

In-tuition

Newsletter of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria

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UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
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YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

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1 Dean's message

Dear colleagues, students, and partners

Professor Lindelani Mnguni ►
Dean: Faculty of Education



Our shared vision of advancing human-centred education in complexity continues to inspire and unite us as we shape the future of education. Together, we strive to position our Faculty as impact-driven, research-intensive, and renowned for its quality, relevance, and impact. By developing people, creating knowledge, and making a difference locally and globally, we are building on our strong legacy of excellence.

Strengthening leadership and welcoming new colleagues

The last few months marked an important transition in our leadership as we welcomed Prof Ronél Ferreira as the new Deputy Dean: Research and Postgraduate Studies, following the remarkable contributions of Prof Saloshna Vandeyar. We also welcomed new academic and professional staff members, whose expertise and commitment will enrich our Faculty and strengthen our teaching, research, and service to society.

Consolidating research for greater impact

As a research-intensive faculty, we are committed to advancing knowledge and responding to pressing educational challenges, especially in Africa. To this end, we consolidated our research focus areas, ensuring alignment with our most impactful projects and outputs. These themes provide a foundation for meaningful collaboration across disciplines and contexts. We have also hosted several international scholars, some of whom have joined us as research associates to strengthen our research collaborations, provide mentorship to emerging scholars, and co-supervise postgraduate students.

In addition to several seminars and public lectures, we successfully hosted the Education Association of South Africa (EASA) and Distance Education and Teachers' Training (DETA) conferences, bringing together thought leaders to share insights on teacher education in diverse contexts. Our commitment to nurturing the next generation of scholars was further evident in the writing workshops we hosted for emerging researchers. In addition, we celebrated the inaugural lecture of Prof Gerald Ouma, whose address on financing public higher education offered critical reflections on equity, sustainability, and social justice.

Teaching, learning, and celebrating student success

We remain proud of our students' achievements. During the autumn 2025 graduations, we celebrated the success of 18 PhD graduates and over 2 000 undergraduate, honours, and master's students. On this occasion, the Faculty also had the honour of conferring an honorary doctorate on Mr Jonathan 'Zapiro' Shapiro, recognising his contributions to South African society through art and social commentary. Meanwhile, our students continue to benefit from work-integrated learning placements, applying their knowledge in real-world educational environments. To further support our academic project, our library opened the doors to its Makerspace, where staff and students can collaborate, innovate, and experiment with emerging technologies to enhance teaching, learning, and research.

Expanding our global engagement

Strengthening our global footprint remains a priority. The revamped Faculty website and enhanced social media platforms now provide improved visibility for the work of our researchers and departments.

The Faculty proudly hosted the Global Network of Deans of Education Symposium 2025 under the theme 'Future-proofing teachers: Global perspectives on integrating AI and digital tools in teacher preparation', where deans of education from around the world engaged in dialogue. We also hosted the Principal's Forum of the South African National Council for the Blind, fostering collaboration on inclusive education. Furthermore, through the ChooseUP event, we welcomed prospective students to our campus and introduced them to the Faculty's academic offerings and community. We also hosted local schools, which visited our campus to get first-hand experience of our academic programmes, teaching facilities, and vibrant learning environment.

Deepening community engagement

Our vision of human-centred education extends beyond the classroom into the heart of our communities. The Pre-University Academy continues to prepare learners for higher education success, while researcher-led projects across departments address real-world educational challenges through

community engagement. Of particular significance, the Department of Educational Psychology signed one of the Faculty's largest-ever MoUs with Thungela and the Department of Basic Education, giving our students access to 45 schools in Mpumalanga for internships and learner support. This partnership is important in combining academic training with meaningful community impact.

Looking ahead

As we enter the second half of the year, we remain

inspired by our achievements and motivated by the opportunities ahead. Guided by our shared vision, we will continue to advance research, foster student success, and deepen our impact in local and global communities.

Together, we make the next chapter of our Faculty's journey matter—The UP Way.

Prof 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.



Reading gets a multilingual pedagogy makeover: How Foundation Phase classrooms came alive

Author: Dr Joyce West

Imagine a classroom where learners don't have to leave their home languages at the door, where reading means more than decoding unfamiliar English words, and where teachers feel empowered rather than overwhelmed. That's precisely what unfolded in Gauteng Foundation Phase

classrooms, thanks to an exciting and transformative project led by the University of Pretoria's Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) (with Dr Joyce West as the project lead) in collaboration with the READ Education Trust. The Schools Literacy Intervention Project, which ran from mid-2023 to early 2025, wasn't just another academic experiment; it was a vibrant, on-the-ground movement aimed at turning the tide on South Africa's reading crisis. The numbers have been worrying: nearly eight out of ten Grade 4 learners in South Africa can't read for meaning. But this project took a fresh, bold approach by embracing translanguaging as a multilingual pedagogical strategy.

So, what is translanguaging? Think of it as language superpowers! Instead of asking learners to 'stick to English', teachers encouraged them to use all the languages they know, Xitsonga, isiZulu, Sepedi, Afrikaans, and more, to make sense of what they read and hear. It's not a shortcut; it's an evidence-based, research-backed strategy that boosts confidence, participation, and comprehension.

Four schools participated in this quasi-experimental study; two received the full 'translanguaging treatment', and two did not. In the experimental schools, learners received

beautiful new readers and big books provided by the READ Trust. But the real magic happened during the teacher workshops presented by Dr Shine Aung and Prof Gerhard Genis. Over four action-packed sessions, teachers explored how to weave multiple languages into phonics activities, story reading, and even vocabulary-building exercises. They tried out word organisers, designed multilingual classroom spaces, and discussed the science of reading.

The results speak volumes. In the experimental schools, Grade 1 and Grade 2 learners made strong gains in core reading skills like letter-sound recognition, word recognition, and reading fluency. While the differences weren't always dramatic, the trend was clear: translanguaging works, especially in the early grades. But this project wasn't just about numbers. The teachers' stories were even more powerful. They described how once shy children became eager to raise their hands, how struggling readers lit up when they realised they could explain words in their home language, and how a sense of purpose and possibility reignited their own teaching practice. Of course, there were challenges: large class sizes, limited time for planning, and tricky logistics during assessments. However, the teachers' resilience and enthusiasm demonstrated that change is possible when teachers are supported, learners are valued, and language is viewed as a bridge, not a barrier.

Looking ahead, the team hopes to expand this approach across all nine provinces. The translanguaging guide developed during the project is poised to become a game-changer for teacher training nationwide.

In a nation as richly multilingual as South Africa, this project reminds us of something profoundly simple: when we honour children's languages, we unlock their potential to learn, read, and thrive.

Prof Kobus Maree sets record with groundbreaking review of Erikson's identity theory

Authors: Prof Kobus Maree and Dr Sharon Mashau-CPRP

The Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria is proud to recognise the outstanding academic achievement of Prof Kobus Maree, whose article on Erik Erikson's identity theory is making waves both locally and internationally. Titled 'The psychosocial development theory of Erik Erikson: Critical overview', the article has become the most downloaded publication in the 53-year history of the Taylor & Francis scholarly journal *Early Child Development and Care* and has already garnered over 352 academic citations.

In this landmark publication, Prof Maree revisits the enduring work of Erik Erikson, whose theory of psychosocial development has long influenced the

fields of psychology, education, and counselling. Erikson proposed that identity evolves over eight distinct life stages, each marked by a specific psychosocial challenge. According to Prof Maree, Erikson's ideas remain strikingly relevant in today's dynamic and often volatile career landscape. The article examines how Erikson's concept of identity can be applied in postmodern career counselling, particularly in contexts marked by economic uncertainty and shifting professional demands. As Prof Maree explains, 'People are increasingly seeking meaning in their work and personal lives. Erikson's framework helps individuals explore their personal narratives and confront unresolved developmental issues

that may hinder career satisfaction.' Postmodern career counselling models such as the career construction theory, Super's life-span life-space approach, and the self-construction theory echo Erikson's insights.

These approaches empower individuals to reframe past challenges as opportunities for growth, guiding them to build coherent life stories that link personal meaning with career direction.

Prof Maree's research places significant emphasis on the link between identity formation and career decision-making. He highlights that career identity—how one views oneself in relation to work—can serve as a foundation for well-being.

Unresolved psychosocial conflicts, often rooted in earlier life experiences, can disrupt this foundation. Through narrative counselling and identity-focused interventions, practitioners can support clients in achieving active mastery of passive 'suffering', transforming adversity into a sense of purpose, renewed hope, and meaningful social contribution. In doing so, each act of healing extended to others becomes, in turn, a step in the clients' own healing journey. Erikson's contribution to the understanding of lifelong development is also central to the article. Contrary to earlier psychological theories that emphasised childhood, Erikson argued that identity continues to evolve well into adulthood and old age. His eight-stage model identifies recurring developmental tasks that must be resolved to foster resilience and adaptability. These insights continue to inform educational psychology and career development practices worldwide. Prof Maree also acknowledges the critiques of Erikson's work, including

gender bias and limited consideration of environmental influences. However, he argues that Erikson's theory remains foundational due to its humanistic and integrative approach to development. By integrating Erikson's framework with modern and postmodern theories, practitioners can offer more nuanced, inclusive, and culturally responsive support. This achievement underscores the University of Pretoria's local and international leadership in research and thought leadership in education and psychology. As South Africa and the world continue to grapple with issues of career uncertainty, identity crises, and life transitions, Prof Maree's research provides valuable instruments for individuals and practitioners alike.

Prof Maree is a B1-rated educational psychologist at the University of Pretoria. He holds doctoral degrees in education, mathematics education, and psychology. He has published over 57 peer-reviewed articles and 36 books and book chapters

since 2015. A sought-after keynote speaker, he has delivered keynote lectures at more than 50 national and international conferences and supervised over 40 postgraduate theses and dissertations since 2005.



Prof Kobus Maree

Ink and Identity: A journey across borders

Authors: Prof Raita Steyn and Dr Marguerite van der Merwe

The Ink and Identity project, designed by Prof Raita Steyn and Dr Marguerite van der Merwe, explores how visual symbols, scripts, and artistic practices can be used as tools for self-expression, heritage, and cross-cultural dialogue. At its core, the project encourages students to create impressions of their identities through mark-making, drawing inspiration from systems such as Ghana's adinkra, South Africa's Ndebele designs, the Congolese Mandombe script, and Greece's Dispilio proto-writing system. The aim is not only to affirm cultural traditions but also to create a shared space where art becomes a language for dialogue across borders.



Greek, Ghanaian, and South African students meeting synchronously online

To put this vision into practice, Ink and Identity was launched as a collaborative exchange between students. Greek, Ghanaian, and South African students first met synchronously online, each bringing their perspectives into the conversation. The process unfolded as a cycle of response and reflection: South African students assessed Greek works, Greek students responded to the South African projects, and later, the Ghanaians entered the dialogue. In this way, the project turned critique into connection, with each round deepening the conversation on identity. The next stage will include Congolese students, whose perspectives will extend the dialogue even further and root it more firmly in African symbolic traditions.

This expansion began to take shape in July 2025, when Prof Steyn met with the Kimvuka Ntuka Kongo association in Brussels. The association, which unites people of Kongo Dia Ntotila, traces its lineage to the ancestors Nsaku, Mpanzu, and Nzinga, descendants of Kongo Nimi

and Mama Nimi Lukeni. In Brussels, Mue Luemba, a representative of the association, presented Prof Steyn with a book on the Mandombe writing system. Created in 1978 by David Wabeladio Payi, Mandombe is a script built on geometric forms and linked to the teachings of Simon Kimbangu. More than a practical writing tool, it is celebrated as a symbol of cultural pride and spiritual revival. Its inclusion in the project underscored the depth of African contributions to global narratives of language and identity, while also preparing the ground for Congolese student participation in the next exchange cycle.

From Brussels, the project's journey moved to Thessaloniki, Greece, where Prof Steyn met with lecturers Stergios Proios and Panos Mitselis. Here, Ink and Identity took on another layer of meaning. Just as Mandombe connects language with spirituality and resistance, the Greek students were working with newly designed stencils inspired by Byzantine and Dispilio writings—reviving early Mediterranean scripts through contemporary practice. The Thessaloniki exchange thus highlighted the project's strength, linking local cultural inheritances with global conversations on identity, while positioning art education as a bridge between past and present.

