

ALI MAZRUI CENTRE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION STUDIES

NEWSLETTER

Issue no. 9 | 2020

From the Director's Desk, Prof Michael Cross

We stumbled but did not crumble!

This sums up the feeling of AMCHES staff and students as we were suddenly forced to navigate under unprecedented circumstances imposed by COVID-19. The 'new normality' demanded subtler and more innovative methods, with frequent improvisation, in confronting our research, teaching and training, networking, and outreach challenges. A major challenge was reconciling our responses with our commitment to social justice, which warranted greater political, ethical and moral responsibility and carrying our compassion and empathy into our practices. We quickly learned to operate in a technology-intensive environment for effective communication and social interaction. The myths surrounding ICT were shattered as our technologically challenged colleagues scrambled for training opportunities or advice on the use of social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and the popular virtual meeting platforms like WhatsApp, Zoom, MS Teams and Google Meet.

We have tenaciously sustained our growth as individuals and as a research centre. In collaboration with our partners, we have amplified our research programme. Our *Generations of African Scholars and Institutions* flagship project, with its focus on convergence of efforts within and across the African continent towards scholarly and systematic documentation of Africa's intellectual legacy, underlines the imperative of reimagining our future. The project's timeliness was highlighted by the *Black Lives Matter* movement that exploded across the globe. A call for manuscript proposals has been made in different platforms and very inspiring proposals have already been received. The *Student Episodic Access* project brings together efforts from researchers of eight South African universities to investigate strategies on how best to mediate the experiences of students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their retention, throughput and success. Other research teams are exploring more appropriate forms of articulation of higher education with the labour market, as well as the challenges in the funding of higher education. In this regard, our partnership with the Council on Higher Education (CHE) is worth noting. Drawing on our own experiences and

lessons from elsewhere, we have been able to gradually and proactively adapt our research ethos and methods to the new normality.

In line with our institutional mission, our presence and voice in the policy arena have been extended. The Centre has just released a comprehensive report on the *Size and Shape of Higher Education in SA*. Unlike previous studies, the report adds a carefully researched evidence-based perspective to the problematic of institutional differentiation, with key policy and steering implications. Two other important reports were released by our researchers. The first, *The Policy and Regulatory Context of Higher Education in SA*, examines how state policy, regulative and steering mechanisms have impacted on higher education transformation in the country. The second is a contribution to a continent-wide research initiative on *Mapping Higher Education Public Policy in Africa* (MHEPPA), commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY) and hosted by the Institute for Post-School Studies (IPSS) at the University of the Western Cape.

Our MEd class under Phase 4 lockdown was a true *learning* experience. We bring the voices of some of the students to this issue. Our doctoral students have also made considerable progress. Some of them have shown unprecedented courage and heroism. After dramatically battling with his health, Mr Khetsi Lehoko passed on in January, the same week he completed his PhD thesis for submission. After several brain surgeries, Mr Bernard Akala has successfully completed his doctoral studies. We are truly inspired by their exemplary determination and wisdom.

An important measure of progress is displayed in our higher education book series with the release of two important titles and two more to be published in 2020 (see our publications list).



**The Future
Reimagined**

Overall, our experience under COVID-19 has left us with important lessons: the need for a reconstituted environment that supersedes the limitations of physical space and distance to enable the full realization of our tasks; the exploration and adoption of more suitable pedagogies and methodologies; the centrality of social justice in the form and content of our practices; and psychological and emotional preparedness to operate effectively under current circumstances, including greater degrees of discipline and self-regulation.

Prof Bruce Macfarlane, Distinguished Visiting Professor, has completed his 5 years of association with AMCHES. He has donated the honoraria and all funds generated from his research and publications in the five years to the Centre to support its research programme and the development of young scholars. Many thanks, Bruce, for your generosity and the many years of invaluable collaboration. We look forward to future collaboration with you.



RESEARCH PROJECTS

Student Epistemic Access and Success project

Zahraa McDonald & Logan Govender

In November 2019, the Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies (AMCHES) was commissioned by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) to conduct research on understanding epistemic access and success of historically disadvantaged students in South African universities. The project, currently in its data collection phase, explores the experiences of successful university undergraduate students with a very specific background profile, that is, students who suffered a considerable degree of marginalisation by virtue of racial background, originating from poor families and communities, and who graduated from relatively under-privileged schools in rural and township areas. The project focuses on undergraduate students in

eight institutions: Universities of the Witwatersrand, KwaZulu-Natal, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Limpopo, Western Cape, Tshwane University of Technology and Central University of Technology.

