we were overwhelmed by the embedded teaching practice. On reflection we now agree that the university should add educational psychology modules to the teachers' training course and make them compulsory for all who wish to qualify for the teaching profession. The learner support modules now help us to navigate some of the emotional causes of learning barriers in learners, and we agree that completing the learner support modules equipped us to be better teachers. In every situation we encounter we have to be kind to learners and act as humanitarians, philanthropists, nurses, parents and comforters. We are fully aware of the fact that our responses could either make or break the children for whom we are responsible.

**The following statements are a reflection of our experiences at UP, and specifically show how JLD assisted us as young teachers.**



*The most important way in which the Learning Support module has assisted me as a teacher is that it made me aware of the different challenges that can hinder the success of learner support in schools' (Zimkhona Mabena).*

*'It is exciting to see all the things we learned about in the learning support textbooks happening in my Grade 1 classroom. I find it intriguing to see learning difficulties manifest in real life. The modules have helped me to identify learners with learning difficulties and provide the necessary support' (Simone de Meyer).*



*'The learning support modules prepared me to be a better teacher. I am critical and analytical when assessing learning barriers to provide relevant intervention. By investigating learners' family backgrounds and relationships, how they communicate, respond to questions and play with their peers, I gain a deeper understanding of their struggles and can develop strategies to help them to succeed' (Aphilisiwe Phillips).*

*'As a professional, I always refer back to the university textbooks I used for the learning support modules and the resources we produced to deal with learning barriers in my classroom. The knowledge and skills gathered at university come in handy' (Chante Brown).*



As we reflect on our experiences in the Foundation Phase classes, we can see how helpful the modules were and still are. As young female teachers we enjoy reflecting on the teaching profession and our teaching experiences.

# Unit for Urban Citizenship: Reaching out beyond our borders

Dr Carin Combrinck (Senior Lecturer • Director: Unit for Urban Citizenship, Department of Architecture)



**W**hen the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology (EBIT) sent out a survey last year to determine which modules could be successfully taught online, I was one of those people who ticked the 'NO' column for all the modules I teach.

The design studio maintains the age-old tradition in Architecture that is understood across the globe, namely a close relationship between master and apprentice. Despite having been encouraged over the past few years to offer hybrid teaching, we have actively resisted this as the

courses offered by the Unit for Urban Citizenship are aimed at engaging meaningfully with community partners in various contexts—warm, real and soulful connections between people that could under no circumstances be simulated through online platforms. Or so I thought.

After much soul-searching and experimentation, and mostly with our innovative students leading the way, the entire Department of Architecture managed to smoothly transition into the virtual space, with projects presented towards the end of the year that in many cases surpassed anything that had come before. As

reported in last year's newsletter, our engagement processes simply shifted gear and we could reach out to a multitude of stakeholders, thereby successfully maintaining contact with our society.

Needless to say, our preparations for this year were marked by an entirely different approach—one in which we were ready to happily embrace the complex obstacles that might come our way. Having experienced the various levels of lockdown, we could anticipate how best to engage with our students and community partners living in different parts of

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**Participatory Action Research with high school learners of the Pre-University Academy at the Mamelodi Campus**



**Construction of the architectural prototype in Plastic View informal settlement**

the city. We could also embark on a very ambitious project that involved engaging with students from Chalmers University in Gothenburg, Sweden in a virtual global studio by way of the Reality Studio.

Our relationship with Chalmers University has its origins with the Head of Department (HoD) of Architecture, Prof Chrisna du Plessis, who received an Honorary Doctorate from Chalmers University in 2010 for her internationally acclaimed work relating to sustainability in the Built Environment. Recognising that our departments shared values pertaining not only to the environment, but also to the role of citizenship in design, a research project was undertaken as part of a joint funding call by the South African National Research Foundation (NRF) and the Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (STINT).

The research project spanned three years, during which both departments developed a growing appreciation for the work being done in support of meaningful community engagement in design. Methodological and theoretical similarities between the Chalmers Social Inclusion Studio and the UP Urban Citizen Studios have been reported in a number of research outputs.

The Reality Studio has existed at Chalmers University for several years and is traditionally located in Kisumu, in Kenya. During 2020, the Unit for Urban Citizenship was approached to consider the possibility of moving the focus of this studio to coincide with our work in Mamelodi and Moreleta East. Based on the mutual understanding of what our departments offered, we were then able to conceive of a studio that could rely on hyperlocal engagement and global knowledge exchange.

We could build on what our honours students had uncovered during their virtual CoDesign studio activities in 2020, thereby establishing a platform of engagement for their counterparts in Sweden as part of their master's year.

Multiple layers of interrelated networks could be activated in this way, with students participating in real time using live-streaming capabilities such as *WhatsApp™* and *Zoom™*. Those in South Africa would serve as the 'foot soldiers' in the field and the Swedish students would be the 'eyes in the sky'. The whiteboard app *Miro™* has become especially useful for shared brainstorming, planning sessions and virtual exhibitions (see the link: [https://miro.com/app/board/o9J\\_INI90g4=/](https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_INI90g4=/)).

Collaboration spanned across year groups to include the honours students, who contributed to workshops, mapping and prototypes as part of their studio outputs in the first quarter. Community members living in the informal Plastic View settlements have been actively participating in enabling architectural prototypes, and school learners in the Melusi informal settlement and the Mamelodi Campus Pre-University Academy have been involved in workshops during which play featured in the development of Community Action Plans.

Perhaps because we have all been affected by COVID-19, irrespective of where or how we live, we seem to have been reminded of our shared humanity. The spirit of togetherness and collaboration that this created between our South African and Swedish students, as well as between our diverse community partners, left us feeling humbled.

We were impressed not only by the value of pursuing an academic purpose of service, but also, more importantly, by the powerful resource we have in the young and pliable minds we are privileged to teach. Looking at the mind-shifting experiences of the past year, I no longer entertain the word 'NO' when thinking about how we can continue to educate. Rather, I think about how best to unlock the potential of all our partners so that we can address these challenges together.

# Somewhere in the Tribulation solar system 2021

Jady Hewitt (Captain of the Starship Phyllis Robertson)



Produced in the Earth-simulation chamber of Starship Phyllis Robertson

Captain's log, star date 98924.88

**A**fter a challenging nine months, the crew and disabled passengers of the very special Starship Phyllis Robertson were looking forward to docking on our home planet Earth to resume the lives they knew before take-off at midnight on 27 March 2020.

This was not to be, since the conditions that mandated our removal from the planet then had remained unchanged. The year 2021 promises to be more of the same, except that we do now periodically allow fellow space travellers into our decontamination and decompression chamber.

Some visitors from Tuks, a nearby vessel, arrived wearing scrubs and carrying bags full of ideas to get the crew and disabled passengers moving and assist those with mobility issues. Group sessions were arranged on the recreation deck and most of the passengers were only too pleased with the distraction, not realising that what was disguised as fun was actually exercise.

We have been informed by Tuks that more of its crew will soon knock on our protection shields armed with training materials and equipment to attend to the poor state of oral hygiene on board. The aim is to improve the skills of

the crew so that we can improve the overall experience of the passengers with better service delivery.

Allowing these visitors on to our vessel is a calculated risk because our passengers do not understand the concept of social distancing. With all the necessary sanitation, temperature screening, registers to complete and the added requirement of covering up the breathing and speaking orifices with masks, we have prolonged the procedure in the reception cabin, but have managed to avoid any contamination by the virus ravaging our planet.

Four months of 2021 have already passed with no prospect of an imminent return to the Earth we left behind. These sporadic visitors are most welcome and appreciated, not only for the distraction they provide, but also for the immense value they are offering to the crew and passengers of this floating vessel. As the command team of Starship Phyllis Robertson, we hope to develop a magnetic tie to the vessel Tuks to ensure that the two vessels remain in close proximity to each other in order to make more visits possible in the future.

Signing off in gratitude that we are not alone in this universe.

# Debilitating factors confronting South African education

Dr Adeniran Gregory Adewusi (Department of Educational Psychology: University of Pretoria)



**M**any factors are responsible for the weak structure of education in South Africa. Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2013) assert that the South African education system is defective as a result of poor work ethic, teachers' low knowledge content and a lack of commitment. The state of education is further affected by the absence of both parental and community support for teachers, the weak morale among teachers and students, low-quality guidance from education authorities, shallow accountability and discipline-associated complications such as absenteeism and truancy, as well as the increasing learner drop-out rates.

Jacobs (2014) argues that school violence is mostly reported in the media as a complex phenomenon that defies understanding. According to Jacobs, violence must be seen from a societal rather than a personal perspective. This phenomenon is causing serious concern in South African schools and must be addressed to ensure a positive learning environment where committed teachers can be free to impart knowledge.

