The Education Department is in an exciting phase of expansion and growth. Celebrating a centenary provides an opportunity for reflecting on how we are responding to the many challenges facing education globally, nationally and locally. It is a time for renewal and re-imagining, and setting an agenda for the future.

Established in 1913, a product of its time, the Rhodes Education Department offered an initial teacher education qualification for white, English-speaking graduates wishing to teach in secondary schools. One hundred years later, the Department forms the core of the Rhodes Education Faculty which offers a range of qualifications within and across four broad education sectors, namely higher education, formal schooling, early childhood education, and education and training and development (ETD). The Department continues to be focused primarily but not exclusively on formal schooling but its focus has broadened to include initial teacher education, in-service teacher professional development, and research. Today, the Faculty’s student body is diverse – in terms of race, language, age, culture, social class and geographic origin – and representative of South African society.

The 2013 stats are: 564 African (72%); 155 White (20%); 47 Coloured (6%) and 13 Indian (2%). The Department attracts graduates from all over South Africa who wish to become teachers, scholars wanting to undertake research, and in-service teachers wanting to upgrade their teaching qualifications, most of whom are from the rural Eastern Cape. One hundred years later, the Department continues to be focused primarily but not exclusively on formal schooling but its focus has broadened to include initial teacher education, in-service teacher professional development, and research. Today, the Faculty’s student body is diverse – in terms of race, language, age, culture, social class and geographic origin – and representative of South African society. These have informed and shaped our vision and Strategic Development Plan, and overall strategic orientation to provide quality and relevant education and access for all.

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1. Increase initial teacher production to accommodate the national needs for teachers in all phases of the formal school system.
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4. Implement an aggressive recruitment drive.
5. Strengthen our career pathway for Early Childhood Practitioners, expand our Early Childhood Development (ECD) offerings and build the intellectual field of ECD.
6. Consolidate and focus our ECD work on Grahamstown.

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5. Consolidate and focus our ECD work on Grahamstown.
• Create more ECD opportunities for Grahamstown children.
• Develop and implement a new Grade R teacher qualification.
• Establish a research Chair of Education and Development.

3 Build teachers’ subject knowledge and pedagogical skills:
• Continue to provide quality, transformative support to the professional development and upgrading of in-service teacher qualifications.
• Continue to target teachers in critical subject areas (Mathematics, Science, English) from remote rural areas of the EC and elsewhere.

4 Consolidate, strengthen and sustain our existing and create new research agendas:
• Secure adequate funding for the continued work of the research chairs (Numeracy, Environmental Education and Mathematics)
• Establish a Chair in Literacy and Language to Research Practice in the Foundation Phase and complement the work being done by the Numeracy Research Chair

5 Support teachers in all phases of schooling to develop information literacy skills, use Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) and resources to enhance teaching and learning in the 21st century:
• Create a Teaching Innovation Hub for initial teacher and in-service teacher education, and ECD teacher education and practitioner programmes offered in the faculty.
• Create a Chair in Literacy and Language to Research Practice in the Foundation Phase and complement the work being done by the Numeracy Research Chair

6 Increase access to Rhodes University for talented rural and Grahamstown school leavers:
• Establish an annual on-campus Winter School for talented Grade 10 and 11 pupils from Grahamstown and rural areas.
• Create pathways for students by establishing formal partnerships with the GADRA Matric school and selected rural schools.

The Education Department is in a strong position to turn challenges into opportunities but is it going to take an extraordinary amount of hard work and support to achieve its goals. A combination of strong leadership, a committed staff and financial support from the state, generous alumni, benefactors and donors will ensure that our quest to provide quality and relevant education and access for all is realised.

PROFESSOR DI WILMOT
DEAN OF EDUCATION
people who are among the poorest in South Africa.

Grahamstown is regarded as the educational hub of the Eastern Cape. The stark reality of the education experience in Grahamstown, however, is one of vast economic and educational inequality.

