

Faculty Activities, Visitors and Highlights: First quarter 2021



Faculty of **Education**



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

Education Department

Prof Nhlanhla Mpfu [Rhodes University] and Prof Tom Smits [University of Antwerp in Belgium] signed a Memorandum of Understanding to complete a research project on Learning impact of translanguaging in multilingual content-based instruction classrooms. The project will include postgraduate students from both South Africa and Belgium.

Prof Nhlanhla Mpfu [Rhodes University] together with Prof Mncedisi C Maphalala [North West University] and Prof Monwabisi K. Ralarala [University of Western Cape] produced a trend analysis report on Staffing South African Public Universities from 1994-2019 on behalf of the Council on Higher Education.

Dr Ellison Musara newly appointed as a Research Associate in the Education Department

The department received notification of a successful nGAP lecturer for Foundations of Education.

A number of departmental colleagues attended the 29th Annual SAARMSTE Conference (online, hosted by National University of Lesotho)

Environmental Learning Research Centre

Significant activities

The past quarter work in the SARChI Chair on Global Change and Social Learning Systems, the Environmental Education and Sustainability Chair and Environmental Learning Research Centre more broadly has been focussed on four main activities:

Programme and Project reporting:

The SARChI Chair APR and the Community of Practice APR were both successfully submitted to the DSI/NRF and the SARChI Chair started its second five-year cycle in January 2021. The COP is into its second year, with baseline reporting in year 1 completed. The COP is working across 11 Research Chairs from 6 Universities, and has established an Early Career Network involving 20 Masters and PhD scholars working on 'Social Learning and Sustainable Development'.

The final report for the Amanzi for Food WRC project was completed, bringing a six-year research programme to a close, but with a strong interest from the WRC to extend this project for wider implementation across three provinces.

The UNESCO/JET #OpenUpYourThinking SADC Research Challenge on ESD and Education (Theme 1 of this regional programme) report was completed and submitted. A SADC wide report is in development that is synthesising all 8 research themes. This will be presented at SADC policy level and at the World Conference on ESD in May this year.

The first two-year phase of the Sustainability Starts with Teachers programme was also completed, with a further two-year renewal of the programme coming up. Final reporting on Phase 1 was submitted to UNESCO in February documenting the programme's work in 6 southern African countries.

The Biodiversity Human Capital Development Review report was finalised and submitted for feedback and was shared and deliberated at the national BCHCS skills summit in March.

Fundraising and set up of new projects and initiatives

The first quarter of the year has also been a busy time for fundraising and proposal development work in the SARChI Chair. In the last reporting period we have been involved in development of a number of new project proposals:

- The SARChI Chair was pleased to hear that a collective proposal for a UNITWIN/UNESCO Network was approved by UNESCO in Paris. This Network has a focus on Education for Sustainable Development and Social Transformation and the SARChI Chair is the main partner from Africa. This links us to over 50 institutions worldwide and to a network of 5 leading UNESCO Chairs internationally, all of whom are founding partners of the UNITWIN/UNESCO network. The main focus of this will be on teacher education.
- An international River Commons Project funded by INREF with a partnership across six continents in which the SARChI Chair is the main African partner – this project was successfully funded to the value of €1.778.516, for a 60-months project.
- An international Capacity Building Programme Proposal on Transdisciplinary Research with the University of Saskatchewan and the SSHRC was submitted. Initial seed funding of 40 000 CAD has been allocated to this project by the UoS for start-up and further project proposal development work should the first round of the proposal be accepted by the SSHRC.
- Profs Rosenberg and O'Donoghue have been working with Engagement Global to support and ESD leadership driven course activated learning network.
- We are in discussion with UNESCO on the second IPA for the Sustainability Starts with Teachers Course which will bring another approximately ZAR 5 Million to Rhodes University over the next two years.

