



Faculty of Education staff rally to support students during the move to remote teaching and learning

Jacqueline Batchelor (Manager: Initial Professional Education of Teachers)

Nadine Petersen (Vice Dean: Teaching and Learning)

When President Ramaphosa gave South Africans notice that the country would be moving to a nation-wide lockdown in March 2020, the movement of people in all sectors of society was curtailed. Universities were profoundly conscious of the impact of the restriction on movement and large gatherings on its core activities, especially teaching and learning at undergraduate level. While some institutions in the higher education sector struggled with the adjustment, at UJ, plans were rapidly developed for moving to remote emergency teaching and learning via the university's learning management system (Blackboard). This was vital to ensure the continuation of academic activities and to salvage the academic year.

Fortunately for the Faculty of Education, significant groundwork in this arena had already started in 2016 with the Blended Learning Task Team comprising members from all departments. Making the transition from face-to-face teaching to a blended and online mode of delivery demands a different skillset. Under the leadership of Dr Jacqueline Batchelor, an expert in digital learning, workshops to capacitate academic staff

to use the affordances of Blackboard and other digital applications for teaching and learning were initiated in 2017 and carried through to 2019. 80% of lecturing staff attended these extended bespoke workshops. Creating an enabling learning environment should not just be reserved for students in class but should also apply to lecturing staff in the process of upskilling their digital skills whilst also expanding their existing pedagogical repertoire to better fit with blended and online learning spaces. This enabling environment should ideally comprise of access to a variety of digital technologies; a skilled and readily available learning design specialist; peers and mentors willing to join in this learning journey; a personal development pathway; as well as opportunities to share learning experiences with others. Showing, telling and theorising is almost as important to bring about a deeper level of learning as the actual learning in the development programme itself.

As part of the drive to support staff optimally, Dr Batchelor also cultivated a group of students from the ICT Support Role BEd programme since 2016. These learning design consultants were appointed to the faculty to assist lecturing staff in their developmental path as they explored different ways for students to engage with a curriculum increasingly mediated through technology. These learning design consultants are skilled not only in the use of various ICT tools, applications and services but have also received at minimum two years of training in appropriate pedagogies to fully exploit these affordances. They are also intimately familiar with the student learning experiences (both positive and negative) being students themselves at some point as undergraduates.

The use of students to support lecturers in their journey of learning more about technology mediated learning turned the traditional model of training and development on its head; academic staff, while still retaining their stature as academic and disciplinary experts, turned to ICT-students as the experts to develop their e-learning skills. Furthermore, staff and the learning design consultants rose admirably to the challenge, working together to enhance teaching and learning via Blackboard and other appropriate technology applications. As part of the drive to capacitate an entire ecosystem, tutors also received extensive training in the use of Blackboard and its affordances for supporting students. More than 200 tutors in 2020 were trained and admirably rose to the challenge to ensure all students were supported during the rapid transition to online teaching and learning processes.

This solid basis proved to be extremely valuable when all teaching and learning activities, including assessments, moved online with little lead time. As a faculty, we were thus relatively well prepared to face what has commonly become known as a 'new normal' in terms of delivering an academic programme remotely. The Faculty's forward-looking stance placed us well ahead of the curve in adapting to the rapidly changing circumstances of teaching and learning. Paramount was the need to support students optimally and to still create a sense of structure for them, in some cases under particularly challenging home circumstances. A good percentage of students, for instance, did not have suitable devices, sufficient data coverage, and home environments conducive to academic study. With tremendous effort UJ management secured devices for 5 000+ students and couriered these to their homes, created space in its residences for vulnerable students to return to campus and made 30GB of data available to all students on a monthly basis. To support students as they engaged with their studies from home under very difficult circumstances, we sent the following letter of appeal to their immediate family. This letter was translated in four languages.

Dear parents/family members/caregivers

The Faculty of Education is deeply grateful for the continued support you have been offering our students in your homes and families to enable them to continue with their studies during the lockdown period. We understand how challenging this may be, especially under the current economic and home circumstances.

Students will soon begin their preparations for the examination, and although the format is different, they will still be expected to spend considerable time on academic work. This does mean that they would need dedicated time and space in which to work without disturbance.

We are working hard to assist them in passing their courses and ask for your help in this as well. Please have conversations with them about the support they need from you to structure their time and working space in the next month.

