



**COLLEGE OF
HUMANITIES**



South African
Education Research
Association



**National
Research
Foundation**

**The 12th annual SAERA conference
Hosted by the School of Education
College of Humanities
University of KwaZulu-Natal**



**Date: 3 – 6 November 2025
Venue: Elangeni Hotel, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal**

***Education in a time of polycrisis:
Pathways of hope, creativity and affirmative ethics***

Prof Melanie Luckay



Please Scan for Biography

Colleagues, it is my profound pleasure, humility, and with deep sense of responsibility that I welcome you all to the 12th Annual Conference of the South African Educational Research Association (SAERA), hosted here at the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This year's conference theme, *"Education in a Time of Polycrisis: Pathways of Hope, Creativity and Affirmative Ethics,"* calls upon us as educators, researchers, policymakers, and importantly as citizens to reimagine the purpose of education amid the multiple and overlapping crises that has in recent times shape learning space.

The concept of the polycrisis is more than a convenient identity to humans; it represents the complex convergence of global and local crises, environmental degradation, political instability, socio-economic inequalities, technological transformations, and uncertainties that continues to define the human condition. As researchers, we cannot remain silent observers of these challenges, they have to be brought to light. The world in which our students, teachers, and communities live is not merely changing, it is undergoing profound revolution rising from technological innovations. The task before us, therefore, is to ask not only how education can adapt to this reality but how it can help transform it. This conference invites us to consider education as an act of hope, a space in which human creativity, ethical imagination, and social responsibility converge. In echoing Biesta's (2015) assertion on *"what education is for,"* we are reminded that education is not only about transmission of knowledge or acquisition of skills, but also about cultivating right judgment, agency, and humanity. Education must speak to the moral and existential questions of our times: What does it mean to live well together? How do we nurture learners who can think critically, act compassionately, and imagine new futures in the face of crises?

We live in an age when dominant narratives of progress, efficiency, and performance often overshadow the deeper purposes of education. In our schools and universities, learning outcomes are increasingly quantified, while the ethical and relational dimensions of teaching risk being sidelined. The *polycrisis* in education has forced us to confront these pressures directly. It challenges us to rethink how educational institutions can serve as spaces of renewal rather than reproduction, of imagination rather than conformity. As researchers, we are called to embrace complexity rather than fear it, to view crises not as a barrier but as a fertile ground for innovation. This is an invitation to engage with ideas, enter into conversations that sparks intellectual curiosity, moral capacities, and to envision alternative educational futures.

It is particularly fitting that this conference is hosted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal, an institution that stands at the forefront of educational transformation in South Africa. Durban's dynamic social and cultural landscape provides a compelling backdrop for our deliberations. I extend sincere appreciation to the Local Organising Committee all committee members for their remarkable work in programme design, logistics, finance, and communication. The meticulous planning and dedication of this team embody the collaborative spirit that SAERA values deeply.

I wish to acknowledge our keynote speakers, panelists, presenters, reviewers, and SIG convenors who have contributed to shaping this year's conference. Each abstract in this volume represents a unique lens through which we can view the complexities of polycrises of education in our time. Collectively, they form a tapestry of inquiry, innovation, and commitment to social justice. To our international delegates, your participation reaffirms SAERA's growing global reach and the importance of transnational scholarly dialogue. To our African colleagues, your work continues to remind us that educational research rooted in African contexts holds transformative power for global conversations about learning, equity, and justice.

As we gather here in Durban, let us carry with us the conviction that education remains one of humanity's most profound acts of hope. Our work as researchers is not separate from the world, it is part of the ongoing effort to make it more just, compassionate, sustainable and egalitarian place. Our discussions over these few days will rekindle our collective imagination, deepen our solidarity, and renew our commitment to the ethical responsibilities that define our profession. On behalf of the SAERA Executive Committee, I extend my warmest welcome to all participants. I believe this conference be intellectually stimulating, engaging and personally inspiring. Together, let us continue to advance the frontiers of educational research and practice through our shared labour and vision, the pathways of hope that our times so urgently require.

Prof Melanie B. Luckay
SAERA President

Prof Jayaluxmi Naidoo



Please Scan for Biography

On behalf of the Local Organising Committee, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to the South African Education Research Association (SAERA) 12th Annual Conference. We are delighted to host this gathering of education changemakers and knowledge creators. It is our hope that our conference delegates will continue to evolve the field of education through critical dialogue, innovative research, and collaborative engagement. This year's conference theme, Education in a time of polycrisis: Pathways of hope, creativity and affirmative ethics, invites us to reflect on important issues shaping education locally and globally. The theme creates opportunities to imagine new possibilities for teaching, learning, and research. The abstracts contained in this book highlight the richness and variety of educational thought and practices that make SAERA a vibrant and intellectually stimulating community.

Our sincere appreciation to our keynote speakers, national plenary speakers and the Nelson Mandela Legacy Lecture speaker, thank you for enriching this conference with your expertise and commitment. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all participants for contributing their work, insights, and commitment to educational research. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the SAERA Executive Committee, the local organising committee, abstract reviewers, sponsors, session chairs, presenters, participants, volunteers, and all support staff for their invaluable contributions to making this conference a success.

We trust that this conference will provide a platform for the exchange of knowledge, conversation and meaningful collaborations. We hope that the stimulating debates that emerge from the conference will continue to shape the future of education in South Africa and beyond.

We wish you a productive, inspiring, and memorable SAERA 2025 Conference.

Prof Jayaluxmi Naidoo
SAERA 2025 LOC Chair

International Keynote Speaker

Prof Joel Samoff (Stanford University)



Educator, researcher, and evaluator, Joel Samoff combines the scholar's critical approach and extensive experience in international development. From Tanzania coffee farmers to militant Michigan bus drivers to Namibian and South African education activists, his orienting concern has been understanding how people organize themselves to transform their communities. He studies the links among research, public policy, and foreign aid. At Stanford University since 1980, he was on the faculty of the Universities of California (Los Angeles, Santa Barbara), Michigan, and Zambia and has taught in Mexico, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. He holds honorary doctorates from the University of Pretoria and the University of the Free State. Advisory Editor at the *International Journal of Educational Development* and editorial board member at the *Journal of Educational Research in Africa* and the *Southern African Review of Education*. His most recent book is *Challenging the Research Complex: Education, External Influence, and Disrupting Dependence in Africa* (2025).

National Plenary Panel

Prof Emmanuel Mgwashu (University of KwaZulu-Natal)



Emmanuel Mfanafuthi Mgwashu's scholarly work includes a collaborative research project called *Access and Inclusion in Higher Education* with a focus on ways in which disciplinary discourses and pedagogic practices across disciplines in higher education serve to include and exclude students. His latest international project, in which he was one of the lead researchers in South Africa, involved 5 institutions: University of Johannesburg, University of Bristol, University of Fort-Hare, the University of Brighton and Rhodes University. The project is called *Southern African Rurality in Higher Education* (SARiHE) that began from 2017 – 2020. The project was investigating how students negotiate the transition from school and home in rural contexts to 'university learning'. A book entitled *Rural Transitions to Higher Education in South Africa: Decolonial Perspectives* (2021) was published by Routledge.

Prof Shireen Motala (University of Johannesburg)



Prof Motala is NRF/DHET SARChI Chair: Teaching and Learning (Tier 1) at the University of Johannesburg. She was the Head: Postgraduate School (PGS), University of Johannesburg (UJ) until September 2020. In October 2024 she was appointed as a member of the Council of the Academy of Science in South Africa (ASSAf). Prior to joining UJ in 2010, Prof Motala was the Director of the Education Policy Unit at the University of the Witwatersrand. Prof Motala has held numerous leadership roles related to higher education including Chairperson of the Education Policy Consortium (2006-2010), Chairperson of the UNESCO South African Commission (2001-2006) and first inaugural president of the South African Research Association (SAERA) (2013-2014). She was

appointed by the Minister of Higher Education and Training to serve on the Council of Higher Education (CHE) for two terms from 2010-2018, and on the executive committee of the CHE. An NRF rated researcher, her research record is substantial. Her research interests and expertise are in the areas of education financing and system reform, access and equity, and decolonisation in higher education.

Prof Yunus Ballim (University of Witwatersrand)



Yunus Ballim holds B.Sc., M.Sc. and PhD degrees in civil engineering from University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg (WITS). He spent six years in the construction industry and has been a full time academic since 1989. His research is mainly in cement and concrete materials science and he held a NRF rating as a researcher between 1994 and 2024. He is currently an Emeritus Professor in Civil Engineering at WITS. He was the founding President of the African Materials Research Society, Deputy Vice Chancellor - Academic at Wits for 7 years and the founding Vice-Chancellor of the Sol Plaatje University in Kimberley. He served on the Council on Higher Education and was Chair of the Higher Education Quality Council. He presently chairs the Council of Umalusi and is a member of the Board of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

Prof Petro Du Preez (Stellenbosch University)



Petro Du Preez is an Extraordinary Professor in Curriculum Studies at Stellenbosch University. Her scholarly intra-actions concern topics around Curriculum Studies, Higher Education, and new materialism/s/posthumanism, particularly concerning questions of social justice and ethics. She has published over 60 peer-reviewed works in these areas. Among her recent publications is the co-edited book *Curriculum Studies (in the) Now: Transformations and Possibilities*, which explores contemporary shifts in curriculum theory and practice, with a particular focus on the South African context.

Nelson Mandela Legacy Lecture

Prof Heila Lotz-Sisitka (Rhodes University)



Heila Lotz-Sisitka is a Distinguished Professor of Education, a Tier 1 South African DSI/NRF Chair in Global Change and Social Learning Systems, and Director of the Environmental Learning Research Centre at Rhodes University. Her research focuses on environment and sustainability education in the global South, transformative learning,

skills for just transitioning to sustainability, and education system change. In addition to authoring over 250 publications and supervising over 130 Masters and PhD scholars, she has delivered 110 keynotes in 35 countries, and has served in 21 national and international scientific and policy committees advancing Environment and Sustainability Education policy and practice globally, most recently as member of the international expert group developing the 2023 UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development. She has been the recipient of numerous awards, including the SAERA Research Honours Award, and is a Member of the South African Academy of Sciences.

Early Career Researcher Keynote Speaker

Prof Phumlani Myende (University of KwaZulu-Natal)



Prof Phumlani Myende is an Associate Professor of Educational Leadership, Management, and Policy in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He is a former Academic Leader of Research and of Masters studies within the same school. He is also a former Secretary (2018-2020) and Research and Development Officer (2015-2017) of the Education Management Association of South Africa (EMASA). Prof Myende's broad research interest is educational leadership in the context of rurality. His current interests within this broader field include leadership of and for school-community partnerships, school financial management, school leadership in the context of deprivation, and leadership for social justice. Within this field, he has published in both local and international journals. Professor Myende has also supervised more than 30 MEd students and 5 PhD students to completion.

A special thank you to the SAERA 2025 LOC

Local Organising Committee

Committee Position	Members
Chair	Prof Jayaluxmi Naidoo
Deputy Chair	Prof Asheena Singh-Pillay Dr Lerato Sokhulu
Conference Secretary	Dr Sebastian Sanjigadu
Programme Committee	Prof Carol Bertram, Prof Daisy Pillay, Prof Ronicka Mudaly, Prof Inba Naicker
Finance and Budget Committee	Prof Suriamurthee Maistry, Prof Labby Ramrathan, Prof Vimolan Mudaly, Prof Shakila Singh, Prof Asheena Singh-Pillay, Prof Jayaluxmi Naidoo
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General Advisor to the LOC	Prof Michael Samuel



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The 12th annual SAERA conference

Education in a Time of Polycrisis: Pathways of Hope, Creativity and Affirmative Ethics

Host: School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal

Date: 3RD - 6TH November 2025

Venue: Elangeni Hotel, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP REGISTRATION: 8:00 - 9:00 (Foyer)	SAERA CONFERENCE REGISTRATION: 8:00 - 14:00 (Foyer)
<i>Dr Sebastian Sanjigadu Dr Reginald Govender Dr Bongani Ndlovu UKZN ECR</i>	<i>(Registration will run parallel with pre-conference activities) Prof Vimolan Mudaly Dr Sebastian Sanjigadu UKZN ECR</i>

DAY 1 MONDAY: 3RD NOVEMBER 2025				
VENUE	GREAT ILANGA	EAST ILANGA	NORTH ILANGA	SUITE 3
9:00 -13:00	EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER (ECR) PROGRAMME - Welcome message to the Early Career Researchers: <i>Mpho-Entle Modise</i> - Early Career Researcher Keynote: <i>Phumlani Myende</i> Chair: <i>Mlamuli Hlatshwayo</i> - Election of the SAERA ECR representative 2025-2027 <i>SAERA ECR Portfolio Team</i> - Vote of Thanks: <i>Maureen Robinson</i>	Pre-conference workshop: <i>Chair: Relebohile Moletsane</i> <i>What is 'Participatory' in Participatory Visual Research, and Why is it Important?</i> <i>Relebohile Moletsane Claudia Mitchell Lisa Starr Shannon Walsh</i>	Pre-conference workshop <i>Chair: Lesley le Grange</i> <i>Theorising in the Posthuman Condition: Rethinking education</i> <i>Lesley le Grange Petro du Preez</i>	Pre-conference workshop <i>Chair: Jeanette K Ramollo</i> <i>Activating Formative Assessment to Enhance Pedagogy in Initial Teacher Education Programmes</i> <i>Jeanette K Ramollo Jayesh Bhana Anil Kanjee</i>

	• ECR Pre-conference workshops: <i>Vimolan Mudaly</i> <i>Jayaluxmi Naidoo</i> <i>Asheena Singh-Pillay</i> <i>Ronicka Mudaly</i> Chair: <i>Mzwandile W. Zulu</i> • ECR Meet & Greet Session <i>Lerato H. Sokhulu</i> <i>Mzwandile W. Zulu</i>			
DAY 1: MONDAY 3RD NOVEMBER 2025				
13:00 - 14:00	LUNCH			
VENUE	GREAT ILANGA			
SESSION 1 14:00 - 15:00	WELCOME AND OPENING OF THE SAERA 2025 CONFERENCE			
	Chair: Prof Asheena Singh-Pillay			
	SAERA President: Prof Melanie Luckay			
	UKZN Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Humanities: Prof Nhlanhla Mkhize			
	UKZN Dean and Head of the School of Education: Prof Emmanuel Mqgwashu			
	SAERA LOC Chair: Prof Jayaluxmi Naidoo			
	Old Mutual (Sponsor): Mr Tashlin Naidoo & Mr Sihlesenkosi Mfeka			
	Musical Performance & Poetry Recital: Fezeka Ndlovu, Samkelo Xolani Mhlongo (UKZN students)			
15:00 - 16:15	INTERNATIONAL KEYNOTE: PROF JOEL SAMOFF <i>When Research Rigor Becomes a Research Cage: Transforming Sites of Control into Locales of Opportunity</i> Chair: Prof Melanie Luckay			
16:15-16:20	CONFERENCE LOGISTICS AND GENERAL INFORMATION Prof Ronicka Mudaly			
16:30 - 18:00	SAERA AGM			
18:00 onwards	WELCOME COCKTAIL/SOCIAL NETWORKING EVENING Prof Labby Ramrathan/Dr Lungi Masinga Book Launch: • Academic Xenophobia: African Scholars in South African Universities: <i>P Simba, C Walters, J Jansen</i> • Arts-based Educational Research Narratives of Academic Identities: Perspectives from Higher Education: <i>I Naicker, D Pillay, K, Pithouse-Morgan, L, Masinga, T Chisanga, A Hiralaal</i> • The Knowledge of Inclusive Education, An Ecological Approach: <i>E Walton</i> • Parental and Caregiver Involvement in South African Education: <i>Z McDonald, A Cooper, A Mahadew, N Xaba</i> • Teaching Reading Comprehension to English Learners in Secondary Schools: A Research-Based Approach: <i>M Cekiso, F Olifant, K Mokhtari</i> Creative Showcase: Boitumelo Mokolopeng UKZN students: Luyanda Khumalo, Issa Ngcobo, Ayanda Masondo, Nhlanhla Magubane, Nhanyiso Khumalo, Simiso Masondo			

	DAY 2: TUESDAY 4 TH NOVEMBER 2025 ¹							
VENUE SESSION 2 8.15- 9.45	EAST ILANGA <i>Chair: Helen Longlands</i>	NORTH ILANGA <i>Chair Nosipho Bele</i>	GREAT ILANGA <i>Chair: Clive Brown</i>	SUITE 1 <i>Chair: Brita Phuti</i>	SUITE 2 <i>Chair: Gabrielle Wills</i>	SUITE 3 <i>Chair: Connie Makobo</i>	SUITE 4 <i>Chair: John Bhurekeni</i>	SUITE 5 <i>Chair: Petro du Preez</i>
PANEL SESSION 8:15 - 9:45	1324 Gender, climate change, education and data: co- creating knowledge for social change with communities in South Africa <i>Helen Longlands Relebohile Moletsane Elaine Unterhalter Lisa Wiebesiek Nkongo Mkhize Buhle Francis</i>	1194 Reimagining the doctoral thesis as scholarly artefact: designing creative theses as countercultural educational practice <i>Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan Nosipho Bele Mandisa Dhlula- Moruri Anita Hiralaal Makie Kortjass Tamar Meskin Ntokoza Mkhize-Mthembu Marguerite Muller Tanya van der Walt</i>	1268 Scholars on the margins: Mid- career postdoctoral academics' polyglot expectations and experiences of research <i>Clive Brown / Michael Mthethwa / Wedsha Appadoo- Ramsamy / Sarah Ralfe/ Bridget Horner/ Urisha Naidoo/ Michael Anthony Samuel</i>	1307 How to open up spaces in the cracks of neoliberalism and making equitable and emancipatory (educational) futures possible <i>Brita Phuthi Sadi Seyama Leigh- Ann Naidoo Carolyn McKinney Salim Vally (Arts-based contribution)</i>	1287 Making it to and through matric: Navigating polycrisis and pathways of hope in South African high schools <i>Ursula Hoadley Gabrielle Wills Shaheeda Jaffer Heleen Hofmeyer Carol Bertram Servaas van der Berg Angela Stott</i>	1368 Primary teacher education curriculum standards and common assessments: “learnification” or teaching- informed research? <i>Monica Mawoyo Maureen Robinson Connie Makgabo Qetelo Moloi Lyn Kok</i>	1398 Reimagining Teacher Pedagogical and Assessment Practices in Southern Africa: Leveraging Theoretical Insights to Enhance Professional Development <i>John Bhurekeni Arorisoe Sibanda Clement Simuja</i>	1435 A Game With/out Rules: An Intra-active Game for Diffraction Reading (and a figuration of a <i>curriculum-to- come</i>) <i>Petro du Preez Jean du Toit (60 mins workshop) 8:15– 9:15</i> <i>9:15 – 9:45 Introduction to the new SIG: Educational Leadership and Management Coordinator Callie Grant</i>
9:45-10:15	TEA							

¹ The number before the title of each presentation refers to the Abstract ID #

DAY 2: TUESDAY 4TH NOVEMBER 2025

VENUE SESSION 3 10.15-12.00	EAST ILANGA TVET Chair: Sinenhlanhla Nkwanyana	NORTH ILANGA SCHOOL LEADERSHIP Chair: Callie Grant	GREAT ILANGA GENERAL STREAM Chair: Novel Lena Folabit	SUITE 1 GENERAL STREAM Chair: Gerard Samuel	SUITE 2 HIGHER EDUCATION Chair: Alois Baleni	SUITE 3 LANGUAGE Chair: Blandina Manditereza	SUITE 4 DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY & STEM Chair: Sarah Gravett	SUITE 5 TEACHER EDUCATION: PARTNERSHIPS INCLUSION & JUSTICE Chair: Sulochini Pather
10:15 -10:35	1095 Moving Beyond Vocational Qualifications: A Freirean Perspective on the Transformative Path of Vocational Education <i>Ezekiel Majola</i>	1172 Preparing socially just school leaders amid educational polycrises: A case study of the ADSLM programme in South Africa <i>Farhana Amod Kajee</i>	1111 Metacognitive Skills as Enablers of Self- Directed Learning in Mathematics Education: A Review of Empirical Evidence in Higher Education <i>Simon Adjei Tachie</i>	1121 An investigation into the polycrisis in teaching and learning in ECD centres in the Western Cape of South Africa <i>Kaylianne Aploon- Zokufa</i>	1175 On Ice boys, ice girls and the workhorses in the university: Postdocs beyond the polycrisis <i>Mlamuli Hlatshwayo</i>	1215 Enhancing indigenous language learning outcomes through gamified collaborative e- learning <i>Fasinro Kabiru Sasaenia Randle Oluwarotimi</i>	1376 Unlocking potential: ODeL for incarcerated students <i>Sabelo Biyela Reginald Govender</i>	1301 Teacher Education in Times of Polycrisis: Decolonial and Justice-Oriented Approaches in South Africa <i>Otilia Chiramba</i>
10:35 -10:55	1265 Vocational Education Stigma: An enduring legacy of coloniality of being <i>Josephine Towani Vaughn John</i>	1203 School leadership socialisation in sub- Saharan Africa: A reimagination <i>Pontso Moorosi Callie Grant</i>	1440 Complicated conversations or convoluted archetypes? Higher education curriculum in South Africa <i>Gloria Castrillon Kirti Menon</i>	1309 From crises to critical moments: A Bourdieuian exploration into the emergence of radical teachers and teacher social movements <i>Ashley Visagie</i>	1239 The Untapped Potential of Professional Doctorates in South Africa: A Neoliberal Perspective. <i>Sybert Mutereko</i>	1377 Enhancing reading through ICT integration in intermediate phase EFAL classrooms <i>Sekanse Ntsala</i>	1391 Support for out- of-field STEM teachers in South Africa: A systematic review <i>Bornwise Ntshani Nomfundo Radebe</i>	PANEL SESSION: 10:35 – 12:00 1260 Partnerships and Research on Inclusion, Diversity and Social Justice <i>Sulochini Pather Ronel Koch Fumane Khanare Trevor Moodley Rubina Setlhare</i>

DAY 2: TUESDAY 4TH NOVEMBER 2025

10:55 -11:15	1313 Reimagining Teacher Union Involvement as A Motivation for School Innovation and Equity: Beyond Traditional Role of Bargaining <i>David Matsepe Thembinkosi Zwane Mugwena Maluleke</i>	1315 An exploration of the leadership styles that school principals employ in rural settings for school effectiveness <i>Makhobela Nkateko Success Kola Malose Mafumo Thinavhudzulo</i>	1197 Female academics' work-life imbalance and academic career development challenges: The impact of work intensification in a South African university <i>Musa Makhoba</i>	1346 Navigating polycrisis in the Nigerian educational system: Primary teachers' perspectives <i>Japhet Omolere Okuntade Oluwafemi Ebiseni Ebimomi Melanie B Luckay</i>	1409 Postdoc-ing in the time of the polycrisis: A South African perspective <i>Alois S Baleni Mlamuli Hlatshwayo</i>	1408 Digital tools and social skills in language learning: Early childhood teachers' perspectives <i>Blandina Manditereza</i>	1181 Mixed Reality Simulation (MRS) to enhance pre-service teachers' use of questioning as a core teaching practice <i>Sarah Gravett Dean Van Der Merwe Pamela Tshabalala Casey Bremner</i>	PANEL SESSION: 10:35 – 12:00 1260 Partnerships and Research on Inclusion, Diversity and Social Justice <i>Sulochini Pather Ronel Koch Fumane Khanare Trevor Moodley Rubina Setlhare</i>
11:15 - 11:35	1382 Crossroads of Opportunity and Exclusion: Determinants of School Participation Beyond Compulsory Education in South Africa <i>Sinenhlanhla Nkwanyana</i>	1323 Transformative leadership in resource-constrained schools in South Africa <i>Andrea Juan Sylvia Hannan Jaqueline Harvey</i>	1227 Co-constructing collaborative support provision strategies through the integration of learner voices and teacher insights <i>Pateka Pamella Jama Matabe Rosa Modiba</i>	1277 Embodied-artistic pedagogies: Who gets to play in South African schools? <i>Gerard M Samuel Charlotte Svendler Nielsen Liesl Hartman Fabian Hartzenberg</i>	1353 Integrating community project initiatives into in-service teacher development curricula at Zimbabwean state universities: A case study <i>Albert Mufanechiya Matseliso M Makgalwa</i>	1134 The impact of language of learning and teaching on the performance of commercial subjects in rural schools <i>Adolph Mathiba</i>	1258 Implementing gamification in the teaching and learning of Economic Management Sciences: Integration to Accounting <i>Skhumbuzo Mbili Ikanyeng Prince Ramonyai</i>	
11:35 - 11:55	PRESENTATION OLD MUTUAL	1296 Stimulating transformative teacher leadership in a liminal space: A South African case study in the critical tradition <i>Callie Grant</i>	1425 Academics' professional identity: Conflicting personal values of academics and institutional culture <i>Novel L. Folabiti</i>	1289 Teachers' accounts of instructional norms in early grade classrooms: A South African case study <i>Ursula Hoadley Colleen Boyd Nompumelelo (Permie) Isaacs</i>	1217 Crossing Borders, Building Bridges: Lessons in Interdisciplinary Doctoral Supervision <i>Rowena Naidoo Michael Anthony Samuel</i>	1420 Decoding African language curricula: Rethinking standards amid educational polycrisis <i>Shilela Nkadimeng</i>	1276 Fostering Teachers' Self-Directed Learning in Resource-Constrained Grade 8 Mathematics Classroom	

			Loyiso C. Jita				Nothile T Kunene Gordon Sekano	
DAY 2: TUESDAY 4TH NOVEMBER 2025								
12:00 -13:00	LUNCH							
VENUE SESSION 4 13.00-14.40	EAST ILANGA TVET <i>Chair: Volker Wedekind</i>	NORTH ILANGA INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION <i>Chair: Curwyn Mapaling</i>	GREAT ILANGA TEACHER EDUCATION <i>Chair: Maureen Robinson</i>	SUITE 1 SELF-REFLEXIVE METHODOLOGIES <i>Chair: Makie Kortjass</i>	SUITE 2 EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY <i>Chair: Siyabonga Mhlongo</i>	SUITE 3 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION <i>Chair: Cina Mosito</i>	SUITE 4 SCHOOL LEADERSHIP <i>Chair: Sibonelo Blose</i>	SUITE 5 INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION <i>Chair: Julia Ross</i>
13:00-13:20	1284 Preparing young people for the Future of Work through 21st-Century Soft Skills Development: A South African Perspective <i>Celestin Mayombe</i>	1143 Pre-service teachers' challenges and navigational approaches: School-university partnership <i>Cias Tsotetsi</i>	SIG PANEL TEACHER EDUCATION 13.00 – 14.40 1357 The Eras Tour: Fifty years of teacher education in South Africa. <i>Lee Rusznyak Maureen Robinson Melanie Luckay Ashley Visagie Connie Makgabo</i>	SIG PANEL SELF-REFLEXIVE METHODOLOGIES 13.00 – 14.40 1416 Mapping Metaphors, Making Meaning: Self-Reflexive Methodologies in a Time of Polycrisis <i>Makie Kortjass Ntokozo Mkhize-Mthembu Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan Daisy Pillay Linda van Laren Anita Hiralaal</i>	SIG PANEL EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY 13.00 – 14.40 1442 AI tools for educational research: A hands-on workshop on topic modelling <i>Siyabonga Mhlongo Alton Dewa Fatima Makda Reuben Dlamini</i>	SIG PANEL INCLUSIVE EDUCATION 13.00 – 14.40 1441 Innovations and Emerging Technologies in Strengthening Inclusive Education: Trends and Controversies <i>Cina Patricia Mosito Prince Osiesi Obakeng Kagola Dikeledi Mahlo</i>	1179 All hands-on deck: A critical analysis of a rural high school's grade 12 enrichment programme and its leadership implications <i>Selaelo Mariri</i>	1167 Exploration of intermediate phase pre-service teachers' understanding of the addition of unit fractions <i>Catherine Kazunga Sarah Bansilal</i>
13:20-13:40	1164 Managing entrepreneurship training in TVET institutions: perspectives from campus senior management teams <i>Alucia Mabunda J Heystek C Mayombe</i>	1147 Expectations vs Realities: Exploring Misalignments in Preservice STEM Teacher Preparation <i>Olalekan Taofeek Badmus Loyiso C Jita</i>					1263 Cultivating collaborative capacity: School principal leadership of township school networks <i>Shahista Syed Inba Naicker</i>	1333 Lessons from Disruption: Reimagining Entry Requirements for Initial Teacher Training Post-COVID in South Africa <i>Nkosikhona Sean Nkosi</i>

	DAY 2: TUESDAY 4TH						NOVEMBER 2025	
13:40-14:00	1434 Vocational education, human capital theory and the purpose of the TVET lecturer <i>Volker Wedekind Jo-Anna Russon</i>	1248 Mindfulness, neurodiversity, and the purpose of education in polycrisis times <i>Micaela Gillespie Carmelita Jacobs</i>	SIG PANEL TEACHER EDUCATION	SIG PANEL SELF-REFLEXIVE METHODOLOGIES	SIG PANEL EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY	SIG PANEL INCLUSIVE EDUCATION	1322 Factors constraining the implementation of the Whole School Evaluation policy and the necessary support interventions: Perspectives from selected principals in township primary schools <i>Sibonelo Blose Samuel Zulwini Nkabinde</i>	1242 Collaboration for The Public Good in a Transforming Higher Education Context <i>Mthobisi Ndaba</i>
14:00-14:20	1406 Beyond Degrees: Building Durable Skills for Life and Learning in Uncertain Times <i>Chatradari Devroop</i>	1422 Patchwork Pedagogies: Navigating mental health, inequality and crisis in South African higher education <i>Curwyn Mapaling Gosiamo Noge Wandile Tsabedze</i>					1331 Phoenix rising from the ashes: School leadership, containment and hope in a time of polycrisis <i>Regan Berry</i>	1214 Mentoring Matters: Exploring Preservice Teachers' Experiences and Identity Development During Teaching Practice <i>Julia Ross</i>
14:20-14:40	1432 Measuring Vocational Education and Training (VET) as a means to enhance individual	1166 Reimagining Pre-Service Teacher Education in Rural Universities: Curriculum, Technology, and the					1411 The role of the school leadership in enforcing knowledge and skills to learners for academic learner	1332 From Admission to Impact: The Case for Strategic Teacher Education Reform in South Africa

	capabilities and freedoms <i>Nthabeleng Lepota</i>	Ethics of Hope in an Era of Polycrisis <i>Oluwatoyin Ayodele Ajani</i>					performance: A collaborative effort <i>Sihle Memela</i>	<i>Olufiropo Emmanuel Alalade</i>
14:40 -15:00	TEA							
DAY 2: TUESDAY 4 TH NOVEMBER 2025								
VENUE	EAST ILANGA	NORTH ILANGA	GREAT ILANGA	SUITE 1	SUITE 2	SUITE 3	SUITE 4	SUITE 5
SESSION 5 15:00-16:40	ACTION RESEARCH <i>Chair: Karen Venter</i>	ASSESSMENT & TESTING <i>Chair: J Ramollo</i>	LANGUAGE AND LITERACY <i>Chair: Pretty Magangxa</i>	GENERAL STREAM <i>Chair: JJR de Villiers</i>	DIGITAL TOOLS & TRANSFORMATIVE PRAXIS <i>Chair: Philani Brian Mlambo</i>	DECOLONISING KNOWLEDGE <i>Chair: Musa Makhoba</i>	CURRICULUM STUDIES <i>Chair: Chris Reddy</i>	KNOWLEDGE BUILDING IN EDUCATION <i>Chair: Sekoai Elliot Nkhi</i>
15:00 -15:20	SIG PANEL ACTION RESEARCH 15.00 – 16.30 1439 Action Research for resilient communities: Navigating educational polycrises together	SIG PANEL ASSESSMENT & TESTING 15.00 – 16.30 1403 AI applications for improving assessment: Strategies for Teacher Educators and Student Teachers	1413 Polycrisis in literature teaching and assessment in South African grade 12 EFAL classrooms <i>Maletsema Ruth Emsley</i>	1282 Pathways of hope: A theoretical exploration of school leaders' professional development through indigenous knowledge integration in foundation phase science education <i>Lulama Mdodana-Zide Zukiswa Nhase</i>	1127 Teachers' perceptions and experiences of using virtual labs for CAPS-aligned experiments in rural South African schools <i>William Zivanayi</i>	1426 Decolonising teacher education in a polycrisis: A case study of integrating indigenous knowledge and technological innovation at a rural South African university <i>Benjamin Seleke</i>	SIG PANEL CURRICULUM STUDIES 15.00 – 16.30 1225 Curriculum studies and curriculum as an assemblage: responding to complex glocal concerns	SIG PANEL KNOWLEDGE BUILDING IN EDUCATION 15.00 – 16.30 Knowledge Building in Education: SIG General Meeting
15:20 -15:40	<i>Angela James Karen Venter</i>	<i>Anil Kanjee Mergan Naidoo Melikhaya Noqamza Nicky Roberts J Ramollo</i>	1419 Applying the Rasch Measurement Model to validate tests of Initial Teacher Education students' understanding of African languages standards for teaching <i>Qetelo Molo Pretty Magangxa</i>	1444 Teach Financial Accounting in the Capitalocene: Using a pedagogy of presence to develop a model for management students in a higher education context <i>Ingrid Baigrie</i>	1118 Inclusive pedagogy as spatial praxis: Rhythms, relationships, and resistance in a time of polycrisis <i>Elzahn Rinquest</i>	1195 Decolonising the Audiology Curriculum: Epistemological disjunctures and pathways of hope for Black African students <i>Musa Makhoba / Sarasvathie Reddy / Mershen Pillay</i>	<i>Chris Reddy Ndumiso Daluxolo Ngidi Samantha Govender Matthews Makunye Divan Jagals Rouann Maarman Shan Simmonds</i>	<i>Sekoai Elliot Nkhi Mlamuli Hlatshwayo</i>
15:40 -16:00			1431 Exploring Grade R teachers' perspectives and experiences of	1093 Zimbabwean migrant teachers in South Africa: The	1392 Assistive technologies for who when the assisting	1275 Preservice teachers drawing on Southern		

			teaching early literacy in linguistically diverse contexts <i>Nikiwe Nondabula /Carli Louw</i>	complexity of identity and belonging <i>JJR de Villiers</i>	cannot assist the assisted? <i>Peles L Biswalo Selloane Pitikoe Cosmas Maphosa</i>	resources to teach about sustainability <i>Ronicka Mudaly</i>		
			DAY 2: TUESDAY 4TH NOVEMBER 2025					
16:00 -16:20			1199 Investigating early grades teachers' experiences on synthetic phonics approach specifically Jolly Phonics in three primary schools in Maseru <i>Khosi Mofolisa</i>	1237 Narratives of women students negotiating gender in the context of gender-based violence: A case of university residences in and around Durban, KwaZulu-Natal <i>Phakamile Mazibuko</i>	1152 Re-centering African epistemologies: Afrocentric methodologies as transformative educational praxis <i>Ojochogwu Joy Obaje</i>	1138 Integration of indigenous knowledge systems for the promotion of sustainable learning and understanding of geometry <i>Zingiswa Jojo</i>		
16:20 -16:40	SIG PANEL ACTION RESEARCH	SIG PANEL ASSESSMENT & TESTING	1219 Ecocultural pedagogy as means to strengthen Foundation Phase isiXhosa literacy <i>Pretty Neliswa Magangxa</i>	1359 UNESCO's development and humanist traditions: The case of South Africa (1945-1994) <i>Linda Chisholm</i>	1115 Technology-Enhanced Learning with AutoCAD Simulation to improve conceptualisation of isometric drawing among pre-service teachers <i>Philani Brian Mlambo Asheena Singh-Pillay</i>	1174 Integrating indigenous epistemologies into entrepreneurship curricula in South Africa: Shaping sustainable futures <i>Jabulile Mzimela Innocent Moyo</i>	SIG PANEL CURRICULUM STUDIES	SIG PANEL KNOWLEDGE BUILDING IN EDUCATION
VENUE	GREAT ILANGA							

SESSION 6 17:00 -18:30	NELSON MANDELA LEGACY LECTURE: PROF HEILA LOTZ-SITSIKA <i>The Ethical Worth of an Education: Moving Beyond Encapsulations</i> Chair: Prof Emmanuel Mqgwashu							
18:30	DINNER OWN ARRANGEMENT							
DAY 3: WEDNESDAY 5 TH NOVEMBER 2025								
VENUE	EAST ILANGA	NORTH ILANGA	GREAT ILANGA	SUITE 1	SUITE 2	SUITE 3	SUITE 4	SUITE 5
SESSION 7 8:15-9:55	TVET & LEADERSHIP Chair: Gabrielle Wills	GENERAL STREAM Chair: Vaughn John	GENERAL STREAM: MATHEMATICS TEACHING Chair: Jeanette Ramollo	GENERAL STREAM Chair: Sulochini Pather	ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & DIGITAL TOOLS Chair: Johan van Heerden	MATHEMATICS EDUCATION Chair: Felix O Egara	GENERAL STREAM Chair: Maletsema Ruth Emsley	ARTS-BASED ENQUIRY & GENERAL STREAM Chair: Linda van Laren
8:15 -8:35	1146 Rapid review of the three-stream model offered at the GET level in South Africa Sharon Grussendorff Cheryl Weston	1240 Student psychosocial well-being in the context of a performance crisis: A case study of postgraduate accounting students at a private higher education institute in South Africa Tamara Naidoo Suriamurthee Maistry	1417 Mission Impossible: Journeying towards epistemological border crossing between mathematics education and education for sustainable development Mzwandile Zulu Sebastian Sanjigadu Lulamile Zangwa	1261 Disquieting the inequities that female students face in Lesotho higher education Malebohang Catherine Morena Molebatsi Milton Nkoane	1241 Integration of artificial intelligence into pedagogical practice: Comparative reflections and insights from two South African universities Grasia Chisango Victor Virimai Mugobo	1170 Systematic review of AI visualization tools in mathematics education: Impact, challenges, and lessons learned Lehlohonolo Dlamini Moeketsi Mosia Felix O Egara	1245 Theoretical perspectives on the capabilities of educational objectives to align with sustainable development Martha Matashu	1128 Supervision as becoming: reimagining education through arts-based inquiry and self-study Anita Hiralaal
8:35 -8:55	1348 Transitioning beyond matric in South Africa Gabrielle Wills	1185 Remediation strategies for enhancing economic student understanding and	1354 Policy-Practice disjuncture in Intermediate Phase Mathematics: A critical inquiry of Home Language	1108 Leaving before the finish line: analysing school factors affecting student throughput from secondary schools	1327 Reliability of Artificial Intelligence in Evaluating Cognitive Levels of Life Sciences Items	1298 Navigating curriculum discrepancies: implications for mathematics education in South African Technical	1355 Managing anxiety and building resilience: Life Sciences teachers' experiences in teaching in	1334 A river runs through it: Landscapes of learning, development and change for non-traditional workers

		performance in South Africa <i>Nana Yaw Brenya Agyeman</i>	pedagogy in teacher education programmes <i>Jeanette Ramollo</i>	in the Western Cape <i>Sulochini Pather Ronel Koch Likho Bottoman</i>	<i>Mbalenhle Ngema</i>	and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges <i>Hlengiwe Mhlungu Lokesh Ramnath Maharajh</i>	townships and rural secondary schools <i>Brighton Mudadigwa Nomzamo Xaba</i>	<i>Amanda Cox Vaughn John</i>
DAY 3: WEDNESDAY 5TH NOVEMBER 2025								
8:55 -9:15	1230 Building pathways for hope on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework: towards a flexible and responsive qualifications sub-framework <i>Colette Tennison</i>	1320 Understanding the role of age, gender, and Grade R attendance on Foundation Phase progression and academic performance <i>Bianca Böhmer</i>	1338 The production of educational space in Makhandla: A mobile ethnography of learner journeys and spatial inequality <i>Nkosikhona Sean Nkosi</i>	1084 Exploring the use of translanguaging to manage language barriers in selected South African school classrooms <i>Khathutshelo Thabagae Pearl Larey</i>	1251 Impact of an online simulation tool in teaching projectile motion in biomechanics <i>Johan van Heerden</i>	1427 Mathematics teachers negotiating blended learning, socio-economic inequities, and limited technological resources in a time of crisis <i>Nkanyiso Mthembu Jaqueline Naidoo</i>	1351 Balancing Fairness and Functionality in Peer Assessment: Insights from the PrimTEd Assessment Paragraph Trial <i>Monica Mawoyo Maletsema Ruth Emsley Mashaba Mashala Yvonne Reed</i>	1186 Constructively challenging a rock and a hard place in the higher education polycrisis context: A reflexive arts-informed self-study <i>Linda van Laren</i>
9:15 -9:35	1290 The South African National Qualifications Framework in the time of Polycrisis: Making Facts out of our Fictions <i>Marco MacFarlane</i>	1383 The crisis of schooling offender learners in correctional centres: a wellness perspective <i>Theresa Lydia Badiktsie Manzini</i>	1428 Exploring grade 12 learners' misconceptions and errors in measurement in mathematical literacy <i>Lebohang Victoria Mulaudzi Zanele Annatoria Ngcobo</i>	1306 <i>Ukuthwasa:</i> Implications for formal education in Eswatini <i>Phumla Mavuso Selloane Pitikoe</i>	1141 The crisis of ethical AI usage: The case of novice masters students <i>Philisiwe Banda Suriamurthee Maistry</i>	1304 Foregrounding indigenous manipulatives in mathematics as a part of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the Foundation Phase <i>Mmaphadi Mtholo Bongani Shabangu</i>	1097 Educational Research for a VUCA World: A realist, socio-cultural perspective <i>Eureta Rosenberg</i>	1345 Access to and success in the education of teenage girls in sub-Saharan Africa <i>Beatrice Akala Emmily Sitati</i>
9:35 -9:55	1374 Technical and Vocational Education and Training College Lecturers' Perspectives on Moodle as a	1310 Young adult survivors' lived experiences of interconnected physical and cyberbullying: Psycho-social impacts	1358 Mathematical knowledge for teaching: assessing and developing knowledge for teaching mathematics in	1279 Teaching life skills through inquiry in township schools: Pathways of hope, creativity, and professional growth in South African foundation	1190 Always in our hands or pockets: A historical review and bibliometric analysis of mobile learning in higher	1160 Culturally responsive teaching through the Igbo language: Enhancing mathematics achievement	1149 Exploring the impact of a mentorship program for aspirant school principals enrolled in a bespoke Master of Education Leadership degree	1360 Making (Some) Sense Differently: Multimodal Dabbings in (Post)-Qualitative Teacher Education Research.

	teaching and Learning Platform <i>Zodwa Khumalo</i>	and implications for interventions <i>Suhana Jacobs Vaughn John</i>	South African primary schools <i>Sharon Mc Auliffe Lyn Kok Samu Chikiwa</i>	phase education <i>Zukiswa Nhase Lulama Mdodana Zide</i>	education (1994-2024) <i>Brian Shambare Thuthukile Jita</i>	among secondary school students <i>Felix O Egara Moeketsi Mosia Fadip A Nannim</i>	at a South African university: A CHAT perspective <i>Douglas Andrews</i>	<i>Delecia Davids Paseka Blessing Chisale</i>
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DAY 3: WEDNESDAY: 5TH NOVEMBER 2025

9:55-10:25	TEA
VENUE	GREAT ILANGA
SESSION 8 10:25-12:30	NATIONAL KEYNOTE PANEL: PROF EMMANUEL MGQWASHU, PROF SHIREEN MOTALA, PROF YUNUS BALLIM, PROF PETRO DU PREEZ <i>Critical Perspectives on Polycrisis</i> Chair: Prof Murthee Maistry
12:30-13:30	LUNCH

VENUE	EAST ILANGA Chair: Lisa Starr	NORTH ILANGA Chair: Noncaba Khumalo	GREAT ILANGA Chair: Marguerite Muller	SUITE 1 Chair Michael Anthony Samuel	SUITE 2 Chair Alli Gerths	SUITE 3 Chair Lungile Masinga	SUITE 4 Chair Andile Dube	SUITE 5 Chair: Labby Ramrathan
SESSION 9 PANEL SESSIONS 13:30-15:00	1221 Youth Imaging Gender Justice: Mobile, Visual and Linguistic Pathways of Hope <i>Lisa Starr Claudia Mitchell Shannon Walsh Relebohile Moletsane</i>	1318 Didactical tools and approaches for learning transformation and advancing sustainability in an era of polycrisis <i>Noncaba Khumalo Tony Laston Magwira Chikumbutso Ndaferankhanda Mbali Ntuli </i>	1288 Playful assemblage: Using live art making and installation to create participatory discussion on embodied academic identity and becoming	1234 Migrating Hopes, Fractured Realities: International Students in South Africa's Higher Education System <i>Nerolen Soobryan Jabulile Happyness Mzimela Shaun Kruger Cassandra Odelle</i>	1274 Parental and Caregiver Involvement in South African Education <i>Adam Cooper Zahraa McDonald Ashnie Mahadew Noxolo Xaba</i>	1366 Reimagining mid-career black women academics' career trajectories: A collaborative self-study <i>Lungile Masinga Nomkhosi Nzimande Samukelisiwe Khumalo (Arts-based contribution)</i>	1436 From Evidence to Action: Supporting Education System Reform During Uncertainty; A What Works Hub for Global Education Workshop <i>Andile Dube Elizabeth Ninan Kholosa Nonkenge Nompumelelo Mohohlwane Joanne Newton</i>	MEET THE JOURNAL EDITORS' SESSION <i>Carol Bertram Shan Simmonds Nyna Amin Sarasvathie Reddy Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan Curwyn Mapaling Angela Stott</i>

			Maite Zeisser Gutiérrez Arorisoe Sibanda John Bhurekeni	Marguerite Muller Daisy Pillay (Arts-based contribution)	Subiah/ Michael Anthony Samuel					
15:00- 15:30	TEA									

DAY 3: WEDNESDAY: 5TH NOVEMBER 2025

VENUE	EAST ILANGA	NORTH ILANGA	GREAT ILANGA	SUITE 1	SUITE 2	SUITE 3	SUITE 4	SUITE 5
SESSION 10	GENERAL STREAM Chair: Shani Steyn	GENERAL STREAM: HE Chair: Mlamuli Hlatshwayo	TVET Chair: Timothy McBride	STEM EDUCATION Chair: Maria Tsakeni	TEACHER EDUCATION Chair: Lee Rusznak	INCLUSIVE EDUCATION Chair: Elizabeth Walton	INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION Chair: Angela Stott	TEACHER EDUCATION & SCHOOLING Chair: Nozuko Zukiswa Gxekwa
15:30-15:50	1341 Teacher knowledge in a postgraduate teacher education programme: A diagnostic assessment intervention <i>Oluwatosin A Egunlusi</i>	1285 Chronotopes of possibility: Reimagining the UoT as a counter-institution in response to the polycrisis <i>Roshnee Sunder Michael Anthony Samuel</i>	1129 Analysing the Efficacy of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Mitigating Youth Unemployment in Botswana <i>Gaolatlhe Medupe Malau David Matsepe</i>	1224 Augmenting pre-service teachers' technological content knowledge through Computational Thinking integration in science methods <i>Cosmas John Kathumba</i>	1231 Classroom Conversations: Feedback that supports student teachers' pedagogic growth <i>Dale Langsford</i>	1085 Inclusive education in multifaceted educational future: Towards a whole school approach <i>Ben de Souza</i>	1335 Exploring pre-service teachers' retention and transfer of gatekeeping concepts in chemistry <i>Sinegugu Khulu Phindulo Ndou</i>	1089 Reimagining Life Skills curriculum delivery: Teachers' experiences of teaching drama in Early Childhood Education <i>John Monwabisi Cobongela</i>
15:50-16:10	1228 Enhancing learner performance through stakeholder co-determination of school-based curriculum in South Africa <i>Michael Marumo Martha Matashu Oluwasola Sasere</i>	1300 Conceptualising precarity in a polycrisis era: Postdoctoral agency and the neoliberal strain in African higher education <i>Julliet Munyaradzi Mlamuli N Hlatshwayo</i>	SIG PANEL TVET, HIGHER EDUCATION & WORK 15:50-17:10 <i>Timothy McBride Marco MacFarlane</i>	1226 Preservice teachers' perceptions of digital tools in science learning in South Africa <i>Stephen Chinedu Nwafor Maria Tsakeni</i>	1370 Back to school: The impact of preparing student teachers to observe classroom practices <i>Lee Rusznyak</i>	1162 Perceptions of professional support staff from SSRC's in relation to their role as members of the DBST <i>Thabo Makhalemele Pateka Pamella Jama</i>	1207 Building Professional Vision and Pedagogical Practice Through Project-Based Learning: Reflections from an Action Research Cycle in Science Teacher Education <i>Angela Stott</i>	1386 IsiXhosa children's literature as a tool in bilingual literacy Instruction in enhancing the teaching of English FAL <i>Nozuko Z. Gxekwa Pretty N. Magangxa Nomaroma Kumanda</i>

DAY 3: WEDNESDAY: 5TH NOVEMBER 2025								
16:10-16:30	1347 Ubuntu as a catalyst for experiential learning and empowerment among women in Microfinance: Insights from the Inhlanyelo Fund <i>Khabonina A Mahlalela- Dlamini</i>	1421 Higher education models in Namibia <i>Julia Musuuu</i>	SIG PANEL TVET, HIGHER EDUCATION & WORK	1381 ICT integration in Life Sciences lessons: A case of teachers in Merafong city <i>Mungandi Monde Kazeni Sajini Fenni</i>	1161 Bridging the theory-practice divide: reflections of school-based student teachers <i>Matshidiso Mahase Sarita Ramsaroop Nadine Petersen</i>	1188 Influence of family structures on the well-being of learners in rural schools during the COVID-19 <i>Kananga Robert Mukuna Thobeka Mbhele</i>		
16:30-16:50	1410 Rubrics to rupture: Co-creating countercultural educational spaces through participatory disruption <i>Shani Steyn</i>	1423 A framework for module template development using authentic teaching and learning: A case study at UKZN <i>Nishani Harinarain Labby Ramrathan</i>		1399 Enhancing conceptual understanding in Physical Sciences through gamification: Digital vs non-digital approaches <i>Lerato Mlaba Nomfundo Radebe Fatima Makda Millicent Motheogane</i>	1088 Analysis of patterns of student interactions in an online discussion forum: Does the presence of instructors make a difference? <i>Hlologelo Climant Khoza</i>	1200 Teachers as collective inclusive education knowledge bricoleurs <i>Elizabeth Walton</i>		
16:50-17:10	1424 Teaching sustainability through local livelihoods in the Life Sciences/ Biology curriculum: Lessons from small-scale goat farming in KZN,	1176 Harvesting ashes: Reimagining the African university in the fires of neoliberalism <i>Amasa Ndofirepi</i>		1122 Critical Pedagogy of Place: Empowering Technology Trainee Teachers to Address Plastic Pollution Through Challenge-Based Learning	1157 Reclaiming Teacher Identity and Voice in Continuous Professional Development through Online Communities	1397 Relationships - a guidance to working against absenteeism <i>Sandra Jederud Karin Bergman Rimbe Gunnel Östlund</i>		

	South Africa <i>Anele Khowa</i>			<i>Asheena Singh-Pillay</i>	<i>Tendayi Dzinoreva Peter Oloba</i>			
18: 30 pm onwards	GALA DINNER & AWARDS							
DAY 4: THURSDAY: 6 TH NOVEMBER 2025								
VENUE	EAST ILANGA	NORTH ILANGA	GREAT ILANGA	SUITE 1	SUITE 2	SUITE 3	SUITE 4	SUITE 5
SESSION 11	HIGHER EDUCATION <i>Chair: Judith Reynolds</i>	GENERAL STREAM <i>Chair: Sandra Jederud</i>	SCHOOL LEADERSHIP & CURRICULUM SUPPORT <i>Chair: Loyiso Jita</i>	SCHOOLING <i>Chair: David Matsepe</i>	STEM EDUCATION <i>Chair: Clement Simuja</i>	INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION <i>Chair: Cina Mosito</i>	EARLY GRADE TEACHING <i>Chair: Rose Brien</i>	ARTS-BASED CONTRIBUTION <i>Chair: Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan</i>
8:15-8:35	1243 There is no justice in postcolonial education systems in Southern Africa: Unpacking contemporary and historical legacies of coloniality. <i>John Bhurekeni</i>	1295 On the interplay of job demands and emotion regulation for teacher well-being: Results of a mixed methods study <i>Ndabenhle T Mdluli Anja Philipp</i>	1137 Teacher leadership: lived experiences of teachers and senior management teams in a Limpopo school <i>Precious Mogaletlwa Chukudu Lynette Lulama Mbatha</i>	1329 Transforming history education curriculum through ecojustice education principles and practices <i>Kabelo Noosi</i>	1356 Empowering in-service teachers to reduce mathematics anxiety and build resilience through targeted interventions <i>Brighton Mudadigwa Tawanda Chinengundu</i>	1100 Strategies university lecturers use to create inclusive spaces in teacher preparation programmes <i>Zandisile Mawethu Sitoyi</i>	1280 Foundation phase students' preparation to teach the "Big 5 of reading" in isiZulu Home Language: A self-reflective study <i>Jabu Mzimela</i>	(8:15-9:45: 90 minutes Arts-based contribution) 1177 Unfolding Academic Lives in and Through the Polycrisis: A Multimethod Arts-Based Research Workshop Using Visual Exegesis and Poetic Inquiry <i>Daisy Pillay Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan</i>
8:35-8:55	1299 Socio-Economic and Ethical Dilemmas of Full-Time Employed Honours Students Amid the Politics of Funding in Selected KwaZulu-Natal Universities	1246 Preparing Student Teachers - the Complexity of WIL Teacher Education <i>Sandra Jederud</i>	1130 Sustainability, inclusion, and justice: Reimagining curriculum support for progressed learners in South African schools	1316 Understanding Quality Assessment in School-Based Assessment in the History FET phase: Towards Theory of Pedagogic Devices	1340 Legitimate Code Theory as an object to work with in understanding computational thinking applications in the Physical Sciences	1148 Education for inclusion: An assessment of pre-service teacher readiness, knowledge, and competencies	1344 The gendered terrain of care: exploring male teachers' roles and realities in foundation phase education	