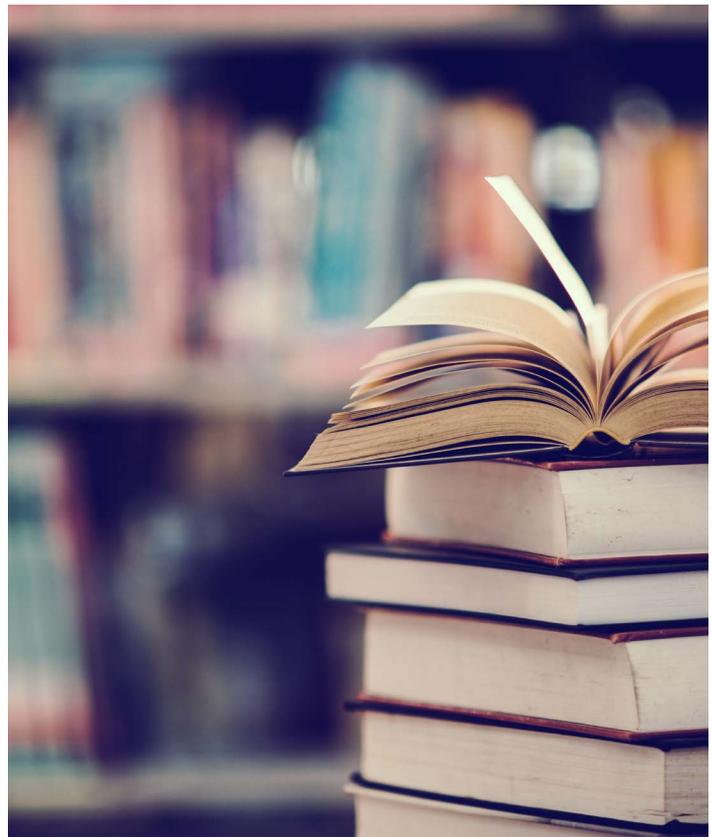
As entrenched in the Constitution of 1996, Section 28 (1) (d) of the Republic of South Africa (RSA), children have the right to education, and learners attending school ought to be protected against all possible forms of danger (Basson, 1996). It could be assumed that teachers' insufficient content knowledge is responsible for learners' failure to acquire the preparatory knowledge they ought to have, which may also account for the high rate of failure in mathematics and related subjects in earlier years and when writing the matric examination.

To add to the challenges experienced in education, some male teachers are unfortunately morally bankrupt and sexually assault female learners. The incidence of HIV/AIDS is increasing, and young women are affected more seriously than their male counterparts (Modisaotsile, 2012). Other issues that exacerbate the challenges faced by education in South Africa is the detrimental effect of peer pressure and the high incidence of substance abuse among learners.

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Essentially, the reasons for the poor performance of learners in general, and in Grade 12 in particular, include inadequate resources; lack of accountability among officers responsible for ensuring the fair distribution of scarce resources; poor learner discipline; ineffective policies emanating from school level, inadequate organisational composition and immature managerial skills; teacher union disruptions and complexities in executing collective agreements; inability to implement government policies; and deficient parental school involvement (Mamogale, 2016).

Any investigation of the various identifiable challenges confronting South African education should pay urgent attention to the issue of teaching and learning. Nationally, learners in public schools have to contend with the problem of insufficient textbooks and inadequate tuition, in addition to difficulties experienced as a result of overpopulated classrooms and poor school facilities (Writer, 2015). Common problems experienced by learners in public schools in all the provinces of South Africa are itemised in the Table below.



Problems experienced in public school	Province (Per cent)									
	WC	EC	NC	FS	KZN	NW	GP	MP	LP	SA
Lack of books	3,1	3,7	2,3	2,4	4,2	4,7	3,7	4,9	2,7	3,7
Fees too high	4,3	5,0	1,7	1,6	2,8	4,1	6,2	3,2	0,8	3,6
Classes too large	6,2	2,8	1,5	1,6	2,6	6,0	3,1	5,7	1,4	3,3
Facilities bad	2,6	4,4	1,6	6,4	2,6	3,8	2,2	4,4	1,2	3,0
Lack of teachers	1,7	5,2	1,8	1,9	1,5	3,0	1,5	2,0	0,9	2,2
Poor teaching	2,2	1,6	1,6	1,4	1,8	2,2	2,4	2,0	1,0	1,8
Teachers absent	2,7	1,1	1,1	2,4	1,1	3,4	2,4	1,6	0,9	1,7
Teachers striking	1,2	0,7	0,6	1,1	0,8	1,1	1,0	1,3	0,7	0,9

**Table 1: Nature of the problems experienced by all learners who attended public schools per Province (Writer, 2015)**

Sadly, even in the twenty-first century, many schools in South Africa still experience some of the factors that debilitate education. This is a clear indication that the country is still struggling to find lasting solutions to common challenges.

The government should also pay attention to other challenges faced by the South African education system that are not identified in this study. Despite the South African government's colossal spending on education to ensure equity, the country still experiences inequality (Ndebele, 2020) in respect of socio-economic opportunities, which has resulted in two forms of schooling, namely functional and dysfunctional school systems.

A wide economic gap still exists between the wealthy minority and the poor majority. Blacks, in particular, remain economically disempowered and are often unable to provide the best possible education to their children.

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# Help an energetic, impactful NPO to improve the lives of those in need!

Mary Lant (Lesedi la Batho: Marketing & International Fundraising Manager)



**L**esedi la Batho (meaning 'light for the people') operates a multi-faceted community centre in the Mabopane township, just a 40-minute drive from Pretoria. We aim to equip, uplift and empower unemployed youth and vulnerable women to improve their lives and become independent of handouts. Our free services include skills training, job placement assistance, small business development, preventative youth education in local schools, a day care centre, empowerment programmes for women, and community support and outreach.

To streamline the recruiting process, the team at Lesedi la Batho recently developed their first volunteer strategy aimed at engaging skilled volunteers who are interested in becoming involved in our community upliftment initiatives. Considering the limitations placed on people by COVID-19, and keeping the safety of all in mind, most of our volunteering needs for this year are virtual.

We enjoy working with volunteers and believe that every individual has the potential to bring unique ideas and skill sets into our organisation, thus expanding and strengthening our impact on the community. We also believe that volunteering should be mutually beneficial—it is not only about what volunteers contribute, but also about what they gain and learn. All South Africans have a responsibility to contribute to positive social change and a future of equality!

**Here are some of the meaningful ways to become involved with Lesedi la Batho this year:**

## **Help us take skills training courses online**

Develop our facilitator manuals to PDF formats that can be downloaded by learners studying at home. This will enable us to meet our targets under COVID-19 restrictions, prepare for another possible hard lockdown and reach learners in remote areas who lack the means to access our centre.

## **Fundraise for our initiatives**

Are you passionate about channelling support for the upliftment of communities? Do you have a network of family, friends, neighbours and colleagues? There are many creative ways to fundraise with us to fuel our various initiatives, from online crowdfunding, participating in a sporting event, requesting donations for your birthday, and more. Our marketing and fundraising manager will work with you to develop your campaign and provide material and tips.

## **Develop a GBV support group manual**

Work with our social workers to develop a user-friendly manual for facilitators of support groups for vulnerable women. This will help us to standardise and improve our support services and equip attendees to host their own support groups, thus increasing the number of women we can reach. Topics include gender-based violence (GBV), domestic violence, sexual abuse, healthy / unhealthy relationships and human trafficking.

## **Maintaining our computer lab**

Conduct routine software and hardware maintenance of the computers in our skills training centre and those used by staff members.

All activities at our centre are performed under strict COVID-19 safety measures, in line with our COVID-19 policy.

Download our full volunteer strategy here:  
[www.lesedilabatho.co.za/volunteers](http://www.lesedilabatho.co.za/volunteers)

# Visit to pig farms during the COVID-19 pandemic

BVSc students with an interest in pigs, and Dr Japhta M. Mokoele (Senior Lecturer and pig specialist)



Our porcine elective week began on 14 September 2020 and included interesting and very informative discussions, presentations, and visits to pig farms. As veterinary students with a special interest in intensive production, we are very grateful for what this week has taught us. We were privileged to learn from highly qualified, knowledgeable, and experienced people who are actively involved in the industry.

During the week we visited two piggeries, namely the Mulungu Agricultural Co-operative and the Baviaanspoort Correctional Services, where we had an opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge of the daily operations and challenges faced in pig farming.

The presentations and discussions informed us of new advancements in vaccinations and treatments for preventative care. We also learned about the protocols that are in place for combatting controlled diseases, such as African swine fever, in South Africa, and the importance of nutrition as a major factor contributing to longevity. An insightful discussion was also held on the genetic enhancement of pig breeds, which contributes to improved production in piggeries.