We are hopeful that our combined efforts will allow these young people, who are the future teachers of South Africa, to achieve success.

From a teaching and learning perspective, staff provided support through monitoring student academic progress on Blackboard to determine those most at risk, changing the nature of assessments as well as accommodating for late submissions when students struggled. Careful

thought was given to the type of synchronous and asynchronous activities utilised to reduce the data load and total cost to students as they engaged with their curriculum. How to prioritise and prudently design activities to preserve the 30GB data allocation per student for as long as possible forced lecturing staff to deeply interrogate how they could still design student engagement and allow full opportunity for students to achieve the set learning outcomes. The vast majority of modules used a flexible design template in Blackboard at the start of 2019 to standardize the students' experiences as they dipped in and out of their various modules. This offered the faculty a tremendous advantage during the rapid transition to online teaching and learning. Students did not have to spend excessive time looking for information in their modules. The ease of navigation within each module translated into real savings in terms of data and time-on-task providing students with a seamless experience. During the rapid transition to online teaching and learning, minimum levels of expected weekly engagements were set and as a result, students most at risk, were identified very early and supported academically and

directed to and additional support services where needed.

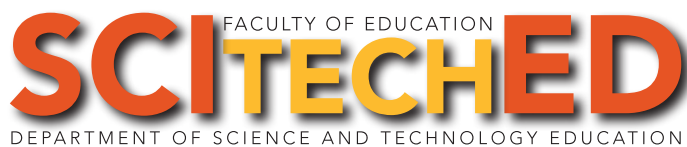
Support for academic staff themselves was offered in the form of extensive guidelines from how to set take home examinations and manage it on Blackboard, to the setting up of alternative forms of communication with students, i.e. WhatsApp groups, to creating screen casting videos with immediate support and managing collaborate sessions.

All in all, despite the challenges of the rapid movement to remote teaching and learning as a faculty we feel we can safely claim that staff were well prepared to deliver the 2020 curriculum. Based on data of student engagement drawn from the university learning management system, mid-year and end-of-year results point to a large measure of academic student success in all courses. Despite the lack of physical contact with teaching and support staff, faculty staff managed to conclude the 2020 academic year successfully; this was entirely due to their ability to adapt both their modes of teaching and working hours to accommodate for student challenges.

Improving teachers' cognition of academic language learning in STEM education (STEM-CALP): A VLIR-OUS joint research project between UJ and the AP University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Antwerp, Belgium

Prof Piet Ankiewicz visited the AP University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Antwerp, Belgium during April 2019 where he was part of a team under leadership of Dr Jan Ardies to conceptualise a project proposal for The South Initiative (SI) project between UJ and AP University of Applied Sciences and Arts. The aim of this two-year pilot project is to improve teachers' cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) of English second language (ESL) as the language of learning and teaching (LOLT)

for STEM lessons (natural sciences and technology) in the Senior phase (Grades 8 and 9). The project proposal was approved in September 2019 and the project has commenced in January 2020. The project involves research funding to the value of € 70 000. The local project team as part of SciTechEd consists of Prof Ankiewicz as the local promoter; Dr Francois Van As will be responsible for Technology and Dr Lydia Mavuru for Natural Sciences.





Left: Prof Piet Ankiewicz (left) visited Dr Jan Ardies (right) at AP University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Antwerp, Belgium. Right: Prof Piet Ankiewicz engaged in work at the white board.

Dr Jan Ardies (the Flemish project promoter) and Nele de Witte as members of the Flemish project team from the AP University of Applied Sciences and Arts visited the local project team during the period 25 until 28 February 2020. During their visit the VC, Prof Marwala also signed the agreement between the Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR-OUS) and the University of Johannesburg.

We spent the first day at TechnEd's seminar room at UJMA, and focused mainly on issues pertaining

to the prospective research collaboration. We deliberated, inter alia, on the project overview, the influence of the Flemish experience on the local needs analysis among technology and natural sciences teachers; the views of the district official from the Johannesburg Central District (D14); existing instruments which can be used to determine teachers' competency of English as LOLT; as well as a demonstration of the STaalvaardig online tool which is being developed in Belgium.



