

**Faculty  
of Education**



**RHODES UNIVERSITY**  
*Where leaders learn*

**Highlights 2021**

# Faculty of Education contribution to the Annual Report to Council - Some Achievements of 2021

## 1. Achievements in Teaching & Learning

In the Education Faculty, best practice is to research quality teaching and learning, and to turn quality teaching and learning into research products. This is evident in several books published this year, including *Teaching and Learning for Change: Education and Sustainability in South Africa (African Minds)*. Edited by Professor Ingrid Schudel, Dr Zintle Songqwaru, Dr Sirkka Tshiningayamwe and Distinguished Professor Heila Lotz-Sisitka, the publication consists of 19 chapters with 20 authors, 14 of whom are Rhodes affiliates. This Open Access online book is a culmination of the 10-year Fundisa for Change research programme led out of the DSI/NRF SARCHI Chair in Global Change and Social Learning Systems in the Education Faculty.

A teaching and learning and teacher experience innovation in the Education Department was an isiXhosa Spelling Bee for Grade 3 learners in all Makhanda schools where isiXhosa is the Language of Learning and Teaching. A first for South Africa, it was held under strict Covid protocols and organised by Dr Lise Westaway, coordinators Tammy Booysen and Demi Edward and B.Ed. Foundation Phase students.

## 2. Research & Innovation

The DSI/NRF SARCHI SA Numeracy Chair in the Education Faculty achieved particular success with its research-informed programme *Mathematics Mental Starters Assessment Project (MSAP)* which is a collaboration between the two numeracy Chairs in South Africa, Prof Mellony Graven from Rhodes and Hamsa Venkat of Wits, and the Department of Basic Education. This research-led work was translated into all official languages in 2021, allowing for the programme to be scaled across all provinces. MSAP provincial data shows statistically significant improvements in learners' post-tests performance following the mental strategies intervention. Data from the Eastern Cape serve as an example: "Paired t-test results based on the scores of the pre-test for all schools ( $M = 37.5$ ,  $SD = 24.6$ ) and post-test ( $M = 56.9$ ,  $SD = 25.1$ ) on the jump strategies assessment indicate that the mental strategies invention is highly likely to have resulted in a substantial improvements in learner performance,  $t(524) = 21.58$ ,  $p < .001$ . Cohen's  $d$  for the effect size difference between the pre- and post-test means is 0.77906. On the commonly used interpretation of effect sizes as small ( $d = 0.2$ ), medium ( $d = 0.5$ ), and large ( $d = 0.8$ ), this is a medium effect size, close to being large ... In short, in Eastern Cape, there is strong evidence that the intervention was a substantial success."



The Education Faculty's participation in the South African Education Research Association's conference was a highlight involving staff and students across disciplines in Education. The SAERA conference is the premier national research event in Education and the 2021 conference was organised by Wits University, with Rhodes graduates on the organising team. No fewer than 29 Rhodes staff and students presented papers, two Rhodes publications were launched, and Distinguished Prof Heila Lotz-Sisitka of the ELRC did a keynote address. The Education Faculty's post-graduate students participated actively by organising and chairing panels as well as presenting.

Education Faculty members in Mathematics and Science participated in the 29th Annual conference of SAARMSTE the Southern African Association for Research in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education (online, hosted by National University of Lesotho). Dr Samukeliso Chikiwa and Prof Mellony Graven; Drs Lise Westaway and Pamela Vale presented long papers based on their research. Prof Graven, Dr Vale, doctoral student and teacher Tarryn Lovemore, Demi Edwards, Tammy Booysen, Dr Chikiwa, and doctoral student Wellington Hokonya, all presented Short Papers. Representing our Science Education programme, Prof Ken Ngcoza and students also presented at the 29th Annual Conference of SAARMSTE. In their Post-Graduate Progress Reports, Prof Ngcoza's students suggested their conference attendance to be motivational and formative.