The challenges begin in the early stages of schooling. A study by Grahamstown Area Distress Relief (GADRA) Education (2012) conducted across 10 Grahamstown primary schools showed that only 58% of learners entering isiswasha-medium schools are school ready. The findings concluded that under half of Grade 3 learners in the schools assessed are able to read isiXhosa at grade level.

The town has also experienced a major decline of Grade 12 performance and the educational inequalities seem to be growing. In 2011 the eight township schools produced 69% of the National Senior Certificates (NSC) and 29% of the university-level passes, with the three former Model C schools producing 40% of the passes and 75% of the university passes. In 2012, the eight township schools produced only 56% of the city’s NSCs and a mere 24% of university passes.

Together, the eight township schools: only registered 37% university-level passes in 2012, down from 53 in 2011. None of these schools were able to produce a distinction in mathematics, and there was a lone distinction in physical science. (Ashley Westaway, Director: GADRA Matric School). Addressing the 50% dropout rate between Grades 10 and 12 is a critical issue in the Eastern Cape.

Providing access to Grade R, improving the quality of basic education, especially in the first three years of formal schooling where the foundation for future learning and success is laid, expanding teacher production and improving teacher retention; and addressing infrastructure backlog are strategic priorities in the Eastern Cape.

A LIVED REALITY

Rhodes University is situated in Grahamstown in the Makana Municipal District of the second largest province of South Africa. The Eastern Cape has a predominantly rural population of 6.7 million people who are among the poorest in South Africa. Past legacies and current socio-economic challenges mean that the population remains divided along racial, social and economic lines. Townships are poorly planned, underserviced and characterised by high levels of poverty and expanding informal settlements.

Government struggles to service the high demand for housing and basic services such as water and sanitation. The greater Makana District, which also includes the rural towns of Alicedale and Redbeek East, is home to some 134,000 people. Its population is growing rapidly as farm workers migrate to towns following the introduction of new labour legislation and changes in land-use patterns. Grahamstown has no industry as such, and experiences high rates of unemployment, most significantly within its black population.

In addition to the many socio-economic challenges facing Grahamstown, there is a lack of adequate school infrastructure and a severe shortage of teacher skills and knowledge, especially in mathematics, the sciences and the languages. Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Foundation Phase education is a particularly critical issue, and there are not enough teachers to teach young learners in their mother tongue. In addition, the Eastern Cape has a highly unionised teaching body that has become a disruptive force in schools and there is a lack of provincial support for schools; of the newly qualified teachers who studied on state bursaries, only 18% got jobs, whereas the national average for placements is 80%.

SUSTAINING DEVELOPMENT

The challenges to education in South Africa cannot be understood or resolved out of the context of the daily life challenges faced by its population. Poverty, food scarcity, life-threatening illness, child-headed households are all factors that impact on whether a child gets to school at all, regardless of the quality of the teaching and learning in the schools. The Makana Regional Centre of Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development, housed in the Department of Education, identifies a range of interacting socio-ecological, socio-economic, socio-political and educational issues and risks that affect development and the quality of life in the Grahamstown district and the Eastern Cape more broadly. These include:
- Unemployment, poverty alleviation and economic development;
- Health, well-being, vulnerability and risk;
- Educational quality and access;
- Youth culture and security;
- Biodiversity, climate change and environmental degradation;
- Governance and service delivery.