From left to right: Ms Nele de Witte, Dr Jan Ardies, Prof Piet Ankiewicz, Dr Francois Van As and Dr Lydia Mavuru at TechnEd (UJMA)

During the second day we met with officials from the Johannesburg Central District (D14) in Soweto to strengthen our partnership and to discuss practical issues concerning the implementation of the project. The officials included Ms Ismail Mashooda (CES) and Ms Shayna Bhoola (DCES); Mr Patrick Ntenjwa (SES: Technology; and Ms Kunitree Virasamy (SES: Natural Sciences).

We also visited the four selected project schools in Soweto, namely Ibhongo Secondary School, Jabulani Technical High School, Bhukulani Secondary School and Aurora Girls High. The Flemish and local project teams had the opportunity to meet the school principals as well as the teachers who would be involved. Later that afternoon we continued our discussion at Kloofzicht Lodge which is situated in the Cradle of Humankind. On the third day we

visited Hoërskool Die Fakkel, and thereafter had concluding discussions about the way forward.

The lockdown due to Covid-19 unfortunately impeded the implementation plan of the project in the sense that considering the rise in Covid-19 cases at the time, the lockdown regulations and the well-being and safety of all, third parties were not allowed to access to schools. After deliberations with officials of Johannesburg Central District (D14) and our Flemish partners, we have decided that the needs analysis, which has been planned for 2020, would have to be postponed most probably until January 2021. In the meantime the Faculty of Education academics and the Master's students involved in the project are working on the literature review.



Meeting with the principal, Mr David Makganyoga (front left) and teachers at Ibhongo Secondary School in Soweto.



Meeting with teachers at Hoërskool Die Fakkel in Forest Hill, Johannesburg South.

Sharing Ubuntu Care Principles during Covid-19

Maximus Monaheng Sefotho

Covid-19 closed the 'normal' ways of going about life in our time. At the same time, it opened new ways of perceiving and doing. While most physical spaces were unreachable during this time, cyberspaces opened 'the new normal'. Professor Sefotho, of the department of educational psychology at the University of Johannesburg is a member of the Red Latinoamericana de Profesionales de la Orientación (RELAPRO) (Latin American Network of Guidance Professionals). The network is very active in the region and welcomes South-South collaboration with mental health professionals. There are approximately 500 professionals from 16 Latin American countries and Maximus Sefotho as special

guest from South Africa. Current discourses in the network centre on developing a Latin American model of "Transitional Orientation for the Ethical Sense of Life". ("Orientación Transicional para el Sentido ético de la Vida"). This model is based on indigenous knowledge systems of Latin America and it is work in progress.

As a member of the network, Prof. Sefotho was invited to share ideas on: *El Paradigma de Ubuntu "Una cosmovisión Africana"* (The Ubuntu paradigm as an African Worldview), that took place on the 8th of June 2020. The discussion was formed from diverse perspectives such as, Capitalism, Socialism and Communalism or Communitarianism types including

Abya Yala, Sumak kawsai (*good living*) and Ubuntu model of Africa. The central theme is orientation and human development. The Ubuntu paradigm is based on the work of Assié-Lumumba (2017), who is a Distinguished Visiting Professor at the University of Johannesburg (2016 - 2021) in the Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education. The paradigm is making in-roads into the field of psychology and research. To this effect, another presentation from STADIO School of Education, followed on the 16th September 2020 on: *Re-imagining Inclusive Education through African Philosophy of Education* (Sefotho).

The presentation on the Ubuntu paradigm, attracted a series of webinars invited by the Catholic University of Columbia, which holds annual *forums for life*. The invited keynote and talks will focus on *Ubuntu as a corner stone for mutual care during Covid-19* (Sefotho - Keynote), *The Ubuntu*

paradigm in research: challenges of Covid-19 (Sefotho, presentation), *African Psychology and transformation* (Sefotho, presentation). This series will also be shared with two PhD students and one undergraduate student.

The philosophy of Ubuntu is perceived as an ethic of care (Waghid & Smeyers, 2012). Ubuntu is therefore regarded as the grand principle of care among Africans. The spirit of communality that is central to Ubuntu promotes a sense of care in communities. The convergence of all the presentations from the team is at the heart of the need expressed by the colleagues of the Catholic University of Columbia. The dialogue is fertile ground for further research with a potential to strengthen the South-South collaboration among staff and students from both Universities.