	<i>Sibongamandla Silindokuhle Dlomo</i>		<i>Makobo Lydia Mogale</i>	<i>David Matsepe Martha Mhlanga Mugwena Maluleke</i>	Methods course <i>Cosmas John Kathumba Clement Simuja</i>	for inclusive education <i>Prince Mensah Osiesi Cina Patricia Mosito</i>	<i>Beatrice Akala Oluwakemi Ajayi</i>	ARTS-BASED CONTRIBUTION <i>Chair: Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan</i>
	DAY 4: THURSDAY: 6TH NOVEMBER 2025							
8:55-9:15	1337 Student resilience in contexts of polycrisis: A scoping review of risk factors and resilience enablers in Southern Africa <i>Adrian van Breda Judith Reynolds</i>	1249 Biokinetics graduate employability and curriculum alignment <i>Henrico Erasmus Khatija Bahdur</i>	1395 The Role of School Leadership in Strengthening Digital Resilience for Work- Integrated Learning in Teacher Education: A Comparative Study <i>Thuthukile Jita LS Spencer Loyiso Jita</i>	1385 Exploring the Nature of Knowledge, Skills and Values prioritized by the Lesotho Basic Education Curriculum Policy <i>Mahlompho Retselisitsoe Tsiane Mankopane Justina Lebona Matsokolo M. Ramokoena Matumelo M. Leboko</i>	1211 Fourth-year students' performance on rapid recall, strategic thinking, and PrimTEd standards on addition and subtraction addition and subtraction <i>Msebenzi Rabaza Duduzile Christinah Sibaya Sihlosokuhle Zwane</i>	1297 Institutional responses to diversity: Intervention outcomes for first-year students in higher education <i>Sibongamandla Silindokuhle Dlomo Marole Nkosikhona Moloi</i>	1266 Which Role do Creative Teaching Styles Play in Mathematics Teaching? Insights from a Case Study with Foundation Phase Teachers <i>Nompumelelo Nzimande Anja Philipp</i>	
9:15-9:35	1235 Global Competence in Higher Education: Developing the Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes Accounting Students Need for a Complex World <i>Nosihle Veronica Sithole</i>	1216 Promoting healthy eating habits through the provision of traditional diets in preschools: The case of <i>Mogoditshane Village, Botswana Sikhangele Mcelelwa</i>	1107 Exploring the impact of neoliberalism on teaching and learning: A call for adoption of alternative ideologies <i>Sekoai Elliot Nkhi</i>	1086 The involvement of parents in fostering whole child education: Teachers' experiences <i>Sebaeng Lerato</i>	1208 Preservice teachers' perceptions about the integration computational thinking and mathematics to develop algebraic reasoning in a mathematics content course <i>Kiyara Bellochun- Khan & Kathleen Fonseca</i>	1196 Harnessing artificial intelligence technologies for inclusive pedagogy in South African schools: Literature insights and teacher educators' perceptions <i>Cina Patricia Mosito </i>	1233 Teaching What We Have Learned: Initial Teacher Educators Reflect on Mathematics Lessons in Grade 2 Classrooms in the Western Cape <i>Rose Brien</i>	

						Mensah Prince Osiesi Obakeng Kagola		ARTS-BASED CONTRIBUTION Chair: Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan
DAY 4: THURSDAY: 6 TH NOVEMBER 2025								
9:35-9:55	1182 On the postdoc polycrisis: Postdocs realities of navigating the complex neoliberal publish or perish work culture in a South African university Zamokuhle Wiseman Magubane	1418 Navigating the shift from teaching in basic education to lecturing in higher education Seshen Brijmohun	1339 Polycrisis in the Teaching and Learning System: Challenges of classroom teachers Japhet Omolere Okuntade Victoria Iyabo Aremu Melanie B Luckay	1326 Internal Financial Control Measures in South African Schools: Challenges and Implications Sithembele Goodman Ndovela	1189 Enhancing Mathematical Discourse and Practice Among Preservice Teachers Azwidowi Emmanuel Libusha	1272 Bridging the digital divide: A framework for inclusive education through technology adoption in South Africa's higher education sector Victor Virimai Mugobo Grasia Chisango	1294 Repositioning teacher educators as intellectual architects – a rapid review of their professional development in Africa Kavish Jawahar	
9:55-10:25								
TEA								
VENUE	EAST ILANGA	NORTH ILANGA	GREAT ILANGA	SUITE 1	SUITE 2	SUITE 3	SUITE 4	SUITE 5
SESSION 12	MATHEMATICS EDUCATION Chair: Nicky Roberts	SCHOOLING Chair: Zamokwakhe Thandinkosi Ncokwana	HIGHER EDUCATION Chair: Nikita Reddy-Ramsunder	GENERAL STREAM Chair: Amanda Morris	DRAMA IN EDUCATION & GENERAL Chair: Derosha Moodley	INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION Chair: Clive Brown	AI AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY Chair: Nazir Carrim	DIGITAL LITERACY AND LEARNING Chair: Thuthukile Jita
10:25-10:45	1244 Educators' professional competence in using indigenous languages to teach primary mathematics Siphesihle Pearl Ngubane	1269 The influence of socioeconomic status on career decision-making challenges faced by learners in South Africa Oluwakemi B Ajayi	1328 Developing Essential Skills for Undergraduates in a Time of Polycrisis: The Role of Higher Education Ntfombi Kunene	1142 Speculative design and transformative pedagogy: reimagining higher education through social impact design and photography	1193 Care-informed-Drama-in-Education: Addressing the agency of young people towards their mental health and well-being in a classroom	1144 Reflecting on Empathetic-Reflective-Dialogical Restorying as a teaching-learning strategy in Higher Education.	1325 From Chalkboards to AI Chatbots: Navigating Polycrisis in Teacher Education through ICT-driven	1153 Teacher agency vs technocratic leadership: Ethical considerations in the pursuit of digital inclusion in education

	<i>Nompumelelo Gcinile Nzimande</i>			<i>Bongani Khoza Nthabiseng Mabale</i>	<i>Boitumelo Mokolopeng</i>	Let's slow it down so that we can re- imagine education <i>Janet Jarvis</i>	Pedagogical Innovations <i>Oluwafemi Ebiseni Ebimomi Melanie B Luckay Japhet Omolere Okuntade</i>	<i>Lineo Amelia Mphatsoane Sesoane Loyiso C. Jita</i>
DAY 4: THURSDAY: 6TH NOVEMBER 2025								
10:45- 11:05	1367 More than a headline: What National Senior Certificate (NSC) assessment data really says about the quality of Mathematics attainment in South Africa between 2010 and 2022 <i>Nicky Roberts Tayla Stephen</i>	1247 Pedagogy of discomfort: Teachers navigating comprehensive sexuality education in the polycrisis <i>Caitlin Eagle Carmelita Jacobs Bolanle Oriola</i>	1380 Navigating the polycrisis in higher education: The case for 'older' early career academics <i>Bongiwe Mayibongwe Ngcobo</i>	1220 Fostering educational resilience in a polycrisis era: Innovative methodologies through project- based Arduino Robotics programming <i>Fadip Audu Nannim Moeketsi Mosia Felix O Egara</i>	1317 Changing teaching pedagogy and creating theatre performances amidst the chaos <i>Verne Rowin Munsamy</i>	1273 From Technicians to Thinkers: Reimagining Teacher Education through a Philosophical Pedagogy of Disruption <i>Clive Jimmy William Brown</i>	1393 Reimagining Teacher Education for Ethical Praxis in the Age of Polycrisis: Towards a Decolonial and Critically Digital Pedagogy <i>Hennades Tabe Halima Namakula</i>	1099 Digitalising the curriculum: Teachers' integration of technological resources into the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement in the fourth industrial revolution era <i>Lindokuhle Gary Nene Lerato Hlengiwe Sokhulu</i>
11:05- 11:25	1364 Exploring teachers' experiences in managing anxiety and building resilience in Physical Science classrooms <i>Brighton Mudadigwa Sakyiwaa Boateng</i>	1352 Investigating social ecosystem for skills development in aquaculture production within just transitioning of the food system and their implications for education <i>Phindile Sithole</i>	1192 Rethinking assessment in a Time of Polycrisis: Exploring graduate attributes in a supply chain management curriculum <i>Nikita Reddy- Ramsunder Labby Ramrathan</i>	1343 Exploring how Preservice Teachers can Develop Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes in learners through Life Sciences Teaching <i>Eyitayo Julius Ajayi</i>	1178 Beyond the classroom: Exploring teacher- student supportive relationships in a KwaZulu-Natal correctional centre <i>Ntuthuko Mathenjwa Melanie Martin</i>	1163 The Role of a Boundary Spanner in Curriculum and Pedagogical Transformatio n: Insights from a South African School-Based Student Teacher Programme	1133 Is there a future for Educational Theory in an age of AI? <i>Nazir Carrim</i>	1254 Blended learning in technology education teacher training: Engaging pre- service teachers in the design process <i>Zaynab Mobara- Links Thuthukile Jita</i>

						Rene` Levinge-Lang Nadine Petersen Sarita Ramsaroop		
DAY 4: THURSDAY: 6TH NOVEMBER 2025								
11:25- 11:45	1223 Attainable pedagogical practices for contexts of poverty: A South African case study <i>Angela Stott Gerhard Guthrie</i>	1270 Traditional leadership role in learner discipline: South African perspectives <i>Zamokwakhe Thandinkosi Ncokwana</i>	1132 The prevalence of learner-centered approach on learners' outcomes in Civil Technology <i>Simphiwe Magnificent Msimango Thokozani Isaac Mtshali</i>	1286 Slow pathways towards hope, creativity and affirmative ethics in Design Educational Practice <i>Nike Romano Amanda Morris</i>	1090 The Role of Digital Technologies in Empowering Women Leaders in Rural Schools: Constraints and Opportunities <i>Buhle Stella Nhlumayo</i>	1224 Augmenting pre-service teachers' technological content knowledge through Computational Thinking integration in science methods <i>Cosmas John Kathumba</i>	1076 Teaching code in (un)equal contexts: Computational thinking and the reality of township schools <i>Mashite Tshidi</i>	1168 Rethinking ethics collision beyond compliance to affirmative praxis <i>Siyanda Manqele Clement Simuja</i>
11:45- 12:05	1305 Applying Universal Design for Learning to Address Mathematics Failure in Foundation Phase Wellington Hokonya	1184 Exploring TVET College Preparedness for Evolving Industry Demands: A Systematic Review <i>Zime Ngcobo</i>	1375 Assessment practices in higher learning institutions, lived experiences of visually impaired learners <i>Peles L. Biswalo Selloane Pitikoe Cosmas Maphosa</i>	1202 Ubuntu and ethics of care as research paradigms <i>Judith Reynolds</i>	1213 Role-play and narrative empathy in English literature lecture rooms: A creative approach to social and emotional learning in higher education <i>Derosha Moodley</i>	1222 Risk Management in Addressing the Duty of Care in Mechanical Technology Workshops <i>Coenraad Jurgens</i>	1257 Teaching Against the Clock: Temporal Tensions, AI, and Ethics in Teacher Education <i>Delecia Davids</i>	1394 From information to ideology: Exploring the impact of digital literacy and ICT on educational transformation <i>Millicent Motheogane Fatima Makda</i>
VENUE	GREAT ILANGA							

SESSION 13 12:10 12:30	CLOSING REMARKS & VOTE OF THANKS Chair: Dr Lerato Sokhulu Dr Bongani Ndlovu Prof Shakila Singh
12: 30	LUNCH & DEPARTURE

SAERA 2025 BOOK OF ABSTRACTS QR CODE:



ECR Pre-conference Programme: Monday, 3rd November 2025
9:00 am – 1:00 pm
Venue: Great Ilanga

TIME	ACTIVITY	FACILITATOR
8:00 - 9:00	Registration	Dr Sebastian Sanjigadu, Dr Reginald Govender & UKZN ECRs
9:00 - 9:10	Opening and welcome	Prof Mpho-Entle Modise
9:10 - 9:15	Introduction to Keynote Speaker	Prof Mlamuli Hlatshwayo
9:15 - 9.45	ECR Keynote Address	Prof Phumlani Erasmus Myende <i>Being an Early Career Researcher in the Context of Polycrisis: Complexities and Navigational Strategies</i>
9.45 - 10:00	ECR Keynote (Question and Answer Session)	Prof Mlamuli Hlatshwayo
10:00 - 10:25	Election of SAERA ECR representative 2025-2027	SAERA ECR Portfolio Team
10:25 - 10:30	Vote of thanks	Prof Maureen Robinson
10:30 - 11:00	TEA	ALL
11:00 - 12:30	ECR Pre-conference Workshops	Workshop 1: Teaching & Learning Prof Vimolan Mudaly <i>Education in a Time of Polycrisis: The Role of Visual Thinking in Facilitating Teaching and Learning</i> Workshop 2: Project-Based Research Prof Jayaluxmi Naidoo, Prof Asheena Singh-Pillay & Prof Ronicka Mudaly <i>From Purpose to Resilience: Supporting Creative and Hopeful Research Journeys for Early Career Researchers in a Time of Polycrisis</i>
12:30 - 13:00	ECR Expectations/Game/ Meet and Greet Session	Dr Lerato Sokhulu & Dr Mzwandile Zulu
13:00 - 14:00	LUNCH	ALL
14:00	Opening & Welcome SAERA 2025 Conference	



**Please Scan for Biography for the ECR
Programme Facilitators**

Pre-Conference Workshops (3rd November 2025: 9:00 am – 1:00 pm)

Abstract ID #: 1438

What is 'Participatory' in Participatory Visual Research, and Why is it Important?

Relebohile Moletsane | Claudia Mitchell | Lisa Starr | Shannon Walsh

In our research endeavours, how do we, as researchers know when 'participation' is taking place or has taken place? What methods might we use to ensure participation by **all**? As researchers look for active and meaningful collaboration with communities in the research process (Macaulay, 2017; Bradbury, 2015), research methodologies that acknowledge participants' agency and privilege their voices and knowledge(s) have gained dominance in recent years. Among these are participatory visual methodologies (PVM), defined as a feminist methodology that uses visual and arts-based methods (e.g., drawing, photovoice, cellphone-making, collage, etc.) with members of marginalised groups to critically examine the world around them to co-generate knowledge to address the social issues they identify (Stringer, 1999; (Mitchell et.al, 2017). The workshop aims to illustrate various democratic principles of research in communities and institutions that include positioning participants as 'knowledge producers' and providing a space for their voices to be heard, promoting dialogue about issues affecting them in their communities and institutions. Our hope is that this approach will foster collaboration, activism, reflexivity and 'resistance' that can include a range of overt and covert strategies to challenge and subvert existing power relations (Madhok, Philips & Wilson, 2013, p. 13), and a built-in 'research as social change' (Schratz & Walker, 2005) that participants may take into their research and practice after the workshop.

Keywords: Arts-Based Methods; Collage; Participatory; Photo-voice; Visual Research

Abstract ID # 1437: Theorising in the Posthuman Condition: Rethinking Education

Lesley le Grange | Petro du Preez

The posthuman condition invites us to think the human differently because of the increasing entanglement of the human with advanced technologies and growing consciousness (due to impending ecological disaster), that the human cannot be separated from the more/other-than-human world. This condition has given rise to 'new' inter/transdisciplinary fields such as new materialisms, feminist materialisms, speculative realism and non-representational theory in which posthuman theorising occurs. This in turn has given rise to alternative ways of doing research, with the umbrella term, postqualitative/post-postqualitative research. Human (the subject) has been central to education, and in Western/ised education the focus has been on the rational autonomous subject. Posthuman theorising invites us to view the subject not as an individual but as ecological or distributed. This alternative view of the subject has implications for education in the posthuman condition. This workshop is aimed at scholars who are not familiar with posthuman theorising and will introduce participants to the different inter/transdisciplinary fields, key concepts and tenets related to these fields. Implications for education will be explored. We shall point out that posthuman is not anti-human and not antithetical to decolonial desires and social justice interests. This preconference workshop forms part of a larger intellectual project that the presenters are engaged with and concerned with understanding education as a life-long affair of experimentation with what is immanently present. No prior engagement with posthumanism is required to participate in this workshop. The idea is to generate a creative and playful space for talking and thinking about alternative ways of being, acting and doing education in the posthuman condition.

Join us for this dynamic workshop to enhance your understanding of posthuman theorising and discover the transformative potential of such theorising for education practices in the posthuman condition.

Keywords: Education; Feminist materialisms; Inter/transdisciplinary; New materialisms; Posthuman condition; Technologies

Abstract ID # 1443:

Activating Formative Assessment to Enhance Pedagogy in Initial Teacher Education Programmes

Jeanette Ramollo | Jayesh Bhana | Anil Kanjee

Workshop Rationale

Research shows that Assessment for Learning (AfL) approaches can enhance lecturers' pedagogical practices by helping them identify and respond to students' learning needs, while also modelling effective teaching strategies for their student teachers. However, for AfL to be effectively implemented, both teacher educators and student teachers need to:

1. Develop a critical understanding of the ideological and policy frameworks that shape their pedagogical practices.
2. Acquire comprehensive knowledge, skills, and competencies in AfL.
3. In addition, teacher educators must be able to model the integration of AfL into their own teaching, thereby supporting student teachers in building and strengthening their pedagogical expertise.

Workshop Design and Methodology

This hands-on workshop employs an interactive approach that require participants to reflect on their pedagogical experiences, share ideas, review specific strategies and techniques, engage in practical exercises, and evaluate different scenarios. Research findings and practical insights from an integrated undergraduate assessment programme implemented in South Africa, alongside experiences from the Primary Teacher Education Project (PrimTed), will anchor learning experiences, tailored to the specific context of initial teacher education programmes in South Africa.

Workshop Outcomes

At the end of the workshop, participants will gain a deeper understanding and/or develop specific practical skills regarding:

- Different interpretations and applications of assessment approaches;
- Integration of formative assessment strategies and techniques into their pedagogical practices;
- Modelling relevant AfL strategies and techniques to student teachers;
- Revising study guides and lecture notes to incorporate AfL approaches;
- Options for reviewing teaching practicum assessments and evaluations.

Abstracts (organised per day and session in the programme)

Day 2 (4th November 2025: 8:15 am – 16:00 pm)

Abstract ID #: 1324

Gender, climate change, education and data: co-creating knowledge for social change with communities in South Africa

Helen Longlands | Relebohile Moletsane | Elaine Unterhalter | Lisa Wiebesiek | Nkongo Mkhize | Buhle Francis

This panel will explore issues at the intersection of gender, climate change and education in South Africa. It will highlight some of the ways the climate crisis intersects with other crises associated with inequalities, and insecurities, prompting discussions of terms like polycrisis. It will consider what some of the features of this time of polycrisis mean for everyday lives, what some of the implications are for education, and how using collaborative innovations and innovative methodologies that can help us document these processes, assess and improve data to support transformational change at local and national levels. This requires different approaches to measurement to provide new insights in this area. The panel will draw on research from the Climate AGEE project, which is conducting in-depth participatory work in collaboration with women leaders in four communities in South Africa experiencing different forms of social, economic and geographic vulnerabilities and marginalisation to better understand ways in which gender and other inequalities in education intersect with acute effects of climate change associated with drought, floods and the warming ocean. The AGEE (Accountability for Gender Equality in Education) project has worked with stakeholders in South Africa and a number of other countries to help develop the AGEE Framework, which provides a participatory method for reflecting in a wide range of settings on which data on gender and education exist, which are missing, and which are needed (see www.gendereddata.org). South Africa has laws and policies committing government to gender equality in education and demonstrates long standing engagement with efforts to transform gender and other inequalities in and through education. Substantial government spending has also been committed to a green transition. And yet, significant gender inequalities in education persist, and issues linked with climate change and legacies of colonialism and apartheid are increasingly acute particularly for the poorest families, communities and locations, where poverty and economic vulnerability, environmental precarity, poor access to clean water and sanitation in homes and schools, and the gendered burden of care in families and communities are especially negatively skewed against girls and young women. Research on building sustainable approaches to gender equality in education and climate justice advocates for developing connections and alliances between local national and transnational levels to enhance understanding of what gender transformative education for climate action should entail. It also emphasises the necessity to understand local complexities and what and how resources can be best used to monitor and facilitate change in order to help identify indicators and data that are suitable for monitoring progress and address the disconnections between policymaking and local implementation.

Climate AGEE is a partnership between the University of KwaZulu-Natal, University College London and Nelson Mandela University. The project connects work on livelihoods, women's rights and education and aims to support and help build women's leadership for action to hold national and provincial governments to account for promises on climate justice and education, improve policies and practices for gender transformative education for climate action and develop more robust institutions. Climate AGEE is part of the larger AGEE project, which draws on the concepts and principles of the capability approach, which emphasises the crucial role of people in shaping their own development through participatory discussion and collective decision making and through holding those in

power accountable (Sen 1999, Crocker 2008). AGEE seeks to develop and leverage good quality evidence and data on gender and education to inform individual and collective decision-making, public discussion, government education planning, financing and policy development and associated accountability processes (Unterhalter et al. 2022). To do this, AGEE has developed an innovative critical participatory approach and associated measurement tools for gaining in-depth insight into gender and intersecting inequalities in education through co-creating knowledge that is informed by the views of those most affected, and by providing opportunities for different voices and needs to be heard in ways that aim to ensure no harm (Unterhalter et al. 2024).

This panel will be chaired by Dr. Beatrice Akaal, University of the Witwatersrand.

It will comprise three presentations:

Paper 1: Data for change in a time of polycrisis: connecting the local, national and transnational in work on gender, climate and education

Authors: Helen Longlands, Relebohile Moletsane and Elaine Unterhalter

The first presentation will discuss the concepts that underpin the work of Climate AGEE and the AGEE project more broadly and reflect on ideas of polycrisis and what this means for thinking about approaches to data measurement and ideas about transformation.

Paper 2: Co-creating knowledge on gender, education and climate using innovative participatory methods

Authors: Relebohile Moletsane and Lisa Wiebesiek

The second presentation will discuss the participatory methods used in Climate AGEE's work at local and national levels. The AGEE approach recognises research participants as experts in their own lives and experiences and enables the co-creation of knowledge and collaborative meaning-making about issues relating to gender, education and climate change. The paper will report on experiences of planning to use these methods in research with communities affected by vulnerabilities exacerbated by the climate crisis.

Paper 3: Building transformative change from the bottom up: insights on gender, education and climate from a fisher community in South Africa

Authors: Nkonzo Mkhize and Buhle Francis

The third presentation will discuss Climate AGEE's work with a coastal fisher community in South Africa to illustrate how the innovative collaborative and participatory approach and measurement tools of AGEE can be useful for providing in depth insight into issues affecting everyday lives and how to better develop strategies for transformational change.

Keywords: Gender, climate, education, data, South Africa, participatory methodology

Abstract ID #: 1194

Reimagining the Doctoral Thesis as Scholarly Artefact: Designing Creative Theses as Countercultural Educational Practice

Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan | Nosipho Bele | Mandisa Dhlulu-Moruri | Anita Hiralaal | Makie Kortjass | Tamar Meskin | Ntokozo Mkhize-Mthembu | Marguerite Müller | Tanya van der Walt

In response to the SAERA 2025 theme—*Education in a time of polycrisis: Pathways of hope, creativity and affirmative ethics*—this arts-based contribution draws on the conceptual and methodological frameworks presented in the forthcoming edited volume *Designing a Creative Thesis: Perspectives from Artful Doctoral Journeys in Education*. Through a multimodal presentation incorporating visual artefacts, poetic inquiry, performance excerpts, and narrative reflection, contributors illuminate the

affordances of creative thesis design as an ethically affirmative, hopeful, and intellectually vigorous response to the challenges of research and education in turbulent times.

Rooted in Southern African scholarly and sociocultural contexts, the creative theses showcased in this contribution subvert dominant academic norms by foregrounding lived experience, aesthetic expression, and reflexive meaning-making. These arts-informed projects explore educational phenomena through metaphors, visual narratives, theatre, collage, childhood play, and autobiographical storytelling—methods that enrich understanding and humanise academic research in ways that resonate deeply with diverse audiences. The contribution positions the creative thesis in education as a pedagogical intervention: a deliberately countercultural act that invites doctoral researchers to reimagine their scholarly identities, interrogate inherited academic conventions, and engage with knowledge production as a collaborative, relational, and generative process.

As an arts-based collective, we demonstrate how designing creative theses cultivates generative practices of educational becoming, offering both doctoral researchers and academic communities new ways to grapple with complexity, uncertainty, and hope in the face of intersecting global crises. We argue that such design opens agency, authenticity, and critical engagement possibilities.

This contribution aligns with the Self-Reflexive and Arts-Based Methodologies stream. It includes the performance of excerpts from selected chapters, visual displays of thesis designs, and dialogic reflections among authors and audience members. Participants are invited into a co-creative space that models the potential of arts-based inquiry not only as research methodology but as an ethical orientation and transformative educational stance.

Keywords: creative thesis design, arts-based research, educational hope, doctoral education, countercultural scholarship, reflexive inquiry

Abstract ID #: 1269

Scholars on the margins: Mid-career postdoctoral academics' polyglot expectations and experiences of research

Clive Jimmy Wiliam Brown | Michael Mthethwa | Wedsha Appadoo-Ramsamy | Sarah Ralfe | Bridget Horner | Urisha Naidoo |

This panel consists of doctoral graduates who reflect on the challenges and strategic choices in navigating the expectations of an academic career after their doctoral completion. Drawing on a range of national and international contexts, working within varied public and private higher education institutional typologies, and in diverse disciplinary fields, this panel will explore the multifaceted expectations that confront the postdoctoral fellow. These panel members are a unique brand that diverges from the conventional trajectory of early-career postdoctoral researchers. Unlike traditional postdocs, who often hold temporary, part-time positions while striving to secure permanent academic employment, the panel members discussed here already occupy full-time, permanent posts within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). However, they could also be considered as sitting on the margins of the overarching institutional discourses. They are thrust into management responsibilities to contribute to the redress agenda and offer academic leadership in a relatively under-resourced environment of young scholars. Their personal ambitions were intended to make a developmental contribution as they embraced formal academic management or informal leadership roles. These roles include co-ordinating research projects, undertaking community engagement projects and providing departmental or institutional service functions. However, they are also simultaneously expected to undertake academic research, supervising and publication responsibilities to ensure they meet the promotion requirements within the

ranks of academia. They too operate as “scholars on the margins” (Hlatshwayo, 2025), bifurcated in their personal, managerial, institutional, and national career trajectories. All these co-existing agendas constrain the full realisation of all of their hopes. These diverse, simultaneous roles and experiences constitute the polycrises of a mid-career academic. Some choose to follow the economic direction of focusing on selfish careerism, others choose to strategise their teaching workload commitments to find the time to do research, and others take on leadership co-ordination of projects and programmes. However, few funding opportunities exist for the continuing professional development of this special group of ‘postdocs’ to support their early career management or leadership roles. Instead, institutional resources are being understandably directed to those at the earlier stages of doctoral degree completion. The effect is that their research responsibilities suffer.

The experiences of this unique brand of postdocs highlight the complexities of tackling the ongoing professional development and career planning for doctoral graduates. Their experiences highlight the need for strong mentorship, leadership support and funding to provide the space to achieve their next stages of career development as academics. Their precarity is not about permanent employment, but about ensuring their future academic career development, instead of being subserviently locked in either continued extensive (undergraduate) teaching responsibilities, or in overburdensome novice management/leadership roles.

The panel will be conducted through a **conversational dialogue** with their *supervisor*, who has been involved with them during the doctoral supervision journeys and now contributes to a further mentorship role in their post-doctoral career. A *mentor* at the institutional level is part of this reflective account of the fragmentary role of mid-career managers/leaders and their researcher identities stuck in limbo.

1. Urisha Naidoo [*Health Sciences*] (South African public university) comments on the expected subservience of the departmental manager to instrumentalist, performative and commodified educational practice serving multiple regulatory structures, which undermines the professional value of the growing academic.
2. Bridget Horner [*Architecture and the built environment*] (South African public university) reflects on her multiple roles of programme co-ordination, research (project) collaboration, educational facilitation and student community engagement that work across disciplines to bridge academic excellence with social impact. She depicts the PhD study period as a relatively structured, safe and developmental space compared with the contested roles and striated complexity of roles of the post-PhD neo-liberal workplace.
3. Sarah Ralfe [*Music education*] (South African private higher education institution), questions the value of a PhD qualification when co-opted into an institutional management position that is concerned with operational and technical rather than theoretical considerations. The wash-out effect of PhD in the management space inspires a critique of “what is management for?”
4. Wedsha Appadoo [*Teacher education and teacher agency*] (a UKZN School of Education graduate in the Mauritius Institute of Education), highlights the ‘invisible leadership’ roles beyond research that are thrust onto a new academic transitioning from a school to a higher education institutional setting. Questions of “academic maturity” of a young academic, expected to nurture others whilst simultaneously engaging in one’s own research development, complexify the role of a mid-career academic.
5. Clive Brown [*Teacher education, social justice and diversity*] (South African public university of technology), foregrounds the relatively marginalised role of research within the institutional ethos of a university of technology. The influence of this undervaluing of research on the personal career trajectories is

explored critically Negotiating change is not just a personal but an institutional agenda.

6. Michael Mthethwa [*Health Science teacher education*] (South African private higher education institution) acknowledges the challenges of a workspace that celebrates the singularity of disciplinary paradigms and practices, whilst his PhD study elaborated inter-disciplinarity and fluid approaches. Embracing alternative multi-paradigmatic orientations is a continued growth trajectory for both him and his colleagues.

Keywords: Academic Leadership, Academic Precarity, Career Development, Institutional Marginality, Mid-career Postdoctoral Scholars, Polyglot Expectations

Abstract ID #: 1307

How to open up spaces in the cracks of neoliberalism and making equitable and emancipatory (educational) futures possible

Brita Phuthi | Sadi Seyama | Leigh-Ann Naidoo | Carolyn McKinney | Salim Vally

The art-based contribution is based on Brita Phuthi's ongoing PhD study on education's role towards transformation, emphasising pedagogical approaches that can critically examine structural racism, and connecting this to scholarly debates on sustainability education. During the presentation, three examples from the study will be showcased using various mediums of expression. The examples focus on pedagogical approaches by teacher educators that critically examine structural racism and questions established ways of learning, knowing and/or being, and include video clips, poetic expressions, reflective narratives, images etc. The examples will be presented by three of the participants in the study, followed by a reflective dialogue where the audience will be invited to join. The participants, who work as teacher educators/lecturers at different universities in South Africa, were selected for the study due to their experience of teaching critically on structural racism and other forms of structural inequalities. The contribution is a co-creation between the doctoral researcher, her co-supervisor and the three participants of the study.

A central theme in the art-based contribution, and which connects the three examples that are showcased, is education's role in shaping futures grounded in justice and equality for all. It connects this topic with debates on sustainability education, offering a critical lens to UNESCO's promotion of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and seeing this in relation to the dominance of neoliberalism within education and in society. Through the three examples of alternative pedagogies for equitable and emancipatory futures, the presentation highlights the need for teaching approaches that can create spaces for love (Darder, 2014), discomfort (Boler, 1999) and critical hope (Freire, 2021). Here, established ways of knowing and being are challenged through exposing structural mechanisms, particularly related to racism. Simultaneously, the examples showcase insights that emphasise critical hope. Through collective work, these pedagogical approaches have the potential to foster critically conscious and socially-justice oriented teachers for the future.

Keywords: Pedagogy of discomfort, love and critical hope; sustainability education; critical teacher education

Abstract ID #: 1287

Making it to and through Matric: Navigating Polycrisis and Pathways of Hope in South African High Schools

Ursula Hoadley | Shaheeda Jaffer | Carol Bertram | Gabrielle Wills | Heleen Hofmeyer | Servaas van der Berg | Angela Stott

South Africa's education system presents a striking paradox: while international assessments confirm that most learners cannot read for meaning by Grade 4, an increasing number are successfully completing the National Senior Certificate or the 'matric'. Much research investigating teaching and learning in South African classrooms describes schooling without learning the appropriate subject knowledge. This panel draws on the in-depth case study of 99 lesson observations (of Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy, History and English Grade 8 and Grade 10 classrooms) and 56 teacher interviews across eight *typical* high schools across the Eastern and Western Cape of South Africa to explore how this apparent contradiction is sustained. The first contribution by Hoadley et al interrogates the strategies—at the level of districts, schools, and learners—that facilitate learner progression through the system despite apparent low-levels of learning. The second paper by Jaffer et al delves into how teachers navigate the high levels of heterogeneity among learners' academic performance intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, and shows that both in-class differentiation and remedial efforts remain limited and largely deferred to Grade 12. The third paper (Bertram et al), contextualized by the preceding two, disrupts the prevailing deficit narrative by documenting instances of 'good' teaching practices, illustrating what good pedagogy can look like in South African classrooms. Together, these studies offer a layered account of teaching and learning in South African high schools, shedding light on both the failings and the moments of pedagogical promise that shape learners' trajectories to matric. The panel invites reflection on what sustainable and contextually appropriate teaching could look like in South African classrooms defined by low performance, high levels of heterogeneity with respect to academic performance and large classes.

Paper 1: How do students get to and through matric?

Ursula Hoadley¹, Carol Bertram², Servaas van der Berg³, Gabrielle Wills⁴

¹ University of Cape Town, ²University of KwaZulu-Natal ³Stellenbosch University ⁴ Stellenbosch University

This work investigates the empirical puzzle: how is it that the majority of South African learners are passing matric while at the Grade 4 level the majority cannot read with understanding? In recent years, South African learners have been reaching and completing Grade 12 at faster and higher rates despite the 2021 PIRLS report confirming that 81% of South African Grade 4 learners did not reach the low benchmark on the test, meaning that they were unable to read with comprehension in their home languages (Department of Basic Education, 2023). Drawing on quantitative evidence from secondary school-results data in six provinces, and insights from an eight-school case study of typical South African high schools across the Western and Eastern Cape in various subjects, the paper suggests nine potential 'answers' to the question. The authors show how a range of district, school and learner level strategies allow a large number of learners to move through the system without mastering requisite grade-level content prior to progressing which results in a low-level equilibrium in the system but probably at great expense to learning.

Paper 2: How is within-class heterogeneity managed?

Shaheeda Jaffer¹, Jaamia Galant², Heleen Hofmeyr³, Gabrielle Wills⁴, Jess Qvist⁵

¹ University of Cape Town, ³University of Cape Town ³Stellenbosch University ⁴ Stellenbosch University ⁵ Stellenbosch University

Post COVID-19, teachers are confronted with greater heterogeneity in learner preparedness due to easing promotion and assessment requirements during the pandemic years, learning losses due to school closures and uneven teaching and learning, and any form of meaningful and sustained catch-up strategies left to schools and teachers. This paper first identifies the extent of heterogeneity in secondary school classrooms in South Africa, considering how this has increased over time. Against this context, the paper then investigates how selected high schools in the Western Cape and Eastern Cape manage learner heterogeneity with respect to academic performance in History, English, Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy in Grades 8 and 10 through 99 lesson observations and 56 teacher interviews. The findings show that teachers believe that 'more than half' of learners struggle with grade-level content and teachers, and schools are doing little in- and out- of class to address differences between learners, with most remedial efforts aimed at the Grade 12 level.

Paper 3: Finding epistemic lift in challenging pedagogic contexts

Carol Bertram¹, Jaamia Galant², Shaheeda Jaffer³, Ursula Hoadley⁴

¹University of KwaZulu-Natal, ²University of Cape Town ³University of Cape Town ⁴University of Cape Town

Pedagogical research in South Africa generally paints a bleak picture of what high school teaching and learning looks like – slow pacing, minimal activity, proceduralising, communalising, recall-level questioning and assessment-driven practices among others. Overall, there is agreement that learners are not learning to reason, think abstractly, or see connections between concepts (Naidoo, 2021; Naidoo & Mabaso 2020). This paper subverts the lens by focusing on instances where 56 teachers in eight schools across the Eastern and Western Cape of South Africa do show moments of “epistemic lift” or provide opportunities for learners to grasp the subject from the point of view of the discipline, by establishing *relationships between concepts, structuring concepts from lower to higher order complexity and selecting the best examples which demonstrate the generative principles of the subject* (Rata, 2016; Vernon, 2019). These instances begin to illuminate what a systematic and contextually relevant pedagogy could look like in South African classrooms characterised by low performance, high levels of heterogeneity with respect to academic performance and large classes.

Keywords: Pedagogy, Learner progression, within-class heterogeneity, Responsive pedagogy

Abstract ID #: 1368

Primary Teacher Education (PrimTEd) curriculum standards and common assessments: “Learnification” or Teaching-Informed Research?

Monica Mawoyo | Maureen Robinson | Connie Makgabo | Qetelo Moloi | Lyn Kok

This panel engages tensions at the centre of the Primary Teacher Education (PrimTEd) collective, a national effort to design and administer common assessments and curriculum standards for primary mathematics, languages and literacies. Our collective effort is to conceptualise what knowledges are required to teach children mathematics, languages and literacies in South African primary schools, how we know the extent to which our student teachers are gaining said knowledges, and so how best to improve our ITE practices. The PrimTEd endeavours may be easily pigeon-holed as “learnification” where education is viewed as individualised learning outcomes, measurable competencies, where standardised tests are technical instruments, used to treating students as consumers and learning as a product. In this conceptualisation efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of the ITE endeavours are the primary concerns. Yet, some of the colleagues who are in the PrimTEd collective reject this view of standardised assessments

as necessarily top-down instruments of neo-liberal capitalism. By defining the standards, designing the tests from the position of those immersed in the practice of ITE, and choosing how results are used, members of the collective consider the PrimTED work to responding to Biesta's call for teaching-informed research. In this framing, the PrimTED standards and related tests are living documents, which articulate some key assumptions and provide a framework against which the academic endeavour of reflecting on and improving practice can be made explicit. The process of curriculum specification, test design, and related use or testing results facilitate ITE reflection on the purpose of education, raising deeper philosophical and political questions:

- Are PrimTED tools (the knowledge and practice standards, the tests, the reports and results) an instance of learnification, in Biesta's (2009; 2010) terms—an overemphasis on measurable learning outcomes at the expense of teaching, subjectification, and democratic purpose?
- Or might they reflect the spirit of teaching-informed educational research (Biesta, 2017), whereby educators' practical judgment and collective experience shape assessment design in ways that foreground purpose, pedagogy, and the ethical complexity of teaching? Rather than presuming a binary, this panel explores the productive tension and interplay between these positions.

Monica Mawoyo: Introduction to PrimTED, and the panel discussion

The origins of PrimTED, how it has worked and its achievements to date. This includes consideration of the PrimTED 'theory of change' and what is assumed to be possible in the short and long term, in the collective as a whole, and in each of its discipline-specific communities of practice.

Maureen Robinson: Identifying trends and debates in the PrimTED knowledge and practice standards for English Home and First Additional Language

While the knowledge and practice standards for English were the product of an intense process of deliberation, they now exist as 'fixed' in the form of draft text. This raises the question as to whether (and how) the standards, as they exist on paper, reflect processes and debates in the teaching of English Home and First Additional Language, especially in a South African context. Examples of such debates include: What theories of language learning underpin the suggested approaches to pedagogy? How will these standards be integrated in a class that is likely to include a mix of home and additional language English learners? And how will they be interpreted by teachers who are pressurised to teach an official curriculum?

Connie Makgabo: Re-versioning and starting to categorise the PrimTED knowledge and practice standards for Home Languages in Sepedi

The PrimTED languages and literacies knowledge and practice standards were originally developed in English, and distinguished home languages from first additional languages. How these knowledge and practice standards were interpreted and re-versioned by ITE academics teaching Sepedi is reflected on. The standards were initially just grappled with for their application to Sepedi, and the need for African languages glossaries or key concepts emerged. As the iterative process of re-versioning standards, developing items, piloting items, and revisiting the standards, how to categorise (and hence theorise) the standards, what weighting to give particular standards, and their overlap with first additional languages and literacies, came to the fore. Much of this work has included engagement with mother tongue-based bilingual education, where ITE contexts ought to be responsive to the changing expectations of teachers in primary schools.

Qetelo Moloi: Rasch measurement and our professional judgements: Convergence or clashes in isiXhosa and Sepedi home languages?

Robust assessment design can and may be firmly assigned to the technicians, where statistical and quantitative competencies reign supreme. But, when the technical analysis

is made accessible to ITE colleagues designing the tests, adapting the standards, and using the test results, Rasch analysis reveals its true power. It is only by combining the data from student teachers in their responses to the test items, together with the professional judgements of ITE colleagues immersed in practice that meaningful tests, and usable reporting are possible. This input contrasts the Rasch measured information, gained from the empirical data during piloting, with the professional judgements made by Sepedi and isiXhosa colleagues on the structure and difficulty levels of particular standards.

Lyn Kok: Creating usable PrimTEd reports to inform teaching in Mathematics

The PrimTEd Maths community of practice has the benefit of having knowledge and practice standards and extensive piloting of items which assess those standards. In these processes, several questions remain unanswered:

- How to conceptualise the standards in ways that are meaningful to inform course design?
- How best to report on the assessment data in ways that are usable for lecturers?

In this input, the process of further refining and theorising the knowledge and practice standards, how the test structure and reporting has developed, and the process of specifying performance levels which are helpful to both student teachers and their lecturers, is discussed.

Monica Mawoyo will facilitate discussion on the extent to which the PrimTEd collective is contributing to 'learnification' and/or to teaching-informed research. Does standardisation in teacher education reflect neoliberal pressures that privilege control, efficiency, and decontextualised evidence—or might it, under certain conditions, be reclaimed as a practice of professional judgment and solidarity?

Keywords: assessment, standardised test, reflection, learnification

Abstract ID #: 1398

Reimagining Teacher Pedagogical and Assessment Practices in Southern Africa: Leveraging Theoretical Insights to Enhance Professional Development

John Bhurekeni | Arorisoe Sibanda | Clement Simuja

The continuing influence of imperial colonial impositions of 'cultural technologies of domination' is evident even in institutions of higher learning in postcolonial Southern Africa. A narrow focus on employability, and disconnectedness from local contexts are evident manifestations of the enduring influence of coloniality within higher education institutions in southern Africa, particularly in teacher education. Research is replete with evidence that current patterns in pedagogy, learning theories, and the purpose of education in teacher training have their origins in colonial modernity. This translates into an inefficiency in teacher training which is rooted in the faultiness of the basic design of the teacher training curriculum and assessment methods highlight the need to leverage change-oriented and learning theories to reimagine teacher training, professional development to enhance significant transformation in pedagogical and assessment practices. This panel, which is made up of researchers who are in teacher training, opens with a paper that traces the origins of learning theories as well as the nexus between the works of Dewey, Lewin, Vygotsky, and Lipman. The discussions are then enriched by an exploration of the aspects to be included in teacher professional development and establishment of change projects as seen from Lewin's perspectives. We conclude our panel discussions by focusing on the import of dialogic teaching and classroom talk in improving teachers' pedagogical skills and competences

Paper 1: Exploring the Role of Learning Theories in Teacher Education and how they advance teacher pedagogical skills and competencies development

John Bhurekeni

Environmental Learning Research Centre

This panel examines the role of learning theories in pre-service teacher education and in strengthening pedagogical skills and competencies, particularly for student teachers in southern Africa. Literature has extensive evidence demonstrating that, from behaviourism in the 1800s to humanism, learning theories in teacher education have evolved and influenced how teaching, pedagogy, curriculum design, policy, and assessment methodologies are understood in formal education contexts. Aim in this discussion is to demonstrate teacher education in southern Africa, offer the imperial colonial administration employed 'culture technologies of domination' to establish hierarchically organised groupings. Entry into pre-service teacher education programmes has traditionally related to employability opportunities that allow one to advance up the social ladder. However, we intend to open this discussion to offer insights on how a non-superficial understanding of learning theories enables educators to develop effective teaching pedagogical skills and competencies and support student learning and development. To achieve this, we intend to draw on insights from Dewey (1916), Lewin (1935), Vygotsky (1978), and Lipman (1973) because the connection between their work has a significant impact on learning and development, particularly in terms of how they position the role of everyday activities and the social environment in the educational process. We hope the discussion will instil an understanding of the emancipatory and cognitive development purpose of pre-service teacher education, which leads to context-relevant educational transformations in southern Africa.

Paper 2: Leveraging Lewin's Change Theory in advancing pedagogical shifts and curriculum innovations

Arorisoe Sibanda

Environmental Learning Research Centre

There is a significant rise in the professional development of teachers to develop the competences that align with the recurring curriculum reforms in Southern Africa. These curriculum reforms are in response to address contemporary issues such as graduate attributes, sustainability concerns, epistemic injustices and so on. The paper is guided by Lewin's change theory, which emphasises iterative processes of change that are complex and participative (Burnes, 2019). The aim of this paper is to emphasise the need to leverage change-oriented and learning theories to trace the pedagogical shifts and curriculum innovations. The paper illustrates how Lewin's (1935) work can be embraced in tracing pedagogical and curriculum innovations when examining the impact of capacity and professional development initiatives. The adoption of Lewin's theoretical insights in teacher training initiatives should be used in cognisance of the works of Dewey (1916), Vygotsky (1978), and Lipman (1973). The preliminary findings of this ongoing study highlight that situating the change theory insights within the founding learning theories and local knowledge provides significant insights for designing the professional development curriculum. This approach addresses the misalignment of capacity and professional development initiatives with the founding learning theories and local knowledge. Democratic participation, collaborative learning and reflexivity are the key attributes of effective capacity and professional development, which require theoretical orientation in pedagogical shifts and curriculum innovations. Thus, it is important to leverage change and learning theories in designing capacity and professional development training programmes that are culturally oriented.

Paper 3: Examining the Import of Dialogic Teaching and Classroom Talk in Improving Teachers' Pedagogical Skills and Competences.

John Bhurekeni, Clement Simuja, and Arorisoe Sibanda

This paper builds on our own experiences of working with pre-service and in-service teachers at a university in South Africa via utilisation of the dialogic teaching and classroom talk as a pedagogical approach. According to Fouché, (2024) dialogic teaching is a pedagogical approach that capitalizes on the power of talk to further students' thinking, learning, and problem solving. Improving thinking and problem-solving skills in teacher education is important, especially in a region that is still contending with the legacies of colonial modernity, which as discussed in the first paper, shapes the current trajectory of teacher education in southern Africa. The paper utilises reflective practice as a methodological approach since it allows us to illustrate the benefits of what we do during lectures, not only for students but also for lecturers. We also make use of Dewey (1916), Lewin (1935), Vygotsky (1978), and Lipman (1973)'s constructivist learning theories as they emphasis the necessity of 'active thinking' skills when encountering obstacles and problems. Evidence from the study demonstrates that dialogic teaching and classroom talk approach fosters a more engaging and interactive learning environment that is anchored on effective communication, classroom management and collaborative learning skills which translate into improved pedagogical competencies for both student teachers and their lecturers. Thus, the approach helps us in reimagining teacher pedagogical competences especially in a context where teacher education has traditionally had a great focus on employability, and in so doing has remained disconnected from local needs and purposes of education.

Keywords: teacher education, professional development, pedagogical shifts and competencies, curriculum innovations, learning theories

Abstract ID #: 1435

A Game With/out Rules: An Intra-active Game for Diffractive Reading (and a figuration of a curriculum-to-come)

Petro du Preez | Jean du Toit

Amidst accelerating neoliberal pressures, increasingly quantified academic environments, and the erosion of deep, collective intellectual inquiry, this workshop introduces a speculative, experimental game: A Game With/Out Rules. The game, as we will argue, is a form of slow scholarship that could also be seen as a figuration of a curriculum-to-come. Rather than reinforcing traditional modes of academic mastery or interpretation, the game foregrounds emergence (immanence), intra-action, and diffractive reading as modes of collective experimentation and sense-making. In this way, it is not merely a game about reading, but a figuration of a curriculum-to-come.

Drawing on feminist new materialist lines of flight, particularly the agential realism of Karen Barad, and the postqualitative provocations of Patti Lather, this reading game is situated as a methodology-to-come: not a prescriptive technique but a performative, ontological embodiment and enactment of scholarship in motion. It is also from here that we understand and develop the idea of a 'curriculum-to-come'.

Using surreal Dixit imagery cards and selected textual fragments, game-players collaboratively explore the affective, relational, and material, by reading texts through cards, cards through quotes, and both through the bodies and affects/effects of those playing the game. The slash in the name—"with/out"—is not merely a stylistic choice, but an agential cut: a dynamic intra-action between structure and freedom, rule and play, form and becoming.

The game unfolds within reading groups committed to slow scholarship and deep work, interrupting the tempo and logic of neoliberal academia. These groups function as oases for contemplative, collaborative work and are informed by a diffractive methodology that

reads theories and experiences through one another—not for comparison, but to trace where and how differences (come to) matter. Imagination is vital in the game and not positioned as a cognitive faculty of the human mind (epistemologically), but as a material, ontological force—what Barad calls a “wandering/wondering of the world.”

Through poetic drift, relational wonder/wander, and playful rigour, *A Game With/Out Rules* becomes a figuration of curriculum as immanent, relational, and open-ended. We propose that this intra-active practice not only resists the logic of efficiency and output that characterises much of higher education, but also gestures toward a curriculum that is ecologically entangled, affectively charged, and ethically responsive - or what we term, a curriculum-to-come.

This workshop invites participants to engage in the game themselves, as a generative response to the “polycrisis of the thick now”—a term that names the entangled urgencies of ecological, political, technological, and institutional crises that defy linear solutions. In this spirit, *A Game With/Out Rules* offers not a remedy, but a diffractive, imaginative space to linger with complexity and play toward alternative possibilities.

Keywords: Curriculum, Diffractive Reading, Game, Intra-action, Rules

Abstract ID #: 1095

Moving Beyond Vocational Qualifications: A Freirean Perspective on the Transformative Path of Vocational Education

Ezekiel Majola

This paper explores the transformative possibilities and constraints of South Africa’s Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector through Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy. Amid overlapping global crises—economic, environmental, political, and social—the urgency of what Biesta (2015) describes as risk and subjectification in education becomes increasingly apparent. TVET’s predominant focus on narrow economic outcomes reflects neoliberal priorities that often reproduce rather than disrupt social inequality. The study, conducted in the Eastern Cape, involved 15 NC(V) TVET graduates and adopted a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. Data were generated through Learning Cycle Group Meetings and Critical Life Narrative interviews, enabling participants to critically reflect on their lived realities and reimagine vocational education beyond technical training. Drawing on insights from South African scholars such as Soudien (2023), Vally & Motala (2014), and Ramphela (2017), the paper critiques a curriculum that marginalises students’ agency, civic responsibility, and critical engagement. Freire’s notion of problem-posing education is proposed as a countercultural alternative—rejecting passive knowledge transmission in favour of nurturing critical consciousness and social transformation. The paper advocates for a reimagined TVET system that transcends employability and positions students as agents of change. This requires not only curriculum reform but also a shift in institutional and pedagogical practices that constrain students’ ability to shape their futures. In line with Biesta’s call to rethink education’s purpose, the paper invites deeper reflection on how TVET might respond to the polycrisis by fostering both personal empowerment and collective transformation.

Keywords: TVET, critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire, Biesta, polycrisis, social justice

Abstract ID #: 1172

Preparing Socially Just School Leaders Amid Educational Polycrises: A Case Study of the ADSLM Programme in South Africa

Farhana Amod Kajee

Amid an escalating polycrisis in education, including rising inequality and the erosion of democratic values, there is an urgent need to prepare school leaders who are ethically grounded and committed to social justice. Leadership approaches rooted in equity and transformation resonate with Biesta's (2015) call to reclaim education's democratic and normative purposes. In South Africa, the Advanced Diploma in School Leadership and Management (ADSLM) was introduced to strengthen in-service leadership capacity and to advance the constitutional values of democracy, equity, and social justice. However, limited empirical research exists on the extent to which this programme cultivates socially just leadership practices. This qualitative case study explores how 8 to 10 graduates of the ADSLM programme at one university perceive and enact principles of social justice in their leadership roles. Drawing on Furman's (2012) Social Justice Leadership as Praxis Framework and Shields' (2010) Transformative Leadership Theory, the study investigates the relationship between professional learning, personal agency, and equity-oriented practice in complex educational contexts. Data is generated through open-ended online questionnaires, eliciting reflective narratives that foreground participants' values, leadership practices, and developmental trajectories following programme completion. Findings indicate that the ADSLM programme contributes meaningfully to the cultivation of socially just leadership. However, the study also identifies a need for more explicit integration of social justice frameworks into programme design to better equip leaders to respond to complexity with hope and perseverance. The research offers valuable insights for the Department of Basic Education to assess how leadership preparation aligns with post-1994 constitutional and policy imperatives in times of systemic crisis.

Keywords: Social justice leadership, Transformative leadership, leadership preparation programme, leadership in complex times

Abstract ID #: 1111

**Metacognitive Skills as Enablers of Self Directed Learning in Mathematics
Education: A Review of Empirical Evidence in Higher Education**

Simon Adjei Tachie

Despite the growing emphasis on self-directed learning (SDL) as a pathway to academic resilience and lifelong learning, explicit metacognitive instruction remains inconsistently implemented within university mathematics curricula. This paper responds by systematically reviewing empirical research on metacognitive skill development in higher education mathematics and assessing how these skills function as enablers of SDL. A qualitative systematic review methodology was employed, guided by Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocols. Peer-reviewed studies published between 2010 and 2024 were retrieved from major academic databases, including ERIC, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Inclusion criteria required studies to focus on tertiary mathematics education, incorporate empirical data, and examine metacognitive strategies (e.g., planning, monitoring, and evaluation) in relation to SDL outcomes. A total of 27 studies were included and analysed thematically. Thematic synthesis revealed three dominant trends: (1) metacognitive training enhances students' ability to regulate mathematical problem-solving; (2) students with higher metacognitive awareness exhibit greater persistence, self-efficacy, and SDL readiness; and (3) instructor scaffolding and explicit metacognitive prompts significantly influence learner autonomy. These findings align with Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) theories (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; Zimmerman, 2002), which conceptualise metacognition as a mediating mechanism between SDL readiness and academic achievement. Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that when higher mathematics education incorporates explicit metacognitive skill development, students become more self-

directed, motivated, and successful. The paper concludes that explicit metacognitive skills instruction is not merely supplemental but foundational in fostering SDL in mathematics education.

Keywords: Metacognitive skills, Self-directed learning (SDL), Mathematics education, Higher education, Learning strategies

Abstract ID #: 1121

An investigation into the polycrisis in teaching and learning in ECD centres in the Western Cape of South Africa

Kaylianne Aploon-Zokufa

In South Africa, where Foundation Phase (FP) learners continue to perform poorly on national and international tests; investigating the practices around teaching and learning in Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres is a crucial step in understanding how best to improve performance in the early years as well as to establish the nature of the polycrisis currently at play in ECD. While various research studies suggest that a deep crisis exists in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), particularly in relation to insufficient teacher qualifications, limited teacher professional development, a lack of resources for teaching and learning, challenges with centre registrations and learner enrolment; the nature of current teaching and learning practices is yet to be explored. This presentation is based on a study that investigated the social organisation of knowledge in lower-income areas of the Western Cape in South Africa. Fourteen centres formed a part of the study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two practitioners at each of the fourteen centres. Currently, I report on teaching and learning practices in four ECD centres, to better understand the context of teaching and learning as well as identify the impact of such practices on ECCE.

Using an interpretivist approach, and constructivism as a theoretical framing; the study shows that ECD practitioners build their knowledge of teaching and learning through their lived experiences as adult learners and that this becomes the foundation of teaching and learning practices in the ECD classroom. Findings also suggest that teaching in ECD consist of using materials provided by external institutions, with very limited alignment between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. The study makes recommendations for more effective and guided teacher professional development opportunities for ECD practitioners in order to have more effective, sustained teaching and learning practices in early learning classrooms.

Keywords: teaching and learning, Early Childhood Development (ECD) practitioners, constructivism, teacher education, early learning

Abstract ID #: 1175

On Ice boys, ice girls and the workhorses in the university: Postdocs beyond the polycrisis

Mlamuli Hlatshwayo

It has become abundantly clear that the global higher education sector is struggling to adequately respond to the growing structural challenges that have questioned the very legitimacy (and being) of the sector. These challenges include the commodification commercialization, and corporatization of the university; the steep state financial cuts; the unsupported and unsustainable massification; the calls for decolonization/ Africanization/ transformation; the rising rates of precarity, employment insecurity and job casualization in the academy; the gendered and patriarchal nature of institutional leadership and governance amongst others. In this paper, I attempt to make three arguments. Firstly, I

read and see the emergent polycrisis as largely neoliberal in its discursive formations, and I suggest that that the managerialism, crippling forms of performance management and the publish and/or perish have had an adverse (and dangerous) effect on the purposes of higher education. Secondly, I argue that the uses/ misuses/ abuses of postdocs broadly reflects this polycrisis, and I shine a spotlight on the complex challenges of these marginalized scholars who have become the new ice boys, ice girls and the workhorses in the modern university. And finally, I end the paper with a proposed framework on what is to be done to recognize, protect and support postdocs beyond the polycrisis in higher education.