The importance of aligning goals with values was demonstrated during an interesting online life-coaching session, and the question-and-answer session (ask a pig vet session) that was held at the end of the week with a vet who does routine work on pig farm was an eye-opener that left us enthusiastic to learn more about the pig industry.

We would like to thank Dr Charles Gilfillan from Kemin, Dr Bianca Voigts from Boehringer Ingelheim, Dr Maygan Jennings from Zoetis, Dr Leana Janse van Rensburg a state veterinarian from the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform, and Rural Development, Mr Mashilo Phosa from Chemuniqué, Mr Andrew Reeder and Ms Lihandi van Niekerk from Topigs SA, Dr Dorothea Mostert from CS Vet and last but not least by Dr Mats Abatizidis from Influential Life Coaching, who kindly shared their knowledge, expertise and most importantly devoted their time to mentor us to become better and successful veterinarians.

# ‘New Deal’ for Africa’s Sahel region needs entrepreneurs to transform land and water resources

Article by ScienceLink



Prof Cheikh Mbow

**M**ore than 99% of the Sahel’s groundwater resources remain untapped, ready to irrigate lands suited to farming with crops and timber. According to Prof Cheikh Mbow, land-use expert and Director of Future Africa at the University of Pretoria, the rich natural resources in Sahel countries like Chad, Senegal and Niger could transform the lives of their populations, especially women and the youth.

In a recent publication, Prof Mbow and his co-authors state: ‘The Sahel has, for more than 40 years, has been seen as a place of hunger, persistent droughts and climate extremes; a place where farmers struggle to produce the crops and livestock needed to sustain the growing population. The foundation of a new rhetoric is to see the Sahel as having the human capital and the natural resources to generate quality products and create massive green jobs.’

This could require, for example, using solar power to extract water from large transboundary groundwater reservoirs such as Iullemeden and Taoudeni, which have the potential to fully meet the current and future needs of West Africa.

‘Groundwater resources exist both as the superficial water tables recharged during the rainy season and the fossil water reserves, including the deep-water tables of sedimentary basins. Considerable reserves of fresh water are stored in these deep-water tables, on a scale of thousands of billions of cubic metres,’ Prof Mbow explained. The potential also exists for the development of farms, forests, and pastoral resources by using better technology and establishing public-private partnerships and cross-border cooperation.

With reference to United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s infamous public works and financial reforms of the 1930s, Prof Mbow said that this could be the Sahel’s ‘New Deal’. However, he cautions that its success will depend on the participation of the youth and women entrepreneurs, and on the improvement of infrastructure, the more effective management of threats like land grabs and a rethinking of funding in terms of investments and capital flow.

Mbow stated that if the Sahel’s natural resource management is transformed, he is confident that the region can change its image and write a new story of prosperity. For more information, please refer to the links below: <https://www.futureafrica.science/index.php/profile/cheikh-mbow-746>

[https://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-natural-agricultural-sciences/news/post\\_2970877-new-deal-for-africas-sahel-region-needs-entrepreneurs-to-transform-land-water-resources](https://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-natural-agricultural-sciences/news/post_2970877-new-deal-for-africas-sahel-region-needs-entrepreneurs-to-transform-land-water-resources)

# Quality of Life for Holy Cross

Elmien Kriel, Skyler Lupton-Smith, Monique Janse Van Rensburg, Lynique Reenen and Charlotte Maluleke (Occupational Therapy Community Group)



**D**uring their seven-week community block, five Occupational Therapy (OT) students provided therapy to the residents of the Holy Cross Home, a residential frail care centre in Suiderberg, Pretoria, which caters for community members of all races and denominations. It is owned and managed by Catholic sisters (Holy Cross Home, 2021).

The OT students presented hour-long sessions four days a week with 10 to 15 residents attending. The sessions focused on different aspects, namely the constructive use of leisure time, deinstitutionalisation and quality of life. Institutionalisation is the result of exclusion and social isolation, which contributes to negative thoughts, feelings and attitudes that compromise quality of life (Cordeiro, Paulino, Bessa, Borges & Leite, 2015).

Some groups were presented outside of the home, where the students could use their clinical reasoning techniques to further facilitate deinstitutionalisation. This added an element of excitement to the residents' day. To improve their independence with regard to daily tasks, the students also introduced activities to maintain the residents' body functions, such as exercises to improve range of motion (ROM), muscle strength, endurance and fine motor coordination.

Fun activities, crafts and physical exercises were used to address all the above-mentioned areas. Since the residents' levels of cognitive and physical functioning differed, the students ensured that the activities were appropriate for each individual so that everyone could actively participate in the sessions. This year there are only three seven-week blocks during which fourth-year students will be placed in the community, which means

that there will be long periods during which the residents will not receive intervention. Realising the importance of making these group sessions more sustainable by ensuring that the therapy continues in their absence, the students discussed this problem with the Housemother, Florence Thokozile Gama, who was keen to learn how she herself could effectively present the group sessions. The students therefore created a programme they could use to coach Florence on important theory. They also incorporated a resource library that included previous sessions and materials she could use. Future community blocks will continue adding to the programme to enhance Florence's knowledge and experience throughout the year. The Holy Cross residents and the OT students all benefited from and thoroughly enjoyed the group sessions as can be seen in the following comments made by residents: 'I am grateful for the young students bringing life to our days'; 'The OT sessions make me happy; and 'I am grateful for the help we get at Holy Cross'.

What a wonderful experience to be able to improve the quality of life of the Holy Cross residents! This was definitely a successful first block for the students.

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# Is there a psychologist I can see?

**Donné Barnard (Educational Psychologist)**

**W**e are all familiar with the procedure involved in being admitted to a hospital or clinic to see a specialist. In South Africa, gaining access to psychological services and support is more complicated. Although some hospitals and schools do offer psychological support services on site, they are offered only part time or, in some instances, via the school governing body framework. The Department of Education also facilitates the provision of district-based psychological support and psychologists to support schools in each district. However, there are simply not enough psychologists available in districts to cope with pupils' counselling needs. Unfortunately, the provision of health services to young people in our country generally does not include psychological intervention, and even where such services are available, they have limited access to them.

When one considers the high rates of depression and anxiety in modern society, which in South Africa is aggravated by various socio-economic challenges, the insufficient availability of psychological services is a cause for concern. Young people in high-risk contexts who are most in need of psychological intervention have, by a wide margin, the least access to support services. It is therefore necessary to identify and evaluate the reasons for this lack of accessibility in high-risk contexts that are characterised by adversity.

In my view, possible reasons for the lack of access relates to:

- The affordability of psychological services
- The stigma associated with psychological support
- The limited number of trained professionals in school- and / or community-based practice
- The uneven distribution of psychological support service providers
- The limited job opportunities for psychologists in South Africa.



Due to the limited job opportunities available in systemic frameworks, more psychologists opt to work in private practice settings. Since it is difficult to establish a sufficiently large and regular client base to ensure a reliable income in a private practice setting, not many psychologists are inclined to provide pro bono support services. Ultimately this results in limited access to affordable psychological support for communities who really need it.

In the South African context, one has to be cognisant of the fact that most families are unable to contribute to a medical aid scheme with a savings component, which directly contributes to them not necessarily prioritising their mental health. I am of the opinion that psychological support services are as important as other health services and their use should therefore not be neglected. Unfortunately, a number of systemic challenges exist that make it difficult to prioritise mental health. Some psychologists conduct research to identify areas of growth and subsequently apply the results to provide alternative and additional group-based psychological support to individuals in need thereof. Research studies that contribute to the accessibility of psychological support aim to ultimately promote increased awareness, improved and relevant psychological support services, and access to psychological assessment and intervention.

This article is intended to promote awareness of the lack of psychological support services available to South Africans in general, and to emphasise the importance of a sustained focus on mental health and the need for change to make psychological support more accessible.

# Fine Arts and Plant Sciences students band together in a fruitful collaboration at Moja Gabedi

Janine Engelbrecht (School of the Arts)



**O**n 6 April, the third-year Fine Arts students, in collaboration with the honours group from Plant Sciences, commenced with their community engagement (CE) project at Moja Gabedi. The project entitled, Sentient Networks, presents a first-time transdisciplinary collaboration between The School of the Arts, Plant Sciences and the Moja Gabedi community.

This project forms part of the Professional Practice module (VIT 301) in Fine Arts that culminates in the third year of study.

Although at the time contact classes had been suspended, the students were able to visit Moja Gabedi on 15 April

*continued on page 22*



after groups of three to four students each had done thorough research on CE, relational art and the notion of 'living plants'. On visiting the site, the Fine Arts students, who were informed by their theoretical foundation in community/art intersections, were immediately able to envision the projects they wanted to execute together with members of the Moja Gabedi community and the Plant Sciences honours students in the following weeks.