Looking ahead, the vision of Ink and Identity is to culminate in a conference and a travelling exhibition staged in Ghana, Greece, South Africa, Congo, and Belgium. By bringing together the works created by students—reflections of their identities, cultural inheritances, and interpretations of one another—the project aims to offer the world a living archive of ink, script, and spirit inscribed across borders.



Mue Luemba presenting Prof Steyn with a book on the Mandombe writing system

Greek students printing on cloth in Thessaloniki, Greece

Transforming communities through education: Introducing the Community Engagement Committee

Author: Kin-Tamsin Williams

Community engagement (CE) is one of the three core 'wheels' of the University's mandate, alongside teaching and learning and research. It reflects the University of Pretoria's commitment to meaningful partnerships that extend beyond the classroom and into the lives of communities. In the Faculty of Education, each department has a representative to serve on the Faculty CE Committee. Together, they aim to coordinate initiatives, share expertise, and ensure that community engagement is integrated into teaching, learning, and research.

Meet the Faculty of Education's CE Committee



▲ From left, Mrs Kin-Tamsin Williams, Dr Tebogo Nkanyani, Dr Mpho Mthembu, Dr Nompumelelo Madonda

Chairperson: Mrs Kim-Tamsin Williams (Humanities Education)

Mrs Williams is a lecturer in the Department of Humanities Education, teaching Sport Management and Human Movement Studies. Her research interests include motor learning, motor development, and perceptual motor learning. With a strong belief that knowledge must serve communities, Mrs Williams is honoured to chair the CE Committee, striving to ensure that engagement initiatives not only enrich communities but also strengthen the Faculty's teaching and research mandate.

Dr Mpho Mthembu (Educational Psychology)

Dr Mthembu is a dedicated lecturer in the Department of Educational Psychology. Her academic focus centres on the critical intersection of sustainability and special needs education, exploring innovative approaches to creating lasting, effective educational practices for learners with diverse needs. Dr Mthembu's research interests specifically examine sustainability practices within special needs education contexts, investigating how educational institutions can develop and maintain long-term, effective support systems for students with disabilities. Through her teaching and research, Dr Mthembu is committed to advancing inclusive educational practices that not only meet immediate learning needs but also ensure the long-term sustainability of support systems for students with special educational needs.

Dr Nompumelelo Madonda (Early Childhood Education)

Dr Madonda is a lecturer and coordinator of community engagement in the Department of Early Childhood Education. Dr Madonda is also an advocate for equity, inclusion, and the integration of indigenous knowledge through play. As a researcher in early childhood education, she is committed to developing innovative approaches that advance inclusion and learning. She recently facilitated a session with students on reading for

meaning at the University of Pretoria's Mamelodi Campus. During the session, she emphasised the importance of teaching children to read for understanding, highlighting how this foundational skill supports literacy and fosters critical thinking and comprehension.

Dr Tebogo Nkanyani (Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education)

Dr Nkanyani is a chemistry education lecturer and holds a PhD in science education. His research focuses on innovative strategies and digital literacies in science education. His current work explores the integration of generative artificial intelligence, blended learning, virtual laboratories, and simulations in science teaching and learning. He is also interested in the use of open educational practices, robotics, and coding to promote 21st-century skills in science classrooms.

Dr Johan Kruger (Education Management and Policy Studies)

Dr Kruger is a lecturer in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies. He lectures Professional Ethics and Law (PEL 310) and Education Law (OWR 880) for MEd. With a background as a former school principal and qualified legal practitioner, Dr Kruger has extensive experience in education law and labour relations. He previously served a teacher union by assisting members in disciplinary hearings, arbitrations, mediations, and conciliations. He also held the position of chief negotiator for the South African Onderwysersunie in the Education Labour Relations Council and the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council.

Purpose and responsibilities of the Community Engagement Committee

The Community Engagement Committee oversees and manages all community engagement activities in the Faculty of Education in accordance with institutional policies and good governance principles. The committee integrates sustainable community engagement into strategic and operational plans while ensuring implementation, risk management, and quality assurance within its areas of competency. Operating through multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary approaches, they address self-identified community problems and maximise impact on University-designated platforms. The committee is responsible for training and supporting staff and students, reporting to governance structures, and registering all activities on the Community Engagement Reporting System. Through these functions, they facilitate meaningful University-community partnerships while maintaining academic integrity and institutional accountability.

Invitation to participate

The committee warmly invites all colleagues in the Faculty of Education to take part in strengthening community engagement. Staff are encouraged to share new ideas, collaborate across departments, and communicate through their departmental representatives. Colleagues are also asked to report on existing CE activities via the formal reporting system, which will soon be introduced and shared with each department. By working together and supporting each other's initiatives, we can create stronger partnerships and ensure that our teaching and research have a lasting, positive impact on the communities we serve.



▲ Dr Nompumelelo Madonda in a session with students

Teach4Reach team visits Innsbruck

Author: Prof Irma Eloff

The Teach4Reach team recently visited the University of Innsbruck in Austria. Prof Irma Eloff and Dr Wietske Boon (post-doctoral fellow), from the Department of Educational Psychology, and Dr Kgadi Mathabathe (Director of Student Affairs, UP) met with their Austrian counterparts during two weeks of research meetings, data analysis sessions, and networking meetings with leaders in quality education. The team also hosted a research colloquium, entitled 'Teaching to reach and reaching to teach: Findings from an international research collaboration on sustainability', in which emergent findings from the project were shared. The Teach4Reach 2.0 project seeks to expand the critical mass of researchers and teacher educators in the Global South and Global North who contribute to knowledge development relating to the Sustainable Development Goals specifically and sustainability broadly.

During the visit, Dr Wietske Boon forged new networks among young scholars in sustainability. 'There are so many opportunities to create new knowledge together and to question what we think we know,' she said.

The team has developed the Teacher Education and Sustainability Scale (TESS), which can be used to understand teacher educators' views on sustainability. The data from the TESS survey are being used in conjunction with vignette research to understand the dynamics of sustainability, quality education, and teacher educator professionalism.



▲ From left to right: Claudia Shreiner (Head of the Institute for Teacher Education and School Research, UIBK), Lucas Weinberg, Kgadi Mathabathe, Irma Eloff, Ann-Kathrin Dittrich and Wietske Boon

The University of Pretoria partners with the Ted-SOEP Project

Author: Prof Sonja van Putten

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of five South African universities participating in the Ted-SOEP Project, a two-year capacity-building initiative supported by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Programme. At its core, the project seeks to strengthen STEM teacher education by promoting collaboration between South African and European partners, specifically from South Africa, Portugal, and Italy, and by exploring ways to embed self-directed learning (SDL), open educational practices (OEPs), and open educational resources (OERs) into teacher training.

The five participating South African universities are UP, North-West University (NWU), the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), the University of South Africa (Unisa), and Sol Plaatje University (SPU). The first phase of the project included an in-person training and project meeting hosted by Pixel in Florence, Italy, from 21 to 30 May 2025. Representing UP were Prof Sonja van Putten, Prof Willem Rauscher, Dr Fru Vitalis Akuma, Dr

Climant Khoza, and Dr Philip Mirkin. The training in Florence was conducted in a building that began as a place where art students, including Michelangelo, received training. It was an interesting experience to be taught about AI and associative software in a room more than 700 years old, with ancient frescoes looking down at us.

The project includes a series of local and international workshops, both online and in-person, that are designed to support the development of training materials, build practical capacity among lecturers and student teachers in using OERs effectively, and co-develop contextually grounded strategies and guidelines for integrating SDL and OEPs into STEM education in meaningful and sustainable ways. Our team is currently in the process of designing a fourth-year module that is based on the following five topics: OERS and OEPs; inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, game-based learning, and simulating real-world scenarios.



Academics from all five South African universities and the University of Florence and representatives from PIXEL



SMTE group. Left to right: Dr Fru Vitalis Akuma, Prof Sonja van Putten, Prof Willem Raucher, Dr Philip Mirkin and Dr Climant Khoza

Community partners and lived experience youth experts continue to be key to the success of the R-NEET study

Author: Ms Joyce Jakavula



R-NEET community partners and lived experience youth experts visiting the Faculty of Education

At least one in every three young people in Gauteng is not in education, employment, or training (ie, NEET). NEETs face many challenges, including being at high risk of depression, which makes it more difficult for them to resume education or training opportunities or actively search for employment.

The R-NEET study (a 66-month study funded by the Wellcome Trust) is investigating what supports NEETs in showing resilience to depression. To do so, the South African R-NEET team (including UP and SAMRC academics, postdoctoral fellows, and post-graduate students; community partners; and lived experience youth experts) has recruited around 2 000 potential participants. From this database, just over 900 NEETs living in stressed communities in Gauteng have already completed the baseline study, which involved researchers and nurses visiting participants at home, with their prior consent, to conduct a survey of their psychosocial, spiritual, political, and economic risks and resources; assess their basic health (eg, blood pressure, heart rate, weight); observe the quality of their dwell-

ing (eg, type of roof, presence and proximity of shade trees); and install a temperature logger to measure the indoor temperature and humidity for the two-year duration of the first phase of the R-NEET study. The baseline study will be completed when at least 1 000 Gauteng participants have been visited at home to facilitate all the aforementioned research. The details of this complex transdisciplinary methodology are documented in a free-to-access article available at <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/child-and-adolescent-psychiatry/articles/10.3389/frcha.2025.1489950/full>.

Community partners and lived experience youth experts (young adults who have lived experience of being NEET and showing resilience to its challenges) have been key to the good progress of this complex baseline study. On 21 August, some of these partners visited the UP R-NEET team (project coordinator, Joyce Jakavula; doctoral fellow, Anita Mwanda; and PI, Prof Linda Theron). Specifically, Cassey Chambers (Operations Director, South African Depression and Anxiety Group [SADAG]), Celeste Matross (Country Director, Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative [REPSSI]), Makananelo Makape (Programme Manager, REPSSI), and lived experience youth experts from R-NET shared insights on the challenges and highlights of championing

the R-NEET study at the community level. They also critically reviewed the findings developed from qualitative R-NEET work completed in 2024, before supporting Anita Mwanda to generate foundational insights aligned to her doctoral study about gendered pathways of resilience. They shared their insights by engaging in an innovative arts-based activity led by Anita. Of particular interest was their sobering message that, regardless of gender identity, schools are failing to adequately prepare South Africa's youth for a reality where higher education is unavailable to most and formal employment is a privilege.

Collaborating with community partners and lived experience youth experts brings immeasurable richness to the research. Their insights, which cannot be gleaned from textbooks or journal articles, advance theory development. Most importantly, perhaps, their joy at being part of a research study that is inclusive, rather than extractive, is a reminder that participatory, transdisciplinary research is the way forward.



R-NEET community partners and youth experts participating in arts-based qualitative work led by Anita Mwanda

International postdoctoral fellow networks with early-career scholars in the Department of Educational Psychology, the Department of Early Childhood Education, and the Centre for the Study of Resilience

Author: Prof Linda Theron

Dr Giulia Gaggero, a postdoctoral fellow in psychology from the University of Trento, Italy, and Prof Linda Theron (Department of Educational Psychology and Centre for the Study of Resilience) have been exploring collaboration opportunities. This spilled over into a chance for Dr Gaggero to visit the Faculty of Education while she was in South Africa. Hosted by Dr Nombuso Gama and Dr Marisa Leask (postdoctoral fellows at the Centre for the Study of Resilience) at the Centre for the Study of Resilience, Dr Gaggero met with early-career researchers from the departments of Educational Psychology and Early Childhood Education and gave a short presentation on her work. Her postdoctoral research focuses on loneliness, non-cognitive skills, and academic achievement in Italian junior high schools. This work builds on her PhD, which explored emotional processes in clinical and personality psychology. The visit was a valuable exchange of ideas. The early-career researchers who attended learned about Italy's

education system, while also sharing their own research. Many common interests were identified, opening the door for possible future collaborations.