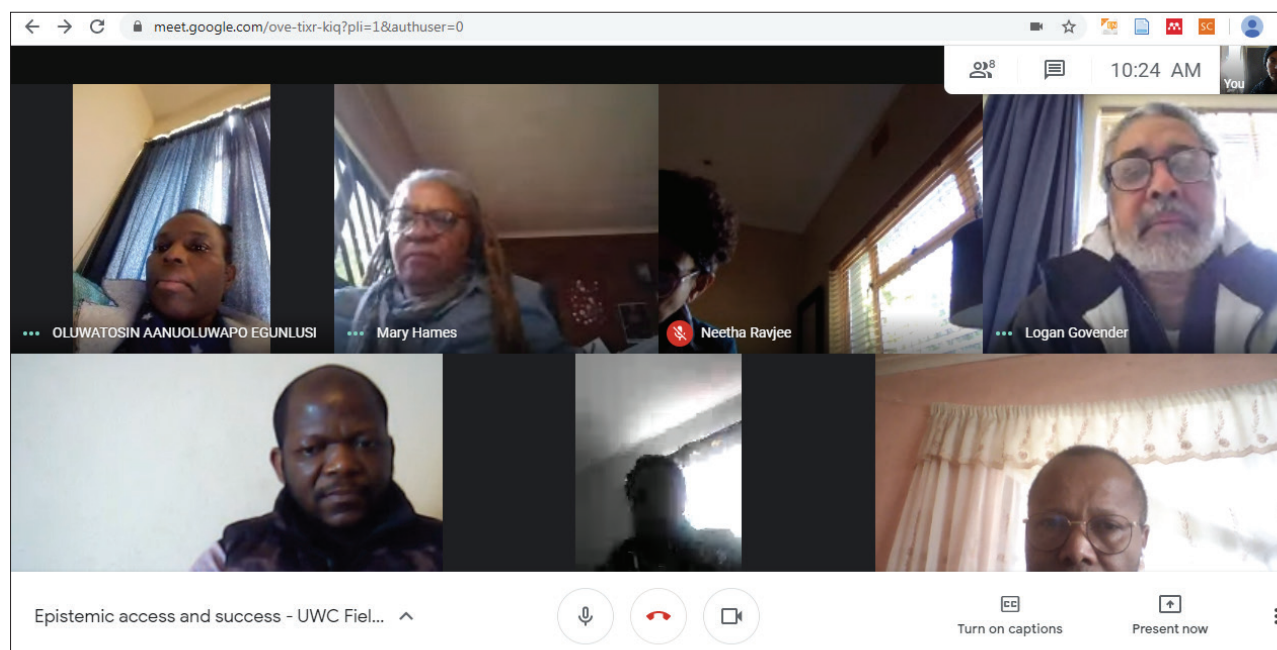
Case study coordinators have been appointed for each institution: Prof Isaac Ntshoe (CUT); Prof Mahlaphlapana Themane (UL); Prof Anil Kanjee (TUT); Prof Yu Ke (UJ); Dr Thoko Mnisi (UKZN); Dr Talita Calitz (UP); Dr Neetha Ravjee and Dr Mary Hames (UWC); and Dr Elizabeth Ndofirepi (Wits). The training of fieldworkers for most institutions has been completed, and data collection (documents and interviews of students and staff) on most campuses has commenced.



Project orientation workshop with university coordinators, 12 March 2020

There is no doubt that the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic has presented challenges, specifically around university priorities and the transition to online activities. However, the approach by the project's coordinating team has been both sensitive and persuasive to facilitate progress. Considerable adjustments to the data collection are envisaged in the course of the project due to adjusting to lockdown regulations. For

example, fieldworkers' training had to be done online, and interviews are being conducted telephonically, as well as through the use of various electronic platforms, such as WhatsApp and Microsoft Teams. The project team remain confident that, despite the obstacles, the project will be completed by the end of 2020.



Fieldworker training for the Epistemic Access and Success research project with UWC team, coordinated by Dr Neetha Ravjee and Dr Mary Hames on Google Meet.

The Changing Size and Shape of the Higher Education System in South Africa, 2005-2017

Ahmed Essop

This project, which was initiated in the last quarter of 2019, has been completed and the report is available online at <https://www.uj.ac.za/faculties/faculty-ofeducation/ali-mazrui-centre>. The report provides an overview of the changing size and shape of the higher education system and associated trends by race, gender, nationality and institution in relation to:

- Enrolments, both undergraduate and postgraduate, including by field of study and qualification level;

- Participation, graduation and throughput rates;
- Academic staff, including employment status and staff-to-student ratios; and
- Research, both publication outputs and research master's and doctoral graduates.

The report assesses the changes against the targets set in the 2001 National Plan for Higher Education, including the implications of the changes for finalising a framework that gives effect to the policy commitment for the development of a differentiated and diverse higher education system.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT AMCHES

A New and Innovative Blended Higher Education PhD programme

Prof Emnet Woldegiogis

Higher education is transforming through complex policy dynamics that are informed by global, regional, and national processes. The challenges facing the sector in many countries today appear to be quite diverse and numerous, associated with issues of leadership, finances, quality, relevance, accessibility, inclusiveness, and the complex role it has in society. Understanding the challenges facing the sector entails interrogating the multi-faceted processes, actors, structures, and the complex policy dynamics within the socioeconomic and political spheres of knowledge production.

The Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies embraces the mission of striving towards scholarly research inquiry, training, and professional development in the field of higher education. ***In line with this mission, the Centre is launching a new initiative for a PhD programme in Higher Education Studies that will expand the horizon of theoretical, empirical, and policy reflections in the field.*** It will be both policy and research-based doctoral training that will allow graduates to forge careers in and outside of academia. This innovative programme is designed to prepare the next generation of scholars, researchers, policy advocates, and leaders in the field of higher education in Africa and beyond.

The proposed PhD programme will combine and accommodate blended approaches, integrating both

online delivery components and on-campus engagements to meet the needs of learners and the goals of the course. This innovative approach represents a model that integrates technology with learning and research into a PhD programme. Blended programmes have the proven potential to enhance both the effectiveness and efficiency of meaningful PhD experiences providing ultimate flexibility for students to access the programmes from anywhere and anytime. It is designed such that some on-campus activities will be substituted by equally meaningful distance and online activities.

The Centre diligently strives to meet the needs of both the students and the changing global marketplace with diverse programme options. This PhD programme will be comprehensive enough to include diverse topics in the field of higher education, critically engaging in epistemological, theoretical, and methodological inquiries. The programmes capitalise on the multidisciplinary pool of scholars and the highly experienced faculty with extensive records of scholarly works. Moreover, the programme will bring together highly specialised scholars from different parts of the world at different stages of the PhD training to enrich the knowledge bases and the international experiences of students.



Prof Woldegiogis making a point at an AMCHES staff meeting, with PDRFs Drs Phefumula Nyoni, Bongani Nyoka and Sibonokuhle Ndlovu.