Gwen Barry (PhD candidate) will present on: *Ubuntu in education and the importance of emotional intelligence at school.*



Danny Ramollo (PhD candidate) will present on: *Ubuntu as a guiding principle of respect and care for others.*



Monoabese Shezy (Education student) will present on: *Cognitive effects of changes in geography for places of work and learning during Covid-19.*

Sharing best practices: Remote teaching and learning

Koketso Pila and Noluthando Mdlalose

The COVID-19 pandemic posed enormous challenges to teaching and. Various sectors were severely affected by the disruption induced by COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa and the education sector was no exception. In response to the disruption, higher education institutions made a transition from face to-face instruction to remote teaching and learning. The University of Johannesburg embraced the transition and staff and students were required to adapt to this new teaching and learning process. In essence, migration to remote teaching and learning provided access to innovative and dynamic instructional environments on virtual digital

platforms. Access to technological devices and bandwidth proved to be an immense challenge to a considerable number of university students.

While arrangements were made with mobile operators to provide students with data, connectivity issues hampered students' ability to meaningfully participate in online lectures culminating in a challenge to complete online assessment tasks timeously. These challenges called for academic staff to be considerate when handling online submissions. Migration to remote teaching and learning had profound implications for assessment in its broadest

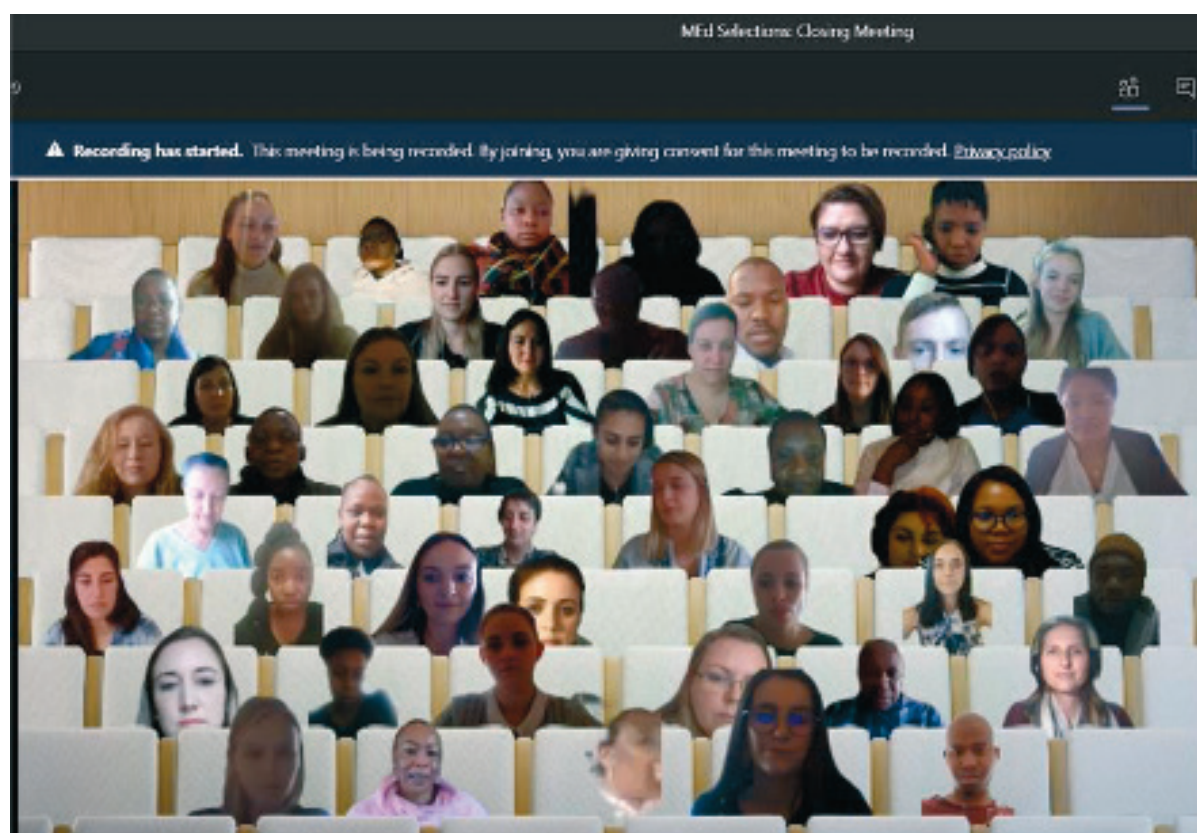
sense. As a blended learning platform, Blackboard contains features that can ideally be utilized to foster active virtual interactions with students. In particular, features such as Blackboard Collaborate Ultra and Blackboard Collaborate Polls can be harnessed to create an engaging and inclusive online learning environment. Blackboard Collaborate Polls make it possible to post multiple choice questions or yes/no type questions which can be administered as a poll appearing on the screen prompting synchronous feedback from students.