▲ Dr Giulia Gaggero



▲ Early-career researchers

Improving literacy through arts-based and multimodal workshops

Authors: Dr Shine Aung and Prof Gerhard Genis

Dr Shine Aung and Prof Gerhard Genis conduct literacy workshops at PS Fourie Primary School in Eersterust, Tshwane South District. The school is located in an area that experiences various socioeconomic challenges. Learners speak a variety of languages at home, including Afrikaans (the majority language), Sepedi, and isiZulu.

programmes and remedial interventions at the school for Grade 3 learners who struggled with reading and writing in English. Prof Genis joined the art club when Dr Aung became his postgraduate student. He is a member of the South African Poetry Project (ZAPP), which conducts multimodal poetry-writing workshops at primary and secondary schools in Gauteng.

learners to think creatively and engages their visual, linguistic, spatial, and kinaesthetic meaning-making modes.

Art, with its multimodal qualities, and creative writing assist in the literacy development of young learners. Combining the visual, linguistic, spatial, and tactile modes fosters creativity, critical thinking, and multimodal communication skills. It makes learning more engaging and enjoyable and allows learners to express their understanding, feelings, and emotions without fear of 'failing'. Furthermore, art is used as an emotive language that scaffolds learners' school literacies.

their learning. It reveals what they think about and how they experience the complex world of learning, both inside and outside school. It merges the heart (emotions), head (cognition), and hands (skills development).

One of these multimodal and arts-based approaches that assists in cognitive and communicative learning is the four-box organiser. Four-box organisers allow learners to combine visual, verbal, oral, linguistic, tactile, and spatial modes in meaning construction. Four-box organisers consist of a written word, which is based on a theme, a visual representation of the word, a definition of the word, and a sentence in which the word is used. This activity ensures that learners engage various senses when constructing meaning from a specific theme or phenomenon. This approach also forms part of innovative pedagogical practices.

As teachers seek to reflect the diversity in their classrooms in what they teach and the topics they explore, they must also embrace the diverse ways in which learners acquire and represent new knowledge. The learners' multimodal, arts-based artefacts are evidence for the benefits of creative multimodal engagement in the classroom. Learners express themselves through various modes, which activate a variety of senses that enhance cognitive and emotive growth. Importantly, this approach allows learners to become designers of knowledge.



Visual, linguistic, and spatial modes combined in one artwork: Dr Shine Aung with art club learners

The workshops take place in Mr Driesman Bester's after-school art and culture club, which was started in 2017. The club consists of learners from all grades at PS Fourie Primary School. Mr Bester teaches Afrikaans and English, and his art club includes art, poetry, and creative writing activities. He also takes learners on visits to museums. Dr Aung has been conducting creative literacy interventions at the school since 2018. After the COVID-19 pandemic, Mr Bester asked Dr Aung to join the after-school art club. Dr Aung, who has been an art enthusiast since primary school, initially conducted special education

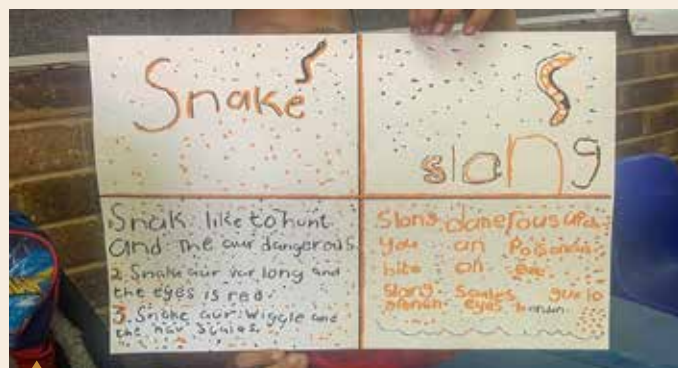
Currently, the workshops include arts-based and multimodal approaches to literacy development in support of Mr Bester's initiatives. Learners draw, paint, and write using a variety of multimodal materials, including acrylic paint, charcoal, oil pastels, coloured paper, pictures, and pens. The learners linguistically enhance these visual and spatial designs by adding their own rhymes, songs, and short poems to their creations. Songs, stories, thematic verbal prompts, and pictures are used as scaffolds to assist learners with these activities. The combination of various modalities encourages

The workshops build on Dr Aung's postgraduate studies. Her research shows that young learners are able to develop their listening, speaking, reading and writing, and vocabulary through arts-based activities. First Additional Language learning is supported when learners are allowed to express their understanding through drawings and art. These multimodal designs display what they know (prior learning) and have learned (new knowledge) about a particular topic, which challenges the dominant view that speaking and writing are the primary modes of representation.

Importantly, learners' drawings provide teachers and parents with insights into their life-worlds and experiences. The process of multimodal design allows learners to embed their emotive experiences in



First example of a four-box organiser



Second example of a four-box organiser

Thungela and the University of Pretoria sign MoA to strengthen psycho-social support in Mpumalanga schools



The Thungela Education Initiative has signed a memorandum of agreement (MoA) with the University of Pretoria's Department of Educational Psychology. As part of this collaboration, the Department of Educational Psychology will deploy master's students to various schools to offer essential psychosocial support to both educators and learners in the Foundation and Intermediate phases.

Thungela launched the education initiative in 2024, a five-year programme that aims to improve the quality of education for Grade R to Grade 4 learners in 45 no-fee schools in Nkangala and Gert Sibande districts, aiming to improve school readiness, literacy, and numeracy outcomes for learners.

Mpumi Sithole, Executive Head of Corporate Affairs at Thungela, said, 'We recognise that educational performance is not only shaped by access to resources but also by the psychological and emotional well-being of both learners and educators. Working with the University of Pretoria, we are equipping schools with the professional support needed to respond to the complex realities facing learners and educators. This MoA is an important step in Thungela's journey to strengthen its impact, and we are proud to contribute to a model that will provide much-needed psychosocial support to the learners and teachers, while empowering the master's students at the same time.'

The mutually beneficial partnership will offer the master's students hands-on experience as they conduct learner assessments and identify the necessary remedial actions and interventions, under the supervision of the district educational psychologists. This will help reduce the workload of the district's educational psychologists, while the master's students gain valuable practical work experience to help them complete the practical components of their academic training. Through this agreement, the University of Pretoria is supporting the implementation of the Department of Basic Education's screening, identification, assessment, and support (SIAS) policy. Prof Ruth Mampame from the University of Pretoria said, 'This community engagement partnership with Thungela exemplifies a strategic alliance that amplifies our capacity to

make a meaningful difference beyond academic boundaries. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, this collaboration not only empowers our students with invaluable real-world experience but also addresses critical community needs, particularly in Mpumalanga. It further fosters a ripple effect of positive change, enhancing emotional resilience, academic achievement, and life skills among young learners. This model underscores the transformative potential of synergy among academia, the government, and the private sector. Together, we are laying a robust foundation for sustainable development and social upliftment, reinforcing South Africa's path toward a more equitable and prosperous future.'

Thungela will fund and manage the programme, overseeing its implementation with a dedicated project structure. To uphold governance and accountability, a management committee has been set up. The committee will ensure consistent engagement with stakeholders across various levels of the Mpumalanga Department of Education, emphasising ethical principles throughout the partnership. Thungela's purpose, which is to create value responsibly together for a shared future, is the cornerstone of this partnership as we continue investing in building resilient communities through meaningful and impactful interventions.



Executive Head of Corporate Affairs Ms Mpumi Sithole (left) and Dean of Education Prof Lindelani Mnguni (right)

Advancing sustainable futures in higher education: A story of vision, collaboration, and impact at the University of Pretoria's new research centre

Author: Prof Samuel Adeyemo

The Centre for the Advancement of Sustainable Higher Education Futures (CASHEF) has emerged as a beacon of innovation and collaboration in the higher education landscape since its inception in August 2023, under the leadership of Prof Kolawole Samuel Adeyemo, its founding director. Dedicated to the development of sustainable, equitable, and future-oriented higher education systems in South Africa, Africa, and beyond, CASHEF has evolved from a bold vision to a dynamic institute at the forefront of research, policy engagement, and community impact in just over a year.

A vision rooted in holism and inclusion

From the outset, the director, with the support of the centre management committee and advisory board members, laid out a clear and comprehensive plan for CASHEF: to develop into a lively centre that not only supports cross-disciplinary research but also encourages dialogue and practical solutions to challenges in higher education, such as student financing, mobility, and institutional governance. The centre also shares the UN's Sustainable Development Goals vision, which emphasises education, fairness, and economic inclusion.

Groundbreaking projects and community impact

One of CASHEF's leading efforts is a countrywide Universities South Africa-funded research study that examines the business activities of all 26 public universities in South Africa. This ambitious initiative has brought together a team of scholars and researchers to provide unparalleled data and insights that have the potential to affect policy and university plans on sustainability and

income generation.

Similarly, the Kola Adeyemo Projects on Health, Education, and Sports (KAP-HES), launched in March 2024 and funded by the Australian High Commission in Pretoria, has made a tangible impact by providing essential higher education skills, health literacy, and sports activities to out-of-school youth in Limpopo and Mpumalanga. The effectiveness of the programme has earned CASHEF accolades and cemented its image as a community development hub.

Engaging minds through events and dialogues

CASHEF's comprehensive calendar of events is a testament to its dynamic intellectual activity. A forum for engaging and thought-provoking conversations, the centre has hosted several expert lectures on topics such as AI ethics and geopolitical shifts in relation to higher education. In addition, the centre has held insightful discussions on the cultural challenges academics face when working overseas. A recent webinar on US-Africa collaboration in higher education emphasised a key point: partnerships must be equitable and mutually beneficial. This crucial conversation now serves as the foundation for a new policy aimed at transforming academic relations worldwide.

Forging strategic partnerships

A great example of the centre's collaborative approach was the visit from the Nigerian Defence Academy in March of this year. The meeting laid the foundation for a new joint leadership training programme aimed at strengthening institutional governance in higher education in Nigeria. Such a project truly shows

CASHEF's impact beyond South Africa. In addition, the centre's strategic partnerships with top universities in the United States continue to create valuable opportunities for academic exchange and joint research. An example is the recent project by the Alliance for African Partnership (AAP) at Michigan State University, which seeks to understand how the tripartite university mission is understood at each of the AAP member institutions. CASHEF Director Prof Adeyemo is one of the researchers involved in this project.

Building capacity and nurturing talent

CASHEF's primary objective is to make a tangible impact in the real world through its research. Considering this, the centre has established a significant fellowship programme for talented associates, visiting scholars, postdoctoral researchers, and research fellows to foster an even more vibrant research scene, which will lead to new publications, input on policy, and more engaging academic debates. On another front, the centre is planning to offer new professional development courses to equip higher education professionals with the forward-looking skills they need to succeed.

Championing policy dialogue

The centre takes pride in its involvement in policy engagement through its various activities. The Policy Conversation Series will serve as a flagship forum for rigorous, biannual debates on topics such as student financial aid, university fees, and governance reforms. The crucial question that will be addressed in the first series of these debates is whether South Africa can create a sustainable, universal student

financial aid system through policy innovation.

Connecting and communicating

Beyond research and events, CASHEF has successfully established active social media channels, including one on LinkedIn, and a newsletter to keep its growing membership informed and engaged. National and international media coverage has helped CASHEF establish itself as a recognised thought leader in sustainable higher education.

Looking to the future

Significant future initiatives will include finalising and sharing the USAf project findings, releasing additional short courses, expanding the research projects, and boosting fellowship programmes.

A journey of impact and collaboration

CASHEF's first year demonstrated that, with the right vision, teamwork, and dedication, it is possible to build a vital hub where research, policy, and community work intersect. The centre is now well-positioned to shape the future of higher education and drive positive change, not just within South Africa but across the continent and around the world.



▲ Prof Samuel Adeyemo

Barriers to learning: Visually impaired learners left behind by education system, experts warn at national Principals Forum Author: Prof Ronél Ferreira

Thousands of visually impaired learners in South Africa are being excluded from meaningful access to education and future employment opportunities due to persistent systemic barriers. This was the urgent message at the recent 2025 Principals Forum, a national platform that brings together principals from the country's 23 schools for the blind and partially sighted, as well as education experts and policymakers.

The annual Principals Forum, arranged by the South African National Council for the Blind (SANCb), was hosted at the University of Pretoria's Groenkloof Campus (Faculty of Education) in May 2025. Attendees heard that, despite some progress, many learners still lack access to basic tools such as braille textbooks, assistive technology, and teachers trained to meet their learning needs.

