

Edubrief | June 2022



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AMCHES off to a flying start in 2022

Prof Emnet Woldegiorgis

Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies

The Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies (AMCHES) was honoured to host an international conference on the theme 'Narrowing the Gap: The Transdisciplinary Search for Innovative Approaches in the Integration and Dialogue among Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Epistemologies' between 21-23 February 2022 in collaboration with the University of Bayreuth, Germany. Attended by 45 people, it brought together early career and established scholars from Europe, Africa and Australia to reflect on innovative higher education approaches and perspectives on indigenous knowledges and cross-cultural dialogue. The conference was fully funded by generous support from the Volkswagen Foundation (WV). Prof Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis, in collaboration with Dr Irina Turner from the University of Bayreuth, submitted the funding and project application, which was successful. Fifteen conference papers have been selected for publication and are currently under peer-review process.

Next, as part of AMCHES's Lecture Series on Higher Education, Prof John Marah from the State University of New York and a native of the Republic of Sierra Leone, delivered a keynote address on Perspectives on Pan-African Education on 4 March 2022. The central message of Prof Marah's talk was that Pan-African Education as the education of African people for continental African citizenship should go beyond the 'tribal', Islamic, neo-colonial, western hegemonic, and micro nationalistic systems of education and should make a 'modest proposal' for a more pertinent system of education in Africa for the 21st century.

AMCHES's busy publication schedule was underlined by three book launches during March and April. On 15 March, AMCHES hosted a double book launch of African Higher Education in the 21st Century, edited

by AP Ndofirepi & E Gwaravanda. The first book, *Epistemological, Ontological and Ethical Perspectives*, critically reflects on philosophical aspects of African higher education through self-evaluation and self-criticism. The second book, *Mediating Learning in Higher Education in Africa: From Critical Thinking to Social Justice Pedagogies*, focuses on teaching and learning in African higher education in the context of decolonisation and transformation debates. On 26 April, AMCHES hosted the launch of the book *Transformative Curricula, Pedagogies and Epistemologies* edited by the late Prof Michael Cross, Caroline Long and Phefumula Nyoni. The book's main focus is to rearticulate the discursive space of the North-South debates on the curricula, pedagogies and epistemologies underpinning education policy and practice.

The month of May was just as busy with the first of AMCHES's bi-annual writing retreat held in Warmbaths, Limpopo Province. Eleven members of the Centre participated with the sole purpose of refining their journal articles, a priority for AMCHES in 2022. In addition, AMCHES has launched two special issue journal proposals for 2023, which will be managed by Dr Mukovhe Masutha, Dr Babalola Balogun and Dr Sindi Msimango under the supervision of Prof Emnet Woldegiorgis and Dr Logan Govender.

AMCHES staff have also been busy with continuing and new research, including the Generations of African Scholars, Creating the New African University, and two new research projects, Steering Epistemic Access and Success of Disadvantaged Students, and the Universities Histories project, University of Johannesburg case study, part of a national project coordinated by Prof Saleem Badat.



Figure 1: Online and offline participants on day one of the three-day workshop



Participants of the AMCHES writing retreat

Starting from July 2022, AMCHES's six Short Learning Programmes on Higher Education Studies are going live and can be accessed on its website.

School violence: another pandemic?

Dr Viren Ramdhany – Mathematics Education Unit

Department of Science and Technology Education

When I first decided to write this piece in March 2022, the following story caught my attention on the TV news:

A teacher at Wessel Maree Secondary School in Odendaalsrus, Free State, has been suspended with immediate effect after a video circulating on social media showed him violently pushing a learner.

Of course, it was distressing and disappointing to watch, especially when I considered that I was once a high school teacher. I could not begin to imagine myself in such a situation!