AMCHES Internship Initiative

Zahraa McDonald

AMCHES is accommodating six Sociology Honours students from UJ's Department of Sociology for their internship programme. The internship programme must be completed as part of their degree requirement. This entails AMCHES providing work-related experience to the students. At an induction workshop with the students on 4 August 2020, Prof Michael Cross, Director at AMCHES, introduced the student interns to the Centre and its programmes; Dr Logan Govender, AMCHES Senior Lecturer, and Dr Zahraa McDonald,

AMCHES Postdoctoral Research Fellow, introduced the Epistemic Access and Success research project, which forms the basis of the interns' research and work experience at AMCHES. The six interns who attended the workshop were Mwansa Mwape, Chenai Chikoto, Princess Buthelezi, Leandokuhle Maswana, Hazel Mubvuta, and Samantha Tshabalala. It was clear from their inputs that they hoped to acquire useful experience in a research environment so that they could consider research as a possible career option.

RAISING THE BAR: RESEARCH AND TEACHING IN THE TIME OF A PANDEMIC

'Sustaining Productivity amid a Pandemic' – Reflections from a Research Centre

Phefumula Nyoni, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, AMCHES

The discovery of the COVID-19 pandemic in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, did not show any immediate signs that the virus would cause disruptions across the globe for such an extended period of time. Within the South African higher education sector, as different measures to contain the spread of the virus were implemented, it became clear that it could not be business as usual. This implied that teaching, learning, research and community engagement had to be done differently.

Following the closure of the University of Johannesburg in March 2020, research activities at AMCHES had to continue, albeit under different conditions, which involved researchers working from home. The home was suddenly turned into a public and private space, and researchers and academics had to ensure that work continued, a situation that has presented many challenges. With several researchers at the Centre having family responsibilities, it was clear that balancing family with work and other obligations was not going to be easy. In some instances, colleagues found themselves facing challenges with technological devices as no one anticipated a 'complete work from home scenario'. In spite of the challenges, researchers at AMCHES showed resilience as they managed to deliver on a considerable number of research tasks as reported at virtual monthly meetings.

A major highlight of our research programme is a book collaboration project that focuses on 'Higher Education in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic', led by Prof Emnet Woldegiorgis and a colleague from North-West University. In addition, Dr Emure Kadenge, AMCHES postdoctoral research fellow, is working on a book chapter on the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on reconceptualising induction for newly qualified teachers. Drs Sibonokuhle Ndlovu and Phefumula Nyoni are working on journal articles for a special issue of the *Journal of Development Studies* after their abstracts were accepted. Dr Phefumula Nyoni also participated in a 'researchers' boot camp', a research initiative by JET Education Services, which involved education researchers' response to the COVID-19 pandemic through a thematic-based approach. Dr Nyoni, an anthropologist, participated in Theme 3 on 'the role of culture in alleviating the spread of COVID-19', where he provided expert support on culture. The report is available at <https://www.jet.org.za/resources/theme-3report-final.pdf/download>. Between April and June, Dr Nyoni also participated in a research project 'Anthropological responses to COVID-19' led by Dr Georgiana Murariu in the United Kingdom, which involved over 40 anthropologists from around the world.

COVID-19's impact on students with disabilities: Viewed through intersectionality

Sibonokuhle Ndlovu, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, AMCHES

Students with disabilities have been confronting challenges in higher education even before the COVID-19 pandemic. While the pandemic has negatively influenced their learning, the theoretical concept of in-

tersectionality, drawn from Critical Disability Theory, helps to illuminate how COVID-19 affects the learning of students with disabilities differently.

Intersectionality explains that disability intersects with other multiple identities, such as sexuality, race, gender, ethnicity or class (Sherry, 2007; 2009). Disability can intersect with other identities of power in society. Persons with disabilities are intersectional subjects, who embody other positions, which can be powerful and valued in an ableist culture (Goodley, 2013; 2014). Thus, disability should not be considered in isolation, but instead should be placed in the centre of other identities, which can advantage or disadvantage an individual with disabilities (Sherry, 2009). This disrupts the notion that all students with disabilities are a homogenous social group 'with special needs'. Critical disability scholars emphasise intra/intersectionality to argue that students with disabilities are diverse in themselves, influenced by their different home and school backgrounds, their different experiences or exposure. Intersectionality therefore helps to understand that while students with disabilities

might be affected, like other students, those with mild disabilities, hailing from elite backgrounds, who have exposure and are connected to the internet, could be having access to learning through online platforms during the COVID-19 crisis. As such, students with disabilities from privileged backgrounds may not be excluded from learning during COVID-19.

Additionally, students with disabilities from disadvantaged contexts might experience limitations of connectivity similar to students without disabilities from disadvantaged backgrounds. Disability here intersects with other identities of disadvantage and oppression. There is a disability and an intersection with other disadvantaged positions. The concept of intersectionality thus helps to avoid the overgeneralisation that COVID-19 affects students with disabilities the same way in their learning.

COVID-19 Teaching: A view from one's home, cars and shopping malls

Logan Govender and Michael Cross

In the second quarter of 2020, Prof Cross and Dr Govender joined the online teaching melee that was suddenly thrust upon the academic community in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The course in question was the Curriculum and Educational Change module, part of UJ's Master's programme in Education Curriculum Studies. Although there were a mere six students in the class, the transition to a full online teaching platform came with many hurdles *and* triumphs.

Hurdle 1: Coming to grips with Blackboard. For two academics not well-versed in this platform, it took some significant mental adjustments before we became comfortable – sometimes driving us 'loco', due in the main to connectivity challenges experienced both by ourselves and our students, especially those working from remote and poor network locales.

Triumph 1: With the help of a magnificent technical back-up team that the Faculty of Education had quickly assembled, we were able to overcome many of the online glitches and delays. Thanks to Patrick and colleagues for great service.