One of the most significant barriers is access to pure Mathematics—a critical subject for university admission and future participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) careers. In some cases, schools for visually impaired learners do not offer any STEM subjects at all. 'Schools struggle to find educators who are equipped to teach Mathematics in Braille,' said Prof Ronél Ferreira, Director of the Centre for Visual Impairment Studies at the University of Pretoria. 'As a result, some learners are unable to access higher education—not due to a lack of academic potential but because of gaps in systemic support.'

Critical issues

Another urgent issue is that of capacity. According to the SANCb, South Africa has a significant population of people with visual impairments, and the country's 23 specialist schools serve thousands of learners, but the demand for services and support far exceeds the current capacity.

'SANCb has been trying to get this critical issue addressed through these forums,' said Joseph Mabanga, SANCb Education and Training Officer. 'Without proper resources, training, and policy support, these learners continue to face systemic barriers, limiting their opportunities for meaningful participation in STEM fields and future employment.'

The forum also highlighted how issues of access extend beyond subjects and into core aspects of the education system, such as language of instruction, discipline, and teacher readiness. Many visually impaired learners are taught in languages with which they are unfamiliar and are expected to master the language and the curriculum at the same time. This dual challenge, combined with a lack of braille proficiency among teachers, creates an additional barrier to learning.

Prof Ferreira called for increased focus on braille training for all educators, saying 'many teachers still aren't adequately equipped to support learners who are blind or visually impaired'. This would also help change the public's thinking about learners with special educational needs.

'We should move away from the idea that a learner with a visual

impairment should only be accommodated in a school for the blind. A learner with visual impairments can function well in a full-service school,' she said. 'But we sit with educators who don't know. They're uncertain, and they want to avoid dealing with children who are living with an impairment.'

That avoidance, she said, is rooted in uncertainty and fear. 'We have an inclusive education policy, but teachers still don't know how to implement it. Some teachers still believe the government needs to provide resources for them to be able to effectively implement policy. It's time we start asking ourselves: What do we have in ourselves, and among ourselves, that we can contribute?' She issued a call to action for educators and principals: 'We must stop seeing disability as a barrier to success. These learners are bright. They just need to be seen, supported, and believed in.'

During discussions about recent amendments to the Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Act 32 of 2024, participants expressed concern that teachers had not been properly prepared for changes related to discipline, language policy, and school governance. Dipolelo Tema, Principal of the Bosele School for the Blind and Deaf in Limpopo, urged school leaders to update their language policies in line with the new law and work more closely with school governing bodies to ensure compliance.

Finding solutions

As the forum turned to possible solutions, speakers called for better training and support for teachers, both in pre-service university programmes and through continuous professional development and research into how teachers can be better trained to teach STEM subjects in the Senior and Further Education and Training phases (grades 7 to 12).

Prof Ferreira said modules in inclusive education should be standard in teacher training and highlighted the Advanced Diploma in Visual Impairment Studies offered by UP as an example of how universities can support schools in creating more inclusive classrooms.

Changing societal attitudes is also key. 'We still sit with stigma in South Africa,' she said. 'We still have communities and families that hide children and do not take them to school because they're ashamed. That's a whole paradigm shift that's required.' The forum opened with a provocative question from Prof Lindelani Mnguni, Dean of the Faculty of Education at UP: 'Is the curriculum you are currently using in your school preparing the child in Grade 1 today to thrive in 2040?'

He reminded delegates that a six-year-old starting school in 2025 would be 21 in 2040, entering a world where artificial intelligence could be the norm, the climate crisis has intensified, and South Africa's economy has evolved in unpredictable ways. 'We can't predict what 2035 or 2040 will look like,' he said. 'But the question is: Can we prepare for it?' The 2025 Principals Forum left no doubt that for learners with visual impairments, the answer will depend on urgent, sustained, and systemic reform.



▲ Participants at the 2025 Principals Forum on UP's Groenkloof Campus



▲ Prof Ronél Ferreira (second from the right) with participants from the 2025 Principals Forum on UP's Groenkloof Campus

Faculty of Education represented at advocacy workshop

Author: Prof Linda Theron

On 22 July, 2REST (Responsibilities for Resilience Embedded in Street Temporalities) lead co-investigator Prof Linda Theron and post-doctoral fellow Dr Nombuso Gama (Department of Educational Psychology and the Centre for the Study of Resilience) contributed to the 2REST advocacy workshop held at the University of Cape Town. They were joined by project lead Prof Lorraine van Blerk from the University of Dundee and Lucy Jamieson and Fulufhelo Ramabulana from the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town. The objective of the workshop was to share insights into the multisystemic drivers of street youth resilience that were developed by the 2REST team following a year-long secondary analysis of multi-year qualitative data generated by street youth from Accra, Bukavu, and Harare. In attendance were many government and industry experts, including Department of Social Development Representative Dr Joyce Ramabulana-Ndutza, Cape Town City social workers, Save the Children representatives, UNICEF representatives, and stakeholders from Western Cape Street Children.

The 2REST team presented policy briefs that advocated for systemic interventions in the

resilience of street youth. These included violence reduction systems, resilient systems supporting street youth to meet their basic needs, resilient livelihood systems for street youth, and resilient health systems for street youth. Although the accounts from street youth were not from South Africa, industry experts found many similarities with the South African context. For instance, poverty, substance abuse, gang violence, gender-based violence, and trafficking are common risks for street children. Street children also face discrimination and marginalisation when accessing services and treatment. They also applauded 2REST for the practical, humanising, and enlightening recommendations presented. They reiterated the need for approaches that identify street children as co-creators in their lives. Having conversations with street children would, for instance, have made them aware that street children do not like the approach of institutionalising them, which is why they run away from institutions.

Overall, industry experts left the workshop with hope and a renewed commitment to collaborate, educate, and partner with other experts to better meet street children's needs.



▲ Dr Nombuso Gama explaining 2REST's findings



▲ Prof Linda Theron explaining multisystemic resilience to government and service providers

Scholarly visit by Rutgers Graduate School of Education

Author: Prof Lindelani Mnguni

On 23 July 2025, staff members of the Faculty of Education engaged in discussions with a delegation from the Rutgers Graduate School of Education. The visiting group of nine postgraduate students was accompanied by their Dean, Dr Chris Span, and another staff member, Dr Darren Clarke. Seventeen members of the Faculty of Education participated in the conversation. All the participants introduced themselves and their research focus areas, with the aim of identifying people to engage with in order to explore future collaboration. Following this initial conversation, the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Prof Lindelani Mnguni, has been involved in additional conversations with the scholars from Rutgers to discuss the way forward in terms of collaboration.



▲ Postgraduate students and delegates from Rutgers University alongside Faculty alumni and staff

The 11th DETA Conference in Mauritius

Author: James Mbewe

The Distance Education and Teachers' Training in Africa (DETA) Conference is an Africa-specific biennial conference initiated by the Unit for Distance Education at the University of Pretoria in 2005. The purpose of the conference is to provide a platform for educationists in Africa to meet and deliberate on educational issues in Africa. The major objectives are to contribute to the debate on teacher training in Africa and build capacity for the delivery of teacher training programmes in Africa. DETA conferences have attracted educationists from both the Global North and the Global South.

The 11th conference, co-hosted by the Unit for Distance Education, the South Africa Institute for Distance Education, and the Mauritius Institute of Education, took place in Mauritius from 22 to 25 July 2025. The theme was 'Education for empowering the Global South: Technologies and pedagogies for distance teacher education'. It was attended by 112 delegates from 11 African countries, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the USA and was opened by the Mauritius Head of State, His Excellency, Prof Dharam Gokhool. Keynote speakers were the Commonwealth of Learning Canada Executive President Prof Peter Scott, Prof Hyleen Mariaye (MIE, Mauritius), Dr Martin Njeru (WVVOB, Kenya), and Prof Cedric Mpungose (Unisa, South Africa).

The conference, hosted by Dr Mary Ooko, Manager of the Unit for Distance Education, was also attended by the Faculty of Education's Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning, Prof Johan Wassermann, Prof Linda van Ryneveld (Director: Comprehensive Online Education Services, University of Pretoria), Prof Elijah Omwenga and Prof Laban Peter Ayiro (the VCs Open University, Kenya and Daystar University, Kenya). It comprised pre-conference workshops, a special presentation, panel discussions, and parallel sessions. The 2027 conference is tentatively planned to be held in Zambia.



▲ Prof Johan Wassermann (right) with delegates from Ghana and SA

▲ Dr Aruna Ankia Gangadeen (Deputy Director MIE), Dr Mary Ooko Manager (UDE), and Prof Dharam Gokhool, President of Mauritius

The Department of Educational Psychology hosts a social event for its students and staff

Author: Zandri Grundling (MEd student)

On Friday, 27 June, the Department of Educational Psychology hosted a social event for current educational psychology master's students and their lecturers and professors. My classmates and I were all excited, anticipating a break from the classroom after a challenging yet rewarding semester.

Of course, the students had also planned something fun for the occasion. Upon arrival, each person, including the lecturers, had to do a little dance as an entry fee. We were all pleasantly surprised to see that even our beloved professors joined in on the fun. We recorded this fun moment and turned it into a short video as a special memory.

An icebreaker activity helped students and staff get to know each other better. It included questions and a quiz that had us scratching our heads. Through all the laughs in this positive, fulfilling atmosphere, the activities gave us the chance to connect with our classmates

and the staff on a more personal level. It was clear that everyone in the room thoroughly enjoyed the activity.

The staff went out of their way to make this event memorable. We enjoyed delicious food platters, and the room was filled with laughter and lively conversations. When the time came to socialise, everyone seemed slightly hesitant, but this quickly faded, and many students and staff were seen mingling and sharing interesting life stories. Naturally, some conversations were related to educational psychology, but for the most part, we were able to step out of the usual learning environment and focus on building trusting relationships with the staff, setting us up for a positive second half of the year.

We ended the day with kind and encouraging words from our HoD, Prof Mampane. Her comment about all the smiles she saw in the room made me reflect on our resilience as students and

staff. Despite having to extend ourselves in the first half of the year, during which we experienced immense growth in a short time, we were still smiling and enjoying the moment together. We are blessed to have such experienced staff who set a brilliant example of what it means to give back to society and make a positive difference.



Prof Irma Eloff (left) and Prof Ruth Mampane (right)



Students and staff enjoying the social event hosted by Educational Psychology



Students and staff enjoying the social event hosted by Educational Psychology

Unlocking opportunity: Prof Kobus Maree on the foundational role of Mathematics and Science in shaping future-ready graduates

Author: Dr Sharon Mashau-CPRP



▲ Prof Kobus Maree

In a special Youth Month edition of No ordinary Wednesday, veteran broadcaster Jeremy Maggs engaged with Prof Kobus Maree, a distinguished educational psychologist and career counsellor, who offered powerful insights into the pivotal role of Mathematics and Science in preparing young people for success in an ever-evolving global landscape. His reflections underscored the critical importance of these subjects, not only as gateways

to academic progression but also as cornerstones of long-term employability and innovation in high-growth industries.

Prof Maree emphasised that Mathematics and Science are truly 'gateway subjects', pointing out that prospectuses across disciplines reveal Mathematics to be the most significant subject in gaining entry to study opportunities, followed closely by Physical Sciences. These disciplines

are not only prerequisites for access to scarce-skills careers but also cultivate core cognitive abilities. They teach learners to approach problems systematically, reason logically, and evaluate evidence critically. Beyond equipping students with academic tools, they prepare young people to participate actively in the knowledge economy and thrive in a world that increasingly demands data literacy, innovation, and informed decision-making.

Continued on page 15...

He highlighted that success in these subjects extends far beyond rote memorisation, developing precision, creativity, resilience, intellectual humility, and curiosity. Mathematics and Science, he noted, push learners to embrace uncertainty, negotiate multiple career transitions, persist in the face of failure, and welcome challenges—skills essential to both life and career success. They also foster the ability to connect concepts, identify patterns in data, think abstractly, and innovate under constraints, all of which are indispensable competencies in the 21st century.

Prof Maree drew clear links between school-level

mastery of Mathematics and Science and the demands of emerging industries. With careers in artificial intelligence, engineering, data science, robotics, renewable energy, biotechnology, and software engineering expanding rapidly, strong foundations in these subjects are becoming indispensable. He explained that learners who excel in them are positioning themselves not only for sustainable careers but also for opportunities to contribute to global and local problem-solving. This is about more than academic performance; it is about innovation, relevance, and meaningful participation in shaping the future. While acknowledging the need for

ongoing curriculum refinement and teacher training, Prof Maree argued for a deeper transformation in how these subjects are taught. He called for approaches that cultivate wonder, curiosity, confidence, and relevance. Too often, Mathematics and Science are presented in ways that alienate learners—ways that are abstract, disconnected, and intimidating. Instead, he advocated for humanising these subjects, making them relatable, demonstrating their practical value, and fostering belief in learners' ability to succeed. Inspirational teachers, strong role models, and career-connected learning, he stressed, must become the norm in classrooms.