True to Kester's (2005:29) ideas surrounding collaborative art practice, the projects proposed by each group of students "challenge us to recognize new modes of aesthetic experience and new frameworks for thinking identity through the thickly textured haptic and verbal exchanges that occur in the process of collaborative interaction".

The first group, for example, spoke to residents of Reliable House—including the chef—to find out what the community really needs, as opposed to what they think the residents require. Following their engagement, the students designed a herb garden that will house plants with healing properties, medicinal uses and nutritional value to be used by the inhabitants of Reliable House. Currently another group of students working at Reliable House are (rather ambitiously) constructing a living wall on the property that separates the dilapidated building at the back from the one that houses the residents.

This living wall, which will be both beautiful and functional, will accommodate various colourful plants to contribute to the aesthetics of the site, herbs and vegetables to be used by the community, and specific plants that are intended to dissuade outsiders from attempting to climb over the wall.

Across the road, at Moja Gabedi itself, other groups are creating two sanctuaries—one for people and one for birds. One group will transform a secluded seating area at Moja Gabedi into a place where residents undergoing rehabilitation and their visitors can meditate. As seen in their watercolour illustration of the area, they will use carefully placed plants, wind chimes and laser-cut panels to create a small haven that provides a break from—but also speaks to—the various sounds that resonate through the site, namely the noise produced by frequently passing trains and the traffic in the surrounding Hatfield area, and the construction noises in and around the site. The second group is constructing a bird cage to house the birds donated to Moja Gabedi. They took it upon themselves to do everything from choosing and planting the plants inside the cage to hand-crafting the bird feeders and perches.

These students are demonstrating Kester's (2005:30) vision of art by making art that not only benefits the community at Moja Gabedi in a very practical sense, but also "encourages self-reflection; calling attention to the exchange itself as creative praxis".

Sentient Networks was facilitated by Janine Engelbrecht (SOA) and Prof Nigel Barker (Plant sciences) with Nicola Grobler (SOA) as the research collaboration coordinator and assistance provided by Dr Angelique Kritzinger (Plant Sciences) and Gernia van Niekerk at Moja Gabedi.

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# One Health for All

Leshan Pillay (Vice Chairperson and Media [VetSCO Chairperson]) and Mikayra Rajoo (VetSCO Secretary)

The Veterinary Student Community Outreach (VetSCO) group is an outreach programme organised by veterinary and nursing students in the Faculty of Veterinary Sciences. Our aim is to expose veterinary and para-veterinary science students to real-life situations in rural settings to increase their confidence in their practical abilities, which should alleviate the fear often associated with a lack of confidence and inexperience. Furthermore, to promote the idea of One Health, the group hopes to raise awareness of animal health issues and promote primary animal health care in rural communities.

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1N-H8NqGGhZooPpAQgA\\_S7Q4AQRDMG1nP/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1N-H8NqGGhZooPpAQgA_S7Q4AQRDMG1nP/view?usp=sharing)

## Our main goals and objectives are:

- To improve animal health and welfare in rural communities
- To expose students to practical learning in communities
- To create an opportunity for vets and veterinary nurse students to work together on clinical cases
- To assist students with the development of skills in animal handling, clinical examination and primary animal health care
- To raise interest in community work and empowerment
- To develop people skills for effective communication with, and education of clients
- To create strong relationships between communities and animal clinics
- To improve human health by controlling zoonotic diseases
- To create opportunities for One Health collaboration.

In 2021, we would like to expose students to new challenges and real-life situations by extending our outreaches to areas in which we have not yet ventured. Our community engagement team will conduct pre-visits to these areas to establish the needs of the communities and identify problems that that can be associated with our vision. Engagement with community leaders will follow, after which a plan tailored to the needs of the community will be constructed.

We plan to visit schools and find meaningful ways to convey our message to the children with the objective of igniting their interest in the veterinary field, animal welfare and primary animal health. We also focus on educating farmers about infectious diseases that affect their livestock. In the course of the year a nurse-specific outreach will be organised to encourage our students to become involved and promote the nursing profession.

Other outreaches planned for the year will involve small animals and bovines. We have a solid plan that adheres to strict COVID-19 protocols while still ensuring that we engage sufficiently with the community.

As a registered society of the University of Pretoria, VetSCO receives funding from the project pool. However, our expenses often exceed the allocated funds and external sponsorship is required. Unfortunately, COVID-19 interfered with our plans and the society was unable to host any fundraising events. This year we have requested various companies to sponsor us so that we can continue attending to the needs of the people and animals in the community. Should you be interested in learning more about our vision and peruse our wish list for the year, please contact our chairperson.

## Chairperson:

Leshan Pillay  
072 204 5987  
leshan.pillay10@gmail.com



# The 'grass to grace' life experiences of a PhD student at the University of Pretoria

Dr Martin Chukwudi Ekeh (Department of Early Childhood Education)



Upon hearing my supervisor (Dr Roy Venketsamy), co-supervisors (Prof Ina Joubert and Dr Susan Thuketana), family, friends and colleagues address me as Dr Martin Chukwudi Ekeh in November 2020, it seemed as if I were in a dream until 7 May 2021 when I received my certificate which clearly stated that I had been granted the privileges of a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education.

This journey, which ended on 7 May 2021, began in 1998. After my Senior School Certificate Exam (SSCE or Matric), I

failed all my subjects, except for the home language. I was depressed. It became worse when I saw my classmates going on to further their education. I loathed myself and almost gave up pursuing further studies, but my mother begged me not to give up. She said to me, *'My son, you are my first child. If you refuse to further your education because of failing SSCE, then your younger brothers and sister will follow suit. Please re-register and start over again'*. I listened to the wise counsel of my mother and started all over with the SSCE exams. I received credits for some subjects and proceeded to attend a college of education.

At the college, I was mocked and cajoled because I chose to study early childhood education as a male. On one occasion I remembered a close relative telling me that I would not excel beyond being a primary school headmaster because of my career choice. To compound the matter, my mother's colleague asked me why I chose such a 'feminine' course. As I reflected on that question, I wondered if early childhood education was exclusively for females, considering that young learners need male teachers as role models too.

However, when I graduated from college with a Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE), it was as if a fire had been ignited in me, and in a short while, I bagged my first degree. With my first degree, I gained employment as a graduate assistant lecturer. This was because at the time there was a scarcity of males who studied early childhood education. Consequently, my mockers became my praise singers. Proceeding with my Master of Education degree in Early Childhood Education chartered a clear career path which positioned me for the PhD programme.

Landing on South African soil on 27 April 2018 marked the beginning of my PhD journey. I met with my first supervisor (Prof Ina Joubert) and co-supervisors at the

*continued on page 25*



time (Dr Roy Venketsamy and Dr Susan Thuketana) on 2 May 2018. In the first meeting, they helped me develop my research ideas, and on the same day, they drew up a timeline for my studies. Shortly after defending my research proposal, my supervisor, Prof Ina Joubert, retired. She handed me over to Dr Roy Venketsamy, who became my supervisor, while Prof Joubert and Dr Susan Thuketana became co-supervisors. I felt intimidated by Dr Venketsamy because I felt like I was in trouble, and indeed, I would have been in trouble had I been a lazy student. To my surprise, it turned out that I had been given a supervisor 'who worked like a typical Nigerian electricity generator that barely stopped generating power'. He kept me in a constant state of awe as I wondered if he ever slept. He was punctual and often gave me feedback earlier than I expected. Sometimes I asked myself how Dr Venketsamy managed to meet the demands of all his post-graduate students. The answer was simple: he loved his job, and he was dedicated to it.

My supervisor drilled me academically, and I am currently enjoying the fruit of my labour, as well as the knowledge and expertise I received under his tutelage. When I became a Teaching/Research Assistant under his guidance, I noticed how my supervisor had instilled in me the skills to conduct research, write and peer review articles, as well as to critically read research proposals and theses. He also taught me the art of academic writing in a short space of time. Together, we submitted six academic articles for publication. Three of them have been published, and three are still under review. While I was a student and a contract employee at the Department of Early Childhood Education, I was fortunate to be exposed to different aspects of academic life. I had written my PhD thesis within 1 year and 7 months, completing in June 2020. After much hard work and many sleepless nights,

I finally reached the end of my journey. I submitted my thesis for external examination.

This was possible because I had supervisors who were unrelenting regarding the timeline, they had agreed upon with me. Though I was still a student, Dr Venketsamy and his colleagues had long since started seeing me as their colleague because of the investment they had made in me. They gave me the opportunity to grow and bestowed on me administrative and soft skills in order for me to handle issues between students and staff members. Apart from the PhD, their teachings moulded me into the person that I have become today.

