

In-tuition

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Embracing the future, honouring the past—advancing human-centred education in complexity

Professor Lindelani Mnguni ►
Dean: Faculty of Education

The Faculty of Education stands at an exciting threshold, a moment of reflection, renewal, and bold possibility. As we open this edition of In-Tuition, I am delighted to share my first message with you as Dean. It is with deep gratitude and profound respect that I acknowledge the leadership of my predecessor, Professor Chika Sehoole. Under his stewardship, the Faculty advanced in excellence, resilience, and impact, emerging as a national leader and a rising global force in teacher education. His legacy is a launchpad for our shared future.

As a community in teacher education, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment—not merely as an institution of higher learning but as a collective of scholars, educators, students, alumni, and partners who are deeply invested in the future of education in South Africa and beyond. The challenges before us are considerable: persistent inequalities in early childhood development, systemic barriers in educational psychology and school leadership, gaps in humanities and STEM education, and a national discourse on education that demands both accountability and innovation. Yet, within these complexities lies an extraordinary opportunity. The Faculty's collective vision—to advance human-centred education in complexity—calls us to embrace nuance, lead with empathy, and approach educational transformation as an interdisciplinary and collaborative endeavour. Our renewed strategic direction is

anchored in a bold aspiration: to position the Faculty of Education as a leading research-intensive faculty in Africa celebrated for its quality, relevance, and impact. This is not simply a matter of prestige but a commitment to developing people, creating knowledge, and making a tangible difference in classrooms, communities, and education systems locally and globally.

We are already laying the groundwork. Our faculty is producing high-quality research, teaching, and learning and impactful community engagement initiatives. Our academic staff, of whom more than 86% hold doctorates and 18 are NRF-rated researchers, are pushing the boundaries of knowledge across disciplines. Our students and alumni are making their mark globally. These are not isolated triumphs but signposts of what is possible when a faculty unites around purpose and excellence. But we are now going further. We are nurturing a scholarly ecosystem thriving on diversity of thought, method, and practice. We are investing in the next generation of researchers, particularly those leading innovation. We are forging deeper collaborations—with schools, communities, industry, and global partners—to co-create sustainable, context-sensitive solutions.

We are also working closely with the broader University community to ensure that the Faculty of Education remains a vibrant and sustainable academic



environment. This includes strengthening our partnerships with units responsible for essential services—such as libraries, IT support, and digital infrastructure—to enhance access to cutting-edge resources for research, teaching, and learning. Together, we are building a faculty and campus ecosystem that is academically excellent, technologically agile, environmentally conscious, and responsive to the evolving needs of our staff and students.

As I step into the office, I invite the entire Faculty of Education family—our professional staff, academics, students, alumni, collaborators, and funders—to join us in shaping a future in which education is not merely a technical pursuit but a profoundly human one. A future in which we do not shy away from the complexities of race, class, gender, and history but confront them with criticality and care. A future in which our faculty leads through research excellence and social imagination.

I look forward to this journey with all of you: the UP way.

Professor Lindelani Mnguni
Dean: Faculty of Education

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Students and colleagues are urged to follow and like our pages, follow the Faculty's activities, and share them with friends, prospective students, and family.

Professor Clinton David van der Merwe receives recognition

Author: Uys Kruger

The Department of Humanities Education is delighted to share the exciting news that Professor Clinton David van der Merwe has been recognised for his expertise and leadership in geography education on the global stage!

Professor Van der Merwe was nominated for and has accepted the prestigious role of South African and African representative on the Steering Committee of the International Geographical Union (IGU) – Commission on Geography Education (CGE) for 2024–2028. This esteemed position is a testament to his outstanding contributions to geography education.

As one of only 11 members steering the Commission on Geography Education, Professor Van der Merwe will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of geography education worldwide. His expertise and leadership will help guide the commission's efforts to promote innovative and effective geography education practices globally.

Furthermore, Professor Van der Merwe has been entrusted with organising the next regional conference of the IGU-CGE, scheduled to take place in October in Stellenbosch, South Africa. This event will bring together over 100 members of the IGU-CGE from around the globe, providing a platform for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and networking.

We extend our warmest congratulations to Professor Van der Merwe on this outstanding achievement and look forward to seeing the impact of his leadership on the global geography education community!



35TH INTERNATIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL CONGRESS 2024
24-30 August | Dublin, Ireland
The South African delegation at the IGU Congress



Prof Van der Merwe presenting a paper he and his honours student, Corine Kriel, wrote at the IGU Conference in Dublin



Prof Christo van der Westhuizen (UJ), Prof Aubrey Golightly (NWU), Prof Van der Merwe (UP), and Prof Joop van der Schree (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands)—speaking the language of geography at a networking function, IGU Congress, Dublin

Educational psychology graduate wins international vignette research award

Author: Prof Irma Eloff

Lethabo Ndlovu (née Mbatha), a graduate in educational psychology, recently won the coveted award for socio-political and emancipatory research questions from the international Vignette and Anecdote Research Network (VignA), hosted at the University of Vienna in Austria. Her study focused on 'The experiences of teenage pregnancy during a pandemic by mothers who are HIV-positive'. The study explored the unique challenges faced by teenage mothers who are HIV-positive during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period that profoundly affected access to healthcare, social support, and educational opportunities. By employing vignettes as a research method, Lethabo

was able to capture the nuanced personal experiences of these young mothers, providing a deep, empathetic understanding of their experiences.

Lethabo intentionally directed her study towards this marginalised and often overlooked group within the

larger context of public health and education. 'By using vignettes, my research provided a platform for the voices of these young mothers to be heard in their own words, allowing for a more intimate and comprehensive understanding of their realities,' she said.



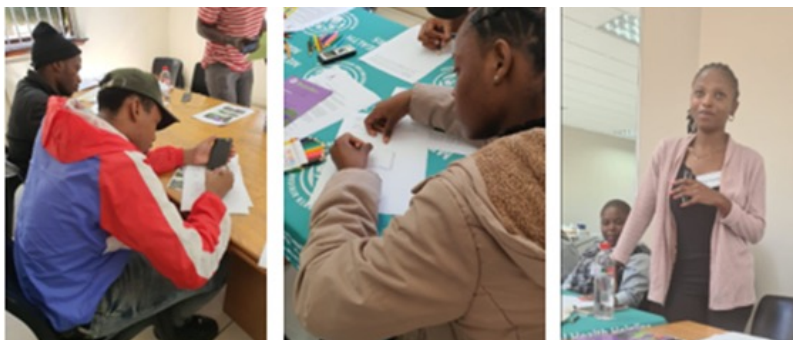
Representatives of VignA alongside UP scholars and educators

The R-NEET South African Youth Advisory Committee (YAC)—Committed to Making Strides for Mental Health Resilience

Author: Joyce Jakavula

The Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) completed a successful year of collaboration and engagement, marking significant progress in the University of Pretoria-led Resilient NEET project. Over the course of four meetings, the eight young ambassadors who are Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET) from various communities in Gauteng worked closely with the project leader (Prof Linda Theron), the project coordinator (Joyce Jakavula), and the community partners (REPSSI and SADAG) to shape and advance the study.

The committee's journey began in April with an introductory session that featured a creative drawing exercise exploring NEET resilience. This initial meeting set the tone for an open dialogue that would characterise the group's work throughout the year, and the interactive sessions were led by two UP educational psychology master's students.



▲ YAC members (Bongani Dube, Kudzayi Badisi, and Kgothatso Molepo) participating and explaining their drawings

In the second meeting, the YAC was introduced to ethical research practices, and the members demonstrated their commitment by reviewing the research tools before submission for ethical approval. This was important to ensure the study would be understood by the target population and that the participants would feel respected and protected. This further highlights the grassroots approach of the project.

In the third meeting, we launched a hands-on transect walk for the YAC, an activity aimed at documenting community and environmental factors supporting resilience. The members also created a promotional video in collaboration with communication teams and youth from project partners. For the final meeting of the year, the YAC engaged in reflective activities, looking ahead at 2025. Through another drawing exercise, members explored their roles and responsibilities and their growth and development as young leaders. They also shared insights from their transect walks, providing valuable perspectives on resilience through their eyes.

Throughout the year, the YAC's work emphasised strong partnerships between academics, youth, and community organisations. By serving as ambassadors for their respective communities, these young leaders brought authentic voices and experiences to the forefront of this study. The youth advisors also attended a meeting and connected with the Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB). Co-led by Professor Mark Tomlinson (University of Stellenbosch) and Prof Flavia Senkubuge (UP), the ISAB is a body of esteemed scholars from multiple disciplines and multiple countries committed to supporting the scientific rigour of the R-NEET study. This international exposure broadened the YAC's scope and cemented the members' pride in contributing to knowledge on African youth resilience.

As the project progresses, the YAC continues to play an important role in ensuring that the voices of young people are heard and valued in the project's research activities. Their dedication and insights promise to shape the future of NEET involvement in research and decision-making, as well as bolster their mental health.



▲ The R-NEET UP team, community partners, and YAC—advancing NEET resilience against depression

A Lithuanian perspective on technology and education

Author: Jody Joubert

The Department of Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education recently welcomed two esteemed academics from Vytautas Magnus University in Lithuania: Prof Natalija Mazeikiene and Prof Judita Kasperuniene. Their visit to South Africa formed part of an Erasmus+ exchange programme between the Vytautas Magnus University and the University of Pretoria, offering insights into educational innovations and technological advancements.

While in South Africa, the visitors explored key landmarks, including the Union Buildings, the Voortrekker Monument, Freedom Park, the Pretoria National Botanical Gardens, and Pilanesberg National Park, enriching their academic experience in this unknown context.

Their visit also featured two seminars on the Groenkloof Campus. Prof Kasperuniene presented on the role of VR/AR technologies and serious games in transforming education, while Prof Mazeikiene explored the use of AI tools in qualitative research. Both sessions highlighted cutting-edge research and practical applications that captivated attendees.



Mr Jody Joubert with visitors from Magnus University in Lithuania: Prof Natalija Mazeikiene and Prof Judita Kasperuniene.

Transforming lives through education: a comparative study of Korea and South Africa

Author: Prof Jaekyung Lee

The Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) and the Centre for the Study of Resilience (CSR) in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria, in collaboration with the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), hosted a seminar entitled 'Transforming lives through education: a comparative study of Korea and South Africa'. The seminar was presented by Prof Jaekyung Lee, a professor and former Dean of Education at the University at Buffalo, SUNY. Being a Fellow of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), Prof Lee is an international leader in educational policy research, assessment, and evaluation, particularly on the

issues of educational equity and accountability.

Prof Lee's presentation aimed to address key questions, including: 'What lessons can developing nations learn from Korea?', 'How can the Global South achieve the SDGs in effective and efficient yet holistic and equitable ways?', and 'What are the key enablers (protective factors) of at-risk students' academic resilience in South Africa?' Drawing upon his research using large-scale international data such as TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study). Prof Lee shared cross-cultural policy insights for educational transformations in South Africa.



▲ From left: Prof Liesel Ebersöhn (Director: CSR), Prof Funke Omidire (Director: CEA), Prof Jaekyung Lee (University at Buffalo), and Prof Ugorji Ogbonnaya (HOD: SMTE)

Exploring a memorandum of understanding between the Faculty of Education and the Higher School of Economics, Moscow

Author: Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

In January 2025, the Centre for the Study of Resilience hosted Prof Evgeniy Terentev, Director of the Institute of Education at the Moscow-based Higher School of Economics (HSE University). In deliberations with the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Prof Lindelani Mnguni, a decision was made to craft a memorandum of understanding between the two institutions. The envisioned partnership focuses on student and staff exchange and research collaboration in several fields of interest, including early childhood education, AI and technology in education, vocational and technical education, and educational psychology studies.



▲ Left to right: Prof Liesel Ebersöhn, Director: Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria; Prof Evgeniy Terentev, Director: Institute of Education, HSE University; Prof Lindelani Mnguni, Dean: Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria.

BRICS Cross-Country Partnership presentation at the Education Association of South Africa conference

Author: Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

The BRICS Cross-Country Partnership flowed from a working group of the 2024 BRICS Civil Forum in Moscow. Members of the partnership presented findings of a cross-country report at the 2025 EASA (Education Association of South Africa) conference. This report is groundbreaking in outlining core resources synonymous with the context and cultures inherent to BRICS nations that enable quality research. Given the unevenness of evidence broadly and for education in particular, the report provides invaluable insights for relevant and responsive education research in low- and middle-income countries globally.



Left to right: Dr Marisa Leask, postdoctoral fellow, Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria; Prof Motlalepule Ruth Mampame, Head: Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria; Prof Evgeniy Terentev, Director: Institute of Education, HSE University; Prof Liesel Ebersöhn, Director: Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria; Dr Phumzile Langa, Director: Rural Education, Department of Basic Education

Bots boost learning at the Faculty of Education!

Author: Dr Joyce West

Chatbots have invaded clickUP, and students are loving (and slightly fearing) it! In an exciting new research project at the Department of Early Childhood Education in the Faculty of Education, Dr Joyce West is leading an innovative team that is making waves with AI-powered chatbots designed to enhance online learning experiences.

Teaming up with technology expert Mr Jody Joubert from SMTE, alongside education specialists Dr Kayla Willemse, Mrs Mariska Ellis, and Mrs Elsamarie Kersop, the researchers integrated friendly, interactive chatbots into clickUP. These chatty assistants provide students with instant support, answer queries day or night, and encourage deeper engagement through interactive learning.

Fun fact: Research shows chatbots not only improve student performance but also help reduce stress by offering 24/7

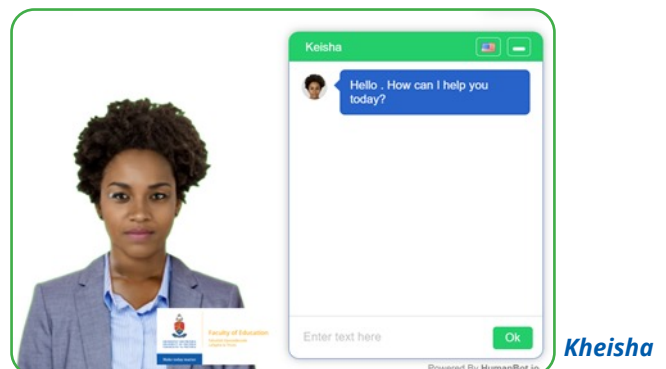
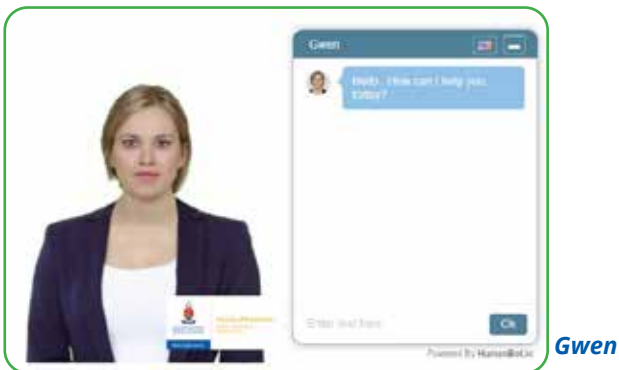
assistance—meaning fewer late-night study meltdowns!

However, not everyone immediately embraced their robotic study buddies. One student humorously admitted to initially suspecting her laptop had been hacked, convinced that the friendly chatbot was a rogue AI takeover!

Dr West explains, 'Our goal is to foster effective human-machine teaming, where chatbots and learners collaborate to create richer, more personalised educational experiences.'

So far, students report higher motivation, increased interaction, and after overcoming initial paranoia, yes—even a little fun, thanks to their chatbot companions.

Looks like bots and brains make a perfect—if slightly suspicious—team!



Responding to megatrends of unemployment, geopolitical tension, and climate change: consultation on a transdisciplinary study

Author: Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

Global megatrends of high unemployment, border unrest, and climate change challenge the health and well-being of people, the planet, and animals, as well as the built environment. Education is a powerful enabler in promoting conservation behaviour that makes the most of available resources and preventing the disastrous effects of strategies that do not support adaptive management of human and natural resources.