In closing, Prof Maree offered a message of encouragement to South Africa's youth, especially those facing adversity. He reminded them that struggles do not define one's future responses to those struggles. He urged learners to continue dreaming, learning, and taking small steps every day towards shaping the lives they envision. His words resonated with hope: 'The future is not something you stumble upon; it is something you create. Every step brings you closer to the life you hope for. You are capable of more than you know. You never fail. You matter. Your life has purpose, meaning; there is hope said Prof Maree.'

Literacy, libraries, and higher education opened up to a group of primary school children

Author: Mrs Sonja Delpont



Education Library staff greeting the learners at the library



BEd hourly staff members holding the learners' attention during the story-reading event



Science, Mathematics and Technology Education staff members and student volunteers showcasing experiments to learners

'On 22 July, the Faculty of Education Library had the privilege of hosting primary school learners from Grade 1 to Grade 7 from SK Moseneke Primary School, Lotus Gardens, Tshwane. The learners had the opportunity to experience a library in support of reading for understanding, and the teachers had the opportunity to acquire literacy training skills.

The day was filled with excitement and learning as library staff read engaging stories such as 'The gingerbread man', which captured the children's attention and sparked lively discussions. Learners were also fascinated by the science demonstrations, especially the dry ice experiment, which created a sense of wonder and curiosity. I was personally excited and inspired to see how happy, enthusiastic, and intelligent the learners were, as many eagerly participated and asked thoughtful questions. Beyond the fun and educational activities, the experience provided the children with a glimpse of university life, motivating them to dream about their own future studies. Overall, it was a meaningful event that reminded me of the important role libraries and outreach programmes play in encouraging a love for reading, learning, and discovery.' Luyanda Sambo (BEd student and hourly staff member, Education Library).

The library and the Faculty welcomed the 55 learners to the campus for an eventful and educational day. The programme included a creative and fun poetry-writing activity presented by Prof Gerhard Genis from Humanities Education; story reading, acting, and fun games facilitated by the library's BEd hourly staff members; and library staff members introducing various types of information sources as tools for knowledge. The topic for the day was 'choosing a career'. To help the learners visualise their future educational paths, they were taken to the newly operational Makerspace for a hands-on experience with innovative technologies such as 3D printing and virtual reality.

The Department of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education

conducted real-time experiments, which elicited fascination and excitement among the learners. Appreciation goes to Mr David Mahapane, Dr Mandlenkosi Sibiya, Ms Kedibone Maifadi, and Dr Tebogo Nkanyani for arranging the event. Faculty experts on literacy from the Department of Early Childhood Education (Drs Joyce West, Dr Renisha Singh, Dr Mashoto Matlala, Miss Poloko Masuelele, and Miss Phindile Zondo) and Dr Connie Makgabo from the Department of Humanities Education shared their expertise with the teachers. The library is grateful for their willingness to assist the teachers.

The library staff, its current BIS (Information Science) interns, its hourly staff members, and students from House Education ensured the well-being of the learners and performed the duties assigned to them with pride and dedication. Feedback received acknowledged the curious and joyful responses of the learners, the building of a 'library tour buddy' with learners who required more attention, experiencing learners with diverse backgrounds and abilities, and learners opening up in a safe and welcoming environment.

The Education Library expresses gratitude to the Dean, Prof Lindelani Mnguni, for taking the time to meet and address the learners. We are grateful to Prof Ugorji Ogbonnaya and colleagues from the Department of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education for entertaining the learners with age-appropriate natural science experiments and providing goody bags filled with nutritional snacks.

Acknowledgement and thanks are also due to our colleagues from the Faculty and Library Marketing Offices for their contributions and the photos they took. Thank you to Facilities Management, the Events Committee, and Security Services for helping the library make this event a success. The contributions and support received from the Department of Library Services are also highly appreciated. The school expressed their appreciation, with the parents, SGB, and the school principal acknowledging the role the Faculty and the library played.

UP Groenkloof inspires the next generation of teachers

Authors: Oreratile Kau and Ayanda Sobopha

The Groenkloof Campus came alive with inspiration and excitement as prospective education students arrived for ChooseUP Day 2025. As part of the University of Pretoria's flagship welcoming event, future educators were given a dynamic glimpse into the world-class academic environment and close-knit community that define the Faculty of Education. The day offered prospective students a powerful opportunity to explore their future home, engage with dedicated lecturers and current students, and truly envision themselves as part of UP's thriving academic family.

The programme began with a warm address by UP's Chief Operating Officer, Mr Sandile Mthiyane, followed by an inspiring message from the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Prof Lindelani Mnguni, who highlighted the transformative power of education. Prof Mnguni emphasised the Faculty's commitment to excellence, noting that 80% of lecturers hold doctoral degrees, ensuring students learn from leading experts and researchers in the field. The theme of community was brought to life by Motlatjo Motsapola, Chairperson of House Education, who shared heartfelt insights about student life, peer support, and the joy of helping others succeed.

The programme also featured an insightful presentation by Prof Linda van Reynold, who introduced UPOne and the flexible, accessible Higher Certificate in Sport Sciences. Her talk highlighted the University's forward-thinking approach to meeting diverse learning needs and expanding access to quality education. The excitement reached new heights with two bursary draws, marking a life-changing beginning for two prospective students.

After the formal programme, the day transitioned into an interactive expo filled with games, activities, and engaging stalls from departments such as Arts and Music Education, African Languages, TuksRes, and Science, Mathematics and Technology Education. Students had the chance to connect with lecturers, explore support services, and even meet and interact with Dean Mnguni and COO Mthiyane as they joined the campus tour.

ChooseUP Day 2025 on Groenkloof Campus was more than a showcase of the Faculty of Education; it was a celebration of ambition, community, and the start of countless promising journeys into the noble profession of teaching.



The Dean of the Faculty of Education, Prof Lindelani Mnguni during his ChooseUP welcome address



Prospective students with their families in consultation at the exhibition stalls

New leadership in the Faculty of Education: Prof Ronél Ferreira appointed Deputy Dean of Research and Postgraduate Studies



Prof Ronél Ferreira

The Faculty of Education is proud to announce the appointment of Prof Ronél Ferreira as the new Deputy Dean: Research and Postgraduate Studies, effective from 1 July 2025. Her term will run for four years, concluding on 30 June 2029. The appointment was officially announced by the Dean of the Faculty, Prof Lindelani Mnguni.

Prof Ferreira, a distinguished

scholar in the Department of Educational Psychology, currently serves as Director of the Centre for Visual Impairment Studies at the University. She previously held the position of Head of the Department of Educational Psychology and has been instrumental in advancing inclusive education, notably through her collaboration with the South African National Council for the Blind to enhance societal integration for visually impaired individuals. In announcing the appointment, Dean Mnguni praised Prof Ferreira's extensive expertise and research leadership: 'Prof Ferreira brings to this role a wealth of experience, a steadfast commitment to research excellence, and a deep understanding of postgraduate education. Her leadership will be pivotal in advancing our strategic vision as a research-intensive

faculty.'

A prolific researcher, Prof Ferreira is widely published, with her recent co-authored book *Understanding education for the visually impaired* (2023) receiving critical acclaim. Her research interests centre on psychosocial support, resilience, and participatory intervention models, particularly within school and community contexts supporting vulnerable children and at-risk populations.

The Faculty also expresses its sincere appreciation to Prof Saloshna Vandeyar, who has served as Deputy Dean: Research and Postgraduate Studies since 2022.

'Prof Vandeyar's tenure has been marked by transformative achievements in strengthening our research and postgraduate

systems,' noted Dean Mnguni. 'Under her leadership, we witnessed significant growth in NRF-rated researchers, academic promotions, and research grant success. Her commitment to research capacity development played a key role in the Faculty recently recording one of its highest numbers of master's and doctoral graduates.'

Colleagues across the Faculty have warmly congratulated Prof Ferreira on her appointment. Among them, Prof Vandeyar extended her best wishes, commending her successor's commitment to research-led transformation and academic excellence. The Faculty of Education warmly welcomes Prof Ferreira to her new role and looks forward to the continued advancement of its research and postgraduate agenda under her capable leadership.

ALTA VOS AWARDED THE STALS PRIZE IN EDUCATION

Author: Prof Irma Eloff

Prof Alta Vos, formerly from the Department of Humanities Education, was awarded the prestigious Stals prize in Education at a function at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS). The Stals prize is awarded by the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns (SAAWK), a multi-disciplinary organization working for the advancement of arts, science, technology, and literature in Afrikaans.

Prof Vos was awarded for a lifetime of work in Afrikaans as a scientific field. She has authored and co-authored multiple series of textbooks for Afrikaans, while simultaneously also interrogating the role of textbooks in society. The role that textbooks play in the official and unofficial curriculum has shaped her research agenda. She explores the role of historical empathy during historical moments, the ways in which stereotypes are represented in textbooks during periods of ideological transition, and the role of visual representations in textbooks.

It is however, her dedication to the development of accessible textbooks for Afrikaans at school and tertiary level during a critical period of political transition in the history of South Africa that won her the Stals prize. Book

series included well-known titles such as Afrikaans ons taal and Platinum Afrikaans (Huistaal), an Afrikaans research textbook for postgraduate students, and two methodology textbooks entitled, Afrikaansmetodiek deur 'n nuwe bril (Oxford) and Vuvuzela-Afrikaans: taalonderrig wat nie geïgnoreer kan word nie (Mediakor), Bestbooks Eksamenhulp Afrikaans for Grade 8 and Grade 9, Goed, beter, beste, Afrikaans books for Grades 4, 5, 6 and 7, Alles-in-een Afrikaans Eerste Addisionele Taal Lees- en taal-series for grades 4

to 7 and Cub Club Afrikaans Grade 4 to 7 as co-author. She also wrote the workbook for the novel and film Pad na jou hart. Through this work she built bridges between the emerging, linguistic empirical work and didactic language worlds in Afrikaans.

During the ceremony, prof Vos extended a special word of gratitude to her husband and family for their support in her academic endeavors. She also thanked the Akademie for the acknowledgment of her life's work.



From left to right: Prof Ilse Feinauer, Chair SAAWK, Prof Alta Vos and Prof Irma Eloff

Prof Johann Engelbrecht invited to serve on the International Advisory Board of the Journal of Research on Mathematics Education (JTME)



◀ Prof Johann Engelbrecht

Prof Johann Engelbrecht of the Department of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education has been invited to serve on the International Advisory Board of the Journal of Research on Mathematics Education (JRME). Recognised as one of the most prestigious journals in the field globally, this invitation is a significant honour for Prof Engelbrecht and the Department.

Prof Engelbrecht's distinguished academic career spans decades. He taught mathematics in the Department of Mathematics before becoming Deputy

Dean of the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences and later serving as acting Vice-Principal of the University until his retirement in 2013.

Throughout his career, he has been deeply involved in advancing mathematics and mathematics education, both locally and internationally. In 2004, he founded the South African Mathematics Foundation (SAMF), and he served as its Executive Director until recently. He was also a founding member of the international Delta movement, a southern hemisphere collaboration dedicated to undergraduate mathematics education. His contributions have earned him numerous accolades, including the Claude Harris Leon Award for Championship in Mathematics Teaching (1998) and the South African Mathematical Society Award for the Advancement of Mathematics (2005).

A prolific researcher, Prof Engelbrecht has delivered keynote addresses

worldwide, published extensively in leading international journals, and collaborated on international projects. He represented South Africa on the International Programme Committee for ICME 2012 in Seoul and participated in a blended learning survey at ICME 2016 in Hamburg.

His research interests include secondary and undergraduate mathematics education, assessment, blended learning, school-to-university transition, and the mathematical requirements of engineering students. More recently, his focus has shifted to the role of technology and artificial intelligence in transforming mathematics education. He has edited multiple special issues of high-ranking journals, as well as the Springer publication Social media in the changing Mathematics classroom. He is currently the lead editor of the forthcoming Springer volume Generative artificial intelligence in the changing Mathematics classroom.

