

MAKHANDA

EDUCATION MATTERS



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EDITORIAL LETTER

CENTRING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

TO ACHIEVE QUALITY EDUCATION

By Phemelo**Hellemann**

The recent CSD graduation of the ECD teachers highlighted the importance of quality education training so that they can become quality teachers themselves. Recognizing that the early years are crucial foundational years in the child's development, education during these years sets a tone for the rest of their schooling careers.

The tone, however, starts with a more hands-on approach to teaching and learning in the early years. Historically, ECD centres took on a more passive 'babysitting' role, leading to poor teaching and practices that did not enhance and nurture the child's development. As Ritcher et al. (2019) note, ECD centres developed the narrative of poor service delivery and education models that did not scaffold brain and foundational skills development in a caring environment moulded by good parent-teacher relations.

The Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education is determined to train responsive teachers with in-depth knowledge of childhood brain development.

Thus, ensuring that the teachers understand how this development is nurtured in affectionate environments as the children (before birth to nine years old) discover and explore the world around them. The Diploma in Grade R teaching run by the CSD is evidence of the PECE's department's commitment to training competent, hands-on ECD teachers that will turn the normative narrative of ECD practices in Makhanda and South Africa around.

- Phemelo Hellemann



CSD CELEBRATES

LEVEL 5 DIPLOMA CERTIFICATION CEREMONY

Heidi

Khuhlane



The Centre for Social Development (CSD), a self-funded entity at Rhodes University, offers a National Diploma on Early Childhood Development (ECD). The main aim of the entity is based on early childhood development from before birth until the age of nine years old.



Some of the objectives of the diploma are to bridge the gap between formal and informal learning by providing access to a Diploma in Grade R Teaching, and to allow students to plan and implement a learning programme which is based on their knowledge of child development from birth to nine years old. The objectives include helping children in Grade R in the Foundation Phase work towards achieving the learning outcomes of the national school curriculum. Lastly, it is to

improve community-based Early Childhood Development services for young children by raising the level of ECD teaching competence as well as providing opportunities for training in support and leadership roles.

On the 10th of October 2022, the CSD had the privilege to host the first Level 5 certification ceremony post-COVID-19.



On this special day for our students, all 93 of them finally had the chance of walking across the stage at the 1820 Settlers' Monument.

The Eastern Cape ETD P SETA Provincial Manager, Ms Noluvuyo Socutshana officiated the ceremony. The Dean, Prof. Eureka Rosenberg, Deputy Dean, Prof. Nhlanhla Mphofu, the HOD, Dr Lise Westaway, and other members of the Faculty of Education at Rhodes University were also in attendance to congratulate the diplomates. Rhodes University Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sizwe Mabizela delivered the keynote address during the ceremony. The representatives from the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education (ECDoE) Ms Tania Christian and Ms Nomvuyo Radasa also attended the ceremony.



The mood was electrical with all the festivities, including a garden party after the ceremony. Forty (40) of these diplomates got an opportunity to further their studies by enrolling for a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) in-service degree in 2022. This is a new five-year programme which started in 2022 at Rhodes University.

Special gratitude to the late Mrs. Ruth Nombewu and Mr. Thuso Moss's dedication to the ECD diploma at CSD as course coordinator and Facilitator, respectively, this ceremony would have not been possible, who sadly passed away in 2020 before the completion of the programme.

Although the course diploma has not been offered in the past two years, plans are in place to offer the programme once again in 2023.

- Heidi Khuhlane

CELEBRATING STAFF GRADUATION IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION

The Dean of the Faculty of Education, Prof Eureta Rosenberg and the rest of the academic staff are delighted to celebrate the following colleagues who obtained their PhDs during the 2020-2022 graduation. The following staff members graduated with their Master's of Education and PhDs:



Ms. Nozuko Heide Khuhlane

Ms. Nozuko Heide Khuhlane who is a Lecturer and the programme coordinator for the BEd Foundation Phase in the Centre for Social Development. Her thesis focussed on curriculum adjustment and adaptive leadership in two Service-Learning courses at Rhodes University as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Dr. Pamela Vale and Ms. Angi Jones

Ms Angi Jones

Angela (Angi) Peta Jones graduated with her MEd with distinction during the October 2022 graduation. Angi is a Lecturer in the Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education. Her study investigated the English language demands of mathematical texts on data handling used in Intermediate Phase Mathematics.

**Tammy Booysen**

Tammy Booysen is a Lecturer in the Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education. Tammy, whose research focused on how differentiated instruction (DI) promotes quality pedagogical practice, graduated during the October graduation 2022.

**Mr. Ntsikohlanga Anthony Kitsili**

Mr. Ntsikohlanga Anthony Kitsili, a Lecturer in the CSD graduated with a Master of Education degree during the October 2022 graduation. His thesis focused on teachers' knowledge and practice in Grade 3 Group Guided Reading.

Dr Fortunate Gunzo

Dr Fortunate Gunzo, the Director for the Centre for Social Development, graduated with a PhD degree in 2020. The promise that Information Communication Technology (ICT) would radically transform the education system and change the way we teach and learn, has not yet materialised, particularly in marginalised contexts. This study examined teacher's perceptions and experiences of using ICT in teaching Social Sciences in Eastern Cape classrooms. It found that ICT availability in the schools does not necessarily entail ICT use in the classroom. Teachers had positive perceptions towards computers in general and thought they were easy to use in their personal lives - but NOT IN their professional lives. Time constraints hampered ICT cross-curriculum integration. The scholar, therefore recommends that teachers be capacitated to use technology already at their disposal and that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) considers allocating space in the curriculum specifically to the use of ICT in the classrooms.

**Dr Zintle Songqwaru**

Dr Zintle Songqwaru, the Namibian Postgraduate Coordinator and a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Secondary Education and Post-Schooling completed her PhD in 2020. Zintle's study sought to understand the professional learning of teachers who are grappling with new environmental knowledge and pedagogy in the national curriculum as an urgent concern. In this study, Zintle developed a realist evaluation approach to understanding teachers professional learning in South Africa's flagship Fundisa [Teaching] for Change programme. Not only does the study offer the first realist evaluation of teachers professional learning in environmental education at a national level, but it also contributes new insights into evaluation methodology in teacher professional development.

**Dr Wellington****Munetsi Hokonya**

Dr Wellington Munetsi Hokonya is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow in the South African Numeracy Chair at Rhodes University and obtained his PhD in 2020. His study was an exploration of the mathematical learner identities of high school learners who participated in after school mathematics clubs in primary school. Wellington explored the mathematical learner identities of high school learners who participated in after-school mathematics clubs during primary school by analysing written and spoken narratives of their school mathematics stories. The analysis revealed that the learners' mathematical identities were heavily influenced by the values that were foregrounded in the after-school clubs - the learners' narratives reflected resilience and hard work. The examiners commended Dr Hokonya on a well-conceived and well-developed study which constitutes an exemplary example of scholarly research.

Dr Samu Chikiwa

Dr Samu Chikiwa who is a Lecturer in the Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education graduated with her PhD in 2020. Samu's research and findings contribute to the local and international field of mathematics teacher education. Her research is investigating ways to effectively support mathematics pre-service teachers' development of Mathematical Knowledge for Teaching by becoming reflective practitioners. Her findings indicate that effective reflection is not an innate skill. It requires structured and deliberate support to enable students to move beyond general descriptive reflections to analytic, dialogic reflections focused on mathematical aspects of teaching and learning and on the improvement of future practice.



Dr Roxanne Long

Dr Roxanne Long, who is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow in the South African Numeracy Chair at Rhodes University graduated with her PhD in 2021. Roxanne investigated Grade R teacher institutional identity presented in policy and expressed through teacher narratives. The study was conducted in the context of a major national policy transition that involved the physical and contextual shift of the reception year out of the Early Childhood Development sector and into the formal schooling sector. This study powerfully highlights the way in which this shift is accompanied by mixed policy messages, with implications for Grade R teachers' institutional identities and learning trajectories across their landscapes of practice.

Dr Injairu Magdalene Kuludu-Bolus

Dr Injairu Magdalene Kuludu-Bolus, a Senior Lecturer in the Environmental Learning Research Centre, received her PhD in 2020. Too often young people in Africa are perceived from the vantage point of what they are not, rather than what they are. Co-conspiring with 21 young Change Drivers and their rising cultures through art-based inquiries, Injairu articulates who Africa's youth are in this present moment as they grapple towards decolonial futures. Through attuning to young people's longings for regenerative futures, the study offers audacious insights into decolonial pedagogical praxis in ways that significantly advance youth studies in Africa.