Keywords: Postdocs; higher education; polycrisis; neoliberalism; transformation

Abstract ID #: 1215

ENHANCING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE LEARNING OUTCOMES THROUGH GAMIFIED COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Fasinro Kabiru Sasaenia | Randle Oluwarotimi

The declining proficiency of indigenous languages among learners has sparked apprehensions over the impact of existing instructional methods, particularly for non-native speakers. As contemporary classrooms continue to have a global outlook, where learners are from different backgrounds, the failure to adequately address the persistent gap between learners in indigenous language classrooms has continuously elevated political, educational, and economic reactions. This study investigated the difference in learning outcomes between native and non-native speakers taught indigenous language through gamified collaborative learning. A quasi-experimental design was adopted for the study, comprising 90 students from two conveniently sampled senior secondary schools in Lagos State. A Yoruba language achievement test was used for data collection, validated and tested for reliability with a coefficient of 0.82. Treatment was administered for four weeks. Native learners achieved a mean score of 29.23, significantly higher than the non-native learners' 13.00. The result of the ANCOVA test on the post-test learning outcome revealed a statistically significant difference between the native and non-native speakers, $F(1, 87) = 80.97$; $p < 0.05$. Native speakers have a lower intrinsic cognitive load when learning a language; prior knowledge and cultural practices allow native speakers to process and retain information efficiently, whereas non-native speakers must invest additional cognitive resources in decoding unfamiliar linguistic elements. It was recommended that gamified collaborative learning strategies be tailored to meet the diverse cognitive requirements of both native and non-native learners in indigenous language instruction to effectively improve learning outcomes and close the significant performance gap between the groups.

Keywords: Gamified collaborative learning, Indigenous language, Native speakers, Non-native speakers and Yoruba Language

Abstract ID #: 1376

Unlocking potential: ODeL for incarcerated students

Sabelo Biyela | Reginald Govender

Correctional centres, previously known as prisons, were not designed for education as they were intended to keep lawbreakers and inmates incarcerated. Hence, facing harsh conditions while isolating individuals from personal development. However, since 2000, the South African Department of Correctional Services has promoted the social responsibility for rehabilitating and reintegrating inmates into society/communities. Education plays a significant role in the rehabilitation process and ensures inmates are transformed into assets to the nation when reintegrating into society. Education at correctional facilities is complex; many students are compelled to study via open-distance eLearning (ODeL). Students cannot leave the correctional centres to attend lectures at academic institutions because of security measures and risks. ODeL involves using advanced electronic communication with instructors and internet technologies in the teaching and learning space. Generally, students at correctional centres can use laptops, desktops, and the internet for academic work with limited use of educational websites and emails.

This research explores the ODeL experience among inmates studying at correctional centres within the ambits of the pragmatic paradigm, adhering to mixed methods with a qualitative-dominance. Purposive sampling technique was used to sample tertiary students incarcerated in three correctional facilities across Durban KwaZulu-Natal. The research focused on postgraduate and undergraduate students who are juvenile males, male adults and female inmates. The findings indicate that while students at correctional centres have access to Internet technologies, they have many limitations imposed that may affect their academic progress and hinder their full potential to rehabilitate into society.

Keywords: open-distance eLearning, incarcerated students, internet technologies, rehabilitation process

Abstract ID #: 1301

Teacher Education in Times of Polycrisis: Decolonial and Justice-Oriented Approaches in South Africa

Otilia Chiramba

This paper examines the evolving landscape of teacher education in South Africa within the context of a “polycrisis”, an interconnected set of social, economic, political, and environmental disruptions. The paper aims to assess current limitations and propose means for reimagining teacher education to address both historical inequalities and emerging global disruptions. While policy reforms and pedagogical innovations have attempted to reshape teacher training, significant challenges rooted in historical and structural inequalities persist. The paper draws on theoretical frameworks of resilience, decoloniality, and social justice to explore strategies that empower educators to act as transformative agents. It presents a vision for a teacher education system capable of addressing both legacy issues and emerging global crises. The conceptual paper adopts literature synthesis. Sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and conference proceedings from both local and international contexts. The analysis reveals three major emerging themes namely persistent structural inequities, emerging spaces of innovation and resistance and decolonial and social justice-oriented pedagogical shifts. The paper therefore recommends curricula reimagining, Institutional support for Innovation, resilience and policy alignment with social justice goals. It concludes that teacher education must transcend technocratic goals and cultivate teachers as agents of social justice and resilience.

Keywords: teacher education, South Africa, decolonisation, policy, transformation, inequality

Abstract ID #: 1265

Vocational Education Stigma: An enduring legacy of coloniality of being

Josephine Towani | Prof. Vaughn John

This paper explores the persistent stigma surrounding vocational education, based on a qualitative case study of the National Certificate Vocational (NCV) curriculum in two TVET colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. Using the decolonial concept of coloniality of being, the study draws on curriculum and decolonial theories to examine how historical and contemporary societal perceptions position, marginalise and stigmatise vocational pathways. Vocational Education in South Africa was initially positioned as a remedial route for poor white males as early as 1910, a perception that continues to influence how TVET colleges are viewed (Makola, Dube & Tabane, 2023). The findings reveal that TVET stigma carries discrimination, devaluation and dehumanisation, contributing to the 'Othering' of NCV students, many of whom come from marginalised backgrounds. This condition aligns with Maldonado-Torres' (2007) notion of the 'zone of non-being', where compounded stigmas of poverty, race and rurality intersect with educational marginalization, as part of polycrisis. The study argues that stigma functions as a mechanism that devalues vocational education and reinforces negative stereotypes (Clair, 2018). As a result, many young people overlook vocational training despite its potential benefits, opting instead for university education. The study concludes by advocating for policy and perception transformations as part of South Africa's broader response to polycrisis. It emphasises the strategic role of TVET colleges in addressing unemployment, poverty and well-being of young people, urging a shift in discourses to dismantle entrenched stigmas and reimagine vocational education as a credible and transformative pathway (Wedekind, 2014).

Keywords: Curriculum, stigma, vocational education, educational justice

Abstract ID #: 1203

School leadership socialisation in sub-Saharan Africa: A reimagination

Callie Grant | Pontso Moorosi

The work of school leadership is a context-sensitive, complex and dynamic process requiring the competencies of leadership and management for the role. In many developing contexts, school leaders work in contexts of poverty, violence, overcrowded classrooms, unsafe school environments, learner and teacher absenteeism and parental absence on a daily basis. Thus, preparation for school leadership in these contexts demands contextually relevant and localised knowledge to meet the complex and resource-constrained demands faced. However, a review of the literature on school leadership preparation and development reveals a predominance of research and publications emanating from English-speaking countries in the global North. This literature cannot be transferred unproblematically to non-Western contexts, thus opening up opportunities for significant research, including research on the African continent. Against this backdrop, our paper draws on a three-year, multi-sited study that explored how school leaders were socialised into the principalship role in four sub-Saharan African countries (South Africa, Lesotho, Namibia and Botswana). Our study was framed by leadership socialisation theory. Principals and deputy principals constituted the participants. In total, 95 school leaders were interviewed across the four countries, and we used open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to generate data. Data were analysed inductively per case which was followed by a cross-case analysis. This paper represents

a reimagination of the school leadership socialisation landscape and offer a unique sub-Saharan Africa contribution.

Keywords: Socialisation, school leadership, socialisation theory, leadership preparation and development, sub-Saharan Africa, steppingstones metaphor

Abstract ID #: 1440

Complicated conversations or convoluted archetypes? Higher education curriculum in South Africa

Gloria Castrillon | Kirti Menon

Universities are identified as agents of change, and the time for complicated conversations *about* curriculum is now. The conviction that 'curriculum' in South Africa (SA) equates to education or to a list of graduate attributes results in a simulacrum of education. Posthumanism provides a radical reimagining of education's purpose and methods, calling for approaches that are holistic, relational, and responsive to the contemporary world. Paradoxically, the requirements for SA curricula have become archetypes and do not enable transformation, leading rather to the "binary separation of self and other, being and belonging" (Praeg, 2014: 248). In this conceptual paper, the deployment of a specific formulation of 'curriculum' as the blueprint for education is examined. Autio (2014: 18) asserts that education should be "educative in the real sense", rendering "every single lesson a 'complicated conversation'". Moving past neoliberalism in the 'postcritical' period requires "wisdom traditions", "deeply political" acts, which are equally acts of "cultural insurrection" (Smith, 2014: 51). It is the authors' contention that South Africa is at a crossroad with respect to curriculum. This paper proposes an approach that contextualizes and historicizes agency, leveraging learning to navigate the world effectively. It draws on research undertaken for the Council on Higher Education by Menon, Castrillon, Singh, Chiramba and Motala (2025) on conceptions of curriculum transformation in South African universities.

Keywords: Agents of Change; Complicated, Convoluted; Curriculum; Higher Education

Abstract ID #: 1309

From crises to critical moments: a Bourdieuan exploration into the emergence of radical teachers and teacher social movements

Ashley Visagie

The focus of this paper concerns the enabling conditions for the emergence of teacher activism under apartheid, which it explores through an analysis of the accounts of four Cape Town teachers, all of whom were classified as 'coloured' under apartheid, identified as socialists, participated anti-apartheid struggle, and held various positions of leadership in activist organisations. The accounts of the teachers are argued to offer a heuristic framework with which to consider challenges which teacher social movements in the contemporary period shall have to overcome. Leveraging conceptual that resources drawn from Bourdieu in analysing the teacher accounts, it is argued that emergence of activism may be better understood by considering how times of crisis produce conditions under which taken-for-granted assumptions can be contested. Crisis produces discordance within the field between hegemonic social visions and the reality of the crisis, which renders plausible resistance discourses. What the paper seeks to illustrate is that crises carry potential but that it requires translators who are capable of showing the linkages between the everyday suffering of people and broader struggles in the field of

power. These translators are those who are able to mobilise particular species of capital. They gather people together. They read the word and the world. They imagine a world that is different and ask both 'what is' and 'what if'. But they don't only imagine new social structures, institutional arrangements and social relations: their beliefs are embodied in the work they do.

Keywords: teachers, activism, imagination, crisis, capital

Abstract ID #: 1239

The Untapped Potential of Professional Doctorates in South Africa: A Neoliberal

Sybert Mutereko

A significant but under-examined finding in the *2022 Doctoral Degrees National Report* relates to the limited uptake of professional doctorates in South Africa (Council on Higher Education, 2022). While these practice-oriented degrees are growing globally, they remain underdeveloped in the South African context. This represents a missed opportunity, as professional doctorates could help bridge the gap between academic research and industry needs - a key objective of the NDP. The report notes this underutilisation results in lost potential for applied research and development of high-level research capacity for practical applications (Council on Higher Education, 2022).

Against this backdrop, this study examines the nature and status of professional doctorates in South Africa through a neoliberal lens. Using a systematic literature review, 499 papers were screened for geographic focus (South Africa) and programme type (professional doctorate), with 40 selected for analysis. Findings reveal that professional doctorates are positioned as responses to labour market demands (Schneider et al., 2024). However, their structure and marketisation vary across disciplines (Stolp, 2012; Stewart, 2024), and tensions persist between academic rigour and market imperatives (Friedrich-Nel & Lues, 2024).

This study underscores the untapped potential of professional doctorates to foster applied, industry-relevant research. Despite their potential, they remain underutilised. A framework for professional doctorates is needed to guide their development and implementation. This research lays the groundwork for further empirical studies, offering insights to inform policy and practice in South Africa and other emerging economies.

Keywords: Professional doctorate, graduate attributes, postgraduate education, curriculum responsiveness, higher education

Abstract ID #: 1377

Enhancing reading through ICT integration in intermediate phase EFAL classrooms

Sekanse Ntsala

For the past two decades reports on literacy performance highlighted poor reading levels as a reality among intermediate phase learners, with the recent international literacy tests emphasising the lack of reading comprehension among this cohort of learners. The implication is that if the situation is left unabated, many learners will continue struggling with many of their subjects, seeing that English is the language of learning and teaching for majority of learners. It is for this reason that this scholarly piece reports on a project aimed at solving the challenge of poor reading and reading comprehension, especially in township schools, where learners use English as language of learning and teaching. Twelve English First Additional language teachers from six schools in the Motheo Education District, Free State were sampled. The interpretive project, premised on Participatory Action research, exposes the participants, who are co-researchers, to the

benefits of Information Communication Technology in reading, and this paper reports on their experiences on the design and the use of digital storytelling in their reading lessons. The data from reflections that took place after the intervention, was analyzed thematically, and it revealed the following: Exposing learners to digital stories promotes active participation and interaction; it facilitates enjoyment; learners are motivated to attend sessions; it minimizes disciplinary issues; and most importantly, it promotes visualization and comprehension levels. A synthesis is that despite challenges around Information Communication Technology, it can help minimize reading challenges in intermediate phase classrooms.

Keywords: ICT, EFAL, Reading Comprehension, PAR, Digital story

Abstract ID #: 1391

Support for Out-of-Field STEM Teachers in South Africa: A Systematic Review

Bornwise Ntshani | Nomfundo Radebe

Out-of-field (OOF) teaching in STEM subjects remains a persistent challenge in South African schools, particularly those that are under-resourced. OOF teaching occurs when educators are required to teach subjects for which they lack formal training or qualifications. This practice often stems from systemic teacher shortages and structural inequalities in education. As a result, teaching quality and learner outcomes are frequently compromised, especially in critical STEM disciplines. Despite the widespread nature of this issue, there is limited understanding of how OOF STEM teachers are currently supported within the education system.

This study presents preliminary findings from a systematic review of empirical literature examining existing support structures for OOF STEM teachers in South African schools. Guided by PRISMA protocols, the review analyzed peer-reviewed studies published between 2012 and 2024. A thematic synthesis of the data indicates that support for OOF teachers is largely inconsistent, uncoordinated, and often dependent on the individual efforts of schools or districts rather than being part of a formalized, nationwide framework. The review also highlights a lack of targeted professional development initiatives, mentorship programs, and collaborative learning opportunities tailored specifically to the needs of OOF STEM teachers.

These findings underscore the urgent need for context-sensitive support mechanisms that recognize the realities faced by OOF teachers in underserved schools. By identifying critical gaps and trends across the literature, this study lays the groundwork for a more equitable and responsive system of teacher support and capacity-building in South Africa's STEM education landscape.

Keywords: Out-of-field teaching, Teacher support, STEM education, under-resourced schools

Abstract ID #: 1260

Partnerships and Research on Inclusion, Diversity and Social Justice

Sulochini Pather | Ronel Koch | Fumane Khanare | Trevor Moodley | Rubina Setlhare

This panel shares experiences of partnerships and research relating to inclusion, diversity and social justice. The panel starts off with a presentation which highlights the value of partnerships in conceptualizing inclusion in developing contexts, particularly relating to the African and South African context. Presentations which follow will share findings from 2 research projects which are underpinned by these notions of inclusion. They explore how sexual consent is negotiated amongst young adults, and teacher perceptions of

naturalistic interventions to support communication with children with autism and other developmental delays.

1. Value of local and International Partnerships in unpacking thinking, policies and practice in Inclusive Education (Prof Sulochini Pather)

This presentation provides a background to notions of inclusion which underpin issues raised in the research papers presented in this panel. It looks at the value of local and international partnerships, drawing on examples from personal involvement in partnership projects in Inclusive Education across Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The presentation is framed by decolonial theories of engagement through international and comparative education proposed by Schweisfurth, Crossley and Watson. It provides an overview of how partnerships have led to the conceptualisation of Inclusive Education and inclusion across developing contexts.

2. Communicating Sexual Consent: Insights from UWC Students (Dr Ronel Koch)

This presentation explores how sexual consent is communicated among university students, drawing on qualitative research with 20 participants from the University of the Western Cape. Grounded in the broader goal of reducing gender-based violence, the study unpacks the nuanced ways in which young adults negotiate consent in intimate contexts. The presentation highlights the importance of clear, respectful communication and aims to contribute to creating environments where sexual engagement is rooted in absolute free will, free from coercion or pressure.

3. Naturalistic interventions to improve communication for children with Autism and other developmental delays in South Africa (Prof Fumane Khanare, Prof Trevor Moodley, Dr Rubina Setlhare)

This study was conducted with teachers based at two special schools in the Cape metropole, Western Cape. This study explores teacher participants' views about the appropriateness and effectiveness of naturalistic interventions in teaching children with challenges in communicating due to autism and other developmental delays. The study is premised on the naturalistic interventions approach which is based on applied behaviour analysis; but focusses on the use of incidental and focused learning in a natural manner. This means that the environmental, cultural and developmental contexts in which children learn, guide how specific learning activities are planned and delivered to encourage the development of communication skills.

Keywords: Inclusion, sexual consent, autism

Abstract ID #: 1313

Reimagining Teacher Union Involvement as A Motivation for School Innovation and Equity: Beyond Traditional Role of Bargaining

David Matsepe | Thembinkosi Zwane | Mugwena Maluleke

There has been a scarcity of research investigating the role of teacher unions beyond their functions in collective bargaining and labour relations, which primarily safeguard the interests of the workers they aim to support. This study seeks to reconceptualize the role of teacher unions, viewing them not merely as negotiators but as catalysts for school innovation and as builders of relationships aimed at promoting social equity within educational institutions. Utilizing a qualitative research methodology framed within a phenomenological design, this study explores the role of teacher unions in fostering school improvement, extending beyond their well-documented focus on advocating for teachers' rights. Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted with four (4) school principals, four (4) union representatives, four (4) educators, four (4) members of the school management team (SMT), and the school governing body (SGB). Using thematic data analysis method, interviews were subsequently analysed to identify

prevalent themes. While teacher unions play a significant role in professional development and policy implementation, their involvement in school administration is often marked by resistance stemming from imbalanced power dynamics and overlapping perceptions of roles. We contend that when teacher unions (TUs) coordinate their efforts with school administration, they have the potential to drive significant school reform, enhance teacher motivation, and tackle disparities in resource allocation and support within schools. Consequently, the research indicates that reconceptualizing teacher unions as collaborative partners in fostering innovation equity has the potential to enhance and fortify school systems, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for learners.

Keywords: Teacher unions; collective bargaining; social equity; labour relation; educational reform

Abstract ID #: 1315

An exploration of the leadership styles that school principals employ in the rural settings for School Effectiveness

Makhobela Nkateko Success | Kola Malose | Mafumo Thinavhudzulo

Leaders in rural schools face distinct and complex challenges, influenced by persisting legacies of apartheid, socio-economic disparities, inadequate infrastructure, and limited opportunities for professional development. These challenges often result in difficulties attracting and retaining qualified teachers, as well as managing scarce resources effectively. Despite these obstacles, many rural school leaders demonstrate resilience and creativity in finding innovative solutions to improve educational outcomes for their students. This study explores the leadership styles that school principals employ to manage their multifaceted educational contexts. The study employed Context-Responsive Leadership Theory and Enacted Environment Theory as the theoretical lens to examine how school leaders adapt their practices to address the unique challenges and opportunities inherent to rural South African schools. The challenges often encompass limited resources, socio-economic disparities, teacher shortages, community expectations and minimal parental involvement, necessitating adaptable and contextually relevant leadership strategies. The study is qualitative, employing a case study design. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews with the school principals. The findings indicate that rural principals frequently employ an amalgam of transformational, instructional, ubuntu and distributed leadership styles, tuned to meet the needs of the schools they lead. Furthermore, principals who exhibit high levels of contextual intelligence, flexibility, and the ability to promote inclusive, long-term school development by adjusting their leadership styles to the changing realities of their schools are effective in these rural settings. The study concludes with recommendations for improving professional development for rural school leaders, decentralisation of decision-making, and implementing policy reforms that address the complexities of rural education.

Keywords: Context-responsive leadership, educational leadership, enacted environment theory, leadership styles, rural school leadership, school effectiveness.

Abstract ID #: 1197

Female Academics' Work-Life Im-Balance and Academic Career Development Challenges: The Impact of Work Intensification in a South African University

Musa Makhoba

Developing academics experience immense pressure due to the progressive intensification of academic work. An intersection of job, career development, and family demands puts pressure on them to renegotiate their work-life balance. Being female in a counterculturally male-dominated higher education system further exacerbates these

challenges. The intersectionality of these factors for female academics remains under-researched, especially in small disciplines where each staff member's role is robust. Within a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology design, and conceptually guided by the system theory framework, this study explored the experiences of female Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology (SLP/A) academics (lecturers) of work-life balance while in pursuit of academic career development at a South African university. Data from eight purposively sampled female academics were analysed thematically. The findings from the studied context suggest that the particular female academics lacked work-life balance, with the majority of their time spent on teaching and related administration. They compromised their academic career development and neglected their social life to cope with the intensification of work demands. They also faced a discipline-specific counterculture against career development, making the availed developmental opportunities barely accessible. This study highlights the flaws in the top-to-bottom flow of academic career development opportunities and the discipline-specific counterculture that restricts career development for some female academics. It further highlights the need for a fundamental policy shift toward firmly protecting female academics against career progression hindrances, in SLP/A and contextually similar Disciplines.

Keywords: Work-Life-Balance, Academic Career Development, work intensification, Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology

Abstract ID #: 1346

Navigating Polycrisis in the Nigerian Educational System: Primary Teachers' Perspectives

Japhet Omolere Okuntade | Oluwafemi Ebiseni Ebimomi | Melaine B. Luckay

The contemporary educational landscape is characterized by interconnected challenges, including economic instability, legislative reforms, infrastructural deficiencies, and social issues, which collectively impede effective teaching and learning. This study examines how primary school teachers in Badagry Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria, experience and respond to these multifaceted pressures—often conceptualized as a polycrisis. Rather than solely attributing classroom inefficiencies to teachers' commitment, teaching methods, or curriculum shortcomings, this research aims to unpack the systemic complexities shaping their professional realities. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected through a questionnaire administered to 100 primary school teachers who were randomly selected from ten primary schools in Badagry Local Government Area (LGA). The study seeks to illuminate how teachers perceive and navigate these interconnected challenges within and beyond the school environment. The findings reveal that teachers frequently act as frontline responders in an educational system strained by external and internal crises, managing curricular demands alongside socio-economic and institutional constraints. The study highlights how teachers adapt their practices in response to these challenges and emphasizes the importance of amplifying their voices. Ultimately, the research offers recommendations for fostering resilience and developing support structures to enhance teacher effectiveness amid ongoing systemic difficulties.

Keywords: Education, Polycrisis, Primary school, Teachers, Nigeria Educational System

Abstract ID #: 1409

Postdoc-ing in the time of the polycrisis: A South African perspective

Alois S. Baleni | Mlamuli Hlatshwayo

Globally, higher education institutions are confronting a series of polycrisis challenges. This polycrisis presents itself through the growing fascism led by the United States and Donald Trump; the commodification, commercialisation, and corporate colonization of higher education; the climate and ecological justice; un-supported massification; calls for transforming/ decolonizing/ Africanizing curricula amongst others. In this paper, we locate the plight of postdocs in this broader global polycrisis. We argue that postdocs have to navigate an increasingly complex and challenging higher education system. Through a qualitative and critical paradigm, we explored and theorised postdocs' experiences in navigating their being and belonging in South African universities. We purposively recruited and interviewed 23 current and former postdocs in three research-intensive universities in South Africa. We relied on Crenshaw's intersectionality to analyse the findings. The findings revealed that postdocs occupy this liminal space of epistemic/ ontological/ societal instability in South African higher education that is characterised by a persistent experience of precarity, marginality, and exclusion, shaped by intersecting factors of class, race, and gender barriers. We further reveal the crippling mental health challenges that postdocs are navigating and negotiating in their lives. We end the paper with our concluding thoughts on the need to subvert the polycrisis in higher education through structural policies and practices that are required to recognize/ safeguard/ protect the well-being of postdocs.

Keywords: Higher education; polycrisis; postdoc; precarity; intersectionality

Abstract ID #: 1408

Digital Tools and Social Skills in Language Learning: Early Childhood Teachers' Perspectives

Blandina Manditereza

This qualitative study, grounded in the interpretive paradigm, explores Grade 1 teacher perspectives on how the use of digital tools affects social skill development in early learners through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Using purposive sampling, 43 Grade One teachers from ten primary schools were interviewed to gain in-depth insights into their subjective experiences and perceptions. The research focuses on understanding how teachers interpret language learning and interaction through the use of digital tools. Data were analysed thematically to capture the perceived social realities of teaching language with technology, highlighting critical factors such as learner attention spans and the interplay between home and school environments. The findings reveal that without a balanced pedagogical approach that acknowledges these interconnected systems, there is a risk of fostering a generation with weakened social skills and diminished interpersonal engagement, resulting in language deficit. This study contributes to educational research by foregrounding teachers' voices and contextualised knowledge, emphasising the importance of considering the ecological context in addressing digital engagement challenges.

Keywords: Diminished social skills, ecological systems interaction, language deficit

Abstract ID #: 1181

Mixed Reality Simulation (MRS) to enhance pre-service teachers' use of questioning as a core teaching practice

Sarah Gravett | Dean Van Der Merwe | Pamela Tshabalala | Casey Bremner

Limited practice time, inadequate feedback, and constrained environments—both in teacher education institutions and schools—significantly restrict pre-service-teachers' opportunities to develop essential teaching practices, particularly questioning techniques. To address this, teacher education programmes must adopt innovative approaches that

prepare pre-service teachers to use core teaching practices meaningfully. Mixed Reality Simulation (MRS) emerges as a compelling solution, providing a controlled yet realistic environment where pre-service teachers can repeatedly practise questioning with avatar learners. This abstract presents two basic qualitative research studies, where each study explored five pre-service teachers' experiences with MRS. Data was collected through focus groups, stimulated recall interviews, and observation. Data analysis was conducted using the constant comparative approach, framed using the lens of adaptive expertise and deliberate practice. The studies revealed three findings: (1) MRS supported intentional, focused practice by providing pre-service teachers with a realistic, low-risk environment to rehearse questioning strategies; (2) MRS coupled with the coaching sessions developed pre-service teachers' competence in using questioning techniques, (3) involvement in MRS in combination with coaching encouraged reflective learning. Moreover, the studies contend that without coaching, the pedagogical potential of MRS is significantly diminished. Coaching transforms MRS from a mere technological tool into a meaningful learning experience, reinforcing the argument that effective teacher preparation requires not just innovative tools, but also thoughtful pedagogical support.

Keywords: Teacher education, Mixed Reality Simulation (MRS), questioning techniques, pre-service teachers, reflective learning, coaching

Abstract ID #: 1382

Crossroads of Opportunity and Exclusion: Determinants of School Participation Beyond Compulsory Education in South Africa

Sinenhlanhla Nkwanyana

The pursuit of educational equity remains a cornerstone of South Africa's national development agenda and democratic transformation. The post-compulsory school phase remains a critical yet under-researched area. While near-universal enrolment has been achieved at the compulsory level, participation significantly declines among youth aged 15–18. This paper examines the demographic and contextual factors that determine who stays in school and who is left behind. Drawing on nationally representative data from the General Household Survey (2002–2022), the paper employs a repeat cross-sectional design using univariate, bivariate, and multiple logistic regression analyses. The theoretical framework underpinning the paper is Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which provides a layered understanding of how individual, household, and contextual variables interact to influence educational participation. The results indicate pronounced disparities by province, gender, disability status, and household income. While some youth manage to remain in school despite systemic challenges, particularly in historically disadvantaged areas, these cases remain exceptions within a system that continues to reproduce inequality through rigid bureaucratic structures and limited support pathways. This paper argues that access to post-compulsory education reflects a broader contest between equity and systemic exclusion. Accordingly, policy responses must move beyond enrolment statistics to engage with the lived experiences of youth in this transitional phase. This paper calls for a rethinking of post-schooling policy by centering the intersecting vulnerabilities that shape who continues in education and who disengages.

Keywords: Post-compulsory education, School participation, Educational inequality, General Household Survey (GHS), Multiple logistic regression, South African youth

Abstract ID #: 1323

Transformative leadership in resource constrained schools in South Africa

Andrea Juan | Sylvia Hannan | Jaqueline Harvey

In the context of South Africa's enduring inequality and systemic educational challenges, many students in resource-scarce schools follow a near-predictable trajectory of low achievement and intergenerational poverty. This study contends that transformative leadership in disadvantaged schools can disrupt these pathways and contribute to a broader reimagining of education's purpose in times of polycrisis. Drawing on quantitative data from public primary schools that perform above national norms despite their material deprivation, this study explores how school principals, teachers, and students co-construct alternative educational futures. These schools offer educational leadership practices that challenge deficit discourses, foreground community agency, and prioritise collective well-being over narrow performance metrics. Principals act not merely as managers of policy compliance but as moral and pedagogical leaders who articulate a transformative vision, foster shared commitment, and inspire hope. Their leadership practices are not heroic in scale but grounded in relational, contextually-responsive actions that yield tangible outcomes for learners and communities. In line with Biesta's call to move beyond the 'learnification' of education, this paper argues that transformative leadership in such schools embodies an education of presence, purpose, and possibility. By cultivating schools that serve as anchors of care, resistance, and transformation, these leaders and their communities illuminate how education can be reoriented toward dignity, justice, and resilience amid the uncertainties.

Keywords: Transformative Leadership, No-fee schools, TIMSS

Abstract ID #: 1227

Co-constructing collaborative support provision strategies through the integration of learner voices and teacher insights

Pateka Pamella Jama | Matabe Rosa Modiba

Collaboration among different stakeholders in the support provision is considered an instrumental element in the implementation of an inclusive education system. Education White Paper 6 (EWP6) on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training system prescribes that collaboration in the support provision should include all stakeholders, such as learners, teachers, members of the community, relevant government departments, and professionals, to just mention a few. However, engaging the views of learners in the support provided to them is still a missing link in support provision practices. Although teachers are central in support provision, learners' contribution is necessary if that support is to address their individual needs. This participatory action research study aimed to develop strategies that can be utilised for learner engagement during the collaborative support provision through the viewpoints of both teachers and learners. Six (6) teachers and six (6) learners from two full-service schools in the Ngaka-Modiri Molema district of Northwest province were purposively sampled to participate as co-researchers in this study. Data was generated through purposeful discussions and collages. Data was analysed through inductive thematic data analysis. The findings of this study depict that Full-Service School teachers were engaging learners to some extent during the support provision. The findings further indicate that learners are minimally involved in the support provision, but not based on the individual support plan. Both teachers and learners indicated the need for involving learners in planning and implementing support interventions. The study recommends that continuous training should emphasise the importance of involving all stakeholders in the support provision.

Keywords: Collaboration, full-service school, learner voices, stakeholders in support provision, support

Abstract ID #: 1277

Embodied-artistic pedagogies: Who gets to play in South African schools?

Gerard M Samuel | Charlotte Svendler Nielsen | Liesl Hartman | Fabian Hartzenberg

How can we integrate playfulness and support individual expression in the classroom when many of our teaching and learning contexts feel trapped by worlds in polycrisis? Cramped classrooms, dysfunctional families, drug abuse, and gangsterism manifest in worsening multiple educational paths intended to address poor reading, disjointed writing, and critical thinking skills. How do integrated arts-based methods that foster playfulness in the teaching space promote social justice and cohesion? This presentation investigates a shift in emphasis from *what* to *how* we can teach in the context of arts-based methodologies to unearth the 'thinking-feeling' responses in children. Thinking in and through movement as the basis for cognition has been explored by Dance philosopher Maxine Sheets-Johnstone and others. Our work specifically examines 'lived experiences' as Dutch educator Max van Manen proposes to gain insight into such 'thinking-feeling' responses of the children, and of ourselves. We embrace bifurcated roles, of what Canadian Visual Arts researcher Rita Irwin terms A/R/Tographers and co-learners, highlighting a potential shift in power dynamics in schools. We ask who gets to play in South African schools and why affirmative ethical practice matters. We have explored an embodied-artistic pedagogy through an arts-integrated project located at a primary school in Cape Town, 2017-2020. Our 'playful' work has investigated abstracted notions such as borders and thresholds, and patterns that can be understood in design terms and as social detritus. We deployed a hermeneutic-phenomenological and arts-based analysis to our engagements in creative movement and dance, much of which was autonomous, and in the form of drawings and photographs. This presentation will further announce how integrated embodied artistic pedagogies can act as pathways of hope and foster understandings of resilience.

Keywords: Arts-based methodologies, Dance, Embodiment, Hope, Interculturalism, Playfulness, Resilience, South Africa

Abstract ID #: 1353

Integrating community project initiatives into in-service teacher development curricula at Zimbabwean state universities: A case study

Albert Mufanechiya | Matseliso M Makgalwa

The study evaluated the integration of the Student Initiated Innovative Community Project curriculum reform into in-service teacher development programme at one Zimbabwean state university. The priority has been to design a university curriculum system that is relevant, contextual and capable of providing meaningful positive impact on communities. Utilising a qualitative methodology and Community-Based Learning as a conceptual framework, the study investigated how the curriculum can be an agent of development in communities where in-service teachers work and live. The study used observation of the community projects, focus group discussions with ten in-service student teachers and five community stakeholders conveniently selected to assess the current landscape of community projects in the teacher development programme. Findings revealed a paradigm shift from a static and unresponsive academic curriculum towards one that speaks to the dynamic needs and circumstances of communities thus taking education into the informal spaces. Community participants voiced a compelling need for such initiatives that empower in-service student teachers to design such sustainable and

impactful community projects, emphasising the importance of experiential learning, social awareness and enhanced synergies between teachers and communities. However, significant barriers including attitudinal challenges, power dynamics, resources mobilisation issues, time constraints, insufficient institutional and community support impede the successful integration of this reform initiative. Research recommendations for policy reform and curriculum redesign are provided to ensure a more responsive and impactful teacher development system, ultimately emphasising the importance of curriculum relevance in enriching teacher professional development and meeting the genuine needs of the Zimbabwean communities.

Keywords: community engagement, curriculum, in-service, teacher development, Student Initiated Innovative Community Project

Abstract ID #: 1134

The impact of Language of learning and teaching on the performance of commercial subjects in rural schools

Adolph Mathiba

The underperformance and declining enrollment in commercial subjects (Business Studies, Economics, and Accounting) in some South African schools have raised concerns about their sustainability. Limited research has explored the role of the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) in shaping commercial learner performance, particularly in rural schools, despite evidence that poor proficiency in the LOLT can hinder comprehension and curriculum delivery in English-medium subjects. This study examines the effects of LOLT on academic performance in commercial subjects within rural schools of the Capricorn South District. Adopting an interpretive paradigm and qualitative methodology, the study employed a multiple case study design. Ten commercial departmental heads from ten secondary schools were purposively sampled. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis, then analysed using thematic content analysis. The study found that poor proficiency in the LOLT is a barrier to the curriculum delivery of commercial subjects. Accordingly, the study concludes that LOLT proficiency is a critical determinant of academic success in commercial subjects. Addressing language barriers through systemic educational reforms, such as teacher training programmes and bilingual education models could improve learner outcomes and prevent further decline in subject enrolment.

Keywords: commercial subjects, curriculum, LOLT, rural schools

Abstract ID #: 1296

Stimulating transformative teacher leadership in a liminal space: A South African case study in the critical tradition

Teacher leadership is a powerful tool for educational improvement and innovation in schools. However, in South Africa (the most unequal country in the world) teachers are seldom taken seriously as leaders, despite their important role as change agents in the transformation of a failing schooling system. This study is therefore driven by the question: How do we stimulate the activist identity in teachers in order for them to become transformative leaders who can lay the groundwork for challenging social inequities and inequalities in schools? Designed as an exploratory case study, the research drew on the experiences of teachers and school leaders involved in a South African university postgraduate qualification in Educational Leadership and Management. The degree is unique in that it is deliberately designed as a transgressive service-learning initiative in the critical research tradition. The 2023 cohort formed the case, and all 20 graduated students were invited to participate in the study. Ten of the 20 students accepted the invitation. Critical pedagogy provided the metatheory with critical educational leadership

and transformative leadership the substantive theories. Data generation tools included individual semi-structured questionnaires and a focus group interview. Data were analysed inductively and deductively. The chapter demonstrates the potential of a transgressive university service-learning course in disrupting school leadership myths and enabling the leadership development of teachers and learners.

Keywords: Teacher leaders, learner leaders, critical pedagogy, critical educational leadership, transformative leadership, university service learning

Abstract ID #: 1425

Academics' Professional Identity: Conflicting Personal Values of Academics and Institutional Culture

Novel Lena Folabit | Loyiso Currell Jita

Higher education is driven by the objective of establishing an educational setting in which academics and students collaboratively construct and convey scientific knowledge and values that can be utilised in the future. Academics' professional identity focuses on their professional interests, values, and commitments to important work duties. Consequently, academics' professional identity may encounter obstacles when faced with a conflicting misalignment between their values and university culture. This paper utilises a qualitative case study with an interpretive paradigm to investigate how academic identity is constructed through the conflicts that arise from the discrepancy between individual values and institutional culture. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine academics purposively selected from an English-speaking university in Cameroon to gain insight into the phenomenon. The gathered data were coded and analysed thematically. The findings reveal the existence of conflict between academics' personal values and institutional culture in the study context. It was found that there is a lack of integrity and ethics within the academic environment, particularly regarding financial transactions and the exploitation of educational practices by some leaders, academic staff, and students. Additionally, issues such as insufficient remuneration, delayed payment, and fear of physical and professional reprisal within the university impact academics' professional identity and self-worth. To address these challenges, it is crucial to tackle delayed wages, foster a supportive environment, align academic values with university beliefs, and promote political neutrality in the study context.

Keywords: academics' professional identities, higher education, institutional culture, personal values

Abstract ID #: 1289

Teachers' accounts of instructional norms in early grade classrooms: A South African case study

Ursula Hoadley | Colleen Boyd | Nompumelelo Isaac

Across early grade classrooms in low- to medium-income contexts there are enduring instructional practices regarded as antithetical to learning but which have proved persistently obdurate to reform. These include such practices as whole class choral reading and the dominance of teacher talk. Recently, agencies concerned with foundation literacy and numeracy have shown some interest in probing teachers' beliefs to understand how to shift these norms. But there is very little research which asks teachers why certain practices are sustained – why they do the things they do. This paper contributes to our understanding of enduring instructional norms in early grade classrooms. Drawing on Layder's (2006) work on social domains, the paper argues that norms derive from different dimensions of teachers' professional and personal lives. The

paper suggests multi-pronged interventions that consider the personal and collective constitution of teachers' work at different social levels.

Keywords: teacher beliefs, instructional norms, early grade learning, low- and middle-income countries, social domain theory, teacher professional development, teachers' work

Abstract ID #: 1217

Crossing Borders, Building Bridges: Lessons in Interdisciplinary Doctoral Supervision

Rowena Naidoo | Michael Anthony Samuel

This paper reflects on the complexities and generative potential of co-supervising an interdisciplinary doctoral study that bridges Health Sciences and Education. The core research problem interrogates how institutional structures and disciplinary traditions constrain or enable epistemological integration within postgraduate supervision. Drawing on the growing body of scholarship on interdisciplinarity, we argue that supervising across paradigmatic divides is not merely a methodological task but a deeply reflexive and political act. Our main argument foregrounds supervision as a dialogical, iterative, and relational process that disrupts normative knowledge hierarchies and fosters conceptual hybridity. Through retrospective analysis of our supervisory journey, anchored in reflective writing, student artefacts, and institutional engagement, we offer a theorised account of interdisciplinary practice as both a pedagogical stance and a strategic imperative. While espousing interdisciplinarity, we problematise how doctoral education often defaults to mono-disciplinary rituals of supervision, examination, and quality assurance. We conclude with recommendations to reframe supervision as an entangled, future-facing practice and call for institutional reform that legitimises interdisciplinary doctoral work.

Keywords: Interdisciplinary supervision, epistemological fluidity, institutional paradoxes, doctoral education reform, knowledge integration, higher education reform

Abstract ID #: 1420

Decoding African Language Curricula: Rethinking Standards Amid Educational Polycrisis

Shilela Nkadimeng

In the current polycrisis in education, addressing social justice, neurodiversity, and cultural inclusion is critical. As Umalusi, the quality council for general and further education and training, develops standards for new qualifications, the National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) emerges as a qualification of empowerment and access pegged at NQF L4. This conceptual paper critiques and reimagines how African language curricula might be quality-assured within NASCA, employing both constructivist and deconstructivist paradigms. Using critical, deconstructive, and neuropsychological lenses, the paper explores frameworks and theories to underpin African language curricula evaluation. It argues that African language typologies predict unique ways of knowing, teaching, and assessing, challenging reductionist, mechanical curricula derived from Germanic language models. African languages' dialogic nature, following call-response and indirection maxims, places high cognitive demands on learners. Such cognitive loads, multilayered and socially situated, require differentiated taxonomies for learning and assessment. The socio-cultural context of African languages suggests that their epistemologies and ontologies cannot be neurologically justified through Western language "versioning" practices, as is current practice in the National Senior Certificate (NSC), a schooling qualification. The paper contends that the NASCA's development provides an opportunity to affirm identity, recognise neurodiversity, and ensure quality learning experiences for African language speakers in this adult qualification. The

polycrisis in education, marked by global inequities, cultural erasures, and knowledge hierarchies, makes it urgent to rethink how African languages are integrated into curricula. We conclude that positioning NASCA as an inclusive, empowering qualification underscores the need for nuanced frameworks to evaluate African language curricula that reflect cognitive and socio-cultural complexity, thereby enhancing educational quality for the historically marginalised.

Keywords: Curriculum standards, Dialogic pedagogies, Language curricula, Neurodiversity

Abstract ID #: 1276

Fostering Teachers' Self-Directed Learning in Resource-Constrained Grade 8 Mathematics Classroom

Nothile T. Kunene | Gordon Sekano

The South African education system faces overlapping global crises, such as economic disruptions, deepening digital divide, lack of planning, goal setting, self-monitoring, and collaboration, which are SDL characteristics, particularly in resource-constrained environments. These polycrises have worsened issues in delivering equitable and quality learning, especially in subjects like mathematics that are foundational for scientific and technological advancement, where the digital infrastructure is vital. This study, therefore, set out to explore (1) *How do senior phase Mathematics teachers experience the teaching and learning of Mathematics in resource-constrained contexts with digital divide barriers?* (2) *How can teachers cultivate resilience and foster Self-Directed Learning (SDL) in mathematics classrooms amid the digital divide?* Employing a basic qualitative design under an interpretive paradigm, five purposively selected teachers took part in pre- and post-intervention semi-structured interviews. All audio-recorded interviews were analysed thematically—open-coded independently by both authors, followed by axial coding to cluster emergent codes into SDL themes. Teachers reported that at their schools, there is no Wi-Fi or teachers' and learners' gadgets. Findings indicated that participants started introducing low-tech pedagogical strategies grounded in learner-centred practices, including Blended classrooms through the use of tools such as PhotoMath, GeoGebra classrooms, Khan Academy video and using logbooks and structured reflective exercises, peer tutoring, collaborative problem-solving, to help learners take ownership of their learning journeys. These results demonstrate that a structured, context-appropriate Technology-Supported Cooperative Learning (TSCL) professional development (PD) intervention can effectively foster teacher SDL and resilience in low-tech **resource-constrained** settings, which contributes to the purpose of education in polycrises settings.

Keywords: collaborative innovation, mathematics education, professional development, resilience, self-directed learning, resource-constrained

Abstract ID #: 1284

Preparing young people for the Future of Work through 21st-Century Soft Skills Development: A South African Perspective

Celestin Mayombe

Globalisation has changed the economy and labour markets at national, regional, and global levels. Since the 2000s, there has been a significant emphasis on the importance of soft skills to meet demand for 21st-century skills in the discourse of education and curricula (Kim et al., 2019; Macquail et al., 202; Rego, 2017). As a result, in today's job market, employers seek individuals with strong critical thinking, problem-solving,

communication, teamwork, creativity, collaboration, and effective use of technology (Feraco *et al.*, 2022; Ferreira & Robertson, 2022; Ramos *et al.*, 2023; Qizi, 2020). However, soft skills have been noted to be missing among graduates (Kaityyn *et al.*, 2018; Macqual *et al.*, 2021; Noah and Aziz, 2020; Taylor, 2016). While it is generally admitted that 21st-century soft skills are important, the concern in this paper is why schools, TVET colleges and universities are not implementing them. The central argument of the paper focuses on the challenges that teachers and lecturers may face in implementing 21st-century soft skills. This has implications for schools, TVET colleges and universities to ensure they prepare young people for the future of work. To prepare for these changes in South Africa, these learning institutions will need to equip young people with the soft skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, teamwork, creativity, collaboration and effective use of technology because they are increasingly in demand in workplaces.

Keywords: Labour markets, soft skills, 21st-century skills, young people, problem-solving, critical thinking

Abstract ID #: 1142

Pre-service teachers' challenges and navigational approaches: School-university partnership

Cias Tsotetsi

Globally there is a concern on the pre-service teachers' readiness for the world of work. Preservice teachers undergo Work Integrated Learning to better prepare them for the world of work. While studies have been done on pre-service teachers and Work Integrated Learning in other contexts, there is a dearth of literature focusing on the two concepts mentioned with a focus on Qwaqwa, the former homeland in the Free State province of South Africa. In this paper, we report on a project that was guided by the following research question: What are the challenges and navigational approaches of second year pre-service teachers placed in a university-school partnership? A total of ten pre-service teachers participated in the project which involved two schools. The students were transported from the university to and from the schools once a week in the third school term of 2024. Informed by the decoloniality theory, we employed case study research design to execute the project at one of the university campuses. To generate data, pre-service teachers had to take five separate photos focusing on the challenges and navigational approaches as they were placed in the two schools. They further had to write a narrative giving meaning to the photos. Findings indicate that they were challenged by the buildings which were not conducive for teaching and learning, multigrade classes and the lack of resources. Furthermore, pre-service teachers reported on the navigational ways in which they survived in the space. This paper contributes to the debate on challenges and creative ways in which pre-service teachers are being prepared for the world of work.

Keywords: case study, pre-service teachers, school-university partnership, Work integrated learning

Abstract ID #: 1441

Innovations and Emerging Technologies in Strengthening Inclusive Education: Trends and Controversies

Cina Patricia Mosito | Prince Osiesi | Obakeng Kagola | Dikeledi Mahlo

In a resource constrained economy, there is a need for educational responses that are accommodating, innovative and sustainable. Despite many available technologies to facilitate learning, for example among learners with disabilities, what remains unknown is

the extent of innovations and technologies in education for adapting the learning environment so that it is welcoming of diversity, differences and enables social and educational participation of all learners. This workshop will feature presentations that outline a variety of technological innovations for epistemic inclusion. The speakers will tease out the trends and controversies associated with these innovations. While mostly based on existing research, contextual implications for South Africa and similar education systems around the world will bear reference. The speakers will address these issues as they relate to Basic, Further and Higher Education. The Discussant will synthesise their experience and personal reflections, what and how imagined technologies have fared so far in South African context and Sub-Saharan Africa in general. These discussions will delve into deliberations that will open the path for further research in the field of Inclusive Education.

Keywords: Emerging Technologies in Education, Inclusive Education, Teaching and Learning, Teacher and Learner Perceptions, Trends and Controversies

Abstract ID #: 1416

Mapping Metaphors, Making Meaning: Self-Reflexive Methodologies in a Time of Polycrisis

Makie Kortjass | Ntokozo Mkhize-Mthembu | Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan | Daisy Pillay | Linda van Laren | Anita Hiralaal

In line with the SAERA 2025 theme—*Education in a time of polycrisis: Pathways of hope, creativity and affirmative ethics*—the Self-reflexive methodologies Special Interest Group focuses on *Mapping metaphors, making meaning: Self-reflexive methodologies in a time of polycrisis*. In an era increasingly described as a *polycrisis*—a convergence of social, ecological, political, and epistemic crises (Tooze, 2022)—educational researchers are urged to reimagine both the content and form of inquiry.

This special interest group (SIG) invites contributions that foreground self-reflexive methodologies and utilise metaphor as arts-based research to explore hopeful, creative, and ethically responsive ways of navigating research and pedagogy. As human beings, we do not merely use metaphors for rhetorical flourish—we think, feel, remember, and make meaning through them. Metaphors are embedded in our everyday language and deeply influence how we construct knowledge, perceive our realities, and navigate complex emotional and intellectual experiences (Boeynaems et al., 2017). We see metaphor not merely as a stylistic device but as a methodological compass—one that can guide researchers through uncertainty, complexity, and contradiction.

As arts-informed and self-study researchers, we understand metaphor as a medium for bridging lived experience with scholarly analysis, enabling the articulation of layered, affective, and relational knowledge (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). We invite submissions that explore:

The use of metaphor in self-reflexive, narrative, or arts-based research methodologies

Methodological innovations that engage uncertainty, ambiguity, and liminality as productive spaces

Embodied, sensory, and visual forms of inquiry that foreground creative knowledge practices (Springgay & Truman, 2018)

Ethical and hopeful responses to research in contexts of institutional, socio-political, and ecological crisis (Zembylas, 2014; Braidotti, 2013)

This SIG offers a collaborative and experimental space to share inquiries that resist extractive research logics and instead cultivate care, relationality, and joy. Together, we ask: What becomes possible when we think *with* metaphors in a time of crisis? How might

metaphor help us trace new pathways of becoming, imagining, and belonging in education?

Keywords: arts-based research, care cultivation, metaphors, relationality, self-reflexive inquiry

Abstract ID #: 1442

AI Tools for Educational Research: A Hands-On Workshop on Topic Modelling

Siyabonga Mhlongo | Alton Dewa | Fatima Makda | Reuben Dlamini
SIG Panel Presentation.

Abstract ID #: 1357

The Eras Tour: Fifty years of teacher education in South Africa

Lee Rusznyak | Maureen Robinson | Melanie Luckay | Ashley Visagie | Connie Makgabo

Teacher Education in South Africa has come a long way over the past fifty years. In this session, members of the Teacher Education SIG reflect on the eras of teacher education in South Africa. Each era is considered in terms of its commitment to social justice, attention to organising systematic learning and its conceptions of teacher professionalism.

The session draws on a published article that tracks key moments in teacher education policy and curriculum in South Africa from the 1970s to the present day. In the article, political and social features of education in each decade are outlined, from a racialised and fragmented system of teacher education to the imagining of alternatives, and the imperative for educational transformation. We track ways in which changes in teacher education policy have enabled or restricted opportunities for systematic learning for students in different social contexts, and towards advancing equity.

Members of the SIG in Teacher Education, and participants in the session, will be invited to share memories of their experiences in these eras, and how these eras have shaped them as educators and researchers. Various members of the SIG will offer their perspectives on the current era of teacher education, its priorities, tensions and opportunities.

The Eras Tour will be followed by a short SIG in Teacher Education Business Meeting.

Keywords: Teacher Education

Abstract ID #: 1179

All Hands on Deck: A Critical Analysis of a Rural High School's Grade 12 Enrichment Programme and Its Leadership Implications

Selaelo Mariri

This paper critically examines a Grade 12 enrichment programme implemented at a rural high school in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. The programme, marked by weekend classes, extended school days and holiday sessions, is intended to improve matriculation results. While the approach reflects the School Management Team's (SMT) commitment to academic achievement, it raises significant concerns about learner well-being, sustainability and the uneven distribution of instructional support across the school. Using a qualitative case study design within an interpretive paradigm, data were generated through semi-structured interviews with seven SMT members along with direct

observations of SMT leadership practices. The findings indicate a disproportionate focus on Grade 12 learners, to the exclusion of foundational work in lower grades. This narrow, high-pressure approach to instructional leadership often emerges from the pressure to produce favourable matric results, overshadowing long-term developmental goals. The paper argues that such crisis mode strategies risk overburdening learners and overlook the systemic issues affecting educational quality in rural contexts. The SMT's leadership in this case study reflects both commitment and constraint—demonstrating dedication within a context of scarcity, yet reinforcing a short-term approach to school improvement. A more balanced and sustainable approach is needed, one that builds instructional leadership capacity across all levels of schooling. The paper concludes by advocating for professional development and school improvement strategies that reduce learner pressure and promote consistent support for all learners.

Keywords: Instructional leadership, Grade 12, rural education, learner well-being, school leadership

Abstract ID #: 1167

Exploration of Intermediate phase pre-service teachers understanding of addition of unit fractions

Cathrine Kazunga | Sarah Bansilal

Understanding fractions is foundational to mathematical proficiency, yet research consistently highlights that pre-service teachers (PSTs) often harbor deep-seated misconceptions about basic fraction operations. This study explores the conceptual understanding of addition of the unit fractions half and a third among a cohort of pre-service elementary teachers. Using qualitative methods, including written assessments and semi-structured interviews, the study investigated how PSTs represent, interpret, and compute with these fractions. The study was conducted with 160 participants and from which eight participants were interviewed for further clarification. The research instrument included an item based on addition of two unit fractions. The study draws on Ball, Thames, and Phelps' (2008) framework of Mathematical Knowledge for Teaching (MKT) to analyze the specialized and pedagogical content knowledge exhibited by participants. Findings reveal a range of misconceptions, including the tendency to apply whole-number reasoning on position, difficulties with finding common denominators, and limited use of visual or conceptual models. Notably, some PSTs demonstrated procedural competence without underlying conceptual clarity, raising concerns about their preparedness to teach these concepts effectively. These results suggest that teacher education programs for primary mathematics teachers require a focus on strengthening fraction instruction and addressing conceptual gaps before PSTs enter the classroom.

Keywords: conceptual understanding, intermediate phase, pre-service teachers, primary mathematics, unit fractions

Abstract ID #: 1164

Managing entrepreneurship training in TVET institutions: perspectives from campus senior management teams

Alucia Mabunda | J. Heystek | C. Mayombe

This article examines the management challenges that affect the delivery of Entrepreneurship Training (ET) at Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges in South Africa. Although TVET colleges are mandated to deliver ET effectively, they continue to struggle to do so, as reflected in national skills reports. However, empirical evidence on specific management challenges experienced at TVET colleges remains limited. The aim of this study was to identify key management challenges

hindering the effective delivery of ET. A qualitative research approach was followed, guided by the Resource-Based View and Effectuation Theory, which together provided a management and entrepreneurial framework for addressing the research problem. Data was carried out through semi-structured interviews with campus managers, heads of divisions, and senior lecturers. The findings reveal that TVET colleges are failing to adequately deliver dual-approach training, resulting in poor ET outcomes. This failure is not the primary challenge; rather, it is a consequence of deeper management challenges.