From a research project implementation perspective, the following were highlights in the last reporting period:

- The GCRF Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures (TESF) was actively engaged in supporting South African research proposal development following the call for proposals (for approximately 10M). Unfortunately, we are facing some uncertainties around the GCRF funding cuts in terms of the full scope of this programme.
- In the international Monitoring and Evaluation of Climate Change Programme we have been working on case study templates of national responses to climate change education with the Axis 1 team. This will inform 58 country-based case studies of climate change education for the Global Education Monitoring Reporting process.
- The ELRC is working with WWF and colleagues at SANParks on ways to limit compliance-driven monitoring and expand learning-driven evaluation. This month saw us finalising recommendations for the South African National Parks on this topic, based on interviews with park managers, scientists and 'mediators' in the organisation. SANParks will now consider these recommendations in a series of workshops.

The ELRC [One Ocean Hub](#) team have supported the development of the Coastal Justice Network (CJN) which is a burgeoning new social justice and transgressive social learning space that is bringing together scholar activists, small scale fisher leaders, lawyers, NGOs, CBOs and other citizens along the SA coast in solidarity for social, ecological and cognitive justice in ocean decision making. Within this the OOH have produced several innovative t-learning platforms to facilitate reflexive justice in the ocean space from:

- Establishing a Whatsapp platform for Small Scale Fisher leaders across the country, including CBOs and NGOs.
- The CJN also helped support participation of local community representatives and other SSF leaders in formal objections to the Integrated Management Plan for Isimangaliso wetland MPA, which has not adequately consulted communities previously.
- The team have been tracking and tracing humxn rights violations within the Blue Economy expansion in South Africa.
- They have been responding also to the intangible heritages that are often not considered in policy and other public domains, and through our [Empatheatre](#) methodology we in the process of developing an animated film which explores the rich spiritual and mystical relationship many South Africans have with the deep sea, while also aligning these values with biodiversity knowledge and ecological sensitive marine areas.
- The ELRC OOH team has also recently funded a project with Ethnomusicology led by Dr. Boudina McConnachie exploring isiXhosa songs of the Sea in the Eastern, and how these could be used to develop customary law archives for ocean justice cases along our coast.

Start-up of the academic year and submission of studies for examination

Despite COVID-19 challenges, and the overall late start of the academic year, we have had a good start with a new intake of Masters scholars with the first Masters week hosted online, we hosted a successful PhD week on '4th generation critical theories' in March, and also co-taught on the Departmental Research Design course. We also had a number of scholars submitting studies for examination. The extension to mid-March was much appreciated by staff and post-graduate scholars as many experienced disruptions in 2020 due to the COVID-19 uncertainties and conditions.

Publishing and publications development

The end of 2020 saw publication of Volume 36 of the Southern African Journal of Environmental Education edited by Prof Rosenberg. The SAJEE focussed on 'Education for Sustainability in Times of Crisis'. The SAJEE Editors subscribe to the open access publishing best practice code of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf). The SAJEE is now also indexed on the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).

Page proofs for an 'Environmental Ethics and Education' book in publication (being co-edited and co-ordinated by A.Prof Lausanne Olivitt) have been received back from the publishers, which means that publication of this book with SUNY Press is immanent. This book captures many years of collaborative research on Environmental Ethics and Education with Prof Bob Jickling from Lakehead University in Canada. Co-authors with A.Prof Lausanne Olivitt and Prof Jickling are Dr Dylan McGarry, A.Prof Ingrid Schudel, E. Prof O'Donoghue, and Prof Heila Lotz-Sisitka.

A 430 page manuscript for a book in 'Teaching for Change – Environment and Sustainability Education in South Africa' (being co-edited and led by A.Prof Ingrid Schudel) has been submitted to African Minds for peer review. This book carries 17 chapters that document research in the national Fundisa for Change programme. Her co-editors are Drs Zintle Songqwaru and Sirkka Tshininganwamwe and Prof Heila Lotz-Sisitka.

Additionally, country papers were produced for the South African Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures programme, and these have been used to inform the process of supporting the development of proposals for the South African Hub of the TEF project. The TEF website <https://tesf.network> has also been finalised.