I cannot fail to mention that this PhD had its fair share of trials and tribulations. I had a rough time studying as ninety per cent of my time was spent on campus, from early morning until evening. Sometimes I walked back to Sunnyside where I lived all alone. Transport was a challenge late at night. I was not used to sitting down and studying for long periods, but I found myself studying for at least 10 hours every day. It became a part of my lifestyle. The Research Commons on Groenkloof Campus were my living room while my residence was just for sleeping in. At times I felt like crying because I would carry out research for days, writing myself into the ground, only for my work to be rejected by my supervisors. However, I persevered and perfected my academic writing skills.

I remain indebted not only to my supervisors, but also to Ms Sonja Delpont, the subject specialist within the Department. She taught me how to use databases and endnotes. To my wife and children who endured my absence in order for me to focus on my studies, I am forever grateful. Lastly, I give my gratitude to everyone who contributed to making this dream of mine a reality.

# Third-year social work students' Ubuntu Buddy-support Project (MWP 361)

Dr Gerna Wessels (Practice Coordinator: Department of Social Work and Criminology)

**C**COVID-19 shocked us into an alternate reality. The lockdown restrictions not only impacted the community engagement of our social work students, but also affected their lives in different ways, and 'loss' and 'isolation' became themes in the lives of many. Not only did our students experience the loss of 'being a student on campus', but they also experienced the loss of opportunities to become involved in spaces where they could contribute to the well-being of others.

On 16 March 2021, the Department of Social Work and Criminology celebrated World Social Work Day with the theme Ubuntu. Everyone living in South Africa is familiar with this term, but this year we really experienced its true meaning. The COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed the way we did things and brought about a renewed awareness that we should be less preoccupied with our own situations and focus on our obligation to contribute to the well-being of others by making a difference in their lives. This event sparked the idea to involve the third-year students in their local communities in a so-called Ubuntu Buddy-support Project.

Online teaching means that many of our students are studying from homes spread over all the provinces. However, a number of students have returned to their accommodation in Pretoria.

The recently initiated Ubuntu Buddy-support Project

works as follows: We challenged students to find anybody in their community who needs support for any reason. This could be an older person who is isolated and lonely, a child struggling with online learning, or a toddler experiencing difficulty adapting to the Early

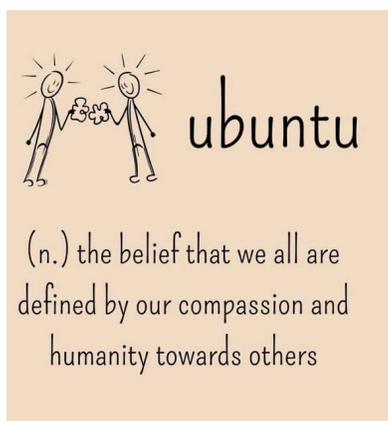
Childhood Development (ECD) Centre after a lengthy absence. Students who returned to their University of Pretoria accommodation were invited to become involved in supporting fellow students struggling with feelings of isolation.

The students spend four weeks with their 'support buddies'. During this time, the focus should be on meeting the support needs of the 'buddy, which could involve walking to the shops with somebody, standing in the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) queue with an older person, playing games with a child or assisting a learner with online learning. During all activities COVID-19 measures, such as social distancing and the wearing of masks, are adhered to. Note that this involvement is not a therapeutic intervention, but is merely 'being there' for someone who needs support. The students are aware of resources available in their own communities and can refer their 'buddies' to the appropriate facilities for assistance.

During the two weeks prior to the commencement of the project, our online classes focused on the meaning of being socially responsive and the principles of ubuntu. Students shared their ideas before moving into their communities.

To make room for accountability, the students have to reflect on their experience within 48 hours by using the journal tool on clickUP. Lecturers are able to pick up on any uneasiness and possible personal stress experienced by the students. They are able to comment on the students' reflections and also follow up with WhatsApp calls to students to provide opportunities for debriefing and guidance for the following contact sessions.

The students' reflections show that this was a powerful experience for them as many have never before reached out to strangers to offer support. They reflected on how they were able to 'give life' to the principles of ubuntu and experience the true meaning of 'I am because you are'.





# The experiences of service providers at Reliable House during lockdown and adjusted lockdown levels

Yeukai L. Muruzi and Sukholuhle Tshuma (Social workers)

## Brief introduction to Reliable House

Reliable House is a centre that offers shelter, health care and psycho-social services to people affected by substance abuse and homelessness in the City of Tshwane. This project was undertaken by the University of Pretoria's Department of Family Medicine in partnership with the Unit for Community Engagement.

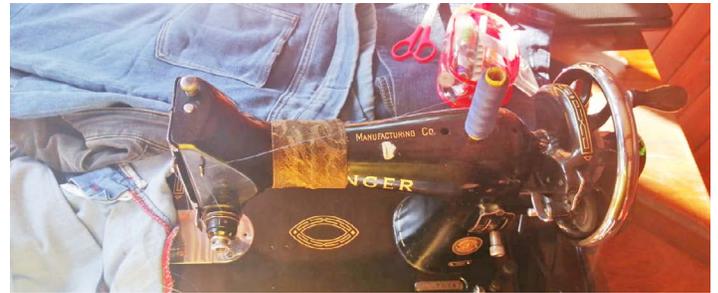
## The impact of COVID-19 on our service provision

Lockdown was implemented in South Africa more than a year ago to reduce the spread of COVID-19. During all the stages of lockdown, every person was and is still expected to act responsibly to contribute to their own and others' safety.

These unfamiliar circumstances meant that day-to-day operations at Reliable House had to be adapted to comply with the lockdown requirements. After starting with Level 5 restrictions, every following level brought about an easing of regulations. During these changing conditions, the service providers at Reliable House had to be innovative in their day-to-day service provision to ensure that they continued to put humanity first. Lockdown did not result in crucial services also being 'locked down', but we had to find innovative ways to continue supporting our community of people who are homeless and use substances.

Our health care services were made available to those who needed them through, for instance, the provision of medication (methadone) that would last for an extended period of time. Social workers and centre managers partnered with other welfare sectors, such as the Department of Social Development, to ensure the availability of food and other basic necessities.

On another note, COVID-19 increased homelessness in the City of Tshwane, particularly during the initial lockdown and subsequent adjusted levels, which resulted in temporary COVID-19 shelters being closed. As such, Reliable House played a crucial role to address the situation, through extension of our basic services to other homeless individuals who needed them. For instance,



offering temporary shelter, food provision, and health care services and conducting of family reintegration.

Careful planning was required to decide how Reliable House could extend its support to more homeless people. This was achieved mostly through collaboration with other organisations like the Tshwane Leadership Foundation (TLF) by making accommodation available to some of the people in their care, who had become homeless during lockdown. In turn, TLF assisted us with the acquisition of food provision through the Department of Social Development. The current adjusted Level 1 lockdown has made it possible for us to resume some of our services while adhering to restrictions such as the wearing of masks, social distancing and sanitising. These services include support group services, individual psycho-social counselling, occupational therapy support groups, skills training, art therapy sessions and students' community work projects.

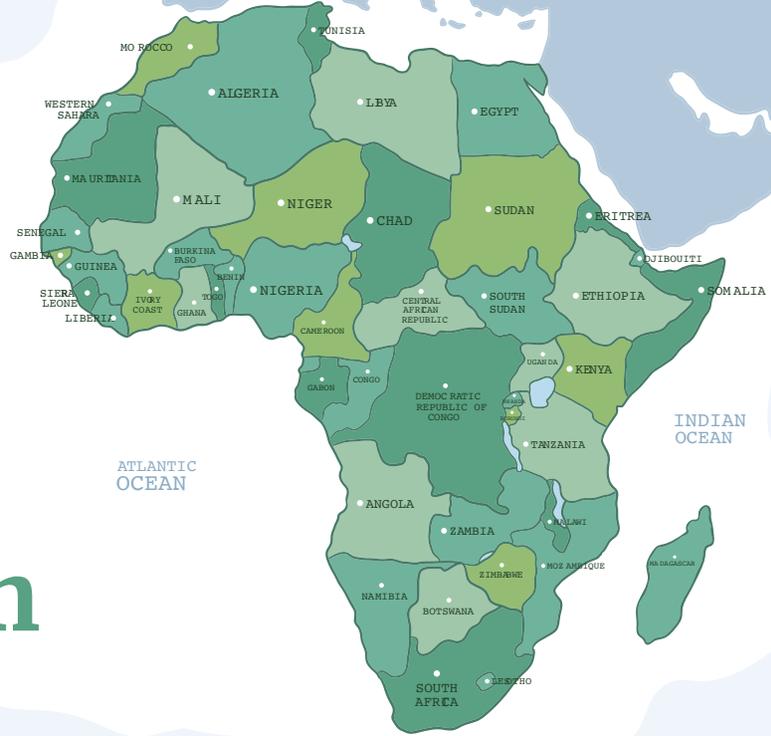
## Current projects and those envisaged for 2021

Despite continued uncertainty and immense challenges caused by nationwide socio-economic issues, service providers at Reliable House continue to strive towards finding innovative ways of supporting our community at the grassroots level.