Mr. Ntsikholanga Anthony Kitsili with his family and friends



Tammy Booysen with her family



Ms. Nozuko Heide Khuhlane with her family members



L-R: Dr Zintle Songqwaru; Distigued Professor Heila Lotz-Sisitka and Dr Lebona Nkhahle

THE PURPOSE OF THE MAKHANDA CIRCLE OF UNITY EDUCATION CLUSTER

By Sakhe Ntlabezo

Despite being a relatively small town, it can be surprisingly easy to live around each other instead of with each other in Makhanda.

Yet the success in this small town of ours oft depends on the collective effort and deliberate intent to foster sustainable connections between entities, organisations, and people. The MCU is one such attempt to navigate this pattern, offering a space of connection towards (hopefully) identifying and constructing forward-oriented responses to some of the challenges of being in Makana.

The MCU is the starting base for what is hoped to be an 'exportable idea' that is scalable and replicable in similar contexts of small towns. It is a registered non-profit organisation (registration number: 258-810 NPO) that started in the early days of the pandemic and, has slowly but surely, worked to develop as an inclusive, apolitical multi-stakeholder forum that encourages meaningful collaboration as a pathway to development. The MCU works through various self-directing thematic "clusters", focusing on areas ranging from food security to education. At the core of the MCU is community; citizens drive it.

The Education Cluster has grown to be a dynamic engagement space for citizens concerned with education-related matters. Quite astounding, is the variety of persons who participate and engage in meetings of the Education Cluster - from schoolteachers and principals to civil society advocacy groups such as members of the Legal Resource Centre (LRC) and the Kagiso Trust. This array of

participants enables a broad range of information sharing that is vital to unlocking opportunities. It ensures that the principle of collaboration extends to anyone concerned with education in the region. This manner of working has made the Education Cluster a critical space connecting around the shared vision of strengthening education.

This can be exemplified by reflecting on some of the discussions that have taken place within the cluster itself. These discussions have included robust engagements between principals and the LRC on strategies to leverage the Department of Education to ensure the provision of learning and teaching support material (LTSM) earlier this year. Within the space, Kagiso Trust has made a database called KDOS accessible to schools who want to get detailed information on their billing, which they can use to engage the municipality on their accounts.

The Education Cluster has been working towards developing an economic impact study of the education sector in Makhanda that will attempt to quantify the sector's value to the region's economy. Quite recently the MCU, along with the Makhanda Schools Principals Forum (MSPF), has taken steps to write to members of the Eastern Cape Portfolio Committee on Education to highlight pressing teaching and learning challenges that schools in the region are facing. What stands out from these few examples is that they demonstrate the heart of the MCU and the Education Cluster - a collaborative, inclusive approach premised on working with each other is worth so much.

Every step forward and little progress made is the result of a collective effort and not a singular push. There's still so much growth and development that can take place within the Education Cluster. Ultimately, this growth

requires more people to join the group and help shape the next steps. There is always space for more to join, so long as there is a shared commitment towards working with each other and not working around each other.

THE UNIVERSITY STAFF DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

By Clement Simuja

The University Staff Doctoral programme (USDP) is informed by an intensive scoping engagement between three institutions (Rhodes University and University of Fort-Hare in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, and Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland), in consultation with academic and non-academic stakeholders (including early career and experienced academics, management and academic developers) in the Eastern Cape. The project aims to develop a doctoral provision that supports impactful education and social welfare research to address local challenges informed by an inclusive evidence base. In 2020, 10 PhD scholars were recruited from Rhodes University and the University of Fort-Hare. Each institution contributed five scholars. The PhD scholars are undertaking a bespoke PhD support programme of facilitated workshops and events in South Africa and the UK. The research focus for the scholars is on engagement to create the

requisite conditions for education research and social welfare in order to address the Eastern Cape's most pressing challenges. The project is tailored to accelerate the successful completion of doctoral qualifications for academic and professional staff, and to drive their empowerment to contribute to sustainable and inclusive research cultures within the Eastern Cape. A core part of the scholars experience includes a structured programme of personal and professional development activity, with a particular focus on developing their academic profile and presence, and eventually academic citizenry, research dissemination while undertaking their studies, and developing networks and partnerships for effective pathways to impact of their findings. The collaboration in this project provides a platform for more skill development and professional collaboration, potentially widening the knowledge acquisition and exchange horizon.



The PhD scholars and their mentors

WE KNOW THAT TEACHERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE BUT WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN TEACHERS.

By Leon

Grové



A total of 410,000 teachers are currently employed in approximately 25,000 schools teaching 12.9 million pupils. We need 25,000 new teachers per annum, however, currently the country's ITE institutions graduate only 15,000 new teachers per year. Between 18,000 and 22,000 teachers leave the profession every year. Over 60% of new teachers in the system emerge from distance learning universities.

Many are qualified, but are ill-prepared for dealing with the realities of being a teacher in a South African school. Our scores on international benchmarking measures are a cause for great concern and they highlight the need for us to look at how we can recruit top talent into the profession. Following on from this, is how we develop these young student teachers into highly effective teachers.

The question of recruiting top talent into the teaching profession is systemic and societal. In countries such as Finland, Singapore and Japan, teaching is a high status occupation and recruitment into universities is highly selective with only the best being accepted into their programmes. It is no surprise that they have some of the strongest education systems in the world. If you manage to persuade the smartest people in your country to become teachers,

you will inevitably have a great education system. This is unfortunately not the case in South Africa, and efforts to raise the status of the profession will have to be a long-term goal. Time is a luxury that the South African education system does not have.

The future economic prosperity of South Africa will require that while we look to improve the quality of entrants to the teaching profession, we look at improving our current student teachers with new models that intentionally bridge the gap between theory and practice to enhance teaching quality. John Hattie's meta-analysis clearly indicates that collective teacher efficacy is the most important influence on student achievement.

Students learn at twice the rate in the classrooms of effective teachers compared to average teachers. They learn in six months what students taught by the average teachers takes a year to learn. In the classrooms of the least effective teachers, the same learning will take two years. Moreover, effective teachers can close the gaps in the classrooms of the most effective teachers - achievement gaps between students from disadvantaged backgrounds and advantaged backgrounds can be closed.

Our current model of student teacher education suggests that the focus on effective teacher education must have as its major focus acquiring important knowledge that is disseminated through lectures, journals, books, and assignments. This results in teachers who are more knowledgeable than previous teachers, but not necessarily more effective in practise. Changes in knowledge will not benefit learners unless student teachers are given clear guidelines to effective classroom practise.

The research into teacher training reinforces what those of us who have dedicated our lives to education already know - that the process of learning to teach is complex, and requires the understanding of multiple variables when planning even the simplest of teaching episodes. Content is freely available on digital platforms, and we have never been in a place where knowledge has been so democratised. This has its benefits, but it creates challenges for teachers to curate knowledge, inspire, hold learners' attention for more than 30 seconds, and be able to convince learners that reading is an important pastime. This includes encouraging social interaction that does not require a phone or tablet; creative thinking and problem-solving in learners rather than cut and pasting others opinions. It also means ensuring that their classrooms are safe learning spaces where respect is shown by both the teacher and the learners and to ensure that cognitive, social and emotional skills and capabilities are encouraged. These are only a few of the variables that teachers need to consider on a daily basis before they have even thought about assessments and mark schedules.

The question we need to ask is where can these skills, competencies and mindsets best be learnt? In a lecture theatre or in a classroom?

I would say that the best way to train teachers is through the apprenticeship model, where students are placed in classrooms with highly effective teachers and mentored in all aspects

of the job. This allows for practical learning of the cognitive, social, and emotional skills and competencies required to be an effective teacher. These student teachers become part of the school community and learn valuable lessons through being involved in all aspects of school life. The model allows schools to develop the next generation of teachers and helps to reduce the burden on our Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) institutions who simply do not have the capacity to effectively deliver the number of teachers required by the education system in the years ahead.

There are obvious challenges to the model surrounding identifying mentor teachers, administering the programme, assessing the student teacher, remunerating mentors and creating a closer working relationship between universities, colleges and schools. These challenges are real, but when the evidence is clear that the current system needs to be improved and the research is clear on what works for effective teacher education, we as a profession must heed the call to action.

"The quality of a country's education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers."
Michael Barber

- Leon Grové



WELCOME: NEW STAFF CORNER



The Faculty Of Education Welcomes **Professor Mags (Margaret) Blackie**. Prof. Mags Blackie is an Associate Professor at the Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning, Rhodes University.