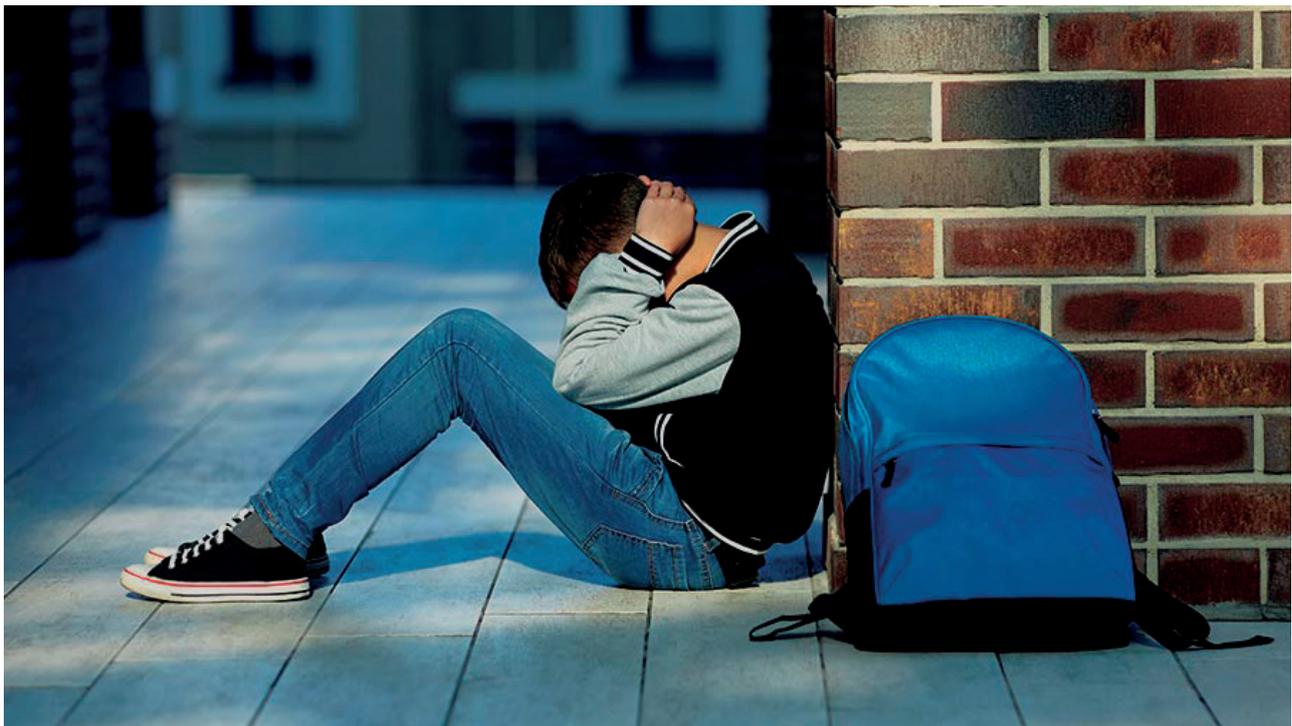
I did a quick internet search of the 10 most recent episodes/incidents of school violence reported in the South African media, and the search results were truly shocking. There were 11 incidents that had occurred in 2022 alone, and the school year was just six weeks old! *What on earth was going on?*

South Africa's history is too often punctuated with violence, and stories such as these are (sadly) commonplace, barely registering on our jaded psyches unless we are directly involved in these incidents. A study conducted by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in 2007 found, among other issues, that: South Africans believe violence to be a "necessary and justified" means of conflict resolution; the criminal justice system is largely corrupt and inefficient; there exists a subculture of violence, characterised by the carrying and use of firearms and knives; and there are extreme levels of inequality, poverty, unemployment, marginalisation and social exclusion (Mncube & Harber,

2013, p.2). Taken separately or together, these factors contribute to the high levels of violence, and the acceptance thereof in South African society.

Violence that takes place in schools, however, should fill us with shock and horror. Just ten years ago, Unisa released a report titled *The Dynamics of Violence in South African Schools: Report* (Mncube & Harber, 2013). The report makes for a sobering read. It attempts to shed some light on "the why" of school violence, to understand the impact of violence on teaching and learning, and to present some ways forward. Unfortunately, a decade later, very little (if anything) has changed. In fact, a few years after the release of the Unisa report, Grobler (2019) and Mhlongo (2017) found that school violence in South Africa was "higher than that experienced in United States" (Khumalo, 2019, p. 1).

Schools are supposed to be places of safety, but the Unisa report found that only 23% of South African learners felt safe at their schools (Mncube & Harber, 2013). The recent violent incidents (in early 2022) highlight the dire lack of safety and security in and around our schools; ironically, this phenomenon was unheard of even during the apartheid years. This is significant, especially since violence and racism are inexorably linked in South African schools. Violence in schools includes bullying, intimidation, the use of derogatory language, and sexual, ethnic and racial harassment; and both teachers and learners are perpetrators and victims of this violence (Mgijima, 2014).