Community engagement projects for the current year include:

- Sewing for entrepreneurship
- Occupational therapy cooking skills classes and food provision
- The Funda Mzansi book club competition
- Ongoing restructuring of Reliable House service interventions.

# Vet Books for Africa – final expedition report for the 2020/2021 term



## The Vet Books for Africa Team (Faculty of Veterinary Science)

The participants in the Vet Books for Africa expedition all arrived in Pretoria on 27 December 2020 and immediately started packing. Early the following morning we went for our first COVID-19 test. We received our results by the evening and were ready to leave the next day. However, we were dealt a blow when we learned that the Malawi borders had once again been closed and we had to change our plans. Entering Zimbabwe through the Beit Bridge border post also presented problems and ultimately, we decided to drive through Botswana to reach Zambia. All went well and we arrived in Botswana without experiencing any problems, which surprised us as our departure had been plagued by so many uncertainties.

We entered Zambia and visited our first university, the University of Zambia, on 3 January 2021. What an amazing experience that was! We were welcomed with open arms and shown the most amazing hospitality by the Faculty of Veterinary Science at the Sekoine University of Agriculture. We were impressed by the Faculty and pleased that we were able to assist them in some way. From there we travelled northwards and visited Conservation South Luangwa and the Chipembele Wildlife Education Trust in the South Luangwa National Park. It was clear that they genuinely appreciate our support and they showed us some of the amazing work they do.

We then had to head back to Lusaka, from where we travelled North again to enter Tanzania, where we visited the Sekoine University of Agriculture in Morogoro on 11 January 2021. This was as satisfying as our previous university visit. Two completely different faculties welcomed us with open arms and assured us of their gratitude for our continued support in educating

excellent veterinarians. We had the opportunity to meet some outstanding young people who had conquered all odds to study at the university.

Unfortunately, we did not have much time to spend there as we had to get to Mwanza at Lake Victoria to again be tested for COVID-19 before being allowed to enter into Uganda. While in Mwanza, we applied online for our Ugandan visas, but unfortunately the issuing of visas was delayed due to the presidential elections. What made matters worse was that there was unrest and the military was deployed, which led to our decision to postpone our visit to Uganda.

We headed south again and were amazed by the friendly reception we received everywhere and the interesting conversations we had. Unfortunately, we were involved in an accident in Mpanda near the Zambian border, but we resolve the matter with the relevant authorities and were on our way again the following day. On entering Zambia we learned that the Zimbabwe border had been closed as a result of an increase in infections. This meant that we had to cancel our visit to the University of Zimbabwe. We then headed to Livingstone for our last COVID-19 test before returning home via Botswana. We entered South Africa on the afternoon of 3 February 2021 and was welcomed by our own friendly police and immigration officials.

We feel that our expedition was very successful and are grateful for the experience. The students we met are hard-working and appreciate our assistance, and the charities are doing amazing work. We are already making plans for further assistance.

## One Health, One Africa



# Social work students participate in Wellness Project at Life Groenkloof Hospital

Leanne Jordaan (Practice lecturer, Department of Social Work and Criminology)

Life Groenkloof Hospital invited two final-year social work students to join their team to assist in managing the increasing emotional and social demands placed on the staff members as a direct effect of COVID-19. The students, having been limited to contact work at their placements due to lockdown measures, were quick to respond. Starting with a situational analysis, students identified various themes to address in a wellness project. Community-based group work, facilitated throughout the project, enhanced participation by the target groups.

The reality of working during a pandemic influenced the way in which the students approached their planning and was evident in the themes that emerged in their analysis. The wellness project, implemented in the hospital to facilitate empowerment through knowledge, included:

- A nurse's workshop: Recognising and managing compassion fatigue
- A gender-based violence awareness campaign
- Team-building sessions for service staff members: Life skills with a focus on communication and problem solving
- An Appreciation Day: In support of service staff members.

The wellness project had a dual purpose: to support and enhance the functioning of identified staff and develop the skills of the social work students through work-integrated learning.

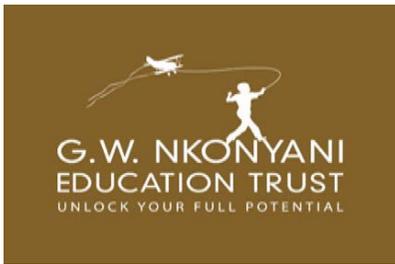
Lessons learnt from staff included understanding the importance of fully comprehending what you are dealing

with, requesting support when you need it, and the value of addressing communication barriers in a high-pressure environment.

The students learnt that despite restrictions, time constraints and limited access to resources, a flexible approach ensures successful engagement with communities. They became thoroughly aware of the importance of validating individuals' worlds as experienced in their communities, as can be seen in their reflections:

- *COVID-19 changed community engagement, as we [the students] had to ensure that we followed all safety regulations, which limited the number of people involved, while previously I might have placed more importance on reaching as many people as possible. The lesson I learnt is that at times changing a few people's lives can be as important as changing the lives of a community (Refiloe Kekana).*
- *COVID-19 really changed how we approach community engagement as it meant that we had to adjust from being hands-on in our first year [literally and figuratively] to having to take precautionary measures when engaging with the community in our final year. This shift forced us to quickly think creatively (Kelly Sedio).*

Although the COVID-19 pandemic changed the way in which the students approached their work, it could not influence the essence of the goals of community engagement.



# The GW Nkonyani Education Trust

**Kenny Manganyi (Chairperson), Rhukanani Mabunda (Secretary) and Them bani Mukhwanazi (Treasurer)**

## Establishment

The G.W. Nkonyani Education Trust, founded in 2012 by former learners of the Hluvuka High School at Bungeni with the aim of improving learner performance in mainly Mathematics and Physical Science, and contributing to broad development in the community, was registered as a Trust in April 2014. This initiative was undertaken to honour Mr Gezani Wilson Nkonyani, a former teacher and principal of Hluvuka High School, who had retired at the end of 2012. Mr Nkonyani was an excellent mentor in the fields of Mathematics and Physical Science and was also passionate about community development. Unfortunately, he died after a hit-and-run accident while he was jogging on 24 December 2017.

## Objectives of the Trust

### The objectives of the Trust are:

- To partner with the Department of Education through its local Hlanganani Central Circuit and other stakeholders in working to improve the performance of both learners and teachers by using grade results as a barometer
- To offer additional lessons in Mathematics, Physical Science, Accounting and English
- To motivate the learners and mentor them from Grade 10 upwards to enable them to make better choices with regard to their academic lives and beyond
- To participate in education-related initiatives within the community
- To promote community development.

## Sustenance

To meet financial commitments, the Trustees contribute a minimum of R1 000.00 per annum and recruit former learners of the school who are successful in their careers to contribute towards the Trust. Funds are also raised through donations from people in business and other well-wishers.

## Activities of the GW Nkonyani Education Trust

The Trust has organised several activities since its establishment, including:

- Annual awards made to top matric students and educators in the subjects Mathematics and Physical Science. An amount of R15 000 is allocated annually for the awards.
- Mobilising community leaders, parents and communities at large to actively participate in education in collaboration with the Department of Education, Hlanganani Central Circuit
- Offering support to poor-performing schools through mentorship, motivational campaigns and career guidance
- Facilitating the establishment of the Community Centre and Library System
- Organising an annual G.W. Nkonyani Memorial Lecture during which experts address the community on development initiatives.

The G.W. Nkonyani Education Trust takes pride in its achievements over the past few years, which have led to young people from disadvantaged families studying and graduating from various universities, such as UCT, UP, WITS and Sefako Makgatho, in different fields, including Medicine, Engineering, Actuarial Science and Accounting. Amongst them are Dr Carnetia Baloyi (a Medical doctor), Masana Mhangani (a Chemical Engineer), Prince Rikhotso (an actuary) and Wisani Maluleke (a sixth-year medical student). One of the students that we support is currently studying Accounting Sciences at the University of Pretoria.

## Challenges

A major challenge for the Trust has been raising funds for its activities in order to be able to realise all its objectives. Another problem is lengthy bureaucratic government processes that have caused delays in the completion of the Community Centre and Library System initiatives.

## Opportunities

Members of the community have shown strong support for the initiative. The Trust has also forged strong partnerships with local leadership and other organs of civil society, and enjoys the support of the municipality and key provincial government departments.