Mags grew up in Zimbabwe and she graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry and Biochemistry from Rhodes University in 1997. She was awarded university colours for academic performance. She taught mathematics at St George's College in Harare, before moving to the University of Cape Town (UCT) to do an honours degree in chemistry. She went further to complete her PhD at UCT. Her project was on novel ferrocenyl antiplasmodial compounds working under the supervision of John Moss and Kelly Chibale. She continued to work on ferrocenyl antiplasmodials at the University of Lille 1,

France in Prof Jacques Brocard's lab as a postdoc in 2002/03.

She then moved to England and out of academia. She worked as a spiritual director at a Jesuit retreat centre for four years. These years were very influential on her way of being in the world. Working intensely with individuals over time has deeply shaped the way in which she understands education. It also provided the experience from which her two spirituality books have been written - 'Rooted in Love: Integrating Ignatian Spirituality into Daily Life' (2013) and 'The Grace of Forgiveness' (2017). Building on this foundation, Mags has taught modules on both the MTh and MDiv programs in the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University since 2014.

In 2007, Mags returned to chemistry and to South Africa. She was awarded a Claude Leon Postdoctoral Fellowship to work with Kelly Chibale in medicinal chemistry at UCT. In 2009, she switched track to take up a Postdoc in the Centre for Engineering Education also at UCT under Jenni Case.

In 2010, she began her independent academic career at Stellenbosch University. At Stellenbosch, she conducted research in both medicinal chemistry and tertiary science education. In medicinal chemistry, she graduated five PhDs and 10 MSc's and published multiple papers in international med chem journals. In 2015, she was invited on the Understanding Knowledge and Student Agency project alongside Paul Ashwin, Jan McArthur and Jenni Case (the project has since

expanded significantly). This project was a longitudinal study tracking chemistry and chemical engineering students through their four years on undergraduate and honours initially in England and South Africa.

Being part of the UKSA project tipped the balance of research activity from med chem to education. In early 2020, when COVID-19 was still a phenomenon in Wuhan, Mags decided to undertake a second PhD in higher education. The focus of this project arose from her interest in decolonisation in science education. The thesis, entitled 'Towards knower awareness in chemistry and chemistry education', uses Critical Realism to develop an argument for the necessity of overcoming 'knower blindness' in both the practice of chemistry and the teaching of chemistry. She will graduate in December from Stellenbosch University.

In mid-2021, Mags had a growing awareness of the need to change to a new environment. A conversation with Sioux McKenna resulted in an exploration of the possibility of joining CHERTL. Mags holds a wide range of intellectual interests. She has published three discrete fields - chemistry, education and theology. She has also taught courses across these three areas. Her teaching experience ranges from first year chemistry at Stellenbosch - more than 900 students taught in two languages; honours courses in organic chemistry (around 15 students) and Masters in Theology (around 15 students).

Since joining CHERTL her research is focused on tertiary science education. This year she has been an editor on two books - 'Enhancing Science Education' and 'Decolonising Knowledge and Knowers' both in the LCT series published by Routledge and on a Special Issue of Teaching in Higher education 'Building knowledge for Higher Education: engaging with legacy of Suellen Shay'.

Mags is excited to be back at her alma mater and is enjoying building relationships as she finds her feet in a new field.



BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN SCHOOL & UNIVERSITY LITERACIES

By Kirstin

Wilmot, CHERTL



Reading and writing practices are a central part of any educational experience. At university they are best understood as social practices, or 'academic literacies', as they are influenced by the disciplinary context in which they are found.

The way in which a student reads or writes is influenced by the kind of knowledge and ways of working with that knowledge that are valued in the discipline. To support students' development of reading and writing, one needs to understand the context in which they are learning.

In 2020, a group of academics from the Economics Department enrolled in the CHERTL short course, Writing in the University: Ways of knowing, ways of doing. This short course helps academics to understand the nature of their disciplinary knowledge and the associated reading and writing practices that are valued in their field. A range of academics participate in the course annually in order to learn how to better support their students' academic literacies development. Colleagues from economics chose this course after they identified a gap between the literacies that students are taught in high school and those which are valued in the first year of university. As a teaching team of Economics 101 and 102, they enrolled in the course to see how they could better support their students.

Enthusiastic lecturers, Dr Sandie Phakathi and Ms Nwabisa Malimba, were among this group.

During the course, the participants learnt about the nature of reading and writing in economics, and explored ways in which students need to express themselves and build knowledge in their assignments. They also explored issues of plagiarism and how referencing is more about joining a knowledge community than a tick-box exercise to avoid plagiarism.

Following the course, Sandie and Nwabisa, in collaboration with their colleagues, embedded an academic literacies support programme into the Economics 101 and 102 curriculum. This intervention saw students reading articles together to develop their reading practices. They also engaged in activities which deconstructed abstracts, exposing them to the different parts of an abstract, and modelling how to write a good abstract. Students also worked together in tutorials to learn about what kind of evidence is valued in the discipline and how to construct a solid argument in economics. Students also engaged in a variety of referencing activities, the purpose of which was to instil the understanding that when they write, they draw on existing knowledge to enter a conversation. This helped to dismantle a technician approach to referencing.



L - R: Kirstin Wilmot; Dr Sandie Phakathi and Ms Nwabisa Malimba

Informal feedback from the lecturers indicated that the embedded intervention was successful. This was confirmed by focus group feedback from the Economics 101 and 102 tutors who stated that after the intervention, students were noticeably more confident and proficient in their writing.

Following the success of the academic literacies intervention at Rhodes, Sandie and Nwabisa saw a need for exposing students to this kind of thinking earlier, in order to get them ready for university. As such, they have been working with the Department of Basic Education, Rhodes University Community Engagement and Kirstin Wilmot from CHERTL to launch an academic literacies support programme in local Makhanda high schools in 2023.

The school intervention will initially include a number of workshops for high school teachers from economics and related subjects. The workshops, designed and facilitated by Sandie and Nwabisa, will enhance teachers' knowledge of scholarly reading and writing practices, and will provide resources for teachers to use in their teaching to help make these practices more explicit to learners. The aim of this support programme is to close the gap between high school learners' literacy practices and those valued in universities, helping make the transition to university a smoother and more enjoyable one.

– *Kirstin Wilmot*

NOMPUMELELO FRANS

A TEACHER WHO MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

By Zimasa Phehlo



Nompumelelo Frans's journey has been unique and challenging.

"My journey has been fascinating considering that I never thought I would fall in love with teaching. I never wanted to be a teacher, but now that I am a teacher, I love what I do," Frans says.

Frans began her teaching career in 1990 with a junior primary diploma, but then shifted her focus from the foundation phase that she loves (Grade 1, 2 and 3), to the intermediate and senior phases (Grade 5,6 & 7). This was very challenging for her as she met teenagers who had problems with literacy and who were reluctant to try new things. Regardless, as a teacher motivated by seeing an improvement in her learner's abilities and education, she established reading clubs for the intermediate and senior phases. These reading clubs were a continuation of the ones she established for the foundation phase. The motivation behind these

Nompumelelo Frans is a passionate teacher from CM Vellem Primary School and a single mother to a beautiful girl at Varsity College. Frans has been a dedicated teacher for 32 years, which she has used to empower learners while playing a transformational leadership role at the school.

reading clubs was to improve and develop learner literacy and to widen their knowledge base.

Through the reading clubs, Frans managed to tap into activities that learners love such as music, where the learners would choose a song, read about the lyrics as a class, and sing along to the song. This fun and enjoyable teaching method was part of improving reading and comprehension, even though learners were unaware what they were doing was part of their educational experience.

Popularly known as uSis Mpumie by the Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE) volunteering students and partners, Frans is also a RUCE community partner.

uSis Mpumie was part of the Engaged Citizens Programme which established the reading and chess clubs for learners at the foundation phase. She worked with student volunteers

who assisted the foundation phase learners with reading and chess. Sis Mpumie believes that chess helps children to focus and that this skill can be transferred to academics. She was also part of RUCE's Siyakhana at Makana programme that deals with Grades 6 and 7. In this program, volunteers play instructional and indigenous games and read with the learners.



Students also provide emotional and mental support to the learners. When a fellow learner committed suicide this year, the volunteers provided much needed psychological and emotional support to the pupils. "That was a very sad time for learners and teachers, but the students took on the role of big brothers and sisters to the learners and we are grateful for that support," says Sis Mpumie. The partnership and networking opportunities at RUCE created space for Sis Mpumie to provide the necessary support to learners and teachers.