A mentimeter is an additional online tool that can be utilised to enhance virtual interactions with students. This online tool provides synchronous opportunities to administer multiple choice questions, short questions as well as open-ended questions. In addition, this feature allows students to respond to questions anonymously. As a user-

friendly game-based learning platform, Kahoot is an additional tool which uses technology to administer quizzes, discussions or surveys. Its learning games, "Kahoots", are user-generated multiple choice quizzes that can be accessed via a web browser or the Kahoot app. It is essentially a game-based classroom response system that can be utilised by the whole class in a synchronous or asynchronous mode. Students can answer questions by using the Kahoot app installed on smartphones, tablets or computers. Kahoot quizzes are administered through the Blackboard Collaborate Ultra platform. Key pedagogical affordances of Kahoot include provision of meaningful opportunities for embracing technology-enhanced learning, enactment of assessment as learning and it can further serve as a data collection tool for research purposes.

Hallmark Achievement: Virtual platforms used in the selection of candidates for the Masters Educational Psychology programme

Dr Veronica Dwarika (MEd Psych programme co-ordinator)



The Masters in Educational Psychology (MEd Psych) programme, is a sought after programme in the country, with University of Johannesburg being the

only university offering the programme as a part-time option. The MEd Psych offers an integrated programme, which includes completion of the

coursework module, a minor dissertation and a twelve-month internship programme. Successful completion of all these components, leads to registration as an Educational Psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). The department's strategic focus is on social justice in diverse communities, and educational settings, through caring, transformative, culturally authentic teaching, learning, and research towards local, inter-Africa and internationally recognised citizenship.

The applications for the programme attract in excess of one hundred applicants annually. The selection process begins in April and continues in phases to the end of September/early October. As part of the selection process, in addition to candidates meeting the minimum academic requirements, candidates participate in a rigorous process of theory to application opportunities and the formulation of a mini research proposal. Successful candidates are thereafter invited to a final round of selections, which included participation in group activities and individual interviews. With the COVID-19 realities in 2020, the department had to adapt from face to face interviews to online interviews. We took on the challenge and invited candidates to participate virtually via Teams Meetings and WhatsApp, as part of the final leg of the selection process. The candidates were aware that they were competing to secure the twenty-five coveted spaces available within the MEd Psych 2021 programme.