Hurdle 2: Getting started. The first week was, in many ways, a test run. We had planned our first online lecture meticulously (or so we thought!): PowerPoint Slides, readings for students and the like. But many students struggled to connect to Blackboard for the live session; our back-up plan was to use WhatsApp,

but we realised it could only host three callers at a time if one doesn't have the business version. So, we had to reschedule the first class, using Zoom.

Triumph 2: Switching to Zoom. In spite of some early glitches, Zoom proved easier for students to connect, and easier for us as presenters to share screens and conduct a successful and engaging session. Things got better and we got more innovative, using short YouTube clips, for example, to enhance content and make the online classes as interesting as possible.

In the end, we managed to complete the module, with students completing three short assignments, one long assignment and a final take-home exam (two students were eventually forced to take supplementary exams due to various personal and combined work/study-related pressures).

We know this was a testing time, not just for us, but especially for our students. We remember feeling deep empathy when seeing some of our students standing outside their homes in the dying winter light (our class schedule changed to 4pm to 7pm to accommodate students returning to work); others would be sitting in their cars and yet others driving to a nearby shopping mall so they could have optimum connectivity and not miss a session. We believe that students' and our endeavours have not been in vain, as all were able to pass the module, some with outstanding achievement.

STUDENT REFLECTIONS ON LEARNING DURING THE PANDEMIC

Lessons and reflections on the 2020 academic year



*Caryn Viljoen,
UJ MEd Student*

2020 has truly been a year for the history books. It seems like there is no aspect of human life, from business to culture, from preschool to higher education, and from leisure to industry, that has escaped the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a post-

graduate student in this most unusual year, I have experienced the abrupt and unexpected transition from contact to online lessons.

I consider myself fortunate to have obtained my honours degree from UNISA, which at least gave me some preparation for the demands of distance education. This is something that greatly assisted with the transition to the 'new normal' of online learning, particularly with regards to the use of online research databases over hard copies that can only be located in campus libraries.

The move to online classes was certainly full of 'ups and downs'. It was clear that the lecturers were just as unsure of the technology as we students were, with much trial and error in the initial phase of the Curriculum and Educational Change module. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise, as it allowed us the opportunity to try various platforms before finding one that was most suitable for our needs. It also unlocked

avenues of conversation that would otherwise not be possible. By using video conference calling, students and lecturers were able to get a glimpse into each other's lives in a manner that does not normally happen during contact sessions. It enabled the students to form connections and commiserate over not only the content of the lessons, but also the shared difficulties and successes in their online learning experience.

Throughout this journey, I saw that the greatest stumbling block is the lack of infrastructure in South Africa. Data provided by the University ensured that students were not financially burdened by the online lessons. Due to the lack of network coverage in their residential areas, many students were often not able to join lessons, not able to connect to voice and/or video, or would have to leave part-way through the lesson. I was lucky enough to have a stable internet connection, definitely a must-have for the future of online learning, but not yet a reality for many students in South Africa.

Indeed, online teaching at all levels could be the future of education. While there are some stumbling blocks that need to be addressed, I think that COVID-19 has precipitated the move to the digital age in a manner that would probably have happened organically over time, but at a much slower pace. The principal of my school often says that the mark of a good teacher is the ability to adapt, which has certainly been true this year while pursuing my master's in the time of the national lockdown – it has taught me lessons that will endure long after the pandemic has passed.

Online learning: Zooming into the Future



*Orapeleng January, UJ
MEd Student*

This article focuses on my experience as a postgraduate student with the shift to full online learning in the context of COVID-19, specifically through the media of WhatsApp and Zoom in the module for Curriculum and Educa-

tional Change. I have different experiences concerning the two online learning platforms, but overall, I can state that the full online learning was beneficial to me. In short, WhatsApp was used for communication and updates, while Zoom was for lecture sessions. Our lecturers for the module were Prof M. Cross and Dr

L. Govender who worked efficiently to ensure that all students are on par with the academic requirements. The support from lecturers and a great deal of effort from my side ensured a rewarding online learning experience in the context of COVID-19.

My experience of full online learning was quite positive, with our lecturers organising a WhatsApp group to facilitate communication. Through this communication, and Blackboard postings, lecturers managed to provide module orientations, which included session guidelines, readings and other information. The orientation given on WhatsApp was beneficial; lecturers highlighted the expectations of the module, for instance, the weekly submissions of assignments, UJ uLink (Blackboard) to access learning materials and class schedules. It is fair to state that UJ's uLink and WhatsApp were used interchangeably to inform us about logistics and changes to the module. Thus,

through these learning platforms, I managed to understand the expectations of the module and make some academic progress. Although there were some data-related challenges, I managed to attend more than 90% of the classes.

Based on the Zoom online learning, I can state that the lecturers made it more conducive to enhance our studies. Zoom online learning gave us the great opportunity to engage, interact and exchange ideas. This was a tremendous experience as it catered for multiple learning intelligence advocated by Howard Gardner. For example, the visual, auditory and verbal students were given the space to express their ideas in Zoom. In essence, that gave me a great opportunity

to learn from my fellow students and more so from the lecturers. Moreover, the Zoom online learning enabled students to share their perspectives, deliberations and critiques of topical educational issues. My experience of using online learning resonates with the critical debates that we had on discussions around decolonial theories, neoliberalism, social justice and 21st century skills in education. Analysing and discussing these discourses through online learning afforded me a new academic experience, growth and development. I can confidently attest that full online learning in the context of COVID-19 was informative and beneficial to me. I had great lessons which enhanced my interactive skills and knowledge.

My experiences of full online learning as a postgraduate student



*Gaone Molapisi,
PhD student*

My name is Gaone Molapisi, a PhD candidate in the Department of Curriculum Studies, Faculty of Education, at the University of Johannesburg. The title of my thesis is 'An inclusive curriculum: Teaching strategies for learners with a hearing impairment'.