In March 2025, education, psychology, biodiversity, and entomology researchers from multiple universities (the

University of Pretoria, the University of Venda, and the Pennsylvania State University) met with biodiversity practitioners and tribal leaders in Thohoyandou and Venda communities to consult on an envisioned project. The purpose of the proposed study is to merge indigenous knowledge and scientific evidence to manage the health and well-being of humans and insects. The study aims to combine these bodies of knowledge into an innovative application that learners and their parents in remote Venda communities may use to monitor conservation choices and actions.



◀ Front row: Prof Murulana, University of Venda; Prof P Karen Murphy, Associate Dean of Research and Outreach, Pennsylvania State University; Prof Liesel Ebersöhn, Director: Centre for the Study of Resilience, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria; Prof Funke Omidire, Director: Centre for Evaluation and Assessment, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria; Ms Paige Alexander, Pennsylvania State University; Prof Lourens Swanepoel, SARChI Chair in Biodiversity, University of Venda
Back row: Ms M Kone (Vhembe Biosphere Reserve); Ms F Tshivhase (Urban and Regional Planning, University of Venda); Dr TE Mphahlele (postdoctoral fellow, SARChI Chair in Biodiversity, University of Venda); Mr O Madzivhandila (master's student, Biological Science, University of Venda); Ms TM Mulaudzi (Office of the Executive Dean: Monitoring and Evaluation, University of Venda)

2REST's research collaboration trip to Scotland

Author: Dr Nombuso Gama (postdoctoral fellow)



Dr Nombuso Gama presenting on multisystemic resilience

2REST is the acronym for the ESRC-funded research study entitled 'Responsibilities for resilience embedded in street temporalities: mapping street youths' lived resiliencies through analysis of secondary data'.

From 23 February to 8 March 2025, the 2REST project team members had their much-anticipated informational exchange trip to Dundee, Scotland, where the principal investigator, Prof Lorraine van Blerk, is based. Everyone excitedly packed their warmest clothes and headed to cold but beautiful Scotland. It was a two-week workshop where team members from the University of Pretoria's Department of Educational Psychology (Prof Linda Theron and postdoctoral fellow Dr Nombuso Gama), the University of Cape Town (Lucy Jamieson and Fulu Ramabulana), Makerere University (Dr Badru Bukenya and James Ssenfuuma) and the University of Dundee (Prof Lorraine van Blerk and Janine Hunter) met to make sense of the 2REST data they had spent a full year coding. The

data were on the resilience of African street youth within the contexts of Harare (Zimbabwe), Accra (Ghana), and Bukavu (Democratic Republic of Congo). It was an exciting time because they could finally see the data in their entirety.

The first week's activities were held at the University of Dundee and entailed formulating briefing papers. Team members came up with the first drafts of four briefing papers. They also held a symposium at the University of Dundee, where they shared project information with Dundee faculty and members of the public. Janine Hunter introduced the project and shared why it was important. Dr Nombuso Gama talked about resilience within street contexts and why the multisystemic approach was apposite for the 2REST project. James Ssenfuuma walked everyone through the coding process. Fulu Ramabulana shared information about the scoping review screening process she was working on with Dr Gama and Prof Theron.

The second week of the trip was a writing

retreat dedicated to producing article outputs. Team members travelled to the countryside of Aberdeen, a serene place that allowed them to focus on the writing process. Team members made a lot of progress and could not believe that two weeks had gone by so fast. They bid farewell to each other on 8 March. Everyone left feeling intellectually enriched and excited about the progress they had made. The goal is to submit four co-authored articles and four briefing papers by the end of the project in September 2025.



Some of the 2REST team braving the cold during a writing retreat tea break
First row, left to right: Fulu Ramabulana, Dr Nombuso Gama, James Ssenfuuma
Second row, left to right: Prof Linda Theron, Prof Lorraine van Blerk, Janine Hunter

Prof Kobus Maree presents a Keynote address at ICP2024 in Prague

Author: Prof Kobus Maree



Professor Kobus Maree

Prof Kobus Maree's participation in the 2024 International Congress of Psychology (ICP2024) in Prague was aimed at promoting and contributing to debates on critical postmodern issues in career psychology.

Keynote presentation

Prof Maree also delivered a keynote address titled 'Promoting social justice, meaning, empowerment, and eco-awareness in the Career Counsellocene

era/Anthropocene'. The presentation generated a great deal of interest and debate among attendees. Prof Maree focused on dealing with challenges and recognising and utilising opportunities in career counselling (psychology) within the current context. He addressed themes such as social justice, personal and community empowerment, and sustainable and inclusive career counselling endeavours but also eco- (environmental) awareness and consciousness, which resonated deeply. Deep reflections on the future of self- and career construction counselling ensued, including reflection on the environmental impact and sustainability of occupational choices and promoting eco-friendly occupations and lifestyles in a world where morality (ethical behaviour) is arguably at its lowest ebb while climate-related challenges are at their highest. Participants commended Prof Maree on his thought-provoking ideas,

especially his strong support for integrating social justice and eco-awareness into current career counselling practices. Subsequently, Prof Maree was invited to submit article manuscripts to various top-tier journals, which should extend the reach of his ideas.

Prof Maree chaired the highly prestigious UNESCO-UNITWIN Symposium, which brought together experts from around the world. During the event, Prof Maree led with a paper titled 'Helping young people deal with existential crises in the Anthropocene'. In his paper, Prof Maree talked about existential challenges faced by all people (young people in particular) in the turbulent and insecure current global occupational environment (characterised by unnerving social uncertainties). The symposium facilitated fruitful and productive discussions but also bolstered and fostered mutual respect and collaboration. All presenters

and attendees expressed sincere appreciation. His participation in the congress resulted in valuable networking opportunities. He networked and connected with numerous researchers from across the globe, who expressed keen interest in working alongside him (and vice versa) on future research endeavours. Prof Maree was deeply humbled by the respect and appreciation he was shown throughout the congress.

The UP-VIP congress funding graciously awarded to Prof Maree by the UP External Grants Committee was utilised to cover flight tickets, accommodation, flights, taxi rides, and shuttle fees, as well as the registration fee. The investment in him should generate meaningful returns (including articles, book chapters, and visiting professorships) for the global career psychology community.

Faculty of Education Research Lekgotla: Advancing human-centred education in complexity

Author: Prof Saloshna Vandeyar

On October 2024, the Faculty of Education, through the Office of the Deputy Dean for Research and Postgraduate Studies, hosted its annual Research Lekgotla, centred on the theme, 'Advancing human-centred education in complexity'. This theme encapsulates the Faculty's commitment to fostering educational practices that prioritise the human element in learning, supported by an intricate understanding of ecosystems, their interdependencies, and the dynamic relationships between them. The Faculty's approach seeks to merge thoughtful analysis with practical action, navigating complex challenges to create resilient educational systems that benefit individuals, communities, and society at large.

The Research Lekgotla provided an invaluable platform for Faculty, postgraduate, and postdoctoral students to engage with this theme, offering opportunities for transdisciplinary dialogue, networking, and collaborative exploration. The event emphasised the need for shared knowledge and solutions that address the pressing societal issues of today, advocating for transdisciplinary

research that transcends traditional academic silos.

The Faculty highlighted that education plays a critical role in equipping scholars and practitioners with the capacity to design responses to complex challenges, fostering sustainable development across Africa and beyond.

Prof Michael Samuel from the University of KwaZulu-Natal delivered a thought-provoking keynote address titled 'Human-centred education: a critical inquiry into individual and collective agendas'. This inspiring and intellectually stimulating address set the tone for the day, challenging attendees to reconsider conventional approaches to education and urging a deeper examination of the human experience in learning environments.

Throughout the day, 44 presentations unfolded across three parallel sessions, encompassing oral presentations, roundtable discussions, and poster presentations. The sessions were organised around several thematic areas that reflect the breadth of human-centred education, namely pedagogical

continue on page 10...

innovations and teacher education; social justice, inclusivity, and equity in education; language, literacy, and multimodality in education; mental health, resilience, and well-being in education; technology, media, and digital literacy in education; multimodal, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches in education; and text and context in education. These sessions facilitated rich dialogic exchanges and offered an engaging environment for intellectual exploration and foresight, placing human values at the heart of educational endeavours. Attendees were invited to consider and reimagine the roles of empathy, compassion, inclusivity, and resilience in the educational process in alignment with the Faculty's identity.

The Research Lekgotla served as a testament to the Faculty's commitment to advancing human-centred education in complex times, celebrating innovation, scholarly rigour, and the collective pursuit of knowledge that places the well-being of individuals and communities at the forefront of educational development.



Prof Saloshna Vandayer, Deputy Dean of Education



Prof Michael Samuel delivering his keynote address

My first conference

Author: Bongiwe Ncube (PhD student, R-NEET study)



Bongiwe Ncube presenting at the IAYMH2025

The International Association for Youth Mental Health is a conference about turning the tide and creating a global blueprint for prevention and integrated care in youth mental health. In March 2025, it was held in Vancouver, Canada. The conference included posters, oral presentations, lightning sessions, workshops, and plenaries on various topics that centred around youth mental health. The symposium, which I was a part of and was funded by the Wellcome Trust, was titled 'Partners, not participants. Drawing on three studies funded by Wellcome, it focused on the innovative models and challenges of lived-experience youth collaboration in mental health research, including research on how youth with lived experience collaborate, co-design, and co-develop research on mental health. The importance of this symposium is that it prioritises youth with lived experience within the entire research process and sees them as partners in the research and not just participants.

I attended the conference as an R-NEET representative. R-NEET (see <https://resiliencyouth.net/>) is a 66-month, Wellcome-funded study led by Prof Linda Theron (Department of Educational Psychology, UP). My PhD study, which is being

promoted by Prof Linda Theron, is affiliated with the R-NEET study. My role in the symposium was to present on the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) of the R-NEET study. The YAC involves youth with lived experiences of being NEET; they are collaborators in the research. My symposium paper was titled: 'Youth-community-university partnerships: Reflections from the R-NEET study on co-designing and co-delivering mental health research'. My role in the symposium was to share, as someone with lived experience, the voices of youth in South Africa.

Visiting Canada was initially quite overwhelming as it was my first conference and my first international trip. Navigating those firsts and feeling as though the people around me knew more (and had more experience) was quite daunting. In addition, having to navigate these new spaces where there were not many people who looked like me (i.e., Black people) made me realise how important familiarity and feeling seen is. However, I also realised that voices matter in research—and not just any voices, but the voices of Black women with relevant lived experiences. Once I realised how important my voice was in

these spaces, it became a little easier to manage the overwhelming anxiety. Part of this was getting comfortable within the Wellcome team, who were amazing in terms of how they helped me better understand that part of the world and navigate my first conference.

This experience gave me the opportunity to tell people, on an international scale, about the work that I do in South Africa as a Black woman, an educational psychologist, and a PhD student. It also taught me that the world (and particularly the area of youth mental health) does not have enough Black and African voices, which was both disheartening and empowering. It was empowering in the sense that it opened my eyes to the work that still needs to be done in my own community to make sure my voice and those of other people who look like me are heard. Overall, it was interesting to see the work being done in other parts of the world to create ways and opportunities for youth to collaborate in mental health research and see how mental health spaces look like in other parts of the world, particularly the parts of the world where resources are so readily available.



The Wellcome team at the IAYMH2025 conference. Back row, from left: Jamie Morgan, Kate Martin, Thomas Kabir. Front row, from left: Bongiwe Ncube, Jemma Cook, Maisie Jenkins, Sophie Chung, and Tate Kambeu



Bongiwe Ncube presenting at the IAYMH2025 conference

Dr Raksha Janak receives Special Interest Group (SIG) in Gender and Sexualities award for best presentation and a highly commended abstract at the British Educational Research Association (BERA) conference 2024 and World Educational Research Association (WERA) focal meeting

Author: Dr Raksha Janak

Dr Raksha Janak, a senior lecturer in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria, has been awarded the Special Interest Group (SIG) in Gender and Sexualities award for best presentation and a highly commended abstract at the British Educational Research Association (BERA) conference 2024 and World Educational Research Association (WERA) focal meeting. The conference, held at the University of Manchester in September 2024, is a premier gathering for educational researchers, fostering collaboration, networking, and engagement with cutting-edge research.

Dr Janak, in collaboration with Professor Deevia Bhana (SARCHI Chair, University of

KwaZulu-Natal), presented research titled 'Poster-making as potential: Girls and the sexual violence assemblage in rural spaces in South Africa'. This study explores how young girls in rural areas use poster-making to express their experiences of sexual violence, revealing the material, social, and cultural factors shaping their vulnerabilities. By amplifying the voices of marginalised young women, the research offers new strategies for teachers, policymakers, and activists to address gender and sexual violence in rural contexts.

In addition to receiving the prestigious SIG award, Dr Janak engaged with leading scholars in gender and sexuality studies, including Professor of

Childhood Studies in the School of Social Sciences Emma Renold (Cardiff University, Wales, UK) and Professor Yuwei Xu (University of Nottingham), who

specialise in early childhood education and gender studies. These engagements further strengthen international research collaborations.



Dr Raksha Janak (University of Pretoria) and Professor Deevia Bhana (University of KwaZulu-Natal) at the British Educational Research Association (BERA) conference 2024 and World Educational Research Association (WERA) focal meeting in Manchester, UK

Best Paper Award for sustainability research

Author: Prof Irma Eloff

Prof Irma Eloff and her colleague Dr Ann-Kathrin Dittrich from the University of Innsbruck were awarded the Best Paper Award at the recent Symposium on Qualifications, Training, Micro-Credentials, and Sustainable Development. The symposium was hosted by the University of Tallinn in Estonia and Hamburg University of Applied Sciences in Germany.

The paper, entitled 'Teacher educators and sustainability: Lessons from African European research collaborations', interrogated the role of teacher educators in supporting the global agenda for sustainability, Agenda 2030, as promulgated by the United Nations. In the paper, the researchers reflected, as project leaders, on the ongoing Teach4Reach research projects, which are funded by Africa UniNet.

The Teach4Reach projects have been developing research networks between the University of Pretoria, the University of Innsbruck, and the University of Vienna for four years. Prof Eloff was the project leader for the first T4R project, and Dr Dittrich is currently leading the second T4R project. Professor Walter Leal, a world leader in sustainability research, commended the team for its work in professional teacher education.



From left to right: Dr Ann-Kathrin Dittrich (University of Innsbruck, Austria), Prof Walter Leal (Chair of Climate Change Management, Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, Germany), Prof Irma Eloff (University of Pretoria, South Africa)

Professor Saloshna Vandeyar: Recipient of the prestigious EASA Medal of Honour Award

Author: Prof Saloshna Vandeyar

Professor Saloshna Vandeyar, Deputy Dean of Research and Postgraduate Studies, has been honoured with the prestigious Medal of Honour Award by the Education Association of South Africa (EASA). The award was presented during the gala evening of the EASA conference held at Sun City Resort on 21 January 2025.

The Medal of Honour is awarded in recognition of exceptional contributions to education, celebrating individuals who have demonstrated outstanding achievements and service over a sustained period. It acknowledges efforts to elevate the status of education in South Africa as both a social science and a practice on the international stage. This is evidenced through international publications, collaborations, partnerships, and invitations to share expertise globally.

Professor Vandeyar's research focuses on social, cultural, and cognitive justice education, with a particular focus on identities, race (in)equalities, and all other kinds of inequalities that are produced and reproduced in educational spaces by educational processes, discourses, and practices. During her acceptance speech, she delivered a compelling narrative of her research journey—a journey that began in the innocence of childhood and culminated in this remarkable achievement. She described it as arduous yet profoundly enriching, sharing key lessons she had learned along the way, interwoven with personal experiences that have shaped her path and her research focus and how this related to the significance of this award.