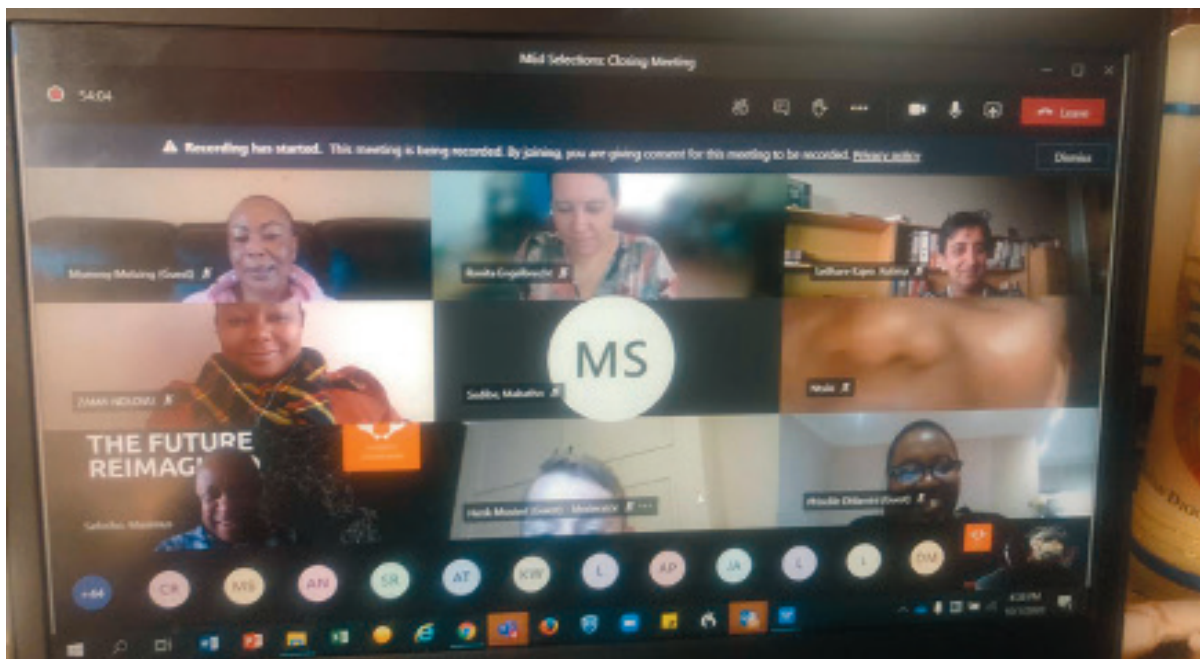
The online group interviews focused on case studies which aimed at amongst other things, assessing candidates' leadership abilities and social sensitivity, their adeptness at strength and asset based assessments, their awareness of diversity issues

within the case study and amongst themselves, as well as their willingness and capacity to respectfully challenge unhelpful patterns in group dynamics. The virtual individual interviews focused on candidates' levels of self-awareness, their acknowledgement of self-destructive tendencies and their pro-active means of dealing with these tendencies through reflective thinking and active agency. A healthy sense of work-life balance was elicited through candidates' descriptions of their capacity to address issues of planning and time-management, the value of healthy support structures within their family and other relationships, and their perspectives on the role of cultural, religious and gender diversity playing a role during participation in the MEd Psych programme.

Candidates' reflections at the end of the online selections process included the following:-

Regarding overall candidate experience: *'It was a great experience and I enjoyed the variety of opportunities we were offered from the first selection round right through to today's experience. I felt that these opportunities have enabled each of us to accurately represent ourselves'.*

On the issue of technology: *'Using MS Teams was a learning curve for most of us, but worth the experience. The WhatsApp group was hugely beneficial and made me feel contained and calm'. 'I think the UJ team has been amazing, so organised and efficient and making alternative plans when technology posed with obstacles. The WhatsApp groups were a fantastic way of keeping in touch and making sure everyone was present and making allowances for people having difficulties'.*



The twenty-five candidates selected for the 2021 cohort, are students that reflect the diversity of communities that they will be serving in their future roles as educational psychologists.

Panel members in the selection process included UJ staff within the Department of Educational Psychology: Prof Diale (HoD), Prof Brown (Deputy HoD), Dr Dwarika (MEd Psych program co-ordinator), Prof Sefotho, Dr Setlhare-Kajee, Dr Maseko, Dr Mabatho, Dr Munongi, Dr Fourie, Dr van der Merwe, Ms Mawila, Ms Mabaso and Ms Soni. External panel

members from within the educational psychology community included: Ms Masilo-Rajuli (private practice), Ms Metsing (GDE) and Ms Mithal (private practice). Mr Henk Mosterth, (Lead Educational Psychologist at Grantley College) moderated the selection processes confirming them to have been fair, non-discriminatory and without prejudice. The success of the online processes has spurred the department to consider continuing embarking on virtual platforms for future selections within the programme.

Prof Shafika Isaacs wins Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award



Years of hard work paid off in a big way for Prof Shafika Isaacs, Associate Professor of Practice in the Faculty of Education, at the University of Johannesburg (UJ). Prof Isaacs recently won the South African Education Research Association's (SAERA) Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award, one of the highest honours in her discipline, for her dissertation titled: *'Towards the recognition of a Soweto boy's play capabilities in the formal education system'*.

"I am humbled to win this award," said Prof Isaacs. "Writing a dissertation, like with other large projects, was very challenging. This was intended as a modest contribution to our collective knowledge and understanding of the lives that our children lead as learning subjects, particularly township boys and having the study of their lives recognised in this way, is a huge honour."