Trying to understand school violence is difficult and will depend on *perspective*. Why does it happen? What form does the violence take? What needs to be done to significantly decrease violent incidents in schools? These are all necessary and pertinent questions, but unfortunately difficult to answer. South Africa's education system is still reeling from the lingering

impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, with significant loss of teaching and learning time casting ever longer shadows over school results. Meanwhile, the issue of lack of basic sanitation in many schools continues to be a scourge. And now, school violence appears to be on the rise (again). Some serious conversations need to take place, lest we reach a point of no return.



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UNESCO / UNITWIN CHAIR AT UJ DELIVERS YET ANOTHER KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Dr Nazreen Dasoo

Department of Education and Curriculum Studies

Soon after her keynote address in October 2021, Dr Nazreen Dasoo, on invitation by UNESCO Paris and UNESCO Harare, delivered another keynote on the topic 'The Revision of the 1974 Recommendation'. She addressed delegates of the regional technical consultation of Africa on how the 1974 Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation, Peace, and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms may be revised. Her address on 6 April focused specifically on new trends and understandings of peace and sustainable development in education. In her presentation, she responded to the following questions: In light of the sub-Saharan context, what are the new trends and understandings of peace and sustainable development issues? Are the topics addressed in the 1974 Recommendation up to date and relevant for the sub-Saharan region? What changes or additions are needed for the 1974 Recommendation? The regional delegates echoed her recommendations, and these insights would inform the development of the first draft of the revised Recommendation.

From the SARChI Integrated Studies of Learning Language, Science and Mathematics in the primary school's desk

Prof Elizabeth Hennig

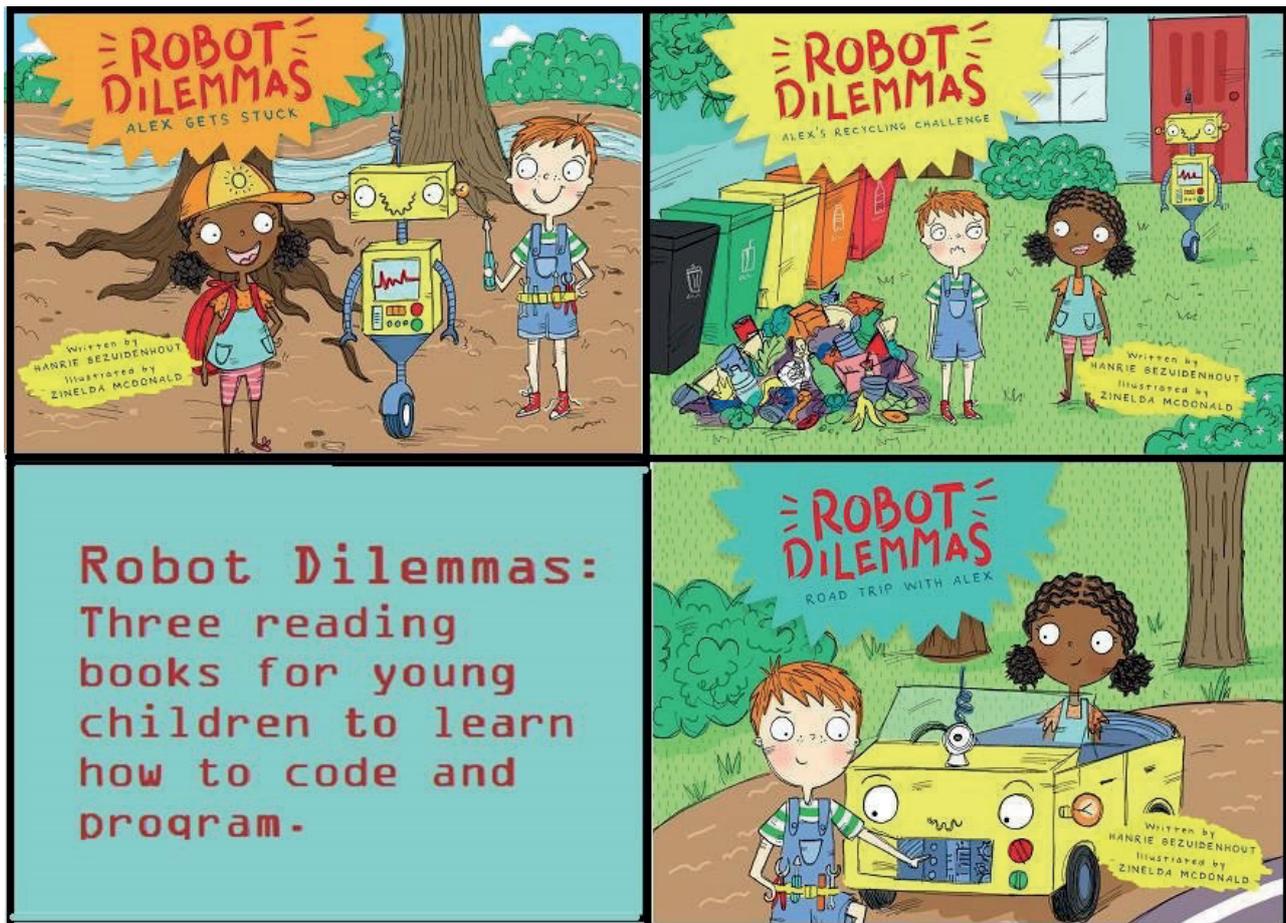
SARChI Integrated Studies of Learning Language, Science and Mathematics in the primary school

