

Faculty Activities, Visitors and Highlights: First Quarter 2020

Faculty of
Education



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

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Education Department

SAARMSTE: Fostering delight in mathematics, science and technology education

Rhodes University hosted the 28th Southern African Association for Research in Mathematics, Science and Technology (SAARMSTE) Conference in collaboration with Nelson Mandela University from 14 - 17 January. The theme for the conference was **Fostering delight in mathematics, science and technology education**. The Local Organising Committee included Dr Lise Westaway (Chair), Dr Pam Vale (Deputy Chair), Ms Zukiswa Nhase, Prof Ingrid Schudel and Mr Chrispen Muthano. This SAARMSTE president is Prof Ken Ngcoza.

Workshops

With funding from Prof Mellony Graven's South African Numeracy Chair, the Education Department was able to host **Professor Emeritus Terezinha Nunes** and **Professor Peter Bryant** at Rhodes University. A plenary speaker at the SAARMSTE conference, Nunes' research is extensive and focuses on numeracy and literacy development of both hearing and deaf children. Her seminal work on 'Street Mathematics' in Brazil illuminated many features of the informal mathematics of children and adults, and how this knowledge can be used to inform teaching and learning in school. More recently, she has led the 'Teaching and Learning of Whole Number in Primary Schools' topic group for the International Congress of Mathematics Education. Nunes conducted two workshops on number in the early years for staff and post-graduate students in the Education Faculty. Together with Peter, she conducted a literacy workshop for staff and students and the broader literacy community.

Visitors from Budapest

The European Union Erasmus+ ICM teaching mobility grant provides support for teaching exchange programmes across continents. **Professor Csaba Csikos**, Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Education, and two of his colleagues, **Professor Judit Sztányi** and **Professor Bernadett Svraka**, from **Eötvös Loránd Universit** in Budapest, Hungary joined Lise Westaway for a 10 day visit. The purpose of the visit was teaching and research. During this time our three colleagues: (1) taught Bachelor of Education (Foundation Phase) and Post Graduate Certificate in Education (Senior Phase/FET) about the use of realistic word problems in teaching mathematics, developing mathematical thinking and identifying children with dyscalculia; (2) worked with colleagues from the Rhodes University Mathematics Education Programme; (3) conducted a workshop for staff and postgraduate students on Quantitative Research; and (4) conducted a seminar on research related to visualisation in mathematics. The mobility grant will be sustained by a joint research collaboration on children's understanding of unitary fractions. Dr Lise Westaway, Prof Callie Grant and Prof Ken Ngcoza will spend 12 days teaching at the Eötvös Loránd Universit in May.

Congratulations

We congratulate Dr Zintle Songqwaru, Dr Clement Simuja and Dr Fortunate Gunzo on being awarded their PhD degrees.

CHERTL Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning

Milestone

This year, 46 academics from eleven universities, will graduate with a PGDip (HE) offered by CHERTL. This is the highest number of PGDip (HE) graduates to date.

Doc Week

Prof Karl Maton, director of the Centre for Knowledge Building at the University of Sydney and visiting professor at Rhodes University, was invited to present a series of seminars at the CHERTL Doc Week, held from 23 – 27 March. Sadly, even though he was in the country, he could not travel to Grahamstown due to COVID-19 restrictions. The Doc Week went ahead with Dr Kirstin Wilmot, the CHERTL Doctoral programme coordinator, facilitating the virtual seminars.

A new Doctoral Programme

This year CHERTL launched a **new doctoral programme** focused on Social Justice and Quality in Higher Education. The programme received funding of five million rand through the DHET and the British Council and is a collaboration between Rhodes University, the University of Lancaster and the University of Venda. This innovative doctoral programme supports scholars through a structured programme of eight modules offered through a combination of synchronous and a-synchronous online seminars, structured engagement with readings and writing tasks and module assignments. Twelve doctoral scholars and six pre-doctoral scholars are enrolled in the programme.

Reading across Borders

CHERTL doctoral scholars also participate in an international project, Reading across Borders, that fosters postgraduate collaborations. Rhodes University and the University of Venda are part of an eight-country collaboration that includes sixty doctoral scholars from twelve universities in South Africa, Kenya, Turkey, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The project enables scholars interested in social justice to engage in reading and deliberations on the topic of **social justice in higher education**.

Engage

This year sixty tutors enrolled for the CHERTL short course for Rhodes University tutors, Engage. The course was designed by Ms Nichola van der Poel and is facilitated by Ms van der Poel, Ms Kelly Solomon, and CHERTL doctoral scholars, Ms Belinda Matawane and Ms Xolelwa Ngantweni.