Keywords: entrepreneurship training, management, stakeholders, TVET, vocational education

Abstract ID #: 1147

Expectations vs. Realities: Exploring Misalignments in Preservice STEM Teacher Preparation

Olalekan Taofeek Badmus | Loyiso C. Jita

Despite global efforts to improve teacher preparation, a persistent disconnect remains between the career expectations of preservice science and mathematics teachers and the realities encountered during their training, particularly in under-resourced South African contexts. This study, underpinned by Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT), Career Construction Theory (CCT), and Ingersoll's Teacher Attrition and Retention Model, investigates how factors such as intrinsic motivation, administrative burden, mentorship access, and resource availability shape preservice teachers' evolving perceptions and decisions to remain in the profession. The training of STEM teachers is vital for achieving educational equity and fostering national development, yet attrition is high due to misalignment between expectations and actual classroom experiences. Literature highlights that such misalignment, coupled with poor systemic support, significantly impacts teacher retention. Adopting a qualitative phenomenological approach, the study explores the lived experiences of seven preservice teachers across two South African universities using semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. The findings reveal five key themes: (1) intrinsic motivation vs. reality shock, where participants entered the profession driven by altruistic values but were quickly disillusioned by classroom realities such as paperwork and behavior management; (2) resource disparity, reflecting the frustration of teaching science and mathematics without essential materials; (3) administrative burden, which overshadowed instructional focus and led to reduced professional satisfaction; (4) evolving career expectations, with participants adjusting their aspirations or reconsidering teaching altogether due to systemic barriers; and (5) conditional commitment, wherein participants expressed willingness to continue teaching only if substantial improvements in working conditions and support structures occur. These findings validate EVT's emphasis on task value and cost assessment, as well as CCT's focus on adaptability in evolving career identities. Ingersoll's model provides further insight into how inadequate working conditions, more than lack of motivation, contribute to early-career attrition. Theoretically, the study underscores the interdependence of individual agency and institutional support in shaping professional resilience. Practically, it recommends embedding early exposure to classroom realities within the training curriculum, establishing mentorship programs, digitizing administrative tasks, offering realistic simulations, and promoting leadership pathways to support long-term retention. This study contributes to understanding the socio-institutional dynamics influencing preservice STEM teachers in developing contexts. It asserts that bridging the gap between expectations and training realities is essential for sustaining a motivated and adaptive teaching force equipped to meet the demands of 21st-century STEM education.

Keywords: Preservice teachers, career expectations, teacher retention, STEM education, professional commitment

Abstract ID #: 1263**Cultivating collaborative capacity: School principal leadership of township school networks**

Shahista Syed | Inbanathan Naicker

School networks—collaborative systems that connect multiple schools to share resources, pedagogical innovations, and administrative support—have emerged as a promising strategy for improving school outcomes. However, the mechanisms underlying their formation and sustainability remain underexplored, particularly in resource-constrained contexts where systemic challenges demand innovative leadership approaches. This paper focuses on principal leadership of school networks within South African townships—a setting marked by historical inequities, socioeconomic deprivation, and systemic barriers such as overcrowded classrooms, resource shortages, and community instability. Grounded in transformational leadership theory and constructivist organizational theory, this study explores how principals initiate, negotiate, and sustain collaborative networks. Using an interpretive qualitative approach, the research employs narrative inquiry as its methodological framework, drawing on in-depth narrative interviews supplemented by collage and object inquiry techniques. Five primary school principals from a township north of Durban were purposively selected as participants, with their experiences captured through narrative vignettes constructed from field texts. Findings reveal that principal leadership serves as a catalyst for network formation, driven by a recognition of shared challenges and a commitment to collective problem-solving. The study underscores the significance of relational agency, wherein principals actively foster trust, reciprocity, and mutual accountability among peers. By navigating structural constraints through collaborative ingenuity, these leaders not only mitigate institutional isolation but also co-construct professional ecosystems that amplify resource-sharing and pedagogical improvement. The paper contributes to global debates on school leadership by highlighting the transformative potential of networked collaboration in marginalised contexts.

Keywords: School Leadership, School Networks, Narrative Inquiry, Township Schools, Principal Agency

Abstract ID #: 1333**Lessons from Disruption: Reimagining Entry Requirements for Initial Teacher Training Post-COVID in South Africa**

Nkosikhona Sean Nkosi

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented disruption to education systems globally. Yet, within this crisis, new forms of functionality and hope emerged—particularly in the area of teacher development. This paper examines how pandemic-era interventions, especially the large-scale employment of teaching assistants in South Africa, provided critical teaching exposure for many unemployed graduates. Drawing on a decolonial theoretical lens, the study critiques the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) admission criteria across 18 South African institutions, which continue to emphasise academic qualifications and subject specialisation, while largely overlooking the valuable, practice-based experience gained during this period. While recognising the foundational role of content knowledge in enabling teachers to effectively mediate subject matter, the paper argues that experiential learning—such as work undertaken as teaching assistants—should be formally acknowledged in assessing candidates' readiness for initial teacher education. Rather than proposing WIL as an alternative pathway, the paper positions it as a vital component that strengthens existing routes into the profession. It concludes with practical recommendations for higher education institutions and

policymakers to build more inclusive and contextually relevant PGCE admission frameworks that better reflect the complex realities of teaching and learning in South Africa.

Keywords: Initial Teacher Education, Decoloniality, Teacher Education, Work-Integrated Learning, COVID-19 Pandemic

Abstract ID #: 1434

Vocational education, human capital theory and the purpose of the TVET lecturer

Volker Wedekind | Jo-Anna Russon

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is distinct from all other parts of the education system due to TVET's explicit relationship with the world of work. This education-work dynamic is evident in the human capital-oriented assumptions that underpin much national and international policy on TVET. The purpose of TVET is often framed as a vehicle for the individual pursuit of skills and education in preparation for the labour market, alongside broader assumptions about TVETs contribution to more equitable and sustainable economic development. However, much recent TVET theory is characterised by a rejection of the individualistic, market-oriented assumptions of human capital theory (HCT), with a growing body of literature emphasising the importance of capabilities, grounded in a human development social justice framing of TVET. For the TVET lecturer, whose day-to-day educational processes are aligned to notions of jobs and the workplace, such debates fail to adequately account for the dual economical and educational purpose of their role. To move these TVET debates forward, we explore the relevance of HCT through the lens of the TVET lecturer. We review the theoretical framings (overt or absent) embedded in theory and policy that attends to the purpose of TVET lecturers, summarising the divergent embrace and rejection of HCT, and discussions of alternative theoretical approaches. We then draw on a survey and series of workshops with TVET lecturers in South Africa, in which we sought to identify their understanding of what it means to be an excellent or quality TVET lecturer. We found that TVET lecturers frame the ideal purpose of their role in ways that align with the underpinning economic logics in both human capital and human development theory, whilst also raising broader social and philosophical questions about the purpose of their role. We argue that attempts to situate TVET in a broader capabilities framing of human development has merit, but fails to adequately theorise the overlapping economic, educational and societal purposes of the TVET lecturer role. We argue that an important step in re-theorising TVET is not a complete displacement of human capital theory but incorporating this as one of several important theoretical dimensions.

Keywords: Education, Human capital theory, Skills, TVET lecturer, Vocational education

Abstract ID #: 1248

Mindfulness, Neurodiversity, and the Purpose of Education in Polycrisis Times

Micaela Gillespie | Carmelita Jacobs

The polycrisis produces heightened stress, emotional volatility, and uncertainty for all learners—especially neurodivergent youth. Moreover the prevailing emphasis on standardization, outcomes, and “learnification” sidelines the emotional, social, and ethical dimensions of education, particularly for those who don't fit neurotypical molds. This paper presents a small-scale qualitative study exploring the use of Mindfulness-Based Attention Therapy (MBAT) with adolescents diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), not simply as a therapeutic tool, but as a countercultural educational practice. Drawing on Gert Biesta's critique of the ‘learnification’ of education and his call for embracing risk,

subjectification, and the unknown, we argue that MBAT offers an alternative vision for education: one grounded in awareness, emotional regulation, and authentic being. Through narratives from adolescents, parents, and educators, we reveal how mindfulness practices cultivated not only calm and cognitive clarity but also empowered young people to navigate an increasingly complex world. This study reimagines mindfulness as a pedagogical response to the need for an education that cultivates presence, emotional insight, resilience, and personhood — qualities urgently needed in navigating the polycrisis.

Keywords: Adolescence, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Mindfulness, Mindfulness Based Attention Therapy, Neurodiversity

Abstract ID #: 1322

Factors constraining the implementation of the Whole School Evaluation policy and the necessary support interventions: Perspectives from selected principals in township primary schools

Sibonelo Blose | Samuel Zulwini Nkabinde

Every government, across contexts, strives to improve schools and education offered to children, who are the future of every nation. One of the key policies through which the Basic Education Department intends to improve public schools in South Africa is the Whole School Evaluation Policy (WSE), which came into effect in 2001. This policy provides guidelines for a comprehensive evaluation of different facets of public schools with the intention of identifying areas of development which must be addressed to improve schools. While this policy is implemented yearly, some schools do not show improvement, particularly in township areas. The study we report on in this conference paper is drawn from a research project that explored principals' perspectives on the influence of the WSE policy on school improvement in township primary schools. The presentation will focus on factors constraining the effective implementation of the WSE policy and the support interventions required to improve the implementation of this policy and township schools. The theory of change framed our understanding of principals' perspectives in this study. Within the qualitative approach, the case study design was adopted to explore principals' perspectives. Twenty principals were purposefully sampled from primary schools in a township. Semi-structured interview and photo-voice methods were used to collect data, which was subsequently analysed using thematic analysis. The findings show context ignorance in policy design and implementation; owing to this, we propose a context-conscious approach to improving schools.

Keywords: Policy implementation, Principals, School improvement, Theory of change, Township primary schools, Whole School Evaluation policy

Abstract ID #: 1242

Collaboration for The Public Good in a Transforming Higher Education Context

Mthobisi Ndaba

In this paper I present a portion of the findings from a qualitative study of academics' role in higher education's contribution to the public good. In this study I explored, among other things, academics' perceptions of the conditions of possibility for the public good of higher education. I conducted in-depth one-on-one interviews with 15 purposively selected academics from two universities in South Africa. From the thematic analysis of these interviews, collaboration emerged as one of the conditions of possibility for the public good. Therefore, in this article, I focus on the portion of the findings about collaboration for the public good in higher education. I make a two-fold argument. Firstly, through the conceptual lens of intrinsic and instrumental forms of public good (Unterhalter et al., 2018,

2019) and Vangen and Huxham's (2010) concept of collaborative advantage, I argue that for higher education *as* and *for* the public good to be achieved in a transforming higher education context like South Africa, it requires the collaborative efforts of multiple stakeholders within and beyond higher education institutions. Secondly, I argue that individual personal relationships play a vital role in the establishment of collaborations and therefore should be taken seriously and deliberately forged. The findings I present in this paper provide insights into what academia stands to benefit from a collaborative approach that rejects ivory towerism, academic tribalism, and the silos mentality, for which it has been criticized.

Keywords: Collaboration, Public Good, Higher Education, Universities, Academics, Relationships

Abstract ID #: 1406

Beyond Degrees: Building Durable Skills for Life and Learning in Uncertain Times

Chatradari Devroop

This paper explores how young people can be better prepared for a world shaped by many overlapping crises—such as climate change, political unrest, and fast-changing technologies. It focuses on the idea of durable skills: abilities like clear thinking, good communication, teamwork, adaptability, and ethical decision-making. These skills are not tied to one job or subject. Instead, they help people stay prepared and confident in a changing world. The paper shows that different groups—universities, employers, and global organisations—agree that these skills are essential. It traces their roots in the older idea of a broad, values-based education and explains how they are being rethought for today's challenges. It also looks at why many students still leave university feeling unprepared, and how the way we teach and assess learning may need to change. The paper offers examples of how schools and universities can include these skills in everyday teaching through real-world projects, teamwork, and reflection. It ends by suggesting ways that educators and employers can work together to help students not only find jobs, but also live responsibly and creatively in difficult times.

Keywords: Durable Skills, Employers, Life and Learning, School, University

Abstract ID #: 1422

Patchwork Pedagogies: Navigating Mental Health, Inequality and Crisis in South African Higher Education

Curwyn Mapaling | Gosiamo Noge | Wandile Tsabedze

The mental health of university students in South Africa has been destabilised by intersecting crises, from the COVID-19 pandemic to structural poverty and campus-based unrest. In response, higher education institutions have deployed an array of institutional and pedagogical interventions. Drawing on a scoping review of 494 studies, with 30 meeting stringent inclusion criteria, this paper examines how student mental health was supported during periods of disruption. The analysis identifies four dominant models: (i) peer-led support structures, (ii) counselling and psychotherapy services, (iii) psycho-educational interventions, and (iv) trauma-informed pedagogies. These were often rolled out rapidly via online platforms, but access was uneven, shaped by the digital divide, resource scarcity, and pre-existing social inequalities. While many interventions succeeded in cultivating safe learning environments or emotional resilience, others faltered due to underfunding or institutional fragmentation. This paper situates these interventions within a broader conceptual discourse of care-based and relational pedagogies, arguing that mental health support in higher education must move beyond service delivery logics toward pedagogical configurations rooted in ethics, equity, and

responsiveness. Rather than tidy models, what emerged was a patchwork of pedagogical adaptations, improvised, context-bound, and reflective of a system navigating uncertainty. This paper contributes to critical debates on student support in times of polycrisis and the possibilities for a more integrated ethics of care in higher education.

Keywords: Student mental health, crisis response, trauma-informed pedagogy, care ethics, South African higher education

Abstract ID #: 1331

Phoenix Rising from the Ashes: School Leadership, Containment and Hope in a Time of Polycrisis

Regan Berry

South African township schools epitomise the compounded impact of polycrisis — historical injustice, poverty, political turmoil, systemic dysfunction — while also bearing witness to extraordinary resilience. This paper shares insights from a grounded theory doctoral study examining the eight-year transformation of a faltering primary school in Alexandra township, which became a beacon of hope and innovation. The study drew on systems psychodynamics theory to explore how anxiety, heightened by trauma, crises and change, immobilised thinking, learning and leading. Without conscious containment, anxiety was contained through unconscious individual and social defences detracting from the focus on the primary task of the school resulting in counter-productive behaviours and a prevailing sense of alienation. Containment opened space for reflection, creativity, and growth. A key finding was the role of the principal as a container of collective anxiety; embodying negative capability to tolerate uncertainty; rebuild trust; and hold hope amid ongoing crisis. The study noted the challenges of technocratic interventions like scripted lesson plans and universalised accountability measures which deprofessionalise teachers, suppressing contextually grounded judgment and creativity. This paper offers practical insights into how school leaders in multiple deprived communities can lead a process of holistic school improvement by fostering relational ethics, developing collaborative supportive networks, and consciously cultivating containing countercultural spaces that enable thinking and learning to take place. It illustrates how, even in contexts of enduring trauma, pathways of hope can emerge — like a phoenix rising from the ashes — when attention is paid to both the visible and unconscious dynamics at play.

Keywords: school leaders, anxiety, containment, unconscious dynamics, holistic improvement

Abstract ID #: 1214

Mentoring Matters: Exploring Preservice Teachers' Experiences and Identity Development During Teaching Practice

Julia Ross

This paper presents key findings from a Master of Education study that investigated the mentoring experiences of South African preservice teachers during their four-year teaching practice (TP). Using a qualitative design rooted in narrative inquiry, the study analysed participants' reflective accounts to explore how mentoring influenced their professional development and identity formation. Four main themes emerged from the analysis: (1) mentoring experiences, (2) learning from mentoring, (3) challenges experienced, and (4) learnings not covered by mentors. The findings reveal that while mentoring was largely viewed as nurturing and supportive, significant inconsistencies in mentor engagement and feedback limited its developmental potential. Participants highlighted the importance of adaptability, flexibility, and reflective practice—skills often observed but not explicitly taught by mentors. The study draws on Bandura's theory of

reciprocal determinism and Aoki's distinction between lived and planned curriculum to theorise the impact of context and mentor-mentee dynamics on preservice teacher identity. It argues that mentoring relationships should move beyond a master-apprentice model towards reciprocal partnerships that empower preservice teachers through meaningful feedback, modelling, and opportunities for agency. Recommendations include structured mentor training, increased access to authentic teaching experiences—including staff meetings and parental engagement—and the intentional fostering of reflective practice. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of effective mentoring in initial teacher education and offer practical implications for enhancing TP programmes in diverse schooling contexts.

Keywords: preservice teachers, mentoring, teaching practice, teacher identity, reflective practice, South Africa, initial teacher education

Abstract ID #: 1432

Measuring Vocational Education and Training (VET) as a means to enhance individual capabilities and freedoms

Nthabeleng Lepota

This paper investigates the relationship between the attainment of the recently introduced Occupational Qualifications and societal outcomes, including labour market status. While measurement strategies linking the labour market to vocational education often take a Human Capital approach, this paper employs the Human Capability Approach (HCA) as a conceptual lens. The intention is to examine how vocational education and training (VET) can serve not only to improve employability but also to expand individual freedoms and opportunities. The paper has a particular focus on the newly developed Occupational Qualifications that are currently replacing the Unit Standards-based qualifications on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF). The Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), the regulatory body responsible for VET in South Africa, has reconceptualised VET as a human development strategy rather than merely an intervention aimed at skill acquisition for income generation or economic growth. The Occupational Qualifications, in contrast with the Unit Standards approach, include a specific focus on knowledge development in conjunction with practical training in an explicit attempt to move away from the “neoliberal ‘vocationalist’ impulse” that Gamble (2016) has so strongly argued against. The intention is for such qualifications to empower individuals to overcome poverty and economic inactivity by enhancing their broader capabilities, enabling them to make meaningful choices and fully participate in society. This intention must be measured. This paper reports on the ongoing efforts of the QCTO to trace both labour market outcomes as well as enhanced human capability and societal mobility of learners attaining Occupational Qualifications.

Keywords: Human Capabilities, Human Capital, Vocational Education and Training (VET), Poverty Alleviation, Social inclusion, Tracer Studies, Occupational Qualifications, Unit Standards

Abstract ID #: 1166

Reimagining Pre-Service Teacher Education in Rural Universities: Curriculum, Technology, and the Ethics of Hope in an Era of Polycrisis

Oluwatoyin Ayodele Ajani

In this so-called polycrisis time with cascading interconnected global problems, teacher education must undergo radical re-imagining of its purpose and practices, more so in rural contexts where inequity in education persists. The study undertakes a systematic

literature review (SLR) of scholarship published between 2000 and 2025 in an effort to study how curriculum design, the integration of technology, and ethical perspectives might work towards transforming rural university-based pre-service teacher education. The study analysed 84 peer-reviewed articles across various databases (Scopus, ERIC, Google Scholar, EBSCOhost) through the lens of conceptual tools such as Biesta's ethics of subjectification. It synthesises themes from the literature and singles out four major trends: (1) continued marginalisation of rural teacher education in national and global agendas for reform; (2) fractured attempts at integrating digital technologies into pre-service teacher curricula for rural settings; (3) the possibilities for the development of inclusive and relevant teacher preparation through contextually-based, culturally responsive pedagogies; and (4) emerging hopeful ethics concerned with the future of education policy and practice. Evidence suggests that, despite their infrastructural and epistemic limitations, rural universities hold the potential to function as engines of educational renewal under a curriculum that does not only promote mere competence but agency, criticality, and care. The review contributes to the conversation on educational change by putting forward countercultural, justice-oriented, and ethically responsive frameworks in teacher preparation. In so doing, it elevates rural pre-service teacher education as an important locus for the imagining of alternative educational futures within the maelstroms of the polycrisis.

Keywords: Pre-service teacher education, rural universities, curriculum reform, educational ethics, technology integration

Abstract ID #: 1411

The role of the school leadership in enforcing knowledge and skills to learners for academic learner performance: A collaborative effort

Sihle Memela

The school leadership is faced with a world of accelerating change in technology. The learners need to adapt to these technological changes, yet the education system doesn't provide adequate resources for the learners to be equipped with 21st century knowledge and skills. Therefore, the paper explores the role of the school leadership in ensuring that learners acquire relevant knowledge and skills to face the Fourth Industrial Revolution era. The uncertainty of the future requires us to develop skills that will allow us to continually adapt to new contexts and be on time with constant technological and social changes (Dishon & Gilead, 2020; Yoon, 2022). The paper used a qualitative research design, using semi-structured interviews of four school leaders who are school management teams of rural schools. The sampling was based on the schools that had obtained above 80% on learner achievement in the previous five years in rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal in the Ugu District. We found that principals use various leadership styles to enhance the culture of teaching and learning in schools to achieve better learner performance. The study concluded that school principals, as leaders in schools, play a significant role in improving learner performance and guiding learners in technological advancements.

Keywords: Principal, School, Leadership, School Management Team, Learner

Abstract ID #: 1332

From Admission to Impact: The Case for Strategic Teacher Education Reform in South Africa

Olufiropo Emmanuel Alalade

Concerns over the declining quality of education in South Africa have been substantiated by poor learner performance across multiple educational levels, supported by empirical data and public dissatisfaction. Central to this challenge is the need to scrutinize the quality of human capital—particularly teachers—tasked with delivering education in

primary and secondary schools. What the teacher knows and does can make a difference and what she/he does not know and cannot do can be a serious problem. The importance of teacher education in any society cannot be over-emphasized because the teacher remains the pivot of any educational process and consequently national development. This conceptual paper investigates the role of teacher education in enhancing national education quality, with particular attention to the selection, competencies, and professional preparedness of individuals entering the teaching profession. The study explores the theoretical underpinnings of teacher education, identifies systemic challenges and opportunities, and assesses their implications for educational outcomes. Findings highlight that teacher quality is a key determinant of student achievement and broader educational performance, therefore, teacher training institutions should attract and target brilliant individuals for admission into their programmes. By situating teacher education as a cornerstone of national development, this study contributes to scholarship by reconceptualizing teacher education as a strategic lever for national development, and ongoing discourse on sustainable educational reform in South Africa. By integrating analysis of recruitment, competency-building, and preparedness, the paper presents a holistic understanding of teacher quality as a determinant of educational success. The paper contributes to scholarship by advocating for targeted recruitment policies that attract academically capable and motivated individuals into teacher education.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Human capital, Teacher competency, National development

Abstract ID #: 1439

Action Research for resilient communities: Navigating educational polycrises together

Angela James | Karen Venter

In times of compounding and interconnected crises-climate disruption, digital divides, socio-political instability, and public health emergencies-educational systems are facing what scholars increasingly call a *polycrisis*. This participatory workshop explores how action research can serve as a powerful, community-driven transdisciplinary research methodology for identifying and responding to contextual educational challenges that emerge within these complex conditions. Participants will be introduced to the principles and cycles of action research, with a specific focus on how to co-create knowledge and solutions with communities affected by systemic educational inequities. Through interactive activities, participants will map real-world challenges in their own contexts, collaboratively develop research questions, and reflect on ethical and power dimensions of participatory inquiry. The session emphasises critical engagement, local relevance, and practical tools that attendees can adapt to their own work/disciplinary context. This 90-minute workshop is ideal for those interested in action research for educational transformation in times of uncertainty.

Keywords: Action Research; Community; Context; Educational Polycrisis; Resilient Communities

Abstract ID #: 1403

AI applications for improving assessment: Strategies for Teacher Educators and Student Teachers

Anil Kanjee | Mergan Naidoo | Melikhaya Noqamza | Nicky Roberts | J Ramollo

Over the last 12 to 18 months, there has been a relatively large number of publications on the impact of AI on the higher education sector. These publications focused on sharing conceptual insights, providing depth, critical engagement, and

theoretical and practical frameworks for educators and practitioners. However, limited information was available on the practical implications of AI on pedagogy and teacher professional development that impacts on the daily lives of teacher educators and student teachers.

Given the dual responsibilities of teacher educators to improve their own pedagogical practices as well as that of their student teachers, this SIG Session panel will serve as a platform for sharing experiences and reflections on the practical implications of AI on teaching, learning and assessment within initial teacher education programmes in South Africa. Drawing of experiences from the medical sciences and university support division, the panel will examine how current policies, systems, and support structures across diverse higher education institutions support or hinder experimentation, capacity development and effective use of AI for enhancing innovative pedagogies that promote the use of assessment to better support students address their specific learning needs.

This session addresses a critical gap in current discourse by presenting evidence-based experiences from multiple South African ITE institutions, offering concrete strategies that participants can immediately implement in their own contexts. By bringing together active practitioners from outside the teacher education sector, we seek to foster dialogue and share concrete exemplars on creating inclusive, effective, sustainable and equitable AI practices that move beyond ideological debates towards exploring options that address current challenges of assessment, teaching and learning for enhancing teacher educators' and student teachers' pedagogical practices.

Panel presentations:

1. AI Applications for Improving Assessment: Before, During and After Teaching - *Evidence from Practice*
2. Navigating Rapidly Changing AI Technologies: *Practical Strategies for Continuous Learning*
3. Building Support Systems: *Institutional Approaches to AI Capacity Development for Teacher Educators and Student teachers*

Discussant – *Lessons from a design perspective: What can we, and what should we be building?*

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Assessment, Initial Teacher Education Programme

Abstract ID #: 1413

Polycrisis in literature teaching and assessment in South African grade 12 EFAL classrooms

Maletšema Ruth Emsley

Literature is not only a field of study, but it can transfer valued critical thinking skills, communication skills, analytical, cultural, and research skills. It is further capable of creating career paths in teaching, education, writing, editing, journalism, reporting, content creation, literary studies, publishing, theatre and filming, media and communications, policy making, and entrepreneurship, to mention a few. In multilingual and multicultural countries such as South Africa diversity becomes a resource for teaching, learning, and assessing literature. 21st-century learners need knowledge, skills, and attitudes to survive in the current harsh world of unemployment and the world that is becoming increasingly technological and entrepreneurial. However, South African policy undermines the teaching and assessment of Literature in schools, and this creates a polycrisis in the education fraternity. This paper problematises 'polycrisis' and reports how it manifests in teaching and assessments. The status quo of EFAL Literature teaching and assessment in South African schools is under-researched. This study asks the questions: What is polycrisis? What is the role of Literature? How does EFAL Literature teaching and assessments contribute to a polycrisis? How can schools and universities collaborate to

make Literary Studies attractive to provide for South Africa's multilingual EFAL settings? The study followed a descriptive qualitative research approach through focus group method to gather a rich and detailed account on the "what," "where," "when," and "how" Literature (Paper Two) is taught and assessed in grade 12 EFAL classrooms in Limpopo Province. There were several interconnected complex issues around the above case relating realised at to the various levels of education, micro-level, meso-level, and macro-level. The study is important to curriculum advisors, selection panels of literary texts, teachers, EFAL examiners, university lecturers, international test designers.

Keywords: English First Additional Language, Literature, Multilingualism, National Senior Certificate, Polycrisis

Abstract ID #: 1282

Pathways of Hope: A Theoretical Exploration of School Leaders' Professional Development Through Indigenous Knowledge Integration in Foundation Phase Science Education

Mdodana-Zide Lulama | Nhase Zukiswa

In a time of polycrisis, marked by socio-political instability, environmental degradation, and the standardisation of education driven by neoconservative policies, school leaders are called to reimagine science education through pathways of hope, creativity, and ethical leadership. This theoretical paper explored how school leaders' professional development may emerge as they facilitate the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into Foundation Phase science education in South Africa. Integrating IKS supports cultural identity, cognitive diversity, and scientific inquiry skills among young learners. However, embedding traditional knowledge within a Western-centric curriculum presents ethical and practical tensions. Drawing on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and the principles of culturally responsive and transformative leadership, this paper critically examines the tensions and possibilities inherent in embedding Indigenous knowledge within a Western-dominated curriculum. It proposes that school leaders, when viewed as ethical and cultural agents, can play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between curriculum mandates and local epistemologies. Key concepts such as distributive leadership, reflective practice, and experiential learning are examined as mechanisms through which professional development can be fostered in complex educational environments. The paper argues that professional growth in such contexts is both a political and pedagogical act, requiring engagement with Indigenous communities, mentorship from knowledge holders, and the cultivation of inclusive professional learning communities. By centering Indigenous knowledge and leadership development within the discourse of hope and ethical transformation, this theoretical contribution advances a decolonial and context-sensitive vision for science education leadership amidst global educational crises.

Keywords: Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Foundation Phase Science, School Leadership, Professional Development, Hopeful Pedagogy, Sociocultural Theory, Decolonial Education

Abstract ID #: 1127

Teachers' Perceptions and experiences of using virtual labs for CAPS-aligned experiments in rural South African schools

William Zivanayi

Studies have shown that carrying out prescribed experiments is a challenge for many teachers in South Africa due to lack of resources in many schools. The study set out to

determine the perception of teachers as well as to examine the effects of virtual labs as a substitute for conventional laboratories in the conduction of prescribed experiments. A qualitative research approach in which eight teachers were selected purposively was utilized for the study. The research design included a pre-intervention, an intervention, and a post-intervention phase. An open-ended questionnaire for the pre-intervention phase and face-to-face guided interviews for the post-intervention phase were used to collect data from the participants. The intervention involved the use of a virtual lab to carry out two prescribed experiments on Newton's 2nd Law and a titration at Further Education and Training (FET). Pre-intervention phase results indicated that teachers were not carrying out the prescribed experiments due to lack of resources. Post-intervention results showed that teachers appreciated the use of Virtual Labs as a method to conduct the prescribed experiments as well as a teaching strategy that could be used to improve conceptual understanding of science concepts. The study concludes that Virtual Labs have been effective as an alternative method to the traditional lab practice to carry out prescribed experiments. The use of Virtual Labs provides an alternative teaching strategy vital for the understanding of science concepts.

Keywords: Prescribed experiments; Virtual Labs; Technology Acceptance Model; Newton's second Law; titration

Abstract ID #: 1426

Decolonising Teacher Education in a Polycrisis: A Case Study of Integrating Indigenous Knowledge and Technological Innovation at a Rural South African University

Benjamin Seleke

The South African higher education sector faces a complex polycrisis, shaped by entangled economic instability, epistemic inequalities, technological disruptions, and environmental uncertainties that collectively challenge conventional models of teacher preparation. This paper presents a case study of one rural-based university in South Africa, critically examining how teacher education can respond innovatively to these multiple crises by integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) with Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies. Anchored in decolonial theoretical perspectives and Biesta's (2015) critique of the 'learnification' of education, the study investigates how curriculum transformation processes at this institution attempt to balance epistemic diversity, technological advancement, and ethical responsiveness. A qualitative case study design was employed, incorporating in-depth interviews with academic staff and student teachers, curriculum document analysis, and classroom observations. The findings highlight significant tensions: while the adoption of emerging technologies enhances pedagogical flexibility and access, the marginalisation of indigenous epistemologies persists, reproducing forms of cognitive injustice. However, where intentional integration occurs, IKS offers culturally situated frameworks that strengthen teacher identity, agency, and contextual responsiveness, while 4IR tools support adaptive and self-directed learning. The study argues for a reimagined teacher education framework that moves beyond instrumentalist approaches, advocating for pedagogical models that are relational, ethically situated, and epistemically inclusive. Such an approach cultivates critical hope and creative agency among teacher candidates, equipping them to navigate the complexities of education in a polycrisis era, particularly within marginalised rural contexts.

Keywords: Polycrisis; Indigenous Knowledge Systems; Fourth Industrial Revolution; Teacher Education; Decolonial Pedagogy; Rural Higher Education

Abstract ID #: 1225**Curriculum studies and curriculum as an assemblage: responding to complex glocal concerns**

Chris Reddy | Daluxolo Ngidi | Samantha Govender | Matthews Makunye | Divan Jagals | Rouann Maarman | Shan Simmons

The world we live in and how we live, work and learn has changed. Education is currently characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA). Curriculum studies as a discipline faces multifaceted challenges that drive relentless curriculum change, locally and globally. This is exacerbated by the rapid advancement of technology, particularly artificial intelligence and machine learning, which necessitates agile, adaptive curricula to ensure that students are equipped with essential digital literacy skills for an indeterminate future.

This context requires a qualitatively different approach to matters curriculum. It also compels ongoing curriculum transformations to remain pertinent and responsive, and to assist students to excel in an interconnected, rapidly evolving, indeterminate global landscape (Du Preez 2025). It challenges curriculum workers to reimagine curriculum, through ongoing experimentation and improvisation (Le Grange and Du Preez, 2023), as a living entity, constantly adapting and transforming in response to the world's rapid changes. Concurrently, global forces such as neoliberalism, characterised by market-driven reforms and privatisation, exert pressure on institutions to prioritise performativity, rankings, and entrepreneurial initiatives over critical intellectual engagement (Fataar, 2018).

Amidst the multiple ongoing polycrisis (local and global), and persistently polarising discourses about what should and should not be taught in educational institutions, we can draw inspiration and hope from thinking across boundaries to reimagine curriculum in education. While curriculum has historically contributed to the perpetuation of the status quo, it can and has also been transformative, expanding possibilities in how we think and express ourselves and present a broader perspective on the construct curriculum for innovation and transformation.

Caraballo (2023) develops a curriculum-as-assemblage stance that renders visible the interrelated dimensions of social, political, and socio-economic discourses with the knowledges, identities, and literacies that are constructed and negotiated in the broader context of schooling and education. She adds that engaging curriculum-as-assemblage challenges us to consider both local and global, as enacted and experienced in particular contexts (classrooms and schools), and as enactments of curricula in schooling as well as in postgraduate teaching and teacher preparation. Curriculum as an assemblage is thus produced at the intersection of multiple desires, struggles, and purposes – both explicit and implicit – in the education institutions, in the disciplines that are taught, and in society.

The panellists will engage with curriculum assemblages to open up pathways of hope and creativity to enable knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to live in the world.

Keywords: curriculum studies; curriculum-as-assemblage; glocal concerns; curriculum transformation

Abstract ID #: 1419**Applying the Rasch Measurement Model to validate tests of Initial Teacher Education students' understanding of African Languages standards for teaching**

Qetelo Moloi | Pretty Magangxa

This paper reports on the development and validation of tests specially-designed to assess the extent to which initial teacher education (ITE) students understand and apply

relevant standards for teaching language and literacy in primary schools. While there seems to be consensus on the value of promoting the use of African languages as a starting point towards mother tongue based bilingual education (MTbBE), there is a dearth of validated information on the extent to which ITE students know and can apply approved standards for teaching in African languages. The PrimTEd CoP has undertaken to develop tests to assess first- and fourth-year ITE students' understanding and application of African Languages standards for teaching but the content and construct validity as well as reliability of the tests remain a subject of continuing debate, especially because there seems to be no benchmarks to relate to. This paper investigates the extent to which the isiXhosa and Sepedi tests developed by lecturers under the PrimTEd umbrella meet minimum requirements for validity, reliability and unidimensionality of assessment instruments. A pilot study of developed test items was conducted on two convenient samples of isiXhosa ($n=68$) and Sepedi ($n=180$) ITE students in two universities that offer B.Ed programmes in the two languages. Data was analysed using the Rasch Measurement Model techniques to develop valid scales. The results showed that most items in the two tests met the minimum requirements for Rasch Model InFIT and OutFIT Mean-squares between 1.3 and 2, and displayed a few items well spread on the Wright Map, indicating required test validity. However, both tests fell below the 0.8 minimum reliability coefficient for objective tests. Item Characteristic Curves in both languages showed item mis-fit patterns, most of which were indicative of student "lucky guessing" of correct answers, mainly because either the stems of the items tended to be ambiguous or the distractor options were non-homogenic. The findings have implications for validation of assessment in African languages, particularly at the stage of rolling out mother tongue based bilingual education in South Africa. They also have implications for the (re-) configuration of the standards that frame the development of tests in African languages.

Keywords: Item Characteristic Curves, non-homogenic, Rasch Measurement Model, unidimensionality, validity.

Abstract ID #: 1444

TEACH FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING IN THE CAPITALOCENE: USING A PEDAGOGY OF PRESENCE TO DEVELOP A MODEL FOR MANAGEMENT STUDENTS IN A HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

Ingrid Baigrie

Located within the broader context of critical pedagogy, this paper explores, through an auto-ethnographic study, how teaching financial accounting to management students revealed the need for a different approach from that of teaching financial accounting to students who aspire to become accountants. Noting that management students needed to go beyond the basics of debits and credits and journal entries as their previous domain of financial knowledge and skills, and aware of the need to engage more authentically with both commerce and the broader socio-cultural and environmental context within which it was hoped these students would one day be working, I sought to develop a curriculum and pedagogy based on what Mbembe (2015) refers to as a "Pedagogies of Presence". I argue for a teaching model for Marketing and Retail Management students that will provide them with both the accounting knowledge that will empower them to function at any level of management within a retail environment, as well as an awareness of the broader socio-economic concerns relating to what Moore (2016) refers to as the Capitalocene. This paper contributes to teaching and learning as well as to the theme of this conference by illustrating how this approach, while aiming at "affirmative empowerment" (Braidotti, 2017), will also lead to appropriate graduate attributes beyond

just disciplinary content knowledge that are needed for the world of work as well as for life as critical and engaged citizens.

Keywords: Auto-ethnography; Critical pedagogy; Financial accounting; Graduate Attributes; World of Work

Abstract ID #: 1118

Inclusive Pedagogy as Spatial Praxis: Rhythms, Relationships, and Resistance in a Time of Polycrisis

Elzahn Rinquest

This paper reconceptualises inclusive pedagogy in South African classrooms as a relational, spatialised response to the intersecting crises of inequality, standardisation, and learner trauma. It addresses the research problem of how teachers navigate the rigid, outcome-driven CAPS curriculum while fostering meaningful inclusion in under-resourced and socially complex environments. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad (conceived, perceived, lived space) and rhythmanalysis, together with Paulo Freire's pedagogy of liberation (dialogue and humanization), the study explores how inclusive teaching involves negotiating both the spatial and temporal dimensions of the classroom. The research is grounded in a school-based ethnographic study involving classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with six teachers at a public ELSEN school. It focuses on three interconnected pedagogical dimensions: inclusive planning, adaptive assessment, and responsive classroom management. Findings reveal that teachers disrupt mechanised schooling rhythms by translanguaging, recoding assessments, and co-producing counter-narratives of ability. Through these practices, they reshape the classroom as a space of affective belonging and pedagogical agency. This paper argues that inclusive pedagogy must be understood not only as a set of practices, but as an ethical orientation—one that attunes to the rhythms, voices, and needs of learners in a time of overlapping social and educational crises. Responding to Biesta's call to rethink education's purpose, it proposes that inclusive teaching in polycrisis becomes an act of resistance: slow, creative, and deeply hopeful.

Keywords: inclusive pedagogy, spatial theory, rhythmanalysis, Freire, relational teaching, South Africa

Abstract ID #: 1195

Decolonising the Audiology Curriculum: Epistemological Disjunctures and Pathways of Hope for Black African Students

Musa Makhoba | Sarasvathie Reddy | Mershen Pillay

In the context of South Africa's polycrisis, marked by intersecting legacies of coloniality, systemic inequality, and epistemic marginalisation, the field of Audiology remains entangled in Eurocentric logics that fail to account for the lived realities and cultural knowledges of Black African First Language Speaking (BAFLS) students. Despite institutional commitments to transformation, the epistemological foundations of the undergraduate Audiology curriculum have not meaningfully shifted. This paper explores how BAFLS Audiology graduates experienced the process of becoming professionals within a curriculum that often renders them epistemically invisible. Drawing on hermeneutic phenomenology and using Cowen's Logical Model of Curriculum Development as an analytical frame, this study examined the epistemological experiences of ten purposively selected BAFLS Audiology graduates from a South African university. The research focused on how teaching, learning, and assessment practices either enabled or constrained their academic and professional development. Thematic analysis

of interview data revealed pervasive linguisticism, classism, and racialised pedagogical practices that encouraged surface learning, limiting the graduates' capacity to develop critical, Afrocentric professional identities. In response to Gert Biesta's call to reimagine the purpose of education beyond mere qualification and socialisation, this study calls for epistemic courage and curriculum reconstitution. It advocates for pathways of hope grounded in culturally sustaining pedagogies, epistemic justice, and affirming professional formation. These findings offer countercultural insights into how health sciences curricula can be transformed to affirm the dignity, knowledge systems, and agency of Black African students in ways that disrupt colonial continuities.

Keywords: Epistemic injustice, curriculum transformation, Black African students, Audiology, decolonisation, higher education

Abstract ID #: 1431

Exploring Grade R teachers' perspectives and experiences of teaching early literacy in linguistically diverse contexts

Nikiwe Nondabula | Carli Louw

In a time of polycrisis, South Africa's educational landscape is deeply shaped by intersecting socio-economic, infrastructural, and linguistic inequalities. Early literacy plays a critical role in mitigating these challenges by laying the foundation for academic success and promoting equitable learning experiences. This paper draws on a qualitative multiple case study to examine the early literacy opportunities offered in Grade R classrooms within linguistically diverse contexts in the Western Cape. Drawing from socio-cultural theory, it explores the question: How do Grade R teachers describe their early literacy teaching approaches and experiences? The study is situated within four distinct classroom contexts - Afrikaans, isiXhosa, English medium, and multilingually diverse English classrooms - using semi-structured individual interviews to capture teacher narratives on their pedagogical practices. Findings from thematic analysis reveal varied strategies teachers employ to foster emergent literacy, often amidst inadequate training, limited resources, and a lack of materials in African languages. By highlighting these pedagogical responses, the study advocates for more responsive teacher education and curriculum development that affirm linguistic diversity and support early literacy in marginalised contexts.

Keywords: Early literacy, Grade R teachers' perspectives, Multilingual classrooms, Diverse teaching and learning context

Abstract ID #: 1093

Zimbabwean migrant teachers in South Africa: The complexity of identity and belonging

JJR de Villiers

Globally, the growth in international migration lead to an equivalent increase in worker migration, including teacher migration. In South Africa, Zimbabwean teachers represent the largest group of migrant teachers. The aim of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore difficulties and challenges that confront Zimbabwean migrant teachers in their attempt to restructure their professional and personal identities in the source country. Fifteen migrant Zimbabwean teachers in private or public high schools were involved in semi-structured, face-to-face, in-depth interviews. Purposive, convenient, quota, and snowball sampling were used to select the teachers in Gauteng province, the largest province of South Africa. The data were analyzed qualitatively by using open coding. The research met the ethical guidelines for educational research, including anonymity, informed consent, confidentiality, trust, and safety in participation. Findings of the study showed that numerous interrelated issues contribute to impeding the reconstruction of the

teachers' professional and personal identities. The impediments were identified as: employment status, immigration status, re-credentialing and re-certification, professional and cultural isolation, professional and cultural marginalization, and holding on to former culture or way of knowing due to lack of induction and mentoring. All these obstacles contributed to a slippery road in the restructuring of their professional and personal identities. An ideal personal and professional identity leads to increased teacher motivation, performance and growth. Supporting migrant teachers to integrate into source country communities could contribute to gradually destroying the xenophobic tendencies of those institutions and communities.

Keywords: challenges, cultural diversity, impediments, multicultural education, professional identities

Abstract ID #: 1392

Assistive Technologies for who When the Assisting Cannot Assist the Assisted?

Peles L. Biswalo | Selloane Pitikoe | Cosmas Maphosa

This paper is informed by the larger findings from a qualitative PhD study conducted in two institutions of higher education in Eswatini which explored how these two institutions provided teaching and learning for the visually impaired learners and the implications of such for technology driven inclusion. The challenges brought about by visual disability and the devastating challenges faced by the visually impaired learners in a technology deprived economy remains a global concern. The paper further underscores limited skills of the lecturers in using Assistive Technologies for visually impaired learners in their classrooms. This qualitative study sought answers to the following question: What types of technology do the lecturers currently utilize to cater for the academic learning needs of the visually impaired learners? A purposively sampled group of twelve participants -four lecturers, six visually impaired learners and two support staff participated in semi-structured interviews. The study used thematic data analysis. The findings revealed the following: a) most of the lecturers had limited skills to teach the visually impaired learners; b) some lectures lamented that the curriculum used to train student teachers does not prepare them on how to teach learners with disability in general; c) some lectures used Braille, audio or digital files compatible with assistive technologies; d) the administrator lamented that some lecturers lacked adequate skills to adapt their mainstream curriculum to meet the needs of the visually impaired learners. We conclude that there were two extremes in terms of AT use; some lecturers were skilled with the technology, while others lagged. This paper recommends thus: a) formal ongoing training for lecturers who teach visually impaired learners; b) education policy change towards mainstreaming ATs for the visually impaired as part of teacher education to prepare them for future interaction with learners with visual disability.

Keywords: Assistive Technologies, Visually impaired learners, Institutions of Higher Education, Eswatini

Abstract ID #: 1275

Preservice teachers drawing on Southern resources to teach about sustainability

Ronicka Mudaly

The uncritical assimilation of dominant discourses about achieving global goals, which draw from the canonical corpus of Western knowledge, has led to intellectual colonisation, and a blind compliance to the monocultural content and pedagogies about sustainability education. This study is an attempt to disrupt ossified categories of accepted "truths" by tapping into creative, culturally inclusive ways of learning to teach about sustainability. A

Southern theoretical lens was adopted to explore the re-viewing, re-thinking and re-planning of teaching of science and sustainability, by tapping into affordances of indigenous knowledge. The central question is *How do preservice science teachers plan to teach about sustainability by leveraging the affordances of indigenous knowledge?* Twenty preservice science teachers were purposively selected to participate in this qualitative study. They engaged in learning about indigenous knowledge and sustainability, and documented this journey in portfolios of evidence, which served as the first data set. Preservice teachers planned science lessons which integrated indigenous knowledge about sustainability. These lesson plans formed the second data set. Data was thematically analysed and findings revealed that preservice teacher learning was supported by indigenous knowledge holders. Preservice teachers visited African medicine markets to learn about medicinal plants, which they then cultivated, using sustainable methods. Implications of this study include the potential for re-imagining an alternative curriculum through an epistemological re-positioning of preservice teachers.

Keywords: Southern theory, indigenous knowledge, teacher education, sustainability education

Abstract ID #: 1199

Investigating early grades teachers' experiences on synthetic phonics approach specifically Jolly Phonics in three primary schools in Maseru

Khosi Mofolisa

The instruction of reading and learning should adopt a learner-centred, multi-sensory, and meaningful approach, as literacy constitutes a foundational skill for academic achievement and lifelong learning. Consequently, literacy should be grounded in the science of reading, while fostering active learner engagement in the construction of their own learning. This coincides with the simple view of reading. In the early years, synthetic phonics instruction has proven to be a crucial approach in developing decoding skills, a fundamental component of the Simple View of Reading (SVR), which highlights that reading comprehension is the result of decoding and language comprehension. This study investigates early grades teachers' experiences on the synthetic phonics approach, Jolly Phonics in three primary schools in Maseru, Lesotho. Underpinned by SVR, Emergent Literacy Theory and Sociocultural theory, the study recognises literacy development simultaneously as cognitive and socially embedded process that begins even prior to formal schooling. Utilising a qualitative research design, the study used face-to-face interviews with teachers who implement the programme in classrooms. Findings reveal both positive and challenges. While educators witnessed the significant improvement in learners' literacy skills, they also observed the challenges of limited training, inadequate materials, and lack of support from the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET). In conclusion, the study highlights that while Jolly Phonics aligns with evidence-based reading instruction, successful implementation needs continuous teacher support, availability of resources and the contextual adaptation. The findings hold significance for literacy policy and teacher development in comparable settings with linguistic diversity and limited resources.

Keywords: Synthetic Phonics, Jolly Phonics, Early Grades Reading, Teacher Experiences, Literacy Instruction.

Abstract ID #: 1237**Narratives of women students negotiating gender in the context of gender-based violence: A case of university residences in and around Durban, KwaZulu-Natal**

Phakamile Mazibuko

The phenomenon of women students' lived experiences in higher education remains an under-researched area despite the emerging challenges relating to gender-based violence, gender inequality, and homophobia. A residential experience is an integral part of students' identity, learning, and development. This suggests that "external" environments, such as personal and social, contribute to students' overarching educational experiences. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the experiences of women students negotiating gender in university residences, situated in and around Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The intersectionality theory was used as a theoretical framework, and narrative inquiry as a research methodology. Collages and semi-structured interviews were used to generate data. The study found that women students experienced multiple oppressions, such as bullying and harassment, because of their multiple intersecting identities. The study also found that despite the extreme challenges exerted on women students, they still demonstrated agency, commitment, and resilience towards negotiating for diversity and gender equality in university residences. The study has shown that university residences are still hubs of hostility, intolerance and violence towards women and the queer community. Therefore, the study concludes by suggesting an urgent need to explore the lived experiences of students within the queer community, this will be helpful to enhance respect for diversity in higher education spaces.

Keywords: Gender, Higher Education, Women, Residences, Social Justice

Abstract ID #: 1152**Re-Centering African Epistemologies: Afrocentric Methodologies as Transformative Educational Praxis**

Ojochogwu Joy Obaje

Within the context of global and epistemic challenges that expose the limitations of dominant Western paradigms, this study explores Afrocentricity as both a theoretical and methodological framework. The study is situated within the historically and culturally context of the Edendale community in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. It responds to the marginalisation of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS) in educational research by foregrounding Afrocentric methodologies as ethical, inclusive, and community-rooted alternatives.

A growing body of literature critiques the coloniality of knowledge and calls for epistemic justice. Within this discourse, Afrocentric theory as developed by scholars such as Molefi Kete Asante and further engaged by African thinkers like Ama Mazama offers a framework that centres African agency, cosmology, and memory. The literature also highlights the importance of decolonising methodologies and asserts the need for participatory, culturally grounded approaches in educational research. Using Afrocentricity as a methodological approach, this study employs oral history, transect walks, and the River of Life technique to engage knowledge holders in Edendale. These participatory tools encourage co-construction of meaning and resist extractive research practices. Afrocentric methods in this context act as epistemic interventions, recovering intergenerational knowledge and enabling self-reflexive community dialogue. The study aims to: (1) understand how Afrocentric methodologies challenge Western knowledge dominance; (2) explore how community-based, Indigenous practices reframe knowledge production; and (3) contribute to inclusive, decolonised educational research. Its

significance lies in demonstrating how African epistemologies can inform ethical educational praxis that is collaborative, restorative, and relevant to local realities. By centring Indigenous voices and methodologies, the study contributes to building inclusive education rooted in justice, reciprocity, and cultural resurgence.

Keywords: Afrocentricity, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, participatory methodology, decolonisation, inclusive education, epistemic justice

Abstract ID #: 1138

Integration of indigenous knowledge systems for the promotion of sustainable learning and understanding of geometry

Zingiswa Jojo

The sustainable teaching of mathematics requires strategies and skills that enable learners to effectively renew, rebuild, reuse, inquire, be open-minded, and cope with understanding connections and applications of mathematics concepts. This study reports from a bigger project operating in the Bizana district aiming at investigating issues of practice for the improvement of mathematics teaching in primary schools. This study explored several approaches on how discussing, teaching and interpreting the diagrams considering an immediate perpetual, operative and discursive approach as culturally disruptive pedagogy was used as an indigenous way to promote geometric understanding. This was a qualitative study in which from a sample of 4 senior phase teachers in a district in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, was observed for a period of two weeks when teaching geometry. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with them after their lesson presentations. Results indicated teachers' use of several games, artefacts and indigenous activities promoted the understanding of geometry. Considering the challenges identified, recommendations were that mathematics teachers should be trained to prepare lessons that incorporate indigenous knowledge, use indigenous teaching aids that will vary as per learning style and strive to use a student-centered approach timeously, particularly in contextualizing mathematical geometry learning, so that this concept can have relevance and meaning to indigenous students.

Keywords: Mathematics, geometry, indigenous knowledge, rural primary schools, pedagogy, activities, sustainable learning

Abstract ID #: 1219

Ecocultural pedagogy as means to strengthen Foundation Phase isiXhosa literacy

Pretty Neliswa Magangxa

The South African curriculum aspires to promote knowledge in the local context, while acknowledging global imperatives. It encourages teachers to build on learners' funds of knowledge they bring from their home backgrounds by aligning these to the classroom curriculum. Ecocultural pedagogy subscribes to this belief, echoing that integrating cultural funds of knowledge with school curriculum cultivates positive classroom engagements. This is key in literacy learning, especially at a time when African Indigenous Learners are reported as underperforming in standardised tests. This study reports on the exploration of how indigenous communities' epistemologies can form the basis of an ecocultural pedagogy. Participatory Visual Methodology within the qualitative research approach was utilised. Photovoice and semi-structured interviews were used as instruments of data collection. Data was thematically analysed using the Funds of Knowledge theoretical framework. Findings revealed that community literacies are multifaceted in nature and

promote critical engagements amongst individuals. These multimodal literacies augment interactions, thinking, and meaning making through various semiotic signs and codes. This study argues that teachers' awareness, knowledge, and attitudes towards ecocultural pedagogies are crucial in incorporating cultural literacies into the classroom curriculum. Moreover, rethinking literacy pedagogies by considering how learners learn, how well they are taught, and what they learn has a significant impact on improving learning outcomes.

Keywords: Ecocultural pedagogy, isiXhosa literacy, Foundation Phase, Funds of Knowledge

Abstract ID #: 1359

UNESCO's Development and Humanist Traditions: The Case of South Africa (1945-1994)

Linda Chisholm

The role of UNESCO in promoting solidarity with the struggle for liberation in South Africa from 1945 is well-documented in the historiography. This was based on humanist and democratic traditions in UNESCO in which the Afro-Asian bloc played a significant role. (Houston, 2008) But there is also critical literature firstly of the 'developmentalism' of UNESCO (Healy-Clancy, 2016) and secondly of the growing convergence of UNESCO's initiatives with the global governance regimes of the OECD and World Bank and the implications for education. (Elfert & Ydesen, 2023b, 2023a, 2024; Mundy, 1999) This paper explores the changing role of UNESCO in shaping a discourse around education within the South African liberation movement inside and outside South Africa. It focuses on the African National Congress (ANC) active in exile and the National Education Coordinating Committee (NECC), active in the social movement that developed in education inside the country from the 1980s. Drawing on Mundy's periodisation of UNESCO initiatives (Mundy, 1999), Elfert's conceptualisation of the twin strands of humanism and 'technical-solutionism' in UNESCO (Elfert, 2023), and a literature historicising the treatment of race and anti-racism in UNESCO (Bernasconi, 2019; Brattain, 2007), this paper will explore how the relationship changed over time in education and comprised relationships with the state, liberal organisations and the liberation movements. It will argue that its positions on race and human rights informed the initial 'humanist' strand of its engagements while a 'developmentalist' strand became more prominent from the 1980s and shaped the 'technical-solutionist' approach which became dominant in post-apartheid South Africa. It will draw on secondary as well as archival sources.

Keywords: UNESCO, South Africa, Education

Abstract ID #: 1115

Technology-Enhanced Learning with AutoCAD Simulation to improve conceptualisation of Isometric Drawing among pre-service teachers

Philani Brian Mlambo | Asheena Singh-Pillay

Poor performance in isometric drawing is a perennial problem despite Grade 12 yearly moderators' reports consistently indicating that learners struggle with this section. This ongoing challenge suggests that teachers also face difficulties effectively teaching this concept. The choice to concentrate on pre-service teachers from a university of technology training as Engineering Graphics and Design (EGD) teachers is deliberate and strategic. As future educators, these individuals have significant potential to act as agents of change in the teaching and learning of isometric drawing. This potential for educational transformation compelled the need to explore the effect of technology-enhanced learning in improving the conceptualization of isometric drawing. To address the research objectives, forty first-year pre-service teachers enrolled in EGD were purposively selected

to participate in this study. The theoretical foundation combined the Zone of Proximal Development and technology framework with Self-Directed Learning theory to underpin this qualitative inquiry. Data was gathered through photovoice and reflective diaries to evaluate the impact of AutoCAD in enhancing the conceptualization of isometric drawing. The collected data was examined through narrative analysis to document and interpret the effects of the AutoCAD intervention. Findings from this analysis suggest that technology-enhanced learning, specifically AutoCAD-based pedagogy, significantly enhances the conceptualization of isometric drawing and improves fundamental spatial visualization skills. The implications of these findings indicate that EGD teachers should adopt technology-based learning approaches in their classrooms. Therefore, this study recommends that all EGD teachers become proficient in operating AutoCAD to integrate this sophisticated drawing software into their teaching methodologies effectively.