Her greatest accomplishments in her decades long career is the positive change and impact she has made in the lives of CM Vellem learners through her extra support through reading clubs. "It is the fulfillment I get when I begin their schooling journey with them from nothing, where they are unable to read and write. However, through these programmes and by understanding my learners, they pull through," adds Frans.

She regularly receives letters from past pupils thanking her for everything she has taught them and the contribution she has made to their overall personal and academic development.

She also has Grade 6 volunteers which are products of the reading clubs who assist other learners with reading.

Her goal for these learners is to instill a self-belief that they can achieve anything they desire. "Teachers should be patient and understand that children come from diverse backgrounds, and they should be passionate about teaching even if teaching was not part of their life goals. Teachers should also put in place support programmes that open up opportunities for learner development. Teachers and parents have a lot to offer in their children's development," Frans ends.

Nompumelelo France has proven to the Makhanda community that she is not just a teacher but a mother, a caregiver and a role model to CM Vellem learners. As a mother, she understood the concept of "it takes a village to raise a child" through the extra support and hours she gives to learners. Through the programmes, she has created a positive impact to the CM Vellem school community and she has built a positive image for the school.

LEARNING TO PLAY & TEACH TENNIS

WITH BED YEAR TWO
STUDENTS AND RHODES
UNIVERSITY DAY-CARE AND
PRE-SCHOOL: ESTABLISHING
A MUTUAL PARTNERSHIP

By Phemelo (PJ) Hellemann

Imagine you are a new teacher, fresh out of University. You go for a job interview, and they ask you what extra-mural activities you can offer. You pause, because you realise you are unsure how to answer this question, partly because you never played any sport at school. You sit there wondering if your ability to participate in extra mural activities will determine whether you get the job.

The answer remains unknown, but the scenario narrated above is one of the reasons why teacher training programmes must include physical education courses that equip students with the necessary skills to teach Phys Ed and sports skills. Physical education, particularly in the foundation phase, encourages physical growth, development, recreation, and play (CAPS 2011, p. 9). More than that, it helps learners develop a love and passion for the sport they might want to play when they are much older.



As Roux emphasises, “physical education delivery, especially in the primary schools, is, therefore, a matter of vital concern” (2020, p. 2).

The Physical Education course for the BEd programme responds to this scenario. The course started as a pilot service-learning course in partnership with the Rhodes University Daycare and Preschool and the Year 2 BE.d students. The course has allowed both the student teachers and the daycare/preschool learners and teachers to learn how to play tennis together. Nearly 90 per cent of the students in the BE.d class have never played any sport in school. Many students that came from schools that did not offer sport as extra-mural teaching shared this narrative. Hence they missed out on physical education in their schooling.

In his article titled, The delivery of primary school physical education in South African public schools: the perceptions of educators, Kobus Roux writes that there is a severe lack of competent teachers that can teach physical education in South Africa. This is due to the rampant inequalities that continue to paralyse the education system. The solution, therefore, as Roux explains, is to train teachers (both in-service and pre-service) to “design developmentally appropriate PE programmes with child-related features” (Roux, 2020, p. 2). The physical education tennis course did precisely that. I designed the tennis course drawing from the Play and Stay manual.

The Play and Stay model teaches tennis to young children using child-related features such as games structured as warm-up and ball skills drills with age-appropriate equipment such as the red, orange and green dot slow bounce balls. I did this training as a novice tennis teacher during my foundation phase teaching days at a local school in Makhanda. I found it relatable, and highly effective in teaching young children between the ages of 3 and 9 to play tennis.



The experiential lessons allowed the learners to experience, structure and implement tennis warm-up drills and ball skills as the necessary foundations to teach tennis in the foundation phase. This course shows the Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education's commitment to providing holistic teacher training to students. For the learners, the focus has been on keeping them fit and active and building their self-esteem and group work skills outside the classroom environment. As Annidene Davis, one of the preschool teachers says, "the program helped the learners improve physical strength, flexibility, balance, and fine motor skills, and they continue to master other activities off the court". In addition to this, Naycan Ferreira also expressed how the service-learning programme has "been instrumental in facilitating interaction between

the learners and their peers strengthens their interpersonal and social skills through learning in a new environment with new experiences, thus equipping them with the skill set to confidently take on new challenges". In this regard, the partnership did not only enhance the preschool learners' education programme but also helped strengthen the BE.d students' learning and teaching practices. To improve physical education in teaching in South Africa, we need to be intentional about establishing more partnerships and exchanges that reduce the gap between schools that can offer sporting circulars and those that cannot. Every learner and teacher deserves the opportunity to learn how to play and teach sports. It starts with creating teacher training programmes that adequately equip their student teachers.

- Phemelo Hellemann



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STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS FOR LEARNING AND SUPPORT

Monica Canca



“We invite you to a follow-up workshop on Community Based Participatory Research, where we will explore ways in which community organisations can be actively involved in research partnerships for the co-production of knowledge and skills towards action for change”.

This is how the August 2022 invitation from Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE) read. It had been a year since RUCE initiated a meeting with the non-governmental sector in Makhanda, to explore possibilities of building mutually-beneficial research partnerships through cooperation, collaboration and partnership. The first session was met with a lot of skepticism, with questions of “why consult us this time” (triggered by a history of community exploitation in research), but in the end what triumphed was hope, that maybe this could be a way to build authentic engagement and move towards collective knowledge creation for actual change.

It all began with RUCE recognising the need for building the capacity of local community-based partners so that they can actively and equally participate in knowledge creation processes, thus enabling them to use research as a transformation tool. Through the Knowledge for Change (K4C) Consortium, an initiative of the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education, RUCE provided an opportunity for a community

partner to be trained as a mentor, alongside three RUCE staff members. This emphasised the ethos of co-learning and co-creation right from the beginning. The role of the mentor is to contribute towards the building of a local knowledge hub comprised of community and university partnerships.

Since then, we have held three sessions with community partners, building an understanding of Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) and the ways in which it can add value to development work in Makhanda. What emerged were three points of consideration - 1) establishing the value of CBPR in community work, 2) building capacity for active participation and 3) effective dissemination of co-created knowledge. In response to the above, community partners acknowledged that CBPR can contribute to the development of community agency towards addressing social issues in Makhanda. It was recognised that this would require building intentional approaches to collaborative learning and sharing, for research that honours local knowledges and serves community needs. Most importantly, there was emphasis

on the need for promoting transparency and inclusivity in data analysis, interpretation and knowledge sharing, for the knowledge to lead to action for change.

Where we are now is at a point of interest, openness and invitation. As community partners with an interest in this unfolding journey, we are open to exploring all the possibilities contained in this emerging manner of knowing and doing. In the spirit of community building, we invite all to connect and share. In our most recent session, community partners shared some emerging thoughts and recommendations on:

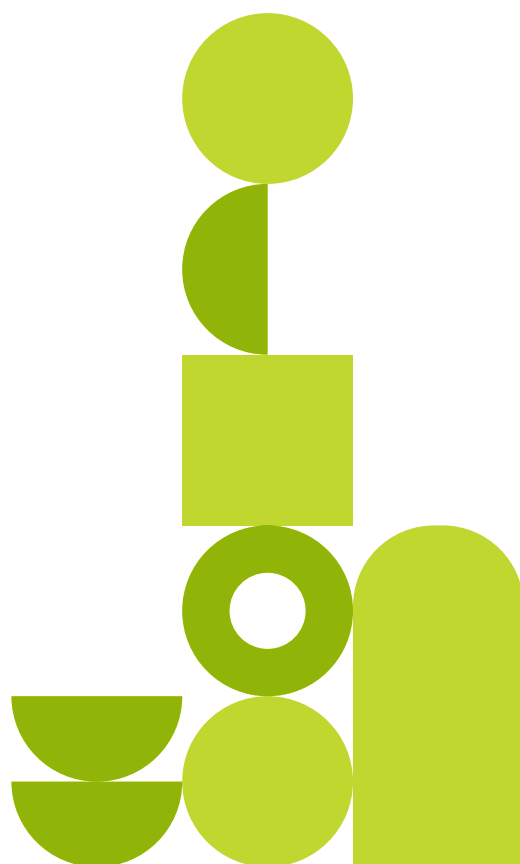
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- 1) creating a space for community partners and academics to engage on current ethics review processes and how these can be transformed to accommodate CBPR
 - 2) creating processes that accommodate community initiated and led research with the university as a supporting partner, and
 - 3) addressing issues of language, culture and context in knowledge creation.
-

As a community partner working for a non-governmental organisation (The Learning Trust) in Makhanda, this has been a liberating journey for me and from what I have observed, it has had the same effect on all partners involved. Being able to view research as an equal partnership between communities and academia has an emancipatory element to it, that of building together, for each other and with each other. Understanding that we have the power to communicate our own lived experiences and be actively involved in

seeking for solutions to our challenges has set us free from the confines of individuality, as organisations and institutions, towards a stronger sense of community and shared purpose.