Profs Lotz-Sisitka and Rosenberg have been invited to edit a Special Issue of a NORRAG Journal on Climate Change Education. A proposal was submitted to this effect and approved.

Community engagement, University Sustainability and COVID-19 responses

AProf L.Olvitt is co-ordinating the food cluster of the Makhanda Circle of Unity and is starting a research programme involving the multi-stakeholders involved in the Makhanda food system.

The Eastern Cape Together Iqonga LoThungelwano (community action network) has been continued with its work to support rural communities with meaningful information on the COVID-19 pandemic and relevant responses. In the last period the project team undertook a reflective review with communities on the value and direction of the network.

Short Courses and Events:

Short courses and online course innovations: The ELRC have been actively engaged in finalising and starting up a set of short courses

- The Training of Trainers/Facilitating social learning in an NRM context course is just coming to an end, although students will be working on their assignments over the next month.
- The Amanzi for Food online course has started with over 180 participants signed up for this open access online course.
- An EWSETA Training of Trainers course has also started this week with 40 TVET and Community Education lecturers and managers signed up.
- The Fundisa for Change Green Economy course Module 2 kicked off this Saturday, with nearly 100 EMS (Economics) and Business Studies teachers joining from North West, Gauteng and the Eastern Cape.
- The Proteus / ELRC short course on reflective social practice also started in February.

Mini Environmental Skills Summit: The ELRC hosted a mini-environmental skills summit in March. At this even we unpacked the findings and recommendations of the Biodiversity Human Capital Development Strategy that has just been revised by Prof Rosenberg and a team of researchers. The Summit was actually not-so-mini because the 60+ participants included some of the most senior and experienced in the biodiversity sector, and syndicates were formed to take the recommendations forward into solid proposals to revive the moment and focus of this strategy.

Challenges:

- An emerging challenge that we are facing relates to the ODA budget cuts in the UK that are affecting the GCRF research programmes, of which we have two in the ELRC – namely the One Ocean Hub and the Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures programme. We are currently in negotiation with partners in the UK on the implications of this for our research programmes.

There is also a potential challenge emerging in that three of our Masters scholars have been successful in obtaining NRF bursaries for PhD scholarly work but the time line between submission, examination and uptake of the bursaries is too short.

South African Numeracy Chair

The SANC team attended the 29th Annual SAARMSTE Conference (online, hosted by National University of Lesotho)

Samukeliso Chikiwa and Mellony Graven presented a long paper titled PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' LEVELS OF REFLECTION ON MATHEMATICS LESSONS: A REVIEW AND ADAPTATION OF FRAMEWORKS

Lise Westaway and Pamela Vale presented a long paper titled PRESERVICE TEACHERS' NOTICING OF CHILDREN'S ADDITION CALCULATION STRATEGIES

Both of these papers were published in the accredited proceedings of the conference.

In addition, Mellony Graven, Pamela Vale, Tarryn Lovemore, Demi Edwards, Tammy Booysen, Samukeliso Chikiwa, Wellington Hokonya, and Sally-Ann Robertson all presented Short Papers.

Mellony Graven, with Hamsa Venkat and Pamela Vale, with Jana Visnovska chaired discussion groups about Early Grades Mathematics Teaching and Learning and Multiplicative Reasoning respectively.

Amanda Nesi has been involved in Materials Development and Professional Development subcommittees of CALT (2021 - 2023). She was also nominated as a member of USAf establishes a Community of Practice for African Languages (CoPAL).

CHERTL

The highlight of the first term has been the Online Doc Week. The Doc Week was organised by Dr Kirstin Wilmot. The focus of Doc Week was Decolonial Research Methodologies. Guests presenters were: Shannon Moreira and Kathy Luckett from UCT; Siseko Khumalo from UP; Savo Heleta (Nelson Mandela); Manjeet Ramgotra (SOAS), Prof Vivian Bozalek (UWC) and Prof Michalinos Zembylas (Open University of Cyprus). We have initiated very successful fortnightly work-in-progress online sessions. In each session, one PhD scholar presents work in progress for peer and supervisor feedback. Dr Wilmot is also the driving force behind the fortnightly work-in-progress online sessions.