# Cognitive decolonisation through global citizenship education

**Dr Eugene Machimana**  
Senior Education Consultant: Community Engagement



The basic function of global citizenship education, also referred to as community engagement (CE), is to create a just and sustainable society by providing information, knowledge and skills. This calls for a paradigm shift towards collaboration and cooperation between the partners of the Global North and South (Sporre, 2012). Therefore, I argue that conceptualising critical global citizenship education within a certain political framework opens up spaces of critical inquiry and engagement with diverse theoretical approaches, epistemologies and pedagogies, which also facilitates decolonising CE (Chovane *et al.*, 2015). CE brings about a paradigm shift in geopolitical relations and allows students and communities to construct knowledge in the global space (Chovane *et al.*, 2015; Sporre, 2012).

Recent developments in academic discourse align with the idea that imposing Eurocentric realities of global citizenship education on the Global South should be challenged (Abdi, 2015; Chovane *et al.*, 2015).

CE that perpetuates inequality through hidden agendas serves only the interests of minority groups that aim to maintain dominance. Abdi (2015, p. 15) critiques Kant (2007) for his “negative global citizenship education” in attempting to teach his European compatriots about Africans, of whom he knows little.

According to Abdi (2015, p. 15), Kant is called a “philosopher of colonialism” because of his philosophy, which presumes that non-Europeans, people with darker skin pigmentation, have inferior mental capacity. His colonial philosophy, which has prevailed globally over hundreds of years, had the ‘unintended’ consequence of decitizenising Africans. As a result, this delinking from colonial systems and structures opens up a space for the grammar of decoloniality (Chovane *et al.*, 2015). This refers to the notion of the Global North engaging with the previously silenced voices of the Global South.

I postulate that Eurocentric views were elevated in global thought and analysis to the detriment of multiple epistemologies (Abdi, 2015; Sporre, 2012). The Global South voices in particular were suppressed in the construction and dissemination of knowledge. J. Ernst Renan was another philosopher who erroneously equated knowledge construction with Europeans (Abdi, 2015). He went so far as to claim that African and Asian natives had limited brain capacity, which meant that they were only good for manual labour (Abdi, 2015).

Such views created a gap in literature and few authentic attempts have been made to alleviate and eliminate the global injustices that rest upon the historical foundations of colonialism. Against this background, I argue that African knowledge and

values should be promoted through global citizenship education that values African epistemology. Scholars argue in favour of global citizenship designed by Africans. Such global citizenship could bring transformative change by connecting the head, heart and hand. In this context, the connection of head, heart and hand refers to addressing community-felt needs in transformative and collaborative ways. It is evident that a head, heart and hand connection exists in the collaborative initiatives between the University of Pretoria and its community partners.

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# The beauty of your supervision, my promoters

Dr Melitah Molatelo Rasweswe (Operating Theater Lecturer)

Education is priceless, yet it is so rarely to get  
Opportunity you gave me, I showed off the value of education  
The value that is far higher and greater than any treasure  
You have been there from the day the idea was conceived  
You were there during my defense

From the very start you guided me  
I have been blessed and spoilt with supervisors so knowledgeable  
You guided when I did not understand  
I would have been lost without your shepherd hood  
Thank you for being part of my journey

You took time to show me hard content to comprehend  
I put special pride in you, I appreciate you  
I thank you; I cannot thank you enough  
Thank you is cheap and underrated  
And yet big and loud enough to move mountains

Your guidance, I remember every time I'm addressed  
Valuable is the supervision you have done for the past three years  
Mistakes I make, you said we learn  
You challenged me to expand my mind  
It seemed too - oo long yet too quick to achieve PhD degree

Outstanding is how you always came through my writings  
Notable are the contributions you made for it to make sense  
Untiring is your efforts not to give up on me  
My promoters, my supervisors, my heroes you molded me  
Your qualities combined are extremely rare

How could I ever thank you enough?  
than to make you very proud

# Q&A: The need to remove development's 'stark distinctions'

Interview by DEVEX funded by UNDP

Belinda Reyers attending an event on sustainable development in New York City in April 2015

According to Belinda Reyers, professor and research chair in sustainability science at the [University of Pretoria's](#) Future Africa institute and senior adviser at the [Stockholm Resilience Centre](#), an urgent need exists to eliminate the 'stark distinctions' between people and nature, and between the environment and development. Their interconnected nature means that one cannot be addressed without the other.

'It is now abundantly clear that things like climate change, extinctions, pollution and deforestation that are labelled environmental risks really aren't just risks to the environment anymore. They are very clearly now some of the largest development risks, economic risks, health risks and security risks the world faces', she said.

The [United Nations Development Programme's latest "Human Development Report"](#), in which Reyers was involved, calls for a shift in thinking to ensure that any development action, policy or project is good for both people and the planet. Reyers urged the development sector to more thoroughly consider the interdependencies between environment and development.

She said: 'Too often, we think about development and environmental challenges as a set of targets that we need to achieve, and this blinds us to their interdependencies.'

She further explained: 'As the Human Development Report shows, when we start to view development from the perspective of 'expanding human freedoms' and open up more choices for people to chart their own development paths, we get to do away with these distinctions between people and planet and move to more diverse visions of development, in collaboration with the planet, rather than in competition with it.'

Speaking to *Devex*, Reyers discussed how people and the planet can influence one another's development, the obstacles to simultaneously addressing both, and

how these can be overcome. This conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

## How do you see social and planetary challenges overlapping and being interlinked?

The Human Development Report clearly states that societal and environmental challenges are not only linked, but actually reinforce one another. For example, climate change and inequality can interact to the detriment of both.

We often talk about the impact of climate change as if it belongs to the future and will be a concern for future generations, but this impact is already being felt—mostly by marginalised and vulnerable groups who actually contribute very little to the quantity of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and who have little power to halt climate change.

The report shows that in our lifetime the world's richest countries—and biggest emitters—could experience up to 18 fewer days of extreme weather events each year, while the poorest countries face up to 100 extra days of extreme weather due to the climate crisis. It is on this very unlevel playing field that social and planetary challenges come together and reinforce one another.

These planetary challenges mentioned in the Human Development Report—climate change, extinctions, pollution and deforestation—are often portrayed in quite simplistic terms as being the result of the actions of humanity, as if humanity is a single homogeneous force.

In fact, the Anthropocene conditions in which we find ourselves are the result of an extraordinary inequality in the human populations of a handful of regions, countries, or people who have caused and profited from changes, while many other regions and individuals are on the receiving end of the negative impacts of those changes.

*continued on page 33*

The term Anthropocene - the age of humans— seeks to recognise the fact that over the past few decades the impacts of the human enterprise on the planet have become so extensive, large and deep that humans are now one of the largest forces shaping the planet: its climate, biosphere, water cycle and even the chemicals in its soil and water.

### **What are some of the obstacles in advancing human development while easing pressures on the planet?**

A major obstacle is how we conceptualise the environment in mainstream development thinking. We have gone from [seeing] the environment as totally external to development—as almost a luxury that we can worry about once development has been completed. I would argue that most people now recognise that the environment, natural resources, pollution and climate change play an important role in development.

However, I still feel that this is a gross oversimplification of the role of the environment as it ignores the many material and nonmaterial links and complex connections between the environment and human well-being. We are not concerned only about food, water and everything we get from the environment; it also shapes our identities, our cultures, relationships, minds and the way we think. ... These complex interdependencies are too often overlooked in mainstream development efforts, and the environment is often simplified as a resource base or a place to put pollution.

### **What needs to change to bring nature and the planet into development thinking?**

Change will be possible if, as a development community, we can move away from the idea that we can choose between development and the environment, and recognise that we are actually making choices that are bad for both. If we reject this binary view where we see the environment as a set of protected areas, which keeps nature in and people out, and see development as industrial development of mines or factories for economic growth and jobs.

If, instead, we focus on the fertile middle ground of actions, projects and policies that build justice, peace and regenerative practices, this will help us to broaden our view of development and build the necessary resilience capacities to navigate the turbulence that lies ahead.

I appreciate the way the Human Development Report describes human development as an 'ongoing journey' rather than a 'destination'. Too often we think about development and environment challenges as a set of

targets that we need to achieve. This not only blinds us to their interdependencies, but also to the actual process of development as societies and ecosystems shaping and being shaped by one another over time.

### **Are there approaches in this vein that have already been successful?**

There are hundreds, if not thousands of places, groups and projects that are doing very innovative things in terms of sustainable and equitable [food systems](#), renewable and democratic energy access, water rights and water security improvements. In fact, there are groups of people who have started keeping databases of these kinds of projects and seeing them as a promise of what a more positive future could look like.

The challenge, however, is that these projects are quite small, localised and often invisible... They are trying to tinker at the edges of development and they keep bumping up against the dominant development model and system in which we are all embedded. There are successful approaches, but I think the real challenge is that they are not yet able to contend with the scale and the challenges of the Anthropocene and the historical economic and political systems on which it is based.

### **With this in mind, what would your call to action for the development community be?**

In some ways, mine is less a call to action than a kind of challenge to the global community that asks: If we acknowledge that people and nature are neither separate nor separable, and that environmental risks are development risks, what does this mean for our visions of development or our visions of a good life that we all aspire to?