According to statistics released by the Eastern Cape Department of Education in April 2013, the province has the highest drop-out rate of learners in the country. Of the 304,900 learners who commenced schooling in Grade 1 in 2000, only 70,240 (23%) completed Grade 12 in 2011. Of the 211,203 Grade 1 learners who started school in 2009, only 145,074 reached Grade 5 in 2013. What has happened to the 66,129 learners who dropped out?
SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTS
- The Eastern Cape HIV/AIDS incidence rate is between 1 to 1.5%, translating to over 600,000 people (20% among antenatal attendees in EC in 2011). Source: www.avert.org/south-africa-hiv-aids-statistics.htm
- The disease has long-term and uncertain effects on society and the economy.
- The average life expectancy for Eastern Cape females is 56 years and for males it is 51.7 years.
- Many households, communities and schools are faced with the challenge of an increase in orphaned children which rose from 76,338 in 2007 to 81,814 in 2011.
- The number of pregnancies among school children is alarming with 1,270 in 2005 peaking to 9,381 in 2009 and settling at 6,500 in 2011.
- In 2011 the Grahamstown unemployment levels rose to 28.8%.
- In Grahamstown East average incomes range from R201 to R500 (US $80) per month.
- Water infrastructure and service provisioning is a critical issue facing the entire Makana District and many households lack access to primary services such as electricity, sanitation and running water.
- Malnutrition and food insecurity are associated with poverty.
- Apartheid inequalities in schools persist despite Government commitment to Education for All objectives in 1994 and over 20% of Makana residents have received no education higher than Grade 6; 33.36% of the Makana District residents are 15 years or below.
- Few Makana youth in the 15 to 25 year age bracket have acquired any work experience.
- Out of school youth are discouraged job seekers who lack qualifications and the language skills for the few jobs that are available.
- Effective local governance is needed to address these and many other local concerns.

EXPANDING THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF TEACHER PRODUCTION
The Education Department is expanding its initial teacher education off a solid base of an outstanding graduation rate. In 2011 the PGCE graduation rate was 99%, while the average for the Eastern Cape was 60%. Student enrolment in the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) has increased in the past five years and in response to this we will expand initial teacher education by introducing a four-year undergraduate degree for Foundation Phase teachers to help address the critical shortage of African mother-tongue teachers in the Eastern Cape.

The major focus of the Education Department is formal schooling, a span from the school reception year (grade R) to Grade 12. We develop sound research based on an understanding of the learning experience as embedded in multiple contexts. We also explore how relevant, accessible and high quality learning experiences may be generated and sustained. We work with schools, communities and the local, provincial and national Departments of Education to develop, implement and research structures and programmes aimed at improving access to, and quality and relevance in, education.

THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS
The majority of South African teachers do not have the required depth of knowledge of their fields to enable quality education. The Education Department provides programmes that enable teachers to deepen their knowledge of the child, the content and the teaching process, and integrate this into practices that will positively impact on teaching and learning in their classrooms. Our Bachelor of Education (BEd) courses strengthen their knowledge and practice in teaching particular content areas. The BEd Honours degree provides a deeper engagement with theory and practice, together with experience in reflective practice and research into practice in education. The MEd degrees focus on research and learning of particular content areas, enabling teachers to develop specialist knowledge in practice of specific content areas.

INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION: PGCE PROGRAMMES
The Department’s three postgraduate programmes qualify students to teach in South African schools. These are the PGCE (Senior Phase and Further Education and Training Band), the PGCE (Intermediate Phase) and the PGCE (Foundation Phase). These programmes provide students with a broad understanding of education processes and systems and the teaching of their specialist subject areas as well as mentored initial experience in teaching those content areas. In recognition of the quality of these programmes, the Department was awarded a multi-million Rand grant to extend our teaching infrastructure for these programmes. This grant has been used to build three teaching venues – two suitable for group work teaching of classes of 50 and one state-of-the-art teaching auditorium – to facilitate group work teaching of classes of 50 and one state-of-the-art teaching auditorium that allows group oriented teaching of 150 students. We aim to increase the size of our PGCE cohort to approximately 180, while retaining the characteristic ethos and quality of the programmes.

INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION: BED PROGRAMMES
The PGCE programmes are restricted to students who have graduated with a Bachelor’s degree. Students wanting to become teachers must obtain a Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree. Students wanting to become teachers in teaching particular content areas. The BEd Honours degree provides a deeper engagement with theory and practice, together with experience in reflective practice and research into practice in education. The MEd degrees focus on research and learning of particular content areas, enabling teachers to develop specialist knowledge in practice of specific content areas.
project involved a small tutoring programme in Physics, Maths and Chemistry. This year’s pilot selected disciplines and fields such as English, for them to rub shoulders with professors in university life, creating opportunities to motivate learners and induct them into Rhodes. The programme for 43 Grade 12 learners from schools in the Eastern Cape.