CSD

CSD Community Work 2021 January to March

The CSD has continued with work on two long-term projects (namely the HCI Ezinkwenkwezini Excellence in ECD project in Makhanda and the VW Legacy Literacy Project in kwaNobuhle). In addition, we have completed the pilot of the Takalani Male Care-Givers project in Manley Flats and Joza and have launched a number of Mikhulu book-sharing workshops in Makhanda. CSD also supported all local ECD centres with registration for the President's Stimulus Package grant.

VW Legacy Literacy project – the baseline EGRA test report has been completed. With over 600 children being tested across 5 schools this represents a significant sample of young isiXhosa readers. Sadly (though predictably) our findings are that almost universally, the benchmarks for 2021 are significantly lower than the already low benchmarks for 2020. On a positive note, however, despite the long holiday, gains made in 2021 have not been eroded.

Ezinkwenwezini- this Appreciative Enquiry based interventionist research project is now at its midway point. Since January, we have conducted four capacity-building workshops with ECD practitioners bringing this aspect of the intervention to a close.

The Takalani Male Care-givers project is a pilot that seeks to mitigate the effects of stereotypes which allocate care and play activities to female care-givers only, and encourage men (including fathers) to play with their children in ways that stimulate cognitive development. The 12-module course has been executed with mixed success across the two sites in terms of uptake from the men who were the intended recipients. However, at both sites the collective community has embraced and enjoyed the play-based activities. Research is being conducted by Takalani for this project and we await the outcomes.

The Mikhulu book-sharing workshops aim to encourage all parents and care-givers, whether literate or not, to engage with their children/wards with wordless story books. Research conducted by the Mikhulu Trust suggests that such engagement increases pre-literacy skills and also accelerates language acquisition. In addition, parent-child relationships and communication are enhanced. We intend to run a year-long series of workshops (10 parents/care-givers) per workshop series of four workshops. The first of these has been completed and another four are underway. Later in the year it is our intention to do research of our own on the effect of this process.

Working with Community Engagement, we have successfully registered 43 local ECD centres for the president's stimulus package.

ISEA

The 2018-2020 BEd in ELT cohort completed their course. All 29 who registered at the start of 2020 wrote the final exam and 26/29 passed, one with distinction, a pass rate of 89.6%. The initial enrollment in 2018 was 32; by this count, the pass rate is 81.2% - by either measure, this is a testament to the remarkable commitment of staff and students, especially in the hard year that we endured.

The ISEA has a BEd Hons cohort of six. Our first teaching session went well, and we decided to have a weekly teaching session of two hours in order to maintain their momentum and cover the course content at a steady rate.

We have successfully recruited a new cohort of 30 Northern Cape students for the BEd SP and FET specialising in English Language Teaching. We also have two self-funded Eastern Cape students, one from Gauteng and another from Mpumalanga. In total we have a cohort of 34.

On 21-22 March we had a f2f Orientation session, taking advantage of the relatively low viral load in circulation and of level 1. The session went well, and we trust that this contact will stand us in good stead should we enter another period of lockdowns. We and the students decided to have a weekly 90-minute teaching session for the same reasons as explained above.

The National Association of English Teachers of South Africa (NAETSA) is having its first conference 26-27 March. We are proud that ISEA two colleagues (Ms Khaya Fulani and Dr Qiana Gray) are presenting workshops. The NAETSA President is another colleague, Mr Sikhumbuzo Sibanda, who will do a presentation on the future of the Association.

RUMEP

RUMEP held its annual Board Meeting at the end of January. The review panel recommendations were discussed before being submitted to IPC.

The post for the new director closed on the 22 March. The contract for the current director has been extended until the end of June.

Recruitment of Northern Cape students started last year and is now complete. All students have student numbers and are presently registering themselves.

An orientation session for the new first year Northern Cape students took place in Kuruman on the 22 March. This group now eagerly awaits on-line or face-to-face teaching.