The Community of Practice of three SARChI Chairs – Prof Leila Patel, Prof Jace Pillay and Prof Elbie Hennig – have progressed with the analysis of data of general child wellbeing and care as well as early grade children's attainment on tests of numeracy, early literacy and mathematics-related vocabulary development. The results of the assessments align with the Thrive by Five results of the pre-school education survey of 5 000 children.

As part of the CoP we presented a workshop for teachers. The workshop session with teachers from all the participant schools took place on Saturday 9 April. In total, 52 teachers met at the Funda UJabule School.

Dr Hanrie Bezuidenhout took the teachers on an imaginary journey through the mathematics mind of

early grade children, showing that number concept development is hierarchical and that understanding of cardinality – the quantity value of a number – comes after children have grasped the one-to-one correspondence of counting. Hanrie used examples from her own teaching career, which teachers found valuable. One aspect of her session that drew much discussion was the role of language in building mathematics concepts. She explained that not only numerals and words were important for mathematical operations, but that many words that relate to space, direction, size, and position play an important part in getting to grips with foundation phase mathematics. She used the example of word problems, which rely on language, with no digits or other symbols used.





Prof Elbie Henning managed the second session. Although the session was about the teaching of initial reading, she intentionally did not use any written language examples (such as PowerPoint slides), aiming to alert the teachers to the importance of sound (phonology) in initial reading. She explained why the term 'phoneme' is important for teachers, using the meaning of the root of the word 'phone'. When children learn to read, they learn to associate a letter (or a letters together) with a sound – a phoneme. Teachers discussed the use of the term, 'phonics' as a way to teach reading, step-by-step, by linking what is seen by the eyes in print to what is heard by the ear as sound. The discussion became quite vibrant, until one delegate raised her hand and said, "with all due respect, Prof, it's now one o'clock!". It was time for lunch.

The UJ Technolab in collaboration with the SARChI Chair, Learning Language, Science and Mathematics in the Primary School, completed teacher development workshops and school support in 20 schools in Limpopo and North West provinces. With LEGO robotics equipment teachers and early grades children participated in robotics and coding workshops. School support visits ensured that the 'Magogo Box' single board computer at the schools, equipped with Raspberry software, would maintain access to a broad range of school subjects, along with robotics education. In 2022, two additional districts in the two provinces will experience the same program and receive the same equipment, which includes a laptop and five tablets with the LEGO kits. This work is supported by substantial grants from the Standard Bank Foundation and is directed by Mr Herman Sekoele. Education fieldworkers are Rhulane Ramasodi and Ian van der Vyver. Dr Harrie Bezuidenhout (GES PDRF) conducts research and presents her development programme for teachers, with

materials and booklets. Prof Elbie Henning oversees the research.

The fNIRS capacity development programme has been continuing for one year. Prof Mojtaba Soltanlou (University of Surrey) and SARChI NRF postdoc fellow from Brazil, Candida Barreto, have initiated a group of researchers who wish to advance educational neuroscience. With a device that captures cortical brain activity by means of light waves that reflect the oxygen presence in different parts of the cortex, three UJ researchers have prepared experiments that they are pre-registering at the Open Science Forum. Data collection will begin in July, when Dr Barreto will be back at UJ. Prof Soltanlou's visit in April was invaluable in sorting out technical details and the methods of this type of neuroimaging.