I am under the supervision of Prof Maropeng Modiba. My journey as a PhD candidate started in March 2016. It is worth mentioning that the journey involved working as a tutor for various modules, including Education Studies 1A, Education Studies 1B and Education Studies 3A. Towards the end of 2019, I joined Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies as a research assistant.

It is well known that the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted all sectors of the economies of affected coun-

tries, including education. In South Africa, for example, schools and universities had to shut down as part of the government's efforts to contain the spread of the virus. As a postgraduate student, the disruptions and closure of the University have had a negative impact on my studies. Organising meetings became a challenge, which led to much frustration.

The closure of the University meant that many of the resources previously available to students became inaccessible. To mitigate this adverse impact, online learning became the norm. However, with much of the previously accessible resources, such as the internet and the library not being available, my progress has been severely affected as I need these resources to ensure progress with my study. Against this background, I have had to rely on meagre data that I have had to purchase from similarly meagre funds to make progress with my studies. The COVID-19 pandemic has therefore not only negatively impacted the economy, but it has also exposed the underlying inequalities in South African society where there is a huge imbalance in access to resources.

NEWS AND EVENTS

AMCHES Director presents keynote address at the University of the Witwatersrand, School of Education Research Weekend, 14 August 2020

We need to start thinking differently so that we can understand deeply – This was a point stressed by Prof Michael Cross in his keynote address, titled *Researching Higher Education in Africa as a Process of Meaning-making: Theoretical and Conceptual Considerations*, at the Wits University Research weekend in August 2020.

Recognising that knowledge is historically and socially situated, Prof Cross emphasised how knowledge rose to prominence in a particular philosophical and historical context, which, in the case of Africa, had been, and remained, under colonial bondage. Concerned with the thinking underpinning higher education research

in Africa, his argument posited four key claims. First, beyond the current critique of Western hegemony, what is urgently needed is not just alternatives but *alternative thinking* (about the epistemological, theoretical and methodological foundations of knowledge). Second, such thinking should be grounded not only in full acknowledgement of the centrality of epistemic freedom and justice, but also in the recognition of "coloniality as a fundamental problem in the modern era" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2014: 185; Santos 2019). Third, as suggested by Bourdieu, in the domain of social research, such thinking requires degrees of vigilance and fundamental epistemological breaks, an

idea also reiterated by VY Mudimbe in *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (1988). Fourth, there is a need for a greater political, moral and ethical responsibility when working with knowledge (knowledge of and knowledge for transformation). Overall, the challenge confronting scholars, especially in the global south, requires a carefully considered epistemological, theoretical and methodological basis, revisiting existing concepts and assumptions to generate more appropriate analytical

tools, and developing assumptions rooted in African histories and experiences. Put differently, it requires acknowledging coloniality as a fundamental problem in the modern world; hence an epistemological decolonisation as a point of departure.

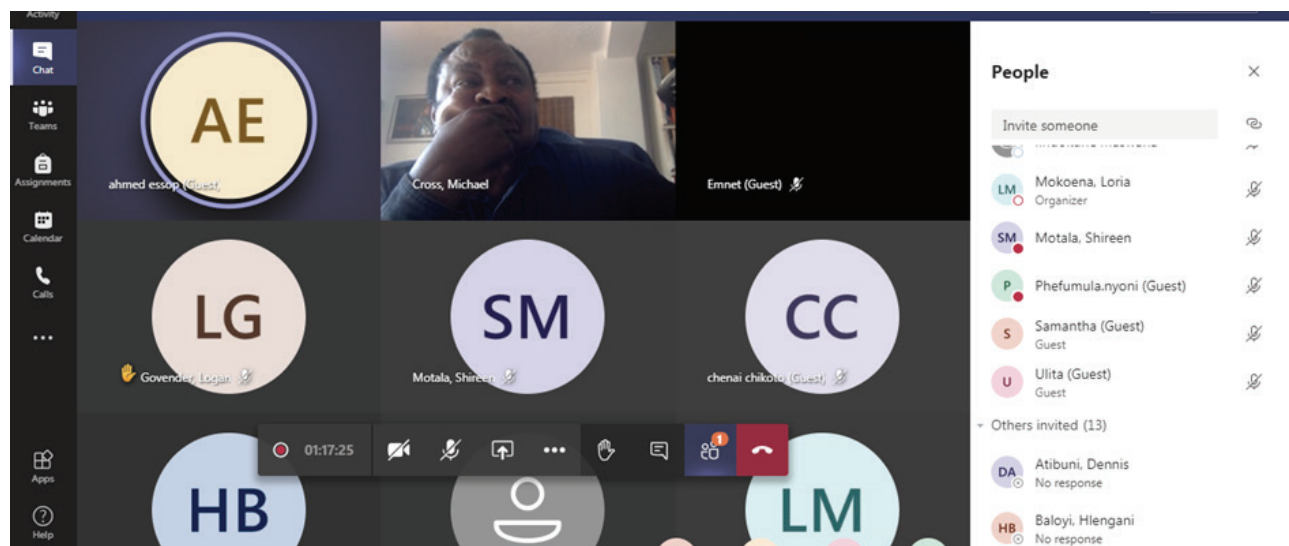
The address was well received, and set the tone for constructive and lively engagement during the research weekend.

Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies Holds its First Virtual Seminar

Hlengani Baloyi, AMCHES Postdoctoral Research Fellow

In the words of Prakash Iyer, an author and former MD of Kimberly Clark Lever, “as the world around us gets transformed, adapt to change or else...”. After a massive disruption of its seminar programme by the COVID-19 lockdown, the Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies appears to have taken heed of Iyer’s advice when it held its maiden virtual seminar on 30

July 2020, following a switch to virtual staff meetings in April. Held via MS Teams, the seminar was well attended by almost all staff members of the Centre and postdoctoral research fellows. The head of the UJ Graduate School, Prof Shireen Motala, also graced the occasion with her presence and engaged vigorously in the discussion that followed the presentation.