Making your post-matric choice with Prof Kobus Maree

Author: Dr Sharon Mashau-CPRP



▲ Prof Kobus Maree

As high school students across South Africa grapple with post-matric decisions, the age-old dilemma of whether to dive straight into university or take a gap year is more pertinent than ever. Prof Kobus Maree, a leading expert in career guidance, offers his insights into navigating these crucial choices.

Prof Maree strongly advocates for job shadowing as a foundational step for high school students. 'Job shadowing

gives students the chance to see what a career looks like on the ground,' he explains. 'It helps them understand what a particular job actually involves and whether it aligns with their interests and strengths.' He stresses that this first-hand experience is invaluable. 'Instead of relying on assumptions or advice alone, they get first-hand experience. This often confirms or challenges their initial thinking and can help prevent costly or discouraging course changes later. It's an excellent way to gain clarity and confidence before committing to a career-life trajectory.'

When it comes to the impact of a structured gap year, Prof Maree is unequivocally positive. 'A well-planned gap year can be deeply beneficial,' he states, highlighting various avenues students can explore, from enhancing skills like IT proficiency or new languages to gaining work experience, travelling, or volunteering, 'all of which broaden their worldview and develop qualities like empathy, compassion, resilience, adaptability, and independence,' he says. He recounted a memorable anecdote from an in-flight magazine: 'It told of a competition asking for the best advice you could give a school leaver. The winner simply wrote: "Get yourself a passport and travel the world."' Ultimately, he believes a thoughtfully executed gap year can 'reignite your motivation and help you return to your studies with greater purpose and maturity.'

While acknowledging the benefits, Prof Maree was also candid about the potential risks and downsides of a gap year, particularly within the South African context. 'In South Africa, where access to meaningful gap year activities may be unequal, some students risk becoming demotivated or disconnected from their academic goals,' he explains. Other challenges include difficulty readapting

to structured learning, falling behind peers, or even negative experiences in work environments that can dampen motivation. 'So, while a gap year can be powerful, it must be approached with clear planning and purpose. This is a sine qua non,' he asserts.

For students wavering between immediate university enrolment and gaining work experience, Prof Maree offered valuable information rather than prescriptive advice: 'I never give "advice". No one can or will ever know you as well as you do,' he noted. He underscored that there is no universal solution. 'Each student's situation, readiness, and clarity of purpose should guide the decision.' His recommendation is clear: 'If you feel uncertain about your study plans or career direction, consider taking a year to gain practical experience, travel, or consult a career psychologist. But do so with intention. Don't drift.' Conversely, if a student feels 'confident and ready', direct entry into university might be the right choice. Regardless of the decision, he advised students to 'apply to university in your Grade 12 year and, if necessary, defer your studies later on. This keeps your options open and reduces the pressure of deadlines later.'

To ensure a gap year or job shadowing experience adds value, Prof Maree emphasises a deliberate approach. 'Set clear goals, document your journey, reflect regularly, and identify life themes emerging from your experiences.' Networking is also deemed crucial. 'Connect with as many people as possible, as some may become mentors or collaborators later on,' he suggests. Consulting a career psychologist early in the year is also recommended 'to refine your mission, vision, and goals. A gap year can offer deep personal growth...but only if treated as a stepping stone, not a detour.'

Lastly, Prof Maree offered insights on choosing a career-life trajectory in an evolving job market. He urged students to look beyond conventional 'safe' choices and instead align with their values, talents, and sense of purpose. He highlighted the importance of adaptability: 'Think about how your skills can enable you to become employable and more adaptable in a world shaped by digitalisation, climate change, and rapid economic shifts.' For him, careers extend beyond mere survival. 'They should be about making a meaningful contribution.' Prof Maree concluded by stressing the cultivation of both practical and deeply human qualities: 'creativity, compassion, adaptability, and resilience.'



Inaugural lecture: UP Professor addresses spectrum of local and global factors shaping public higher education financing

Author: Dr Sharon Mashau-CRP



Prof Gerhard Ouma

In his recent inaugural lecture, Prof Gerald Wangenge Ouma of the University of Pretoria's Department of Institutional Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation and the Faculty of Education addressed the complex, often contentious landscape of funding for higher education in Africa, particularly South Africa.

An inaugural address is a vocational milestone for newly appointed professors or those who have been promoted to full professor. Prof Ouma's lecture, titled 'Financing public higher education: balancing unsteady scales', was based on insights gleaned over two decades of research and significant contributions to national policy. In his address, he argued that public higher education financing is influenced by an interplay of political and economic processes, colonial legacies, post-independence aspirations, economic challenges, and global policy shifts.

'Decisions made by policymakers are influenced not only by immediate financial realities but also by broader political agendas and societal demands, such as social justice, equity, skills development, and expanding access,' Prof Ouma said. He has been instrumental in shaping South Africa's higher education funding systems, having served on more than a dozen national task teams since 2007, including the Ministerial Committee on the Financing of Universities and the Ministerial Task Team on

Fee-Free University Education for the Poor. These roles, coupled with his position as Senior Director for Institutional Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation at UP and his decade-long membership in Universities South Africa's Funding Strategy Group, have grounded his scholarly work in real-world policy processes and institutional realities.

Prof Ouma's doctoral research, which compared the response of public universities in South Africa and Kenya to declining government funding, shaped his subsequent research, which explores the crisis of state funding and reliance on tuition fees and third-stream income. During the lecture, he highlighted the tension between higher education institutions, the state, and society. He cited the 2015/2016 #FeesMustFall student protests as a manifestation of this tension, where universities attributed fee increases to declining state funding, while the state pointed to increased student financial aid being negated by rising tuition. He noted that public universities underappreciate the complexities of financing higher education in South Africa, the country's history of inequality, and rising public sentiment against tuition fee increases.

A key challenge, Prof Ouma said, is the increase in per-student costs at rates that exceed the general economy's inflation. He also highlighted the compounding effect of accelerating student enrolments on per-student costs. 'Post-apartheid South Africa has seen significant growth in student enrolment, but it has strained resources, compromised quality, and led some universities to increase enrolments in low-cost programmes to cross-subsidise more expensive offerings,' he explained.

Prof Ouma also pointed out that public funding has not kept pace with rising costs, leading to increased reliance

on tuition fees and shifting a significant financial burden onto students and their families. 'This underfunding is aggravated by funding mechanisms that do not consider the actual cost of higher education provision and governments failing to disburse all approved funds,' he explained. 'Student debt, which in South Africa grew from R2,7 billion in 2009 to R17,3 billion in 2022, further compounds these challenges.'

Prof Ouma dedicated a significant portion of the lecture to the historical context of higher education financing in Africa, particularly the 'systematic and coercive disinvestment' driven by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund through structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in the 1980s and 1990s. These programmes compelled African countries to reduce public spending on social services, including higher education, in favour of primary education. This era, he explained, saw higher education framed as a less competitive investment priority, leading to the decline of public funding, the introduction of cost-sharing policies, and student loan schemes.

'The legacy of SAPs underpins many of today's challenges, catalysing the institutionalisation of cost-sharing and redefining higher education as a private rather than a public good, leading to universities becoming "hybrid" institutions—part public, part market-driven, or public by day and private by night,' he explained. Prof Ouma then turned to tuition fees, which he described as a 'deeply contested, complex, and multidimensional issue'. Addressing the legacy of free higher education in many African countries after independence, he stated that while it aimed to promote nation-building and human capital development, it had unintended consequences; among other things, beneficiaries were primarily from middle-class

and urban backgrounds due to inequalities in the school system. 'Free higher education was an expensive project that limited expansion and led to a decline in quality as state funding failed to keep pace with growing enrolments,' he added.

Prof Ouma went on to elaborate on cost-sharing, where students and their families contribute to the cost of their studies alongside the state. He made a distinction between 'complementary' cost-sharing, where private funding supplements public funding, and 'substitutive' cost-sharing, where it replaces it. The post-2008 global financial crisis, he explained, saw a shift towards substitutive cost-sharing, where accelerating increases in tuition fees coincided with a sharp decline in public funding. This substitutive model creates deep tensions, undermining the democratic promise of higher education as a public good and leading to an affordability crisis for families.

'Complementary cost-sharing models with strengthened state funding advance inclusive massification, while substitutive cost-sharing exacerbates inequality,' he said. Prof Ouma concluded the lecture by outlining several key imperatives: a renewed pact between higher education institutions, the state, and society; a long-term perspective in funding decisions; funding models that advance inclusivity and education justice; a broader, holistic framework that considers higher education's societal contributions beyond economic returns; and an understanding that underfunding undermines a country's long-term capacity for research, innovation, and skills development. 'Financing higher education is not merely about budgets or political calculations but about the future that society desires,' Prof Ouma said. 'This requires models that are financially sustainable, socially just, and contextually appropriate.'

Celebrating Women's Month: Spotlight on Prof Linda Theron, a trailblazer in education research



▲ Prof Linda Theron

Prof Linda Theron (DEd, Guidance & Counselling; HPCSA-registered educational psychologist) is a professor in the Department of Educational Psychology and an associate of the Centre for the Study of Resilience in the Faculty of Education. She is also an extraordinary professor in the Optentia Research Unit at North-West University and an affiliate professor in the Centre for Resilience and Socio-emotional Health at the University of Malta, where she teaches about resilience across minority and majority world contexts to students selected for the International Joint Master of Resilience in Educational Contexts (https://lnkd.in/g-x_S5_g). Her clinical and research interest is in African youth resilience to structural violence, with a special interest in the multisystemic, contextually responsive resources that play into youth well-being. Prof Theron's track record of funded studies and over 150 publications align with this interest, as do the studies of more than 60 postgraduate students whom she has mentored.

Currently, Prof Theron holds a £5 000 000,00 Wellcome Discovery Award to lead the R-NEET study (<https://lnkd.in/dEjNuTvZ>), a multi-site, 66-month interdisciplinary investigation into the multisystemic roots of resilience to depression among young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET). She is also

a key member of the consortium leading the Horizon-funded Planet4Health study (<https://planet4health.eu/>), with the role of co-leading the investigation into human resilience to climate change and environmental stressors. She has shared her enduring interest in resilience at 150 conferences and symposia around the world and is often invited to provide keynote or plenary addresses that showcase the inspiring resilience of African young people.

She currently serves as an associate action editor for Adversity and Resilience Science (Springer) and the Journal of Adolescent Research (SAGE). She is also a subject editor (with a focus on human and community resilience) for Society & Ecology (the Resilience Alliance) and serves on several editorial boards, including those of Child Indicators Research, Journal of Adolescence, and School Psychology International. She is an invited member of the Wellcome Trust Career Development Interview Committee, the citiesRISE Scientific Advisory Council, and the EQUALITY Research Collective, among others. The National Research Foundation of South Africa rated Prof Theron's resilience-focused work as internationally acclaimed (B1), and she is an elected member of the Academy of Science, South Africa (ASSAF).

Celebrating Women's Month: Spotlight on Dr Folake Ruth Aluko, a visionary in open and distance learning, breaking boundaries in research and leadership



Dr Ruth Aluko

Dr Folake Ruth Aluko, a distinguished researcher, earned her doctorate from the University of Pretoria in 2007, following MEd and BEd degrees from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. She joined the Unit for Distance Education at the University of Pretoria as a full-time researcher in January 2009.

She manages the quality of the distance education programmes in the Faculty of Education. Her research focus areas include quality management of ODL programmes, mobile learning, access, social justice, programme evaluation, student support, and teacher professional development.

As a distance education practitioner, Dr Aluko has authored four books, two of which are *Does distance education in the developing context need more research?* and *Building theory into practice (Vols 1 & 2)* (2023), in which practitioners showcase their research. Books on distance education research are sparse, especially on the African continent.

Dr Aluko has authored 15 book chapters, 24 articles in accredited journals, and five conference

papers. She lectures in full-time programmes in the Faculty and has supervised postgraduate students and mentored a postgraduate fellow. She has delivered 12 keynote addresses, read 64 papers, and facilitated workshops at local, regional, and international conferences.