Chancellor's Medal for the Most Meritorious Master's Study for 2021

Dr Suraiya Naicker

Department of Education Leadership and Management

Ms Carike Verbooy, top master's student in the Faculty, received the Chancellor's Medal at the graduation ceremony held on 18 May 2022. Carike completed her Master's degree in Education Leadership and Management. Her minor dissertation was on *Gender equity in the leading of a South African private higher education institution*. She is seen in the photo with the Head of Department, Dr Suraiya Naicker, and Emeritus Professor Pierre du Plessis. Carike is currently working on an article publication related to her master's research, which was on Women Leadership at a Private Higher Education Institution and supervised by Dr Moyo Zvisinei.



What school textbooks in South Africa say about the Cold War – and why it matters

Prof Linda Chisholm (article co-authored and first appeared in *The Conversation*)

Centre for Education Rights and Transformation

South Africa's stance on Russia's invasion of Ukraine is not that surprising in light of its treatment of the Cold War in the school history curriculum and textbooks. In these, it is reflected as having had a negative impact on Africa.

The Cold War (1945-1990) ranged the United States and its allies against their rival nuclear superpower, the Soviet Union. What textbooks contain is significant for being the officially approved representation of the nation's history. This 'official knowledge' usually embeds social controversies in ways that favour ruling groups.

We recently contributed a chapter to a book about how the Cold War is being handled in history textbooks and classrooms worldwide. We examined selected textbooks for Grade 12 (the final year of senior secondary school) for the officially sanctioned images of the Cold War.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has once again caused fissures between the West and the Soviet Union's principal successor state, the Russian Federation. The potential nuclear stand-off between them could be termed a new Cold War.

Our mission is to share knowledge and inform decisions South Africa's image of its own history as represented in the school curriculum and textbooks suggests that it is unlikely to result in a stance aligned with the West.

Choosing textbooks

Textbooks follow curriculum prescriptions closely but are also mediated by textbook writers' own readings and understandings. Since 1994, the South African curriculum has been revised four times, including the latest COVID-induced 'trimming'. These changes have not substantively altered the section on the Cold War.

After each revision, publishers are invited to submit textbooks for consideration in a national catalogue. Using criteria provided by the Department of Basic Education, teams of evaluators screen textbooks for the catalogue. Based on schools' choices, provinces make selections from the list of approved textbooks.

We selected two textbooks – *Focus History* and *New Generation History* – from those topping the list for most provinces in 2016. We compared these with prominent apartheid-era textbooks.

Textbook representations of the Cold War

Under apartheid, the history curriculum was divided into two sections, international and South African history. Until 1982, the curriculum for international history included France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Japan and the United States, while neglecting the rest of Africa and the global south. From 1982, China, India, Vietnam, Latin America and independent African countries were included.

The Cold War was part of the section on international history. A 2018 study on textbooks' views of Russia specifically showed that a fear of Communism was embedded in apartheid textbooks.

The post-apartheid curriculum revised this approach. The Cold War frames a section that begins with 'Independent Africa' and moves on to 'Civil Society Protests' (in the US and the UK) from the 1950s to the 1990s; 'Civil Resistance in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s'; 'The Coming of Democracy in South Africa' and 'Coming to

Terms with the Past'. The section closes with 'The End of the Cold War' and 'Globalisation to the Present'. It thus integrates African and South African history into world history, within which the Cold War is central.

The curriculum specifies that "blame for the Cold War" be taught and learnt through the presentation of different interpretations and differing points of view.

Nonetheless, there is a new narrative. In both the curriculum and textbooks, the "baddies" are no longer the feared Communists. Instead, the then-superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union, representing different ideologies, are both seen as responsible for the Cold War and for creating spheres of interest and conflict through proxy wars. They are presented as manipulating more vulnerable states through extensive military and financial aid, espionage, propaganda, rivalry over technology, space, sport and nuclear races.

The section on Independent Africa compares the former Belgian Congo as "a tool of the Cold War" with the African socialism of Tanzania. It closes with the way Africa became drawn into the Cold War, using Angola as an example. The Soviet Union, the US, Cuba, China and South Africa were all involved militarily in Angola. The section on the Cold War ends with the West seen as becoming dominant.

The Cold War was a binary conflict between two blocs, but also generated a more independent, neutral position led by the Non-Aligned Movement, a mostly Afro-Asian bloc. The leaders tried to assert themselves as independent of the superpowers. This isn't dealt with in the curriculum, but is an important dimension.