It's open season for Learning, unLearning and reLearning and you are all INVITED!

- *Monica Canca*



INTERNSHIP CORNER



MY INTERN JOURNEY AT RHODES UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

By Nwabisa Nkani

My name is Nwabisa Nkani, I was born and grew up in Makhanda. I graduated from Rhodes University in 2022 with a Bachelor's degree in Journalism and Media Studies. I am shy and introverted, but I like to challenge myself by stepping out of my comfort zone. I treasure people who allow me to be myself in various spaces. I am an observant person, I like to look around and assess things. As much as I am reserved, I am willing to engage and learn from others. And I am empathic, especially now that I am becoming independent and more exposed to the world.

I am a media intern at the Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE) through the presidential youth employment initiative programme. My duties include media management, creating different types of media, writing stories about various aspects of community engagement, assisting in managing CE social media, and sharing media literacy knowledge with young people who are interested in the field of Journalism.

My internship experience at RUCE has been exciting and informative. I have gained valuable skills and knowledge that I will use in my future work endeavours. My first encounter at RUCE was gaining a new perspective on what community engagement is all about. I was not aware of the principles, approaches, values and practices of CE. Learning and experiencing new knowledge about CE, observing, participating and engaging in different categories of CE has been amazing. At RUCE I learnt what a healthy working relationship should be like in the workplace.

The importance of being professional at work by having a good positive mindset, being on time, giving it your best, being humble and the willingness to learn every day. At the community engagement division, I gained confidence in not being afraid to surround myself with strong people, because those people can support you and help you achieve your goals. Most importantly, being around the RUCE staff has inspired me to try my best in everything that I do and make the most of each moment I get. One of the compelling values

that were instilled in us was the book-reading culture. In the past, I was not a reader unless I needed to read for my academic work. But now I am gradually making reading a book part of my life.

Through RUCE, I have engaged in periodically learning new academic terminology. My communication skills have been improving through exposure to public speaking and engaging with others as well as by creating our passion intervention projects. We have created spaces that enabled other young people to empower themselves which allowed us to gain different skills and an indepth understanding of community engagement. My passion project was around sharing my journalistic skills with young unemployed youth who are interested in journalism and creating an enabling space where their voices will be heard.

I worked with the Assumption Development Centre (ADC) where they provided pathways for young people to get employed and be journalists in training at Grocott's mail after the training sessions. Rhodes University Community Engagement made me more open-minded as I am more willing to learn new things outside of my interests, alter my mind about certain things, look for creative solutions, more open to collaborating with others such as my colleagues (interns) and those who are experienced in different areas of specialisation.

In conclusion, I enjoyed working in the CE division, and I appreciate the opportunity that I was given by Rhodes University to work at RUCE. Undoubtedly, I have grown, developed and transformed as a person in how I think and do things.



THE TURNING POINT IN MY PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY: INTERNING AT RUCE

By Nwabisa Timana

My name is Nwabisa Timana and I was born in Makhanda where I have spent my entire life. I commenced my foundation phase career at Ntaba Maria Primary School before moving to Ntsika Secondary School. In 2019, I was accepted to read for a Bachelor of Social Science in Economic and Organisational Psychology at Rhodes University.

I then decided to change my career path, and I enrolled for a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) for training to become a teacher. One could describe me as kind and talkative. I guess all of that comes down to why I love kids.

Being an unemployed graduate really hits hard. When I got a call that I was selected to be part of the PYI Internship program I was ecstatic. I felt God had answered my prayer because I had already given up, but God said 'no my darling'. My excitement was based on the fact that I knew the opportunity will open

more doors for me and I will gain 'office' experience.

My time as an intern has been nothing short of amazing. At first, I was placed in the finance department (salaries) where I was mentored by the great Mrs. Melanie Jattiem who taught me a lot about how to present yourself at work.

We used to have one-on-one sessions once a week where I used to share any new skills learnt on the job that week, and how to improve them further. I remember in one of the sessions we were talking about some of the systems in the salaries office and how they are linked to labour laws and other legislation. This allowed me to use my economics knowledge, and that was a really exciting moment for me. We even spoke about the dress code and about appropriate workplace behaviour.

A month later, I changed departments, and was placed in Community Engagement as I had

expressed to my previous mentor that I would love to be in a space that will allow me to work with the community - kids to be precise. She supported my wishes, and she facilitated the move to CE. Shout out to her.

Working with CE has been a fascinating experience. I guess that is because our mentors (Mrs. D. Hornby) and the RU staff at large make that possible. I always look forward to our staff sessions every Friday morning and that has taught me the importance of team work/building. One of the questions often asked in those meetups is 'how are you doing personally and professionally?' That question shows me that it is not only about work, but also about you as a person.

I have learnt so much from gaining technical skills to unlearning some unhealthy behaviors, to me realising that the career path I chose is the right one. I think it is safe to say that the people around me choose kindness every day.



INTERNING AT RUCE: WHAT I LEARNT

By Thuleka "Nomjoli" Ngcingane

My name is Thuleka "Nomjoli" Ngcingane and I was an intern at the Rhodes University Community Engagement Office.

Being an intern meant that I was granted an opportunity to observe and learn from the workplace environment and to build various work skills that would significantly improve my chances of employment. I strongly believe that participating in this internship programme has provided me with valuable work experience and new knowledge as a recent graduate who had zero work experience. I am grateful to have worked at RUCE, and I have truly enjoyed meeting everyone there. Their support, love and positive feedback has created a productive and enjoyable environment for everyone at the office.

The team pushes you to realise your full potential. I remember when I arrived at the

roffice, the first few weeks I wasn't really sure of myself in terms of taking on my roles and responsibilities. I was barely skilled in adaptability but the support offered by the RUCE team was exceptional, and this translated into a smooth transition to work life. Within a month there, I was comfortable and I was doing my job quite well - I believe I excelled in it. I can now confidently say that I am skilled in adaptability, I enjoy working in a team environment (as I can also work independently) and I am always eager to learn.

One of the many things I liked about participating in this internship programme is the fact that I got placed at RUCE. I got a chance to learn about what Community



Engagement really means and I have gained so much insight about what it means to be a socially-responsible individual. Through assigned roles/responsibilities at RUCE (being the facilitator for a Basic Computer Skills course for Rhodes staff and ECD practitioners), I have realised the importance of sharing knowledge and resources with the community. The programme is run at the Social Innovation Hub at RUCE. The SIH realised the need for the community to be computer literate especially now that everything has switched to the virtual world. The SIH then found a way to address this need through the introduction of the computer course. Being part of this beautiful programme was simply fulfilling as I got to see the impact it has on the participants. This means that these individuals (particularly the Rhodes staff such as cleaners/) get to access the Rhodes resources and no longer feel alienated or excluded from them as they can use the Rhodes computers on their own. Knowing that I contributed to that positive personal change makes me genuinely happy.

I have developed as a professional and as a person. Experienced staff members have taught me patience. I had to apply a range of strategies in order to get program participants to understand what I am demonstrating and to be able to do it on their own. I also provided emotional support and worked with them in solving some professional problems. Our interactions were very deep and meaningful and I am glad to have been part of this opportunity - it has changed my life and the way I see people. Once again, I am grateful for the amazing team at RUCE that contributed to the experience and skills I now have. Now, looking ahead, I am very positive and confident that I will do so much better using the skills and experience I have gained at Rhodes University through this internship. Ndiyabulela! Camagu!

HOW WORKING AT RUCE HELPED ME BECOME MORE COMPASSIONATE



By Zimasa

Mpehlo

I am a young woman who was born and raised in Makhanda. I went to Ntsika Senior Secondary School where I completed and passed my matric in 2016. My matric results were not enough for me to be accepted at a university but I never lost hope. In 2017, I decided to go to Gadra Matric School and upgrade marks so that I can improve my chances of being accepted at Rhodes University.

I started my first year at Rhodes University in 2018 and this was a very challenging year for me. However, I managed to overcome those challenges and I completed my Bachelor of Arts in the allocated three years. I furthered my studies and did a Post graduate degree in education and I graduated in April 2022.