Keywords: isometric drawing, technology enhanced learning, AutoCAD, simulation, conceptualisation, engineering graphics and design, spatial visualization

Abstract ID #: 1174

Integrating indigenous epistemologies into entrepreneurship curricula in South Africa: shaping sustainable futures

Jabulile Happyness Mzimela | Innocent Moyo

In the context of a global polycrisis, including rising inequality, environmental change and intensification of neoliberal education reforms, entrepreneurship is presented as a catalyst for economic growth and development. In South Africa, this has translated into efforts to institutionalise entrepreneurship into higher education curricula to unlock young talent and stimulate economic growth. However, current approaches to entrepreneurship education reflect Western epistemologies and, therefore, reproduce colonial logics and sustain socio-political inequalities. This depoliticises and undermines decolonial pedagogical goals and epistemic justice. Against this backdrop, this paper draws on the theory of politics of knowledge production and engages with relevant literature to critically assess the limitations of conventional entrepreneurship curricula. It further explores the potential for decolonial alternatives, with a specific focus on Historically Disadvantaged Institutions of Higher education in South Africa. We argue that the pressing national imperatives of inclusion and sustainability require a paradigmatic shift toward a decolonial entrepreneurship curriculum that engages Indigenous epistemologies and aligns with socio-economic contexts for sustainable futures. A decolonial entrepreneurship curriculum calls for a fundamental rethinking of core entrepreneurial concepts through Indigenous worldviews. This includes embedding cultural narratives, values, and languages into the learning process, and grounding education in the relational ties between people, land, and community. Indigenous entrepreneurship offers a transformative alternative, with the potential to address youth unemployment while prioritising community well-being, environmental stewardship, and cultural continuity. In response, we therefore advocate for a pluriversal entrepreneurship curriculum that recognises multiple ways of understanding value, exchange, and success. Embedding such pluriversalism into entrepreneurship curricula is essential to cultivating a pluriversal economy and fostering more inclusive, contextually relevant pathways to development in a polycrisis.

Keywords: Curriculum; Indigenous entrepreneurship; Decolonisation; Historically Disadvantaged Institutions; South Africa

Day 3: Wednesday 5th November 2025 (8:15 to 17:10)

Abstract ID #: 1230

**Building pathways for hope on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework:
towards a flexible and responsive qualifications sub-framework**

Colette Tennison

Internationally, the implementation of national qualifications frameworks has become a prevalent approach (Allais, 2014). However, as countries such as Australia and the England have reviewed their qualification frameworks post-implementation, their flexibility to accommodate articulation between the vocational and higher education sectors and

their capacity to allow for career progression in the vocational sector has been found to be problematic (Ta et al., 2025). Similar challenges have also been identified in the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in South Africa (QCTO, 2025). Faced with the bleak unemployment statistics in South Africa, particularly in terms of youth unemployment and those not in employment, education, or training (NEETs), which in 2024 were at 45.5% and 43.2% respectively (Statistics South Africa, 2025), the skills development sector in South Africa needs a flexible and responsive qualifications framework that supports both articulation and immediate employability. This paper will explore the scholarship and literature on concepts such as micro-credentials, the stacking of qualifications with flexible entry and exit points, articulation, and the use of recognition of prior learning as possibilities available to strengthen the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework, thereby building occupational flexible learning pathways that could begin to address the crises facing South Africa at this time.

Keywords: National Qualification Frameworks, Vocational Education and Training, Outcomes-based education, Occupational learning pathways

Abstract ID #: 1320

Understanding the role of age, gender, and Grade R attendance on Foundation Phase progression and academic performance

Bianca Böhmer

Amidst growing emphasis on learning outcomes in the Foundation Phase and national efforts to achieve universal access to Grade R, this paper examines how Grade R attendance, gender, and age of entry into Grade 1 affect learning outcomes and progression during the Foundation Phase. A student-level panel dataset, constructed from SA-SAMS school administrative data in six provinces (EC, GP, KZN, LP, MP, and NW), is used to run a multi-linear regression model with school fixed effects and a regression discontinuity design to analyse these relationships. The findings indicate a negative relationship between age in months and the likelihood of repeating Grade 1, as well as a significant advantage for girls in learning outcomes. Moreover, a positive correlation is observed between Grade R attendance and better learning outcomes in Grade 1. Some differences in the mathematics and home language outcomes by month of birth persist to the Grade 4 level.

The study shows that while demographic factors such as gender and age are linked to inequalities in learning outcomes during the first year of school, they do not constitute a barrier to access. South Africa has largely achieved broad and timely access to schooling, even at the Grade R level. The introduction of compulsory Grade R will be important to reach the last group of learners not yet enrolled, and improved compliance relating to age of entry remains important as this affects repetition rates and associated costs. However, Grade R access and on-time entry are not primary obstacles to academic attainment. As such, policy levers such as making Grade R compulsory or enforcing correct admission ages are unlikely to yield substantial further learning gains at the population level. Instead, future progress will depend on enhancements to existing schooling services, including greater system efficiency and improved instructional quality.

Keywords: Repetition, early learning, Grade R, Age, Gender, Admissions

Abstract ID #: 1338

The Production of Educational Space in Makhandla: A Mobile Ethnography of Learner Journeys and Spatial Inequality

This paper investigates the spatial and educational inequalities in post-apartheid South Africa through a study of Makhandla, a peri-rural town that exemplifies the country's enduring socio-spatial divides. Despite reforms, historical legacies continue to shape

unequal access to education along racial and geographic lines. Drawing on Lefebvre's theory of the production of space and decolonial theory, the research examines how learners in marginalised township schools experience and produce space as they navigate fragmented educational landscapes. In the second phase of the study, a mobile ethnography approach was employed to follow four Grade 6 learners over 20 days, capturing their school journeys and extracurricular movements through mobile interviews, photography, and observations—yielding rich, situated insights into how children perceive and negotiate space in their daily lives. A central finding is the emergence of a “thirdspace” between school and community, articulated through learners' perspectives—particularly Vuyo's metaphor of the school absorbing the community's refuse. This highlights a shared spatial and social entanglement in which schools cannot be seen in isolation from the communities they serve. Rather than deferring agency to distant futures, the study reveals how children conceptualise immediate forms of engagement and change, challenging adult–child and school–community binaries. Education, therefore, must be reimagined as a collaborative, community-rooted process that equips children with the tools—both material and ideological—to transform their lived environments in the present.

Keywords: spatial inequality, decolonial theory, thirdspace, rural education

Abstract ID #: 1084

Exploring the Use of Translanguaging to Manage Language Barriers in Selected South African Schools' Classrooms

Khathutshelo Thabagae | Pearl Larey

Language barriers pose a significant threat as they affect the learner's academic outcomes, content grasping, and level of understanding. Several policies have been implemented to manage the threat; however, existing literature identified a gap in classroom strategies that teachers adopted to manage language barriers. The emergence of translanguaging is rapidly rising in the education landscape, pointing to the need to adopt the strategy in basic education. With the focus on education management and classroom management, the study adopted Cummins' linguistic interdependence theory. This study employed a qualitative design from the interpretivist lenses, using the methods of semi-structured interviews and non-participatory structured observations in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipalities, to explore the use of translanguaging to manage language barriers in selected South African schools' classrooms, looking at the significance of enhancing classroom management strategies for teachers in various communities. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse data, with themes and subthemes used to structure the findings. The findings of the study reported that teachers firstly used translanguaging for language interdependence between L1 and L2 to help the learners create meaning of the content. Secondly, teachers incorporated collaboration and cooperation to allow the learners to engage and discuss their content in L1 and L2. Subsequently, they improved the learner's academic language in L1 and L2 with the help of different dialects they had already acquired. Moreover, teachers scaffolded L1 and L2 in different subjects taught to help learners recall the content. With these findings, the study recommended the adoption of translanguaging as a classroom strategy to enable quality and inclusive education in multilingual schools' classrooms.

Keywords: Translanguaging, Language barriers, historically disadvantaged schools, Classroom management, Education Management

Abstract ID #: 1251

Impact of an Online Simulation Tool in Teaching Projectile Motion in Biomechanics

Johan van Heerden

Projectile motion in Sport Biomechanics is a fairly complex topic requiring insight into mathematical concepts and aspects of physics, which students tend to find challenging if these subjects were not part of their school curriculum choices.. The purpose of this presentation is to reflect on the impact of an online Physics Education Technology (PhET) Interactive Projectile Motion Simulation Tool on the understanding of these concepts among a group of students enrolled for a module in Biomechanics as part of the undergraduate curriculum of the B Sport Science. A questionnaire survey was conducted using a 5-point Likert Scale to assess the self-reported understanding of concepts related to projectile motion before and after the use of the PhET simulation tool. Respondents rated their understanding of projectile motion significantly ($p \leq 0.0001$) better after the Power Point Lecture of the topic ($3,04 \pm 0,80$) than before ($2,21 \pm 1,05$) and indicated a significant ($p \leq 0.05$) improvement in their understanding ($3,31 \pm 1,11$) after using the simulation tool. Other specific learning outcomes (independent variables) assessed included the understanding of vector resolution, trigonometry, the influence of gravity and the integrated influence of the velocity and angle of projection and relative height of release on the apex and range of projectiles in sport. In conclusion, there is a sound basis for using online simulation tools, and the PhET projectile motion simulation tool in particular, to augment student's knowledge on the topic in the context of an on-line and/or blended approach to teaching and learning.

Keywords: Phet Simulation, Projectile Motion, Biomechanics

Abstract ID #: 1427

Mathematics teachers negotiating blended learning, socio-economic inequities, and limited technological resources in a time of crisis

Nkanyiso Mthembu | Jaqueline Naidoo

The COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges to the education sector, resulting in a shift to online teaching and blended learning. In addition, the COVID-19 crisis put multiple challenges under the spotlight. Teachers had to negotiate socio-economic inequities, limited technological resources, poor internet connectivity, and curriculum coverage. Therefore, teachers reconsidered their teaching strategies and use of available technological resources to design lessons for remote learning. This study examined how senior phase mathematics teachers learned to adopt a blended learning approach in the context of the coronavirus pandemic and address the challenges. Underpinned by the Community of Inquiry and the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge frameworks, the study was located within the interpretive paradigm and adopted a qualitative, narrative methodological approach. Five senior phase mathematics teachers were purposefully selected as participants. Narrative frames, lesson observations and semi-structured interviews were used to generate data, which was analysed thematically. Findings revealed that socio-economic inequities and lack of technological resources limited learners' engagement and motivation, which presented challenges. Mathematics teachers adapted their pedagogy to address some of these challenges, using creative strategies and facilitating learning communities. The findings further revealed that learners' negative perceptions of mathematics, the inequality gap, teachers' lack of technological capacity development, and limited contact time also contributed to the challenges experienced. This study contributed to the knowledge of how the blended learning approach could be best improved and adopted.

Keywords: Mathematics teachers, blended learning, social inequities, technological resources, narrative research

Abstract ID #: 1351

Balancing Fairness and Functionality in Peer Assessment: Insights from the PrimTEd Assessment Paragraph Trial

Monica Mawoyo | Ruth Emsley | Mashaba Mashala | Yvonne Reed

In a context of increasing enrolments and constrained resources in higher education, assessing open-ended writing fairly and efficiently is a challenge. The Primary Teacher Education (PrimTEd) English assessment project trialled JumpTrak, a peer-marking tool for paragraph writing, to address this issue. Initial trials exposed difficulties in fairly ranking low-performing paragraphs, especially in the presence of seemingly AI-assisted writing. These findings raised concerns about equity and authenticity in student writing (Xu, Yao, & Wang, 2021). In response, the tool was redesigned using a design-based research approach. A revised rubric and peer-ranking process were developed. Initial ranking was done by student peers, with final scoring validated by language experts who grouped responses into high, medium, and low categories. This mixed marking strategy was intended to calibrate accuracy and enhance fairness (Elo & Kallio, 2022). Preliminary findings suggest that peer-based comparative judgment has potential as a formative assessment tool but requires moderation to mitigate bias and maintain validity. The work contributes to debates on the ethics of AI-assisted writing and the role of human judgment in assessment design. It echoes Biesta's (2015) call for education that embraces ethical decision-making and uncertainty, particularly in an era of digital disruption.

Keywords: peer marker, PrimTEd, assessment, equity and authenticity, paragraph writing

Abstract ID #: 1186

Constructively challenging a “rock and a hard place” in the higher education polycrisis context : A reflexive arts-informed self-study

Linda van Laren

Educational research resides in contexts where overarching political, social and economic concerns are inextricably connected. In higher education two of the myriad challenges, related to neoliberalism, globalisation and a market-driven society, manifest as student enrolment massification and institutional underfunding. Higher education academics need to balance responsibilities of research output performance to supplement higher education funding and professional teaching demands in lecture halls with enlarged lecturer to student ratios. Higher education issues are not isolated, separate matters but embedded in general crises forming a multiple crisis conglomeration – known as a *polycrisis*. As a self-study educational researcher, I challenge the divided academic responsibilities using alternative research approaches. Believing that improvement in my professional practices is possible, within a polycrisis context, I challenged the ‘negative’ educational research space with ‘positive’, constructive educational vision using self-reflexive methods. My research question was: “What professional self-learning possibilities present, using arts-informed self-study to provide insights into how to research in higher education spaces differently? Utilising an ethical ‘starting with myself’ research design, my metaphor study served as an alternative, different approach. This study focused on my practice through visceral and sensory self-learning, in seeking ways of balancing academic responsibilities in an embodied, satisfying manner. By gazing at my (and not others’) practice I ethically gained learning insights that would not have felt or seen using traditional research methodologies. Through stimulating under-utilised and under-valued capabilities and senses I challenged ‘a rock and a hard place’ context. This approach provided constructive insights into challenging educational research spaces.

Keywords: Professional academic learning, self-reflexive arts-based approach, higher education polycrisis, metaphor study

Abstract ID #: 1290

**The South African National Qualifications Framework in the time of Polycrisis:
Making Facts out of our Fiction**

Marco MacFarlane

Allais (2014) has argued that the centralisation of education and training within Qualifications Frameworks is misguided, while Gamble (2021) asks whether vocational or occupational training can perhaps 'disrupt' the logic of such Qualification Frameworks (Gamble, 2021). Globally, such frameworks are widespread, and with the introduction of the National Qualifications Framework in South Africa in 1995 (SAQA Act, No 58 of 1995), and its subsequent revision in 2008 when the SAQA Act was replaced by the NQF Act (No. 67 of 2008) a systemic reality was created that has moved Qualifications Frameworks as a theoretical construct in South Africa not only into practice, but into law. As the regulator of Occupational and Vocational training in South Africa, the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) is inextricably bound to, and indeed has emerged from, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and its related legislation and policy.

Policy 'churn' and uncertainty have characterised the trajectory of vocational training since the transition to democracy (and indeed before) – and if the outcomes of vocational training are juxtaposed against labour market statistics in South Africa, it becomes clear that opaque and unstable policy and practice find expression in the lived realities of South Africans. This research follows an argumentative approach, and explores crucial questions around how the NQF has (re)shaped the realities of educators and educational institutions, with a particular focus on vocational education and training in South Africa.

Keywords: National Qualification Frameworks; Vocational Education; Educational Policy

Abstract ID #: 1383

**The crisis of schooling offender learners in correctional centres: a wellness
perspective**

Theresa Lydia Badiktsie Manzini

Correctional schools provide education to offenders with the goals of rehabilitating, reducing recidivism, and preparing them for successful reintegration into society. However, truancy, violence, and bullying in the classrooms are a crisis that undermines the potential for rehabilitation and adversely hinders the emotional, intellectual, and social wellness, as well as the academic success of the learners. This study aims to explore appropriate ways to address the crisis of teaching and learning experienced in correctional centres. It integrates the theoretical frameworks of Bronfenbrenner's ecosystem (1997) and Wellness theory (Hettler, 1984) to understand effective approaches for addressing the crisis, successfully rehabilitating offenders, and enhancing their wellness. Through a qualitative research design, a case study and observations within the correctional school were conducted (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012). A purposive sampling was employed; five offenders and two teachers were interviewed. Findings indicate that teachers experience challenges of misbehaviour among offender learners in class, as they disrupt the learning and teaching process. Recommendations propose developmental strategies, skills, and techniques for teachers, particularly in conflict and anger management, handling misbehaviour among offender learners in class, enhancing rehabilitation, and successfully reintegrating into society. Moreover, recommendations aim to raise awareness among policymakers in the Department of Correctional Services and the Department of Basic Education to address policy gaps to support learners' intellectual, social, and emotional wellness, ultimately promoting their academic success.

Keywords: offender learner, crisis schooling, rehabilitation, intellectual, emotional and social wellness

Abstract ID #: 1428

Exploring Grade 12 Learners' Misconceptions and Errors in Measurement in Mathematical Literacy

Lebohang Victoria Mulaudzi | Zanele Annatoria Ngcobo

This empirical paper identifies learners' common misconceptions and errors in the topic of Measurement in Mathematical Literacy in Grade 12. The persistent underperformance in the topic of Measurement, coupled with persistent misconceptions even after instruction, leads to persistent errors that hinder learners' mathematical understanding and knowledge. The paper is grounded in Constructivism, drawing from Piaget's and Vygotsky's principles that emphasise knowledge construction through active engagement, scaffolding, and social interaction. Adopting an interpretive qualitative approach, the paper used an exploratory case paper, incorporating data from learner exam scripts, teacher interviews, and national diagnostic reports. Document analysis and thematic analysis were conducted to identify and synthesise patterns of learner misconceptions and errors in Measurement. Findings reveal that learners struggle with procedural challenges, such as incorrect formula application, unit confusion, computational mistakes, and conceptual gaps, such as misinterpreting measurement dimensions or failing to distinguish between area and volume. Learners exhibit interpretation and application issues, especially in real-life contexts like reading maps, converting time, or estimating surface area. These dual-layered errors reflect both surface-level mistakes and deep-rooted misunderstandings. The paper concludes that misconceptions in ML Measurement are not isolated but cumulative, stemming from a fragile conceptual foundation and procedural disconnection. It recommends adopting constructivist-aligned pedagogical strategies, such as scaffolded instruction, visual aids, and contextualised tasks, to build conceptual coherence and procedural fluency. Additionally, enhance teacher professional development by focusing on pedagogical content knowledge in Measurement. These findings have implications for curriculum design and teacher professional development aimed at reducing learner misconceptions in Measurement.

Keywords: mathematical literacy; measurement; learner misconceptions; procedural errors; conceptual understanding; computational errors

Abstract ID #: 1306

UKUTHWASA: IMPLICATIONS FOR FORMAL EDUCATION IN ESWATINI

Phumla Mavuso | Selloane Pitikoe

The paper underscores high attrition rates among Emaswati high school learners to accept *ukuthwasa*. These students face a dilemma of choice between formal education and the *ukuthwasa* initiation requirements. Evidently, there are physiological and mental effects of accepting or rejecting *ukuthwasa*. Scarcity of literature on *ukuthwasa* affects the development of strategies that could support *amathwasa* learners' progression in education. In light of these gaps, the paper addresses these two research questions: How does *ukuthwasa* affect the educational performance of high school students in Mankayane? How best can formal education system support/accommodate *amathwasa* learners to complete their high school education? Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Ubuntu theories ground the study. This qualitative study used the interpretivist paradigm to deeply understand the subjectivities around *ukuthwasa* and how the phenomenon affects *amathwasa* learners pursuing high school education in Eswatini. A snowballed sample of twelve Mankayane high school students participated in interviews that were

conducted in their naturalistic settings of their convenience. Thematic data analysis revealed: a) unfriendly/hostile school environment towards *amathwasa*; b) physiological challenges faced by *amathwasa* learners are often unresponsive to Western medical treatments; c) inadequate provisions to support the educational continuity of *amathwasa* during *ukuthwasa* phase and the transition into *bongaka* – traditional healing phase. We conclude that while *ukuthwasa* can profoundly affect these learners, the lack of institutional support exacerbates their educational challenges. Recommendations for a decolonised policy change agenda, aligned with African epistemologies to better accommodate *amathwasa* learners beyond Eurocentric educational model are provided.

Keywords: African spirituality; Ukuthwasa; Amathwasa; High School Learners; Othered; Formal Education

Abstract ID #: 1141

The Crisis of Ethical AI Usage: The Case of Novice Masters Students

Philisiwe Banda | Suriamurthee Maistry

As higher education institutions adapt to new technologies, artificial intelligence has emerged as a crucial tool for transforming instructional approaches (Khan et al., 2025). The recent disruption by generative AI has created much uncertainty and crisis-like reactions in higher education, as it relates to how novice research students perceive and use AI. This paper reports on a study that explored Master of Education students' understandings and utilisation of Generative Artificial Intelligence at a selected university in KwaZulu-Natal. The Unified Theory of Acceptance and use of Technology and the Actor-Network Theory were leveraged in framing the study theoretically. A qualitative case study located within an interpretive paradigm was adopted as the research design. Semi-structured interviews and document review were employed as primary methods for generating data. Ten Master of Education students were purposefully identified and selected as the study's participants. A thematic analysis was adopted to analyse data and assist in producing results. The findings revealed that participants had limited understandings of the relationship between AI use and ethical responsibility, exhibiting an exaggerated perception of artificial intelligence and its capabilities, constantly viewing it as a new technology that is capable of performing any tasks. It emerged that AI has a tendency of generating false and fabricated information, requiring the constant use of google scholar to verify the accuracy of AI generated content. Thus, an urgent need of training programmes is required, focussing on the ethical use of AI.

Keywords: Understandings, Generative Artificial Intelligence, Master of Education students, utilisation

Abstract ID #: 1304

Foregrounding Indigenous Manipulatives in Mathematics as a Part of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the Foundation Phase

Mmaphadi Motholo | Bongani Shabangu

The idea of using concrete materials in the foundation phase is enshrined and embedded in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Mathematics (Grade 1 - 3) document. In terms of skills acquisition, the curriculum aims to develop critical thinking and logical reasoning through the use of concrete materials, ultimately contributing to the creation of a just society. These skills are in line with the objectives of education for sustainable development, which promotes a holistic understanding of society. In essence, it upholds the values of living in harmony between society and the environment, where

tackling social ills would require having a holistic knowledge of the environment, economy, and society as a whole. In South Africa, township communities are one of the most common places facing social ills and lack the necessary skills for sustaining their livelihood. In addition, previous studies reveal that 'traditional' math tools do not bear any relevance to the children, thus making it difficult to have a nuanced understanding of the subject. In the study, we therefore discuss how indigenous manipulatives in mathematics can function as tools that are culturally and locally relevant in equipping children with the necessary skills and values necessary for tackling their everyday challenges. Our study relied on sociocultural theory as a theoretical framework for understanding how culture, history and social interaction influences and shape the foregrounding of indigenous manipulatives in mathematics as a process of using education for sustainable development in townships. The data was generated through two steps, namely semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The study was carried in the Motheo District in the Free-State Province, South Africa with a focus on grade 1.

Keywords: indigenous, manipulatives, sociocultural, grade 1, environment, mathematics, Sustainable

Abstract ID #: 1097

Educational Research for a VUCA World: A realist, socio-cultural perspective

Eureta Rosenberg

VUCA' and 'BANI' is how some describe the unpredictable shocks of our present reality. These buzz words portray the world as surprisingly Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous, Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, and Incomprehensible. It may be only a Cartesian worldview, with Modernism and Positivism, that assumes things to be 'normally' otherwise. Many educators know their workspaces to be highly unpredictable contexts where judgement is required on a daily basis in the face of insufficient information and resources. This theoretical research paper has two connected thrusts. First, I apply the notions of judgement and professionalism (Biestra, Freidson) to educational settings in Africa, drawing on published case studies and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (2016-2025). Here, in the African Union's *Standards and Competences for the Teaching Profession*, I find echoes of Biestra's call for purpose, relationality and teacher professionalism, as they frame schooling as a teleological (multi-purposeful) practice that acknowledges the contextual and relational nature of education-in-society, with educators making judgement calls based on knowledge not only of curriculum and pedagogy, but also of the learners' and wider context.

I then move to ask how educational research and policy should respond. If we know or at least suspect that existence is *by nature* dynamic, nonlinear, and only partially knowable, in-context, how do we research and inform policy in ways that recognize purpose, educator praxis and the pre-eminence of relationships? I conclude by exploring the potential of realist informed socio-cultural research, to create collaborative spaces for pushing towards living, seeing, and shaping education spaces differently.

Keywords: VUCA, BANI, educator professionalism, contextual judgement, realism, socio-cultural research

Abstract ID #: 1345

Access to and success in the education of teenage girls in sub-Saharan Africa

Beatrice Akala | Emmily Sitati

Access to and success in education are foundational to social equity and progress. In sub-Saharan Africa, girls remain significantly underrepresented in education at all levels (UNESCO, 2023). The article explores the systemic barriers that hinder educational

access and achievement for girls, particularly in marginalized and underprivileged communities in Sub Saharan Africa. Guided by Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), the study examines how interconnected environments—family, school, community, and broader societal structures—shape girls' educational experiences. We investigated the question: *How does a girl's ecosystem inhibit her access to and success in education?* Using secondary literature, we investigate barriers to access and success. Our critical analysis highlights the complex interplay of cultural norms, poverty, gender-based violence, and inadequate infrastructure that collectively impede girls' educational progress. We argue that while some policies and programs show promise, significant gaps remain in implementation. We conclude that improving girls' education in sub-Saharan Africa requires a holistic, ecosystem-based approach. Prioritizing education as a fundamental human right and enforcing inclusive policies are essential steps towards achieving gender equity and broader developmental goals.

Keywords: access, success, equity, gender parity, equality, marginalised.

Abstract ID #: 1374

Technical and Vocational Education and Training College Lecturers' Perspectives on Moodle as a teaching and Learning Platform

Zodwa Khumalo

Amid the unprecedented times of the coronavirus pandemic in 2019, lecturers globally had to swiftly adapt to online teaching and learning platforms such as Moodle. The sudden switch to online learning stimulated uncertainty and fear amongst lecturers about the effectiveness of Moodle as a teaching and learning platform. This paper aims to explore the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) lecturers' perspectives on using Moodle to teach Engineering Studies at a TVET college. The study adopted a Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge model as its lens through which to comprehend the dynamics surrounding the effective use of Moodle as a teaching platform. A qualitative research approach within an interpretive paradigm was employed to comprehend the TVET lecturers' perspectives on the successes and challenges of using Moodle as a teaching platform. In-depth interviews and Moodle observation were used to generate data for the study. Purposive sampling was used to select four TVET college lecturers as the participants in the study. The findings revealed that despite the general positive buy-in, challenges included unstable connectivity, lack of student data and gadgets, and lack of lecturers' oversight over assessment activities that may lead to potential students' unethical practices. More in-depth and comprehensive training for the lecturers, in-depth understanding of the students' needs, and refinement of the Moodle software to allow for an interactive platform are recommended for the effective use of Moodle.

Keywords: Moodle, Teaching and Learning, Engineering Studies, TVET, Lecturers, South Africa

Abstract ID #: 1310

Young adult survivors' lived experiences of interconnected physical and cyberbullying: Psycho-social impacts and implications for interventions

Suhana Jacobs | Vaughn M. John

Growing violence is part of the polycrisis affecting educational institutions and wider society. One manifestation of this, is the escalating trend of bullying that begins in physical spaces and extends into cyber spaces, often through video recordings of assaults shared on social media. This article presents findings from phase one of an action research study in KwaZulu-Natal which explored the psycho-social impacts of the progression of bullying from physical to cyber spaces. This phase involved in-depth interviews with five purposively sampled young adult survivors whose narratives shaped three subsequent phases of action and reflection. Drawing on the work of critical theorist Paulo Freire, Brad Evans and Henry Giroux, the study explored the complex layers of violence to understand the multifaceted nature of the psycho-social impacts on survivors. The impacts identified, via thematic analysis, were increased pain, enduring trauma, heightened fear, poor self-image and identity, overwhelming loneliness and feelings of dehumanisation. Our findings reveal the complex, intersecting effects of physical harm, social media amplification of harm and consequent psycho-social trauma. This creates crises for learners, their families and schools while highlighting the need for educational interventions and stronger frameworks for physical and online safety, and bullying prevention. Theoretically, this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of the interconnectedness of physical and cyberbullying, which we conceptualise as *digitally extended bullying* (DEB), involving four dimensions of extension. The impacts of DEB on survivors inform strategies currently being developed for mitigating risks, addressing challenges and safeguarding young people in South Africa's evolving digital environment.

Keywords: action research, cyberbullying, physical bullying, interventions psycho-social impacts, survivors

Abstract ID #: 1358

MATHEMATICAL KNOWLEDGE FOR TEACHING: ASSESSING AND DEVELOPING KNOWLEDGE FOR TEACHING MATHEMATICS IN SOUTH AFRICAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Sharon Mc Auliffe | Lyn Kok | Samu Chikiwa

Understanding and defining Mathematical Knowledge for Teaching (MKT) remains a global challenge with significant implications for teacher preparation and assessment. Moving beyond traditional content knowledge assessments to capture the complexity of teaching—particularly the specialised knowledge required in classrooms—is essential. Building on Shulman's (1986) foundational distinction between subject matter knowledge (SMK), pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), and curriculum knowledge (CK), Ball et al. (2008) developed a more detailed, practice-based model of MKT by analysing the actual work of teaching in the U.S.

This paper draws on Ball et al.'s framework to examine how MKT can be assessed in the South African context. Although the Primary Teacher Education (PrimTEd) project has defined knowledge and practice standards, there is a need for exemplified tasks and assessment items that reflect these standards. We explore how conventional mathematics content questions can be adapted to assess both specialised and pedagogical content knowledge aligned with the Ball framework.

Using existing PrimTEd assessment items and examples from international literature, we demonstrate how such adaptations can better reflect the nuanced knowledge required for effective mathematics teaching. Our work contributes to the growing body of research on MKT in South Africa and offers practical insights for teacher educators striving to better prepare primary school teachers. This study is particularly relevant for those developing

assessments that reflect the real demands of mathematics teaching in diverse classroom settings.

Keywords: Mathematical knowledge for teaching, assessment, preservice teachers

Abstract ID #: 1279

Teaching Life Skills through Inquiry in Township Schools: Pathways of Hope, Creativity, and Professional Growth in South African Foundation Phase Education

Zukiswa Nhase | Lulama Mdoana Zide

This study explores how Grade 3 Foundation Phase teachers implement an inquiry-based approach to develop scientific process skills in township classrooms in the Sarah Baartman District, Eastern Cape, South Africa. Framed by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and principles of inquiry-based learning, the study focuses on how teachers foster learner agency and scientific thinking within systemic educational challenges. Conducted in four quintile 3 and 4 schools where isiXhosa is the predominant home language, the study used a qualitative case study design, gathering data through semi-structured interviews and lesson observations. South African teachers continue to navigate the complexities of under-resourced environments, large class sizes, and evolving curricular demands, realities that reflect the broader polycrisis affecting education. Yet, this research highlights how some teachers creatively and ethically engage learners in Life Skills education through learner-centered inquiry. By examining teachers' understanding and facilitation of inquiry-based practices, the study provides insight into how scientific process skills can be nurtured even within constrained conditions. Findings indicate that despite challenges, inquiry-based learning serves as a hopeful and empowering pedagogy, encouraging exploration, collaboration, and critical thinking. Teachers' ability to adapt and innovate under pressure reveals not only the transformative potential of this approach but also their role as ethical agents in advancing inclusive and quality education. This study contributes to the discourse on foundational science education by illustrating how inquiry-based learning can act as a pathway of hope, creativity, and resilience in times of educational crisis.

Keywords: Inquiry-Based Learning, Scientific Process Skills, Life Skills Curriculum, Foundation Phase, Educational Inequality, Hopeful Pedagogy

Abstract ID #: 1190

Always in our hands or pockets: A historical review and bibliometric analysis of Mobile Learning in Higher Education (1994-2024)

Brian Shambare | Thuthukile Jita

This study investigates the evolution and impact of mobile learning research in higher education over a 30-year span, from 1994 to 2024. Despite increasing global attention to digital education tools, a comprehensive understanding of trends and influential contributors in the mobile learning domain remains underexplored. To address this gap, the research employs a bibliometric approach to map publication trends, scholarly influence, and thematic developments in the field. A dataset of 3980 publications was extracted from the Web of Science database on April 12, 2025, and analysed using Microsoft Excel, Python, VOSviewer, and polynomial regression techniques. Building on existing literature that highlights the growing integration of mobile technologies in educational settings, this analysis identifies key contributors; countries, institutions, authors, and journals that have shaped the discourse. Findings indicate a sharp increase in scholarly output post-2010, with a notable surge between 2020 and 2022, coinciding with the educational disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The United States,

China, and Taiwan stand out as leading nations, with Taiwanese institutions such as the National University of Science and Technology demonstrating significant impact. Influential figures, including Hwang Gwo-Jen, and journals like *Computers & Education* and *Education and Information Technologies* emerged as central to the field. Core themes over the last decade include gamification, augmented reality, learner self-regulation, and pandemic-induced shifts in mobile learning practices. The study argues that as we move beyond 2025, emerging technologies like Virtual Reality and Artificial Intelligence are poised to redefine the landscape of mobile learning research. These insights offer strategic implications for policymakers and institutions aiming to embed sustainable and forward-looking digital learning initiatives in higher education.

Keywords: Mobile learning, mobile devices, higher education, bibliometrics, citation analysis

Abstract ID #: 1160

Culturally Responsive Teaching through the Igbo Language: Enhancing Mathematics Achievement Among Secondary School Students

Felix O. Egara | Moeketsi Mosia | Fadip A. Nannim

Mathematics plays a foundational role in the development of logical reasoning, problem-solving skills, and scientific literacy, all of which are essential for individual and national development. Despite its importance, many students in Nigerian secondary schools continue to perform poorly in mathematics, particularly when instruction is delivered in languages and contexts that are disconnected from their cultural experiences. This study investigated the effect of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) through the Igbo language on the mathematics achievement of Senior Secondary One (SS1) students in public secondary schools in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. The research addressed the persistent issue of low mathematics achievement by exploring whether instruction situated in a familiar linguistic and cultural context could enhance learning outcomes. A true experimental design was employed, involving 80 students randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. The experimental group received instruction in circle geometry using CRT principles delivered in the Igbo language, while the control group was taught the same content using conventional methods in English. Data were collected using a 20-item Geometry Achievement Test (GAT), developed and validated by experts, with a reliability coefficient of 0.81 from pilot testing. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 28, employing descriptive statistics and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). Results showed that students taught using CRT through the Igbo language significantly outperformed their peers taught using conventional instruction, $F(1, 75) = 11.71$, $p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .135$. Gender had no significant effect on performance, and no significant interaction was found between instructional method and gender. The study concludes that integrating culturally and linguistically responsive approaches into mathematics teaching can improve achievement and foster educational equity. It recommends incorporating indigenous language instruction and CRT training for teachers to enhance the inclusivity and effectiveness of mathematics education.

Keywords: Culturally responsive teaching, Igbo language, mathematics achievement, mother tongue instruction, gender, secondary education

Abstract ID #: 1149

Exploring the impact of a mentorship program for aspirant school principals enrolled in a bespoke Master of Education Leadership degree at a South African university: A CHAT perspective

Douglas Andrews

Achieving the objectives of the United Nations Sustainability Goal 4, ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, is a challenge for leaders and teachers in South African schools that are affected by a polycrisis that includes a range of radical social, political, economic, cultural, and pedagogical challenges. Research shows that school principals encounter considerable environmental constraints and polycrisis when transitioning from classroom teachers and mid-level management roles to school leaders. Also, newly appointed school leaders often lack the essential skills, knowledge, and leadership abilities needed to make transformative decisions to navigate tensions for leading successful, inclusive, and high-performing schools.

To support aspiring school leaders navigate polycrisis, a university in Johannesburg has launched a customized Master of Education in Leadership degree. This program features an innovative collaborative mentorship initiative that operates in conjunction with the academic coursework. Experienced school principals will mentor the selected students enrolled in this competitive M.Ed. program. The program currently includes (n=11) in-service, aspiring school leaders and has enlisted the services of (n=7) experienced school principals who will serve as mentors.

Engeström's, Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) inspired, Third Generation Activity Systems Model, will be used as a theoretical framework to understand the complexities that exist in school systems and the changing nature of the 'object of activity.' In this project, the mentor, from one system, interacts in a 'third object' space with the mentee (the aspiring leader) who exists in their school system. This interaction (mentorship) addresses contradictions within the context of the school system where the mentee works.

The first part of the paper presents initial findings from a qualitative pilot study involving four mentors who participated in semi-structured interviews. The interviews aimed to explore two key aspects: first, the theoretical foundations that supported the mentors in their roles, and second, the mentors' perceptions of how their one-on-one engagement with mentees was preparing aspiring school leaders—students transitioning from middle management and classroom roles to school principals. The initial findings indicate that the mentors prefer a hybrid mentorship strategy that emphasizes reflection. Additionally, they favor an approach that incorporates coaching elements, focusing on task-setting, as well as relational one-on-one engagements with mentees that provide opportunities for emotional support and problem-solving.

The second part of this paper presents findings from the pilot stage of the study, which explored the experiences of four mentees (n=4) involved in a mentorship program. Each participant also took part in semi-structured interviews. Initial findings indicate that the mentees: (1) appreciated the goal-setting initiatives, (2) valued the close contact with their mentors for addressing sensitive and emotional issues, and (3) found the mentors' prior experience, particularly their knowledge in creating and sustaining 'deep networks', to be invaluable in problem-solving and resolving interpersonal conflicts.

Keywords: Mentorship, coaching, inclusive education, leadership, Cultural Historical Activity Theory, pedagogy

Abstract ID #: 1360

Making (Some) Sense Differently: Multimodal Dabblings in (Post)-Qualitative Teacher Education Research

Delecia Davids | Paseka Blessing Chisale

This arts-based contribution emerges from our impromptu conversations in our departmental tea room, where we realised that we were both drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic and assemblage theories within our doctoral studies. Deeply concerned with being intentionally reflexive in our practices, we often exchanged ideas and engaged in numerous discussions about our work. Here, we aim to provoke discourse, as our conversations fostered the potential for new nodes in further knowledge development and the gathering of our collective rhizomatic experiences to initiate discourse from our living assemblage, drawing on our shared multiplicity of becoming. In this arts-based contribution, two novice researchers in teacher education, one working in ICTs for Learning, the other in Life Skills and Visual Arts, come together in a multimodal conversation to reflect on our early engagements with (post-) qualitative methodologies and posthumanist provocations in our doctoral work.

Rather than claiming allegiance, we trace our experimental dabblings with these ideas as we attempt to conduct research differently. Our presentation unfolds in three parts: two individual multimodal contributions followed by a collective reflection. The first contribution presents an entangled ethnography, where curated photographs from fieldwork are used not only to explore the digital experiences of preservice teachers, but also to reflect critically on the researcher's own positionality, reflexivity, and methodological entanglements. This visual practice becomes a means of thinking-with theory, materiality, and self in an unfolding research assemblage. The second contribution draws from a multimodal PhD thesis in which original artworks created by the researcher serve as reflexive "data" collection and analytic tools, exploring how art-making can function as a mode of inquiry and sense-making in Life Skills/Visual Arts teacher education. The researcher draws on rhizomatic pockets as time-travelling tools that serve as knowledge reservoirs, flowing between the continuums of time, space, and place to build an assemblage of becoming. Together, we consider how multimodal methods extend the possibilities of research in teacher education, shifting how we come to know, represent, and be within our inquiries. We reflect on how arts-based and visual modes challenge linear notions of reflexivity, and what becomes possible when we allow messiness, movement, and materiality to shape our research processes, even if only provisionally, imperfectly, and experimentally.

Keyword: Rhizomatic theory, Post-qualitative methodologies, Posthumanism, Reflexivity, Assemblage, Arts-based Research

Abstract ID #: 1221

Youth Imaging Gender Justice: Mobile, Visual and Linguistic Pathways of Hope

Lisa Starr | Claudia Mitchell | Shannon Walsh | Relebohile Moletsane

Panel Abstract: Amid the polycrisis, gendered violence, shrinking civic space, and linguistic erasure interlock to thwart equitable learning, particularly among youth. This panel weaves four participatory projects that position youth as imaginative agents of gender-transformative education. Mitchell interrogates the transnational journey of *Youth United Will Never Be Defeated*, a travelling exhibition of thirty photographs whose circulation across seven countries surfaces dilemmas of censorship, safety, and "difficult knowledge." Walsh traces Carmen's solitary arrival at the Durban TRANSFORM summit, showing how absence under gang surveillance in Wentworth becomes a visual testimony of refusal and survival. Moletsane, Mkhize, Luthuli, and Wiebesiek examine how co-learning about sexuality through isiZulu vernacular unsettles taboos and seeds collective

agency in rural KwaZulu-Natal. Starr, Mitchell, and Thompson present *MOBILIZE*, where Sierra Leonean pre-service teachers engage in cellphilm, WhatsApp mentoring, and micro-learning to craft hopeful classroom micro-practices. Collectively, the papers reveal how participatory visual methodologies open countercultural pedagogical pathways, answering SAERA's call to pursue hope, creativity, and affirmative ethics in education. The panel invites reflection on vital strategies for re-purposing education when crises converge. We offer recommendations for policy, curriculum and research.

"How does gender travel?" Biography of a travelling exhibition about disrupting gender norms

The paper questions what it means for images, especially images on disrupting gender norms to cross into different geopolitical spaces, particularly in a context of feminist backlash. This paper draws on the production and mobilization of an exhibition *Youth United Will Never Be Defeated* based on photos and captions produced by youth from Tanzania, Mali, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Mexico and Indigenous youth in Canada. Organized around the prompt 'gender in my community', the photos and captions were produced by more than 200 youth in these countries. The youth attending a Transnational Summit in Durban and representing the various countries listed above, selected 30-35 photos for a travelling exhibition, created a title for the exhibition (*Youth United Will Never Be Defeated*) and a curatorial statement. The resulting exhibition travelled back to each of their countries, but in the full recognition of a number of critical concerns. Can all photos be exhibited everywhere? How did youth themselves respond to knowing that their images would travel. What counts as difficult knowledge and what safeguarding might be needed around images of trans and queer issues exhibited in Nigeria of Sierra Leone?

Breaking the Scene of Impasse: Youth, Gender-Transformation, and the Trouble of Participation in Wentworth

Through the story of Carmen, a young woman from Wentworth, South Africa, we explore the limits and possibilities of gender-transformation work in contexts shaped by systemic violence. Wentworth is a community marked by apartheid spatial legacies, intergenerational trauma, and the constant threat of gangsterism. In early 2025, Carmen arrived at the transnational TRANSFORM Youth Summit alone—despite having prepared alongside a group of her peers using photovoice methods. Fear of kidnapping, territorial violence, and gang surveillance kept other youth home. Through Carmen's story, we consider how gender issues can be displaced or silenced in times of crisis, and how absence itself can be understood as a form of visual evidence. Drawing on feminist theory, including Lauren Berlant's concept of the impasse and Pumla Gqola's framing of refusal in the context of pervasive gendered violence, we argue for a more nuanced understanding of gender-transformation that accounts for the limits of participation under structural violence—and honors the subtle, complicated ways that youth continue to resist, witness, and make meaning. Ultimately, we call for an expanded praxis that sees youth not only as change-makers, but also as survivors negotiating the layered violence of their environments.

Sex in our Language: Mediating Gender and Sexuality Co-Learning through Mother Tongue with Youth in a Rural KwaZulu-Natal Community

In her 2013 essay, *Queering the Mother Tongue*, Sara Mourad (2013) wrote that 'science is in, not above, historical and linguistic processes', arguing that "the poetic and the political are inseparable" (p.2533). Several questions arise: What difference might language play in young people's learning about gender and sexuality? How might their understanding enable them to un-learn the unequal gender norms that govern relationships and influence social change in their community? We report on emerging findings from participatory workshops with 15 out of school youth in a rural KwaZulu-Natal

community in South Africa to understand the unequal gender norms in their community, and to develop strategies for change. We use arts-based and participatory visual methods to facilitate learning and youth-led action. In the workshops, we wanted to understand whether and how the use of the isiZulu, the mother tongue of participants, might enable or inhibit their learning and communication about gender and sexuality, and their efforts towards social change. We considered this issue in a context of unequal gender norms and cultural taboos, especially those surrounding open communication about sex and sexuality is considered taboo.

MOBILIZE: New Teachers Leveraging Mobile Media for Gender-Transformative Education in Sierra Leone

In a world marked by interlocking economic, environmental, and social challenges, educators must craft hopeful, ethically imaginative responses to the polycrisis. Drawing on Biesta's call to reclaim the purposes of education and on feminist studies, this paper reports on the future of MOBILIZE, a proposed five-year critical participatory action research project with 30 pre-service teachers across five Sierra Leonean teacher-training institutes. The intervention integrates (1) cellphilming—short, participant-produced mobile videos, (2) youth-to-youth mentoring through WhatsApp, and (3) locally generated micro-learning resources. Workshops, digital dialogue, and iterative co-analysis position young teachers as knowledge producers and agents of gender-transformative change. Preliminary findings from related work reveal that creating and screening cellphilms catalyses reflexive discussion on important topics such as child marriage and school-based misogyny, while WhatsApp groups sustain peer mentoring and rapid resource circulation. Participants report enhanced pedagogical agency, a broadened ethics of care, and emergent micro-practices that re-vision classrooms as sites of collective hope. By tracing how mobile technologies can amplify creative pathways towards gender equity, MOBILIZE offers a scalable model for re-orientating teacher education to confront the polycrisis. Implications for policy, curriculum design, and South–South collaboration will be discussed, inviting dialogue across diverse groups.

Keywords: gender transformation, participatory visual methodologies, social change, youth engagement

Abstract ID #: 1318

Didactical tools and approaches for learning transformation and advancing sustainability in an era of polycrisis

Noncaba Khumalo | Tony Laston Magwira | Chikumbutso Ndaferankhande | Mbali Ntuli | Maite Zeisser Gutiérrez | Arorisoe Sibanda | John Bhurekeni

The world is grappling with high geopolitical tensions, and wicked climate change issues, which are having a negative influence on human security in general and developmental and learning experiences in particular. Research is replete with examples of how this polycrisis is reshaping the reality in which individuals must live. The most likely outcome of polycrisis events, particularly for young people and senior persons, is that they will become traumatic in the absence of proper support networks (Cody Sanders, 2025). With the need of co-creating sustainable networks in mind, this panel stems from experiences in change-oriented educational research that allow for a multi-voiced approach to educational reform and transformation. The presenters, comprising seasoned educators with extensive experience in collaborative change-activated projects, engage in a discussion on transformative learning. The panel opens with a paper that emphasises the value created for teachers through ESD-led teacher capacity development, change-projects and how this has catalysed pedagogical shifts in learning and practice in this

polycrisis era. The panel further explores the import of indigenous knowledge systems and decolonial climate fiction, to develop culturally responsive pedagogies that amplify community and youth voices in educational transformation. These innovations which are considered to be transgressive and transformative potentially move, in the last paper, into regenerative possibilities that are enriched by being context-relevant and rooted in our cultural philosophies.

Paper 1: Climate Justice and Curriculum Innovations through ESD Professional Development and Climate-Action Change Projects

Noncaba Khumalo, Tony Magwira¹

¹Environmental Learning Research Centre, Rhodes University

Climate change presents an unprecedented societal challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa, with profound and inequitable consequences on children, the youth, and other vulnerable groups, raising concerns about climate-related injustices. Amid this quandary, ESD is recognised as a key mechanism for addressing such sustainability challenges in the curriculum to promote inclusive, equitable and sustainable futures. In Southern Africa, there has been significant progress made in building ESD capacities through teacher professional development and change projects from initiatives such as Sustainability Starts with Teachers (SST) and Fundisa for Change. The Change Project model is recognised as a viable and strategic approach for ESD (Lotz-Sistka, 2022). This paper is guided by the Value Creation Framework (Wenger et al., 2011), which offers a lens for examining how professional development and change projects translate into curriculum innovations and social transformations that address climate justice issues. In this paper, we are interested in exploring the value created by ESD professional development training and change projects in capacitating teachers to be agents of change in addressing the climate crisis, which is part of the polycrisis. Preliminary findings indicate that leveraging meaningful learning from change project experiences promotes pedagogical shifts that are key to strengthening ESD. Thus, the findings will offer insights on how ESD professional development and change projects can promote pedagogical transformation and climate justice.

Paper 2: Leveraging community and youth voices through Integrating Indigenous Knowledge and Critical Pedagogy in Transformative and Transgressive learning initiatives

Authors: Chikumbutso Ndaferankhande & Mbali Ntuli

¹Environmental Learning Research Centre, Rhodes University

In an era of polycrisis, marked by escalating environmental challenges such as water scarcity and climate change, effective Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) necessitates transformative learning initiatives that are inclusive of community and youth voices and contextually relevant. This paper explores the role of integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into river monitoring. It then looks into how local knowledges and practices inform climate change education, drawing from principles of critical pedagogy and fiction writing, can enhance youth and community empowerment. Both approaches address the marginalization of local lived experiences and the centring of eurocentric narratives in formal and informal environmental education. Data informing this paper is based on two case studies: the first located in the catchment area of the Msunduzi River, KwaZulu-Natal and the other in Karonga schools in Malawi. Part of the methodology for the two cases studies employs self-reflexive, arts-based speculative fabulation and critical pedagogy to decolonize climate and river monitoring narratives and foster agency in climate action. The objective is to develop culturally responsive pedagogies and community sensitive practices that amplify community and youth voices. As seen from the preliminary findings, youth and community-oriented projects can

promote sustainable futures in both informal and formal learning spaces necessary during the polycrisis. We demonstrate that leveraging local knowledges and IKS offer innovative didactical tools for transformative learning, building generative resilience, and advancing ESD rooted in African contexts.

Paper 3: *Uywanakuy*, nurturing and caring for each other: stories of transgressive intercultural learning in research

Maite Zeisser Gutiérrez¹

¹Environmental Learning Research Centre, Rhodes University

Talking about pathways of hope, creativity and affirmative ethics in times of polycrisis, requires broadening our vision looking for more holistic approaches. When asking ourselves about what education is and what its purpose is, perhaps we don't need to reinvent the wheel, don't we already learn in and from our cultures? Nor can we ask ourselves these questions, isolating them from *how* we educate and from *where*. What if some of the responses were whispered to us from ancestral times? This paper tells the story of a co-created research engaged in transgressive courage, grounded in the philosophical, ethical, pedagogical, and practical principle of my Andean culture, *uywanakuy* – nurturing and caring for each other. The stories shared speak about my collective journey with 20 co-conspirers of 7 countries from South Americas, attempting to weave our transformative experiences on intercultural education through a beyond method approach, political ethics of care and intuitive pedagogy. By creating a culturally responsive process, recentring co-conspirers stories at heart of research, we will hear about how this approach allowed: resonance with the research purpose, feeling that it “speaks and relates to” people; facilitated dialogue among different cultural systems, specially through metaphors; grounded concepts and theories in our own sensibilities. All of which contributed to a multidimensional mutual nurturing, *uywanakuy*. The paper will come full circle, surfacing how this mutually nurturing journey, co-created a regenerative path for transformative and transgressive intercultural learning in research.

Keywords: transformative learning, knowledge co-creation, teacher capacity development, indigenous knowledge, decoloniality, regenerative possibilities

Abstract ID #: 1288

Playful assemblage: Using live art making and installation to create participatory discussion on embodied academic identity and becoming

Marguerite Muller | Daisy Pillay

In this arts-based discussion we draw on previous collaborations to extend our practice as embodied arts-based scholars. Through live art making and the concept of assemblage we reflect on our scholarly and artistic collaboration to explore what arts-based research and practice has made possible for us. In the context of the ‘polycrisis’ we invite conference participants to join us as we create a live artwork and living installation to collaboratively respond to the questions:

How can collaborative art making help us share our becoming as embodied academics?
How can collaborative innovations and innovative methodologies provide countercultural safe spaces for pushing thought beyond how we know the world and provide insights into how to live through education spaces differently?

As we draw on arts-based methods to explore these questions we create a **playful detour** from the conference programme to gather as a group of co-explorers (artists, scholars, academics, students) willing to pause, linger, and notice. We bring objects, artworks, materials, thoughts, and written text to the space to create a pop-up live art event and installation artwork. Installation art is a form of visual art where you arrange objects in a space and view the space and audience as integral parts of the artwork. Therefore, we

see our discussion as an installation which creates a space in the conference programme where we claim some time to slow down in a space where everyone's story of that moment is heard and acknowledged. In doing this we withhold interpretation or judgement to share a moment for unlearning our academic habits of criticising and analysing. We will use art to share our thoughts with the aim of creating a collective artistic installation of embodied academic identity. We draw on art to make visible the diffractive patterns that emerge as the group's experiences, insights, and bodily presences to intra-act. Through live art making we create an installation where participants co-compose meaning in real-time, folding in one another's impressions. We end the session by reflecting on the collaborative art installation and ask the questions:

What's lingering, unresolved, or still unfolding for you? Instead of looking for a "correct" interpretation, pay attention to moments of divergence, disagreement, or confusion.

How did the group co-produce new meanings or ways of being-with the artwork?

Following this arts-based discussion we will document the final installation through photo and video to share back with participants co-creators and invite further engagement and connection beyond the conference space.

Keywords: Arts based methods, installation art, live art, embodied academic, collaborative art making; playfulness

Abstract ID #: 1234

Migrating Hopes, Fractured Realities: International Students in South Africa's Higher Education System

Nerolen Soobryan | Jabulile Happyness Mzimela | Shaun Kruger | Cassandra Odelle Subiah | Michael Anthony Samuel

In the face of widespread global disruptions, the movement of international students reveals a complex relationship between hope, displacement, institutional opportunism, and systemic exclusion. These students are driven by multiple factors, including the desire for academic excellence, the need to escape socio-political instability, and the opportunity to engage with global markets. Fortunately, South Africa is increasingly and simultaneously positioning itself as a destination for international students, particularly those from Africa. However, alongside institutional efforts to attract international enrolments lies a contradictory set of challenges, namely, restrictive visa regimes, financial precarity, administrative indifference, and cultural exclusion. Aligned with the 2025 SAERA conference theme of Polycrises, these international students' struggles are compounded by academic marginalisation and hostile social environments. These elements create precarious experiences that impact students across various dimensions, including academic, financial, psychosocial, and cultural aspects.

These tensions speak to the simultaneous pull and push dynamics within the global higher education landscape, whereby students are pulled into institutions through strategic marketing and rankings-focused recruitment but pushed to the margins through everyday practices of neglect and dismissal of their knowledge or perspectives.

Against this backdrop, this panel forms a **conversational dialogue** that draws on a multivocal set of perspectives from academics who are either former international students or are working closely with such student cohorts. The discussion will explore how global polycrises are refracted through the everyday realities of international undergraduate and postgraduate students in South Africa, including their negotiation of shifting policies, the commodification of foreign student bodies, and their often-muted contribution to local knowledge ecologies.

This panel will be constituted through the format of a conversational interview of the panel members from varied institutional and contextual portfolios and experiences:

Nerolen Soobryan, from his academic assessment management perspective at MANCOSA, a private higher education institution that is expanding its continental international footprint.

Jabulile Happyness Mzimela, UNIZULU, in the discipline of Human Geography at a rural university, promotes an African Indigenous Knowledge Research Network, addressing decolonisation and the marginalisation of continental epistemologies.