Lesson 1: The power of passion

'I am a child of apartheid, shaped by the stark realities of South Africa's history,' Professor Vandeyar began. Growing up, she witnessed injustices that ignited an unrelenting desire for change. She recalled walking to her segregated school, seeing slogans like 'Free Mandela' on walls, unaware of their significance at the time. She recounted watching African workers in an Indian suburb being apprehended by white policemen for not carrying their 'dom pass' and thrown into cage-like vans. Even as a child, she knew this was wrong. Her experiences during the 1976 riots as a Grade 9 student and during the 1980 language policy boycotts as a first-year student at Wits University further deepened her resolve. As a member of the Black Student Society, she participated in passive resistance (satyagraha) on the lawns outside the Wartenweiler Library, where she first encountered threats of police dogs and tear gas—harrowing reminders of the oppressive forces they were resisting. These early experiences ignited a passion for justice—a passion that found its expression in research. 'I realised that while the sword may force change, the pen can inspire it,' she said. 'My work became my protest and my hope for a better and more just world.'

Lesson 2: Resilience in the face of adversity

When Professor Vandeyar joined the Faculty of Education in 2000, she was one of only three Black academics—a stark reminder of the slow pace of transformation. Despite holding a PhD and having served as a Head of Department at a tertiary Teacher Training College, she was appointed as a lecturer, while some of her White peers with lesser qualifications held senior positions. These experiences of inequity and alienation could have deterred her. Instead, they fuelled her determination to not only survive but thrive. Over time, she became the first Indian woman to rise from

lecturer to full professor in the Faculty, the first Indian Head of Department, the first Indian director of a research centre, and the first Deputy Dean of Research and Postgraduate Studies. 'I was a trailblazer,' she reflected, 'and inadvertently became a role model for many Black women who followed.'

Lesson 3: Compassion and an ethic of care

Quoting Maya Angelou, Professor Vandeyar said, 'People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.' Her research emphasises creating educational spaces where compassion transforms relationships, challenges mindsets, and fosters hope. She has developed an 'epistemology of compassion' and a 'pedagogy of compassion', urging educators to disrupt received knowledge, embrace pedagogic dissonance and an ethic of discomfort, foster dialogic engagement, instil hope, and nurture agency in students. 'This is not just theoretical,' she emphasised; 'it is a call to action. Words may inspire, but actions create change.'

Lesson 4: The importance of agency

Professor Vandeyar believes that education must empower students to become agents of change. Through her work, she strives to inspire students to take action, instil hope, and envision sustainable peace. 'Education is not merely about knowledge transmission,' she said; 'it is about transformation.'

In her closing remarks, Professor Vandeyar left the audience with profound reflections: 'This award is not just mine. It belongs to those forgotten children who want education. It is for those frightened children who want peace. And above all, it is for those voiceless children who want change.' Her words resonated deeply, reminding everyone of the transformative power of education and the enduring impact of compassion, resilience, and agency.



▲ From left: Prof Candice Livingston, Chairperson of EASA; Prof Saloshna Vandeyar, Deputy Dean: Research and Postgraduate Studies, University of Pretoria; Prof Fumane Khanare, outgoing Chairperson of EASA

Congratulations to Dr Aluko for receiving a C2 NRF rating

Author: Prof Lindelani Mnguni

Dr Ruth Aluko, researcher for the Unit for Distance Education (UDE), was recently awarded a C2 NRF rating. She previously held a C3 rating.

In line with the University of Pretoria's research culture of enhancing the quality of its practices, the UDE regularly conducts action-based research. The purpose of this research is to improve practice through the development of appropriate quality assurance structures to monitor, review, and evaluate the quality of distance education practices. Rooted in national evaluation criteria and recognised international practices, the procedures cover both administrative and academic practices. All stakeholders are involved in monitoring the practices using the various instruments the UDE has developed.

In addition, distance education research in the Faculty influences research into teacher education on the continent and beyond through the biennial Distance Education and Teachers' Training in Africa (DETA) conference, chaired by Dr Aluko.

Dr Aluko is also the Chief Editor of Teacher Education through Flexible Learning in Africa (TETFLA, <https://upjournals.up.ac.za/index.php/tetfle/index>), an open journal that emanated from the DETA conference proceedings.

With the support of the UDE, Dr Aluko looks forward to further enhancing the quality of distance education practices, which will feed back into improved programme design, development, and teaching in the Faculty and beyond.



▲ Dr Ruth Aluko receiving her C2 NRF rating

Congratulations to Prof Raita Steyn on receiving an NRF C3 rating

Author: Prof Lindelani Mnguni



▲ Professor Raita Steyn

It is with great pleasure that we congratulate Professor Raita Steyn on being awarded a C3 rating by the National Research Foundation (NRF). This prestigious recognition follows a rigorous peer-review process and highlights Prof Steyn's sustained research excellence and scholarly impact.

An NRF C rating is granted to established researchers who have demonstrated a consistent record of quality research, engagement in their field, and the ability to conceptualise and investigate key academic

problems. A C3 rating, in particular, confirms that reviewers concur that the researcher meets these high standards, reaffirming Prof Steyn's influence and contribution to her discipline.

This achievement is not only a testament to Prof Steyn's dedication and expertise but also a significant milestone for our faculty. It enhances our academic reputation, research standing, and commitment to advancing knowledge. As a faculty, we take immense pride in celebrating this well-earned recognition.



Why do so many believe 'Maths is not for me'?

Author: Prof Ugo Ogbonnaya

This important question was the focus on November 2024, during the inaugural lecture of Prof Ugorji Ogbonnaya, Head of the Department of Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education. Held in the prestigious Senate Hall, the event brought together guests, colleagues, academic peers, and students.

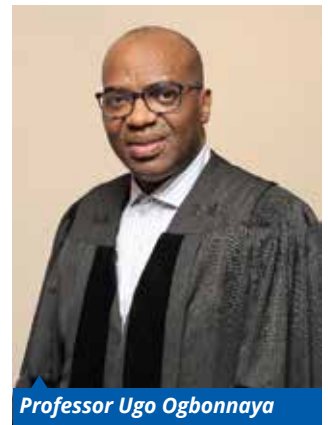
Professor Ogbonnaya's lecture, titled 'Maths is not for me: factors shaping secondary school students'

Mathematics performance', explored how teacher factors, instructional practices, and socioeconomic status influence students' Mathematics achievement.

One key insight was the potential for technology to enhance Mathematics learning when combined with constructivist teaching approaches, making Mathematics engaging and enjoyable. Professor Ogbonnaya also emphasised

the importance of teacher qualifications, experience, university preparation, and professional development in transforming students' Mathematics achievement.

Special thanks to the Faculty of Education, University management, the event organisers, and all attendees for making this event a success. It was a privilege to share this proud occasion with you.



Professor Ugo Ogbonnaya

Creating the future we desire for inclusivity, support, and well-being through multilingual education

Author: Oreratile Kau



▲ Prof Funke Omidire

On August 2024, Prof Funke Omidire's inaugural lecture was held at the University of Pretoria. In her lecture, she went into detail on how linguistic diversity can aid in learning and development, saying, 'Incorporating diverse home languages can stimulate effective learning for academic achievement, progression, adaptability, and well-being.' She then elaborated on how more research is required for 'mainstream acceptance' so that multilingual education and training can be practised.

'In this address, I present my contributions to applying navigational tools such as dynamic assessment (DA), peer mentoring, translanguaging, and innovative pedagogy to promote inclusion and a deviation from conventional teaching practices. I argue that privileging home languages influences the development of positive identity, attitude, and socio-cultural responsiveness, all of which are relevant for quality education and well-being. Furthermore, viewing home languages as a support tool for learning facilitates the inclusion of learners with language difficulties, developmental delays, and communication and specific learning disorders.' She went further into detail, stating that 'heightening support in this manner alleviates language as a barrier to learning.'

In the lecture, Prof Omidire also highlighted how home languages and bilingualism are cognitive benefits that help facilitate learning, academic success, and motivation. She closed her inaugural lecture by stating that her current research is focused on investigating innovative multilingual learning support strategies across sub-Saharan Africa. 'My vision is to overcome the pedagogical challenges of teaching in multilingual environments, prioritise the authenticity of language and culture in the teaching and learning environment, and develop positive attitudes towards home languages for support, inclusion, and well-being.' The inaugural lecture was attended by fellow Faculty members, as well as friends and family.

Numbers with impact: transforming education through big data analytics

Author: Oreratile Kau

On August 2024, the University of Pretoria welcomed guests and fellow members to the inaugural lecture of Prof Marien Graham of the Department of Early Childhood Education. Her lecture was on how big data can be used to enhance the educational landscape. 'These innovations have revolutionised traditional teaching and learning methods, intertwining education with the power of big data analytics,' she said. 'However, the current era has brought about a shift, highlighting a gap that brought about this research.' Her research focused on exploring and demonstrating the applications of big data analytics in education, such as teaching methodologies, improving learner outcomes, and supporting mental health and well-being.

She elaborated on how data-driven insights can transform educational practices, delving into their impact on teaching and learning, as well as learner well-being and mental health, and underscoring the need for a holistic approach to educational improvement. She highlighted the importance of transdisciplinary work in creating a more integrated and effective educational framework and posited that the future of education lies in leveraging data to enhance academic outcomes and address broader societal challenges. 'This can drive systemic change to create more equitable educational opportunities for all learners.'

She closed her lecture by stating that this work underscores the importance of continued research in this area and gave recommendations for further studies to explore the long-term impacts of data-driven strategies.



▲ Prof Marien Graham

Springer Nature series: Advances in Mathematics Education

As part of the Springer Nature series Advances in Mathematics Education, Johann Engelbrecht (of the SMTE department), Greg Oates (Australia), and Marcelo Borba (Brazil) are publishing a book titled Social media in the changing mathematics classroom. Five other colleagues in the SMTE department, Ugorji Ogbonnaya, Sonja van Putten, Nelé Loubser, Jessica van Putten, and Mary-

Jane Lessing, were involved in writing chapters.

The book consists of 16 chapters written by academics from all over the world and presents an international panoramic view from the mathematics education community on a variety of topics around the impact and role of social media in mathematics education. The book will be

Author: Prof Johann Engelbrecht
published in April 2025.

Johann Engelbrecht was also invited by Springer Nature to edit a follow-up book with Birgit Pepin (Netherlands): Artificial intelligence in the changing mathematics classroom. This book will also involve several chapter authors from the SMTE department and will be published in 2026.

Congratulations to the following staff member who were promoted with effect from 1 January 2025

Promotions to Senior Lecturer



Dr Fru Akuma

Promotions to Associate Professors



Dr Celest Combrinck



Dr Maryke Mihai



Dr Mia Abrie

Promotion to Full Professor



Prof LS van Putten



Make today matter

Faculty of Education

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

LLITUP Research Unit Newsletter



Catch up with the LLITUPians and their adventures!

Dearest readers welcome to another issue of LLITUP's newsletter.

LLITUP is officially ten years old! How the good times fly by!

It felt like just the other day I was laying as separate pieces waiting to be assembled. What an absolute honour to be LLITUP's mascot through these 10 amazing years!

I have been on many adventures myself, but let's not talk about me just yet, there's plenty time for that. The LLITUPians have been quite busy this year, let's dive in!

They have added a new LLITUPian to the team. They attended conferences and hosted seminars and workshops. And don't forget the graduations that make us all exceptionally proud. They also walk down memory lane reflecting on the 10 years of LLITUP. And they recount the spectacular 10 days of LLITUP events.

Happy reading!

Froggy x



In this Highlights
you can expect:

New LLITUPian
joining the team

Flexible Future
Conference

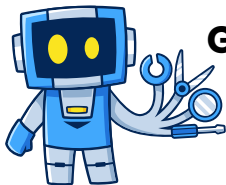
Seminars

Graduations

LLITUP turning 10!

10 Days of
Celebrations

Expanding our team



Get to know Confidence Ngobeni



Confidence Ngobeni

Share a brief professional background and how it led you to join LLITUP?

My name is Confidence Ngobeni and I hold a bachelor's degree in education intermediate phase and an honours degree in Computer Integrated Education (CIE), both from the University of Pretoria. In 2021, while pursuing my honours degree in (CIE), I worked as an e-learning facilitator for an ICT course offered by Enterprises University of Pretoria for part time. I also became an e-Tutor for ICT at the University of Pretoria, Distance Education Unit. The same year, I joined a primary school in Mpumalanga, Carolina, where I was using an interactive whiteboard to teach language in grade 4. In 2023, I enrolled for a masters degree in Computer Integrated Education (CIE) with the University of Pretoria. In February 2024 I joined Comprehensive Online Education Services (COES) as a learning design intern at the University of Pretoria. The experience and skills gained in the journey ultimately paved the way for me to join the LLITUP team in May 2024, where I can further contribute to educational technology.

What sparked your interest in technology and how did you get started in this field?

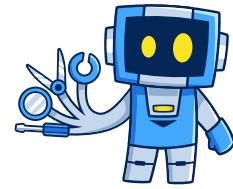
The moment I entered university I knew that I wanted to further my education. However, I did not know which field to pursue at that time and I did not do any research. When I was in my third year I had the Methodology of E-learning as one of the fundamental modules I was taking. This is where my interest in technology started. The class was not a class to miss because it was fun. We were always engaged in the class and always had something to do before class.

I saw how technology transformed the learning environment and as a future intermediate teacher, I wanted to contribute to the transformation for other learners. So I started asking our lecturer who was teaching the module, Mr Jody Joubert about my interest in technology education and he then introduced me to an honours in Computer Integrated Education. I was excited to find that there is an honours program in the field offered by the university, from there I knew the program I was going to choose for honours. Ever since, my interest in technology has been growing especially when I discover new technologies that can be used in education.

How do you stay current on the rapidly changing technological sphere?

Continuous learning has always helped me to stay current in the field. I take advantage of the LinkedIn courses to help me grow in the field. I also take advantage of conferences and webinars. As a CIE masters student I read journal articles for my study so I am able to stay informed. Ever since I joined LLITUP I am exposed to practical experience which helps me to grow every day. For example, I am supervising CIE honours students and also hold support sessions with them. The different technologies that are at LLITUP have also been helpful in my professional growth. By following people on LinkedIn who are in the same field I am able to see what other people are doing in education technology and as I get informed I am also inspired. To do more.

Meet our new LLITUPian



What are your professional goals for the next few years? How do you see yourself growing in LLITUP?

My professional goals in the next few years is to complete my masters and pursue a PhD in Computer Integrated Education at the University of Pretoria. So I see myself as a full time lecturer and researcher. This will allow me to even contribute more at LLITUP. I will also be able to contribute to South African education sectors especially where they are still behind with technology integration.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work? Do you have any hobbies or interests that you are passionate about?

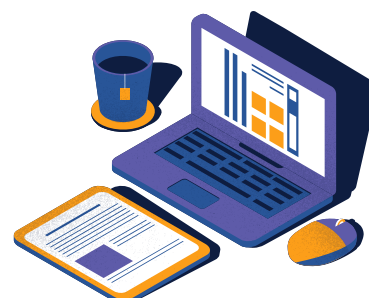
I've always believed in learning from those who once were where I am and those who are already where I am going. So, I love going out with people like this whom I have built relationships with. I know whenever I meet with them, there is something to learn. We explore new places together, play games, read books and listen to music together. Because there are people who helped me get to where I am, I am passionate about helping others also get to the top too. So, sometimes I meet with other people who reach out to me for advice with academics or anything that they think I can assist with.

What are some of your skills that make you even more valuable to our team?

Pursuing a career in Computer Integrated Education has exposed me to opportunities where I developed digital instructional design skills, technical proficiency, academic communication, assessment techniques, collaborative and teamwork, innovative thinking, research skills and project management.

What is one fun fact about you that people might not really expect?

I pursued a career in education only because my mom would not talk to me until I said yes to being a teacher and honestly, I would be regretting now if I did not listen to her because I love education.



SITA visits LLITUP

State Information Technology Agency (SITA) visits LLITUP for a workshop on integrating technology in training.

On the 25 July, LLITUP had the honour of hosting delegates from the State Information Technology Agency (SITA). The purpose of the session was to create an interactive and engaging afternoon that would focus on improving training methods and materials through the use of Open Educational Resources (OER). The session was focused around gamification, generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) and e-Books. The team used these concepts to facilitate the process of helping SITA reimagine the manner in which they could approach their training.



Gontse Mthelebofu & Kabelo Mahlase

It was a fun opportunity to explore how technologies could transform their training environments.