Dr Aluko is a lead investigator for local, regional, and international distance education/teacher education projects. She is the Chief Editor of the open journal Teacher Education through Flexible Learning (in Africa and other developing contexts) and serves on the editorial boards of affiliated journals. She is involved in conference organisation and serves as the Chair of the Distance Education and Teachers' Training in Africa (DETA) Conference, an Africa-specific biennial conference

initiated by the University of Pretoria in South Africa in 2005 that brings together teacher education practitioners with their international collaborators. Dr Aluko has served two terms as President of the National Association of Distance Education and Open Learning in South Africa (NADEOSA), a forum for collaboration on open and distance learning, and as Treasurer of the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA).

Dr Aluko has held C3 (2015) and C2 (2024) ratings from the National Research Foundation (NRF), a peer review system that assesses the standing of South African researchers. She was the first black African woman from the Faculty of Education to be awarded an NRF rating.

Celebrating Women's Month:

Spotlight on Prof Irma Eloff, a champion for education and sustainability



Prof Irma Eloff

From being the first woman Dean of Education at UP to winning international awards for her groundbreaking research, Prof Irma Eloff embodies excellence, resilience, and global impact. This Women's Month, we honour her remarkable journey.

Irma Eloff is a professor of educational psychology at the University of Pretoria and an adjunct professor at the University of Innsbruck in Austria. She is a member of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) and is rated as a social scientist by the National Research Foundation (B2). Prof Eloff is a former Dean of Education at UP, the first woman to hold this position. As a young academic, she was an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology at Yale University.

She has authored more than 100 scholarly articles and book chapters and has authored and edited nine books. She is an alumnus of the University of Pretoria, Stellenbosch University, North-West University, and the Gordon Institute of Business Science. She has held visiting professorships in the USA, the United Kingdom, and Europe. Since August 2024, she has been a network partner in the interdisciplinary network of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Northwestern Switzerland. Her research and teaching have won numerous awards. Most recently, Prof Eloff and her research collaborator, Ann-Kathrin Ditttrich, won the Best Paper Award at the International Symposium on Qualifications, Training, Micro-Credentials and Sustainable Development hosted by Hamburg University of Applied Sciences and Tallinn University, with a paper entitled 'Teacher educators and sustainability: Lessons from African-European research collaborations' (February 2025). In 2022, the Federal Minister for Education, Science, and Research, as well as the Minister of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation, and Technology in Austria, awarded the Aurora Alliance multi-institutional team, in which she teaches on education and sustainability, third place nationally in the category 'Communication and decision-making'.

In 2018, Prof Eloff was awarded a Förderkreis 1669 Wissenschaft Professorship in Social Sciences at the Institut für LehrerInnenbildung und Schulforschung of the University of Innsbruck. She also received the HB & MJ Thom Prestige Award in 2017, the Education Association of South Africa Medal of Honour in 2015, and the International Prize for Excellence in HIV Research Related to Children from the International AIDS Society (IAS) and the Coalition for Children Affected by AIDS in 2014 in Melbourne, Australia.

Prof Eloff is also the President of TuksRugby at the University of Pretoria.

Spotlight on Prof Saloshna Vandeyar, a pioneer of compassion and cohesion

Prof Saloshna Vandeyar, a distinguished academic, joined the University of Pretoria in 2000 as one of its first three black academics. A Hindu woman from a disadvantaged background, she bravely integrated her personal experiences into the curriculum, enriching the Faculty's academic discourse.

Prof Vandeyar's research focuses on social, cultural, and cognitive justice in education. She addresses a wide range of inequalities, including those related to race, ethnicity, class, gender, and religion that are perpetuated in educational settings.

A C1-rated scientist by the National Research Foundation, Prof Vandeyar has authored six scholarly books and numerous articles and book chapters. She is a member of several international organisations, including AERA and CIES, and serves on multiple editorial boards. Her contributions have been recognised with four international research awards, including the Venus International Foundation Award (2015) and the CIES Award (2012). She has also won five national awards, including the NSTF Senior Black Researchers Award (2007) and the EASA Medal of Honour (2025). Additionally, she has received six institutional awards from the University of Pretoria, including the Best Researcher Award in the Faculty of Education (2019).

During her 26-year tenure at the University, Prof Vandeyar founded and directed the Centre for Diversity and Social Cohesion, and from 2022 to 2025, she served as the first Deputy Dean of Research and Postgraduate Studies in the Faculty of Education. Her desire to be an agent of transformation is a driving force, and she developed the 'pedagogy of compassion' framework for diverse educational settings.

Prof Vandeyar is highly regarded for her ability to embody a life that is both unique and in harmony with people of different cultures and beliefs. Her profound yet quiet example continues to leave a lasting impression on the institution.



Prof Saloshna Vandeyar

Celebrating Women's Month:

Spotlight on Prof Margaret Funke Omidire, a pioneer transforming multilingual education to foster inclusion, equity, and opportunity



▲ Prof Funke Omidire

To close the Women's Month section, we celebrate Prof Margaret Funke Omidire's unwavering commitment to equity in education, her pioneering scholarship, and her role as a mentor and leader who empowers future generations.

Prof Omidire is a professor in the Department of

Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria, where she also serves as Director of the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA). A registered educational psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), she is widely recognised for her contributions to the fields of multilingualism, linguistic diversity, language in education, and multilingual pedagogies in sub-Saharan Africa. Her research is deeply rooted in advancing equity and inclusion, with a particular focus on reconceptualising education in multilingual contexts to foster comprehension, critical thinking, and learner well-being.

Prof Omidire holds a C2 rating from the NRF and has supervised over 30 postgraduate students, including ten PhDs. She has produced more than 55 scholarly outputs, including journal articles, book chapters, and edited volumes, notably 'Multilingualism in challenging education settings: Supporting learning and development' (2020) and 'Using multiple languages for learning: Evidence-based strategies for teachers' (2021). Her leadership in large-scale projects, such as the Teacher Assessment Resources for Monitoring and Improving Instruction (TARMII) initiative, valued at R6,6 million, and the Primary Learners Multilingualism Intervention (PLMI) project, reflects her ability to bridge theory, policy, and practice to improve educational outcomes. Her work has attracted significant research funding from bodies such as the National Research Foundation and the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, while also fostering international collaborations with leading scholars in the USA and Europe. She has delivered presentations at numerous conferences, symposia, and invited talks globally and has contributed to teacher professional development across diverse educational contexts.

Prof Omidire's excellence has been recognised through accolades such as the Education Association of South Africa's Emerging Researcher Award (2019), the University of Pretoria's Academic Achiever Award (2020), and the Postgraduate Supervision Award (2020). She has held leadership positions, including Chair of the Education Association of South Africa (2022), and continues to play a vital role in shaping education policy and practice through her scholarship and service. Her vision remains to advance multilingual education as an asset for learning and development, while supporting teachers, inspiring students, and influencing policy to achieve inclusive, high-quality education in South Africa and beyond.



The University of Pretoria confers an honorary doctorate upon South Africa's most celebrated and multi-award-winning editorial cartoonist, Jonathan Shapiro—better known as Zapiro

Author: Dr Sharon Mashau-CRP

Shapiro, whose career as a cartoonist began in the mid-1980s, is frequently invited by universities to contribute to discussions on subjects ranging from journalism, art, anthropology, and literature to international relations. The Honorary Doctor of Education was conferred on him as part of UP's autumn 2025 graduation season (2–29 May), during which more than 12 000 students graduated.

'It's really pleasing for me to see my cartoons being used in our schools and universities as teaching aids and in exam papers and textbooks,' Shapiro said in an interview from his home studio in Cape Town ahead of the ceremony. 'It is, therefore, particularly special for me to be receiving an honorary doctorate in education. The cartoons link different disciplines, which is very much part of the transdisciplinary discourse in higher education today,' he added.

Shapiro's early years

Shapiro's fascination with cartoons and

comics began in childhood, and he honed his drawing skills while pursuing a degree in architectural studies at the University of Cape Town (UCT). However, his ambition to become a cartoonist soon took precedence, leading him to switch to graphic design. His studies were interrupted by compulsory military conscription.

During his time in the army, he refused to carry a rifle, an act for which he was humiliated. As part of this humiliation, he was forced to carry a heavy lead pole in place of a rifle. He turned this imposed punishment into a prop, using it satirically to highlight the injustices of the army and the apartheid regime. While still serving, he became a cartoonist-activist within anti-apartheid organisations.

In 1988, he was awarded a Fulbright scholarship and moved to the School of Visual Arts in New York, where he studied media arts, including satirical cartooning and caricature. Over the past four decades, his cartoons have provided a compelling and incisive reflection on events in South

Africa, spanning both the apartheid and democratic eras, with his work published in national and international outlets across the globe.



Dr Jonathan Shapiro giving his honorary address

#UPGraduation2025: Overcoming enormous obstacles and excelling

Author: Jenette Webb



Dr Jenette Webb

At just 14 years old, I was on my way to Stellenbosch with my high school for an athletics camp when my life changed forever. Our train was involved in a horrific crash: Two trains collided, leaving devastation in their wake. I was rushed to Potchefstroom Hospital, where I was treated for a dislocated shoulder, internal bleeding, and a severe injury to my left temporal lobe. What I didn't know then was that this injury would trigger something far more challenging, epileptic seizures that would redefine my entire journey.

For years, I went from one neurologist to another, struggling with relentless seizures. No doctor

seemed able to help me, and my high school couldn't provide the academic support I needed after missing months of school. Eventually, my parents made the difficult decision to move me to a school closer to home. My epilepsy was classified as 'drug-resistant', and I was in and out of hospitals, facing a brutal cycle of seizures, pain, stiffness, and nausea. Each seizure felt like drowning, suffocating in silence, and I was unable to cry for help as consciousness slipped away. I lost time, confidence, and the ability to live a normal life. I desperately needed support, not just academically but mentally and emotionally. Then, at 16, a friend of my mom recommended a neurologist at Unitas, and for the first time in years, we had a breakthrough. Dr Terblanche didn't just treat me; he cared. He adjusted my medication, introduced the ketogenic diet, and in my final year of school, I had a vagus nerve stimulator implanted to help control my seizures.

Yet, despite these efforts, many people around me believed my future was limited. Doctors, teachers, and even those close to me told me I would never live a normal life. They said I would never hold a job, never drive,

never have true independence. But through the unwavering support of my parents, sisters, family, and friends, I refused to accept those limitations. I fought through every seizure, whether it struck while jogging, showering, or studying for an exam. I pushed through when my kidneys began to fail, through the depression, the frustration, and the nights spent questioning why my life had taken this path. But the hardest battle I faced was with God. I questioned everything. Why me? Why this pain? Why a life filled with so much struggle? I felt abandoned, lost in the chaos of uncertainty. I prayed, but at times, I wondered if He was even listening. There were moments I was angry with Him, moments I doubted His plan. But through every seizure, every setback, and every tear-filled night, He was there. Even when I couldn't feel Him, He was carrying me. It took years, but eventually, I found the right combination of treatments and, finally, freedom from seizures.

At 22, something incredible happened. I reconnected with an old friend, someone who would change my life forever. Two years later, I married that same friend. Today, at 29, I am happily

married, a mother to a beautiful baby boy, Joshua, and the proud dog-mom of two amazing pups. I have been seizure-free for more than two years, received a new vagus nerve stimulator, and I now drive, work, and—against all odds—earned my PhD in assessment and quality assurance in education and training, with the focus of my research being on resilience. Resilience is more than just a word to me. It is the foundation of my story. So many believed I wouldn't make it, but here I stand today, my dreams unfolding in ways I never dared to imagine. Yet, this achievement isn't mine alone. It is a testament to the power of belief, unwavering support, and standing together when the road is difficult.

Looking back, I see that my greatest struggle was also my greatest blessing. Those painful years forced me to question so much, but they also led me to grow so much closer to God. And for that, I am forever thankful for epilepsy. Because without it, I would never have the relationship with Him that I have today. He has carried me through so much, and forever will I proclaim the glory of God, the miracle worker!

#UPGraduation2025: How a UP education graduate is paving the way for dyslexic learners

Author: Palesa Mahlakwane



Nomfundo Brukwe

Recent Faculty of Education graduate Nomfundo Brukwe is an educator who is on a mission to support inclusive education, which seems entirely appropriate given the meaning of her name.

'My name, "Nomfundo", means "mother of

education". That reminds me daily of my calling to nurture and support learners,' she says.