Prof Isaacs has published widely on digital learning in Africa and said she was particularly drawn to this subject to bring attention to the lived experiences of township boy children in particular, their talents and their struggles as a sedge way into developing child-centred policies and practices. "I am hoping that the thesis provides ideas on how we can realise the dream espoused by the DBE that every child is a national asset."

The educational research Prof Isaacs specialises in centers around the narratives or 'stories' about a 10-year-old Soweto boy pseudo-named Kabelo who seemingly exemplifies the 'underperforming South African learner'. Kabelo shows us how he struggles with reading and how he is labelled in the formal education system as a severely cognitively-challenged, progressed learner with special educational needs. The dissertation compares and contrasts Kabelo's world of academic performance with his everyday world of play. In this way it exposes his talents and capabilities in his everyday world of play, including his digital play. However these talents and capabilities are overlooked, unseen, and misrecognised in his world of academic performance. The thesis through Kabelo's voice, makes an appeal for the recognition of his play capabilities in the formal education system as a social justice project.

The South African Education Research Association's (SAERA) main aim is to professionalise, cohere and improve educational research and academic work in South Africa. It is open to all scholars of education.

Prof Isaacs said that winning this award was particularly significant beyond disciplinary acclaim. "I certainly hope that the award will spark interest in the social justice underpinnings of the thesis and its findings," she said.

First student cohort of fully online, accredited qualifications become UJ graduates

About three years ago, the University of Johannesburg (UJ) ventured into a new territory by introducing fully online and accredited qualifications to professionals and students who opted to study from home. Now, approaching the end of 2020, and after an eventful journey, the first group of these students have acquired their qualifications, without setting foot on campus.

The University congratulates all its first fully online graduates. The students enrolled in programmes such as Master of Public Health (three graduates), Master of Education in ICT (two graduates) and the following Advanced Diplomas: Financial Markets (eighteen), Transportation Management (eight) and Logistics (three), with more graduations to emerge in the first half of 2021.

Online Master of Education in ICT graduates



Brenda van Wyk

Registering for the carousel approach helped me to schedule and align my studies according to my available time, making my learning much more focused, meaningful and effective.

The themes that the programme covers opened new and exciting worlds. These included educational ICT policy development, current and emerging issues in digital learning, contemporary learning design theories and frameworks, and framing assessment within 21st century contexts.

The programme appealed to me as I already completed LMS training for instructional and learning design. I found the Community of Inquiry approach exhilarating and collaborative. I loved how the practical application of new digital skills could be applied in learning outcomes.

As the programme did not require any campus visits, any travel and no face-to-face sessions, I was able to attend sessions and keep up even whilst traveling abroad. With the excellent design and online support received, I was able to complete the programme in a minimum of two years.



Elmarie Kritzinger

As an Alumni of the University of Johannesburg, I started my studies again in 2018 after more than a decade of working in academia. When the opportunity crossed my path to enroll as one of the first cohorts in the new Med ICT qualification, I could not resist. The qualification linked the field of Education and Technology in a seamless manner, to provide the knowledge and skills to enrich this relevant and important subject field. After a 2-year program (including coursework and a mini dissertation) I must congratulate UJ with a wonderful Master's qualification. The educational pedagogy is rapidly changing for the future and we as educators must be ready and prepared. This qualification provided me with practical knowledge and skills to move education into the 4th Industrial Revolution. Educators must be on the forefront of education. I would recommend this qualification to any educator to ensure that they are ready for the future.

Editorial

by David Robinson

This year has been a challenge for students, the Faculty, and the society at large. Covid-19 has had a significant effect on education in terms of the changes to the traditional processes that have largely been taken for granted. The articles in this issue of EduBrief provide a record of the ways in which the Faculty of Education at UJ addressed the challenges resulting from this situation.

The use of technology provided a means to engage in teaching and learning in an innovative manner. In the various articles in this issue there is commentary on how the Faculty used technology to support the teaching and learning process. Despite the Covid-19 situation the Faculty was able to achieve great success in teaching and learning. The responses to Covid-19 reflected the ability of the Faculty to approach teaching and learning, administration, and assessment in a way that required flexibility and academic rigour.

Despite the challenges of the year, the Faculty has been very successful in serving our community and delivering programmes of a high quality.

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