The entire presentation was in a form of an e-book- a way to show innovative presentation possibilities. An exciting discovery, for the visitors, was the many possibilities GenAI offered for training. These included generating ideas, recreating and improving training practices and existing materials. GenAI also showed the delegated how to create purposeful, context specific training experiences for their audiences. The gamification aspect was presented through badges and modularity. This demonstrated the potential of reducing time with managing courses and their admin while still being able to make relevant and necessary changes to training materials without changing their core.



SITA Participants completing interactive activities

The gamification aspect approached the training through low stakes but fun oriented assessment.

The participants walked away with new insights on how technology could make their training programmes more interactive, accessible, and impactful.

The success of the event is that it opened doors to exciting future collaborations between LLITUP and SITA. Both organizations are eager to continue exploring these innovative approaches to training, with the potential for more sessions and deeper partnerships ahead.



Rolling the Dice in Doctoral Research

Snakes and Ladders, the opportunities and threats of GAI in doctoral research

On 11 March 2024, the Humanities Faculty convened the UCDP Doctoral Communities of Scholarship for a Seminar on Generative Artificial Intelligence and Research. Jody presented a session titled "Snakes and Ladders, the opportunities and threats of GAI in doctoral research" during the seminar.



The Path

- Proposal
- Approval and data collection
- Chapter Writing
- Data analysis and conclusion
- Editing



Slide from the presentation

The game of Doctoral research

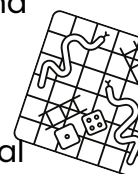


Slide from the presentation

The session used the engaging analogy of the familiar board game to explore the complex impact of Generative AI (GenAI) on the doctoral research journey. In the presentation, the research path of doctoral students—from proposal and approval to data collection, writing, analysis, and editing—was depicted as a game of snakes and ladders.

The "snakes" represented challenges associated with GenAI, such as ethical concerns, biases in language models, potential threats to academic integrity, and the risk of producing generic findings. The "ladders" illustrated the benefits – like enhanced information synthesis, researcher support, data analysis, and accessibility and inclusivity of research findings

Mrs. Elmien Claassens, the facilitator and avid LLITUP workshop attendee, remarked, "It is always good to listen to Jody and be inspired by his 'no fear' approach to GAI and technology in general." The feedback from participants in the session, highlights the encouraging, forward-thinking and innovative perspective that LLITUP has for integrating GenAI into research.



Artificial Intelligence meets Academia

Postgraduate seminar: How GAI can be used in research

On the 2nd of September, Jody hosted a Postgraduate support session on Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in research. The session explored some key aspects of GAI in the academia and research.

An important part of the seminar was the possible uses of AI in research and their implications. GenAI can assist researchers in many tasks ranging from analysing vast datasets to accelerating data analysis and while fostering innovation in research.



Slide from the presentation

Literature Review Assistance	Summarizing Research Articles Keyword Identification
Data Analysis	Qualitative Data Coding Quantitative data interpretation
Content Generation	Drafting Sections of Papers Hypothesis Generation
Survey/Questionnaire/Interview Design	Question Formulation Pilot Testing
Research Communication	Simplifying Complex Concepts Abstract and Summary Writing
Ethical Implications and Analysis	Exploring Ethical Implications Ethics Analysis

Slides from the presentation

Maintain Academic Integrity

- **Original thought**
AI should support your research, not replace it.
- **Plagiarism awareness**
Check AI-generated content for originality.
- **Proper attribution**
Transparently acknowledge AI's role in your work.

Participants engaged with the session's activities and noted how their quality of interaction with GenAI, determined the quality of information they received.

Ethical considerations were also a discussion theme. Concerns around disclosure and researcher accountability were quite an enlightening part of the discussion.

The session provided valuable insights into the workings of GenAI, and what responsible AI use in research means.

A curriculum check-up, just what the Doctors ordered!

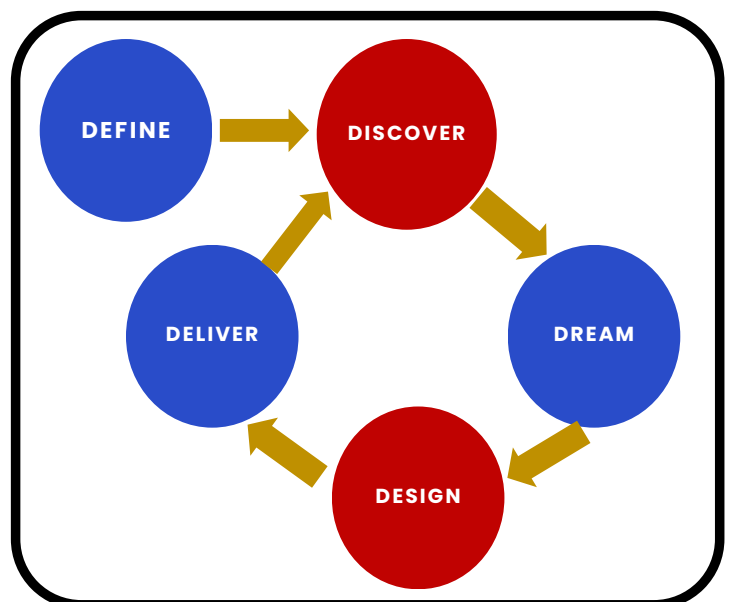
Faculty of Health Sciences enlist Prof Callaghan for a curriculum redesign



Prof Callaghan, Jody & Family Medicine Doctors from the Faculty of Health Sciences

The Department of Family Medicine in the Faculty of Health Sciences is in the process to re-curriculate the Bachelors of Clinical Medical Practice. The qualification is changed from a three year undergraduate to a four year NQF level 8 professional degree.

Prof Callaghan was appointed as interim part time Education Consultant with Education Innovation from July for the Faculty of Health Sciences. This is one of the projects she is collaborating on. The re-design process is facilitated through an Appreciative Inquiry process and follows the phases of Define, Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny. The stakeholders meet once a week. Where a workshop-type approach is necessary, the activities are hosted in the LLITUP Collaboratorium's workshop space on Groenkloof Campus.



Appreciative inquiry process

"It is quite inspiring to work with the team from Family Medicine, as their dedication to the qualification, positive approach to teaching and care for their students are evident throughout all our interactions", said Prof Callaghan.

Flexible Futures

Reflections from Kabelo Mahlase

Attending my first conference was fun and informative. However, nothing can prepare one for speaking at their first conference, for me it was terrifying. The tension started building from the moment I began preparations. The presentation was built around the experience of allowing students to use AI in an honours educational assessment module.



Kabelo Mahlase at Flexible Futures 2024

The preparation for the conference took a long time, even after preparation was done, it still felt as if there was more to be done. I had to work through a considerable amount of data and reduce it to a few meaningful insights. In conversations with colleagues, it became clear that some are uneasy about allowing students to use AI but were fully aware that students are already using it. This was at the heart of the presentation.

The focus was on how students are using Artificial Intelligence (AI) when given the opportunity. It was quite interesting to discover how students are comfortable with the technology with only very small numbers choosing to avoid it or were using it incorrectly. What I found most interesting and promising was that students were committed to using AI responsibly.

This was especially because the process of students creating meaningful artifacts (required in the module) naturally limited the reliance on AI, as students had to engage with the material more deeply. The stance at LLITUP is to view AI as a cognitive tool. A resource to assist students in thinking critically and creatively, rather than doing the work for them. If students are encouraged to use the tool this way, they learn how to use the tool responsibly but still ensuring that students engage meaningfully with content.



Farihah Jaffer at Flexible Futures 2024

Reflections from Farihah Jaffer

In our presentation, titled 'Escaping' Traditional Assessment Methods: Formative Assessment through a Digital Escape Room, I introduced an innovative pedagogical strategy designed to enhance student engagement and learning. From the outset, I immersed the audience in the experience by incorporating elements of the escape room into the presentation itself. Clues, answers, and challenges were embedded within the slides, requiring participants to listen closely and collaborate actively to solve them.

I demonstrated how the digital escape room integrated QR codes as dynamic clues, blending technology with pedagogy to assess students' knowledge. The activity was framed within a formative assessment context, emphasizing its ability to develop problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. I concluded by showcasing how this method not only engaged students but also fostered their digital competencies, offering insights into its scalability and adaptability across disciplines. Feedback highlighted its potential to revolutionize formative assessment practices.

In our other presentation, "Assessing Digital Competency Development in Pre-service Teachers," I shared findings from an e-learning methodology module designed to cultivate digital competency in alignment with South Africa's Professional Development Framework for Digital Learning. This framework identifies 13 digital competencies essential for professional growth, curriculum focus, and leadership.

The module tasked third-year pre-service teachers with creating a digital learning experience for challenging topics in their subject areas. Through assignments that included developing websites, videos, infographics, QR codes, and interactive documents, students applied digital tools in authentic contexts. Using surveys and instructor observations, I analyzed the progression of digital competency development. Students began the course with limited technology skills but reported significant improvements by the end, citing increased confidence and creativity. Reflective survey responses highlighted how practical activities enhanced their digital competencies, equipping them to integrate technology effectively in future classrooms.

Achievement Unlocked: Con-GRAD-ulations!

Insights from our new CIE graduates!



Dr Jorietha Hugo

PhD in CIE

A PhD is more than a research journey to explore your field of interest. It is an accumulation of your values, beliefs, skills and competencies, all working together to make a practical and theoretical contribution to new knowledge and practices. I was fortunate to have two world-class supervisors from leading universities in South



Jorietha Hugo at graduation

Africa to accompany me along the way. Prof Ronel Callaghan (UP), my primary supervisor, guided me through the process of scientific research rigour and excellence. Prof Johannes Cronje (CPUT), my co-supervisor, guided me conceptually and provided a wealth of resources, tips and tricks when completing a PhD.

This journey taught me to do academic research and fostered critical thinking skills, resilience, efficient use of technology, creativity and confidence. I learned to appreciate the skills and competencies of fellow travelling scholars as we shared our experiences and learning in our PhD Community of Practice. My research in strategy development for educational technology enabled me to transpose existing skills and knowledge to the emerging field of educational technology.

It was an extremely rewarding and enriching experience and, in some way, a “ticket” to a new future.

Sithandwayinkosi Goba-Hlongwane

MEd in CIE



Sithandwayinkosi at graduation

Graduating at UP was a proud and emotional milestone for me. It represented not just the culmination of years of hard work, but also the growth I experienced academically and personally and the relationship that I have gained with my supervisor, Professor Callaghan, through her guidance.

The experience and the relationships formed quickly led to me attending my first academic conference, which was both exciting and eye-opening. It was incredible to be surrounded by scholars and professionals who share a passion for Computer Science Education. Presenting my work felt surreal, and the feedback I received was invaluable. I definitely know there is more that will come as a result of my decision to do my Masters in Computer Intergrated Education at UP.

Chantal Hammer

MEd in CIE

Completing my master's has been both rewarding and challenging. Perhaps not the wisest move was to change my career halfway through my master's whilst raising my son as a single mom and completing my master's.

However, I am indebted not only to my mom and my son, Brady but also my supervisor, Mrs A. van Rooyen, who were there with words of encouragement during those more challenging times. For those who are about to start their masters, support is key.

Writing a dissertation whilst working full-time means sacrificing time spent with family and friends. The second lesson is saving your work to multiple places and keeping different versions. This is not new advice but unfortunately a difficult lesson for me to learn as I unknowingly transferred my corrupted files to the ones saved in the Cloud. Lastly, feel passionate about what you are researching as this keeps you focused on the end goal.



Chantal Hammer with her certificate

Achievement Unlocked: Con-GRAD-ulations!

We honour our CIE graduates



*Martin Mouton at
graduation*

Martin Mouton

MEd in CIE

My Master's Degree dissertation, titled *Elements of Blended Continuous Professional Development Short Course Design for Educators*, was a challenging yet deeply rewarding endeavor. I had the privilege of working under the guidance of my primary supervisor, Mr. Jody Joubert, whose support, professionalism, and friendly approach were invaluable throughout this journey. His insightful feedback helped me refine my ideas and research approach effectively.

Professor Ronel Callaghan, my co-supervisor, brought unmatched expertise and wisdom to the process. Her critical feedback and deep experience were crucial in elevating the academic quality of my research.

Thanks to the knowledge I gained during my studies, I have already been able to apply these skills in my role as Supervisor at IPS Health and Wellness. I designed a blended learning course during our recruitment program, which successfully led to the employment of a Manager-level team member. This achievement would not have been possible without the insights from my degree. Additionally, I now design blended CPD programs for our staff regularly, further enhancing our internal development.

I am grateful to the University of Pretoria for its support and give glory to God for guiding me through this significant professional milestone.

On behalf of LLITUP we would like to congratulate our new graduates on their exceptional achievements and wish them good luck in their future endeavors!



With love from The Mother City

**Advanced Course in Computer Integrated
Education presented in Cape Town.**

**The 2023 cohort's journey comes to an end, but the 2024 cohort's journey
has just begun.**

Prof Callaghan and Jody witnessed yet another group of Western Cape teachers graduate from the Advance Course in CIE all while they also presented their second CIE session to the new group of excited teachers.



2023 students at certificate ceremony.



2024 new students completing an activity

One CTLI student shared their insights of the course during the graduation session.

From day one, the CIE course immersed us in a dynamic blend of theory and practical application. We delved into topics such as educational technology, instructional design, and digital pedagogy. The facilitators, Prof Ronel Callaghan and Jody Joubert, guided us with passion and expertise. Their commitment to our growth was evident in every lecture, workshop, and discussion.

Each cohort member brought a unique perspective, representing diverse educational contexts and disciplines. We witnessed creativity in action, as colleagues shared their best practices, troubleshooting tips, and success stories. Whether it was a math teacher using interactive simulations or a language instructor fostering virtual cultural exchanges, we learned from one another. The late-night discussions, animated debates, and collaborative projects forged lasting bonds.

The CIE course equipped us with practical skills that transcended theory. We revamped our lesson plans, incorporating multimedia elements, gamification, and formative assessments. Our classrooms transformed into vibrant hubs of engagement, where students interacted with content, peers, and the world beyond. We witnessed the power of blended learning, adaptive algorithms, and personalized feedback.

We express our heartfelt gratitude to the stakeholders who made this journey possible. Ms Fikile Machimana's unwavering support fuelled our motivation. Her belief in the transformative potential of technology in education inspired us to push boundaries. Prof. Ronel Callaghan and Jody Joubert (in his absence), though physically apart, were present in every breakthrough we achieved. Their mentorship transcended distance. We pledge to carry forward the torch of transformative education, lighting the way for generations to come. Thank you to everyone who believed in us, challenged us, and celebrated our achievements. Together, we shape the future—one digital lesson at a time.

Coding the future: A mini workshop

LLITUP hosts ECE for a mini workshop on coding and robotics

Recently, the Department of Early Childhood Education and the Living Lab for Innovative Teaching at UP (Department of Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education) held a workshop for undergraduate BEd foundation phase students.



The workshop introduced the students to various coding and robotics tools like Bee-Bots, Tanks and other hands-on materials. The workshop provided a practical, immersive experience, allowing students to engage physically and actively with coding and robotics concepts. This approach aimed to enhance the students' understanding of the subject by using concrete activities. These students are the first cohort at the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Education to participate in the new module, Teaching and Learning Coding and Robotics in the Foundation Phase. The hands-on nature of the workshop not only deepened their comprehension but also made learning enjoyable.



All images: 2024 Foundation Phase Teachers completing Coding & Robotics workshop activities





Honorary LLITUPian: Dr Celeste Combrinck

The story of how Celeste became an honorary LLITUPian

A short story by Dr Celeste Combrinck

In a recent time, on a well-known planet, there lived a tribe called the LLITUPians. A cheerful and hopeful group, they wanted to befriend our machine counterparts. In the land of LLITUP, people were open and curious; they looked at the boxes full of gadgets and saw a way to learn with technology.