To overcome this challenge we are introducing a four-year full time BED teaching qualification, building up to a final capacity of approximately 60 graduates per year, over a five-year period. This will be a multilingual degree programme, allowing teachers to specialise in Foundation phase teaching and to teach either isiXhosa or English. The Education Department has been awarded funding for a three-year research programme, to research issues of quality in Foundation Phase education and to carry out the preliminary design of the curriculum. We are currently working to secure bursary funding for prospective students and funding for the final infrastructure components required for this development.

RESOURCES AND THE TEACHING INNOVATION HUB
Guided by trends to create collaborative learning experiences we are transforming the resource centre in the Department into an interactive and multifunctional space. This will be an inspirational and aspirational place in which teachers can experiment and develop their pedagogical skills through experiential and active learning approaches. To do this, students require access to more current technologies such as interactive whiteboards, e-beams, tablets and multimedia resources, to name a few examples. The teaching innovation hub will enable students to be trained to use these technologies effectively for teaching. While recognising that we need to align our teaching practices with modern technological and educational trends, we are also conscious that South Africa is characterised by huge socio-economic and digital inequalities. Thus, to ensure relevance and access, the studio will provide access to and space for the use of a wide variety of learning technologies, tools and resources suited for use in the wide range of schools in the Eastern Cape.

INCREASING ACCESS TO TALENTED RURAL SCHOOL LEAVERS
The Department ran a Winter Tutoring School for 43 Grade 12 learners from schools in Keiskammahoek at Rhodes in July 2013 with the intention of giving talented rural school children exposure to Rhodes. The programme aims to motivate learners and induct them into university life, creating opportunities for them to rub shoulders with professors in selected disciplines and fields such as English, Physics, Maths and Chemistry. This year’s pilot project involved a small tutoring programme in Mathematics and English was provided for the top three Grade 11 and 12 pupils from each of seven schools. We hope to be able to fund further winter schools that will increase these interactions with deserving candidates.

*On behalf of Ntinga Ntaba kaNdoda, I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for hosting and running a high-quality programme of teaching grade 12 learners from our eight Keiskammahoek south high schools. They were highly positive and motivated by the experience,* wrote Mazibuko K. Jara, Executive Director for Community Heritage Sustainable Development and Community Power in Keiskammahoek South.

RESEARCH IN THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
While the Education Department forms the core of the Faculty, especially with regard to its focus on formal schooling and the Professional Development Centre, it is home to several centres of excellence in research and in-service teacher community outreach initiatives. These include three productive research Chairs; a Chair in Environmental and Sustainability Education addresses broader systemic issues in education and two critical Chairs in Mathematics Education and Numeracy address one of the fundamental weaknesses in school teaching both nationally and internationally.

We have an established a productive team researching educational leadership and management. We are also developing high level research capacity in the fields of language and literacy education, particularly in the foundation and intermediate phases, and in science and geography education.

THE MURRAY & ROBERTS CHAIR OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION
(Opposite page)

The Murray & Roberts Chair of Environmental Education is Africa’s only Chair in Environmental Education. The research programme of the Chair and the Environmental Learning Research Centre (ELRC) has a core focus on environmental learning, human agency and social change, and the implications of environmental and sustainability challenges for education and training processes and systems both locally, nationally and internationally.

Four inter-related research programmes focus on:

• Educational quality and relevance in schooling and higher education systems, including teacher education.
• Change-oriented learning and sustainability practices in vocational education systems and workplaces.
• Capabilities and agency development in community-based learning programmes for sustainable development.
• Social learning and global change, linking local learning with global change challenges.
Since 1990 the environmental education research programme has graduated over 160 Masters scholars, and 24 PhDs. The ELRC currently hosts a programme of approximately 15 PhDs, and 30 Masters scholars at any one time, and it contributes to other postgraduate (Initial and in-service) programmes.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LINKS:
The Chair and the ELRC are internationally recognised as a United Nations University linked Regional Centre of Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development, hosting the Makana RCE on behalf of the Faculty of Education. Our staff contribute actively to, and are represented on the Global Universities Partnership for Environment and Sustainable Development, the Mainstreaming of Environment and Sustainability in African Universities Partnership, and in the UNESCO International Reference group for the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development. The Chair and the ELRC have worked in close partnership with the SADC Regional Environmental Education Programme for over 15 years, and led the development of an Environmental Sector Skills Plan for the South African government. They are currently co-operating on key international initiatives such as the Southern African Universities Association Climate Change programme for southern African universities, and the UNESCO International Climate Change Education initiative, that is capturing national case studies of climate change to develop guidelines for systems of education and training globally.
THE FIRSTRAND FOUNDATION MATHEMATICS EDUCATION CHAIR

The FirstRand Foundation Mathematics Education Chair is hosted by Rhodes University, jointly funded by the FirstRand Foundation, RMB Fund, the Department of Science and Technology and administered by the National Research Foundation.

The FRF Mathematics Education Chair initiates and coordinates teacher education and research projects that focus on improving the quality of mathematics teaching and learning (NRF, 2008). Prof Marc Schäfer, appointed in this position in 2010, together with his team seek to:

• Improve the quality of teaching of in-service mathematics teachers at previously disadvantaged secondary schools in the Grahamstown Education District;

• Improve the mathematics results in these previously disadvantaged secondary schools as a result of quality teaching and learning;

• Research sustainable and practical solutions to the mathematics crisis; and

• Provide leadership in mathematics education and increase dialogue around solutions for the mathematics education crisis.

The teacher community interventions are underpinned by a strong emphasis on teaching for conceptual understanding. The Maths Teacher Enrichment Programme (MTEP) sessions are each based on a particular concept or theme, allowing for a broad and open philosophy of styles and approaches, while creating a growing network of concepts. This is linked to both the curriculum and classroom practice, and it is here that on-site school support plays a crucial role in transferring this knowledge to the classroom and finding solutions that fit this context.

MEd students affiliated with the project lead an MTEP session based on their research, this demonstrates to teachers how the results of academic research can have a direct impact on teaching and learning in the classroom.

All of the research questions speak directly to the multi-faceted mathematics education crisis. The findings are themed around the following solution clusters:

• Growing a professional teacher identity;

• The role of manipulatives in effective teaching strategies;

• Understanding and catching up the overwhelming mathematic backlog amongst our learners;

• Harnessing the use of mobile technologies the access mathematical resources and information.

One of our most powerful examples of empowerment as a result of MTEP is the teacher participation in the annual national AMESA Congress. Four MTEP teachers pose proudly after practising their presentations for the upcoming conference.
Research Agenda

• Regular contact sessions
• School workshops
• In-school support
• Driven by mathematical concepts
• Contextualised within the curriculum

Underpinned by a strong emphasis for teaching for conceptual understanding.

The VITALmaths project produces short video clips specifically designed for the autonomous learning of Mathematics. These intellectually and visually appealing video clips are typically one to three minutes long and develop a variety of mathematical concepts and processes for dissemination using mobile technologies. The videos are available online in English, German and isiXhosa for free at the following links:

- http://www.ru.ac.za/vitalmaths/
- https://www.facebook.com/VITALmaths
- http://www.youtube.com/VITALmaths

The South African Numeracy Chair (www.ru.ac.za/sanc)

The SA Numeracy Chair is a hub of mathematical activity, passion and innovation that blends teacher and learner numeracy development with research in mathematics education in Grahamstown and South Africa. Its project work focuses on the development of four interrelated communities of practice, namely the teacher development program community, the communities of learners in after school clubs, the research community who draw on the teacher and learner communities as their empirical field, and the community of families who become involved through family maths events. All research and development products emanating from this work are made freely available to all through the increasingly popular website which researchers, teachers and learners across the country and beyond have begun using on a regular basis.

• The four interrelated objectives of the Numeracy Chair are as follows:
  - To improve the quality of teaching of in-service teachers that primary school level;
  - To improve learner performance in primary schools as a result of quality teaching and learning;
  - To research sustainable and practical solutions to the challenges of improving numeracy in schools;
  - To provide leadership in numeracy education and increase dialogue around solutions for the mathematical education crisis.