Notable Achievements

- At the 2019 Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa conference Ms Anthea Adams was elected to the Executive Committee of the organisation. Dr Nicola Pallitt was elected co-convenor of the Technology-Enhanced Special Interest Group of HELTASA.
- Dr Pallitt is a member of the core team and co-convenes an online course for the *e/merge Africa network*, Facilitating Online. *e/merge Africa* is an online professional development network mostly for educational technology researchers and practitioners in African higher education. Since Dr Pallitt joined CHERTL, an increasing number of Rhodes University academics have enrolled on the course.

- Dr Pallit has been elected vice-president of the Division of Culture, Learning and Technology (hereafter CLT) of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT). The CLT Division focuses on intersections and syntheses of culture, learning, and technology with particular emphases on championing inclusiveness and equity for the entire spectrum of human identification from individual, organisational, and behavioural contexts.

Web Seminars

Dr Roxana Chiappa is co-organiser of an international web seminar series, "**Committing ourselves to Social Justice: Doctoral Education for complex times**". The series is co-organized by Center for Studies in Higher Education UC Berkeley, Center for Innovation and Research in Postgraduate Education (CIRGE) at the University of Washington. The series brings together doctoral education scholars, international agencies, and doctoral practitioners to discuss the **role of doctorate education to shape agenda of social justice**. The first seminar of 2020 will take place on April 1. The seminar is entitled, Practicing social justice during doctoral education: Insights from Engineering and Science. The next seminar will be organised by Rhodes University and will be led by a speaker from our university.

Professional Development

CHERTL joined an EU-funded collaborative project aimed at the professional development of academics for **infusing sustainable development goals (SDGs) into the curriculum**. Rhodes University is represented on the project by Professors Jo-Anne Vorster and Lynn Quinn (CHERTL), Mr Andrew Todd (HKE), Adv Shuaib Rahim (Law), Ms Shabnam Shaik (Anthropology) and Dr Thandi Nqowana (RUCE). The European partner university is Frederick University in Cyprus, while the South African partners also include the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal and the University of Venda.

Enabling Online Education through Technology

The Educational Technology team in CHERTL, Dr Nicola Pallitt, Mr Neil Kramm and technicians, Messers Edward Domboka and Dalitso Chindipha, have had an extraordinarily busy first term. They acquired a **RUconnected app** for use on Android devices and are currently negotiating a similar app for Apple devices. These applications will enable students to work on RUconnected courses **while not connected** to the internet. Thus far, the app has been downloaded by about 1500 students. The number will increase with the need for online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the last three weeks of term, they were hard at work **preparing academics for online teaching**. To this end, they designed and offered eleven blended and online sessions and facilitated some face to face workshops just before the lockdown was announced. They continue to conduct online sessions and are consulting widely with lecturers during the lockdown period. CHERTL is designing an orientation programme for students to prepare them for online learning.

ISEA Institute for the Study of English in Africa

The ISEA is hosting an English Language Fellow, Dr Qiana Gray, in partnership with the US State Dept and US Embassy, Pretoria for the second year in 2020.

Two ISEA members of staff (Ms Fulani and Mr Sibanda) visited the USA for a two week study tour in January 2020, at the invitation of the US Embassy.

RUMEP Rhodes University Mathematics Education Project

Congratulations

- We congratulate Mr Ronald Griqua who was awarded his MEd in Mathematics Education (with distinction) and Mr Silence Balele on obtaining the Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education.
- A former 2018 RUMEP student, Mrs Jolene Phirimana is congratulated on coming first in the Eastern Cape in the GET Phase for Excellence in Mathematics Teaching. She went to the National Teacher Awards in Pretoria and achieved a bronze award for coming third.

Visitors from Hungary

Dr Lise Westaway arranged with the three Hungarian visitors to visit RUMEP. They held two seminars with the staff on common fractions and basic number sense which was so enlightening and productive. The staff at RUMEP were also invited to the two lectures presented to fourth year BEd FP full time students on number and dyscalculia.

CSD Centre for Social Development

Emeritus Professor Lilli Pretorius was nominated as a Visiting Professor at the CSD and Ms Margaret Irvine was nominated as a Professional Associate.

CSD's community-based staff underwent training in Appreciative Inquiry.

SARChI Chair and the ELRC Environmental Learning & Resource Centre

In the past quarter, the SARChI Chair in Global Change and Social Learning Systems, completed its four year review, which has been submitted to the NRF. In the past four years this SARChI Chair has supported 73 post-graduate scholars with direct and indirect funding from the NRF and other projects.