I was travelling to Cyber City when I came across this beautiful place called LLITUP. Of course, I had heard about the LLITUPians before, that they were famous for their excellent food and even better humour. I saw their main castle on the hill and decided to take my chances to find assistance for my venture. I knocked on the door, and the Matriarch answered. *Good day, weary traveller. Can I be of assistance?*

I was surprised; a servant should have answered, not the Lady of the House. Nonetheless, I was pleased to make her acquaintance and ask for assistance on my quest. I quickly curtsied and said: *My Lady, I need your help. I want to capture the elusive Android wandering our fair land since late autumn. I have plans to make it an indentured servant for the benefit of all peoples.*



AI Generated image depicting the LLITUP Team

She looked at me in bemusement and answered: *Please come in...you may join our nightly feast and tell us about your quest.* I hurried into the great hall and found a small gathering of people and zoomorphic characters.

They welcomed me, and I took my place, savouring the smell of freshly baked bread, roasted chicken, baked vegetables and sundry. Next to me sat a fine-looking owl who blinked slowly and knowingly. As I wolfed down the feast, I told them about my desire to capture the Android. An excitable teenager named Georgie, asked: *Why do you want to capture this Automaton? Surely you can befriend it and take it back to your land?*

I looked around; the Lady, the Owl, Georgie, Pretty Pretty Panda and the Snow Leopard stared at me in puzzlement. I was taken aback. Could the Android be more a friend than a foe? More person than drone? *If you think I can talk to it, make friends and introduce it to other sentients, I will try!* I proclaimed more bravely than I was feeling. The LLITUPians cheered and vowed to help me become friends with Airia, the Android.

This dear friends, is but part of the great story. But it gives you an idea of how things work in LLITUP, where help is available for those who ask. Where pilgrims into Tech Enclaves are welcomed and assisted.

If you decide to make machines your amigos, go to LLITUP to find the knowledgeable and cordial clan of LLITUPians.

**A decade of LLITUP
celebrated over 10
spectacular days**

In-tuition newsletter | March/April 2025 | 31



The 10 years before the 10 days

On 17 October 2014 the LLITUP research unit was officially inducted into the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. A longstanding dream of Professor Ronel Callaghan for a unit that drives and researches innovative teaching came to life. In 2016 the research unit launched its Collaboratorium – a collaborative space where technology (as part of the innovation landscape) could be tested and developed to its educational potential.

Throughout the years LLITUP has undertaken numerous activities. Reflecting on these 10 years proved to be a formidable task, as the jam-packed nature of the LLITUP activities required careful chronologic placement in terms of their contribution to the LLITUP we know today. This reflection informed the programme of our 10-day festivities – activities designed to showcase LLITUP through the years as they remain relevant today.

Day 1 – Our LLITUP Story



Rooted in the Living Lab model, LLITUP aims to foster collaboration among educators, researchers, and stakeholders to drive innovation in teaching and learning. Looking back over the last decade, we identified four key milestones since LLITUP's conceptualization in 2012.

In 2014, the formal establishment of the Research Unit provided a foundation for collaborative educational projects. The launch of the Collaboratorium in 2017 offered a dynamic space for exploring educational technology and its role in innovative teaching. During the 2020 pandemic, LLITUP assisted various departments and other stakeholders in adapting and implementing effective online strategies. By 2022, the research unit had grown into a well-recognised initiative, fostering collaboration and innovation in teaching and learning. Over the years, LLITUP has led impactful projects, from integrating technology, making PodCasts, coding and robotics and AI in education. Its workshops, symposia, and community initiatives have empowered countless educators and students while shaping research and postgraduate studies.

Day 1 was a terrific opportunity for Prof Callaghan and Jody to share their insights on LLITUP's evolution over the past 10 years. While it was a great opportunity to showcase the philosophy, work, successes and innovations of LLITUP, the day also served as a chance to thank our stakeholders for their role in our success and introduce our vision for the future. As LLITUP continues, we remain committed to inspiring innovation, research, and community-driven solutions to redefine innovative teaching for the Global South and beyond.

Day 2 – Artificial intelligence in Education: Open Discussion

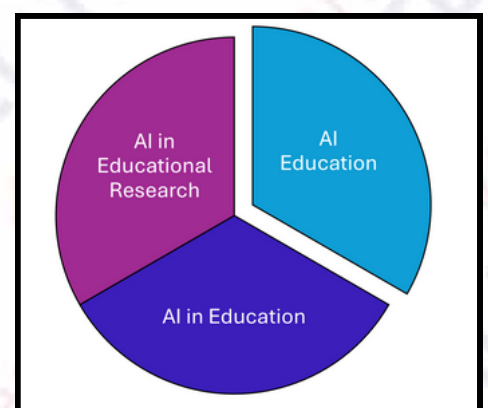
AI has made its way into education with great fanfare. Since 2019, generative AI has been a focus for the LLITUP team and was introduced (albeit theoretically at first) in modules such as JLT330, CTM710 and CIT720. The explosion of ready-to-use AI tools in 2023 saw LLITUP exploring, experimenting and spreading awareness of AI. This included our Exploration workshop, Dr Celeste Combrinck's workshop on AI in research, several informal engagements and an International Lecture by Jody in 2023.

This time, we decided that an Open Discussion about AI in Education would benefit academics and postgraduate students who face this phenomenon daily.



Slide from presentation

Jody and Farihah, along with Prof Seiji Isotani (University of São Paulo and Harvard University) and Mr Neill Kramm (Rhodes University) facilitated a lively discussion on what AI Education, AI in Education and AI in educational research really mean. Valuable discussions emerged which will shape LLITUP's AI journey through future workshops, brainstorming sessions and research.



Slide from presentation

Day 3 – Coding & Robotics Colloquium

Dr Kayla Willemse &
Ms Gontse Mthelebofu



Coding and Robotics have created a buzz in the South African educational environment. With the introduction of draft curricula in 2019 and the recent (2024) gazetting of the coding and robotics curricula for Grade R – 9, a new world has opened for education.

Fariyah Jaffer &
Kabelo Mahlase



LLITUP has been engaged with Robotics since 2016 when an MBot was gifted to the Collaboratorium. Lilo, our pink MBot, quickly took centre stage in our modules, specifically JMI, JMR, RTT and CIT. The idea of coding and robotics clubs, as well as coding and robotics as a means of teaching in a play-based, multidisciplinary, and learner-cantered way, quickly became central to the ethos that LLITUP advocated.

Jody Joubert



On 9 October, LLITUP and the Department of Early Childhood Education teamed up to host a colloquium. Over 100 delegates attended the event (both face-to-face and online), with included presentations, an industry exhibit and even a student coding and robotics expo.

Bottom: Students and attendees of the colloquium



Day 4–Mobile Learning Race

Mobile learning was one of LLITUP's earliest initiatives, introduced even before the inception through the ICT4RED project done in collaboration with the CSIR. Over the past 10 years, we have empowered teachers to integrate mobile learning through modules, courses, postgraduate studies, workshops and conference presentations. This included OPV312 (2012 to 2023), workshops with undergraduate students during COVID, JLT330, and the mobile learning for 21st Century Educators courses.



Jody discussing race details



SMTE's Race Team

Day 4 fell on 10 October 2024. The 10th day of the 10th Month – perfectly timed for our 10th-year festivities, albeit a week prematurely. To showcase LLITUP's work with mobile learning, we revived our Groenkloof Campus race and took to the campus once again. During this race staff and student teams participated playfully, engaging with mobile learning activities to learn about mobile learning principles.



Mr LJ van Zyl and student teams

Day 5–Research Collaboration: Elevator Pitches

Networking with stakeholders is a cornerstone of LLITUP's success as a research unit. LLITUP actively networks with government, industry, internal stakeholders (academics, students, library and Education innovation), external stakeholders (academics and teacher) and community stakeholders.

During our session, participants engaged with the ideas of collaborative, inter- and transdisciplinary research. Demonstrating how vital research networks are for these activities. The participants developed elevator pitches – short powerful monologues tailored for engaging research partners. Through this exercise, a research network took shape among the diverse participants showing, illustrating the organic nature of such networks.

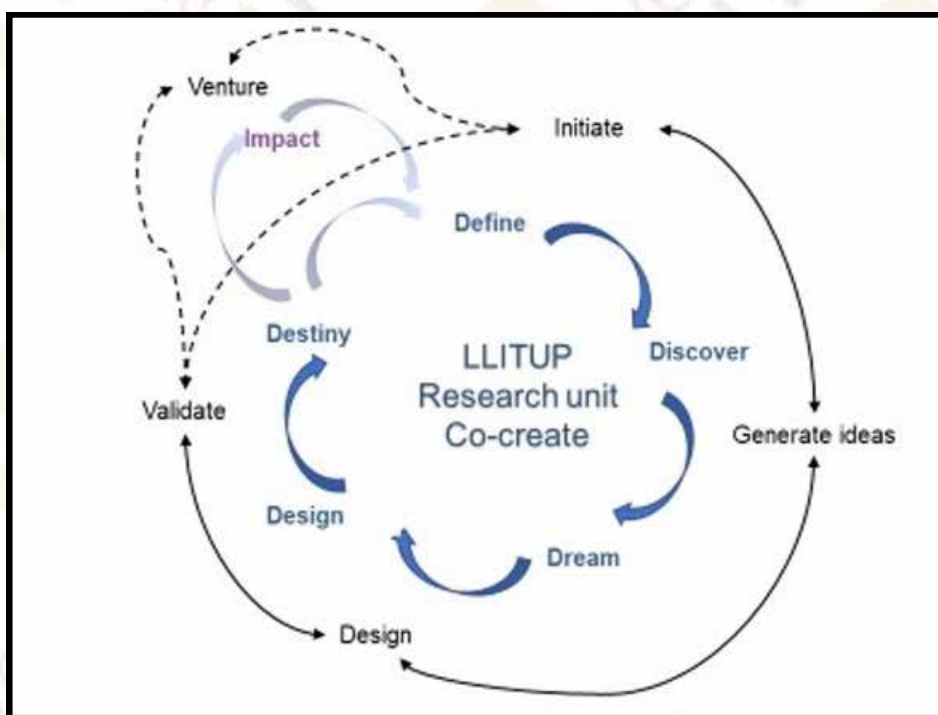
TIPS:

1. Short and sweet
2. Focus on Value and Collaboration
3. Simple language

Day 6–Appreciative Inquiry for Teaching Innovation

LLITUP is grounded in the Living Lab research paradigm but is unique in also employing Appreciative Inquiry as both a paradigm and a research strategy. Appreciative inquiry, through its Define, Dream, Design, Develop and Destiny phases, is a powerful tool for encouraging innovation and positive change. LLITUP, through our work in the Collaboratorium, also strongly believes in innovation through the purposeful integration of technology as cognitive tools. These approaches are used in all our modules and the positive outcomes are tangible. One example of this was the Reimagine Teaching at UP initiative that LLITUP championed in 2021 and 2022.

To bring these ideas together, Prof Callaghan and Jody presented a workshop titled “Appreciative Inquiry for Innovative Teaching”. Participants received a quick crash course in computers as cognitive tools (or mindtools), and then the fun began. They developed innovative activity plans to enhance their teaching through the use of computers as cognitive tools. While we guided participants through the initial phases of Appreciative Inquiry, we look forward to seeing the Destiny of their activities.



Appreciative inquiry as a paradigm and research strategy

Day 7–Student Competition Expo

Students are central to LLITUP's mission – researching to inform teaching and teaching to inform research. Education students, as pre-service teachers, are therefore equally important. Over the years, LLITUP has reached thousands of students through general education modules (like OPV312), methodologies (where we taught or collaborated with lecturers), and student workshops. We have witnessed the empowerment that students gain from activities where innovation is driven through technology integration.

As part of the 10 years of LLITUP celebrations, the technology integration plan competition was launched to challenge students to create technology-infused teaching plans. This was not a simple 'find a gadget' challenge. Participants had to carefully consider the apps they would use, pairing them with specific content and well-thought-out pedagogy. The goal was to craft CAPS-aligned content and design engaging classroom activities that incorporated meaningful technology integration – all while juggling their regular academic workload.



Student Competition Finalists

continued on next page

The competition process had three key steps. Firstly, students selected five technological tools or apps, focusing not on popularity but on their potential to enhance learning. They critically evaluated whether their chosen tools could authentically improve the classroom experience for learners. Secondly, they created content to pair with the apps, ensuring it was rich, engaging, and interactive. Finalists transformed traditional content into active learning experiences, adding depth and promoting learner engagement. Finally, participants designed pedagogical approaches to pair with their tools and content. They incorporated strategies such as mobile learning, flipped classrooms, and gamification to create authentic learning experiences.

On 15 October, the finalists Thejil Maharaj, Magdeline Makhubela, Sipho Mampana, Christopher Masango, Humphrey Ngobeneni and Lerato Sakoane presented their plans at an expo in LLITUP's F-Lab. The judges were blown away by the fresh, innovative teaching ideas that emerged from the competition. The winners were Magdeline Makhubela (first place), Thejil Maharaj (second place), and Christopher Masango (third place).

The competition was a resounding success, demonstrating that when students are given the opportunity, they can reimagine classroom experiences with technology as the vehicle. We are incredibly proud of the students who showcased the faculty's ability to prepare 21st-century teachers and highlighted the exciting potential of meaningful technology integration in the classroom



Prizegiving of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners

Day 8–Coding & Robotics Playshop

Day 8 linked to our story on day 3. However, this time we focused on the manner in which LLITUP confronts disruptions in education. Our steps always include Dream2Play, Dream2Learn, Dream2Teach, and Dream2Research. These approaches have been invaluable to LLITUP as we explored and pioneered the adoption of mobile apps in teaching and learning, addressed teaching and learning challenges of #FeesMustFall and the COVID pandemic, and embraced the onset of Coding and Robotics and AI in education.



Participants of the Coding & Robotics Playshop

Day 8 featured a Coding & Robotics Playshop where attendees explored unplugged coding and robotics concepts through play. With three unplugged stations– Algorithm Adventures, Debugging Detective, and the Dice-Based Creation Station – participants had the opportunity to explore different aspects of the coding and robotics world.

At Algorithm Adventures, attendees became digital trailblazers, diving into the Blockly and AlgoRun realms. Their mission? To navigate mazes of logic puzzles and create algorithms to save a virtual world. Next, the room buzzed with detective energy at the Debugging Detective station. Code criminals had snuck bugs into the code of houses, the zoo, and playground mats. Intrepid sleuths had to catch these bugs and rewrite the correct code for the Beebots to stay on track. Finally, at the Dice-Based Creation Station, a pair of magical dice directed participants' adventures. One die determined movements (right, left, forward, backward), while the other introduced challenges like loops and conditionals. Participants became storytellers, crafting whimsical adventures for their Beebots on mats featuring a township, a city, and ocean explorations. The hands-on session immersed participants, encouraging collaboration and celebrating successes at each station. Attendees left buzzing with inspiration, already imagining how to adapt these activities for their classrooms

Day 9–Soft Skill Integration Workshop

In 2018, the Department of Basic education introduced the Professional Development Framework for Digital Learning (PDFDL). The Faculty of Education sought an innovative way to address the digital competencies required by this framework without developing new modules or extensive training for students. In early 2019, faculty workshops began, and various modules adopted a gamified plan for digital badges that promote student competencies. In this way, the students are subtly trained in digital competence through their existing modules and could demonstrate these competencies through the badges they earned. Gamification proved to be an effective tool in encouraging participation in digital competence development from both lecturers and students.

Ten digital badges support the development of competencies in the faculty. LLITUP has been involved in the development, roll-out, and evolution of this initiative, and various postgraduate studies have been conducted on this innovation.

On day 9, Gontse and Prof Callaghan presented a workshop on soft skill integration to participants from the various faculties within the University. Participants were introduced to the idea of using micro-credentials (such as badges) to develop soft skills. They envisioned what this could mean in their own practice and shared innovative and diverse ideas. Finally, participants were tasked with developing an idea for an activity that students could complete and earn a badge or micro-credential.



Gontse Mthelebofu and participants of the Soft Skills Integration Workshop

Day 10–LLITUP Success Stories

LLITUP acknowledges that a research unit like ours cannot exist without the contributions of others. As Jody puts it, “LLITUP creates a round table where various stakeholders can sit together to solve educational problems and dream up innovative ideas”. Over the years, LLITUP’s journey has been enriched by many stakeholders, each contributing in unique ways to teaching, learning, or researching innovative teaching.