After school mathematics clubs allow primary students increased opportunity to learn and enrich their mathematical experiences in ways that are free from curriculum and assessment driven teaching practices. These are supportive communities where sense making, active mathematical engagement and participation,

The use of low-tech resources such as these wooden blocks supports the conceptual teaching of Mathematics for understanding.

Professor Mellony Graven holds the Chair in Numeracy.
and mathematical confidence building are foregrounded during individual, pair and small group interactions.

THE CAPE FOUNDATION PHASE RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The Cape Foundation Phase Research Programme is a joint initiative of Rhodes University, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Walter Sisulu University and the University of the Western Cape. It was established as a key initiative of the Department of Higher Education and Training to strengthen knowledge and practice of Foundation Phase Teacher Education in South Africa. The programme investigates and responds to the challenge posed by the severe shortage of qualified Foundation Phase teachers and aims to strengthen the capacity of higher education institutions to provide more and better qualified Foundation Phase teachers nationally. Envisaged outcomes of this project include contributions to quality teacher education practices through evidence-based programme development; increasing the number of foundation phase teachers and teacher educators, and ensuring more inclusive access for learners to quality learning experiences.

Professor Jean Baxen heads up the Cape Foundation Phase Research Programme.
THE CENTRE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH, TEACHING AND LEARNING

The primary role of CHERTL is to develop academic staff as professional educators, the promotion and assurance of quality in teaching and learning, and the development of student learning in conjunction with academic departments. CHERTL also hosts a large PhD programme in Higher Education Studies and functions as an academic department of Rhodes University with its main research focused on the development of teaching and learning in higher education.

CHERTL makes a significant contribution to the national higher education landscape both through formal qualifications at other institutions as well as through representation on national bodies such as the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA) and the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC).

IN-SERVICE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND UPGRADING OF TEACHING QUALIFICATIONS

The Education Faculty offers several programmes for mostly rural teachers in the Eastern and Northern Cape. These include English, Mathematics, Life Orientation, Science, Early Childhood Development and Information Communication Technology in Education. These courses include school-based professional support for teachers.

THE RHODES UNIVERSITY MATHEMATICS EDUCATION PROGRAMME

(http://www.ru.ac.za/rumep/) The Rhodes University Mathematics Education Project (RUMEP) is an independently funded NGO that focuses on improving mathematics content knowledge and teaching skills in primary and secondary schools. RUMEP produces graduates who are resourceful and sufficiently skilled from rural and semi-rural backgrounds to guide and support other teachers of mathematics in a cluster of neighbouring schools. The 13 RUMEP clusters and their resource bases have impacted on 45,000 pupils from 480 schools and 488 teachers who actively participated. RUMEP has also authored 10 maths teaching aids for teachers who have no textbooks, let alone supplementary materials. The intervention strategy has three major components:

1. The collegial clusters groups both within and between schools. As a group, they identify areas in their teaching which need to improve and then design a programme of intervention and work to achieve this improvement with the RUMEP facilitators.

2. The MathsNet Internet Communications Project was designed to provide an infrastructure for the development of working communities of practice. These communities create and adapt resources for themselves and make them available for use and further development by others. The idea is to motivate teachers to use technology in the classroom to stimulate learning and boost learner morale.

3. There are currently six clusters with approximately 180 teachers in 74 schools reaching approximately 25 000 learners who are benefiting from the project.

INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF ENGLISH IN AFRICA

The ISEA was established to research the difficulties of teaching English in Africa and in South Africa in particular and focuses on how it is spoken and written by the main linguistic groups, how it is taught, and how teaching techniques can be improved. The institute has large-scale research and implementation projects in English education, publishes journals devoted to English language and literature in Africa and South Africa, and provides a research base for scholars in the field. The ISEA also trains teachers in the Eastern Cape through the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) and BEd in-service programmes.