Having graduated with a master's degree in early childhood education during UP's spring graduations, she is now focusing on supporting dyslexic learners and creating a conducive environment for them to thrive while equipping teachers with practical tools to identify and support learners with reading difficulties. Ms Brukwe advocates for equal opportunities for all learners, no matter the challenges they encounter. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she taught students with learning difficulties that could not be properly identified or accommodated at the time. Through this experience, she recognised the significance of adopting inclusive methods in the classroom, sparking an interest in research that focused on supporting dyslexic learners.

Ms Brukwe uses the RAVE-O (Retrieval, Automaticity, Vocabulary, Engagement with Orthography) programme, which is designed to improve reading, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary for dyslexic learners. It uses structured, multi-sensory activities, integrating

phonics, sight words, and comprehensive strategies. In South African classrooms, RAVE-O can be implemented through small-group interventions alongside regular classroom instruction, with teachers adapting the programme to the curriculum to meet the needs of learners. 'My goal is to generate evidence-based strategies that can be adopted nationally to improve reading fluency and comprehension among Grade 4 learners,' she explains.

Ms Brukwe's master's research used the RAVE-O programme to train educators with evidence-based tools to support dyslexic learners in mainstream classrooms.

She has also taken to social media platforms like TikTok to empower teachers to share creative strategies to support student success, gaining recognition on the platform among both educators and parents for her insights on classroom strategies. She advises educators to approach digital platforms deliberately, focusing on delivering practical value and engaging realistically with their audience. 'Social media has immense potential to improve education by making learning interactive, captivating, and accessible,' she says.

In 2022, Ms Brukwe was recognised as one of the Mail & Guardian's 200 Young South Africans for her contributions to education. 'Being recognised by the Mail & Guardian was incredibly humbling and motivating,' she says.

Seeing her learners grow and gain confidence in their abilities continues to fuel Brukwe in this field. Her research on the RAVE-O programme has yielded promising results, and she aims to implement these findings in her doctoral studies, which, she says, she is excited to begin.

#UPGraduation2025: Dr Bodibadi Modungwa becomes first person to receive PhD in Setswana at UP

Author: Katlego Badu

Dr Bodibadi Dorothy Modungwa has made history by becoming the first person to receive a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Setswana at the University of Pretoria (UP). Her doctoral research focused on teaching Setswana as a home language in Grades 11 and 12, a culmination of more than 30 years of dedication to education and the promotion of her mother tongue. "Personally, this milestone is a significant honour as it affirms the value of my language and culture," she says. "Professionally, it signifies a step forward in elevating Setswana as an academic discipline, opening doors for further research, preservation and recognition of African languages in higher education."

Dr Modungwa grew up in Ga-Rankuwa, a small township in Pretoria, surrounded by rich oral traditions and cultural practices. "Being immersed in Setswana from an early age inspired my passion to preserve and advance the language through education and research," she explains.

Her love for Setswana deepened during her undergraduate studies and over the course of her decades-long teaching career. "Over the years, I realised that learners show different levels of proficiency in Setswana, even in predominantly Setswana-speaking areas," Dr Modungwa says. "This motivated me to find strategies to support multilingual learners and promote Setswana academically."

One of the major challenges of her PhD journey was translating academic knowledge into Setswana. "Finding equivalent terminology was difficult because some concepts had no direct translation," she says. "I drew on indigenous knowledge, consulted experts and created new terms that stay true to the language's essence." A notable example is her translation of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky's zone of proximal development concept as Kgaolo ya Tlhabololo e e gaufi, broadening Setswana's academic vocabulary and demonstrating its ability to convey complex ideas.

Dr Modungwa is grateful to her family, supervisors and colleagues for their support. "My supervisors, Dr Connie Makgabo and Dr Refilwe Ramagoshi, guided me through moments of doubt. The Head of Department, Professor Johan Wassermann, reminded me of the value of my work when the journey felt too heavy. My children and sisters gave me constant love and encouragement, and my colleagues motivated me throughout." Her doctoral journey was not without challenges. Balancing her roles as a new lecturer, PhD student, mother and supervisor to five master's students demanded immense sacrifice. "There were moments of stress and helplessness, especially when hired statisticians delayed my data analysis," she recalls. "Communication with my supervisors, patience and perseverance were vital. Completing a PhD requires dedication, sacrifice and resilience."

Through her work, Dr Modungwa hopes to inspire others to value indigenous languages in scholarship. "I aim to continue developing Setswana academic resources, mentor emerging scholars, and promote the language in schools and higher education, ensuring it thrives both culturally and academically," she says. For Dr Modungwa, the PhD is more than a personal achievement; it is a testament to the richness of Setswana, a tribute to her community, and a beacon for future scholars. "This journey has taught me that embracing one's language and culture in academia is not only possible but essential," she says. "I hope my story encourages others to pursue research that honours their heritage."



▲ Dr Bodibadi Dorothy Modungwa

Capping excellence in education

A standing ovation to the 2025 Faculty of Education graduates! Through dedication, perseverance, and countless hours of hard work, you have reached a remarkable milestone that deserves to be celebrated with pride and joy. This achievement is more than just receiving a degree; it is about unlocking doors to new opportunities, shaping the future of education, and carrying forward the values of excellence, leadership, and service.

As you step into the world as educators, leaders, and change-makers, remember that every lesson you teach, every learner

you inspire, and every community you serve will ripple far beyond the classroom. We are incredibly proud of your journey and excited for the impact you will create in transforming lives, uplifting communities, and driving the future of education forward.

Here's to celebrating your success and the legacy you will continue to build!



UP EDUCATION

AT A GLANCE

The faculty of Education is the largest contact Faculty of Education in the country and a leader in teacher education and training. Our core function is to train quality teachers, education psychologists, leaders and managers in education. Our administration criteria ensures that we attract high performing students from all over the world.

EXCELLENT ACADEMICS



82.7%

academic staff with doctorates



20

NRF rated researchers



95.9%

Examination undergraduate pass rate

STRONG INTERNATIONAL PROFILE



88 351

Alumni worldwide

QS Rankings **(301-400)**



ACADEMIC OFFERINGS

6 Undergraduate programmes

4 initial teacher education qualifications:
Bachelor of Education

Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)

Higher Certificate in Sports Science

Distance Education programmes

Postgraduate programmes

Postgraduate Diploma in Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Post graduate Diploma in Visual Impairment Studies

Advanced Diploma in School Leadership and Management

13 Bachelor of Education Honours, 15 Med and 15 PhD programmes

STUDENT PROFILE

6 992

Total number of enrolled undergraduate students

4 430

Total number of distance education students

84.18%

Percentage of black students

Total number of postgraduate students

4 219

89.64%

Percentage of international publications



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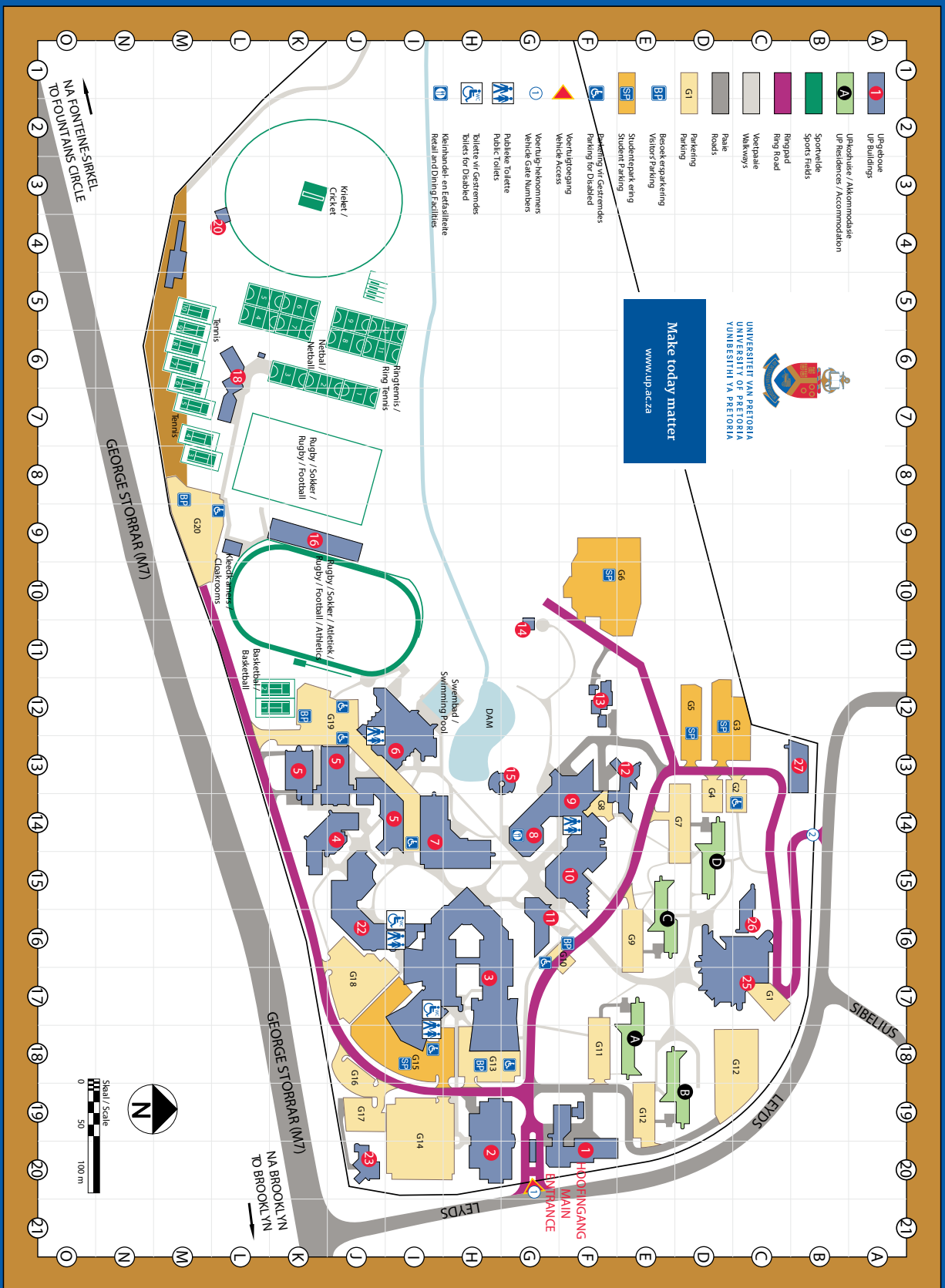
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Groenkloofkampus / Groenkloof Campus / Khamphase ya Groenkloof S 25° 46' 10" E 28° 23' 56"



GEBOUW			KOSHUISE		
11 Administrasie	G16	12 Gasteakkommodasie	E13	16 Pawiljoen	K9
3 Aldoel	H17	7 GK-biblioteek	H15	26 Personeelakkommodasie	C16
15 Boma	G13	13 Hoof: TuksRes	F12	6 Sportsentrum	I13
25 Duethuis	J20	14 Jakaranda-klubhuis	G11	8 Studentesentrum	G14
23 Eetsaal	C17	18 Kentucky-klubhuis	L6	1 Tegniese Dienste	F20
		27 Kiaat-klubhuis	B13	5 Tegnika	J13
BUILDINGS			RESIDENCES		
11 Administration	G16	25 Dining Hall	C17	9 Inca	E16
3 Aldoel	H17	23 Duet House	J20	13 Kiaat	D15
10 Auditorium	F15	7 GK Library	H15	26 Staff Accommodation	C16
15 Boma	G13	12 Guest Accommodation	E13	8 Student Centre	G14
20 Cricket Club House	L4	13 Head: TuksRes	F12	1 Technical Services	F20
		14 Jak aranda Club House	G11	5 Technika	J13

Kaart soos bygewerk in Oktober 2022
Wysings: Alhoewel elke moontlike poging aangewend is om te verseker dat dit wat op hierdie kaart verskyn die jongste akkurate inligting is, moet gebruikers nie aanvaar dat dit altyd die geval is nie. Die Universiteit van Pretoria aanvaar geen aanspreeklikheid vir enige skade, direkte of indirekte, wat voortvloei uit die gebruik van hierdie kaart. Die Universiteit van Pretoria aanvaar geen aanspreeklikheid vir enige skade, direkte of indirekte, wat voortvloei uit die gebruik van hierdie kaart.

Map updated October 2022
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