Although the role of Africa and Africans is more prominent than in apartheid-era textbooks, the current books position Africans as both passive victims of the superpowers and as fighters for freedom, imbued with agency and initiative.

South Africa's current perspective on the Russia-Ukraine conflict claims to be in line with this as well as its own history of negotiated transition.

The question is how anticipated curriculum revisions will update treatment of the Cold War and contemporary conflicts. Curriculum designers and the writers of textbooks may wish to retain an emphasis on multiple perspectives.

This would enable the small minority of school students who study history to examine all sides of the complexities of the new Cold War so that they can decide on ethical issues for themselves.



Do values really make a difference in the classroom? A focus on a public lecture from the Department of Science and Technology Education

Prof Erica Spangenberg –

**Mathematics Education Unit,
Department of Science and Technology Education**

About the speaker: Prof Qiaoping Zhang is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Mathematics and Information Technology, the Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK). Currently, he is the Programme Leader of Master of Arts in Mathematics and Pedagogy at EdUHK and a member of the Curriculum Development Council Committee on Mathematics Education in Hong Kong Education Bureau. His research interests and publications are related to affects in mathematics education, teacher education, and students' problem solving. Recently, he had co-edited a special issue on Values and Valuing in Mathematics Education of the journal *ECNU Review of Education*.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we took many things for granted. For example, face-to-face interactions with students in mathematics methodology lectures or having written examinations in person were normal. However, things that we view as important have changed after COVID-19. The power of communication and personal engagement are now valued.

Prof Qiaoping Zhang from the Education University of Hong Kong, who presented a public lecture on behalf of the Department of Science and Technology Education on 18 May 2022, emphasised that it was time for us to rethink what was important in our mathematics classrooms. In his presentation focusing on a series of studies about values in the teaching and learning of mathematics, he argued whether values really made a difference in the classroom.

There is no fixed answer or standard to what effective mathematics teaching is or how a successful teacher should look like, but we have some common sense about what our expectations are. For example, a good teacher should be patient, caring, and has learners' wellbeing at heart. He/she should have good pedagogical content knowledge, or a good teacher should be able to motivate learners to work hard in mathematics.

Nevertheless, effective teaching is culturally and contextually bounded. Something that is applicable to Hong Kong may not be working in South Africa. We have different perspectives to explain the same thing. Whether teaching is good or effective or successful does not depend on how we apply methods in our classroom, but rather on our cultural background. In fact, teaching effectiveness in mathematics is related to the person's values and valuing of mathematics education.

Although value is a construct in the affective domain and closely related to the concept of beliefs, it has connective variables, meaning there is some overlapping between the cognition, affect and behaviour. Mathematical values are about thinking what mathematics is or what mathematics teaching and learning are. These values reflect on what is important in the teaching or learning mathematics. Mathematics values can include the valuing of achievement, effort, relevance, practice, communication, ICT, feedback, etc.

However, from research studies done by Prof Zhang, a misalignment in values between primary school and secondary school teachers was revealed. While primary school teachers in mainland China valued detailed information written on the chalkboard, secondary school teachers in the same country valued the use of ICT. A mismatch between the values of teachers and their learners was also revealed. While a teacher valued conceptual understanding in mathematics learning by giving learners challenging problems, learners preferred the teacher's explanation of the concepts.

Prof Zhang found cultural differences in what learners found important in Mathematics. In Hong Kong, effort was valued most by learners, followed by the use of formula, and thirdly, by wisdom. Thinking only followed later in the sequence of importance. In contrast, in mainland China, thinking was valued most, with problem solving second. While teachers in Hong Kong value mathematics and interaction, concept understanding, fluency and accuracy are more important in mainland China. In Japan, communication is valued specifically to promote mathematical thinking. Thus, culture shapes values on what is important in the learning and teaching of mathematics. More specifically, a social cultural perspective inform studies on values in mathematics education.

These findings call for action in educational research in South Africa. What do our teachers and learners value? What mechanism can ensure value alignment between teachers and learners but also the curriculum? To take it even further, if we know values are important, how do such values influence teaching and learning? How do we promote important values in teacher education? How do we change values? Lastly, how do we preserve important values? What learners tend to remember in the long term after they left school is the values that actually shaped them as lifelong learners.