As the number of ISEA alumni grew, the opportunity to develop a network of teachers to sustain and foster professional ties across the province became pressing.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Top: Dr Bruce Brown, Head of Department Bottom left: Zintle Songwaru, Fundisa for Change programme coordinator. Bottom right: Dr Kenneth Ngcoza, a lecturer in Science Education.
education over several years of working in the Eastern Cape. The volume intends to promote a process of systemic improvement in the quality of education available in the Province.

Writing is Fun, a newsletter started in the late 1990s by the IDEA to maintain collegial relations between graduates, has become a means to advertise the conference, to stay in touch with teachers between conferences, to reach the wider language community and grow professional ties among teachers and also between teachers and Rhodes University.

THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Established in August 1981 as an NGO, the CSD’s primary focus was to create an awareness of the importance of education in a community in which children had no access to care and education of any kind. Homecare groups cared for thousands of pre-school children whose families could not afford the fees charged at registered pre-schools. This was more than a basic child-minding scheme and CSD developed a basic Early Childhood Development (ECD) training programme for caregivers. Approximately 75 farm schools, benefiting more than 800 children, were established in Fort Beaufort, Grahamstown, Alexandria and Port Alfred.

In 1997, an ECD pilot project initiated by the Department of Education led to the development of an interim ECD policy and curriculum framework guidelines. The CSD’s focus became more streamlined towards providing educational and management training for ECD practitioners in line with policy and framework. Through experiential learning the CSD realised that although much time, effort and resources are invested through training, it is necessary to integrate the training of ECD practitioners with that of the needs of the community.

Community Development (CD) courses ensure that community practitioners combine their efforts with those of the ECD practitioners to act as catalytic drivers for community development processes. This translates into the improved well-being of children and their families. The unit has invested heavily in developing quality Level 4 and Level 5 training materials to deliver a high standard in our in-service practitioner education programmes. One of the crucial gaps identified in the ECD pilot project is the establishment of a career path for ECD practitioners. Serious thought is being given to the development and implementation of a new Grade R qualification, and funding to establish a research Chair of Education and Development.

LOOKING FORWARD …

Given the critical need for more teachers our priority to expand teacher education remains and we will require support to produce quality teachers and academic support for students in the form of mentorship. A full-time four year Bachelor of Education degree for Foundation Phase Teachers that has a bilingual curriculum in English and isiXhosa will provide a platform for researching multilingualism and mother-tongue instruction. This new degree will build on the research outputs of the Cape Foundation Phase research programme, and will provide strong collaborative research partnership opportunities with the new NRF/NRF SARChI Chair in Multilingualism, awarded in 2012 to the Rhodes University School of African Languages.

The South African government has been exploring various ways to integrate African languages into the education system, but there has not been consensus on how best to do it. In an effort to promote multilingualism and foster social cohesion, the National Department of Basic Education has announced that all primary school pupils will have to learn an African language from 2015.

The proposed new Multilingualism Research Centre will provide further support and skills to these new teachers through its programmes. Forming part of the current School of Languages, and under the auspices of Dr Russell Kaschula, it will focus on the development of African languages in order to enhance their effective interface with modern development, theories and concepts. It will also explore and document strategies for intellectually using African languages for use in Higher Education where the focus is on achieving quality education for historically disadvantaged students, as well as promoting multilingualism for speakers in other languages.

We believe firmly that interventions to change the education realities for South African children need to start in the early developmental phases and reach through the many stages of learning if we are to make a tangible difference to their educational successes and transform their current future outlook of little hope. We are the only Faculty in South Africa with a pathway for ECD practitioners and we require the staffing support to train Grade R teachers to support the national intervention to implement a Grade R class at each school.

Going forward we also recognise the importance of sustaining the engine room that has been created by our research of practice. An additional chair in Literacy will complement the essential work being carried by the Numeracy Chair and strengthen our Foundation Phase offerings. Another chair in Education and Development is necessary to build the intellectual field of Early Childhood Development. We look forward to partnering with you, our future donors, to not only re-imagine but change the educational realities of South African children and transform their communities and their worlds.