

Profile for Mr William Smith

An alumnus of Rhodes University, Mr William Smith is probably best-known for providing interactive TV education in Mathematics and Science on the Learning Channel for almost two decades.

After matriculating, Mr Smith completed his BSc and his BSc (Hons), both with distinction, at Rhodes University. His parents, JLB Smith who identified the coelacanth, and Margaret Smith, ichthyologist and accomplished fish illustrator, both had deep-rooted ties with the University and Makhanda (then Grahamstown).

In 1962, Mr Smith went on to complete his MSc in seven months at the University of Natal. Although his initial journey was into the world of business, working at African Explosives and Chemical Industries and Afrox, he soon realised he would not be content unless he followed his passion for teaching.

His first project in the education sector was establishing 'Star Schools', with the aim of providing value for money education with top-class teachers. Over the next 25 years, Mr Smith became famous throughout South Africa, where his schools have taught almost a million pupils of all races. He received many accolades for his innovations in teaching, including the highly prestigious 'Teacher of the Year' award.

In 1990, Mr Smith began producing The Learning Channel's educational television programmes with the financial backing of Hylton Appelbaum, then Executive Director of the Liberty Life Foundation. As a result of his work on this programme, Smith was voted as one of the top three presenters on South African television in 1998.

Besides his education programmes, Mr Smith appeared along with Jeremy Mansfield in the popular South African television quiz show, *A Word or 2*. He was also a judge for the Miss South Africa Pageant in 1998 and 1999.

Mr Smith was voted 86th in the Top 100 Great South Africans in 2004. In 2019, he was awarded the Order of the Baobab (silver) in recognition of his services to teaching and the "demystification of mathematics and science". The National Orders are the highest awards that South Africans can receive. The president bestows a national order upon a South African citizen or member of the international community who has contributed towards making South Africa a democratic and successful country.

Mr Smith is also a renowned conservationist and owned the Featherbed Nature Reserve in Knysna, where he lived until the sale of the land and company in 2004. He was also the owner of 'Rivercat Ferries', which has several craft that cruise in the Knysna lagoon and out to sea.

For his exceptional teaching skills and compassion and in recognition and celebration of his considerable and novel contribution in the teaching and learning of Mathematics and Science

in South Africa and beyond, Rhodes University will honour Mr Smith with the degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) (*honoris causa*) at its 2021 Graduation ceremonies in April 2021.