The UJ Cricket team with coach Mr Siyabonga Sibiya

2022 Sports Day at Funda UJabule Semoni Cancelliere

Department of Childhood Education

On 13 May first-year foundation phase students collaborated with the UJ cricket team members in a service-learning sports day project with learners and teachers from Funda UJabule Primary School. This marks the first service-learning project within the Department of Childhood Education (DCE) since 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Service-learning is an educational approach where students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organised service experiences that meet community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with an institution and the community. It is integrated into the students' academic curriculum and provides structured time for students to reflect on their experiences before, during and after the service-learning event. The first-year students were placed in groups and were required to organise a sports day for Grade R and 1 learners from the school. As part of the learning outcomes, the first years designed sporting equipment like wickets, cones, balls, and bats out of recyclable materials. These homemade materials were used by the first years and cricket players to involve the learners in the art of throwing, catching, and batting. Service learning has been a part of the DCE since its inception in 2010, and we are so pleased to have had a very successful day for the first time in three years. Thank you to the UJ cricket team for joining us.



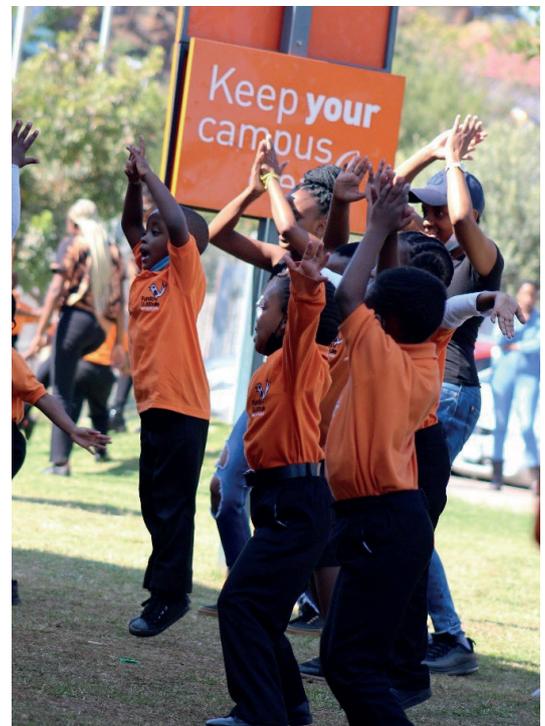
DCE first years with learners from Funda UJabule and UJ cricket team members



The DCE first year group "Untoucha-balls" with learners from Funda UJabule



The "Tiger Cubs" group with Funda UJabule learners and a UJ cricket team player



Learners from Funda UJabule

GRADUATIONS

Staff graduations



Mr Kenneth Baloyi, a staff member in the Department of Childhood Education, graduated with a Master of Education. His dissertation was on 'Intermediate phase pre-service teachers' integration of robotics in designing STEM lessons'.



Dr Dean Van Der Merwe

Thesis: Lesson design in pre-service teacher education: The science of learning and competencies for a fast-changing world

Supervisor: Prof SJ Gravett

Co-supervisor: Prof S Ramsaroop

Doctoral graduations

12 doctoral degrees conferred at this year's Autumn and Winter Graduation Ceremonies.

Doctor Educationis (DEd): Educational Psychology

Dr Ratidzai Shoko

Thesis: School-based interventions and their effectiveness in controlling violent acts committed on learners in a special needs school

Supervisor: Dr H Dunbar-Krige

Co-supervisor: Dr VM Dwarika



Doctor of Philosophy in Education (PhD)



Dr Wendy Lyn Baumgartner

Thesis: Design principles for a pre-undergraduate foundation programme mathematics course promoting academic growth

Supervisor:

Prof ED Spangenberg

Co-supervisor:

Prof GV Lautenbach



Dr Gwendoline Barry

Thesis: Narratives of pedagogical gaps in emerging professional identities of second career teachers in South Africa.

Supervisor:

Prof MM Sefotho



Dr Paulina Hamukonda

Thesis: Investigating the teaching of the number concept at junior primary phase in the Oshana region of Namibia

Supervisor:

Prof K Luneta



Dr Naziema Begum Jappie

Thesis: Social justice leadership: Challenges and practices in higher education in the Western Cape, South Africa

Supervisor: Prof M Cross

Co-supervisor:

Prof ET Woldegiorgis



Dr Cherese Farrah Jones
Thesis: Values-based physical education for the intermediate schooling phase in a diverse South African context
Supervisor: Prof CJ Roux
Co-supervisor: Dr H Dunbar-Krige



Dr Ntsoaki Teresa Mokala
Thesis: Teachers' narratives of their teaching experiences of learners with hearing impairment in a special school in Gauteng
Supervisor: Prof MM Sefotho