Our final day included presentations from some of our most prominent stakeholders including Prof. Lizette de Jager, Head of department Intermediate Teaching at CPUT (the Positive Deviant), Ms. Verasha Sing, telecoms expert turned educator (the Energizer), Candice du Preez, Interactive AV Solutions (the Dreamcatcher), and David Sekao (Lesson Study Man) and Elmien Claassens (the Groupie). During the session we also awarded prizes and celebrate Dr Celeste Combrinck’s induction as our first Honorary LLITUPian



The LLITUP Team

A special word of thanks.

The LLITUP research unit extends heartfelt thanks to all of our stakeholders who have journeyed with us over the past 10 years. We would especially like to thank our Deans, Prof Chika Sehoole and Prof Irma Eloff for their unwavering support.

We are also grateful to the Heads of Department in SMTE, Prof Max Braun, Prof Gerrit Stols, and Prof Ugorji Ogbonnaya – for creating a space where we can pursue our LLITUP dreams. Finally, a special thanks for the departmental administrators at SMTE, Sophia le Roux and Buhle Oliphant, for their dedication and efforts in making our 10-year journey and 10-day festivities possible.

THRIVE

Resilience Evidence from Africa



THRIVE

Resilience Evidence from Africa

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**Official social media pages of the
Centre for the Study of Resilience**



Centre for the Study of Resilience



@CSR_UP

Global views on the resilience of school-attending youth with experiences of marginalisation

Prof. Tassos Matsopoulos,
Director of School Psychology Laboratory, University of Crete.

Hosted by Prof. Linda Theron, Prof. Anastassios (Tassos) Matsopoulos, University of Crete visited the Centre for the Study of Resilience and Department of Educational Psychology, University of Pretoria, in August 2024 as part of the Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Programme. Professor Matsopoulos is the Director of the Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Programme 'Resilience in Educational Contexts'. The visit builds on collaboration between these research leaders with a focus on a School Psychology International special issue on resilience and marginalised youth.

Professor Matsopoulos met with colleagues of the Centre for the Study of Resilience, the Department of Educational Psychology, as well as the Department of Early Childhood Education to discuss educational and research projects, as well as observe the context of training of educational psychology students at the University of Pretoria – including school-based visits where MEd (Educational Psychology)-students participate in offering a resilience programme to adolescent girls. Professor Matsopoulos also delivered two lectures to postgraduate students.

In the next stage of the Erasmus Mundus grant, Prof. Ruth Mampane and Prof. Funke Omidire, both from the Department of Educational Psychology, University of Pretoria, will visit the School Psychology Laboratory, University of Crete.



*From left: Ms Joyce Jakavula (Project Coordinator for R-NEET at the University of Pretoria and Research Assistant at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria); Dr Nombuso Gama (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria); Prof. Linda Theron (Professor at the Centre for the Study of Resilience and Full Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria); Mrs Mariza Matsopoulos; Prof. Ruth Mampane (Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria); Prof. Margaret Omidire (Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria); Prof. Anastassios (Tassos) Matsopoulos (Director of the Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Programme "Resilience in Educational Contexts", University of Crete); Prof. Liesel Ebersöhn (Director of the Centre for the Study of Resilience and Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria).

Resilience to COVID-19 challenges: Lessons for school psychologists serving school-attending youth with experiences of marginalisation



Parents' perceptions and evaluation of the implementation of a resilience curriculum in Greek schools



Grandmothers flock to provide social support: a sociocultural pathway to resilience in high adversity spaces

Dr Judi Aubel, a public health anthropologist and co-founder of The Grandmother Project, shared insights on evidence of how positive change is enabled when socio-cultural resources are mobilised in high-adversity spaces. The Change Through Culture movement of the worldwide Grandmother Project operationalises evidence synonymous with the Relationship-Resourced Resilience theory (Ebersöhn, 2019).

The Grandmother Project demonstrates a significant shift in community health strategies by focusing on a redefined role of grandmothers in non-Western societies. Traditionally seen as caregivers, these matriarchs are now recognised as vital agents of social change, influencing the health and well-being of women, children, and adolescents across generations. Dr Aubel asserts that the wisdom of grandmothers has often been marginalised in public health and development research, overshadowed by Western views that emphasise nuclear family structures.

By placing grandmothers at the forefront of social initiatives, the Grandmother Project aims to bridge the gap between traditional practices and modern development efforts. This groundbreaking project highlights the importance of these experienced women as custodians of cultural heritage and leaders of progressive transformation in their communities. Grandmother Project's holistic strategies, which include the involvement of grandmothers, have demonstrated that these women can be powerful advocates for change when engaged respectfully.

For instance, the Girls' Holistic Development Programme in Senegal effectively tackles issues such as child marriage, female genital mutilation, and girls' education by incorporating grandmothers in leadership training and intergenerational dialogue sessions. These initiatives have not only empowered grandmothers to adapt their practices but have also significantly shifted community norms.

Grandmothers offer invaluable intergenerational knowledge crucial for community health, from maternal care to adolescent development"
- Dr Judi Aubel

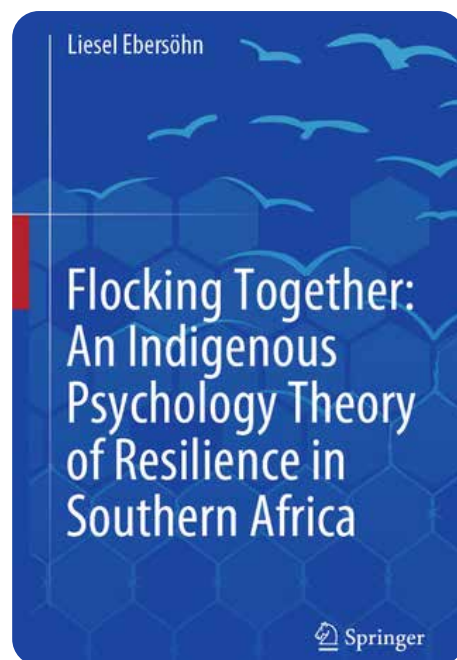


Dr Judi Aubel, Executive Director of the Grandmother Project

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The impact of these interventions has been profound. An evaluation of the Girls' Holistic Development programme by Georgetown University highlighted major improvements in school attendance, a reduction in child marriage rates, and a change in attitudes towards female genital mutilation. The involvement of grandmothers in these efforts showcases the potential of tradition when it is combined with new information and respectful engagement. The success of the Grandmother Project provides important lessons for global development. By understanding family dynamics in collectivist cultures and valuing the voices of elderly women, community-based interventions can become more effective and sustainable. Instead of imposing external solutions, the Grandmother Project advocates for an approach that treats communities as partners in development, utilising the cultural wisdom inherent within them.



Postdoctoral Student mentoring: focusing on resilience given the education challenge of war and conflict

Dr Tahani Aldahdouh is a postdoctoral research fellow at Tampere University, Finland. For this postdoctoral study, she is collaborating with, amongst others, the Centre for the Study of Resilience on a study: 'Resilience Between Siege and Genocide: Gaza's University Teachers Speak'. Dr Aldahdouh's study was awarded a two-year fellowship from the Tampere Institute of Advanced Study (IAS) following a selection process involving 367 applicants. Dr Aldahdouh's project was chosen for its exploration of resilience among university teachers in Gaza following the genocide in 2023-2024.

Dr Aldahdouh's research stands to gain considerably from the collaboration with Prof. Liesel Ebersöhn, Centre for the Study of Resilience (University of Pretoria), Prof. Caroline Mansfield (Edith Cowan University), Dr Ghassan Elkahlout, and Dr Sansom Milton (Centre for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies, Qatar), and Dr Jeremy Oldfield (Manchester Metropolitan University).

Dr Aldahdouh's research seeks to understand how university teachers in Gaza navigate extreme adversity and unique challenges. The study uses a social-ecological perspective to explore the interaction of protective and risk factors at the individual, institutional, and societal levels.



Key elements of Dr Aldahdouh's research include narrative interviews with Gaza's university teachers, focus groups with higher education administrators, and documentary analysis of recovery policies. The expected outcomes are not just a list of possibilities but a clear vision of the project's results.

They include identifying crucial resilience factors and modelling their interactions in post-genocide contexts, which will provide a comprehensive understanding of the resilience dynamics in such contexts. Planned outputs of Dr Aldahdouh's work include two open-access articles and presentations at international conferences, contributing significantly to the field of resilience studies.

Both South Africa and Palestine (Gaza) have experienced profound historical and ongoing adversities that shape their socio-economic landscapes. South Africa's post-apartheid transformation and the persistent inequalities offer critical lessons on resilience amid systemic challenges. Similarly, Gaza's protracted conflict and socio-political constraints demand an understanding of how communities, including university teachers, can adapt and thrive despite extreme adversities.

Moreover, the Centre for the Study of Resilience's work is pivotal in challenging the predominance of Eurocentric and Western resilience models. By focusing on the socio-ecological processes unique to the Global South, the Centre for the Study of Resilience generates knowledge that is more attuned to the realities of regions like Gaza. Further, the Centre for the Study of Resilience emphasises integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems and local socio-cultural practices into resilience studies. Gaza, with its cultural heritage and tight-knit community structures, can benefit from this approach. Centre for the Study of Resilience's methodologies could help uncover how Gaza's unique socio-cultural dynamics contribute to the resilience of its university teachers. This will provide a richer and more nuanced interpretation, which is central to Dr Aldahdouh's research.

Dr Tahani Aldahdouh,
Postdoctoral Research
Fellow, Tampere
University, Finland



"Understanding and enhancing university teachers' resilience is crucial for mitigating brain drain and ensuring continued advancement of academic progress in affected regions."

- Dr Tahani Aldahdouh

Postdoctoral Fellows collaborating to generate knowledge on resilience

University of Pretoria Postdoctoral Fellows hosted at the Faculty of Education (Dr Marisa Leask, Dr Nombuso Gama and Dr Wietske Boon) established a forum to combat academic isolation and enable peer support to navigate the complexities of. The Postdoctoral Forum provides collaborators with valuable opportunities to connect, share ideas, and support each other with participation in a roundtable discussion at the Faculty of Education Research Lekgotla, themed “Advancing Human-centred Education in Complexity”, as a first, collaborative event.

The theme of the conference, ‘Advancing Human-Centred Education in Complexity’, couldn’t have been more fitting for the inaugural gathering of this group. As Postdoctoral Fellows from different Faculty of Education departments and research centres, they were able to collaborate and present their diverse research interests. According to Dr Leask, the group was united by a common thread: resilience. Dr Wietske Boon’s exploration of Early Childhood Teacher Educators emphasised the role of resilience in upholding values-driven education, helping educators navigate challenges while aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Dr Nombuso Gama’s research on resilience embedded in street temporalities offered insights into how individuals in real-world environments adapt and persevere, demonstrating resilience in action. Similarly, Dr Shuaib Muhammed highlighted the importance of resilience in mental health, advocating for emotional and psychological support in Sub-Saharan schools to foster overall well-being. The research by Dr Jessica Versfeld demonstrated how expressive arts can cultivate resilience by strengthening social connectedness among teachers. Lastly, Dr Leask’s research on the enablers and constraints of school-based interventions showed how resilience fosters self-efficacy and agency in teachers, influencing both their perceptions of the intervention and their willingness to implement it.

*From left: Dr Marisa Leask (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria); Dr Nombuso Gama (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria); and Dr Wietske Boon (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria).





From* left: Dr Nombuso Gama (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria); and Dr Wietske Boon (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria).



***From left: Dr Marisa Leask (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria); Dr Nombuso Gama (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria); and Dr Wietske Boon (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria).**



***From left: Dr Shuaib Muhammed (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria); and Dr Marisa Leask (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria).**



***From left: Dr Marisa Leask (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria); Dr Nombuso Gama (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria); and Dr Wietske Boon (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria).**



BRICS Exchange for education research capacity development

Reverend Rue Hopley, Research and Centre Administrator at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, received a Kazan Federal University grant to attend the 2024 Summer University programme at this Tatarstan-based university in Russia. Rue engaged in an immersive academic and cultural experience designed for international researchers and lecturers in teacher education delegates with 400 participants from more than 40 countries delegates. One of the unique aspects of the programme was its interdisciplinary approach, allowing delegates to choose from a wide range of courses tailored to their academic interests and career goals. The course offerings included subjects such as Russian language and literature, artificial intelligence, economics, international relations, and environmental science. Each course was taught by esteemed faculty members from Kazan Federal University, one of Russia's oldest and most respected universities, known for its strong emphasis on research and innovation. Rev. Hopley attended the course on international relations as it was one of only two courses presented in English. The classes consisted of a variety of interesting subjects and concluded with the presentation of group projects on possible future BRICS+ collaborations. The group in which Rue participated focused on clean and renewable energy and was awarded first prize.



Rev. Rue Hopley receiving the 2024 Kazan University Summer University Programme participation certificate

Beyond the classroom, the Summer University emphasised experiential learning through a series of cultural immersion activities. Delegates had the chance to visit the Kazan Kremlin, a UNESCO World Heritage site, as well as other significant historical landmarks in the region. We also participated in workshops and seminars focused on Russian traditions, cuisine, and arts, giving Rue a well-rounded understanding of the country's cultural landscape.

A notable feature of the programme was its focus on fostering intercultural communication and collaboration. Participants engaged in group projects and discussions that encouraged us to share our perspectives and learn from each other's experiences. This not only enhanced our academic knowledge but also helped Rue develop essential soft skills such as teamwork, leadership, and cross-cultural communication.



Rev. Rue Hopley participating in a group discussion

Moreover, the Summer University offered several extracurricular activities, including sports events, language exchange programmes, and social gatherings, which provided delegates with ample opportunities to build lasting friendships and professional networks. The programme also included a closing ceremony where participants received certificates of completion, recognising our academic achievements and participation in the cultural activities.

Strengthening pre-service teacher capacity as a resilience-enabling pathway for education in the BRICS space

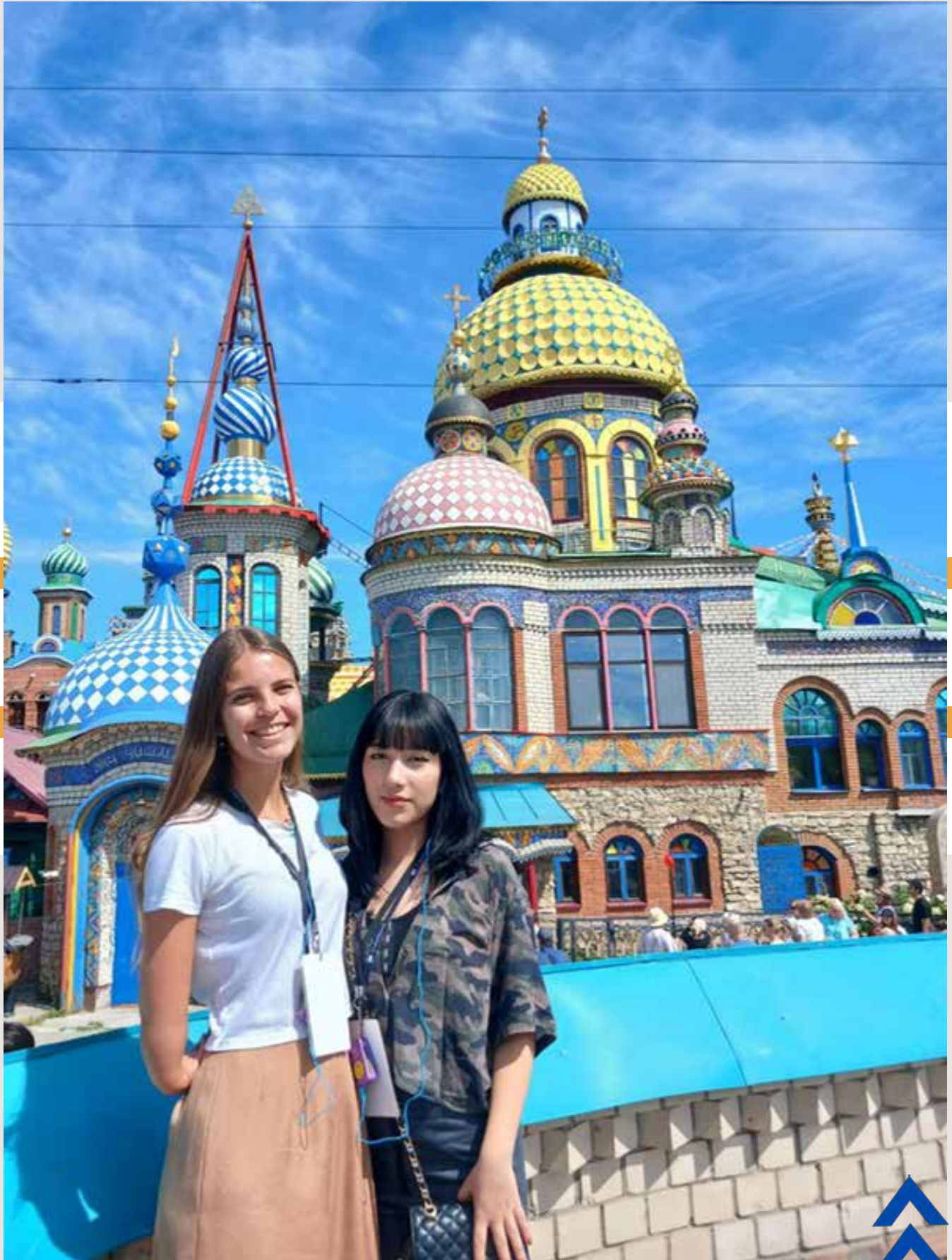
Uzaan Du Toit is a Centre for the Study of Resilience intern and pre-service education student was invited by the Kazan Federal University, an affiliate of the Centre for the Study of Resilience, to participate in the July 2024 Summer University programme at Kazan Federal University, Russia. Uzaan described Kazan Federal University as an institution rich with historical significance, where every building seemed to transport one back to the 16th century, yet with a modern and innovative atmosphere.