Shaun Kruger, UKZN, drawing on his experience of being an international law studies student in a multi-country programme in the Netherlands, reflects on the student recruitment and immigration procedures, highlighting the over-commercialisation of transnational education, reliance on unregulated agents, inadequate student support, and shifting geopolitical dynamics.

Cassandra Subiah, UKZN academic development officer in medical sciences, expands on the lack of a holistic institutional support network for international students beyond administrative and legal induction programmes. The lack of inclusive contribution of international students' lived experiences to local higher education curricula is eclipsed by the desire to acclimate students into South African hegemonic discourses, to a process that borders on xenophobia.

The panel interviewer, **Michael Anthony Samuel**, draws on his experiences as an international student in the UK during the post-academic boycott, his present research coordination of the Mauritius-South Africa collaborative doctoral studies cohort, and his involvement in a continental supervisor capacity development project across Africa.

Separate panel papers will not be presented, since the format is constituted through an interactive dialogue between the panel members in the interview. Together, we explore what it means to be educated *in* and *for* a world shaped by overlapping crises. We ask: How are international students in South Africa positioned within higher education discourses and policies during this time of polycrisis? What does this positioning tell us about the ethics, purposes, and futures of education?

In conclusion, this panel seeks to offer conceptual and practical insights into the reimagination of higher education in South Africa through the lens of international student experiences as a critical pathway of hope, creativity, and transformation amid global crises.

Keywords: International students; Migration and mobility; Academic precarity; Institutional support for international students

Abstract ID #: 1274

Parental and Caregiver Involvement in South African Education

Adam Cooper | Zahraa McDonald | Ashnie Mahadew | Noxolo Xaba

PRESENTERS:

Panel chairperson	Alli Gerths
Paper 1 presenter	Zahraa McDonald
Paper 2 presenter	Adam Cooper
Paper 3 presenter	Ashnie Mahadew
Discussant (optional)	Noxolo Xaba

Keywords for panel / session: (4-6)

Parent involvement, early childhood education, community engagement, primary school education, school ecosystems

Panel abstract:

This panel presents research from a recently published book, “**Parent and caregiver involvement in South African education (HSRC Press, 2025)**”. In an edited collection of chapters, the authors explore research, experiences and lessons about parental and

caregiver involvement across the education system, from early childhood development to basic education. The chapters move across times, places and themes, raising questions for the future of educational research on parent and caregiver involvement in South African schools. The book emphasises educational research and interventions.

The book's focus on parents means that education is conceived as a field that includes schools, homes and communities, proposing that education operates as an ecosystem, rather than in an isolated setting. This challenges academics and students of education, as well as practitioners and policymakers to think about their practices, methodologies and assumptions in relation to a range of spaces that extend beyond the classroom. Our approach represents a bold relational orientation to educational research, challenging scholars to reflect upon and reconceptualise the spaces they assume are relevant to schooling.

The focus on parent involvement in the wider schooling ecosystem means that the book brings together research on South African schooling that has generally either focused on 1) 'identity and the contexts of schooling', and 2) the academic performance of learners. Parent and caregiver involvement in their children's education unites these usually separate concerns because this topic clearly has implications for improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools and it highlights the social aspects inherent in education. The book is divided into three sections and speakers on the panel will speak to each of these. The first section frames parental and caregiver involvement in South African education using a social justice approach to the topic, which has guided the book's orientation overall. The second section unpacks, in more detail, the specific contexts of parental and caregiver involvement in education, spaces where the battles for social justice play out. The final section looks at specific interventions in parental and caregiver involvement in education, exploring how a more just education system might be achieved. The logic of the book and this panel is therefore to begin by unpacking what social and political forces shaping parent involvement means, before moving to how these shape specific contexts and what can be done to intervene on the ground.

Paper 1: "A social justice perspective on parental and caregiver involvement in education policy"

Z McDonald¹, N Xaba²

¹University of Johannesburg, ²The South African College of Applied Psychology

This chapter examines the role afforded to parents and caregivers in South African education policy. The chapter illustrates that, in South Africa, education policy makes provision for parental and caregiver involvement in school. The authors analyse education policy with a social-justice lens and contend that economic inequalities mediate the rights and obligations afforded parental and caregiver involvement in education. The implication of the argument presented by the authors in this chapter is that education policy discourse assumes level playing fields for parental and caregiver involvement in school governance and learning.

Paper 2: "Who are South African caregivers, how do they feel about educational quality and what is their involvement in schools?"

T de Kock³, A Cooper⁴

³JET Education Services, ⁴Human Science Research Council

This chapter reports on the first nationally representative study of South African caregivers', a survey that delved into parents' perceptions of education quality and self-reported involvement in schools. A nationally representative sample of primary caregivers was drawn and the research conducted as a module of the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS). The study helped to create a detailed picture of who South African parents/caregivers are, their financial and living conditions, and how they choose schools for their children.

Paper 3: “An inclusive learning environment in early childhood care and education: Enhancing parent and family partnerships”

A Mahadew⁵

⁵University of KwaZulu-Natal

This chapter on creating an inclusive learning environment in early childhood care and education (ECCE) focuses on enhancing partnerships with families in the years preceding formal schooling. Grounded in interpretivism, this chapter reports on semi-structured interviews carried out with a group of ECCE educators, a centre supervisor, a field monitor and a research student at an ECCE centre in a low-income township. The core argument of her chapter emphasizes that building partnerships with families does deeper than becoming involved, but also enables families to increase their knowledge of children's needs, allows educators to acquire a deeper understanding of the family's culture and diversity, and extends children's learning outside the school, resulting in a more positive experience.

Keywords: Parent involvement, early childhood education, community engagement, primary school education, school ecosystems

Abstract ID #: 1366

Reimagining mid-career black women academics' career trajectories: A collaborative self-study

Lungile Masinga | Nomkhosi Nzimande | Samukelisiwe Khumalo

We are three South African black women academics who employed collaborative self-study as a countercultural space for engendering care, creativity, and community to facilitate how we can productively reposition ourselves for upward mobility into senior promotions in the University. Self-study emerged in the early 1990s as a self-reflexive research methodology and scholarly community focused on developing professional practice and knowledge in teacher education. It has since expanded across disciplines to address complex issues in higher education. The arts have long played a role in self-study and are gaining popularity as a method of inquiry. Building on this creative, reflexive impetus, we were provoked to ask, “*How can arts-based thinking open up imaginative/alternate pathways for academic advancement as black women academics positioned as the missing middle?*” “*What can we do to better position ourselves for academic advancement?*” “*In what ways does arts-based thinking offer countercultural safe care-full ways to respond generatively to social, cultural, and symbolic inequalities that play out in our academic lives/work in the university?*”. In this presentation, we show how collage making and object inquiry allowed us to co-creatively reflect on ways of progression amid the productivity-driven, competitiveness, and busy-ness of academic work. Through our co-reflexive process, we saw the personal-professional interconnections as political and complexly interwoven with the institutional culture. Therefore, in the intensely individualistic and dangerously competitive university system, the absence of structured support for mid-career academics pushes us to move beyond how history has come to create us and imaginatively and joyfully create our own pathways towards academic advancement.

Keywords: co-creation, black women academics, academic advancement, mid-career, and art-based methods

Abstract ID #: 1436

From Evidence to Action: Supporting Education System Reform During Uncertainty; A What Works Hub for Global Education Workshop

Andile Dube | Elizabeth Ninan | Kholosa Nonkenge | Nompumelelo Mohohlwane | Joanne Newton

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

Discuss strategies for building resilient, inclusive, and innovative education systems through evidence generation and use.

Apply evidence-driven practices to national education reforms based on shared practical experiences.

Expand their professional network with education researchers committed to transformative change in the Global South.

Keywords: Action; Education System Reform; Evidence; Global Education; Policy; Practice

Abstract ID #: 1341

Teacher knowledge in a postgraduate teacher education programme: A diagnostic assessment intervention

Oluwatosin A. Egunlusi

The apartheid system of teacher education was designed to reproduce and maintain inequality, inequitable socio-political and economic control. Post-1994, teacher colleges were closed, and teacher education was located in the higher education sector. To abate the shortage of teachers, Bachelor degree holders in teaching-related disciplines, with the assumption that they have acquired adequate content knowledge, can join the teaching field by acquiring a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and become qualified teachers.

However, recent research suggests that despite students' previous degrees, some still face challenges with their content knowledge. The teacher's authority lies in the curriculum and extensive content knowledge. What kinds of knowledge do students bring to and expect from the postgraduate teacher education programme? Reviewed documents and a semi-structured interview with nine commerce students and four staff members were used for data collection. Data was analysed using content and thematic analysis. Contrary to what has often been assumed, some PGCE students did not possess adequate content knowledge, and expected the content knowledge from the programme. While many students had a basic understanding of teaching practice, they still felt the need for an extended practicum for more training.

Drawing on the case study findings and Shulman's and Grossman's model of teacher knowledge, I argue that the quality of teachers produced may not be ready to face the immediate demand of the education sector. Findings suggest a need for diagnostic assessment to identify students who need to strengthen their content knowledge and extension of the PGCE programme to produce quality teachers.

Keywords: Diagnostic assessment, Teacher education, Teacher knowledge, Content Knowledge.

Abstract ID #: 1285

Chronotopes of Possibility: Reimagining the UoT as a Counter-Institution in Response to the Polycrisis

Roshnee Sunder | Michael Samuel

In a world gripped by polycrisis—ecological collapse, epistemic instability, social fragmentation, and technocratic dominance—what forms of higher education offer hopeful and ethically grounded alternatives? This paper reimagines the South African University of Technology (UoT) not merely as a differentiated institutional type, but as a countercultural chronotope—a space-time of possibility in which new ethical, epistemic, and curricular pathways can be forged. Drawing on a critical interpretive case study of a transitioning UoT, the paper uses Winberg's concept of chronotopes, alongside currere

(Pinar) and institutere (institutional becoming), to explore how the UoT can disrupt both its technikon legacy and the isomorphic pressures of traditional university models. By integrating general education into professionally oriented curricula, this UoT deliberately cultivates T-shaped graduates—capable of deep expertise and expansive civic, ethical, and ecological responsibility. Rather than succumbing to despair or mimicry, this reimagined UoT embraces curriculum transformation as an act of affirmative ethics, creative resistance, and pedagogical hope. It invites educators, policymakers, and curriculum workers to view the institution not as a problem to be fixed, but as a space of becoming—responsive to planetary urgencies, attuned to social justice, and open to alternative futures. This presentation will resonate with scholars and practitioners seeking courageous, contextually grounded, and hopeful responses to the purpose of higher education in an age of collapse and possibility.

Keywords: institutional identity, curriculum transformation, chronotopes, Universities of Technology (UoTs), t-shaped graduates

Abstract ID #: 1129

Analysing the Efficacy of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Mitigating Youth Unemployment in Botswana

Gaolatlhe Medupe | Malau David Matsepe

Despite the Botswana government's effort in providing free education from basic education to higher education, the high youth unemployment rate remains a significant socio-economic challenge, limiting national development and economic growth. It is widely recognised that skills and knowledge are indispensable for employment, social inclusion and job creation, economic and national development, and international competitiveness and that education and skills are crucial for improving workers employability. The need to provide knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for employment, economic, technological, and national development has renewed demand for improvement and reform in TVET systems to make them fit for this task. Although TVET has been cited both as a system for developing skills and competencies necessary for socio-economic development, national development, employment and job creation and as a mechanism for poverty alleviation, self-employment and wealth creation, an effective TVET system requires a functional and responsive TVET policy. The study is essential for improving practice and for providing insight during a policy reform and development process. It is within this context that a comparative study is essential for improving practice and for providing insight during a policy reform and development processes. Selection of South Africa for this study is based on several reasons. First, South Africa has several TVET transformation plans and strategies, which can serve as a basis for TVET development and improvement in other countries, as comparative study provides an opportunity for identifying best practices for policy improvement. Such plans and strategies in South Africa include, among others, South African Qualifications Authority Act; Education White Paper 4-A programme for the transformation of FET; Further Education and Training Act, 1998; Skills Development Act 1998; National Skills Development Strategy 2001-2005; and National Skills Development Strategy 2006-2010. In the light of these aspects, Botswana can leverage TVET to create sustainable employment opportunities, reduce dependency on the formal job market, and drive economic transformation. A descriptive research design is employed, with a study population comprising TVET graduates, instructors, policymakers, and industry stakeholders. Using a purposeful sampling method, the study aimed to interview ten (10) unemployed youth, ten (10) TVET practitioners, and ten (10) employers. The thematic analysis method is used to determine relationships between TVET training and employment outcomes. Findings from this study are intended to be of use in policy renewal and development.

Keywords: TVET, youth unemployment, skills development, workforce integration, economic sustainability.

Abstract ID #: 1224

Augmenting pre-service teachers' technological content knowledge through Computational Thinking integration in science methods

Cosmas John Kathumba

Computational thinking (CT) integration in education emerges as a fundamental component, especially for preparing science pre-service teachers. Literature suggests that integrating CT through CT-plugged-in strategies, such as computational models and simulations, plays a critical role in preparing pre-service teachers to thrive in modern science classrooms. However, relatively little is known about integrating CT through plugged-in strategies in science teacher education in the South African context to foster technological content knowledge (TCK) among pre-service teachers. Employing the technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) framework as the lens, this study examines the influence of integrating computational thinking in the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Physical Sciences methods course through a CT-plugged-in strategy on pre-service teachers' technological content knowledge. This study adopted a qualitative case study research design to generate data from six pre-service teachers enrolled in the PGCE Physical Sciences Teaching Methods course. Data were generated through observations, participants' artefacts, and interviews. The empirical findings reveal that pre-service teachers, supported by computational models and simulations such as MiLab App and Physics Education Technology (PhET) simulations, advanced their knowledge and skills in using technology to design and explore scientific concepts in Physical Sciences. Thus, integrating CT in science methods through a CT-plugged-in strategy augmented Physical Sciences pre-service teachers' development of technological content knowledge. Therefore, this paper advances the literature on the intersection of integrating CT in science methods courses through a CT-plugged-in strategy and pre-service teachers' technological content knowledge.

Keywords: computational thinking, computational models and simulations, pre-service teachers, technological content knowledge, Physical Sciences methods, plugged-in strategy

Abstract ID #: 1231

Classroom Conversations: Feedback that supports student teachers' pedagogic growth

Dale Langsford

Classroom conversations about student teachers' developing practice are a critical space for mentor teachers to unpack student teachers' practices. However, the potential for supporting professional learning is not fully realised when feedback is unelaborated observations, judgements or lists of 'dos and don'ts.' This presentation shows, empirically, differences between conversations that empower student teachers to think about their work in more specialised ways and those that offer useful but limited feedback. I analyse the post-lesson observation feedback given to the same student teacher by two practicum supervisors. Using concepts from the Semantics dimension of Legitimation Code Theory, I show how the properties of knowledges conveyed to student teachers in feedback can be represented as pathways across the semantic plane. Classroom conversations that offer student teachers new insights into their teaching practices take a radically different pathway than those that commend student teachers on a good effort and offer a few practical tips. The analysis shows that when conversations shift between particular details of a lesson and general teaching principles, student teachers learn to see examples of

how practice is enacted in various contexts. These shifts are valuable because experiential learning becomes more easily transferred to future lessons and into different contexts. In the busyness of classroom life, conversations must offer elaborated, reasoned, explanatory accounts for what worked or did not work for student teachers to gain crucial insight into how and why some pedagogic options are more appropriate than others. Understanding the semantic pathways provides a powerful representation that mentor teachers and university supervisors can use to hold post-lesson feedback conversations that extend student teachers' professional learning.

Keywords: student teacher, mentoring, feedback, work-integrated learning, Legitimation Code Theory

Abstract ID #: 1085

Inclusive Education in Multifaceted Educational Future: Towards a Whole School Approach

Ben de Souza

Inclusive education is an educational approach that ensures that all learners are given equal educational opportunities in the same learning environments with necessary individualised support. Globally, countries haven taken several actions towards the realisation of inclusive education. However, the pessimism about the practicality of inclusive education is becoming increasingly evident. In the southern African context, this pessimism is exacerbated by lack of educational foundation and future for inclusive education. The educational foundation entails the basis from which inclusive education is conceptualised for practice while educational future implies the intended inclusivity practices. Informed by Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory, this study investigated how inclusive education can be mainstreamed in teacher education through Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). With this intention, the understanding was that teacher education offers the educational foundation for inclusive education while ESD gives the educational future outlook of it. The study involved teacher educators in one institution in Eswatini that were involved in a Change Project around inclusivity for accessible and sustainable infrastructure. The study found that the understandings that teacher educators attached to inclusive education, ESD and teacher education determine the kind of inclusive pedagogical proficiency they develop in pre-service teachers. To strengthen inclusive education, there is a need to invest in teacher education as the foundation of inclusivity and utilise ESD as its futuristic framework. Therefore, inclusive education can no longer be regarded as an education reform independent of other educational circumstances. Instead, it should inform the core of the Whole School Approach.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Pedagogical Proficiency, Education for Sustainable Development, Teacher Education

Abstract ID #: 1335

Exploring pre-service teachers' retention and transfer of gatekeeping concepts in chemistry

Sinegugu Khulu | Phindulo Ndou

In chemistry education, the ability to link foundational ideas across different topics is vital for student understanding. Gate keeping concepts (GKCs) are the foundational and cross-cutting ideas that act as an intellectual entry point into a discipline. These ideas are not isolated facts, but rather integrative principles that recur across topics, enabling students to connect ideas, recognize patterns, and develop coherent mental models of chemical

processes. The ability to retain and transfer GKC allows students to make meaningful relationships between concepts within and across topics, allowing for application of knowledge in new contexts. In this regard, this study aimed to explore ways in which pre-service teachers' (PSTs) were able to retain and transfer GKC learned in Thermodynamics for application in Chemical Equilibrium. Data was collected from 30 PSTs written assessment utilizing a qualitative research approach and the Teacher related Science Content Knowledge (TerSCK) as a theoretical construct. The data generated revealed that, generally PSTs struggled with recognizing GKC such as enthalpy, entropy and Gibbs free energy when these concepts were implicitly required for understanding of Chemical equilibrium. Additionally, they also had problems with applying these concepts in solving conceptual and contextual problems relating to Chemical Equilibrium. The potential cause for the non-recognition of GKC indicates a fragmented conceptual understanding, where knowledge is compartmentalized within specific topics rather than integrated across the discipline. These findings highlighted a need for educational interventions that are informed by the theory of powerful knowledge and a TerSCK-based curriculum for effective preparation of science teachers.

Keywords: Teacher-related Science Content Knowledge, pre-service teachers, Gate Keeping Concepts, Powerful Knowledge, Thermodynamics, Chemical Equilibrium

Abstract ID #: 1089

Reimagining Life Skills Curriculum Delivery: Teachers' Experiences of Teaching Drama in Early Childhood Education

John Monwabisi Cobongela

Teachers' experiences in Early Childhood Education refer to the daily realities, problems, accomplishments, and professional development that teachers face when teaching. Several factors influence these experiences, including curricular demands, classroom atmosphere, socioeconomic backdrop, parental participation, and institutional support. An interpretive case study that explores teachers' experiences teaching drama in five primary schools, in the early childhood education/foundation phase. Data were generated qualitatively from ten life-skills teachers through reflective activity, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, lesson observations, and document analysis for triangulation purposes. Purposive and convenient sampling were used in selecting teachers from the Umlazi district, five primary schools. Thematic analysis was used to produce both themes and categories. Through the natural identity framework (NIF), the findings of the study outlined that teachers' experiences of teaching life skills (drama) are informed by actual action experiences and consequence experiences, as teachers implement the life skills curriculum. Thus, teachers expressed the need for balanced curriculum concepts, so that life skills (drama) teaching would produce expected quality results at the end of the year. The study proposes a modified framework, the drama teacher experiences (DTE), to enhance the teaching of drama in the early childhood education. This framework promotes teachers' natural drama experiences, which are underpinned by reflection and re-critiquing of teachers' actions during the process of teaching and learning.

Keywords: Teachers' experiences, curriculum, life skills, drama, early childhood education

Abstract ID #: 1228

Enhancing Learner Performance Through Stakeholder Co-determination of School-Based Curriculum in South Africa

Michael Marumo | Martha Matashu | Oluwasola Sasere

South African curriculum have undergone a couple of reforms since advent of democracy to improve quality of education and learner performance, however, poor learner

performance still prevails. This raises concerns among education stakeholders and calls into question quality of education learners receive in South Africa. Although studies have investigated likely factors that could be associated with poor learner performance, the role of school-based curriculum (SBC) in influencing learner performance has not been fully explored. Hence, this study explores roles of stakeholders in development of SBC to influence learner performance. Located within transformative paradigm and underpinned by socio-cultural theory (SCT), this study adopted quantitative research approach using descriptive research design. Data was gathered through closed-ended questionnaires administered on 81 teachers and 198 school management team (SMT) members who were purposefully sampled. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to analyse data. The findings revealed that SMTs play the central role in development of SBC, though the process requires collaboration with internal and external stakeholders. Based on these findings, the study recommends development of a policy specifying specific roles internal and external stakeholders should play in development of SBC in schools. Additionally, teachers as curriculum implementers, should be co-opted into SBC process to integrate their insights and enhance their instructional delivery.

Keywords: Curriculum, school-based curriculum, learner performance, curriculum reform, school curriculum.

Abstract ID #: 1300

Conceptualising precarity in a polycrisis era: Postdoctoral agency and the neoliberal strain in African higher education

Julliet Munyaradzi | Mlamuli N. Hlatshwayo

Neoliberalism has influenced and reshaped higher education to restructure and transform through performance management, metrics and managerialism. At its worst, neoliberalism has rapidly increased precarity among the institutional staff, particularly the early career academics. In turn, precarity leads to reduced academic autonomy. The early career academics employed on fixed-term contracts and postdoctoral fellows grapple with logics of marketisation and neoliberal managerial governance with limited support in terms of time for research related activities. Using a critical theoretical analysis, this paper explores how neoliberal logics influence the agency and identities of postdoctoral fellows as a category of early career academics. The paper explores the implications of neoliberal structural constraints of postdoctoral fellows diminish their resilience, critical engagement and agency within the institutions which host them in the South African context in particular, and Africa in general. The paper adopts a conceptual approach, synthesising theoretical perspectives and extant knowledge to provide a nuanced comprehension of how the postdoctoral fellows grapple with the neoliberal turn in higher education institutions. The interrogation of the interplay between managerialism and individual agency greatly contributes to a more broadened and grounded understanding of the structural and systemic barriers confronting postdoctoral fellows. It also proffers some insights into possible and sustainable practices in higher education during times of crises, highlighting potential avenues for innovative restoration of agency and sustainability in higher education.

Keywords: Academic precarity, agency and identity, higher education governance neoliberalism, postdoctoral fellows

Abstract ID #: 1226

Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Digital Tools in Science Learning in South Africa

Stephen Chinedu Nwafor | Maria Tsakeni

For the past decade, there has been an increasing use of digital technology in higher institutions in South Africa, as evident in empirical studies. This is not unrelated to the recent advocacy for the integration of digital tools in education, which has influenced modern teaching and learning approaches. Preservice teachers play a crucial role in achieving this, as their knowledge and usage of these tools is vital in how they can be used in the classrooms. To improve science learning for a 21st-century classroom, it is important to understand how preservice teachers engage with and evaluate these tools as well as the challenges they encounter along the way. The study explored the preservice teachers' perceptions of the use, effectiveness, and challenges of digital tools in supporting science learning. The study employed a sequential mixed methods design in which a systematic survey and semi-structured interview were conducted. The survey questionnaire was administered to 85 students, among whom four participated in a semi-structured interview. Data analysis was done using frequency, mean, standard deviation, one-sample t-test, and independent sample t-test. The findings of the study revealed that various digital tools, including presentation tools, educational videos, online learning platforms, digital collaborative tools, and electronic resources, are utilized in science learning, whereas interactive stimulations, virtual labs/experiments, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality are not used. Also, there exists a positive perception on the effectiveness of these tools in improving students' learning outcomes, understanding, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, interaction, engagement, and quality of science learning. However, the study showed significant challenges such as insufficient training, lack of access to appropriate technology, technical problems, and inadequate infrastructure that align with the science curriculum. These findings underscore the need for improved digital competencies in teacher education and for education stakeholders to hasten the effective integration of digital tools in higher institutions of learning towards better science learning outcomes.

Keywords: Digital tools, preservice teachers, science learning, challenges, South Africa

Abstract ID #: 1370

Back to school: The impact of preparing student teachers to observe classroom practices

Lee Rusznyak

Student teachers often enter initial teacher education (ITE) programmes confident in their ability to understand teaching. After all, they have already spent years watching teachers at work. However, what they notice—and how they interpret lesson quality—may not support their professional learning. This paper examines how South African student teachers observe and interpret teaching at the beginning of their studies, and the impact of explicitly preparing them to interpret teaching before their first practicum.

Lesson observations written by student teachers at the start of their studies show their tendency to focus on learner activities, participation and enjoyment. Using the Semantics dimension of Legitimation Code Theory (LCT), I show how these early observations reveal a fragmented, simplistic understanding of teaching.

The student teachers were then introduced to teaching as the professional practice of organising systematic learning. Through coursework and their participation in the national *Teacher Choices in Action* module, they studied classroom practices across diverse contexts. They analysed how teachers select, sequence, and represent concepts, and how they design opportunities for learners to engage meaningfully with content.

Before their first school-based work-integrated learning (WIL) session, the student teachers re-observed the same lesson. Their focus and analysis had shifted significantly:

they now attended to the teacher's mediation of concepts, considered the coherence of the lesson, and its responsiveness to diverse learner needs. They demonstrated greater insight into more complex patterns of teaching practices and were better able to infer the teacher's pedagogic intentions.

These findings suggest that preparing student teachers to observe and analyse teaching, grounded in a conception of teaching as a professional practice, can enhance their professional readiness for work-based learning.

Keywords: teacher education; work-integrated learning; pre-service teachers

Abstract ID #: 1162

Perceptions of professional support staff from SSRCs in relation to their role as members of the DBST

Thabo Makhalemele | Pateka Pamella Jama

Education White Paper 6 calls for the improvement of special schools and settings for learners that they serve hence their conversion to resource centres that are integrated into District-Based Support Teams (DBST). Teachers from these Special School as Resource centres (SSRCs) are obligated to be involved in teaching and supporting teachers from Full-service schools in curriculum adaptation and classroom management to support diversity. This paper reports on the perceptions of professional support staff from SSRCs about their roles as members of the DBST assigned to support the schools which participated in a larger action research project in the Free State province. The paper elaborates on the empirical data gathered by means of qualitative and explorative approaches using interviews to the participants who were not directly involved in the larger project. 12 SSRC teachers were purposively sampled, and data was thematically analysed. The results indicated that the SSRCs undertake an active role as resource centres since most of the professional support staff are not employed in various positions across the education services; they, are inclined to provide services to targeted learner population rather than supporting the Full-service schools and they experience inadequate ongoing training on their role as members of DBST. Moreover, it was found that both human and physical resources are inadequate, leading to a minimal access of external support. Prevalence of functional collaborations among different stakeholders in support provision can never be overlooked for accommodating diversity in different types of schools.

Keywords : special schools as resource centres, district-based support teams; inclusive education; professional support staff, education support services

Abstract ID #: 1207

Building Professional Vision and Pedagogical Practice Through Project-Based Learning: Reflections from an Action Research Cycle in Science Teacher Education

Angela Stott

Concerns about the limited pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and classroom readiness of newly qualified teachers have prompted calls for more practice-oriented approaches in initial teacher education. This paper reports on the first cycle of a mixed-methods action research study exploring the use of a project-based learning (PjBL) intervention—the “Ladder Approach”—to develop Natural and Physical Sciences student teachers’ professional vision, personal PCK, and enacted PCK. The study involved 26 third- and fourth-year Bachelor of Education students at a South African university. A flipped-classroom model delivered theoretical content, while contact sessions

emphasised structured reflection on modelled science teaching through lecturer demonstrations and curated video exemplars. Students gradually completed a Content Representation (CoRe) to design lessons on the topic they chose to specialise in, culminating in three video-recorded microlessons. Data sources included self-reports, questionnaires, group interviews, peer and lecturer evaluations, written tests, and lesson video analysis. These were analysed descriptively and thematically. Findings indicate that the intervention supported students' import of collective PCK into personal PCK, evidenced by recognition of effective teaching and demonstration of pedagogical reasoning. Most students also demonstrated enactment of these strategies, though limited confidence and superficial engagement were observed in several cases. These findings suggest a need to strengthen the practice strand of the Ladder Approach through more micro-enactment opportunities. This raises critical curriculum design questions around balancing depth, feasibility, and relevance for developing-world teaching contexts.

Keywords: project-based learning, action research, pedagogical content knowledge, professional vision, science teacher education, microteaching

Abstract ID #: 1386

isiXhosa Children's Literature as a tool in Bilingual Literacy Instruction in enhancing the teaching of English First Additional Language

Nozuko Zukiswa Gxekwa | Pretty Neliswa Magangxa | Nomaroma Kumanda

Literature holds transformative power in shaping learners' cognitive, linguistic, and cultural development. In bilingual classrooms, particularly in the South African Foundation Phase, children's literature in indigenous languages like isiXhosa can serve as a bridge to acquiring English literacy. This paper explores how isiXhosa children's literature supports the development of English literacy skills in bilingual learners. The study is grounded in emergent literacy and bilingualism theory, emphasizing the transferability of foundational literacy skills from a learner's home language to a second language. As part of this pilot study, the authors composed three original isiXhosa poems, translated them into English, and conducted a comparative analysis to highlight the interplay between the two languages and the pedagogical potential of bilingual texts. This pilot study builds on previous research that examined the role of children's literature in integrated teaching and learning. Through engagement with isiXhosa texts, the study reveals that using culturally relevant literature enhances comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and learner confidence in English. The findings underscore the importance of valuing learners' linguistic backgrounds and integrating indigenous literature into early literacy instruction. The paper advocates for a pedagogical shift that embraces bilingualism as an asset and positions isiXhosa literature as a meaningful tool for authentic and inclusive learning.

Keywords: Literature, Bilingual, Literacy, English First Additional Language

Abstract ID #: 1347

Ubuntu as a catalyst for experiential learning and empowerment among women in Microfinance: Insights from the Inhlanyelo Fund

Khabonina A. Mahlalela- Dlamini

This study explores how the African philosophy of Ubuntu facilitates experiential learning and empowerment among women beneficiaries of Eswatini's Inhlanyelo Fund microfinance program. It aims to understand how Ubuntu's values of humanness, interconnectedness, and mutual support shape women's learning experiences, contribute to their empowerment, and influence their socio-economic development. Drawing on Jarvis's (2006) experiential learning theory, the research examines how learning occurs within communal social networks and leads to behavioural and economic transformation. Using a qualitative interpretive approach, data were collected through semi-structured

interviews and life histories with ten women in the Manzini region. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data. Findings reveal that women's learning is deeply relational and embedded in social networks such as savings groups and market interactions. These networks foster solidarity, trust, and collective responsibility, which enhance both practical business skills and personal resilience. Ubuntu principles enrich experiential learning by emphasizing community-centred approaches that support sustainable socio-economic progress. In conclusion, Ubuntu acts as a powerful catalyst for experiential learning that promotes holistic empowerment among women in microfinance contexts. The study recommends that microfinance training programs explicitly integrate Ubuntu-informed experiential learning methodologies to strengthen women's agency and foster sustainable socio-economic development. These culturally grounded insights offer valuable guidance for educators, policymakers, and development practitioners committed to adult learning and empowerment.

Keywords: Experiential learning, microfinance, women's empowerment, Ubuntu

Abstract ID #: 1421

Higher education models in Namibia

Julia Musuuu

Namibia's historical entanglement with South Africa, shaped by over a century of colonial domination, formally ended with independence in 1990. Yet, remnants of this asymmetrical relationship continue to manifest in the policy and practice of higher education. This paper critically examines the phenomenon of policy borrowing and benchmarking, with specific reference to Namibia's adoption of South African frameworks, policies, and institutional logics. While often framed as a rational response to globalization and the pursuit of international standards, such practices risk deepening epistemic dependency and reinforcing internal forms of colonization, particularly in postcolonial contexts. In a time of polycrisis—marked by persistent inequalities, fragile sovereignties, and global pressures—this research foregrounds the ethical and political tensions inherent in the wholesale importation of quality assurance models. Drawing on document analysis, the study investigates the mirroring of South African quality assurance practices within Namibia's national and institutional frameworks. It questions the consequences for autonomy, relevance, and knowledge sovereignty in Namibian higher education. Rather than dismissing the value of transnational learning, the paper advocates for pathways of hope and creativity through locally anchored quality assurance systems that affirm Namibia's educational identity. In doing so, it contributes to a broader decolonial project that seeks ethical, context-sensitive alternatives to policy mimicry, grounded in plural knowledges and African intellectual agency.

Keywords: Higher Education, Policy Borrowing, Benchmarking, Polycrisis, Quality Assurance, Epistemic Dependency, Namibia, South Africa, Educational Sovereignty, Decoloniality

Abstract ID #: 1381

ICT integration in Life Sciences lessons: A case of teachers in Merafong city

Mungandi Monde Kazeni | Sajini Fenni

Technology has become an integral part of human life in the 21st century, including the education sector. Its significance in the South African education system is evident in the Gauteng Department of Education's provision of Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) devices to schools, aimed at enhancing the teaching and learning process to improve learner performance. Schools in Merafong City were among the recipients of these ICT devices, which were intended for use across various subjects,

including Life Sciences. However, despite the availability of ICT tools, the performance of Life Sciences learners in Merafong City high schools has remained unsatisfactory (GDE, 2011; Khalo, 2020). The reasons for this continued underperformance are not well understood. We argue that providing schools with resources, without sufficient training of teachers on how to use them and addressing contextual challenges might not yield the desired learning outcomes. Consequently, this study sought to explore ICT integration in Life Sciences lessons in Merafong City high schools. A qualitative case study approach was used to collect data from six Life Sciences teachers from public high schools in Merafong City. The study was guided by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which includes the concepts of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and intention to use technology. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, then analysed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that participants generally supported the integration of ICT into their lessons, acknowledging its potential to enhance the teaching and learning of Life Sciences. However, the study also exposed underutilization of ICT tools. Many participants expressed reluctance to use the available devices due to lack of an understanding of most ICT tools. Reported challenges included time constraints, insufficient support, and unreliable internet and electricity connectivity. These findings could inform efforts to strengthen the integration of ICT in Life Sciences classrooms.

Keywords: Life Sciences, teachers, ICT, integration, effectiveness, lessons

Abstract ID #: 1161

BRIDGING THE THEORY-PRACTICE DIVIDE: REFLECTIONS OF SCHOOL-BASED STUDENT TEACHERS

Matshidiso Mahase | Sarita Ramsaroop | Nadine Petersen

The persistent disconnect between coursework and fieldwork has left many newly qualified teachers ill-equipped for the demands of 21st-century classrooms. This misalignment underscores the need for deliberate partnerships between universities and schools to foster authentic, practice-oriented learning. In response, a Faculty of Education at an urban South African university has implemented a model of teacher education that integrates online academic instruction of university coursework with immersive, mentored practice teaching experiences for students who are in full-time school placements; this programme has come to be known as school-based teacher education. The study will report on the experiences of first-year school-based student teachers (SBSTs) enrolled in this undergraduate programme during 2021 and 2022. Employing an interpretive qualitative approach, data were gathered via focus group interviews and analysed via the constant comparative method and informed by the theoretical lens of cultural-historical activity theory. We found that despite an MoA that outlined clear expectations from the university and school, this did not materialise in practice, leading to students struggling to manage the dual demands of academic coursework and in-school responsibilities. Second, the extent and consistency of support from both university and school stakeholders significantly shaped the depth and quality of SBSTs' learning. While the integration of university and school systems revealed inherent tensions and contradictions, it also opened avenues for enriched learning when coursework and classroom practice were effectively aligned. To resolve these tensions, the study advocates for the creation of collaborative spaces that transcend institutional boundaries through sustained dialogue and mutual understanding.

Keywords: Theory; Practice; School-University Partnerships; CHAT

Abstract ID #: 1188

Influence of Family Structures on the Wellbeing of Learners in Rural Schools during the COVID-19

Kananga Robert Mukuna | Thobeka Mbhele

There is limited research examining factors on the influence of family structure on the wellbeing of learners in rural areas. This study investigates the influence of family structure on the wellbeing of learners in rural schools during COVID-19. It used a qualitative approach through a multiple case-study design. Four learners from grades 9, 10, and 11 and four teachers were purposively and conveniently selected at two high schools in the uThukela district, KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and observation and analysed through narrative analysis. The results showed that family structure affects learners' wellbeing and causes poor academic performance and disruptive behaviours. It further affected learner's mental health. The study found that most learners from single-parent families, nuclear families, and grand-parent families experienced difficulties at home based on parenting style, family income, and support structure. The results suggested forming a basis for different stakeholders to assist the learners in coping with the challenges emanating from their family structure backgrounds. This study recommended that the government develop counselling, self-awareness, and tutorial programmes in schools for learners who cannot afford basic needs and should be provided with food, clothes, and learning materials.

Keywords: COVID-19, Family structure, Learners' wellbeing, Rural schools

Abstract ID #: 1410

Rubrics to Rupture: Co-creating Countercultural Educational Spaces Through Participatory Disruption

In the era of increasing crises, marked by ecological decline, economic instability, epistemic insecurity, and socio-political fragmentation, education is at a critical juncture: complacency and maintain the status quo, or embrace disruption, re-imagination and renewal. Drawing on Biesta's critique of "learnification" of education and his call to reassert subjectification and risk at the heart of the educational encounter, this paper seeks to investigate how collaborative innovations, and creative methodologies can generate countercultural safe spaces that challenge dominant traditions of teaching, learning and assessing. Reframing safe spaces as pedagogical sites of dissonance, this paper looks at how educators and students can push thought beyond traditional ways of knowing. Using participatory and arts-based methodologies, dialogic pedagogy, and co-research with teacher students and educators, arguing that collaboration itself is an act of systemic resistance. These innovations foster "brave spaces" of shared inquiry that unsettle authority, centre marginalised voices, and reimagine education as a deeply human, ethical and relational project. Methodologically, this inquiry takes the form of a reflective and conceptual analysis, drawing on practitioner research, narrative fragments and case illustrations from teacher education contexts. It explores how these practices disrupt institutional rhythms and open possibilities for living differently in, and through, educational spaces. Ultimately, this paper calls for a reorientation of educational practice, towards ways of being and doing rooted in collaboration, imagination and risk, insisting that education, in the face of global ruptures, must become a space not merely of survival, but of a space of reimagining and renewal.

Keywords: Education renewal, Dialogic pedagogy, Post-Qualitative inquiry, Safe spaces, Epistemic disruption, Subjectification

Abstract ID #: 1423

A Framework for Module Template Development Using Authentic Teaching and Learning: A Case Study at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

Nishani Harinarain | Labby Ramrathan

Curriculum reform in South Africa is increasingly emphasizing competence development over traditional subject content mastery, mirroring global shifts in higher education pedagogy. Within this context, authentic teaching, learning, and assessment have emerged as critical mechanisms to foreground embedded competences and enhance transferability across disciplinary and professional domains. This study responds to the need for a more structured and deliberate approach to competence development by proposing a framework for module template design that explicitly incorporates authentic teaching and assessment principles. The research problem addressed is the absence of practical tools within current module design processes that assist academics in identifying and developing embedded competences. Drawing on theoretical perspectives from Biesta (2020), Wiggins (1990), and Ashford-Rowe et al. (2013), the study challenges prevailing “learnification” approaches and argues for education that is performance-oriented and contextually relevant. Employing a qualitative case study design, the research was conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. A framework for module template development was iteratively developed and validated through focus group discussions with academic staff across undergraduate programmes. The focus groups explored the framework’s relevance, clarity, and potential for implementation. It is anticipated that the framework will be viewed as a valuable, context-sensitive tool that promotes the deliberate teaching and assessment of competences. The proposed findings suggest that its adoption could support curriculum alignment with national reforms and prepare students for complex, real-world challenges. The study aims to contribute to ongoing efforts to transform higher education through authentic, competence-focused pedagogy.

Keywords: authentic learning, curriculum reform, module template

Abstract ID #: 1399

Enhancing Conceptual Understanding in Physical Sciences through Gamification: Digital vs. Non-Digital Approaches

Lerato Mlaba | Nomfundo Radebe | Fatima Makda | Millicent Motheogane

Gamification, defined as the application of game-like elements such as points, levels, challenges, and rewards in non-game educational settings, has emerged as a promising instructional strategy to address long-standing issues in science education, including low learner motivation, lack of engagement, and difficulty grasping abstract concepts. By transforming traditional lessons into interactive and dynamic learning experiences, gamification provides opportunities for students to actively participate in the learning process, increasing intrinsic motivation and promoting sustained interest in complex subjects such as Physical Sciences. Despite its growing popularity, there is still a notable gap in empirical research that systematically compares the impact of digital versus non-digital gamification approaches on educational outcomes in Physical Sciences.

Digital gamification tools, such as educational apps, virtual simulations, and online quizzes, offer interactive, data-driven, and often personalized learning experiences. These tools are particularly beneficial for visualizing abstract scientific phenomena. In contrast, non-digital gamification techniques, including physical board games, card games, and role-play activities, can foster social interaction, peer collaboration, and hands-on learning in environments with limited access to digital infrastructure.

This study uses a systematic review design to critically analyze peer-reviewed research published between 2012 and 2024. Grounded in the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework, the study examines how teachers integrate content, pedagogy, and technology to implement gamified strategies effectively. Preliminary findings indicate that while both approaches offer valuable benefits, their success is often influenced by factors such as teacher competence, contextual relevance, and

infrastructure availability. The study advocates for context-sensitive and, inclusive gamification strategies.

Keywords: Gamification, Digital learning, Non-digital methods, Physical Sciences education, TPACK

Abstract ID #: 1088

Analysis of patterns of student interactions in an online discussion forum: Does the presence of instructors make a difference?

Hlologelo Climant Khoza

With the advancement of technological tools, online discussion forums are central as they allow students to engage in meaningful discourse beyond traditional classroom settings. The purpose of this study was to understand how (if at all) instructor presence in online discussion forums makes a difference to how students engage with each other. Instructor presence in this case has to do with instructors responding to students' postings in various ways, like providing guidance. This study draws from aspects of socio-cultural theory and the construct of collaborative learning. Vygotsky (1978) stressed that knowledge is co-constructed through dialogue and social interaction. Through students interacting with one another, knowledge can be co-constructed for meaning-making. Based on Vygotsky's theory, students in online courses can construct knowledge through social interactions in asynchronous discussions. This study employed a qualitative case-study approach to analyse student interactions within an online learning platform, comparing discussions where instructors are actively involved with those that are student-led. Data included the students' and instructors' posts on the discussion forum. There were 138 students who participated in the discussion forum and three instructors. Data analysis was done manually using the transcripts of discussions using Fu et al.'s (2016) framework. Findings indicate that students exhibited dialogic interactive patterns through the use of various discourse strategies in the absence of instructors. The study concludes that although instructors can initiate discussions and scaffold students' posts, their presence did not make a difference in the interactive patterns. These findings are discussed, and recommendations are made.

Keywords: Online discussions, Blackboard, Interactive patterns

Abstract ID #: 1200

Teachers as collective inclusive education knowledge bricoleurs

Elizabeth Walton

White Paper Six says, among other things, that teachers are crucial for inclusive education, but lack the knowledge and skills required for inclusive teaching. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have been used with good effect globally for in-service teacher education, including to enhance inclusive teaching. To support professional development for inclusive teaching in one full-service school in Gauteng, PLCs were convened in a school-university partnership.

Melancholic portrayals of the deficit teacher are problematised in this research. Recognition of teachers' epistemic agency is sought in an answer to the question of how teachers engage with the inclusive education knowledge presented to them. Qualitative data were generated by recording and transcribing 42 PLC group conversations, with informed consent from the teachers, over three years. Thematic analysis focused on identifying and understanding teachers' engagement with knowledge. Concepts recruited for analysis included framing (Bernstein), and bricolage (Levi-Strauss and others). Teachers challenge the strong framing of the instructional discourse by the university team

and their conversations indicate a range of responses to the inclusive education knowledge. These responses show nuances of recursively 1) embracing the knowledge by extending, enriching, and enacting it and 2) resisting the knowledge by rarefying, refocusing, and rejecting it. Through this research, teachers are affirmed as collective inclusive education knowledge bricoleurs, exercising epistemic agency as they combine new knowledge with their individual, contextual and collective experience. However, in the teachers' construction of an inclusive education knowledge that works for them, the conceptual integrity of inclusive education knowledge can be fragmented, relativised and diminished.

Keywords: inclusive teaching; Professional Learning Communities; Epistemic agency; bricolage and bricoleur; framing

Abstract ID #: 1424

Teaching Sustainability through Local Livelihoods in the Life Sciences/Biology Curriculum: Lessons from Small-Scale Goat Farming in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Anele Aurelia Khowa

Addressing the growing challenge of food insecurity in developing regions requires educational responses grounded in local realities. This study reframes small-scale goat farming in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, as a case study for teaching sustainability in Higher and Basic Education. The research explored how small-scale goat farming contributes to household food security in rural and peri-urban areas such as Msinga, Kokstad, Howick, and Pietermaritzburg. Using structured surveys and auction data, the study found that goats are vital livelihood assets, providing income, food, and other household goods. Especially in resource-limited settings. Their resilience and adaptability make them especially valuable in arid areas with limited infrastructure. Findings from this study can meaningfully inform sustainability education curricula. In higher education, the study provides a locally relevant example for discussing food systems, rural development, climate adaptation, and informal economies. It also highlights gender roles and livestock diversity, enhancing learning across environmental science, agriculture, and development studies. In basic education, the research supports life skills, natural sciences, and social studies lessons, focusing on themes such as environmental adaptation, responsible resource use, and self-reliance. Using real-world, rural-based examples in the classroom fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and appreciation for indigenous knowledge systems. The study advocates for embedding such examples in educational practice to support Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Through linking empirical research with pedagogy, educators can empower learners to understand and address sustainability challenges in ways that are relevant, inclusive, and rooted in their lived experiences.

Keywords: Sustainable education, Education for sustainable development (ESD), Food security, Small-scale farming. Indigenous Knowledge

Abstract ID #: 1176

Harvesting Ashes: Reimagining the African University in the Fires of Neoliberalism
Amasa Ndofirepi

This paper examines how neoliberalism has influenced African higher education, particularly how market-oriented reforms have altered the essence and significance of education. It argues that the shift towards neoliberalism—marked by commodification, privatisation, and performance metrics—has changed universities from centres of critical thinking and social justice into institutions aligned with global economic frameworks. Consequently, education is increasingly perceived as a personal investment aimed at

individual benefit, rather than a public good anchored in ethical responsibility, community involvement, and self-determined knowledge. The paper critiques this transition through a decolonial and philosophical perspective, incorporating African philosophical concepts like ubuntu (relational personhood) and sankofa (learning from the past). It asserts that neoliberalism inflicts epistemic violence by marginalising indigenous knowledge, diminishing the value of the humanities, and undermining the university's capacity for transformation. Education's meaning has been narrowed to economic productivity, pushing aside the broader African ideals of becoming socially aware, critically engaged, and ethically responsible individuals. In this context, the paper highlights emerging resistance forms, such as student-led movements like #FeesMustFall, and advocates pluriversal alternatives grounded in African philosophical traditions. It urges a reimagining of the African university as a site of renewal—one that resists neoliberal influences and reclaims its role as a space for liberation, critical examination, and collective thriving

Keywords: Neoliberalism, African higher education, decoloniality, ubuntu, epistemic justice

Abstract ID #: 1122

Critical Pedagogy of Place: Empowering Technology Trainee Teachers to Address Plastic Pollution Through Challenge-Based Learning

Asheena Singh-Pillay

In an era of polycrisis, many higher education institutions remain preoccupied with metrics, outcomes and throughput. This research draws on Gruenewald's notion of critical pedagogy of place, advancing the rationale that educational spaces can connect socio-environmental contexts with broader learning. Such connections help trainee teachers understand how the poly-crisis—particularly environmental degradation—manifests in their immediate surroundings while initiating students' agency to address these contextual challenges. Focusing specifically on plastic pollution, this study examined how teacher training programs can address this issue through curriculum innovation and experiential challenge-based learning. Working with trainee technology teachers (TTTs) at a South African institution, the research explored their experiences with community-based problem-solving activities related to plastic consumption and disposal. The technology education polymer module was restructured to combine theoretical knowledge with practical challenge-based learning, engaging students in real-world environmental challenges. Data were generated via focus group interviews, reflective journals, and photovoice techniques. TTT worked with four communities close to the university campus and conducted household plastic audits, shared findings with community members and collaboratively developed sustainable solutions. This approach effectively bridged the gap between academic learning and environmental action, addressing the polycrisis, including fossil fuel depletion, ecosystem damage, and greenhouse gas emissions. The findings highlight the potential of teacher education to cultivate environmentally conscious educators who can inspire sustainable thinking across educational settings, offering a replicable model for empowering future educators as change agents through knowledge co-creation and context-specific environmental problem-solving.

Keywords: Agency, Challenge-based learning, Critical pedagogy of place, Plastic pollution, Teacher education,

Abstract ID #: 1157

Reclaiming Teacher Identity and Voice in Continuous Professional Development through Online Communities

Tendayi Dzinoreva | Peter Oloba

Online communities have become useful, safe and informal spaces where teachers grow and express themselves outside formal Continuous Professional Development (CPD) structures. This research is an exploration of how online communities serve as spaces for teachers to reclaim and contribute to their professional identity and voices within the context of CPD. The research draws upon Lave & Wenger's (1991) theory of Communities of Practice and Priestley's (2013) concept of Teacher Agency to investigate how engagement in virtual peer networks impact teachers' professional identities, voices, sense of belonging, autonomy and empowerment. A mixed method approach was employed to collect data through surveys and semi structured interviews from a purposively selected online community with a membership of over 20 000 teachers from across the globe. Findings from 100 teacher-respondents to the online survey and 10 active members who were interviewed point to the importance of teacher involvement and engagement in the design of CPD programs. Teachers argue that CPD strategies that come out of top-down theoretical approaches are often disengaged from real classroom practices and dynamics. Online communities, from the teacher experiences, provide opportunities for teachers to share real classroom challenges and an unrestricted platform for exploring various approaches shared by different members. Various challenges were also outlined including peripheral participation by some members, unstructured engagement which may potentially cause confusion and impostor syndrome on the part of active members. In this paper we advocate for continuous professional development models that leverage online platforms to stimulate the agentic capacity of teachers as well as creation of more agentic spaces that value teacher voices in teachers' CPD. Implications for policy design are discussed to encourage more collaborative and inclusive teacher-driven rather top-down models that are often prescriptive, idealistic and disconnected from the everyday experiences of teachers.

Keywords: communities of practice, teacher agency, identity, online professional development.

Abstract ID #: 1397

Relationships - a guidance to working against absenteeism

Sandra Jederud | Karin Bergman Rimbe | Gunnel Östlund

In Sweden, a sustainable upbringing includes access to quality education, preparing children for a functioning adult life. Education is compulsory for ten years, from preschool to grade nine, but in practice, a twelve-year education is necessary for future job security. Beyond academics, schools aim to promote equality, democracy, and social belonging. Students are entitled to a safe environment that supports both learning and well-being. School attendance is a key indicator of future success, closely linked to health and resilience, especially for students facing challenges at home. Following the pandemic, problematic absenteeism has increased, with many students feeling isolated during remote learning. Research highlights the influence of school climate, parental education, and staff satisfaction on attendance.

Relationships play a crucial role in fostering student engagement, particularly for those prone to absence. Building and maintaining these connections can be difficult but is essential for encouraging attendance and learning. School practices—language, actions, and inclusion—impact how students and staff relate to one another. An intersectional approach helps understand the diverse reasons behind absenteeism, including experiences of exclusion based on gender, ethnicity, disability, or other factors.

Norm-critical pedagogy, rooted in power and gender theories, is used to analyze school practices and promote inclusivity. The study involved field notes and interviews with teachers and principals at two schools. Findings revealed that relationships were key to engaging students in the introductory program, though teachers often had to adjust their lessons based on fluctuating student attendance, leading to fragmented instruction.

Keywords: absenteeism, relationships, upper secondary school, guidance

Day 4: Thursday 6th November (8:15 am – 12:05 pm)

Abstract ID #: 1243

There is No Justice in Postcolonial Education Systems in Southern Africa

John Bhurekeni

Unpacking Contemporary and Historical Legacies of Coloniality.

Despite the promises of equity and education for all, the imagined educational order established by postcolonial governments in southern Africa has also promoted contemporary manifestations of coloniality. Curriculum reforms in postcolonial southern Africa, akin to the imperial colonial education system, divided people into hierarchically organised groups. Prolonged exclusion and subjugation to cultural technologies of domination, in conjunction with modern problems of internal hegemony amidst multidimensional global geopolitical tensions, have prompted many curriculum innovation scholars to ponder, 'What measures should be taken to guarantee educational transformation for the common good?'. This study investigates how knowledge systems, curricula, and educational structures are shaped by both historical and modern legacies of coloniality. It analyses epistemic and cultural violence using Gayatri Spivak's concept of "epistemic violence" and Homi Bhabha's concept of "cultural hybridity" and the "third space", investigates neo-colonial dynamics, and aims to provide a framework for a nuanced discussion and understanding of the complex challenges and opportunities for promoting justice, equity, and decolonisation in southern African education. The study demonstrates that postcolonial governments' evolving disposition in enacting primary and secondary school curricular reforms does not correlate with the complex realities and expectations of citizens, given that education in southern Africa has left people disempowered.

Keywords: coloniality, curriculum reform, innovation, postcolonial, epistemic violence, internal hegemony.

Abstract ID # 1295: On the Interplay of Job Demands and Emotion Regulation for Teacher Well-being: Results of a Mixed Methods Study

Ndabenhle T Mdluli | Anja Philipp

Many teachers report high job demands. Often, emotional aspects are experienced as especially demanding. Thus, teacher emotion regulation is of great concern, and emotion regulation is relevant to teacher well-being. It is not yet established how the level and variety of teacher job demands and the choice of emotion regulation strategies interact and influence teacher well-being. This presentation focuses on the interplay of teachers'

job demands, emotional regulation, and how it influences teacher well-being. The theoretical foundations of this presentation are the Hot/Cool, the Resource/Strength, and the Job Demands Resources models. Informed by the pragmatist research paradigm, a mixed methods design was adopted. In the first phase, data was collected from a purposive sample of 123 secondary school teachers from two districts in Durban via self-administered questionnaires. In the second phase, data were generated with a purposively recruited sample of nine teachers from the same areas, and semi-structured interviews were used. Findings revealed that teachers experienced high levels of job demands for disruptive learners, hiding emotions and the frequency of expressing emotions. The study showed that teachers in the sample mostly used emotional reappraisal, emotional suppression and deep acting when regulating their emotions. One significant contribution of this study was to aggregate teacher job demands into the level and variety. The result of the analysis to determine how the new variable of level and variety of job demands affected teacher well-being showed a complex but exciting interplay of outcomes, which will be presented at the conference.