### **3. Community Engagement**

The Education Faculty affiliated Centre for Social Development (CSD) has continued with work on two long-term projects which profoundly address community engagement, namely the HCI *Ezinkwenkwezini Excellence in Early Childhood Development* (ECD) project in Makhanda and the VW *Legacy Literacy Project* in kwaNobuhle. In addition, they piloted the Takalani Male Care-Givers project in Manley Flats and Joza and launched Mikhulu book-sharing workshops in Makhanda. CSD also supported all local ECD Centres with registration for the President's Stimulus Package grant.

The Education Faculty affiliated Institute for Englishes in Africa (ISEA) and the Rhodes University Mathematics Education Programme (RUMEP) continued to offer capacity development programmes in the Eastern Cape and the Northern Cape, reaching into far-flung rural and semi-rural communities. These academic community engagements consist of externally funded teacher development courses to improve basic education in the key national priorities of Language and Mathematics education. Despite difficult Covid-19 conditions, good results were achieved through the hard work of staff under two acting directors (Dr Rethabile Mawela and Fezeka Mhkwane), and the support of their boards. In the ISEA, 89,6% of the cohort of educators registered in 2018-2020



for the B.Ed. (English Language Teaching) offered in the Northern Cape and Eastern Cape, completed the 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%. Dr Mawela describes this as “a testament to the remarkable commitment of staff and students, in another hard year we endured”.

#### **4. Financial position of the University and Third Stream income**

Education Faculty researchers participate in and lead international research collaborations that contribute to Rhodes’ third stream income. The DSI/NRF SARCHI Chair in Global Change and Social Learning Systems in the Education Faculty, for example, participated in an international proposal for a UNITWIN/UNESCO Network, which was approved in February 2021 by UNESCO in Paris, with an overall budget of ca. USD 500,000 per annum. This Network will focus on teacher education and the SDGs. The project links over 50 institutions worldwide and a network of five leading UNESCO Chairs internationally. While the SARCHI Chair is the main partner from Africa, Rhodes graduates are also leading participation from the Universities of Lesotho and Botswana.

An international River Commons Project was successfully funded by INREF (the Wageningen Interdisciplinary Research and Education Fund in the Netherlands) with a partnership across six continents in which the DSI/NRF SARCHI Chair in Global Change and Social Learning Systems in the Education Faculty is the main African partner. This project is funded to the value of €1.778.516 over 60 months, and will support the tuition and travel of PhD students studying the learning aspects of the governance of iconic rivers around the world.

#### **5. Achievements of staff and students**

A-Prof Nhlanhla Mpofu of the Education Faculty led a new collaboration with the University of Antwerp in which a Memorandum of Understanding was signed for a funded research project on the Learning impact of translanguaging in multilingual content-based instruction classrooms. The project will include exchange visits and support for postgraduate students from South Africa and Belgium. In her first year at Rhodes University, A-Prof Mpofu also initiated research collaborations related to language learning between the faculties of Education, Science and Humanities.

Prof Mellony Graven, the DSI/NRF SA Numeracy Chair in the Education Faculty, was invited to chair and coordinate a plenary panel *Mathematics education reform post 2020: Conversations towards building back better* at the 14th International Congress on Mathematical Education (ICME). ICME is the largest gathering of mathematics educators in the world and an invitation to do an ICME plenary is one of the most prestigious invitations in the field of mathematics education. (Reference: Graven,



M., Borba, M., Jablonka, E., Martin, D. & Subramaniam, K. (2021). Plenary Panel 2: Mathematics education reform post 2020: Conversations towards building back better. 14th International Congress on Mathematical Education (ICME), East China Normal University, Shanghai, China)

Ms Amanda Nesi of the Department of Education was nominated as a member of USAf's Community of Practice for African Languages (CoPAL).

Ms Anthea Adams of CHERTL played a strategic role in the organisation of HELTASA 2021, as an active member of the programme development team, who also provided mentoring to novice reviewers of programme abstracts. HELTASA is the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa.