After I graduated, I became an unemployed graduate that was looking for opportunities that will help me grow as an independent working young professional. This is when the opportunity to work at the Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE) came along. I took this opportunity as one of the biggest opportunities in my life and I was excited because I have always wanted to learn and be fully immersed in community engagement activities. I was also happy that my being an introvert was going to be challenged so that I can step out of my comfort zone. This experience taught me to understand the importance of being around people, learning with others and being engaged with other

citizens. Through working at RUCE and being part of some of their programs has made me realise that engaging and working with people is much better than working alone. However, it is always important to be engaged with people that have the same goals and desire for the community.

I started my internship at RUCE on the 1st of July 2022 and being an intern at RUCE has been a wonderful experience that I will always be grateful for. I was working under the Intsomi program where I was working closely with the parents of the children that are part of the program. I was also given an opportunity to develop my own program which is the Grade 9 intervention program. This program was about getting the Grade 9s ready for their subject choices and what career path they would like to follow after matric. Through this internship, I acquired communication, computer and intervention skills.

Before I came into RUCE I lacked communication but through our meetings every Fridays, I learnt that communication and teamwork are very important and they are a key to growth and development. Through the workshops and development program training for interns, I acquired essential knowledge that will assist me in my personal and academic development. Most importantly, I have seen

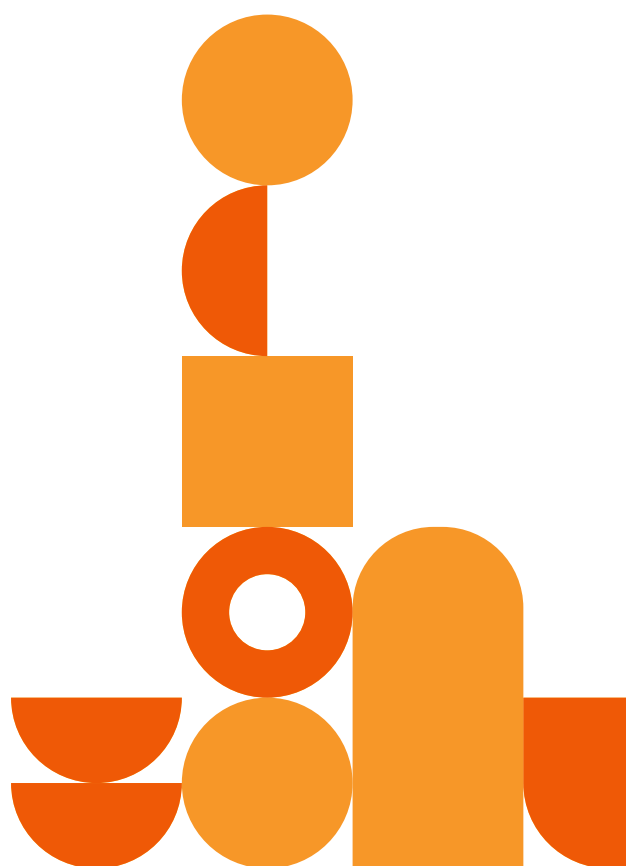
HOW WORKING AT RUCE HELPED ME BECOME MORE COMPASSIONATE

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and lived the experience of developing the community and other people through humanity. This internship has been a good opportunity that has mentally and emotionally developed me as an individual and it has transformed me into a better human being.

It was a great pleasure to work in a healthy environment such as RUCE because community engagement is led by kind and inspiring people that are working for a better future for everyone.

- Zimasa Mpehlo



PRIORITISING DIGITAL SOCIAL INNOVATION IN EDUCATION: THE SOCIAL INNOVATION HUB

By Thandiwe Matyobeni*

In this digital era, the right to equal, quality education must include digital education.

Many South Africans can access the internet on mobile phones, but most do so through workplaces and mobiles. This disparity in digital access across the schooling sector was made evident in 2020 when the government responded to the COVID pandemic by transitioning to online learning.

It's not just unequal access to technologies that limit education in schools. There are multiple levels of access to be achieved for digital capacity to become embedded in the culture of a community. Rhodes University Community Engagement uses digital social innovation to holistically address digital access by supporting innovators in education, through its vibrant Social Innovation Hub.

The digital divide is the result of unequal access to hardware and data. Through its digital equipment library, the SI Hub encourages users to engage with devices in the comfort of their own spaces. The libraries are also internet hotspots and are open to the public to borrow laptops, tablets, recorders, cameras and other devices. A Mobile Hub model is used towards Makhandu-wide access, enabling organisers to borrow several devices for short periods. The SI Hub has collaborated with GADRA Education since 2019 to assist over 20 learners annually to apply for post-school opportunities; Vul'Indlela to assist with transferring learning materials for the SD



card campaign; a budding entrepreneur to start a computer skills business in Extension 7; and local youth organisation and Awarenet to run a youth-made news show. The library also facilitates the sharing of devices between Rhodes University and its community partners. With devices donated from Rhodes University Information and Technology Services, computer labs were set up in Shaw Park Primary, Holy Cross, Tanti Primary School, Eluxolweni and Ubuntu Bethu.

To overcome the psychological factors that restrict access, the SI Hub uses digital storytelling, a method that encourages expression through narrative, while developing media literacies like video editing, file management and internet research. In Basic Education, the SI Hub has run these workshops with youth in Tsitsikamma to explore what nature means to children, and learners from iKamva Youth and St. Mary's D.C.C learners to explore different emotions.

In higher education, the SI Hub ran workshops with first year Bachelor of Education Professional Studies students to explore their own previous experiences with teachers and Community Psychology students to reflect on their service-learning experiences. Towards intergenerational learning, the Hub collaborated with Anthropology students to engage with elderly home residents and return with their findings in an accessible format. The SI Hub has trained over 600 participants since 2019.

The SI Hub's Basic Computer Skills courses are adapted to the requirements of each group to encourage participants to see its value in their daily lives. Our Vul'indlela parents group practices skills to help their children with schoolwork, while our Early Childhood Development group practices like making registers and finding online games and activities. The course incorporates reflection and mentorship with volunteers through RUCE's active citizenry programmes. Train the trainer programmes train teachers to use their new skills to further train learners, parents, and unemployed community members. We have worked with over 150 participants so far.

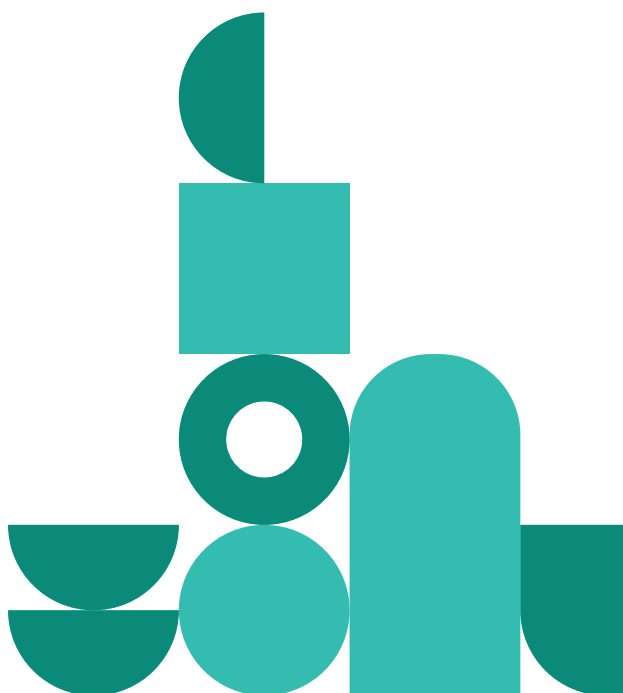
Interventions that equip schools or teachers with devices can remain unused because of lack of familiarity or concern for security. Through contextualised training programmes, the SI Hub further trains participants to build on their computer skills independently, to train others and to troubleshoot problems. By building these capacities, practitioners on the ground can take ownership of these resources and lead learners.

This year, we are working with D.D. Siwisa to train their community members using their devices.

The Social Innovation Hub as a digital social innovation is centred on sustainability. While the programme began with investment from a global consortium, its models can be adapted by any organisation with any resources by meaningfully coordinating existing resources. Furthermore, the sharing of knowledge is key, and the model infuses indigenous knowledge systems to ensure long-term impact of projects.

- Thandiwe Matyobeni

* Thandiwe Matyobeni coordinates the Social Innovation Hub.



RHODES UNIVERSITY PRE-SCHOOL

CONTRIBUTES A FOUNDATION FOR LEARNING

By Nwabisa

Timana



The Rhodes University Pre-school was mainly designed to accommodate children of staff members and students. The idea was to provide the children with academic and social early childhood education, and aftercare services.