Keywords: teachers, job demands, emotion regulation, interplay, well-being

Abstract ID # 1137: Teacher Leadership: Lived Experiences of Teachers and Senior Management Teams in a Limpopo School

Precious Mogaletlwa Chukudu

This study explores the lived experiences of teachers and Senior Management Teams (SMTs) in implementing teacher leadership in a South African school. Despite policy shifts towards collaborative governance and distributed leadership, the actual transformation of schools and full implementation of teacher leadership have been limited. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of challenges, opportunities and potential strategies for enhancing teacher leadership. Using narrative inquiry, this study is generating data through storytelling and narratives from six participants, comprising three SMT members and three teachers, purposively sampled from a secondary school in Limpopo. This study identifies and analyses barriers, and challenges that impede the promotion of teacher leadership. Furthermore, strategies and recommendations for overcoming these barriers and supporting teacher leadership development are being developed. Preliminary findings highlight the complexities of teacher leadership implementation, including differing perspectives on the concept, shaped by varied lived experiences within the school system and sometimes diverging views between teachers and SMT members on its scope and purpose. The participants are offering valuable insights into the practical realities of the school's leadership ecosystem, including opportunities for growth, and barriers to engagement. The study is expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on teacher leadership, highlighting the importance of understanding the lived experiences of teachers and SMTs in implementing teacher leadership. Hence, the study's findings have a potential to inform policy and practice, promoting a more collaborative and effective approach to school leadership and management.

Keywords: Distributed leadership: Lived experiences: Narrative enquiry: School leadership: Senior Management Teams (SMT): Teacher Development: Teacher leadership.

Abstract ID # 1329: Transforming History education curriculum through Ecojustice education principles and practices

Kabelo Noosi

History education is of paramount importance to every country around the world, as it fosters a sense of national identity and cultural heritage. It arguably creates a sense of knowing where a nation comes from and where it is going; equally, it can be argued that it instils some sense of patriotism. Historically, the History curriculum has perpetuated Western histories and epistemologies while marginalising African histories and ways of knowing. The domination of Western history and knowledge extended the Western hegemony by advancing Western epistemology, which caused the destruction of African knowledge, cultures and languages. This study attempts to unpack elements of domination in the History curriculum assessment policy statement (CAPS) and, equally, explore practical ways of disrupting Western-dominated epistemology in History CAPS. Ecojustice education, which is a tool that seeks to bring justice to marginalised and oppressed social groups due to historical injustice and the infiltration of Western influence, is used as a conceptual framework. Action research is used as a research methodology. Data was generated through literature review, observations and reflective journals. Document analysis was used to analyse the data generated. The findings of this study indicate that there are some of the principles of ecojustice education that are found in the History CAPS document, which attempt to include and accommodate historically marginalised. Despite the visibility of ecojustice education principles, there are some elements in the History CAPS document which still perpetuate exclusion and domination.

Keywords: History education, Ecojustice education, Domination, History CAPS.

Abstract ID # 1356: Empowering In-Service Teachers to Reduce Mathematics Anxiety and Build Resilience Through Targeted Interventions

Brighton Mudadigwa | Tawanda Chinengundu

This study investigates strategies to reduce anxiety and build resilience in mathematics in-service teachers. Mathematics anxiety is a prevalent issue that negatively impacts student performance, engagement, and confidence. Studies established that in-service teachers harbour anxieties about their mathematics knowledge and ability to teach mathematical concepts. Since teachers can easily pass on their math anxiety to students, prospective teachers should aim to minimise their anxiety. This research introduced targeted interventions to equip in-service teachers with resilience-building tools, including the Growth Zone Model, relaxation techniques, and the Ladder Model. These tools were shared through workshops and professional development sessions to help teachers create supportive and adaptive learning environments. Using a qualitative approach, data collection involved semi-structured interviews, observations conducted in classrooms, and field notes recorded from the participants. Classroom observations indicated that students frequently feel increased anxiety during problem-solving activities and assessments, which can hinder their capacity to grasp mathematical concepts effectively. Field notes highlighted the benefits of resilience-building strategies, such as greater student engagement, lower stress levels, and enhanced problem-solving abilities. The Growth Zone Model allowed teachers to recognise students' emotional states and modify their teaching approaches to accommodate individual needs, while relaxation techniques promoted a calm and focused learning environment. The Ladder Model offered a systematic method for gradual learning, enabling students to gain confidence and master intricate mathematical concepts progressively. Teachers reported that these strategies

improved their capacity to support students emotionally and academically, resulting in better overall results. This research highlights the importance of integrating psychological and pedagogical strategies into mathematics education to address anxiety and foster resilience, contributing valuable insights to the field of STEM education.

Keywords: Mathematics Anxiety, Resilience, Growth Zone Model, The Ladder Model, Relaxation techniques, STEM education

Abstract ID # 1100: Strategies university lecturers use to create inclusive spaces in teacher preparation programmes

Zandisile Mawethu Sitoyi

This article investigates effective strategies that lecturers use to promote inclusivity in teacher preparation programmes, as shown through the narratives of three lecturers in a South African university. An interpretive phenomenological design was used to closely investigate how lecturers create inclusive spaces in teacher development programmes. This article is part of a larger study conducted at a university in Cape Town, and it adopts Nel Noddings' theory of care as a theoretical lens to examine the strategies lecturers use to support pre-service teachers in becoming competent and inclusive educators. Data were collected through narrative interviews and thematically analysed using the constant comparative method. The study focused on three participants with over a decade of teaching experience to provide an in-depth understanding of their lived experiences of promoting inclusion. Trustworthiness was ensured through participant and researcher triangulation, reflexive journaling, and ethical rigour throughout the research process. The findings show that even though lecturers face challenges in creating inclusive learning environments and differentiating instruction, they adopt student-centred and culturally responsive strategies to accommodate students' diverse learning needs. Lecturers promote a culture of belonging through open communication to ensure students feel welcome and free at the institution. Additionally, lecturers engage in reflective practice to improve their teaching and model inclusion for their students. This study contributes to teacher training and inclusive education by providing practical ways of creating inclusive spaces in teacher preparation programmes. It highlights the interplay between individual commitment and institutional barriers, showing that inclusive teaching is a pedagogical effort and a structural challenge. If inclusivity is implemented thoroughly, lecturers can play an important role in providing learning spaces where social justice is at the epicentre.

Keywords: Inclusive education; teacher preparation; lecturer strategies; higher education; diversity; pre-service teachers

Abstract ID # 1280: Foundation phase students' preparation to teach the "Big 5 of reading" in isiZulu Home Language: A self-reflective study

Jabu Mzimela

Teaching the essential reading components, affectionately known as the "Big 5 of reading", serves as a fundamental framework for literacy development. Essentially, these are: phonemic awareness, phonics and word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. This study acknowledges that teaching reading skills is the most complex skill to master. Thus, it is imperative to examine how preservice teachers are prepared to teach the "Big 5 of reading" in the isiZulu home language. This study aimed to reflect on

how the researcher prepares preservice teachers specialising in the Bachelor of Education in Foundation Phase Teaching to teach the “Big 5 of reading” in the isiZulu home language. The study was conducted in one of the Universities located in KwaZulu-Natal, where isiZulu home language method modules are taught to preservice teachers enrolled in the second year of study. A self-study methodological design framed within the critical paradigm was used. Document analysis, the researcher’s teaching reflective journal, and memory work were used to generate data. Using Kegan’s teacher knowledge construction theory (1982), the study revealed the critical importance of developing a comprehensive theoretical understanding, enhancing pedagogical content knowledge, and cultivating a nuanced appreciation of the linguistic complexities inherent in teaching reading in an agglutinative language. The research underscores the distinctive characteristics of teaching reading skills in isiZulu, which diverge substantially from approaches used in fusional languages. The findings call for a more holistic, context-responsive approach to teaching reading skills, challenging lecturers to develop sophisticated, linguistically sensitive pedagogical strategies that address the unique structural and conceptual demands of isiZulu home language acquisition.

Keywords: Bachelor of Education in Foundation Phase teaching, Big 5 of reading, IsiZulu home language, reading skills, Pedagogical content knowledge

Abstract ID # 1177: Unfolding Academic Lives in and Through the Polycrisis: A Multimethod Arts-Based Research Workshop Using Visual Exegesis and Poetic Inquiry

Daisy Pillay | Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan

For over a decade, within a South African higher education landscape shaped by the enduring legacies of apartheid, colonialism, and neoliberalism, we have been designing and enacting arts-inspired research to explore what it means to be an academic today—and to imagine what our academic lives might yet become. In these complex and uncertain times, our challenge as scholars and educators is to actively participate in the reimaging of education. How might collaborative innovations and creative methodologies offer countercultural, generative spaces that push the boundaries of how we understand ourselves, our knowledge, and our place in the world? And how might these approaches help us live and work differently within the evolving terrain of higher education? This workshop brings together visual and literary arts to illuminate the often-unseen dimensions of academic life. Through creative expression, we ask, How can combining arts-based methods, specifically visual exegesis and collective poetic inquiry, facilitate an ethically embodied engagement with academics’ everyday lives? Workshop participants will experience a cumulative build-up of arts-inspired activities, beginning with the self and moving outward to connect with others- human and beyond. And by seeing, feeling, sensing and listening with shared arts practice, we hope to surface personal and collective narratives that speak to academics’ lived experience of navigating higher education amid the global polycrisis. This workshop invites participants at different moments of their academic lives, regardless of their experience or confidence with the arts, to surface different and untold stories of self and agency through artistic creation and imaginative response. (Re)Creating stories of lived experiences in a shared imagination space oozing with trust and confidence can free up thought and point to something beyond our enduring, banal practices. In doing so, we invite shifts in understanding of ourselves, our institutions, and the possibilities for transformation.

Keywords: academic lives, visual exegesis, relationalities, embodied engagement

Abstract ID # 1299: Socio-Economic and Ethical Dilemmas of Full-Time Employed Honours Students Amid the Politics of Funding in Selected KwaZulu-Natal Universities

Sibongamandla Silindokuhle Dlomo

Postgraduate study, especially at Honours level, is increasingly vital for professional development in the education sector. However, students who unexpectedly secure full-time employment after registering for Honours programmes face significant socio-economic and ethical dilemmas. These include managing academic demands alongside work responsibilities, navigating institutional inflexibility, and confronting limited access to funding support. This systematic review synthesizes evidence from 13 peer-reviewed studies to examine how full-time employed Honours students negotiate these dual roles within higher education. Using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework, the review followed a structured search, selection, and appraisal process to identify relevant literature published between 2013 and 2025. Thematic synthesis was guided by Schlossberg's Transition Theory and the Theory of Student Involvement. Findings reveal that students face time poverty, psychological stress, funding uncertainties, and moral tensions about compromised academic performance. Institutional responses often lack flexibility, with limited recognition of students' working status. Despite these barriers, many students demonstrate high levels of motivation, resilience, and reliance on informal support networks. The review highlights the need for more inclusive funding policies, context-sensitive curriculum design, and ethics-aware student support systems. Recommendations include adopting postgraduate programmes to acknowledge the lived realities of working students and improving institutional responsiveness to their complex transitions.

Keywords: Systematic Review, PRISMA, Working Honours Students, Funding Politics, Socio-Economic Challenges, Ethical Dilemmas, Higher Education

Abstract ID # 1246: Preparing Student Teachers - the Complexity of WIL Teacher Education

Sandra Jederud

Work-Integrated Learning Teacher Education (WIL TE), aims not only to strengthen professional preparation but also to attract more candidates. However, this dual-role model—where student teachers are both students and employed teachers—raises important questions about professional learning and identity development. Previous studies have shown that this way of organising TE is a double-edged sword. WIL student teachers are perceived by university educators in many cases to be more reflective than ordinary program student teachers, but also, they are perceived to see upon themselves as ready teachers and thus less receptive for campus courses (Jederud, 2024). This study aims to understand how WIL TE students experience learning across institutional contexts and how these experiences shape their professional identities. Preliminary findings indicate that boundary-crossing fosters both learning and tension. Student teachers report increased ability to apply theory to practice and develop professional confidence and perceive this way of organizing TE as successful. However, the weight of teaching responsibilities can at times overshadow academic engagement. As brokers, they translate between university expectations and school realities. These tensions reflect the challenges of identity negotiation within overlapping communities of practice (Wenger,

1998). The four boundary-crossing mechanisms were evident; identification occurred as students compared university and school cultures, coordination was observed in routines developed to manage workload across settings, reflection helped students reconsider assumptions about teaching. Transformation emerged when students proposed changes to academic learning based on school practices. These processes highlight how learning emerges from navigating contradictions, not from eliminating them. Designing WIL TE programs that embrace these tensions—rather than suppress them—can support deeper professional learning. However, for WIL TE to succeed, it must recognize and support this complexity—not just in structure, but in didactics

Keywords: WIL, teacher education, boundary crossing, communities of practice

Abstract ID # 1130: Sustainability, Inclusion, and Justice: Reimagining curriculum support for progressed learners in South African schools

Makobo Lydia Mogale

Progression policy implementation in South African schools aims to promote sustainable, inclusive, and just education for all by advancing learners to the next grade despite not meeting promotion requirements. Progressed learners face academic and socio-emotional challenges that hinder their learning success, necessitating innovative approaches to curriculum adaptation and school-based interventions. This research uses Universal Design for Learning as theoretical lens to explore long-term implications of progressed learners' academic success and holistic development. UDL focuses on flexible and adaptable learning environments to accommodate diverse learning needs. This qualitative study, placed within interpretivism paradigm, adopts an exploratory case study design. Purposive sampling was used to select five teachers in five secondary schools of Limpopo Province. These teachers were selected because they form part of the sample in a 3-year project on School-Based Support Teams' (SBSTs) initiatives to support progressed learners. Data were generated through observations and semi-structured interviews and analysed thematically. Findings reveal divergent interpretations of progression policy emanating from personal experience, professional background, and individual belief systems. These interpretations interplay between policy intent and contextual realities, eventually varying approaches to curriculum support. The study recommends teacher autonomy to use their professional judgment, professional development, and a collaborative approach, to adapt teaching methods that afford progressed learners' opportunities to bridge the content gap. To offer curriculum support, the study concludes on the rigid implementation process in which to prepare, for whom to prepare, and to what end, to align practical school-level contexts.

Keywords: Curriculum support, progression policy, teachers, Universal Design for Learning

Abstract ID # 1316: Understanding Quality Assessment in School-Based Assessment in the History FET Phase: Towards Theory of Pedagogic Devices

David Matsepe | Martha Mhlanga | Mugwena Maluleke

This study investigated quality assurance in assessment, focusing on History FET grade 10–12 School-Based Assessment (SBA) practices. The purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which quality is assured when planning and administering SBA in the history FET phase grade 10–12. The study took place in three schools in the Sekhukhune South district of Limpopo province. The reason for choosing these schools

was the identified information gap and socio-economic issues that existed within the rural schools in the Sekhukhune district. The research design used in the study was interpretivist, and it was qualitative in nature to investigate how quality is assured in school-based assessment in the history subject FET phase (grades 10–12). The key findings of the study are that quality assurance measures and adherence are equated to the process of moderation of SBA's. One finding that emerged was the challenge experienced by teachers, which is a lack of autonomy in assessment practices. This is reflected in the promotion and use of past common assessments as a measure to assure quality in pedagogical episodes. Considering the findings, the study recommends the development of quality assurance mechanisms specific to the history subject that will alleviate the skills gap in assessment (SBA) and lead to an effective implementation of the curriculum.

Keywords: School-based assessment; quality assurance; assessment policy; curriculum and assessment policy; history; further education and training

Abstract ID # 1340: Legitimate Code Theory as an object to work with in understanding computational thinking applications in the Physical Sciences Methods course

Cosmas John Kathumba | Clement Simuja

With a widespread effort to apply computational thinking (CT) in science education, the feedback is worrisome, as most science teachers lack familiarity and competencies. Research also demonstrates that science teacher education programmes, especially in developing countries, do not effectively foster the application of computational thinking to improve instructional strategies among science teachers. This paper reports the findings of the study that explored how Legitimate Code Theory influences (or does not) Physical Sciences pre-service teachers' understanding of computational thinking application in improving instructional strategies. Adopting the semantic dimensions of legitimate code theory: semantic density and semantic gravity, we presumed that pre-service teachers would unpack scientific systems from abstract and complex to more concrete and simpler components, hence improving computational thinking application. The study employed a qualitative research design in which data were generated through pre- and post-assessment questionnaires, worksheets and semi-structured interviews from six Physical Sciences pre-service teachers. Findings reveal that pre-service teachers' competencies to analyse abstract and complex equations and formulae before legitimate code theory intervention were very weak. However, oscillating through semantic dimensions of legitimate code theory offered a snapshot of how pre-service teachers engaged in weaker semantic gravity and stronger semantic density, such as equations and formulae and stronger semantic gravity and weaker semantic density, such as devising algorithms and using concrete experiences, helped them unpack the scientific systems to enrich their instructional strategy competencies. Therefore, the findings extrapolate the role of legitimate code theory in the application of computational thinking in science teacher education.

Keywords: Computational thinking, Legitimate Code Theory, Physical Sciences, Instructional strategies, pre-service teachers.

Abstract ID # 1148: Education for Inclusion: An Assessment of Pre-Service Teachers' Readiness, Knowledge, and Competencies for Inclusive Education

Prince Mensah Osiesi | Cina Patricia Mosito

Learners' diversity poses a complex challenge for learning outcomes and for the teaching process. Teachers often find it difficult to navigate such challenges while also sustaining the tenets of inclusive education. To ensure the continued sustenance of inclusive education, pre-service teachers are expected to be ready, knowledgeable, and competent in inclusive classroom pedagogy. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to assess the level of pre-service teachers' readiness, knowledge, and competencies in promoting inclusive classroom teaching and learning during teaching practicum. Underpinned by the Universal Design for Learning theory, the study utilised the survey research design, with a population consisting of third and fourth-year pre-service teachers at the Faculty of Education, in a sampled public university. The Pre-Service Teachers Readiness, Knowledge, and Competencies for Inclusive Classroom Teaching Questionnaire (PTRKCITQ)($\alpha=0.86$) was designed as the research instrument to elicit information from respondents strictly in line with the five research questions that guided the study. Data obtained for the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics via SPSS V 26. Results revealed that pre-service teachers' readiness for inclusive classroom teaching is high; they have adequate knowledge of inclusive teaching and education and a high level of competencies in creating and managing inclusive learning environments; gender does not significantly influence pre-service teachers' readiness, knowledge, or competence for inclusive classroom teaching; the factors militating against pre-service teachers' readiness, knowledge, and competencies for inclusive classroom teaching and education were identified. Implications for theory and practice, and recommendations were made.

Keywords: Pre-Service Teachers, Competencies, Knowledge, Readiness, Inclusive Education

Abstract ID # 1344: The Gendered Terrain of Care: Exploring Male Teachers' Roles and Realities in Foundation Phase Education

Beatrice Akala | Oluwakemi Ajayi

Foundation Phase (FP) teaching, which encompasses Grades 1 to 3, remains predominantly female-dominated due to entrenched gender norms that associate women with nurturing and caregiving roles. These societal expectations have historically positioned FP teaching as unsuitable for men, contributing to the underrepresentation of male teachers in this phase. However, recent literature indicates a gradual shift, with more in-service male teachers expressing interest in FP teaching despite persistent stereotypes and challenges. This paper explores the complex experiences of male FP teachers using qualitative data collected from 8 in service teachers pursuing their Bachelor of Education qualification at a South African university. It examines how gendered perceptions, societal expectations, and skewed power relations shape the professional identities of male teachers in FP. The study employs an intersectional lens to analyze how masculinity, sexuality, and age intersect to influence how male teachers are perceived and treated within the profession. The study concludes that although in service male teachers are passionate about teaching in FP, they often have to navigate a paradoxical space—celebrated for their potential to serve as positive role models in communities with absent fathers, yet simultaneously subjected to suspicion, surveillance, and stigmatization. Their experiences are characterized as the “good” (positive community impact), the “bad” (perceived unsuitability for nurturing roles), and the “ugly” (associations with sexual misconduct). These challenges are compounded by hegemonic masculinity, which devalues care work and positions it as low-status and inappropriate for men. The paper

argues that young male FP teachers require targeted support and encouragement to build their confidence and resilience. Their presence is not only valuable but essential in addressing broader social issues, such as fatherlessness and gender inequality in education.

Keywords: Foundation Phase teaching, gendered roles, male teachers, gender discourse, challenges

Abstract ID # 1337: Student resilience in contexts of polycrisis: A scoping review of risk factors and resilience enablers in Southern Africa

Adrian van Breda | Judith Reynolds

Students in higher education in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) face multiple challenges as they navigate their studies. These include personal, academic, community and political challenges. Understanding how students deal with these challenges can shed important light on the provision of support to students more widely. While there is a body of research on student resilience in Southern Africa, this remains rather fragmented, resulting in the lack of a comprehensive understanding of student resilience in this region. Therefore, this paper aims to answer the question, “What resilience processes enable better-than-expected outcomes among university students in Southern Africa?” We conducted a scoping review of the literature on student resilience in higher education in the 16 SADC countries, with publications ranging over 20 years from 2005-2024. We followed the PRISMA guidelines for conducting the review, and utilised Rayyan to manage the screening of manuscripts. Sixty-three studies met the inclusion criteria for review. The presentation focuses on the risks that students face, and the resilience enablers that facilitate better outcomes. We enumerate the risks according to their sources, finding that students face a wide range of crises. We identify a plethora of resilience enablers, ranging from micro (e.g., biological and psychological) to macro (e.g., social and environmental). We found that students’ resilience resources were often multisystemic, that is drawing on multiple and interacting systems. We advocate that this network of resilience enablers is essential to pathways of hope.

Keywords: university students, risk, multisystemic resilience, Southern Africa

Abstract ID # 1249: Biokinetics graduate employability and curriculum alignment

Henrico Erasmus and Khatija Bahdur

Recently, concerns arose from private sector regarding the employability of Biokinetics graduates, while the Health Professions Council of South Africa mandated transitioning to a new 4-year professional qualification, with additional work-integrated learning (WIL) hours throughout the program. Consequently, the questions which arose was firstly to ascertain the employment status of Biokinetics graduates from a semi-rural university, and secondly to determine how graduates perceived essential employability skills, and possible reasons for unemployment. To examine the questions, a quantitative online survey method was used. The survey framework drew from established models and validated research questions related to graduate competencies, self-perceived employability, employment history and employer expectations. Purposive, non-randomised sampling was used to include volunteers from the 2017-2021 Biokinetics alumni (N=43). The 2022 alumni were excluded due to involvement in mandatory internship. The average response rate was 80% (n=34). Findings indicated that 84% felt

they had acquired sufficient technical skills during their studies. However, only 20% believed their entrepreneurial skills were adequately developed. Despite this, 53% reported difficulties in securing any employment. The primary beliefs identified regarding unemployment were a lack of job opportunities (76%) and misalignment with industry requirements (53%). Graduates identified problem-solving, critical thinking, technical/practical skills, and planning ability as crucial for employability. These results underscore the necessity for curriculum development that not only aligns WIL with the technical/practical requirements of industry but also focuses on how practical activities should be conducted to enhance learning. Future research could focus on the impact of extended WIL programs which incorporate soft skills.

Keywords: practical skills, employability, entrepreneurship, job, work-integrated learning

Abstract ID # 1395: The Role of School Leadership in Strengthening Digital Resilience for Work-Integrated Learning in Teacher Education: A Comparative Study

Thuthukile Jita | Spencer LS | Loyiso Jita

The increasing frequency of global crises, ranging from pandemics to economic instability, has emphasized the urgent need for digital resilience in teacher education, particularly within work-integrated learning (WIL) contexts. This study investigates how school leadership contributes to strengthening digital resilience during such crises, with a comparative focus on South Africa's Motheo District and the Houston District in the United States. Grounded in Community of Practice Theory and Distributed Leadership Theory, the research explores how collaborative practices and shared leadership approaches facilitate the development and implementation of digital strategies in WIL. Using document analysis as the primary research method, the study examines policy documents, strategic plans, and institutional reports from schools and teacher education programs to understand how leadership structures influence digital resilience. This is complemented by surveys and semi-structured interviews with school leaders to contextualize and assess the application of these policies and strategies on the ground. The focus is placed on leadership practices, policy frameworks, and the deployment of digital infrastructure and resources to support WIL during periods of disruption. Findings reveal how distributed leadership enables multiple stakeholders to take ownership of digital innovation, while communities of practice foster sustained engagement and peer learning among educators. The study offers critical insights into effective leadership models and presents policy recommendations for enhancing the digital preparedness of teacher education programs in response to current and future crises. By integrating theoretical perspectives with practical analysis, this research contributes to the evolving discourse on digital transformation and resilience in teacher training worldwide.

Keywords: Comparative education; Digital resilience; Teacher education; Technology in education; Work-integrated learning (WIL); School leadership

Abstract ID # 1385: Exploring the Nature of Knowledge, Skills and Values Prioritized by the Lesotho Basic Education Curriculum Policy

Mahlompho Retselisitsoe Tsiane | Mankopane Justina Lebona | Matsokolo Maria Ramokoena | Matumelo Mamello Leboko

The global educational landscape is undergoing continuous transformation in response to emerging issues and evolving societal demands. The increasing complexity of the modern

world necessitates the development of adaptable, future-ready learners equipped with relevant competencies to navigate dynamic environments. In alignment with global trends, Lesotho has undertaken curriculum reforms to address the realities of the “polycrisis”. The Lesotho Basic Education Curriculum Policy therefore, emphasizes the development of core competencies, shaping an educational framework designed to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to navigate an evolving global environment successfully. This study critically explores the nature of knowledge prioritized within the Lesotho Basic Education Curriculum Policy, examining how its core elements support the goal of fostering competent, resilient, and socially responsible learners. Drawing on Habermas’s theory of knowledge interests, the study employs a qualitative case study design to analyze the policy document. Findings indicate that while the curriculum values learner-centered approaches aimed at developing competencies, skills, and values, its reliance on traditional assessment methods emphasizing measurable behaviors presents a challenge to holistic education. This narrow focus risks limiting learners’ ability to cultivate creativity, critical thinking, and ethical decision-making, which are essential attributes for success in the 21st century. By interrogating the interplay between policy intentions and assessment practices, this research underscores the need for innovative evaluation strategies that align with learner-centered pedagogy. Ultimately, the study contributes to ongoing curriculum debate on what knowledge is worth developing, by advocating for educational frameworks that integrate competencies, values, and assessment approaches fostering well-rounded student development.

Keywords: nature of knowledge, curriculum policy, learner-centered pedagogy, elements of curriculum

Abstract ID # 1211:

Fourth-year students’ performance on rapid recall, strategic thinking, and PrimTed standards on addition and subtraction addition and subtraction

Msebenzi Rabaza

Primary school mathematics learners perform poorly in rapid recall, strategic calculation, and thinking involving the addition and subtraction of numbers globally and in South Africa. This study investigated the performance of preservice teachers in rapid recall, strategic thinking, and Primary Teacher Education (PrimTEd) standards. This quantitative study used a survey research design to select fourth-year Bachelor of Education students, 33 at university A, 184 at university B, and 452 matched data for five universities who completed the addition and subtraction pretest. Data showed that the fourth-year students performed higher on rapid recall at universities A=83%, B =83%, matched data = 76%, followed by strategic thinking universities A=65%, B= 74%, matched data = 60%, and the primary teacher education standards at universities A=55%, B= 54%, matched data =47%. with a mean score of universities A=62%, B= 64%, matched data = 55% respectively. The findings show that University B outperformed University A on strategic thinking and PrimTed standards and the mean score on the addition and subtraction pretest. The fourth-year students who participated in this study need a deep understanding of strategic thinking and PrimTed standards to effectively teach primary school learners strategic thinking involving addition and subtraction.

Keywords: Addition, PrimTed Standards, Rapid Recall, Strategic Thinking, Subtraction

Abstract ID # 1297: Institutional Responses to Diversity: Intervention Outcomes for First-Year Students in Higher Education

The importance of diversity and inclusion in higher education, particularly for first-year students, cannot be overstated, as these principles are essential for fostering academic success, improving retention, and ensuring meaningful social integration. Despite growing discourse on inclusive education, there remains a significant research gap concerning systematically documented interventions and their measurable outcomes within the South African context, specifically in KwaZulu-Natal. This study aims to address this gap by critically analysing existing literature from 2004 to 2024 to identify and evaluate strategies that promote diversity and inclusion among first-year university students. Employing a scoping review methodology, the study synthesizes findings from peer-reviewed articles, policy documents, and institutional reports. The review reveals a range of interventions, including culturally responsive orientation programs, peer mentorship schemes, inclusive pedagogical practices, and targeted support services. Key findings indicate that such interventions contribute to enhanced academic performance, increased student engagement, and a stronger sense of belonging. Nevertheless, persistent challenges such as institutional resistance, limited financial resources, and lack of systematic monitoring threaten the sustainability of these efforts. The implications of this analysis underscore the need for robust institutional commitment, continuous professional development for academic staff, and the implementation of comprehensive policy frameworks. These measures are essential for embedding diversity and inclusion as core values in higher education, ultimately transforming the academic and social experiences of first-year students in KwaZulu-Natal.

Keywords: diversity, inclusion, scoping review, academic success, student engagement, inclusive education, policy support

Abstract ID # 1266: Which Role do Creative Teaching Styles Play in Mathematics Teaching? Insights from a Case Study with Foundation Phase Teachers

Nompumelelo Nzimande | Anja Philipp

The status of Mathematics education in South Africa is concerning, as shown in the results of large-scale studies. Probing into teaching this subject could be among the first steps to address this situation, starting with the Foundation Phase. Mathematics teaching relies on various classroom practices. Creative teaching styles have emerged as a promising classroom practice that may foster innovation, play, interaction, and enjoyment, which are crucial for developing basic foundational Mathematics skills. However, little is known about being creative and developing creative teaching styles in Mathematics teaching (e.g., using storytelling, play or developing creative lesson routines). This study is based on Fredrickson's theory of positive emotions to explore a possible broaden-and-build effect of creative teaching styles. An interpretivist stance was adopted, employing a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through artefacts, classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with six purposively selected teachers and were analysed using content analysis. Initial findings indicate that creative teaching styles simplify the teaching process with the aim of making teaching more enjoyable and meaningful for learners, thus improving Mathematics teaching. For example, the integration of storytelling as a creative teaching style in teaching addition (using a number line including learners' names and doing actions), humanises mathematics, promotes interaction and makes the concept memorable. Further results on the development of creative teaching styles as an effective teaching approach for Foundation Phase Mathematics teaching are presented.

The role of creative teaching styles and how teachers can incorporate these to enhance Mathematics instruction will be discussed.

Keywords: Foundation Phase, Mathematics, Creative teaching styles, Teachers

Abstract ID # 1235: Global Competence in Higher Education: Developing the Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes Accounting Students Need for a Complex World
Nosihle Veronica Sithole

Due to the rapidly evolving in the world, higher education has a crucial role of preparing accounting students for the ever-changing times, complex profession and societal challenges. Accounting education programmes at Higher Education (HE) should enable students to thrive in diverse, dynamic, and uncertain environments. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate the type of knowledge, skills and attitude students need for the complex world and how education higher education can develop them. Critical Emancipatory Research (CER) theory foregrounded this research since it concentrates on critiquing, empowering, transforming and creating freedom in systems. CER encouraged me to select a research methodology that will allow participants to fully participate in addressing the research. Therefore, the study followed a Critical Paradigm, Exploratory Research Design and Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, while thematic analysis was used for data analysis. All 26 purposively sampled participants were fully engaged in the dialogues which took place via Zoom for 2 days. Employing Critical Emancipatory theory and PAR assisted me in developing transformative answers to the research problem by collaborating with participants to identify, develop and implement changes to the skills, knowledge and attitude accounting students need for the world of work with constant challenges and changes. Results showed that accounting students require knowledge of utilising digital technologies including data analytics and Artificial Intelligence, an understanding of global economic systems, and international accounting standards. Also, students need skills for economy transformation, entrepreneurship, adaptability, critical thinking, effective communication and teamwork to navigating real-world challenges, as well as a positive global mindset attitude, resilience, and a commitment. Higher education can develop students on the above knowledge, skills and attitude by incorporating experiential learning such as internships, voluntarily work and entrepreneurship in the curriculum. In addition, students can gain global exposure opportunities and soft skills training.

Keywords: Global Competence, Higher Education, Accounting, Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes

Abstract ID # 1216: Promoting healthy eating habits through the provision of traditional diets in preschools: The case of Mogoditshane Village, Botswana
Sikhangele Mcelelwa

Promoting healthy eating habits through the provision of traditional foods in pre-schoolers is viewed by studies as critical for holistic development as well as preventing health issues. However, there is limited information on how preschools promote the consumption. The paper explores the role played by preschools in instilling healthy eating habits through the provision of traditional foods. A qualitative study embedded in a case study design was done in Mogoditshane village, Botswana. To determine food habits being practiced, data was drawn through observations and interviews from three purposively selected

private preschools that provide meals to their learners. A sample of six preschool teachers with experience on integrating healthy eating habits in the teaching and learning process, three administrators who make decisions regarding meal planning and partner with food suppliers and three head cooks who prepare meals for preschoolers. Observations on meal programs, teaching and learning activities were done to witness the strategies used by preschool centres to promote healthy eating habits through the provision traditional foods. A thematic approach was used to analyse and interpret data. Study findings uncovered that there is negligence of traditional foods over junk food such as sugary and processed snacks. The study recommends policy formulation on how traditional food diet can be accepted and integrated in preschools.

Keywords: healthy eating habits, unhealthy eating habits, preschool centres, traditional foods

Abstract ID # 1107: Exploring the impact of neoliberalism on teaching and learning: a call for adoption of alternative ideologies

Sekoai Elliot Nkhi

The proposed study aims to unearth the impact of neoliberalism on teaching and learning in the highly marketised institutions of higher learning in Lesotho. Lecturers and students in the neoliberal universities have been reconceptualised as the human capital in a commercial transaction in which the lecturer and the university vend education to the student who then functions as the client. Lecturers are therefore considered as pecuniary entities that can be distributed to uphold the profit margins which is influenced by the casual contracts. Moreover, students should be able to buy education which is embalmed as a product with limited life. The neoliberal perspective views students as buyers of education and not acquirers of knowledge, so I will therefore argue for an emancipatory pedagogy championed by Paolo Freire as well as social constructivist approach advocated by Lev Vygotsky that do away with this 'oppressive' educational reforms which see students as customers to whom knowledge is sold. It is therefore difficult as suggested by literature to teach students to be critical thinkers because they are seen as consumers and not learners. In order to explore this impact that neoliberalism has on teaching and learning, the proposed study will employ a qualitative approach confined within an exploratory design. Data will be collected through face-to-face interviews with academics. Based on the above assertions, I will further argue for alternative ideologies which universities could adopt that develop and provide for support higher education students and their learning.

Keywords: Constructivism, Ideologies, Neo liberalism, Teaching and Learning, Universities

Abstract ID # 1086: The Involvement of Parents In Fostering Whole Child Education: Teachers' Experiences.

Sebaeng Lerato

For the Whole Child Education (WCE) to thrive, schools should provide conditions that support learners' cognitive and non-cognitive development. Schools seem to be doing well on the cognitive development of the child. However, the same cannot be said about the non-cognitive development aspects. This is evident considering learners' undesirable behaviour in schools, which a lack of parents' involvement could be a contributing factor. Therefore, to understand teachers' experiences in their efforts to involve parents, this

study explores teachers' views on the involvement of parents to foster whole child education. This study adopted a qualitative case-study research design. Four teachers from four secondary schools were purposively sampled. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and document reviews. The data was thematically analysed. The study found that 1) parents' level of education influences students' academic and non-academic performance, 2) teachers and parents do not have close working relationship that would help learners in gaining more support that could help them develop holistically and 3) parents do not actively participate in their children's education due to a variety of socio-economic status. This study concludes that learners' unruly behaviour in schools seems to be perpetuated by the underdevelopment of the non-cognitive aspects, which could be exacerbated by the non-involvement of their parents in their education. The study had several implications; it afforded teachers a platform to express their views concerning parental involvement, and it stands to exposing parents to teachers' experiences regarding parental involvement.

Keywords: Parental involvement; whole-child education; child development; holistic development

Abstract ID # 1208: Preservice teachers' perceptions about the integration computational thinking and mathematics to develop algebraic reasoning in a mathematics content course

Kiyara Bellochun-Khan & Kathleen Fonseca

Recent studies highlighted the importance of integrating CT into various school subjects like mathematics to nurture learners' problem-solving and creativity. Integrating mathematics and computational thinking (CT) in mathematics classrooms is influenced by student teachers' perceptions of how to translate CT into mathematical teaching practices and their experiences with computational concepts, practices, and tools. A significant challenge in developing an integrated understanding of CT and mathematics is the training of student teachers. Studies have shown that for student teachers to effectively integrate CT into mathematics, they need to develop a deep understanding of CT content, mathematics content, and pedagogical practices. Thus, in this qualitative case study, the aim of this study was to investigate second-year student teachers' perceptions of the integration of computational thinking and mathematics to develop algebraic reasoning and how the integration was understood in lesson planning in a mathematics content course. Data was collected through a questionnaire to determine the student teachers' perceptions of CT and the integration of CT into mathematics lessons. Stimulated-recall interviews and lesson plans were also used to identify how the integration process assists in developing student teachers' understanding of CT and algebraic reasoning. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the questionnaire, and thematic analysis was used to analyse the stimulated-recall interviews and lesson plans. The findings indicate a positive shift in student teachers' perceptions of the integration of CT into mathematics lessons. It also shows that they developed a better understanding of CT processes and algebraic reasoning.

Keywords: Computational thinking, algebraic reasoning, student teachers' perceptions, computational thinking processes

Abstract ID # 1196: Harnessing Artificial Intelligence Technologies for Inclusive Pedagogy in South African Schools: Literature Insights and Teacher Educators' Perceptions

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has proven to be impactful in moderating and enhancing the process of teaching and learning. Unlike traditional teaching and learning aids, AI technologies provide a personalised teaching and learning experience for both teachers and learners, thereby promoting an inclusive pedagogy. Given the diverse cultural, socio-economic, and gender landscapes of South Africa (SA), the inclusive pedagogy remains the best approach. However, with the emergence of AI technologies and their adoption in education, challenges and reservations about how inclusive it is for both learners and teachers abound. Little is known about the use of AI technologies for inclusive pedagogy or how it can be adopted for promoting it. This study, underpinned by the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Critical Pedagogy theories and utilising the critical interpretive synthesis methodology, fills the gap in the literature by exploring the perceptions of three teacher educators and literature evidence on harnessing AI technologies for inclusive pedagogy. The research focus was to contextualise what inclusive pedagogy is, how inclusive pedagogy can be adopted, and how to harness AI technologies for inclusive pedagogy. Findings indicate teacher educators' perceptions on AI technologies in education, inclusive pedagogy in the SA school context, and how to harness AI technologies for inclusive pedagogy. Thus, inclusive pedagogy can be improved and promoted in SA schools via the adoption and application of AI technologies. Implications for theory, practice, and policies, as well as recommendations, are made.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence technologies, Critical interpretive synthesis methodology, Teacher educators, Inclusive pedagogy, South African schools

Abstract ID # 1233: Teaching What We Have Learned: Initial Teacher Educators Reflect on Mathematics Lessons in Grade 2 Classrooms in the Western Cape

Rose Brien

The necessity for building strong foundations in early number work is well-documented and gaining momentum, placing pressure on tertiary institutions to provide optimal training for prospective teachers. This paper presents the experiences of a group-based teaching practice assignment undertaken by Third Year Foundation Phase initial teacher educators (ITEs) in Grade 2 classrooms across the Western Cape. Rooted in the PRIMTED 2025 Addition and Subtraction Manual, the assignment required 170 ITEs to collaboratively design, implement, and critically reflect on a mathematics lesson that foregrounds conceptual understanding, differentiated instruction, and learner engagement. The purpose of the assignment was to transform theory into practice by integrating key pedagogical strategies learned in coursework into authentic classroom contexts. The study investigates three interrelated research questions: How do Foundation Phase ITEs translate pedagogical strategies from the PRIMTED manual into classroom practice? What challenges and opportunities do they encounter when implementing differentiated instruction and fostering learner engagement? And in what ways does structured reflection on teaching experiences enhance their understanding of responsive teaching and conceptual understanding in early grade mathematics? The assignment unfolded in three interconnected parts: planning the lesson, teaching and gathering evidence, and group reflection. Drawing directly from the manual, lessons incorporated whole-class teaching and small-group mat work to support learners' diverse mathematical thinking. Each student submitted artefacts and individual reflections, offering insights into what worked, what challenged them, and how their preparation shaped their classroom responses. The

final group synthesis task connected the PRIMTED manual with classroom realities, highlighting how student teachers adapted pedagogical tools to meet contextual needs. Findings indicate that the manual provided a strong conceptual and methodological foundation for the ITEs; however, the reported classroom realities called for a deepened understanding of responsive teaching, the complexities of differentiation, and the need for ongoing reflection. The paper argues that such scaffolded practice-based assignments strengthen the bridge between coursework and classroom practice, offering critical opportunities for ITEs to learn through teaching and reflection.

Keywords: Initial Teacher Educators, Foundation Phase, Addition and Subtraction, Differentiated Instruction, Learner Engagement, Responsive Teaching, Reflection, Practice-Based Learning

Abstract ID # 1182: On the postdoc polycrisis: postdocs realities of navigating the complex neoliberal publish or perish work culture in a South African university.
Zamokuhle Wiseman Magubane

Postdocs are largely described in literature as ‘researcher precariat’s’ because of the peripheral position they occupy in the hierarchy of higher education environments (CHE, 2022; Woolston 2020d). Their reckless appropriation into unfavourable working conditions in hostile neoliberal workplace environments constitutes their confronting and negotiation of the publish or perish discourse. Employing the tenets of critical interpretive foundations of qualitative research, in this study I explore the complexity of postdocs experiences of navigating the neoliberal publish or perish work culture in one South African university. Through purposive together with convenience sampling, 18 postdocs were recruited to participate in the individual Microsoft soft teams semi-structured interviews. I utilised Nancy Fraser’s (1995) theory of social justice to think through and theorise the habitual marginal position of postdocs in the academy. Findings indicate the ‘postdoc precarity’ phenomenon as surmounted by the neoliberal extractivist logic of the university with no permanent employment and underpay of postdocs despite their advanced PhD qualifications. Findings also reveal the unsettling nature of the postdoc system in its being casually sexist and gendered around men postdocs who are less supported in the academy with women postdocs also falling victim to the “motherhood penalty”. I end the article with broader reflections on policy implications for supporting the human rights of postdocs and how a national postdoc network can offer this compelling support.

Keywords: postdoc, precarity, neoliberal, South Africa, higher education

Abstract ID # 1418: Navigating the Shift from Teaching in Basic Education to Lecturing in Higher Education
Seshen Brijmohun

While the experiences of seasoned academics are well-documented, this paper seeks to illuminate the often-unheeded journeys of early career academics navigating teacher education in a complex and evolving educational landscape. This study explores the lived realities of novice lecturers as they transitioned from teaching in Basic Education (BE) to lecturing in Higher Education (HE) amidst a polycrisis environment characterised by social, economic, environmental, and technological shifts. Emphasising the development and application of pedagogical resilience within the HE environment, the study employs qualitative data collection methods, including semi-structured interviews, reflexive solo narrative-framed podcasts, and reflective visual representations to thematically explore

the key challenges faced during this transition from BE to HE. These challenges include adapting teaching methodologies to rapidly changing contexts, addressing diverse and vulnerable student needs, and integrating prior BE experiences into HE practices. Preliminary findings suggest that novice teacher-educators often rely on foundational skills gained in BE, which serve as vital anchors amid turbulent times, supporting the development of adaptable and effective teaching strategies. Grounded in *Transformative Learning Theory*, the study highlights the critical role of supportive structures, identity shifts, and ongoing professional development in fostering resilience during this polycrisis. Through a narrative inquiry into how early teaching experiences influence tertiary education practices, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how novice lecturers navigate and shape their pedagogical identities in a time of pervasive crisis, offering valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to enhance the resilience and quality of education amid ongoing challenges and changes.

Keywords: teaching, early career academics, narrative inquiry, reflexive methodology

Abstract ID # 1339: Polycrisis in the Teaching and Learning System: Challenges of classroom teachers

Japhet Omolere Okuntade | Victoria Iyabo Aremu | Melanie B. Luckay

The present educational landscape is increasingly characterized by the prevalence of multiple, interrelated issues that simultaneously undermine the success of classroom teachers, with a particular focus on primary schools in Badagry Local Government Area of Lagos State. This study examines the complex realities faced by teachers in Nigeria. Despite popular beliefs that attribute educational inefficiency to teachers' lack of dedication, these viewpoints often overlook the intricate crises affecting the teaching and learning process. Using semi-structured interviews and a convenient sampling technique, the study employs a qualitative research design to gather detailed insights into the lived experiences of ten (10) teachers from five primary schools in Badagry Local Government Area. The research identifies external challenges, such as socioeconomic difficulties and community expectations, which collectively shape the teaching environment. In addition, internal crises within school settings—such as administrative pressures, policy instability, and inadequate resources—are also examined. These overlapping crises significantly impair teachers' ability to deliver effective instruction, while also highlighting the adaptable strategies teachers employ to navigate these challenges. The study emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and addressing the reality of polycrisis in professional practice. From teachers' perspectives, this study advocates for more comprehensive support structures that enable teachers to create resilient and productive learning environments despite persistent difficulties.

Keywords: Polycrisis, Learning System, Teachers, Challenges

Abstract ID # 1326: Internal Financial Control Measures in South African Schools: Challenges and Implications

Sithembele Goodman Ndovela

This empirical paper reports on the internal financial control measures in selected Secondary schools. The study's objective was to determine how School Governing Bodies, through the finance committee, manage school finances in selected secondary schools. While using a qualitative research approach within the interpretivism paradigm, Carrington et al. (2008)' Governance and accountability theory was adopted as the study's

theoretical perspective. The data were generated using semi-structured interviews with 4 SGB members who were purposively sampled. The participants were part of the finance committee members from four quintile schools at the uMgungundlovu Education District in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). Understanding the internal control measures will help address the polycrisis in these selected secondary schools. This will ultimately improve the quality of teaching and learning in participating secondary schools. The findings revealed: (1) Segregation of duties and poor record keeping. (2) The SGB members reported diverse views on the keeping of records of cash inflows and cash outflows. (3) Parental access on the financial statement of the school. This was triggered by the difficult language used by the SGB finance committee. There is no transparency on the usage and reporting on school financial matters. (4) a lack of training of SGB members, especially on the financial management of school funds. This study recommends the need for monitoring and training finance committee members on school financial management. The study also recommends that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) should have financial training manuals written in African indigenous languages spoken by the majority of learners in selected secondary schools. The submission of financial statements should be done via the links provided by DBE, and the treasurer should be the one submitting financial statements to avoid the sole dominance of school principals.

Keywords: internal control, School Governing Bodies, financial accountability, finance committee

Abstract ID # 1189: Enhancing Mathematical Discourse and Practice Among Preservice Teachers

Azwidowi Emmanuel Libusha

The success of teaching mathematics lies in ensuring students become proficient in specific topics, signifying their integration into a community of practice (CoP). A mathematics CoP consists of individuals who share an interest in mathematics and collaboratively enhance their knowledge and skills. Proficiency requires students to possess the necessary "discourse" to communicate effectively within this community. Discourse refers to the everyday use of language to articulate mathematical ideas. This study investigated errors and misconceptions held by preservice teachers in communicating procedures for solving multi-digit subtraction using the standard written algorithm (vertical column method). It aimed to align preservice teachers' discourse with that of the mathematics CoP. The research question was: How do preservice teachers communicate their procedures for solving subtraction of natural numbers using the standard written algorithm? Using a qualitative methodology, the study analysed students' pretest responses and exam scripts to assess conceptual change over time. Content analysis revealed that, although students often arrived at correct answers, their language and conceptual understanding were inconsistent with the mathematics CoP. Relearning theory provided the framework for analysing data and facilitating conceptual change, resulting in measurable improvements. Enhanced exam performance indicated closer alignment between students' discourse and the CoP. The findings underscore the importance of developing mathematical language and conceptual understanding alongside procedural fluency. These insights are valuable for preservice and in-service teacher development programs, highlighting the need to foster mathematical discourse for effective teaching and learning.

Keywords: Mathematics, mathematical language, teacher practices, subtraction of natural numbers, transformative learning

Abstract ID # 1272: Bridging the Digital Divide: A Framework for Inclusive Education through Technology Adoption in South Africa's Higher Education Sector

Victor Virimai Mugobo | Grasia Chisango

As the adoption of educational technology in the South African higher education sector continues to increase at an accelerating rate, the attainment of inclusive education remains elusive. The inequalities in the higher education sector are a microcosm of the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality that are prevalent in the broader South African society. The purpose of this study was therefore to develop a framework to guide higher educational institutions in South Africa on how to use educational technology to ensure inclusive education in a diverse environment that is underpinned by polycrises such as unemployment, poverty, technological changes, financial crisis and inequality. These polycrises drive and exacerbate the digital divide that is prevalent in the South African higher education sector. Using a triple lens approach, the theoretical framework for this study was underpinned by the capability approach, Freire's critical pedagogy and activity theories. The study adopted a qualitative multiple case study research design informed by grounded theory data analysis techniques and document analysis. Using purposive and snowball sampling, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 academics drawn from universities across the country. Two focus group discussion sessions were conducted with purposively selected participants in order to validate the findings from the semi-structured interviews. The study found that there exists a digital divide in South African higher educational institutions as students from previously disadvantaged and marginalised backgrounds continue to face digital exclusion. The study further found out that more and more higher educational institutions are becoming technologically elitist and thus achieving inclusive education remains an enormous challenge. The study therefore recommended a framework that South African higher educational institutions could possibly implement in order to bridge this digital divide and ensure inclusive education through equal access to educational technology across their institutions.

Keywords: Digital divide, inclusive education, educational technology, framework

Abstract ID # 1294: Repositioning teacher educators as intellectual architects – a rapid review of their professional development in Africa

Kavish Jawahar

Frameworks underpinning Africa's renaissance recognise teachers as agents of transformation and research on their professional development is growing. In contrast, the role of teacher educators – the educators of these agents - receives considerably less attention. Their professional development remains under-researched and insufficiently mapped. These risk a disconnection between the continent's transformative aspirations and the teacher education systems needed for achieving them. A rapid review of 28 journal articles was conducted to explore how African teacher educator professional development features in scholarly literature. The African Framework of Standards and Competences for the Teaching Profession afforded an analytical lens for revealing how

professional development can position teacher educators to cultivate the kind of teachers envisioned by Agenda 2063. While scholarly engagement and innovative practices are emerging, professional development opportunities remain largely fragmented and inconsistently structured. This pattern reflects the marginalisation of teacher educators in African higher education, which contributes to the broader educational dimension of the polycrisis, constraining the continent's ability to achieve quality education outcomes. Despite this, literature reveals evidence of pedagogical creativity and professional agency. Seeing and empowering teacher educators as central to Africa's education systems is vital for cultivating the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed by African teachers. There is an urgent need to expand research on African teacher educators, grounded in local ways of knowing and being that center relationality, as embodied in Ubuntu. Such research is essential for charting meaningful professional development pathways and repositioning teacher educators as intellectual architects of the Africa we want.

Keywords: teacher educator, professional development, rapid review, polycrisis, Africa

Abstract ID # 1244: Educators professional competence in using indigenous languages to teach primary mathematics

Siphesihle Pearl Ngubane | Nompumelelo Gcinile Nzimande

The teaching of mathematics using indigenous languages have gained the attention of researchers, more especially since the recent developments of incremental introduction of Mother tongue based bilingual education, which emphasises the need of teaching using both learners' indigenous languages and English simultaneously. Moreover, the multilingual turn has marked significant changes from bilingualism to multilingualism, resulting to the issue of effectiveness in teaching mathematics using indigenous languages being in question. The puzzle stems from the current status quo of mathematics teaching and learner performance in South Africa. Furthermore, interventions on teacher development programs in teaching mathematics using indigenous languages which remains scarce. This study seeks to address what can be seen as a conundrum by probing into teacher competence, and whether educators are professionally developed to teach mathematics using indigenous languages, particularly at the primary level of schooling, as it is the level where basic mathematics skills are developed. This study was underpinned by the COACTIV Model of teacher competence. A qualitative-research approach located within the traditions of the interpretivism paradigm was employed, and six educators were purposefully selected for an in-depth insight into the phenomenon. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and observations. Findings revealed that there are limited professional developments conducted in indigenous languages, shortage of mathematical resources in indigenous languages and lack of mathematical concepts in indigenous languages. It is recommended that training programs should be developed that focuses on teaching mathematics using indigenous languages, including developing mathematical concepts and resources presented in indigenous languages.

Keywords: Multilingual turn, indigenous languages, primary mathematics, professional development and professional competence

Abstract ID # 1269: The Influence of Socioeconomic Status on Career Decision-Making Challenges Faced by Learners in South Africa

Oluwakemi B Ajayi

The influences of socioeconomic position on learners' career decision-making and career development have come to light more recently. Given that education may have a number of expenses, both up-front and concealed, household income plays a significant role in determining access to education. In light of this, this study aims to examine the influence of socioeconomic status on career decision-making challenges faced by learners in South Africa. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory served as the theoretical framework for this study. The study employs a qualitative research methodology to investigate the perspectives and experiences of learners regarding how socioeconomic status issues influence their career decision-making. Using a purposive sample technique, 18 Grade 12 learners from three township secondary schools in Gauteng Province, South Africa, were chosen in order to gain rich, in-depth knowledge on the observed phenomena. Participants were interviewed in semi-structured interviews. The data was analysed using thematic analysis in order to better understand how socioeconomic status influences the challenges learners in South Africa encounter while making career decisions. The findings of this study shed light on how learners' career aspirations are seen to be influenced by their socioeconomic background. Low family socio-economic status, sibling delinquency, perceived inability to obtain government bursaries and poor access to the internet/low connectivity in homes were perceived to be among the challenges faced by learners while making career decisions. The study recommends that families should play an active role in learners' academic pursuits and work together with the school for learners to achieve success.

Keywords: Socioeconomic status, career, decision-making, Grade 12 learner, career development, household income

Abstract ID # 1328: Developing Essential Skills for Undergraduates in a Time of Polycrisis: The Role of Higher Education

Ntfombi V. Kunene

The world is currently facing an unprecedented polycrisis, characterized by multiple, interconnected crises that pose significant threats to human existence. In response, there is a growing recognition of the need for higher education institutions to prioritize the development of essential skills for undergraduates. However, despite this growing awareness, there remains a lack of clarity on the specific skills required and how they can be effectively integrated into curricula and pedagogies. This proposed study aims to address this knowledge gap by investigating the essential skills required by University of Eswatini's undergraduates to thrive in a polycrisis world and will be grounded on Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1978). Using a mixed-methods approach, the study will combine a comprehensive review of literature, expert interviews, and a survey of undergraduates and educators. This will enable the identification of essential skills required by undergraduates, an examination of current higher education curricula and pedagogies, and the proposal of a framework for prioritizing essential skills development. The study's findings will inform policy and practice in higher education, providing insights into the essential skills required by undergraduates in a polycrisis world and how institutions can support their development. The study seeks to empower undergraduates to become active agents of change in a rapidly changing world, and contribute to the

ongoing dialogue on the role of higher education in preparing students for a complex future.