Uzaan networked with a range of delegates from across the globe, and especially from other BRICS nation-states, strengthening her appreciation for diversity and inclusion. The team-building exercises in the BRICS classes helped foster lasting friendships. These connections remained strong even after the program, with the group continuing to share stories of their lives via WhatsApp.



Ms Uzaan du Toit giving an invited speech as representative of English-speaking delegates at the closing ceremony of the July 2024 Summer University programme, Kazan Federal University representing English-speaking delegates.

Reflecting on her experience in Russia, Uzaan described it as “unforgettable.” She was grateful for the opportunity and cherished the lessons she learned during her stay. Initially, she chose the class on international relations because it was one of the two options taught in English. Uzaan had little prior knowledge of international relations and even less about the BRICS countries and their histories. However, the classes quickly captured her interest. This was partly because they were in a language she could easily understand and because the subject matter proved fascinating. The lecturers made the lessons engaging, encouraging participation in conversations and debates, which Uzaan eagerly joined. Her active engagement caught the attention of the lecturers, and she was awarded a certificate as one of only four students out of a class of 80 to receive the ‘Most Interactive Award.’ Uzaan also received certificates for ‘Winner of Track BRICS+: New Trends in International Relations’ for the best project on BRICS+ Cyber Security Organization, ‘Outstanding Achievement and High Level of Demonstrated Knowledge,’ and active participation in the Summer University project at Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, held from July 8 to July 22, 2024. These awards also came with an incredible opportunity for her future.



Ms Uzaan du Toit and Ms Victoria Padrin at the Tatarstan “Temple of all Religions”.

Doctoral Student International Dissemination of Research

Strong social connectedness strengthens teacher resilience in the Global South

Few teacher resilience studies exist in the Global South and South Africa. The Centre for the Study of Resilience co-sponsored former doctoral student Dr Jessica Versveld to present findings from her doctoral study at the 33rd International Congress of Psychology in Prague. Jessica presented a paper entitled 'Time to flock time together strengthens relationships and enhances trust to teach despite challenges.' Her study is nested in the Isithebe-intervention study, which leveraged the Afrocentric, Relationship-Resourced Resilience theory to investigate teacher resilience in an under-researched, Global South context.

Jessica shared qualitative Isithebe results which indicated that time spent together promoted a sense of belonging, safety, and trust amongst teachers to support one another by sharing ideas for informal professional development or caring for children, families, and friends who depend on such help to withstand ongoing challenges. Structured time to build relationships capitalises on dominant but marginalised Afrocentric belief systems favouring interdependent, collective resilience values, beliefs, and practices and encourages instructors to teach countering deficit notions of structurally disparate contexts.



Dr Jessica Versveld presenting at the 33rd International Congress of Psychology in Prague



Dr Jessica Versveld and Ms Maxine Manley, a doctoral student at the University of Pretoria (Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education), at the 33rd International Congress of Psychology in Prague

Methodological thoughts by a postdoctoral fellow on studying resilience and education in an emerging economy space

Dr Marisa Leask is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria. A primary research focus of Marisa is that of methodological approaches to implement evidence-based research in practice – be it at a school or an organisation, intervention implementation calls for an understanding of what motivates people to change and the context. She believes in the tenet that the way in which certain factors are negotiated across the different levels of the bioecological model determines sustainability. By bridging the gap between research and practice, she hopes to support initiatives that address quality education. Quality education is not about achieving specific outcomes but addressing equity. Her research focuses on how education can be a powerful tool for addressing inequalities, promoting inclusion, and empowering marginalised communities. It means providing all students, regardless of their background, with the skills they need to succeed. Success for Marisa means that students can participate in the economy, thereby breaking the cycle of poverty.

Passionate about learning, Marisa went back to university when her children were completing high school to update her knowledge. Going back to university confirmed her interest in doing research. With the support of her family and the confidence of her supervisors in my abilities, Marisa not only redid her honours but completed a Masters and PhD. Marisa's academic journey has been interwoven with being part of the Centre for the Study of Resilience, and as of 1 July 2024, she started as a Postdoctoral student.

On a personal level, Marisa is proud to be a wife and a mother of two sons. With her Italian background, she developed a passion for food and enjoys cooking. Quality time for Marisa is sharing a delicious meal with her family.

Dr Marisa Leask
(Postdoctoral Fellow at
the Centre for the Study
of Resilience, University
of Pretoria)



Wellbeing as a pathway to resilience: The Wellbeing in Higher Education Network Summit, Querétaro, Mexico



The Centre for the study of Resilience co-sponsored (with The Wellbeing Project) the attendance of a doctoral student, Janine De Bruin, at the July 2024 Wellbeing in Higher Education Network Summit in Querétaro, Mexico. This summit, which focused on the importance of ecological belonging in higher education, brought together a diverse group of passionate individuals from around the world who are dedicated to promoting wellbeing in various spaces.

The summit was an intimate four-day gathering where participants engaged in thought-provoking discussions about how students can be supported in developing into not just capable workers but well-rounded, healthy individuals who are prepared for life. It was inspiring to see the commitment to nurturing students who have a sustainable outlook and who are driven to positively empower their communities.

One of the key themes of the summit was the concept of ecological belonging and its crucial role in holistic wellbeing. Ecological belonging emphasises the deep connection between individuals and their environment. When students feel a sense of belonging to the spaces they inhabit—whether physical, social, or academic—they are more likely to thrive. This connection fosters a holistic sense of wellbeing, allowing students to develop emotionally, mentally, and socially. It reminds us that education should not only prepare students for their careers but also equip them with the tools to live meaningful, fulfilling lives.



Janine de Bruin (Research assistant at the Centre for the Study of Resilience) and Initiator at TaraSri Foundation

This summit also underscored the importance of staying connected with our cultural heritage, something particularly relevant for us in South Africa. We must remember the rituals, traditions, and practices that have kept our communities healthy for generations. These cultural ties are more than just customs—they are vital to our wellbeing. By reconnecting with the earth, staying in tune with our bodies, and living in the present moment, we can cultivate a sense of belonging that is essential for holistic wellbeing. Our cultural heritage is a source of strength and resilience that we should cherish and integrate into our daily lives.

Janine mentions that the summit was not only an opportunity to engage in enriching conversations but also a chance to experience the vibrant culture of Querétaro. "The organisers ensured that our time was filled with culturally rich experiences and wonderful food, making the event all the more memorable. I am deeply grateful to the organisers, especially Alejandra Garza and Silvana Cisneros from the Wellbeing Project, as well as the Centre for the Study of Resilience for providing me with this incredible opportunity. It was truly a privilege to be part of such an important and impactful gathering".

As we continue our work in promoting wellbeing, let us carry forward the lessons learned from this summit and apply them in our efforts to create environments where students — and indeed all individuals, can flourish.



Participant at this years Wellbeing in Higher Education Network Summit in Querétaro, Mexico.

Querétaro city centre in Mexico



A tribute to a young researcher at the Centre for the Study of Resilience

Sfiso Sabelo Masina

It is with heavy hearts that we remember a young academic whose life was tragically and senselessly cut short, leaving behind a legacy of promise and potential. Though Sfiso's time with us was too brief, it was marked by remarkable intelligence, boundless ambition, and a genuine kindness that touched all who knew him.

Sfiso's journey was one of resilience and determination. He uplifted himself from humble beginnings, using his passion for knowledge as a means to create a brighter future for himself and those around him. His academic pursuits were not just a path to personal success but a way to uplift his community and contribute to the betterment of South Africa. His work was a testament to his belief in the power of education to transform lives and societies.

In his academic endeavours, Sfiso's brilliance set him apart. His unwavering dedication to his field inspired peers and mentors alike. He consistently strived for excellence, driven not only by his own aspirations but by a deep commitment to making a positive impact on others. His exceptional contributions to the Masidlale Study focused on improving the lives of children in distress through play, will resonate in the field of educational psychology and beyond for years to come.



Beyond his academic achievements, Sfiso was a beacon of compassion and care. He was the friend who would always lend a listening ear, the colleague who offered support without hesitation, and the student who sought to make the world a better place through his work. His ambitions were never just for personal gain; they were rooted in a desire to contribute positively to society.

Sfiso preparing shisanyama for the Masidlale Research group during a 2021 Gqeberha research visit



The loss of such a vibrant and promising life is profoundly felt by all who had the privilege of knowing him. His potential was immense, and his future was bright. While we mourn his passing, we also celebrate the indelible mark he left on our hearts and minds.

I would like to share a heartwarming encounter from Prof. Kobus Maree, who had the privilege of witnessing Sfiso's innate compassion firsthand. Several months ago, Prof. Maree encountered a panicked dove near his door. Despite his efforts to help, the bird remained terrified and kept crashing into the shutter glass. Then, to his relief, Sfiso appeared. With a few gestures, he understood the situation, closed the glass door, and gently caught the bird. Holding it in his big, comforting hands, Sfiso released it into the open air. Professor Maree praised him for his natural compassion, remarking that Sfiso was born to be a psychologist.

Though Sfiso is no longer with us, his spirit lives on in the memories we hold dear and in the lasting impact of his work. We honour his legacy by continuing to pursue our own passions with the same vigour and care that he exemplified.

Rest in peace, dear friend. Your journey was far too short, but your light will continue to shine in the lives of those you touched with your bright, big smile and your beautiful big heart.



Masidlale Study research visit,
Gqeberha 2021

*From left: Mr Sfiso Masina; Dr
Mokgaetji Somo; Rev. Rue
Hopley; and Prof. Liesel
Ebersöhn.



New Centre for the Study of Resilience-affiliated publications

Journal articles

Ebersöhn, L., Murphy, P.K., & Basson, L. (2024). The TAPESTRe framework: equalising an uneven global knowledge base to inform relevant, responsible and responsive evidence-based education policy and practice. *Revista de Políticas Educacionais*, V. 18, December 2024, p. 1-21. (Accepted)

Ebersöhn, L. (2024). Flocking to transform lives in inequality: including evidence-based indigenous knowledge in inclusive education agendas. *Revista Brasileira De Educação Especial*. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1980-54702024V30E0108>

Abou Jaoude, G. J., Leiva-Granados, R., Mcgranahan, R., Callaghan, P., Haghparast-Bidgoli, H., Basson, L., Ebersöhn, L., Gu, Q., & Skordis, J. (2024). Universal Primary School Interventions to Improve Child Social-Emotional and Mental Health Outcomes: A Systematic Review of Economic Evaluations. *School Mental Health*, 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-024-09642-0>

Jonker, C., Graham M. A., & Ebersöhn, L. (2024). Measuring dimensions of Teacher resilience in Africa: self-efficacy and teacher efficacy. *South African Journal of Education*. 44(3), <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v44n3a2481>

Akinduyo, T. E., & Theron, L.C. (2024). Factors contributing to the resilience of African widows: A scoping review. *OMEGA – Journal of Death and Dying*. DOI: 10.1177/00302228241252857

Fouche, A., Cockcroft, K., & Theron, L. (2024). The COVID-19 resilience journey of vulnerable young South Africans. *Current Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-024-06018-0>

Ncube, B., Theron, L., & Haffeejee, S. (2024). Resilience to structural violence: an exploration of the multisystemic resources that enable youth hope. *South African Journal of Psychology*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00812463241266337>

Theron, L.C., Levine, D. T., & Haffeejee, S. (2024). NEET and resilient: The lived experiences of a sample of South African emerging adults. *International Journal of Psychology*. <http://doi.org/10.1002/ijop.13219>

Goodman, M., Theron, L., McPherson, H., Seidel, S., Raimer-Goodman, L., Munene, K., & Gatwiri, C. (2024). Multisystemic factors predicting street migration of children in Kenya: A multilevel longitudinal study of families and villages. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 154, 106897. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2024.106897>

Haffeejee, S., Theron, L., & Moretti, M. (2024). Critical reflections on the usefulness of eConnect to a sample of child and youth care workers in South Africa. *Residential Treatment for Children & Youth*, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0886571X.2024.2338761>

Wright, C. Y., Millar, D. A., Kapwata, T., Rodgers, G., Batini, C., & Theron, L. (2024). Social-ecological-resilience enablers among youth residing in the air polluted Highveld Priority Area of South Africa. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 29(1), <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2024.2322569>

Levine, D. T., Theron, L., Haffeejee, S., & Ungar, M. (2024). Resilience to depression among emerging adults in South Africa: Insights from digital diaries. *Emerging Adulthood*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21676968241273319>

New Centre for the Study of Resilience-affiliated publications

Chapters in books

Ebersöhn, L., & Edwards, M. (2024). Far-flung does not mean far-fetched: Promoting teacher resilience through professional development in higher education engagement with in-service teachers in remote schools. In J. Madalińska-Michalak, & M. A. Flores (Eds.), *Teacher and school resilience in an era of uncertainty*. Palgrave Macmillan/Springer. (Accepted)

Centre for the Study of Resilience monthly Much and Mingle get together



*From left: Ms Joyce Jakavula (Research Assistant at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria); Dr Nombuso Gama (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria); Mrs Jamie Spies (Research Assistant at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria); and Rev. Rue Hopley (Research Assistant at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria).



*From left: Dr Marisa Leask (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria); and Mrs Janine de Bruin (Research assistant at the Centre for the Study of Resilience).



*From left: Prof. Liesel Ebersöhn (Director of the Centre for the Study of Resilience and Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria); and Prof. Linda Theron (Professor at the Centre for the Study of Resilience and Full Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria).



*From left: Prof. Jaekyung Lee (Professor and former dean of education at the University of Buffalo, Fellow of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), Fulbright Global Inform Scholar and World Education Research Association (WERA) Visiting Researcher); Prof. Linda Theron (Professor at the Centre for the Study of Resilience and Full Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria); Rev. Rue Hopley (Research Assistant at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria); Dr Marisa Leask (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria); Ms Rosanne Swallow (Student at University of Pretoria); Mrs Jamie Spies (Research Assistant at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria); Dr Nombuso Gama (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria); and Ms Joyce Jakavula (Research Assistant at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria).