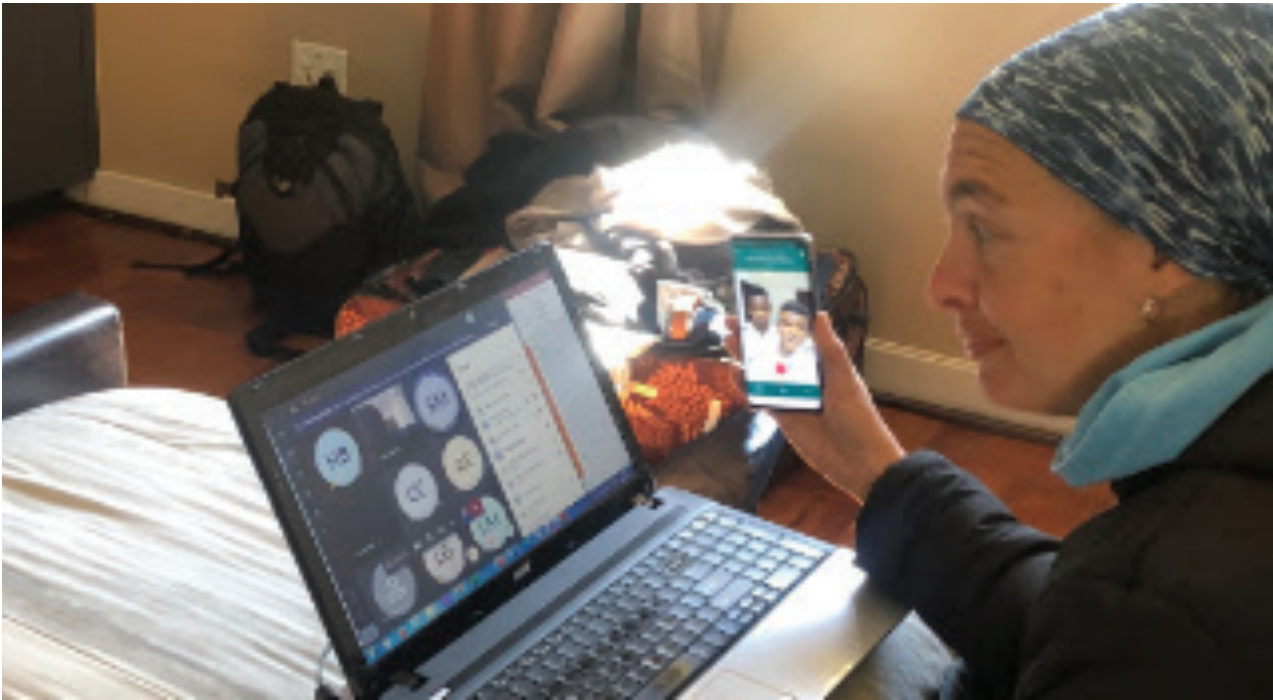


Prof Michael Cross seen in a typically contemplative mood during the seminar

Chaired by Prof Michael Cross, the main purpose of the seminar was to discuss a draft literature review of a study on epistemic access and success in higher education. The seminar was presented by **Dr Sibonokuhle Ndlovu**, a postdoctoral research fellow and member of the project team. What emerged from the presentation was that the literature review stands on three main pillars. These are:

- Individual, collective and institutional resources historically disadvantaged students resort to in the process of epistemic access.
- How historically disadvantaged students negotiate their epistemic access and success within a diverse and rapidly changing university environment.
- How institutions mediate the process of epistemic access and success.

The presentation was well received and the discussions that followed were constructive and geared towards improving the various scholarly perspectives presented in the review. In the main, the seminar went smoothly. The MS Teams platform appears to be a stable virtual platform that works well. There were no interruptions experienced during the entire session, thanks to the administrative and technical wizardry of Loria Mokoena, the Centre’s administrative assistant, and Dr Zahraa McDonald who successfully hosted and recorded the proceedings. The technical wizardry entailed merging different technologies; from WhatsApp to MS Teams. The picture below shows Zahraa holding up a cellphone as Sibonokuhle presents on speaker to those ‘present’ on MS Teams. One wonders if David Harvey could conceive of this when he theorized space-time compression in 1989.



Dr Zahraa McDonald looking somewhat bemused at her own technical wizardry

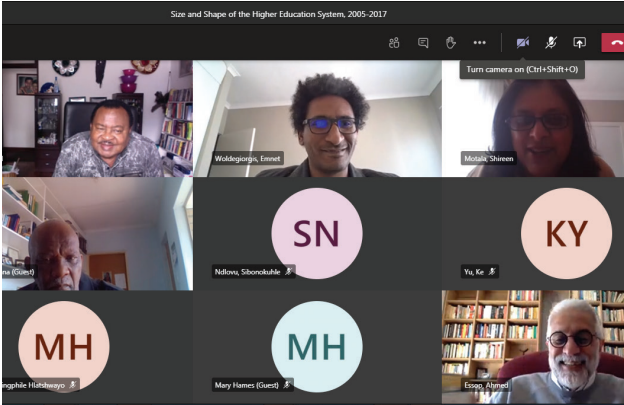
Virtual Seminar on Size and Shape of Higher Education in South Africa, 18 August 2020

Zahraa McDonald, AMCHES Postdoctoral Research Fellow

In the second virtual seminar, held on 18 August 2020, **Ahmed Essop**, research fellow of AMCHES, presented a report he authored on the Size and Shape of Higher Education in South Africa (2005-2017). This seminar, also hosted via MS Teams, was well attended by almost all staff members of the Centre, postdoctoral research fellows, institutional coordinators of the Epistemic Access and Success project, as well as interns. The South African Research Chair in Teaching and Learning, Prof Shireen Motala, was the discussant, paving the way for a fruitful and engaging discussion following the presentation.