The Chair holder, scholars and collaborators of the Chair have published 113 peer reviewed journal articles and book chapters and have edited or co-edited 5 books. Scholars associated with the Chair have contributed 234 conference presentations and wide range of public outreach, community engagement and social learning initiatives, with over 60 radio broadcasts, blogposts, exhibitions, mobile applications, and performances produced, along with 25 national dialogues, and 10 national and international courses (amongst other outputs). The Chair has graduated 10 Masters scholars and 14 PhDs in this time, with a further 5 PhDs and 1 Masters currently under examination.

A notable recent achievement for the SARChI Chair is the award of a DSI/NRF Community of Practice grant from the NRF. This CoP is focussed on Sustainable Development and Social Learning and will bring together 11 Distinguished Professors and SARChI Chairs nationally to co-research ways of integrating Sustainability Sciences into Education and Training systems. This COP is currently being operationalised.

In the past quarter the two Chairs in the ELRC and the staff of the OOH have:

- Hosted an international research meeting for the Africa Vocational Education and Training 4.0 programme involving academics from Wits University, the University of Nottingham and Gulu University in Uganda, as well as Fort Cox Agricultural Training Institute.
- Hosted an international Research School on Cultural Historical Activity Theory with Professors Yrjö Engeström and Annalise Sannino from the University of Helsinki, and the University of Tampere in Finland. The research school is leading to the publication of a book.

- Hosted the first consultation of the GCRF Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures Programme in Johannesburg. The consultations are supporting co-design of the research call for the South African Node. The programme in Johannesburg was attended by Professor Leon Tikly, UNESCO Chair of Global Comparative Education (PI for the programme at University of Bristol), Professor Arjen Wals (UNESCO Chair of Transformative Social Learning, Wageningen, Netherlands), and Dr Latif Ismael, CEO of Transparency Solutions from Somalia. Further consultations are taking place nationally and internationally (but are on hold due to COVID-19)
- Hosted the final workshop for the SETA Monitoring and Evaluation Research Partnership Initiative in Pretoria, involving all 22 SETAs.
- Hosted a workshop for the WRC Ecological Infrastructure for Water Security Research programme involving approximately 40 stakeholders involved in EIWS. The purpose was to finalise the Social Learning Strategy for the EIWS programme.
- Hosted a creative practice participatory research methods school for approximately 60 national and international participants, and the Lalela uLwandle (listen to the sea) play in Port Elizabeth and in Makhanda.

In the past quarter the ELRC have signed up new funding to the value of ZAR 34.8 million for projects in the next three years.

Another highlight in this quarter is the publication of a Green Skills research book, edited by Professor Eureka Rosenberg, former PhD scholar Dr Presha Ramsarup (now Director of the Wits Centre for Researching Education and Labour) and Professor Heila Lotz-Sisitka (SARChI Chair). The title of the book is:

Rosenberg, E., Ramsarup, P., Lotz-Sisitka, H.B. (2019). *Green Skills Research in South Africa: Models, Cases and Methods*. Routledge Studies in Sustainability. 229 pp. ISBN 978-0-367-23340-2.

We are also grateful for the renovated facility for the SARChI Chair: A new office block and large seminar room, which has just been completed at the end of March.

NRF Mathematics Education Chair

At the recently held **SAARMSTE conference** in Port Elizabeth, the Maths Education Chair team (academics and students) presented **10 papers** on their research activities.

Prof Schafer had a paper accepted for the recent German Association of Didactics in Mathematics 2020 conference in Germany. He is negotiating with Professor Matthias Ludwig from the Goethe University in Frankfurt on setting up a **Southern African Hub for and of the award winning MathsCityMap project**. The Chair's concept document and proposal was well received.

Prof Schafer is in the process of finalizing an internship for Dr Clemence Chikiwa at the Goethe University in Frankfurt for later this year.

Prof Schafer is in the process of negotiating with key players in conceptualizing a joint visualization research project with Swiss academics and researchers similar to the successful VITALmaths project which ended last year.

Transformation

The Education Department appointed a 3 person HoD leadership team and worked with the HoD Forum, HR and Finance to arrange for induction training, as it was recognised that new HoDs and Deputy HoDs need induction if they are to succeed at the challenging task of leading departments in higher education today.

The Dean started a **Faculty Leadership Forum** to bring leaders from each of the Faculty entities together to discuss matters of mutual interest and to ensure effective distributed leadership, which has been a key tenet of our transformation planning in 2019.