Connect with the Centre for the Study of Resilience

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CEA

Centre for Evaluation and Assessment



CEA Supports the DBE in Launching National and International Assessment Results



Back row: From Left: Ms Shine Aung (CEA), Ms Tshepang Thubane (DBE), Ms Taslima Ahmed, Ms Prudence Shai, Ms Etinosa Izevbogie, Mr Gabriel Mokoena (CEA) and Mr Sinethemba Mthimkhulu (University of Pretoria)

Front row: From left: Dr Nonhlanhla Shozi (DBE), Prof Funke Omidire (CEA), Dr Mark Chetty, Ms Reshoketswe Monama and Mrs Dikeledi Mathebe (DBE)

The Minister of Basic Education, Ms Siviwe Gwarube, launched the results of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) at a prestigious event organised by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) with the support from the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) on the 4th of December 2024. The release of the TIMSS national report was made concurrently with the IEA's release of the international results of TIMSS. The Department of Basic Education also presented the report of the regional study, Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational

Quality (SEACMEQ) as well as a set of four South African Systemic Evaluation reports. The CEA has also been instrumental in preparing other reports for the Department, including the report for the Early Learning National Assessment (ELNA), the Standard Setting Technical Report, and the Technical Advisory Group report.



Basic Education Minister Releases the TIMSS 2023 Results



Prof Funke Omidire (Director of the CEA) and Ms Siviwe Gwarube (Minister of Basic Education)

The programme for the release of the TIMSS results and the other intervention reports included a keynote address by the Minister of Basic Education. Prof Omidire was invited to be part of the panel discussion, along with Dr Rufus Poliah, Dr Qetelo Moloi and Mr Basil Manual. The event was attended by officials from all spheres of government as well as non-governmental organisations and teacher unions.

Dr Mark Chetty presented the TIMSS 2023 results, and a host of other presentations followed, including those by international presenters such as Dr Ursula Schwanter and Mr Maurice Walker of the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER). Dr Nonhlanhla Shoji presented the results of SEACMEQ V, while Prof Anil Kanjee presented on South African Systemic Evaluation.

CEA HOSTS WEBINAR ON INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION

The Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) invited experts in the field of instrument development to present their research at its first webinar on the 25th April 2024. In her opening remarks, Prof Funke Omidire, the Director of the CEA, welcomed the attendees and expressed her delight with the centre's move to facilitate these kinds of conversations through webinars. Prof Omidire indicated that this is the first in the series of webinars planned by the CEA for the year 2024. Dr Celest Combrinck, from the Science, Mathematics and Technology Education Department (SMTE) introduced the first presenter, Prof Caroline Long of the University of Johannesburg (UJ). Prof Long's presentation, entitled "Alignment of theory, measurement", covered the theoretical aspect of instrument development and used the Rasch measurement theory as the theoretical basis. The presentation also drew from a model for teacher education that privileged the notion of agency and the empowerment of teachers by Poonam Batra. The model's building block includes A Creative Activity, Good Education, Teacher Education, Reform Mathematics Education, Assessment and Measurement, and Research Approach.

In presenting on the aspect of good education, as an example, Prof Long used the scores obtained by countries in the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). Prof Long argued that it would be short-sighted to rearrange the primary school curriculum to include more mathematics and less art and music based on the performance on TIMSS. With regards to mathematics teacher education, the presentation attempted to challenge the thinking around assessment and measurement while seeing the critical need for conceptualizing theory, constructing measures and reflecting on outcomes. Prof Omidire introduced the second presenter, Dr Qetelo Moloi, who presented on "Constructing high quality data collection instrument for research: Advantages of using the Rasch measurement model". Dr Moloi's presentation gave an overview of popular research instruments, measurement, instrument validity and validation, the principles of Rasch measurement theory, instrument development, and instrument security. The question and answer session was facilitated by Mr Jody Joubert, a lecturer at the SMTE. Prof Ugorji Ogbonnaya, Head of Department, gave the vote of thanks.

CEA Director Leads a Successful Colloquium On Multilingualism And Multilingual Education



The Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) hosted a colloquium on multilingualism and Multilingual Education on the 30th of October 2024. The hybrid event provided insightful conversations in understanding the complexities of our multilingual context and forged a way forward towards a more culturally and linguistically accommodative learning environment. The programme for the event was directed by Ms Tshililo Nembambula, who facilitated the remarkable success of the event.

The colloquium was led by a renowned expert in the field of Multilingualism and Multilingual Education, Prof Funke Omidire. In setting the tone for the conversation, Prof Omidire referred to the models of multilingual education, which include Language as a Resource (LAR), Translanguaging Theory, the Collaborative Team Teaching (CTT) Model, The Dynamic Model of Multilingual Education (DMM), an Integrated Model of Multilingual Education, and Content and Language Integrated Learning. Among the presenters were a registered educational psychologist and a PhD candidate at the University of Pretoria, Ms Janine De Bruin, who presented on

“Language of the Heart: The role of mother-tongue learning in fostering identity and involvement”. A Senior Professor of International Comparative and Intercultural Education research at the University of Hamburg, Germany, Prof Ingrid Gogolin, presented on “Multilingual Literacies: Empowering the next generation”. The Director of the Assessment Directorate at the Department of Basic Education, Dr Mark Chetty, presented on “Language and Education: Introducing Mother-Tongue Based Bilingual Education” (MTBBE) on behalf of Dr Naledi Mbude-Mehana. Prof Rinelle Evans, a professor emerita, University of Pretoria, presented on “Navigating the multilingual classroom with English as the instructional rudder”. Dr Ruth Aluko’s presentation was entitled “What role can distance education play in institutionalizing multilingual education at teacher training institutions? Dr Aluko is a researcher within the Unit for Distance Education at the University of Pretoria. Prof Liesel Ebersöhn, a discussant for the colloquium, contributed enormously to the conversation. Prof Ebersöhn acknowledged the presenters and participants’ contributions and efficiently synthesized the diverse discussions.



From Left: Mr Gabriel Mokoena (CEA), Prof Jakeyung Lee (University at Buffalo), Mr Nkosi (PS Fourie Primary School) during Prof Lee's visit to South African schools.



Ms Shine Aung and Ms Etinosa Izevbogie providing art lessons at PS Fourie Primary School in Eersterust.



CEA staff members joins the Groenkloof mobile learning race as part of the festivities celebrating 10 years of the Living Lab for Innovative Teaching at the University of Pretoria (LLITUP).



Officials from the Department for Basic Education, Dr Nonhlanhla Shoji (Researcher) and Dr Mark Chetty (Director of the Assessment Directorate) attended the inaugural lecture of Prof Funke Omidire at the University of Pretoria.



Prof Ugorji Ogbonnaya (Science, Mathematics and Technology Education Department), Dr Antoinette van der Merwe (Albert Luthuli Leadership Institute) and Mr Gabriel Mokoena (CEA) attended the RESEP conference in Stellenbosch.

Dr Celeste Combrinck, a senior lecturer in the Science Mathematics and Technology Education Department, conducted a workshop on analysing data using SPSS. The workshop was organised by the CEA and aimed at benefiting postgraduate students at the University of Pretoria.



Standard-setting Workshops for National and International Assessments

The CEA hosts DBE workshops at the Faculty of Education

The Department of Basic Education commissioned a series of standard-setting workshops on three assessments: Early Learning National Assessment (ELNA), Systemic Evaluation Study, and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). The workshops were coordinated and organized by the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA), University of Pretoria. The first part of the workshop was hosted at the Department of Basic Education offices. The second and the third parts were hosted by the CEA at the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. The workshops were facilitated by the members of the PIRLS 2021 Technical Advisory Group (TAG), Prof Anil Kanjee and Dr Qetelo Moloi. The workshops focused on the national assessments, Systemic Evaluation, the Early Learning National Assessment (ELNA), and the international assessment, the

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). The expected outcomes of the workshop were to know what standard setting is, identifying different methods of standard setting, identifying main features of objective standard setting), differentiating between "Essential" and "Non-Essential" items in a test, and completing rating sheets of items in each test.

The panelists were trained to rate the assessment items in the eleven official languages. The panelists rated the Grade three, Grade six and Grade nine language items for the Systemic Evaluation, Grade three items for the ELNA, and the Grade four and Grade six items for PIRLS.



Pedagogical Multicultural Communities in Teacher Preparation

Prof Funke Omidire, the Director of the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment, and Dr Diane Rodriguez from Fordham University, USA, co-presented on Multicultural Communities in



“Teacher Preparation” at the Education Association of South Africa’s annual conference. This was held on the 14th to 17th January 2024 at the Mount Grace Hotel and Spa in Magaliesberg. Fordham University and the University of Pretoria are in a faculty collaboration partnership to enhance multicultural pedagogical communities.

The presentation was based on research that was conducted among teachers in New York and Pretoria, to understand their views on teaching culturally and linguistically diverse learners. The objective of this collaboration is to explore methods to improve teacher training programmes for fostering cultural integration and effective pedagogical intervention. The focus of this study is to uncover and analyze perspectives of school teachers in Pretoria, South Africa, and New York in the USA with the emphasis on teaching culturally and linguistically diverse learners in a multicultural school context. The key findings of the study are the identification of challenges faced by teachers in linguistically diverse classroom environments as well as the exploration of how multiculturalism can be a valuable tool to address these challenges.

CEA Hosts a Post-doctoral Fellow University of Ilorin



Dr Muhammed Shuaib Abolakale

Qualifications: B.Ed, M.Ed and Ph.D. in Educational Guidance and Counselling.

Institution: University of Ilorin

“My area of research is education and well-being. I am specifically involved in studies and projects that focus on school based mental health.”



Currency and Agency of Assessment as a Vehicle for Realising the Envisaged Learner



From left: Prof Funke Omidire (Director of the CEA), Prof Mary Metcalf and Dr Rufus Poliah (Department of Basic Education)

The Department of Basic Education (DBE), led by then minister Mrs Angie Motshekga, hosted its ninth Basic Education Sector hybrid lekgotla at the Birchwood Conference Centre in Boksburg from the 14th to 16th March 2024. The lekgotla aimed at fostering critical discussions and strategies to move the Basic Education sector forward.

The 2024 lekgotla took place under the theme "Equipping learners with knowledge and skills for a changing world". Stakeholders who attended the gathering included officials such as Members of the Executive Council (MECs); Heads of Departments (HoDs); representatives of teacher, parent, and learner organisations; local and international academics, and experts from post-school education sectors.

Prof Funke Omidire, the Director of the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA), along with Dr Rufus Poliah from the DBE, participated in a moderated discussion with the theme "The currency and agency of assessments as a vehicle for realising the envisaged learner", chaired by Prof Mary Metcalf of the University of Johannesburg. In unpacking the theme for the panel discussion, Dr Poliah referred to the three components of this theme. Firstly there is the envisaged learner, who is a learner who can think critically and creatively, and is able to solve problems. This is a 21st century learner who must be digital and entrepreneurial in terms of the skills they possess. Secondly, using assessment as the agent, the driver, the point of intervention and

action. How do we use assessment appropriately so that assessment brings actualisation to the learner that we want to see in the South African system? Thirdly, assessment as a vehicle. Dr Poliah maintained that assessment must be used to evaluate learning. Prof Omidire, who was introduced as a professor at the University of Pretoria and an educational psychologist with deep interest in multilingualism and multilingual education, emphasised the importance of teacher development to teach reading. This was in the wake of the PIRLS 2021 results, which revealed that 81% of learners in South Africa did not reach the PIRLS CenterPoint of 500. Prof Omidire emphasised that the purpose of the assessment, in terms of high stakes assessments, is to enable the government to pinpoint where the emphasis should be placed.



Transforming Lives through Education: A Comparative Study of Korea and South Africa

The Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) and Centre for the Study of Resilience (CSR) in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria, in collaboration with the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) hosted a seminar entitled “Transforming Lives through Education: A Comparative Study of Korea and South Africa”. The seminar was presented by Prof Jakeyung Lee, a professor and former dean of education at the University at Buffalo, SUNY. Being a Fellow of the American



From left: Prof Liesel Ebersöhn, Prof Funke Omidire, Prof Jakeyung Lee and Prof Ugorji Ogbonnaya at the presentation by Prof Lee

Educational Research Association (AERA), Prof Lee is an international leader in educational policy research, assessment and evaluation, particularly on the issues of educational equity and accountability. Prof Lee’s presentation aimed to address key questions, including: What lessons can developing nations learn from Korea? How can the Global South achieve SDG in effective and efficient, yet holistic and equitable ways? What are the key enablers (protective factors) of at-risk students’ academic resilience in South Africa? Drawing upon his research using large-scale international data such as TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study), Prof Lee shared cross-cultural policy insights for educational transformations in South Africa.

Literacy Development Through Technology-supported Play-based Activities



From left: Ms Shine Aung, Prof Gerhard Genis, Ms Prudence Shai and Ms Etinosa Izevbigie

The Literacy Association of South Africa (LITASA) 2024 Conference took place on the 13th to 15th September 2024 at the University of Cape Town. The theme for this year’s LITASA conference was “Literacy learning across contexts: home – play – work”. CEA’s researchers, Ms Shine Aung, Ms Prudence Shai and Ms Etinosa Izevbigie presented their findings at the conference. Their paper was entitled “Literacy development through technology-supported play-based activities: Exploring the application of the Montessori approach in the 21st century”. The study investigated whether Montessori teachers incorporated technology in the classroom and what their perceptions were on the use of

technology in the classroom. The study also sought to investigate how Montessori methods could be adapted to rural contexts. The Montessori approach to education is seen as interactive, and caters to diverse learning needs, as well as the individual learner’s interests.

Translanguaging Workshops For Primary School Educators



Prof Gerhard Genis conducting the translanguaging workshop with the primary school teachers



The Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) and READ Education Trust partnered to conduct a study on the effectiveness of Translanguaging strategies for Foundation Phase teachers. The first stage of the project was to develop a training guide that covered the basic principles of Translanguaging and the basic principles of reading. The guide also provided practical ideas for listening, speaking, reading and writing activities that incorporate Translanguaging. The second stage was to assess learners' reading ability using the EGRA assessments; with a team of trained postgraduate students, Grade 1, 2 and 3 learners were tested at four primary schools in Gauteng. Two of the schools received this intervention, with four workshops being conducted with foundation phase teachers after school hours. Teachers found the guides to be user-friendly and found the four workshop sessions to be beneficial in implementing Translanguaging practices in the classroom.





The Centre for Educational Assessment (CEA) at the University of Cape town and the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) at the University of Pretoria hosted a collaborative hybrid webinar entitled “Culture of Evidence and Whose Evidence?” The topic was forged from two presentation titles by esteemed academics, Dr Millett’s “Culture of evidence for student learning outcomes in tertiary education”, and Prof. Salome Human-Vogel’s “Whose evidence? Considering the politics of evidence and how it shapes key priorities in higher education”.

The discussions, led by Dr Catherine Millett and Prof. Salome Human-Vogel, sparked engaging conversations about the role of evidence in enhancing student learning outcomes in tertiary education.

Aspects of Student Well-being and Reading Achievement in PIRLS 2021

The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) released a report on [“Aspects of Student wellbeing and reading Achievement in PIRLS 2021”](#). The report presents the relationship between the student’s reading achievement and some indicators from the data collected through the PIRLS 2021 Learner Questionnaire. These indicators include, firstly, the learner’s sense of school belonging, secondly, bullying, thirdly, learners feeling tired or hungry, and lastly, frequency of learner absences. The Bullying scale in the learner questionnaire included ten items that asked learners to rate how often they experienced bullying behaviours at school.

In examining the relationship between student well-being and academic achievement, this report revealed that internationally, learners who never or almost never experience bullying achieved an average mean score of 519, those who reported experiencing bullying about monthly achieved an average mean score of 495, while those who reported experiencing bullying about weekly achieved an average mean score of 451. A similar pattern was also observed in South Africa where the learners who never or almost never experienced bullying achieved a mean score of 359, those who experienced bullying about monthly achieved a mean score of 304, while those who experienced bullying about weekly achieved a mean score of 243.

THE CEA IN PICTURES

Photo Gallery



Prof Omidire's Inaugural Lecture

Photo Gallery



UP EDUCATION

AT A GLANCE

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