Chaired by Prof Emnet Woldegiorgis, the main purpose of the seminar was to present the nature and scope of how the size and the shape of higher education have changed between 2005 and 2017. What

emerged from the presentation was that while the size and the shape of higher education in South Africa have shown some positive trends over the period, several issues warrant more careful scrutiny and debate. One of these debates relates to differentiation within the sector, that is, to what extent should or ought all higher education institutions be intent on achieving similar objectives, specifically with regard to institutional permutations of the research-teaching balance. Certainly not a simple matter, and thus not resolved in the seminar. A resolution, however, was that more engagement with this and related debates were essential if the sector was to increase the throughput of undergraduate students, in particular. We therefore look forward to future seminars, both virtual and physical.

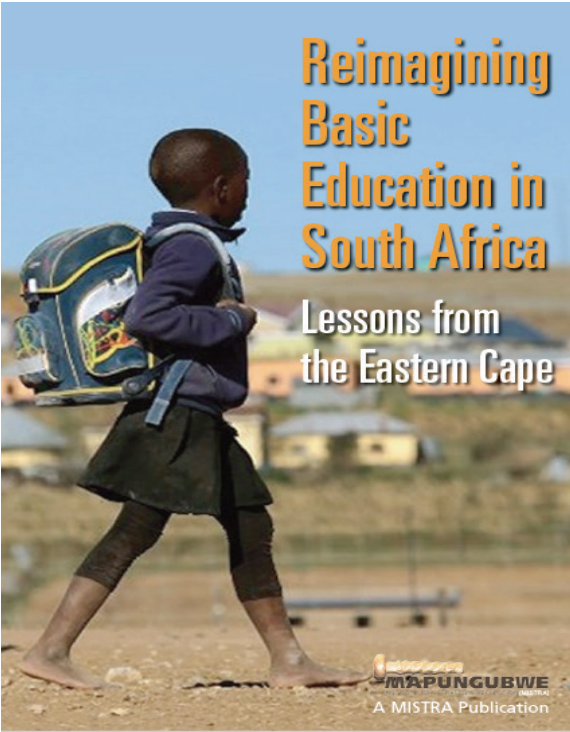


Above are some photos of participants at the seminar

MISTRA Online Roundtable Webinar: Current challenges facing basic education and the impact of COVID-19, 19 August 2020

At the end of 2017, the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA) launched the publication, *Reimagining Basic Education in South Africa: Lessons from the Eastern Cape*, examining the roles of power and politics, governance, management and accountability in the transformation of South Africa’s ed-

ucation system. As a follow-up to this research, and in the contemporary context of the COVID-19 pandemic, MISTRA hosted an online roundtable on the *Challenges facing basic education in South Africa and the impact of COVID-19*.



Dr Logan Govender, Senior Lecturer at AMCHES, and co-editor of the 2017 MISTRA Eastern Cape book publication, was invited as one of three speakers to the webinar, where he delivered a draft paper on *COVID-19 and the return (or not) to school: Teacher-unions and the state in the management of the pandemic*. He was joined by Dr Lindiwe Tshuma, Wits University, whose presentation focused on *Impact of COVID-19 on language transition and development*, and Dr Michael Gastrow, Human Sciences Research Council, who shared his views on *Implications of online learning for inequality and access: COVID-19 and beyond*.

The event was attended by forty-four participant stakeholders, who contributed to a lively online ‘chat’ and discussion following the presentations. Dr Heidi Brooks, MISTRA Senior Researcher: Humanity, who facilitated the event, remarked that “it was a really engaging webinar”. Prof Susan Booysen, Director of Research at MISTRA, suggested, in her closing remarks, that the webinar was certain to contribute to the current debate on the challenges education faces in South Africa. MISTRA will be developing a report that draws together and synthesises the presentations on charting a way forward, for distribution to policymakers and education stakeholders towards the end of September.

A WARM WELCOME TO NEW STAFF



AMCHES meeting to welcome new staff

NEW STAFF



Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis

Prof Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis (PhD) has been researching higher education issues in Africa since 2006. He did his PhD at the University of Bayreuth, Germany, where he also worked as a researcher of higher education between 2015 and 2018. His research focuses on various issues of higher education processes in Africa. He did his joint master's degree in Higher Education Studies at Oslo University in Norway, Tampere University in Finland, and Aveiro University in Portugal. He is certified in two advanced-level research training in higher education in the Netherlands at the Centre for Institutional Cooperation (ICIS) Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, and training on Leadership and Management of Higher Education Institutions in Maastricht School of Management. Before his PhD, he was Head of Quality Assurance Office, Department Head and team leader at Mekelle University, Ethiopia. He has published several articles, book chapters, and books on higher education issues, particularly theories of regionalisation and internationalisation, student mobility, cost-sharing, partnership models, and harmonisation of higher education systems in Africa. He is currently working on diverse themes of decolonisation of higher education in Africa. He joined the Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies as an associate professor in March 2020.



Emure Kadenge

Dr Emure Kadenge is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies, University of Johannesburg. She holds a PhD in Education Policy from the University of the Witwatersrand. Her research interests are in academic literacy development in higher education and teacher professional development policy issues. Prior to joining the University of Johannesburg, she served as a writing consultant at the Wits School of Education Writing Centre and published articles on the implementation of Language Policy in Higher Education and the changing role of writing consultants in higher education disciplinary spaces.

Dr Kadenge is currently researching teacher development issues, with a focus on the implementation of teacher professional development policies. Her research interrogates current developments and arrangements of the new early career teacher induction policy in the South African public schooling context with the view to identify and amplify various induction policy development and implementation issues in Africa and the world at large.