The preschool has two programs running: a morning program from 07:30 to 12:30, and a full day program running from 07:30 to 16:30. The preschool provides a peace of mind for parents while they go about their daily work activities. It stays open during the March and September holidays and closes with the University in December.

Some 45 learners and four teachers can be accommodated at the Rhodes Preschool. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a reduction in the number of children in the school. There are currently 35 learners and three teachers at the school. The team behind preparing the children to develop a range of basic learning skills are the Preschool Coordinator Ms. Essie Davis, who teaches the 4-5-year-olds, Ms. Naycan Ferraire, the Assistant Coordinator who teaches a class of 2-3 years old's, and Ms. Debra Yamiso, the Assistant Teacher. Ms. Mandisa works as a general worker, but also has the enthusiasm to assist in the classrooms. The preschool has an

open-door policy where parents are allowed to come and see what their children do in the classroom and the learning that happens through play.

Early childhood education is one of the most important building blocks of a child's future development and learning progress. The RU Preschool aims to provide exactly that - a strong foundation for their learners - and in return, the teachers gain satisfaction and an upliftment of their spirits that drives them to put more into the children's education.

The RU preschool has formed partnerships with different departments providing programmes that complement the normal preschool programme. They are in collaboration with the Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE) Office, which is offering the Budding Q school readiness program for 4 to 5-year-olds. Every Thursday, the Budding Q student volunteers come to the preschool and teach the children about fine motor skills, gross motor skills, and all the skills that children need for school readiness. Secondly, the preschool is in collaboration with the Education Department where Ms. San

Knoetze teaches second-year Bachelor of Education students to use Wordworks materials to help the 4 and 5-year olds get ready for reading and writing. The second-year B.Ed students, together with Ms PJ Hellerman, also offer the Play and Stay tennis program for 2 - 3-year olds on Thursdays and 4 - 5-year olds on Fridays.

"However, we are spreading our wings and looking out there to get more departments involved, getting PGCE students involved, and taking it out to the Grahamstown community to get involved", said Ms. Davis.

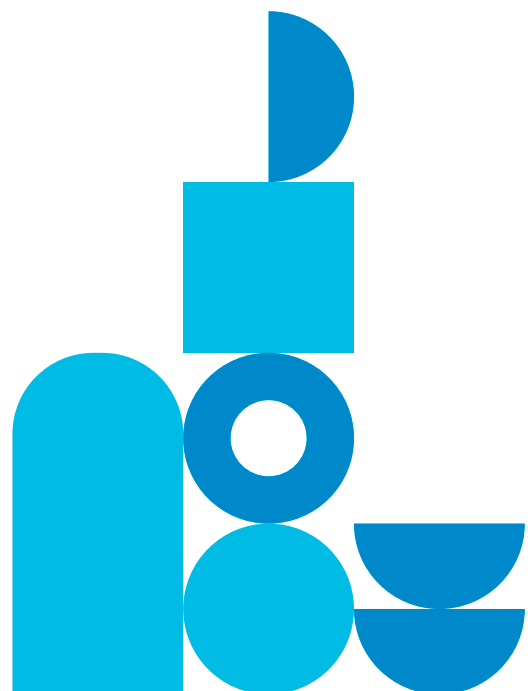
The preschool is currently in the process of dedicating a page on its website called "Let's record where they are now" where they track students who have been in the school over the past years and are now back at Rhodes University for their tertiary education.

In the past, the challenge the preschool used to face was parental involvement in the children's development at school. However, the school overcame that challenge by involving the parents more in some of the activities, such as when they recently celebrated Heritage Day at the preschool which involved the entire family unit. Parental involvement has improved, and they have become more interested in visiting the classrooms to see their children doing their programs, writing their names, and reciting poems. They become amazed and proud of their little ones.

Ms. Davis described the highlight of the preschool as moving from the old premises to the new ones, which are much better suited to their purpose. That shift made a huge impact both on the children and the teachers, as well as the parents.

"I believe that the environment plays a vital role in developing the child, developing their brains," said Ms. Davis. All in all, the preschool now receives positive feedback from parents, departments, and people outside the school who are interested in sending their children to the pre-school," she said.

- Nwabisa Timana



THE SECOND RHODES UNIVERSITY ISIXHOSA GRADE 3 SPELLING BEE

By Lise Westaway

A Spelling Bee competition was introduced in 2021 for Grade 3 learners in schools where the language of learning and teaching is isiXhosa. It is worth noting that this is the only isiXhosa Spelling Bee in the country. This year, the Primary and Early Childhood Education Department at Rhodes University, and Grahamstown Area Distress Relief Association (GADRA) Education, facilitated and ran the Spelling Bee.

The Spelling Bee competition falls under the Vice-Chancellor's Initiative to Revitalise Public Schooling in Makhandla. The first year Bachelor of Education (foundation phase) students, together with their lecturers, Lise Westaway, Tammy Booysen, Demi Edwards, Linda Nelani and Amanda Nesi of the Primary and Early Childhood Education Department at Rhodes University and GADRA Education, planned and facilitated the event.

The spelling competence of every Grade 3 learner in the 10 primary schools where isiXhosa is the language of learning and teaching in the Foundation Phase was assessed by the Bachelor of Education (foundation phase) Year 1 students.



Indiphile with her mother (right) and teacher (left).
Photo Siyamthanda Pongco (Grocotts Mail, September 27, 2022)

The 10 primary schools are: Archie Mbolekwa, CM Vellem, DD Siwisa, Fikizolo, Makana, NV Cewu, Samuel Ntlebi, Samuel Ntsiko Seventh Day Adventist and Tantyi. After collating all the results, the highest achieving 29 learners were chosen to participate in three semi-final events held at the Drill Hall in Makhandla on 3, 4 and 5 August 2022. Each of the 29 learners who participated in the semi-finals managed to spell more than 24 words correctly from a word list developed by Anelisa Mfenyana and Linda Nelani. The words were divided into four levels:

-
- (1) words where each consonant is separated by a vowel, e.g., igazi
 - (2) words with two consonants before a vowel, e.g., incula
 - (3) words with three consonants before a vowel, e.g., ingwevu
 - (4) words with four consonants before a vowel, e.g., umngxobhozo
-

The best spellers from the semi-final events were chosen to participate in the finals of the Spelling Bee competition.

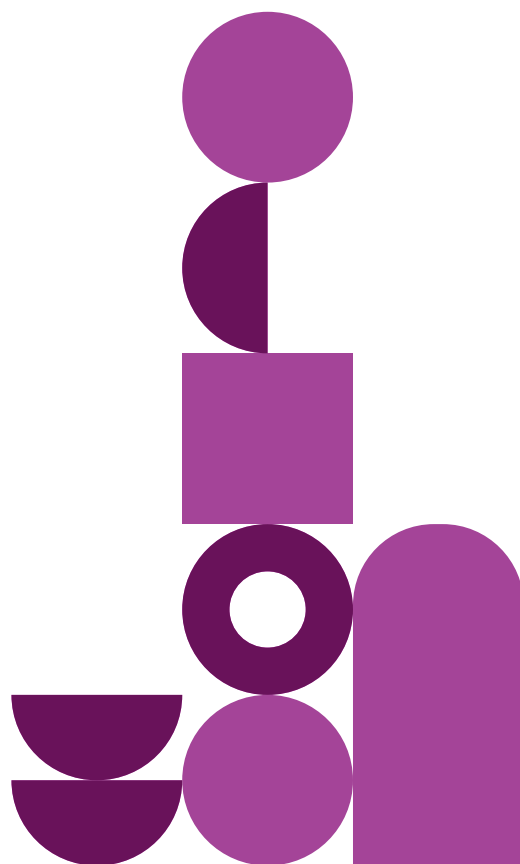
The 12 learners who were chosen to take place in the final event were: Hlumelo Mbilana (Samuel Ntsiko), Indiphile Mphati (Archie Mbolekwa), Limise Krisiyani (DD Siwisa), Qhayiya Ngqinzi (CM Vellem), Inam Klaas (Samuel Ntsiko), Emely Madzimure (Makana), Othandwayo Magi (NV Cewu), Lakhiwe Mzongwana (Samuel Ntsiko), Iviwe Ngqokoma (Archie Mbolekwa), Kungoyolo Deyise (Samuel Ntlebi), Asekhona Bishini (DD Siwisa) and Angamile Tyanase (Samuel Ntsiko).

The finals of the Spelling Bee competition took place at the Drill Hall on 21 September 2022. The event was attended by the guardians of the 12 learners, teachers, principals, invited guests from Rhodes University, GADRA Education and Grocotts Mail.