Dr Tulonga Tulimeutho Shuukwanyama
Thesis: Challenges faced by newly graduated teachers in using mother-tongue to teach mathematics in the Oshana region of Northern Namibia
Supervisor: Prof MC Long
Co-supervisors: Dr AD Nkosi and Dr JS Maseko



Dr Aviwe Ability Sondlo
Thesis: The pedagogical orientations of pre-service science teachers towards instructional approaches
Supervisor: Prof UD Ramnarain
Co-supervisor: Dr L Mavuru



Dr Mxolisi Kunene
Thesis: Educators' perceptions of their principals' servant leadership behavior. A case study of four secondary schools
Supervisor: Prof PJ du Plessis



Dr Gaone Molapisi
Thesis: An inclusive curriculum: Teaching strategies for learners with a mild hearing impairment
Supervisor: Prof MM Modiba
Co-supervisor: Prof A Brown



Congratulations to all the graduates!

SAVE THE DATE
 Faculty of Education Affinity Group Launch – 30 July 2022
 Launch of Centre for Neurodiversity@UJ – 9 September 2022
 Neurodiversity Symposium – 10 September 2022

Take action, inspire change, and make every day a Mandela Day

In line with the theme for the 2022 Mandela Day, the Faculty of Education would like to promote awareness about food security in the country.

To this end we request donations of the following non-perishable items by 22 July 2022:

**Oats | Rice | Canned fish | Canned beans | Canned Beef | Maize meal
| Samp | Cooking oil | Legumes | Lentils | Powdered milk | Sugar**

Donation of seeds for school and community food gardens are also welcome.

Drop off points:

UJ Auckland Park Kingsway campus:

B-Ring 309B or B-Ring 429

UJ Soweto Campus:

Robert Sobukwe, GNA 208

Alumni attending the graduation catch-up session can drop off the donations at the graduation venue, Imbizo Hall, at the Soweto Campus on the following dates. Dedicated boxes will be available at the venue.

18 July 2022

20 July 2022

Do what you can, with what you have, wherever you are.



**NELSON
MANDELA DAY™**

A NELSON MANDELA FOUNDATION INITIATIVE

**The Future
Reimagined**

Research in the Department of Childhood Education: Mixed Reality Simulation in Pre-Service Teacher Education

Dr Dean van der Merwe

Department of Childhood Education

The “Mixed reality simulation (MRS) in pre-service teacher education project” is a research project that explores how MRS can be used to guide and support pre-service teachers to develop competence in using core teaching practices. The technology used for the teaching simulations utilises a combination of immersive virtual environments and human-directed in-the-moment puppetry, a model known as human-in-the-loop (HITL). The MRS platform that is used in the research is TeachLive™. TeachLive™ utilises HITL avatar-based simulated environments, meaning that the participating student teachers interact with computer-based, human-controlled avatars acting as learners. The initial focus of the research is on the use of questions as a core teaching practice. Some of the research objectives are to investigate how student teachers experience MRS and how the affordances of MRS advance student teachers’ effective utilisation of questions. Prof Sarah Gravett is the project leader, and Dr Dean van der Merwe is

the co-leader. Staff members involved are Prof Sarita Ramsaroop, Prof Jacqueline Batchelor, Prof Nadine Petersen, Dr Kathleen Fonseca and Pumzile Mello who is doing her doctoral research within the project. In addition, two master’s students are involved, namely Pamela Tshabalala and Casey Bremner. Thandeka Ncube will also be joining the project as a doctoral student. Prof Carisma Nel of North-West University is a research collaborator. Though the project was only recently launched, there is already evidence that the student teachers are benefiting from their involvement in the MRS. They show increased competence in relation to using questions as a core teaching practice. Their reflections on their experience show deep thinking about their practice and increased self-efficacy.

For more information, visit our website: <https://www.uj.ac.za/faculties/education/departments-2/childhood-education/>

STAFF PROMOTIONS

The Faculty congratulates staff on their promotion and look forward to their continued contribution.



Dr Andy Carolin in the Department of Childhood Education promoted to Associate Professor.



Dr Lydia Mavuru in the Department of Science and Technology Education promoted to Associate Professor.



Dr David Robinson in the Department of Education and Curriculum Studies promoted to Associate Professor.



Prof Anthony Brown in the Department of Educational Psychology promoted to Full Professor.

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