Mr Sikhumbuzo Sibanda of the Institute of Englishes in Africa (ISEA) was elected as president of the National Association of English Teachers of South Africa. NAETSA held its first conference 26- 27 March 2021. Two other ISEA staff (Ms Khaya Fulani and Dr Qiana Gray) presented workshops, while Mr Sibanda did a presentation on the future of this new Association.

Five members of the Environmental Learning Research Centre in the Education Department (A-Prof Lausanne Olvitt, D-Prof Heila Lotz-Sisitka, Prof Ingrid Schudel, Emeritus Prof Rob O'Donoghue and Dr Dylan McGarry) co-authored a book titled Environmental Ethics: A Sourcebook for Educators with the lead author Emeritus Professor Bob Jickling from Lakehead University, Canada: ITSI and Google Books.

Prof Mellony Graven, the DSI/NRF SA Numeracy Chair in the Education Faculty, collaborated with leading international expert in equity in mathematics education, Prof Robyn Jorgensen, to publish a book titled Merging Numeracy with Literacy Practices for Equity in Multilingual Early Year Settings. Published by Springer, the book is the culmination of five years of collaborative research across Australia and South Africa in under-served and multilingual contexts. Reference: Jorgensen, R. & Graven, M. (2021) Merging Numeracy with Literacy Practices for Equity in Multilingual Early Year Settings. Springer: Singapore. ISBN 978-981-16-7766-3 and e-book 978-981-16-7760-0 doi/10.1007/978-981-16-7767-0

## **6. High profile visitors to our University**

For CHERTL staff and students, highlights of the year included the Online Doc Weeks organised by Dr Kirstin Wilmot and involving a range of world class presenters. The first Doc Week of 2021 focussed on Decolonial Research Methodologies and featured several distinguished guests presenters including: Rhodes alumnus Siseko Khumalo from University of Pretoria; Savo Heleta (Nelson Mandela); Manjeet Ramgotra (SOAS), Prof Vivian Bozalek (UWC) and Prof Michalinos Zembylas (Open University of Cyprus).



The NRF renewed the award to the DSI/NRF SARCHI Chair in Global Change and Social Learning Systems in the Education Faculty which started its second five-year cycle in January. This Chair convenes an NRF COP (Community of Practice) on Social Learning and Sustainable Development which involves 11 Research Chairs from six Universities, as well as a new Early Career Network involving 20 Masters and PhD scholars. The Environmental Learning Research Centre convened the National Environmental Skills Summit in September, which included a research colloquium of transdisciplinary scientists and policy makers as part of the NRF CoP. The colloquium was opened by Dr Makobetsa Khati of the NRF, and Mr Imraan Patel of the DSI gave the closing remarks.

## **7. Staff changes**

Prof Di Wilmot (former Dean) took early retirement in 2021. Dr Ellison Musara was appointed as a Research Associate in the Education Department and DHET agreed to the appointment of Dr Phemello Helleman as an nGAP lecturer for Foundations of Education, to take up the position in 2022. Prof Eureta Rosenberg and Associate-Professor Nhlanhla Mpofu were elected as Dean and Deputy Dean respectively.

## **8. Transformation and equity**

The Faculty elected a new Deputy Dean, A-Prof Nhlanhla Mpofu, and made good progress to establish two new departments in line with its transformation and other strategic objectives, and informed by an External Review concluded in 2021. These are the Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education (Education Foundations) and the Department of Secondary, Youth and Sustainability Education (Education Futures). CHERTL is the third department in the Education Faculty.

## **9. Student experience**

Ms Luyanda Hadebe of the Education Faculty received the *Student Volunteer of the Year 2021* award from RUCE (Rhodes University Community Engagement). Luyanda completed a Commerce degree before enrolling for a PGCE in 2021. The Volunteer of the Year is chosen annually from among 800 student volunteers. Ms Hadebe has been in the Student Volunteer programme for four of her five years at Rhodes, and built up such experience that she now co-facilitates training sessions and mentors new volunteers. Her community engagement has defined her career trajectory by encouraging her to extend her studies with an educational qualification.