The winner of the competition was Indiphile Mphati from Archie Mbolekwa Primary School. Inam Klaas (Samuel Ntsiko) and Emely Madzimure (Makana) came second and third respectively.

The Spelling Bee competition was a huge success with everyone in the audience encouraging each of the learners who participated in the final. Given the success of the second Grade 3 isiXhosa Spelling Bee, we look forward to continuing to highlight the importance of learning in isiXhosa in the Foundation Phase and the significance of spelling in the development of reading competence.

- Lise Westaway



GETTING YOURSELF ORIENTATED

By Sheila Wood

The following activity was done with in-service teachers, to indicate that true north is a real place on Earth, and its direction from a local environment can be easily found. During this exercise, and in subsequent assignment work, teachers indicated through their comments, questions and ideas, that there was an enormous spin-off from the work. This feedback informed my desire to share the idea with interested parties.

Orientation in mapwork, especially in mathematics classes, is often a problematic idea. Finding direction of one place to another is purely theoretical if practiced only in textbook form, with maps themselves either imaginary, or not of the local area. In such instances, 'orientation' of the map is restricted to noting in which direction the north arrow points on the page itself. No physical orientation of the map takes place, because one is not using it to find something within one's own, immediate locality.

Orientation and direction finding in mapwork exercises can only make knowledgeable sense if our position on Earth is defined absolutely, and direction from one place to another is measured in relation to a known, fixed point. To orientate a map, one needs to turn and lay it, so that the true north line depicted on the map points to true north where it actually occurs on Earth.

In navigation, true north is the geographic north pole. It is at the axis around which the earth rotates (the other end would be the geographic south pole).

Finding the direction of true north is easy and fun to do, and can offer multiple opportunities for providing practical learning experiences that illustrate and develop meaning encompassed in map reading activities.

Using The Meridian Line to Determine The Direction of True North from Your Position on Earth:

All meridian lines connect to true north and true south. They are reflected on maps by lines of longitude. For any locality, midday occurs when the sun is at its highest point in the sky. At this moment, the shadow of any object is at its shortest, falling on a line exactly 90° to the equator, and on the line connecting your position to the north and south poles. By finding the shortest shadow line formed by an object around the time of midday, you can locate the orientation of true north from that locality.



The direction and position of this line is constant throughout the year, so once it is found, it can be marked permanently into the surface of the Earth.

Our Task:

Our practical task was initially set up to find the meridian line at a specific point on Rhodes University campus. Once this north-south line was identified, it was used to find the direction of various objects visible from the position in which we were working. Later activities extended the work to include making both measures of direction and measures of distance from one's central point to various objects in the visible surroundings, and to record these on a toposcope.



Strengths of The Project:

Working outside, the practical tasks were done on a large scale, making them easily accessible to group participants who needed to be on their feet and moving around in the physical environment. Finding the meridian line took time, giving opportunity to explore and discuss the practical reasons behind why the line itself occurs and can be found.

The shortest midday shadow line identifies the direction of true north. A large, 360° compass can then be added, its north aligned to the direction of the true north line. Its central point is defined as the position from which the direction of objects are to be measured. A scale for measuring rotation in 10° angles gives sufficient accuracy for measuring the direction of objects in the immediate locality. Objects are

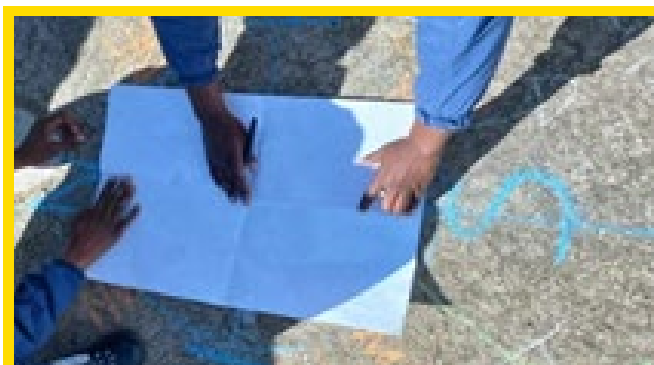
sited from the central compass point, and their line of direction marked onto the compass itself. Work was done using bearing in degrees at first, later linking the records made to the more generalised measures of the 8 compass points.

Comments and Observations:

Teachers working in the real environment made sense of direction finding. Finding the direction of an object from a real place helped transfer the idea into map reading exercises. We worked on towns in South Africa, aligning north on the page to the meridian line in our immediate environment.



Those who took it into schools found large-scale made group work easy. Learners were interested in knowing the direction of real things they could see. 360° paper compasses made reading bearings easy. Simple chalk drawings helped Grade 6 learners relate bearing of objects around their central position on the school grounds, to the main eight compass points.



A toposcope indicates the distance to objects by a scaled length of line. Real measures are made with a metre stick, and then converted to representative line lengths on the toposcope drawing, using a simple ratio scale (1:100).

Constructing direction boards brought far off places into the immediate locality.



Even finding the meridian line, brought out great creativity in our teachers!



Teachers commented on the simplicity of resources needed. Wind proved the most challenging factor in the practical work, and finding the meridian line depended on having sunshine. Many felt they would like to make some form of permanent fixture on their school grounds. Others mentioned that including local neighbourhood features would create a strong identity with learners.

Conclusion

As the facilitator of this project, I have been astounded at how the practical work naturally draws one into the knowledge required for direction finding and scale work on maps.

Best of all, was seeing the tenacity, resourcefulness and creativity that emerged in those determined to complete the project. I hope it may inspire others to dare to dream also!

- Sheila Wood



My acknowledgements for ideas and photographic contributions shared: Malamlela, Nelisiwe; Siwela, Busani; Mleya, Lenience; Dumbu, Vangirai; Makadzange, Linny and the whole 2nd year class of 2022.

TILL WE MEET AGAIN...

By Roxanne Long

In October 2022, Rhodes held a celebratory ceremony for all of us who missed out on that important walk across the graduation stage. As many of the South African Numeracy Chair Project team members would be gathering together for this, Prof. Graven took this opportunity to keep the 'coming together' spirit alive, and the team embarked on a two-week long session of writing, researching, talking, workshoping, connecting and sharing.

On that special Wednesday, seven of our students celebrated their graduation. A huge congratulations to you all! And then, from Thursday till Saturday, the team worked together on our varied research projects, supported each other as we grappled with data, frameworks, and submission protocols. Prof. Silke Ladle (from Germany) was welcomed into our 'tribe' during this time too!

Monday

By Monday, the SANCP team, working in partnership with the CSD, were out running a workshop for the ECD Ambassadors from the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative. We gathered in Joza to 'play with numbers.' The workshop focused on challenging some of the assumptions about our own mathematical understanding, as well as our understanding of how young children learn about numbers. We played with algebra, patterns, the structure of number, palindromic sums and logic. There are already plans in place to work with these fantastic young people early next year. This is when we will use 'how we think about numbers' in order to think about 'how we teach about numbers'.

Tuesday

On Tuesday, the team invited our Grade R, 1 and 2 partner teachers from previous years for a workshop up at the Monument Restaurant. During this workshop, we welcomed some teachers we hadn't seen since 2016 with hugs, joyful greetings, and even a few selfies. We also said hello to some new faces, which post-COVID, is a previously unappreciated privilege. The afternoon was spent sharing ideas for teaching, resources for numeracy games, and digital support for future resource creation. We didn't leave out our Grade 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 partner teachers though.

Wednesday

That brings us to Wednesday, when we went back up to the Monument and welcomed another 50 teachers. This time, the workshop focused on our soon-to-be national Mental Starters Assessment Project

You'd think we'd be done by now? We've gathered as a team, reconnected with old teachers, and welcomed some new ones...but we couldn't leave out the parents. Integral to early childhood development and education, these are currently some of our most enthusiast partners!

Thursday

Thursday was booked for the team to visit George Dickerson, where Grade R children and their parents alike participated in the final of three workshops focused on the Early Number Fun Story Book range.

Friday

On Friday, the team went out to Joza to continue the work with the parents and teachers of a local creche there.

Finally, to bring the whole week back full circle, the team worked again in partnership with the CSD and their group of practitioners from their Centres of Excellence Project. The afternoon was the most intimate of the sessions, as we gathered around one table, and grappled with some mathematical thinking, talking, and teaching.

And just like that, the pause that COVID put on the world, on celebrating, on teaching, and on connecting, finally felt like it was over. We haven't quite caught up with all the time lost, but for those two weeks in October, we definitely made a good start!

- Roxanne Long



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