Dr Zahraa McDonald

Dr McDonald is currently a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies, University of Johannesburg. She recently taught Sociology at the University of the Western Cape. She holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of Johannesburg, which examined Islamic education and post-secular citizenship in South Africa. Her current research focuses on student epistemic access and success in higher education and teacher education from the perspective of the sociology of education. She has published on issues relating to teacher education, Islamic education, religion and citizenship education, as well as school safety.



Tribute to a beloved colleague

Khetsi Lehoko, a doctoral candidate at the Centre, sadly passed away in January 2020 after a long and debilitating illness. Khetsi was a political activist, committed to the struggle for democracy as reflected in his rich and varied career, which spanned the education and trade union sectors. After training and working as a primary school teacher in the East Rand in the 1980s, he joined the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU) as an organiser. Subsequently, his passion for education and training resulted in his election as the National Education Secretary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). In this capacity, he played a key role in the coordination of the teacher unity talks to form a national teachers' union, which culminated in the formation of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) in 1990. In 1995 he joined the senior echelons of the newly formed Department of Education (DoE). This enabled him to bring to bear the skills and experience honed in the struggle for democracy to the transformation of the education and training system, specifically in the areas of curriculum change and technical and vocational education. It was his commitment to the democratic project, his intellectual curiosity and his understanding of the complexities of the transformation process as an "insider" that led him to pursue a doctoral study to "better understand the crisis facing the education system". His commitment and passion pushed him, despite his illness, to complete the final draft of his dissertation a week before his passing. It was a "labour of love" and his insights will no doubt contribute to addressing the challenges that continue to bedevil the education and training system. Khetsi's energy, commitment, passion and sense of humour will be sorely missed.

AMCHES PUBLICATIONS – LATEST Books

African Higher Education Series (Editors – M Cross, A Keet and E Woldegiorgis; Editorial Assistant – L Govender)

Published

Rensburg, I. Motala, S. and Cross, M. (eds.). (2020). *Transforming Universities in South Africa: Pathways to Higher Education Reform*. Leiden/Boston: BRILL Sense Publishers.

Ndofirepi, Amasa P. (2020). *Inclusion and Social Justice: Theory and Practice in African Higher Education*. Leiden/Boston: BRILL Sense Publishers.

Muna, N. and Assié-Lumumba N'Dri, T. (eds.). (2020). *Education and Development Outcomes for Equality and Governance in Africa*. New York: Palgrave.

Muna, N. and Assié-Lumumba N'Dri, T. (eds.). (2020). *Education and the Development of Human Capital: Outcomes for Equity and Governance in Africa*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Forthcoming

Gwaravanda, Ephraim, T. and Ndofirepi, Amasa P. (eds.). *African Higher education in the 21st Century: Epistemological, Ontological and Ethical Perspectives*. Leiden/Boston: Brill Sense, September 2020.

Seale, O. Deanship in the South: *Bridging Troubled Waters*. Leiden/Boston: Brill Sense.

Cross, M., Long M.C., Ndlovu S. and Nyoni P. *Transformative Curricular, Pedagogies and Epistemologies: Teaching and Learning in Diverse Higher Education Contexts*. Leiden/Boston: Brill Sense.

African Higher Education Transformation Series (Editors – Andre Keet and M Cross; Editorial Assistant – JB du Preez)

Published

Maurice Crul, Liezl Dick, Halleh Ghorashi and Abel Valenzuela. (2020). *Scholarly Engagement and Decolonisation: Views from South Africa, The Netherlands and the United States*. Stellenbosch: African Sun Media.

Rensburg, I. *Serving higher purposes – University mergers in post-apartheid South Africa*. Stellenbosch: African Sun Media.

Other books (forthcoming)

M. Cross, L. Govender and A. Essop (eds.). *The South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) and the Struggle for Professional Unionism*. UKZN Press.

N'Dri T. Assié-Lumumba, Kanishka Bedi, Michael Cross and Yatigammana Ekanayake (eds.). *Ubuntu and Comparative Education and International Education for Peace*. WCEES Series. Leiden/Boston: Brill.

N'Dri T. Assié-Lumumba (Ed). *African Renaissance onwards the 21st Century: Endogeneity, Historical Contingencies, and Purposeful Fusion by Education*. Africa World Press & Red Sea Press.

Brahima, A., Turner, I., and Woldegiorgis, E. (2020). *Decolonisation of Higher Education in Africa: Perspectives from Hybrid Knowledge Production*. Routledge/Taylor & Francis.

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Adem, S. (2020). Reason and Number: African Reflections on Japan. In R Anthony and Ruppert U (eds.). *Reconfiguring Transregionalisation in the Global South: African Asian Encounters*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Assie-Lumumba, N'Dri T. (2020). The African University Tradition: A Historical Perspective in Manja Klemenčič (ed.) *Mass and Elite Higher Education Systems in 21st Century section of the Encyclopedia of International Higher Education Systems and Institutions*, Springer, 2018. (<https://meteor.springer.com/login.jsf>), Netherlands: Springer, 2020.

Assie-Lumumba N'Dri T. (2020). Series Introduction. In Zehavit Gross (ed.). *Migrants and Comparative Education*, Leiden and Boston: Brill Sense, 2020, pp. ix-xiii.

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Published

Essop, A. (2020) *The Changing Size and Shape of the Higher Education System in South Africa, 2005-2017*. Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies, University of Johannesburg.

Cross, M. and Kulati, T. (2020) *The Policy and Regulative Context of Higher Education in SA*. Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies, University of Johannesburg.

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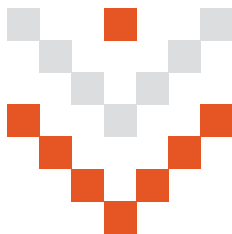
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