Keywords: curriculum design, essential skills, higher education, pedagogies, polycrisis, undergraduates

Abstract ID # 1142: Speculative Design and Transformative Pedagogy: Reimagining Higher Education through Social Impact Design and Photography

Bongani Khoza | Nthabiseng Mabale

Transformative pedagogy reimagines education as a catalyst for societal change, integrating democratic principles, ethical reflection, and crisis-responsive strategies. This conceptual paper explores how speculative design—a forward-looking methodology centred on critical imagination and alternative futures—can amplify transformative pedagogy in higher education. By integrating photography and social impact design as tools for ethical exploration, the study constructs a transdisciplinary framework that merges Freirean critical pedagogy, Kolb’s experiential learning, and aesthetic theory. The framework positions the classroom as a speculative site for democratic participation, resilience, and societal change, using digital storytelling and photography to design fictions to challenge neoliberal educational paradigms and interrogate systemic vulnerabilities. Transformative pedagogy, reimagined through speculative design, prioritises crisis-responsive strategies, ethical reflection, and embodied democratic practice. The paper proposes principles for educators, including participatory action, sensory engagement, and institutional support for speculative methods, while modelling curricula that enhance students’ capacity to articulate democratic ideals through narrative and visual experimentation. Though not empirically tested, the framework synthesises speculative design with social impact methodologies to provoke new possibilities for addressing structural inequality. Ultimately, this approach redefines educators as facilitators of imaginative and ethical engagement, arguing that such an approach can disrupt traditional power dynamics, stimulate critical engagement, and prepare learners for complex sociotechnical futures. Implications for curriculum design, educator development, and future research are discussed, positioning speculative pedagogy as a vital conceptual advance for educational innovation.

Keywords: Speculative Design, Postgraduate Supervision, Postgraduate Research, Postgraduate Supervisors, Coaching

Abstract ID # 1193: Care-informed-Drama-in-Education: Addressing the agency of young people towards their mental health and well-being in a classroom

Boitumelo Mokolopeng

Drama-based pedagogies are a proven strategy for promoting mental health and well-being among young people. Despite this, studies argue that teaching mental health content topics without a relevant pedagogy may result in misinterpretation of children's behaviour and re-traumatisation of children. By integrating the care principle through the lens of posthumanism, it suggests an acknowledgement of the mutually affecting agencies of researcher, learners, environment and curriculum. This post-qualitative study employed the Participatory Action Research approach as a strategy to encourage flexibility, experimentation, and collaboration with participants. In this present study, a care-informed drama in education serves as a framework to understand the relational value of learning

about Post-traumatic stress disorder through drama pedagogies. The researcher conducted a series of workshops with twenty Grade 10 learners enrolled in the Dramatic Arts subject. By engaging in interactive theatre games, a nurturing environment that emphasised the importance of collective and mutual care was explored, as well as acknowledging that learners' interconnectedness influences their overall well-being. The mutually affecting agencies of the researcher and learners were also traced. Building on the themes that emerged from theatre games, we created a performance that utilises improvisation to explore the importance of personal connections in sharing stories. To evaluate the effects of care-informed drama in education, we facilitated a feedback discussion where participants shared their emotional reactions tied to their roles. This reflective and diffractive practice sought to ensure that learners feel supported by and capable of caring for others, fostering interactions that promote inclusive transformation. The results of the study were analysed using thematic interpretation to determine the mutual influence of care-informed drama in education. The findings suggest that care principles can help alleviate symptoms related to Post-traumatic Stress Disorder when employed alongside drama pedagogies. This framework provided learners with psychological safety and challenged limiting beliefs. Furthermore, research indicates that care-informed drama in education may serve as a container to offer care and emotional support.

Keywords: Drama-in-Education, young people, trauma, care, mental health and well-being, curriculum & learners

Abstract ID # 1144: Crossroads of Opportunity and Exclusion: Determinants of School Participation Beyond Compulsory Education in South Africa

Sinenhlanhla Nkwanyana

The pursuit of educational equity remains a cornerstone of South Africa's national development agenda and democratic transformation. The post-compulsory school phase remains a critical yet under-researched area. While near-universal enrolment has been achieved at the compulsory level, participation significantly declines among youth aged 15–18. This paper examines the demographic and contextual factors that determine who stays in school and who is left behind. Drawing on nationally representative data from the General Household Survey (2002–2022), the paper employs a repeat cross-sectional design using univariate, bivariate, and multiple logistic regression analyses. The theoretical framework underpinning the paper is Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which provides a layered understanding of how individual, household, and contextual variables interact to influence educational participation. The results indicate pronounced disparities by province, gender, disability status, and household income. While some youth manage to remain in school despite systemic challenges, particularly in historically disadvantaged areas, these cases remain exceptions within a system that continues to reproduce inequality through rigid bureaucratic structures and limited support pathways. This paper argues that access to post-compulsory education reflects a broader contest between equity and systemic exclusion. Accordingly, policy responses must move beyond enrolment statistics to engage with the lived experiences of youth in this transitional phase. This paper calls for a rethinking of post-schooling policy by centering the intersecting vulnerabilities that shape who continues in education and who disengages.

Keywords: Post-compulsory education, School participation, Educational inequality, General Household Survey (GHS), Multiple logistic regression, South African youth

Abstract ID # 1325: From Chalkboards to AI Chatbots: Navigating Polycrisis in Teacher Education through ICT-Driven Pedagogical Innovations

Oluwafemi Ebiseni Ebimomi | Melanie B. Luckay | Japhet Omolere Okuntade

Since the beginning of the 21st century, teacher education programmes has undergone significant transformations influenced by the evolution of information communication technologies (ICTs) and social media. There has been a shift from the dominant use of chalkboards/whiteboards as instructional delivery platforms to a dynamic space where artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots and other technologies are deployed in classrooms, symbolizing a sharp paradigm shift in how educational content is perceived, accessed and accessed. Recent disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide challenge the roles of teachers and learners by highlighting the polycrises of technology and pedagogy, as well as the need for innovative approaches in modern education. This study employs a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews to explore how pre-service teachers could employ ICT-driven pedagogical innovations to address the challenges related to equity, access, and learner engagement in learning environments. Specifically, this study examines the roles of AI chatbots as tools that offer immediate feedback and support—limitations often faced by traditional methods—and highlights how traditional pedagogical models are often ill-equipped to manage complex learning challenges. It analyzes the implications of these innovations for curriculum design and pre-service teachers who are in-between the world of work and the university. Furthermore, it argues that for ICTs to be genuinely transformative, pre-service teachers must be well-prepared to incorporate technology into their teaching methodologies. The findings address the challenges posed by the polycrises of technology and pedagogy in teacher education by helping pre-service teachers reimagine pedagogical practices through the use of technologies such as AI chatbots in their various forms.

Keywords: Pre-service teachers, Polycrisis, Pedagogical innovation, Chatbots, Chalkboards, ICT

Abstract ID # 1153: Teacher Agency vs. Technocratic Leadership: Ethical Considerations in the Pursuit of Digital Inclusion in Education

Lineo Amelia Mphatsoane Sesoane | Loyiso C. Jita

The accelerating digitisation of education presents a critical ethical challenge: to what extent do prevailing leadership models support or constrain teachers' professional agency in shaping equitable and contextually responsive pedagogical innovation? This literature review critically explores the ethical tensions between teacher agency and technocratic leadership within increasingly digitised education systems. While teachers are expected to innovate and integrate digital tools, they often operate under leadership structures that prioritise standardisation, centralised control, and performance metrics. Drawing on literature from both the Global North and South, the review examines how these dominant leadership models, rooted in neoliberal and managerial logics, constrain teacher autonomy and reproduce digital inequalities. The paper conceptualises teacher agency as an ethical practice shaped by individual capacity, professional identity, and institutional conditions. It highlights how technocratic leadership can undermine this agency, limiting teachers' ability to respond contextually and equitably to learners' needs. Conversely, it identifies enabling conditions. The conditions include participatory leadership, collaborative cultures, and continuous professional development, as they support meaningful, teacher-led innovation. This study, which is guided by questions of ethical

responsibility in curriculum making and educational leadership, argues for a shift toward distributed and justice-oriented models of leadership. Such models must center teacher voice and professional judgment as they advocate for inclusive, digitally empowered learning environments. The paper concludes with implications for researchers, policymakers, and educators committed to ethical leadership and educational equity in the digital age.

Keywords: Teacher Agency, Leadership, Ethical Considerations, Technology, Digital Inclusion, Education

Abstract ID # 1367: More than a headline: What National Senior Certificate (NSC) assessment data really says about the quality of Mathematics attainment in South Africa between 2010 and 2022

Nicky Roberts | Tayla Stephen

Mathematics performance in South Africa continues to draw significant attention. While often labelled a “crisis”, the reality is more nuanced—in some cases, outcomes are improving, albeit off a low base. Earlier analysis (Roberts, 2017) revealed persistent inequalities by race, class, and gender, but how these patterns have shifted in the 2020s remains unclear. This paper examines the extent to which the legacy of apartheid continues to shape outcomes through race and socioeconomic status. Using national race-disaggregated Grade 12 National Senior Certificate (NSC) data on mathematics and mathematical literacy (2010–2022; $n = 7\,546\,104$) and school quintile as a proxy for socioeconomic status, we present longitudinal trends showing a growing preference for mathematical literacy and an ongoing shortage of quality passes in mathematics. Between 2010 and 2022, mathematics participation declined from 48% to 37%, with far steeper declines among Black learners (broadly defined) than among white learners. Quality pass rates (passes > 60%) fell from 5.6% to 4.7%, largely due to declines among white learners. Despite some post-2020 recovery, learners in independent and quintile 5 schools remain far more likely to participate in mathematics and achieve quality passes than those in no-fee schools. Tracking these trends enables reflection on how the education community responds to this enduring “crisis”, and where meaningful solutions—such as early intervention, conditional grants, advice on subject choice, and teacher capacity building—may lie.

Keywords: Standardised assessments, South Africa, mathematics, attainment, Longitudinal study

Abstract ID # 1247: Pedagogy of Discomfort: Teachers navigating Comprehensive Sexuality Education in the polycrisis

Caitlin Eagle | Carmelita Jacobs | Bolanle Oriola

What happens when a teacher is asked to teach content they don’t fully believe in, or feel too unsafe to deliver? What does that mean for our goals as educators in a world of deepening gendered dimensions of the polycrisis? This paper explores primary school educators’ lived experiences of teaching Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in a

Western Cape Education Department school in South Africa. Drawing on a qualitative case study within a social constructivist paradigm, the research reveals how educators navigate deep tensions between personal beliefs, social taboos, institutional expectations, and curriculum mandates. Through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and visual elicitation methods, the study highlights how discomfort, moral conflict, and selective engagement shape the enactment of CSE in the classroom. By engaging with Biesta's (2015) critique of the 'learnification' of education, the paper repositions CSE not as a set of content outcomes, but as a space of ethical and political struggle. It argues for a reimagining of professional development—not just as skill training, but as the cultivation of ethical courage and reflective practice. In the context of the polycrisis, where gender inequality and youth vulnerability intersect with institutional fragility, this paper calls for a more humanizing and countercultural approach to sexuality education in schools. In a world beset by intersecting crises—from gender-based violence to cultural fragmentation—the role of education in shaping ethical, informed, and resilient young citizens is more urgent than ever.

Keywords: Primary school educators, Comprehensive sexuality education, Qualitative research

Abstract ID # 1380: Navigating the polycrisis in higher education: The case for 'older' early career academics

Bongiwe Mayibongwe Ngcobo

Higher education institutions worldwide are grappling with a complex web of interconnected challenges, aptly described as a polycrisis. This multifaceted crisis encompasses crippling structural issues such as inequality, unemployment, climate crisis, ecological changes, poverty, digital inequity, global Trumpism, fascism, funding cuts to higher education amongst others. In this paper, we argue that one of the most hidden/ unseen/ mis-recognized academics who have experienced this growing polycrisis have been "older" early career academics and their experiences in higher education. "Older" early career academics tend to be older in the sense that they return to higher education in their 40s and 50s yet they are early career scholars in the sense that they are novice and junior academics. Often characterized by career breaks, motherhood, maternal responsibilities and employment disruptions, older early career academics are largely underfunded, undersupported and struggle with research and teaching commitments at higher education. In this paper, we make a discursive case for the real recognition of older early career academics in higher education. We suggest that policy formulations and imaginations on training, supporting and mentoring the next generation of early career academics tend to overlook these academics and silence their complex and nuanced experiences. We end the paper with a proposed framework on how older career academics can be recognized, targeted, supported, mentored and enabled to succeed in higher education despite the growing polycrisis in our lives.

Keywords: Polycrisis; higher education; older early career academics; transformation

Abstract ID # 1220: Fostering Educational Resilience in a Polycrisis Era: Innovative Methodologies through Project-Based Arduino Robotics Programming

Fadip Audu Nannim | Moeketsi Mosia | Felix Egara

Background/Context of the Study

In a time characterised by rapid technological disruption and a global need for advanced skills, educational systems face the task of equipping students to persist, adjust, and thrive in complex situations.

Research Problem

This study investigates the efficacy of a project-based learning strategy utilising Arduino robotics, referred to as the Project-Based Arduino Robot Application (PARA), as a novel method for enhancing educational engagement and achievements in undergraduate preservice teachers' robotics programming.

Research Design

The study employed a quasi-experimental methodology to investigate the effects of PARA on 74 second-year undergraduate students in Computer and Robotics Education at three different institutions.

Findings of the Study

Results indicated that students exposed to PARA surpassed those instructed with traditional Interactive PowerPoint (IPP) methods in both achievement (63.00 ± 16.81 vs. 43.79 ± 12.07) and task persistence (73.75 ± 13.46 vs. 40.00 ± 13.70). Gender-disaggregated data revealed divergent outcomes: male students achieved higher scores, whereas female students exhibited increased persistence.

Conclusion

These results highlight PARA's capacity to tackle the abstract and technical aspects of robotics programming by embedding learning in concrete, creative, and collaborative projects. This study contends that project-based robotics programming is a progressive and countercultural instructional method, addressing the ethical and cognitive requirements of education during a period of polycrisis. It enhances the ongoing discussion regarding the inventive use of educational technology to transform learners' experiences, cultivate resilience, and promote enduring engagement with complex content.

Keywords: Project-Based Learning, Arduino, Educational Technology, Task Persistence, Robotics Programming, Student Achievement

Abstract ID # 1317: Changing teaching pedagogy and creating theatre performances amidst the chaos

Verne Rowin Munsamy

The aim of this research paper is two-fold. Firstly, it seeks to identify the shift in teaching pedagogy during crisis at DUT and secondly to identify creative performance methods that fostered hope during these moments of crisis. In 2020 the world experienced the Covid 19 pandemic and people were forced to stay at and work from home for almost two years. South Africa was no exception to this pandemic. In Durban, South Africa, we also experienced the Zuma riots which caused violence in the province, with many lives lost. The teaching pedagogy of DUT had to align with these moments of crisis. The manner in which we taught live performance had to shift from contact teaching to online teaching and even those subjects like, Performance Techniques, had to be re-examined. Drama and performance is a medium that is difficult to teach online but we had to find a way to teach students and to find creative ways to make live performance that adhered to Covid 19 protocols. The paper will firstly; reflect on the online teaching that took place on Whatsapp and MS Teams and the impact this medium of teaching had on academia at DUT and secondly; the live performance that was created through the performance of *SARDINES* (Munsamy, 2022) an adaptation of a radio drama script for live performance. I

will use a qualitative method of data collection, specifically an autoethnographic method that compiles information from personal journals and video footage during this time.

Keywords: Teaching, Learning, Live Performance, Covid-19, Self-reflexive

Abstract ID # 1273: From Technicians to Thinkers: Reimagining Teacher Education through a Philosophical Pedagogy of Disruption

Clive Jimmy William Brown

Situated within a university of technology that transitioned from a former technikon, this paper explores how embedding philosophy in an initial teacher education (ITE) programme may shift student-teachers' perceptions of themselves—from passive technicians to reflective thinkers and policy shapers. The study emerges in response to the polycrisis framing of education as characterised by overlapping socio-political, economic and institutional stressors. Drawing on Brown's (2024) concept of student-teachers as "levers of change," this research interrogates how philosophy as pedagogy fosters critical reflexivity and a sense of educational purpose. The empirical data stems from a three-week face-to-face engagement with a first-year Intermediate Phase student-teacher cohort, who responded to a researcher-designed Google questionnaire. Preliminary findings highlight that student-teachers are acutely aware of the disillusioning realities of schools: excessive administrative burdens, overcrowded classrooms, scarce resources, hierarchical power imbalances, and challenging learner behaviour. These insights, while potentially disheartening, offer an opportunity to reframe these challenges through philosophical inquiry that centres meaning-making, ethical agency, and political voice. The paper argues for a shift away from policy adherence toward cultivating a collective, critically aware teacher identity—one that embraces uncertainty, reclaims professional autonomy, and contributes to democratic policy discourses in education. This reimagining of teacher education is a hopeful counter-narrative in a time of educational polycrisis.

Keywords: philosophical pedagogy, initial teacher education, policy agency, student-teachers, teacher identity, educational polycrisis

Abstract ID # 1393: Reimagining Teacher Education for Ethical Praxis in the Age of Polycrisis: Towards a Decolonial and Critically Digital Pedagogy

Hennades Tabe | Halima Namakula

The current global condition, characterised by a polycrisis marked by the convergence of environmental, political, technological, and socio-economic disruptions, poses urgent and complex challenges for teacher education. These crises are not isolated, but deeply interconnected, reflecting the consequences of accelerated neoliberal capitalism and its effects on education systems. This theoretical paper critiques the dominant technocratic, outcomes-driven models of teacher education and advocates for a reimagined framework rooted in ethical praxis, decolonial thought, and critical digital pedagogy.

The research problem centres on the inadequacy of existing teacher preparation programs to cultivate educators who can critically respond to the ethical, cultural, and epistemological complexities of the polycrisis. Drawing on Biesta's (2015) critique of the

"learnification" of education and the marginalisation of subjectification and democratic engagement, this paper engages with scholarship in critical pedagogy (Freire, 2020), decolonial theory (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; Mbembe, 2016), and postdigital education (Fawns, 2022).

The main argument is that teacher education must shift from instrumental approaches to one that foregrounds ethical becoming, critical hope, and epistemic justice. This involves preparing teachers to navigate and challenge power laden technologies, embrace pedagogical risk, and co-create counter hegemonic spaces of learning. Such an orientation envisions educators as public intellectuals capable of fostering resilience, cultural affirmation, and critical agency in their classroom environments. By synthesising insights across critical traditions, the paper offers a conceptual map for transforming teacher education into a site of resistance, creativity, and hope amidst uncertainty.

Keywords: Polycrisis, Teacher education, Critical digital pedagogy, Decoloniality, Ethical praxis

Abstract ID # 1099: Digitalising the Curriculum: Teachers Integration of Technological Resources into the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement in the Fourth Industrial Revolution era

Lindokuhle Gary Nene | Lerato Hlengiwe Sokhulu

The integration of technological resources into the curriculum is both a response to and a reflection of the broader economic, environmental, social, and technological realities shaping our world. Fostering relevant skills such as coding, data literacy, and adaptive learning and enable education about climate change while it promotes inclusivity and access to diverse perspectives. As a result, integration of technological resource has proven to develop further teaching practices by improving teacher learning and pedagogical strategies. This qualitative case study explored teachers' experiences of integrating technological resources into the curriculum in the 4IR era in South African primary schools. The interpretive paradigm was used as a worldview to provide insights on to the teachers' experiences. Eight teachers were purposively and conveniently sampled to participate in the study. Data was generated using online one-on-one semi-structured interviews and Zoom focus group discussions. The TPACK framework served as an interpretive lens for the thematic analysis the data findings. The findings suggest that teachers draw knowledge on the integration of technological resources from their personal identity (Personal integration) and the surrounding societal norms (Informal integration) and disregard policy documents (Formal integration) provided by the department of education and manuals. Drawing from the findings this study recommends that teachers should be motivated by formal integration where teachers should focus on reimagining the purpose of education to enable student centered learning, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and digital literacy.

Keywords: Curriculum, Integration, Technological resources, Primary schools

Abstract ID # 1364: Exploring Teacher's Experiences in managing anxiety and building resilience in physical science classrooms

Brighton Mudadigwa | Sakyiwaa Boateng

This study explores how physical science teachers experience and manage learner anxiety in physical science classrooms and examines the strategies they use to nurture science resilience in both learners and themselves. The study was grounded within the

self-determination theory and guided by two central questions: (1) How do physical science teachers experience and manage their learners' anxiety in physical science classrooms? (2) What strategies and support systems do physical science teachers use to build resilience, and how do these approaches impact teaching and learning outcomes? The study employed a qualitative case study design to collect data through pre and post teacher intervention workshops and semi-structured interviews with physical science teachers from diverse school contexts. The prior findings before the workshop revealed that teachers commonly experience anxiety in this subject due to the subject content being complex and their inability to prepare adequately to teach. Teachers also indicated that they have observed most of their learners experiencing anxiety in this subject. Post-intervention interviews indicated that the teachers design strategies to help their learners manage their anxiety by showing support and being empathetic in their pedagogical designs. The study recommends that more of such workshops should be conducted on a yearly basis to create awareness of learners' anxiety in physical sciences and to equip teachers with sufficient strategies to build resilience among high school learners across schools in South Africa.

Keywords: Anxiety, physical science education, resilience, learner support strategies, teaching and learning outcomes

Abstract ID # 1352: Investigating social ecosystem for skills development in aquaculture production within just transitioning of the food system and their implications for education

Phindile Sithole

Food insecurity can adversely impact children's cognitive development, health, and academic success. Therefore, ensuring food security is crucial as it necessitates providing children with access to a nutritious and diverse diet, vital for their holistic growth and well-being. This study draws on the conceptual framing of the social ecosystem for skills development and aims to investigate how the skills systems may enhance and support aquaculture for food system transformation in South Africa and Malawi. The study is consistent with calls for bold solutions to food system challenges (poverty, hunger, malnutrition, food insecurity, inequality, exclusive economy) in southern Africa (UN Secretary General, 2019; Food and Agriculture Organization, 2022), as these are everyday problems in education, particularly at primary and secondary school levels. In addition to contributing to food and economic security, the study's utilization of a critical realist analysis of "position-practice systems" illustrates how skills development, specifically aquacultural skills in this case, may yield positive impacts for learning in both formal and non-formal contexts. This is because critical realism, as a philosophy of science, likely retains either an implicit theory of learning or implications for learning theory, or both. Another important educational implication drawn from the ongoing study process is how the study incorporates diverse voices and practices of people from different contexts and backgrounds within the two countries involved, resulting in a multi-voiced context and culturally bound approach to learning and transformation.

Keywords: food security, social ecosystem, skills development, critical realism, learning theory

Abstract ID # 1192: Rethinking Assessment in a Time of Polycrisis: Exploring Graduate Attributes in a Supply Chain Management Curriculum

Nikita Reddy-Ramsunder | Prof Labby Ramrathan

In an era marked by interconnected crises, from economic instability and environmental degradation to social inequality, questions around the purpose of higher education, particularly in professional programmes, are increasingly urgent. This paper critically explores how the assessment practices within a Bachelor of Commerce in Supply Chain Management programme at a South African private higher education institution shape the development of graduate attributes in response to these global and local polycrises. Drawing on Biesta's (2015) notion of education beyond mere learnification, the study challenges dominant outcome-driven approaches and argues for a more ethically responsive and holistic vision of education. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research employs document analysis and semi-structured interviews with academic staff and the programme coordinator to interrogate the alignment between curriculum intentions, assessment design, and the cultivation of knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for ethical and adaptive engagement in the SCM sector. Preliminary findings suggest that while technical competence is prioritised, assessment practices inadequately engage students in cultivating critical thinking, adaptability, and ethical discernment, capacities essential for navigating complex professional and societal landscapes. The paper calls for a reimagining of assessment practices that move beyond performativity and offer hope-infused, context-responsive pathways for student learning. It contributes to current debates on how higher education might more meaningfully respond to the polycrisis through curricula that affirm relational ethics, creativity, and transformative professionalism.

Keywords: Assessment, Curriculum, Graduate Attributes, Polycrisis, Higher Education, Ethical Education

Abstract ID # 1343: Exploring how Preservice Teachers can Develop Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes in learners through Life Sciences Teaching

Eyitayo Julius Ajayi

The South African Life Sciences curriculum gives expression to the knowledge, skills and values worth learning in South African schools. However, against the backdrop of a polycrisis world, where disparate crises interact in such a way that the overall impact significantly exceeds the sum of all its parts, the occurrence of social ills is a major contributor to economic instability globally. The prevalence of social ills among youths has been blamed on teachers' lack of conveyance of appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes, underpinned by values, to learners. Therefore, the qualitative study embedded within the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm utilized a case study methodology. Data were derived from video recordings of microteaching activities of 120 3rd and 4th year students registered for an exit methodology course in a university in South Africa. A systematic thematic data analysis involving 5 steps and comprising a hybrid of deductive and inductive approaches was employed for data analysis. The four knowledge strands stipulated by the curriculum were projected during the microteaching activity. The skills taught resonate with those associated with the three broad subject-specific aims in the Life Sciences curriculum. Ultimately, the knowledge, attitudes and skills were underpinned by the ten fundamental values enshrined in the South African Constitution. Higher education owes it a duty to train future teachers who are capable of nurturing appropriate knowledge and skills, underpinned by values suitable of positively impacting young peoples' attitudes towards self-fulfilment, and meaningful participation in society as citizens of a free country as stipulated in the curriculum.

Keywords: Pre-service teachers, Life Sciences curriculum, Skills, Attitudes, Values, South African constitution

Abstract ID # 1178: Beyond the Classroom: Exploring Teacher-Student Supportive Relationships in a KwaZulu-Natal Correctional Centre

Ntuthuko Mathenjwa

This paper examines the central role of teacher-student supportive relationships in shaping the educational experiences of incarcerated youth registered for the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination in a KwaZulu-Natal Correctional Centre. This focus forms part of a broader qualitative study that explores how youth in custody navigate the challenges of studying while incarcerated. The study responds to the research problem of limited insight into the emotional and relational dimensions of prison education, especially how the roles assumed by educators extend beyond traditional instruction. Using a critical qualitative research design, data were generated through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with eight incarcerated learners. Findings show that educators frequently act as mentors, parental figures, and advocates, creating supportive environments that counteract the often dehumanizing nature of the correctional context. Participants consistently emphasized that teachers' emotional support, personal encouragement, and genuine care significantly contributed to their motivation, persistence, and academic engagement. These relationships offered hope, structure, and a sense of worth, enabling learners to reimagine their identities and futures. The paper posits that teacher-student relationships function not only as educational instruments but also as essential rehabilitative components within correctional education. The study advocates for prison education policies and practices to acknowledge the comprehensive, multifaceted roles of educators and to invest in their training and support to fulfill these roles effectively. Ultimately, cultivating supportive educational relationships is crucial for unlocking the transformative potential of education for incarcerated youth.

Keywords: Incarcerated youth, prison education, teacher-student relationships, educational support, rehabilitation, KwaZulu-Natal

Abstract ID # 1163: The Role of a Boundary Spanner in Curriculum and Pedagogical Transformation: Insights from a South African School-Based Student Teacher Programme

Rene` Levinge-Lang | Nadine Petersen | Sarita Ramsaroo

This study explores the role and function of a boundary spanner in the implementation of a school-based student teacher (SBST) programme within a multi-school-university partnership in South Africa. The SBST model, aligns with extended student teacher internships but differs in its approach to addressing the disconnect between university coursework and school-based practice. The study focuses on the experiences of a boundary spanner—an individual positioned between the university and partner schools—tasked with facilitating communication, coordination, and pedagogical and curriculum alignment across institutional boundaries. Using a generic qualitative design, data were collected through semi-structured and focus group interviews conducted via MS Teams. Findings highlight the boundary spanner's multifaceted role in navigating complex relationships, supporting curriculum coherence, and enhancing mentoring quality. Stakeholder reports reflect the value of the boundary spanner as a consistent point of contact, which proved critical in managing the intricacies of the partnership and ensuring a more integrated learning experience for student teachers. This research contributes to

the limited body of literature on boundary spanners in Global South contexts, offers insights into how such roles can support national efforts to improve school-university collaboration, as encapsulated in the Teacher Internship Collaboration South Africa (TICZA) project. It also provides recommendations for informing existing guidelines for the development of Professional Practice Schools in South Africa.

Keywords: university-school partnership; boundary spanner; student teacher internship; initial teacher education; theory-practice divide.

Abstract ID # 1133: Is there a future for Educational Theory in an age of AI?

Nazir Carrim

The increasing development of artificial intelligence (AI) has raised concerns about not only what the future of education in general will look like but also questions about how initial teacher education (ITE) should be structured and (re)conceptualized. Preparing future teachers has included educational theory, which is viewed as important for ITE students to develop a theoretical and deeper understanding of education systems, processes, and implications. However, what the future of educational theory will be in the future in the age of AI is not straightforward. This paper first traces the historical contestations about educational theory. Secondly, the foundationalist, disciplinary assumptions upon which educational theory is based are discussed. Thirdly, the possibilities of maintaining, refining, and further enhancing the positive and productive role that educational theory can still play in an age of AI in the future are explored. It concludes by showing that disciplinary specialisations have a role to play, but interdisciplinary collaborations will be more important for education in a future age of AI. The specific focus of the paper is to maintain the theoretical contributions that educational theory offers, to ensure that the use of AI in education is not only instrumentally used but can be defended educationally.

Keywords: Educational theory, artificial intelligence, foundationalism, disciplinary knowledge, education, future.

Abstract ID # 1254: Blended Learning in Technology Education Teacher Training: Engaging Pre-service Teachers in the Design Process

Zaynab Mobara-Links | Thuthukile Jita

Blended learning is a teaching and learning approach that has recently gained momentum. The approach has been widely implemented and studied; however, very few report on the preservice teachers' engagement in blended learning activities within practical-based courses. This study, therefore, reports on the engagement of technology education preservice teachers in a blended learning approach. Moreover, the study focuses on their engagement in the design process, a systematic process that encourages the user to develop solutions to solve problems, rectify design issues, and satisfy the needs and wants of society. A cohort of 193 preservice teachers participated in this study. These participants were purposefully selected to respond to the research question *how do preservice educators engage in the design process within a technology education course?* A qualitative research approach was adopted whereby data was collected through individual- and group-portfolio submissions. Furthermore, the community of inquiry (Col) framework was the underlying framework for this empirical study. Col is grounded in three interdependent elements: namely, teaching, cognitive and social presences. The authors explored the implementation of a suggested blended learning

approach within the three interdependent elements and reported on their findings. From the findings, a recommendation is made for a technology education blended learning model that can be implemented when focusing on the design process. A recommendation is further made for a conceptual framework model for preservice teachers' engagement in the design process within a blended learning approach.

Keywords: Blended Learning, Design Process, Preservice Teacher Training, Technology Education

Abstract ID # 1223: Attainable pedagogical practices for contexts of poverty: a South African case study

Angela Stott | Gerhard Guthrie

Decades of attempts to replace teacher-centred pedagogy (TCP) with learner-centred pedagogy (LCP) in 'developing' country classrooms have been largely unsuccessful, despite LCP being promoted internationally as 'global best practice'. In South Africa, a context marked by significant inequality, LCP reforms have struggled, particularly in schools serving poor communities, leading to a shift towards more stipulative, knowledge-transmission curricula. Amidst typically low achievement in township schools, this study investigates a notable exception: a Grade 9 Natural Sciences class where the pass rate dramatically increased from 20% in Grade 8 to 81% in Grade 9, accompanied by improved student behaviour. Addressing the problem of identifying successful pedagogy in most South African schools, this research used an ex post facto mixed methods approach, combining experimental logic with ethnographic observation and video analysis of the teacher's lessons. The study utilised Guthrie's Teaching Styles Model and Schweisfurth's LCP minimum standards to analyse the observed practices. Findings indicate the teacher's approach closely fit the Formalistic TCP style, characterised by authoritative knowledge transmission through dialogic routines and frequent closed questions, focusing on the memorisation of stipulated curriculum content. While centred on transmission, the teaching was highly engaging and respectful, built on learners' prior knowledge, and dialogic, meeting five of Schweisfurth's seven LCP standards. Strong evidence suggests these contextually appropriate TCP practices, supported by provided worksheets and skilful dialogue, significantly contributed to the achievement gains, serving as a 'proof of concept' for identifying effective local methods in poverty contexts where high-stakes exams make memorisation crucial for student progression.

Keywords: Curriculum, Pedagogy, Teacher-centred, Learner-centred, Developing countries, South Africa

Abstract ID # 1270: Traditional leadership role in learner discipline: South African perspectives

Zamokwakhe Thandinkosi Ncokwana

Managing learner discipline is a critical ingredient in the quest for effective teaching and learning and school effectiveness across different global contexts. Discipline is central to ensuring that there is effective teaching and learning in a school and a conducive climate within which learners can learn, free from harm, disruption and chaos. Across contexts, teachers complain about disciplinary challenges in schools. Though relevant legislation does not explicitly sanction traditional leadership (TL) role in learner discipline, in some rural areas they are involved. The aim of this study is to examine the role of TL in learner discipline in schools. This qualitative interpretivist study drew on a case study research

design. As a lens to examine the TL role in maintaining learner discipline, the asset-based approach was used. The study purposively selected two principals and two traditional leaders. Data generated through semi-structured interviews were deconstructed through thematic analysis. The following themes emerged: traditional leaders' (TLs) involvement in the maintenance of learner discipline in rural schools; promotion of cultural identity and heritage in communities; respect of traditional leaders among the youth of school going age; maintenance of order and discipline in communities surrounding schools; and involvement traditional leadership in conflict resolution in schools and communities. The TL role in learner discipline not being provided for in the legislative and policy framework does not deter TLs from invoking the traditional leadership authority they wield to mitigate indiscipline as this is what works in their own contexts for the benefit of their schools.

Keywords: traditional leadership, leadership, learner discipline, traditional leaders

Abstract ID # 1132: The Prevalance of Learner-Centered Approach on Learners' Outcomes in Civil Technology

Simphiwe Magnificent Msimango | Thokozani Isaac Mtshali

Learner-centred approach in Civil Technology remains a critical approach to achieve learner outcomes amidst the persistence of polycrisis such as learner overcrowding. It remains unclear how Civil Technology teachers enact this approach in the advent of overcrowding and insufficient hands-on skills learning resources. The purpose of this study is thus to explore the enactment of learner-centred approach by Civil Technology teachers during hands-on lessons. Purposive sampling was used to identify five Civil Technology teachers and one hundred and ten learners to participate in this study. Qualitative research approach and single case study design was used. Data was collected through document analysis and semi-structured interviews and data was analysed thematically. The findings revealed that Civil Technology teachers had a challenge to employ learner-centred approach and preferred group works when they are conducting practical lessons. These teachers demonstrated a dissonance cognitive into using this approach in large classes as they stated impossibility to attend each learner's need during practical lessons. In fact, the practical lessons (simulations) had been structured such that learners should always work in groups. As a result, this hindered on the promotion of learner-centred approach in a Civil Technology classroom. Therefore, this study recommended that since teachers have autonomy to design their own practical lessons, they should consider structuring simulations that can be done individually in order to create learner's centredness. This is in-line with the Civil Technology Practical Assessment Task policy which stresses the need for skilling learners individually and in groups to achieve satisfactory learner outcomes.

Keywords: Learner-centered approach, Civil Technology, Technology and Vocational Education, learning out-comes, Practical skills

Abstract ID # 1286: Slow pathways towards hope, creativity and affirmative ethics in Design Educational Practice

Nike Romano | Amanda Morris

This case study analyses a pedagogical intervention in which Masters of Design students and lecturers explore collaborative and innovative ways of decolonizing a text entitled "What Is at Stake with Decolonizing Design? A Roundtable". Embracing a variety of modes of engagement with the text, that include reading aloud, reflexive free writing and

art-making, the paper offers a compelling case for how design education can cultivate ethical, creative, and hopeful responses in a time of polycrisis. The presentation will show how students' multi-modal forms of expression troubled hegemonic western cultural effects that permeate learning and teaching discourse and practice. Furthermore, by resisting the dominant neoliberal higher educational culture that valorises speed and outputs, the collaborative practice of Slow reading provided an opportunity for in depth critical engagement. Students grappled with the nuanced complexities and response-abilities that young designers have shaping the world. The iterative reenactment of Schultz et al's "Roundtable" thickened understandings about decolonising design, as students uncovered how this seminal text neglects design practice in Africa. In addition to identifying this gap in the literature, the multimodal collaborative engagement transgressed the western academic canon that tends to prioritise the individual rather than the collective. Students' sharing of their lived experiences in relation to the text opened up a generative space for pushing thought beyond how they know the world and provided insights into how educational spaces can be activated differently.

Keywords: Decolonising design, arts-based pedagogies, Slow scholarship, affirmative ethics, Multimodality

Abstract ID # 1090: The Role of Digital Technologies in Empowering Women Leaders in Rural Schools: Constraints and Opportunities

Buhle Stella Nhlumayo

Studies indicate that women in rural educational leadership often navigate multiple layers of disadvantage, including geographic isolation, limited access to professional development, socio-cultural biases, and infrastructural deficiencies. With the growing penetration of digital tools in education, such as virtual leadership training programs, e-governance platforms, mobile-based communication systems, and digital resource hubs, there is an emerging potential to bridge existing gender and geographic disparities in school leadership. Using a phenomenological narrative inquiry, this qualitative paper generated data through narrative interviews with three women school leaders in KwaZulu-Natal. The findings explored the lived experiences of the women school leaders engaging with digital platforms for decision-making, instructional supervision, and community engagement. The findings highlight both the empowering potential and the systemic limitations of digital technologies, including issues of digital literacy, infrastructural reliability, policy support, and cultural resistance. This paper contributes to the discourse on gender equity in education, offering actionable insights for policymakers, development agencies, and educational institutions seeking to leverage technology for inclusive and transformative leadership in rural education systems. <!--StartFragment -->The paper recommends digital capacity building for women in school leadership to address the specific digital and leadership needs of women in rural schools. Furthermore, it proposes establishing digital mentorship programs and professional communities to alleviate the professional isolation experienced by women in rural school leadership roles. National and local education authorities are also encouraged to integrate gender inclusion into digital education and leadership policies.

Keywords: digital literacy; digital technologies; narrative inquiry; rural school leadership; women leadership

Abstract ID # 1224: Augmenting pre-service teachers' technological content knowledge through Computational Thinking integration in science methods

Computational thinking (CT) integration in education emerges as a fundamental component, especially for preparing science pre-service teachers. Literature suggests that integrating CT through CT-plugged-in strategies, such as computational models and simulations, plays a critical role in preparing pre-service teachers to thrive in modern science classrooms. However, relatively little is known about integrating CT through plugged-in strategies in science teacher education in the South African context to foster technological content knowledge (TCK) among pre-service teachers. Employing the technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) framework as the lens, this study examines the influence of integrating computational thinking in the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Physical Sciences methods course through a CT-plugged-in strategy on pre-service teachers' technological content knowledge. This study adopted a qualitative case study research design to generate data from six pre-service teachers enrolled in the PGCE Physical Sciences Teaching Methods course. Data were generated through observations, participants' artefacts, and interviews. The empirical findings reveal that pre-service teachers, supported by computational models and simulations such as MiLab App and Physics Education Technology (PhET) simulations, advanced their knowledge and skills in using technology to design and explore scientific concepts in Physical Sciences. Thus, integrating CT in science methods through a CT-plugged-in strategy augmented Physical Sciences pre-service teachers' development of technological content knowledge. Therefore, this paper advances the literature on the intersection of integrating CT in science methods courses through a CT-plugged-in strategy and pre-service teachers' technological content knowledge.

Keywords: computational thinking, computational models and simulations, pre-service teachers, technological content knowledge, Physical Sciences methods, plugged-in strategy

Abstract ID # 1076: Teaching code in (un)equal contexts: Computational thinking and the reality of township schools

Mashite Tshidi

Computational thinking is essential for problem-solving in the digital age, yet disparities in resources, infrastructure, and teacher training create unequal learning experiences in programming education. These challenges are most evident in township schools, where teachers must foster computational thinking despite limited access to digital tools and resources. Addressing misconceptions and cognitive overload is central to this process, as flawed mental models can hinder learners' ability to grasp programming concepts. Given the high failure and dropout rates associated with introductory programming, there is a pressing need to understand how teachers adapt their instructional practices to support learners in these under-resourced environments. Grounded in mental model theory, this study investigates how teachers influence learners' conceptual understanding of programming despite pedagogical and infrastructural constraints. Using a qualitative case study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with township school teachers, and thematic analysis identified four key instructional strategies. Teachers employ stepwise algorithmic thinking to support problem decomposition, use real-world examples to bridge abstract concepts, incorporate peer-assisted learning to accommodate varied learning paces and engage in hands-on activities to address prior knowledge gaps. These findings underscore the role of teachers in overcoming learning barriers and promoting computational thinking in under-resourced contexts.

Keywords: Computational thinking, Instructional practices, Mental models, Programming education, Teacher pedagogy, Township schools, Unequal

Abstract ID # 1168: Rethinking Ethics Collision Beyond Compliance to Affirmative Praxis

Siyanda Manqele | Clement Simuja

In the face of a polycrisis, our ethical orientation as educational researchers, academics, teachers, students, and curriculum makers demands critical examination. The dominant ethics discourse in higher education in South Africa promotes practices that prioritize bureaucratic compliance over societal ethical engagement. In our study, we argue that ethics in HE in South Africa have become unethical, serving institutional interests rather than the societies they purport to serve. This presentation presents research findings from a case study of one university in the Eastern Cape Province. The study adopted a qualitative research approach and used in-depth interviews and one focus group discussion to collect the data. Fourteen participants were purposively selected and it included supervisors of postgraduate students' research. The study adopted thematic analysis to draw the themes while Gee (2005) 'Discourse collision' was adopted as a theoretical framework. The findings from this study reveal that the current HE ethical practices enforce erasure of participants' identities, prioritization of procedural compliance and maintaining the interests of external bodies. These findings demonstrate that the HE ethical Discourse is in collision with the realities of conducting research in societies in South Africa. The study recommends an educational approach to research ethics, one that infuses ethics into teaching and research praxis and a hopeful approach to knowledge production, one that prioritizes collaboration, participation, and social responsibility.

Keywords: Research ethics, educational research, affirmative ethics, polycrisis, higher education

Abstract ID # 1109: Empowering Mathematics Teachers through Digital Pedagogy and Sustainability: A Pathway of Hope in a Time of Polycrisis

Jayaluxmi Naidoo

In the era of polycrisis, marked by climate change, digital transformation, and social inequities, mathematics teacher education needs to transform to meet social and educational needs. This study explores how a mathematics education module can prepare in-service mathematics teachers to incorporate sustainability themes and digital pedagogies in their classrooms. Conducted at one teacher education institution in KwaZulu-Natal, the study examined the integration of digital pedagogy and sustainability themes to promote socially receptive mathematics pedagogy. Framed by the transformative learning theory, the study adopted a qualitative case study methodology. Thirty-two in-service mathematics teachers enrolled as B.Ed. Honours students participated. Data were generated using reflective journals, individual and focus group interviews. The interviews focused on whether or not participants incorporated sustainability themes and digital pedagogy when teaching. The reflective journals were analysed, focussing on how, when and why the participants included sustainability themes and digital pedagogy. Incorporating sustainability themes or digital pedagogy by the participants was self-initiated. Data were analysed using thematic mapping and a transformative learning trajectory table. Findings revealed that including sustainability themes within mathematics teaching nurtured increased teacher agency, ethical

awareness and a change in their professional identities. In addition, the use of digital pedagogy assisted in making the sustainability themes easier to incorporate into lessons. This study contributes to teacher education discussions by offering an agenda for preparing mathematics teachers who are digitally literate and socially conscious. By focusing on digital pedagogy and sustainability themes, mathematics teacher education becomes a transformative force for advancing future-ready educational environments.

Keywords: Digital Pedagogy, Mathematics Teacher Education, Professional Identity, Sustainability, Transformative Learning

Abstract #: 1305

Applying Universal Design for Learning to Address Mathematics Failure in Foundation Phase

Wellington Hokonya

Foundation Phase mathematics education in South Africa remains a critical focus area for addressing persistent learning disparities and fostering long-term academic success. Despite policy commitments to inclusive, high-quality education, national assessments continue to reflect significant gaps in learner performance and engagement, particularly among those from diverse linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds. This paper explores the potential of Universal Design for Learning as a transformative framework to actualize Inclusive Education principles within Foundation Phase mathematics instruction. Grounded in the Universal Design for Learning principles of multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression, the discussion highlights how culturally relevant artefacts such as beadwork, basket weaving, and multilingual resources can enhance learner comprehension and participation. Drawing on national policies (e.g., Education White Paper 6), Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, and current research, the paper illustrates how Universal Design for Learning aligned strategies, including collaborative learning in after-school mathematics clubs, provide meaningful scaffolding and motivation in early mathematics learning. These strategies not only respond to learners' diverse needs but also reframe diversity as an asset, promoting equity, agency, and deeper conceptual understanding. The paper demonstrates how integrating Universal Design for Learning into Foundation Phase classrooms aligns with the national call to strengthen early mathematics education and provides practical tools for teachers to navigate inclusive pedagogy. Ultimately, Universal Design for Learning is positioned not simply as a method of instruction, but as a coherent, context-sensitive approach to disrupting systemic barriers and building inclusive, empowering mathematics learning environments for all Foundation Phase learners.

Keywords: Universal Design for Learning, Inclusive Education, Foundation Phase, Mathematics, Cultural Relevance, Learner Diversity

Abstract ID # 1184: Exploring TVET College Preparedness for Evolving Industry Demands: A systematic review

Zime Ngcobo

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges are struggling to adequately prepare students for a "polycrisis" world and the demands of rapidly evolving industries. This shortfall contributes to significant societal issues, including high unemployment, economic decline, and increased crime, largely due to graduates lacking relevant skills and knowledge for the job market (Mseleku, 2022). This ongoing "polycrisis"

is intensified by a core misalignment between TVET programs and industry needs. This study conducted a systematic literature review (2019-2025) to investigate the readiness of TVET college programs to facilitate students' successful entry into various industries. The central research question was: To what extent are TVET Colleges prepared for evolving industry demands? The review focused on two key themes: industry demands and the knowledge and skills offered by TVET colleges, analyzing their interplay with student preparedness. Literature selection prioritized relevance, publication date, applicability to the South African context, and empirical first-hand data. Findings indicate that TVET colleges are struggling to keep pace with rapid industrialisation driven by automation and digitalization. Their current practical and vocational training often falls short of workplace expectations due to outdated content and resources (Jacqueline & Jonas, 2021). Furthermore, the Department of Higher Education and Training's (DHET) inadequate support in providing updated resources and professional development, particularly in ICT integration, has resulted in a widespread mismatch with industry-expected skills (Mahlangu & Mtshali, 2024). Aligning TVET programs with industry transformations is paramount. The study concludes that effectively preparing students for future industry demands requires implementing modern teaching methods, integrating digital technology, and fundamentally restructuring curricula to incorporate new, relevant skills and knowledge (Allias, et al., 2021).

Keywords: TVET training, Workforce readiness, Industry integration, Societal "polycrisis", Student preparedness

Abstract ID # 1375: Assessment practices in higher learning institutions, lived experiences of visually impaired learners

Peles L. Biswalo | Selloane Pitikoe | Cosmas Maphosa

Assessment practices for visually impaired learners (VILs) in higher education require careful consideration to ensure equitable educational opportunities. This study's objective was to determine how VILs are assessed in assignments, tests, and examinations in two higher learning institutions in Eswatini; exploring methods and techniques used by lecturers and examining the lived experiences of VILs during assessment processes. A qualitative design was employed with purposive sampling of 12 participants comprising 4 lecturers, 6 VILs, and 2 support staff. Data were collected through interviews exploring assessment methods, techniques, and challenges faced by educators and students. The study revealed that VILs receive similar assessments to sighted peers with necessary adaptations including Braille versions of tests and examinations. Challenges identified included noise disruption from Braille devices in inclusive classrooms, inaccessible feedback mechanisms preventing students from understanding their performance. Participants emphasized the importance of flexible assessment methods, and verbal feedback for blind learners. The study concluded that, while institutions demonstrate commitment to inclusive assessment through Braille adaptations and time accommodations, significant barriers remain in feedback accessibility and technology integration. The study recommends implementing accessible digital platforms for feedback delivery, developing inclusive intelligent learning management systems, and establishing systematic approaches to assessment adaptation that maintain academic rigor while ensuring equity for VILs.

Keywords: Adaptive testing, alternative evaluation, flexible assessment, verbal feedback

Abstract ID # 1202: Ubuntu and Ethics of Care as Research Paradigms

Judith Reynolds

Research undertaken in education takes place against a background of crises not just in education but in politics, economics and the climate. In this time of polycrisis, it becomes even more important not to replicate, on a small scale, the kinds of inequalities, harm and violence that are playing out on the world stage. Drawing on relationality in research is one way that educational researchers can approach this in a carefully self-reflexive manner. This paper undertakes a comparative analysis of Ubuntu and the Ethics of Care as variations of a relational research paradigm. Ubuntu is an African concept. Ethics of Care arose out of feminist perspectives on moral development. The paper highlights how these frameworks can foster ethical research practices grounded in care, generosity, and interconnectedness. This is the shared axiology of Ubuntu and Ethics of Care. In terms of ontology, both perspectives view people as embedded in webs of relationships, though in Ubuntu this includes relationships with ancestors and brings a spiritual dimension into consideration. Both Ubuntu and Ethics of care understand knowledge as shared, communal and situated, and recognise that people may come to know things in ways that are not only cognitive or rational. Again, Ubuntu brings in a recognition that people may come to know things through dreams and their ancestors. Both perspectives values knowledge that benefits the community, however community is understood. In a time of polycrisis, relational research orientations are not just beneficial but necessary if researchers and research participants are to find pathways to hope and humanity.

Keywords: Ubuntu, Ethics of Care, Research Ethics, Research Paradigms

Abstract ID # 1213: Role-Play and Narrative Empathy in English Literature Lecture Rooms: A creative approach to Social and Emotional Learning in Higher Education
Derosha Moodley

With multiple crises shaping the psychological state of people, this paper argues that the study of literature can teach students intrapersonal and interpersonal skills to use at work, home and in life. Underpinned by the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) model, the study used role-play and narrative empathy activities in the English literature lecture room to build the SEL competencies. This paper thus answers the question, how does role-play and narrative empathy engage SEL when participants study English literature? A qualitative approach was used to honour the emotional complexities of the participants' responses. The action research design resulted in five action research cycles but this paper explores the generic premise of teaching English literature for the purpose of producing social and emotional learning outcomes. Each cycle produced data from observation and field notes, research diaries, writing tasks and autophotography. The findings showed that when the participants recognised that the emotional outbursts, unpleasant relationships, or impulsive behaviour of the characters they were studying led to unfortunate circumstances, they understood that this was due to a lack of social understanding or a deficiency in intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. The teaching of such skills, which SEL produces, highlights the importance of having social and emotional management strategies.

Keywords: Social and Emotional Learning (SEL); English Literature studies; Role-play; Narrative empathy; Emotional intelligence (EI)

Abstract ID # 1222: Risk Management in Addressing the Duty of Care in Mechanical Technology Workshops

In the South African public education context, the safety of learners in Mechanical Technology workshops remains a pressing issue. Safety management in these workshops must align with the Occupational Health and Safety Act (85 of 1993) and involves the legal duty of the teacher and the expected standard according to which they must exercise their duty of care to ensure a safe workshop environment. This article shares the findings that emerged from mixed-methods research in public schools in South Africa that offer Mechanical Technology as a subject. The aim of the study was to explore to what extent policy on safety management in Mechanical Technology workshops was applied. The findings revealed that only a few schools had safety policies in place for Mechanical Technology workshops and that existing policies were inadequate to ensure the safety of teachers and learners in these workshops. It is recommended that school governing bodies comply with their legal obligation to draft a safety policy for school workshops to limit risks and injuries to learners. Such a safety policy is the primary instrument to ensure that the department, teacher, or school is not held legally liable for damages. Moreover, ensuring the safety of learners in workshops is not only a legal requirement but also a vital part of ethical and responsible education. In a time marked by overlapping challenges in schools, strengthening accountability and care in Mechanical Technology workshops is a practical and hopeful step towards a safer, more supportive education system.

Keywords: Mechanical Technology workshop, safety policy, secure school environment, risk management, duty of care

Abstract ID # 1257: Teaching Against the Clock: Temporal Tensions, AI, and Ethics in Teacher Education

Delecia Davids

The growing presence of generative AI in education introduces new pressures around time that unsettle established ways of teaching, learning, and ethical decision-making in teacher education. This paper explores how preservice teachers in South Africa engage with the ethical and pedagogical tensions that AI brings into their learning journeys and professional development. Drawing on Barnett's notion of *a will to learn*, the paper reflects on the contradictions between the uncertainty, struggle, and becoming that underpin deep pedagogical learning, and AI's predictive logic that promises speed, efficiency, and ready-made solutions, from lesson plans to assessments. Adopting a sociomaterial lens on digital agency, the paper draws on data from a 10-month, multi-site, multimodal ethnographic study involving preservice teachers navigating AI in lesson planning, assessment, and classroom practice. Fieldwork included classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and multimodal journals. The findings show that while AI often eases workload and time-related stress, it also produces temporal tensions, moments when ethical reflection, agency, and deeper pedagogical thought are short-circuited by the drive for immediacy. By centring time as a contested and relational element within teacher education assemblages, this paper rethinks the role of time in learning, ethics, and becoming a teacher. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing conversations about the role of AI in teacher education and proposes contextually responsive strategies for working with AI tools without losing the educational value of struggle and uncertainty. Rather than framing AI as either a shortcut to competence or a threat to authenticity, this study calls for a more nuanced understanding of how teacher educators can support future teachers in sustaining a will to learn and in learning to teach with integrity in a fast-changing, digitally mediated world.

Keywords: Digital Agency, AI and Ethics, Teacherly Becoming, Multimodal Ethnography, Assemblages

Abstract ID # 1394: From Information to Ideology: Exploring the Impact of Digital Literacy and ICT on Educational Transformation

Millicent Motheogane | Fatima Makda

The use of Digital Literacy and Information Communication Technology (ICT) in higher education has profoundly altered teaching, learning, and knowledge dissemination. Digital Literacy in this context denotes the skills required for students, instructors, and institutions to proficiently explore, assess, and utilise digital technologies and platforms for academic objectives. However, while these technologies offer substantial opportunities for enhancing educational practices, their implementation has raised concerns regarding digital divides and the challenges of ideological polarization in online learning environments. This article analyses the impact of Digital Literacy and ICT on ideological transformation in higher education, emphasising their influence on students' critical thinking, cultural understanding, and general knowledge across a variety of disciplines. By enabling broader access to diverse perspectives and information, digital technologies can challenge and reshape established ideologies, promoting intellectual growth and academic discourse as a result, use education to improve the nation's economic, social, and cultural well-being. The research examines the problems associated with digital divides, and the possibility for ideological polarisation in online learning environments. This study utilised a mixed-method research strategy, incorporating both closed and open-ended questionnaires and document review. The data was gathered from three South African higher educational institutions and analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. In conclusion, although ICT and Digital Literacy can facilitate beneficial ideological changes in higher education, this necessitates deliberate methods to address the issues they pose, thereby assuring a balance, equitable and inclusive educational experience for all students. Additionally, there is a need for students, instructors, and institutions to develop essential skills in Digital Literacy to critically engage with digital content and foster informed ideological transformations.

Keywords: Higher Education Institutions, Community of Inquiry, Digital Literacy, Information Communication Technology

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