What we are talking about in terms of a future is so radically different from the present that we all occupy that I do not think we can really see what the future looks like. The challenge, as I see it, is to start rethinking our visions of development and its stark distinctions.

### **Part of our [Focus on: People and the Planet](#)**

This series explores how climate change and other planetary imbalances impact the rising trend of human inequality and potential solutions to eliminate inequality and support a healthy planet.

*This focus area, supported by the U.N. Development Programme, explores how climate change and other planetary imbalances impact the rising trend of human inequality and vice versa. Visit the [Focus on: People and the Planet](#) page for more.*

# Pre-University Academy learners receive art lessons online

Jani Mills (MEd student and lecturer: Art Education)

Nowadays teaching and learning revolve around technology but teaching a practical subject such as art online can be difficult. During the April 2021 school holidays, the fourth-year visual arts education students and their lecturer, Mrs Jani Mills, a lecturer from the Faculty of Education, Department of Humanities, presented a week-long art holiday programme at the Mamelodi Campus for 38 Pre-University Academy (PUA) learners from 17 secondary schools. The aim is to extend the programme to a monthly art club. Each student teacher had to create a virtual lesson to be presented online. The student teachers created tutorial videos with step-by-step instructions on what the learners needed to do. The art holiday programme was essential to encourage the learners to be imaginative and think outside the box. The goal of this holiday programme was to provide students with the opportunity to teach online and allow the PUA learners to be creative and develop the right sides of their brains. Art enhances brain function and affects brain-wave patterns, emotions and the nervous system, and has been proven to raise serotonin levels.

Art can help use emotionally, financially and psychologically, and also helps to shape individual and collective personality. Creating art will increase a learner's ability to connect with the surrounding world and develop new skill sets for self-expression and communication. Art is a universal language that can make one more observant, relieve stress and enhance problem-solving skills.

At the beginning of the holiday programme, the classroom was filled with shy learners eager to be creative. Most of them had never before picked up a paintbrush. The week started with basic colour theory and the use of a



traditional medium, acrylic paint. However, art is not only painting and drawing—it is also science. The learners experimented with various media, but also discovered that they could create art with household items such as cooking oil, food colouring, dishwashing soap and water. Using these media, they created marbled effects on paper and soap bubbles with different colours. This exercise was followed by a pottery project. Pottery improves motor skills, allows learners to develop problem-solving skills and improves their creativity.

The vision is that the art club will continue with monthly classes taught by Mrs Jani Mills. The learners will work in various media and techniques to promote their development as individuals and artists.

# Be a part of the global Mandela Week

Lori-Kay Erasmus (Director: Pet Community Outreach)

**P**et Community Outreach (PCO) was initiated by likeminded people and the first successful outreach was held at Pet and Pool in Boksburg on 18 May 2019, when 190 pets were sterilised and 450 were vaccinated. Our next successful drive was hosted by Sandoz in Kempton Park with the assistance of Pet and Pool, University of South Africa (UNISA), the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) and private veterinarians who offered their services free of charge to pet owners who could not afford to pay. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we were able to organise only two outreaches in 2020, both at the Boksburg Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) venue, where 360 pets were sterilised and 500 vaccinated.

Two further outreaches were completed on 27 March and 27 April 2021 at De Deur and Boksburg respectively. A total of 177 pets were sterilised and 460 were vaccinated in partnership with UNISA, the Boksburg SPCA, Pet and Pool, and Compulsory Community Service (CCS) and PCO veterinarians, Dr Marge Greenfield and PCO Directors Dr Marianne Vermooten, Ria Minnaar, Errence Mabela and Lori-Kay Erasmus.

We are a non-profit organisation (NPO) and take care of pets whose owners cannot afford the services of private veterinarians by vaccinating and sterilising the animals and educating their owners who will hopefully impart this information to future generations. We also visit schools and use books and pictures to teach children about primary health care for pets and how to care for their pets. This also enriches their lives from a literacy / social development point of view and assists with Feral Cat Projects.

One of our other objectives is to provide a learning platform:

- Fifth-year veterinary students assist with prep work, vaccinations, clinicals and observation in theatres.
- CCS veterinarians are supported by our more experienced veterinarians when conducting spaying and neutering procedures.



- University students are given opportunities for the experiential practical work required by the various institutions.
- Volunteers from the various communities who would like to 'give back' assist with recoveries, animal handling or admin work.

Before COVID-19 interrupted our activities, PCO also visited schools, crèches and companies to educate pet owners and others about responsible pet ownership, primary health care and myths and facts about adopting a pet.

We have five more outreaches planned for 2021. The 'Global Mille Outreach' is an all-inclusive outreach involving the entire country. For this outreach we appeal to all CCS veterinarians, veterinarians, students and volunteers to assist as we will need many hands to reach our target of 1 000 sterilisations. We will start with the Mandela Week sterilisations on Monday, 12 July 2021 and finish on Mandela Day, Sunday, 18 July 2021. We appeal to other NPOs, private veterinarians and veterinary institutions to each sterilise between five and ten pets free of charge to help us to achieve our goal. Other NPOs that have suitable venues but no veterinarians can contact us and we will supply veterinarians and / or the veterinary consumables, drugs and equipment required. The number of sterilisations will be tallied on a central system and we hope to reach 1 000 on Mandela Day.

To make this possible we will need to fly our veterinarian teams throughout South Africa and also appoint veterinarians in specific areas to manage the outreach. Many sponsors and donors will be approached for financial assistance and will receive marketing rewards in return. Smaller outreaches will continue throughout 2021 in areas where they are needed.

If you would like to become part of PCO for any of the abovementioned outreaches, please contact Lori-Kay Erasmus on 0837017632, or email [lorikay@worldonline.co.za](mailto:lorikay@worldonline.co.za). Please like our Facebook page and log on to the website page for information about future outreaches.

# As we anticipate the return of the great normalcy

Dr Nkhensani Maluleke (Senior Lecturer and Head: Work Integrated Learning)

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic we have all had to learn how to do things we needed to do in different ways. I remember spending hours on Zoom talking to colleagues from the Côte d'Ivoire about how to teach children in remote parts of both our countries to speak English. Most of that time was spent thinking and talking about affordable offline technologies that can be used to teach language. After much discussion we concluded that none of it would work—no matter how affordable the technologies were, neither us nor the rural people could afford them.

Ministries of Basic Education all over the world too have also been searching for ways to get children's schooling back on track without having to reopen schools. Understandably parents, even those of university students, are opposed to the idea of their children returning to schools or campuses where they may be exposed to a potentially deadly virus.

Work Integrated Learning Offices at all the universities in the country that offer B. Ed programmes have also had to find ways to meet the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) for work-integrated learning (WIL) under changed circumstances. We are all working in the hope that our lives will soon return to normal.

But what if this does not happen? Are we ready to change the concept of school as we know it? Are we ready to change the way we teach children to speak a foreign language? Are our reasons for teaching them a foreign language really valid? (My colleague from the Côte d'Ivoire would give me the look if I asked that out loud!) The bottom line is that if normalcy never returns, we will have to rethink not only how we do things, but also our reasons for doing them.

Here at the Faculty of Education my team and I have been working tirelessly to make sure that all our students

have been placed in schools where they can complete their WIL hours. However, we are on edge as we know that any changes in the COVID-19 regulations might affect our planning. The question is whether an online WIL experience can adequately prepare our students for actual teaching in a class environment? Will our rural schools be able to transition to a new normal online? What does all this mean for WIL? We do not yet have the answers, but we are keen to learn.

We are as ready as we can be for a return to normality: Indemnity forms have been signed, police clearances have been obtained, and South African Council for Educators (SACE) provisional registrations for the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and final-year students are underway. Normality has to return because we yearn for it— we cannot settle for a new normal. Or can we?

Much has been taken away from us by the pandemic and our existence is now planned around COVID-19. We could be thinking of how to transform the way we have been doing WIL placements towards building the desired rainbow nation, or exploring how to build bridges that connect the Pretoria city schools and the Soshanguve and Mamelodi township schools, and how to prepare teachers not only for Pretoria, but for a diverse South Africa. Instead, we now have to focus on making sure that our students and colleagues do not become infected, that we do not become infected. We have to make sure that the MRTEQ requirements that were designed for normal circumstances are met even in these abnormal times.

Our emailing skills have reached a new high and most of us have probably received too many emails to reply to in one lifetime. Working hours have become a thing of the past, with work-related emails having become like a chatting app. It seems as if work is all we do now.

It is not all bad though, and we are not helpless. While we hope that normality will return, we are ready to cope with the demands of the new normal. We foresee the emergence of more online schools, and more schools turning to blended learning. We have been thinking about new ways to work with such schools and to prepare teachers to serve in the new- normal school.