

# ēducātiō

Faculty of Education



Stellenbosch  
UNIVERSITY  
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sonke siya phambili  
saam vorentoe

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# ēducātiō

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## FROM THE EDITOR



We are at the beginning of a year full of potential, possibilities and challenges. Looking back, 2023 tells us of many milestones reached, progress made and personal goals achieved.

May 2024 build on the success of the past and be a year in which the Faculty of Education's influence extends wider and makes an even greater impact.

Contact me with news events at:  
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This edition is available in English and Afrikaans on the Faculty of Education's website.

**Elbie Els**

*Marketing & Communication Coordinator*





# FOREWORD

## Vice Dean: Teaching and Learning

It's time again to take stock of the year that flew by. There were, of course, many challenges. Here I think of 2023 that kicked off with unexpectedly large numbers of first-years.

Staff had to adapt and even change their plans and teaching methods almost overnight. But a few workshops and seminars later, and we were through it.

The successes and highlights were no fewer, as you will find out in this issue. This issue boasts interviews with alumni who have excelled in their field. In the field of sport, Nicola Smith talks about her life as a Protea netball player, while Dillon Henwood, who has already made his mark as a teacher, informs us of his National Teachers' Award. Two young lecturers, Delecia Davids and Dr Elzahn

Rinquest, share with us a new assessment method and a visit to Norway, respectively.

You can also read about staff who published books. Very special is articles on five staff members who retired at the end of 2023. We also announce the students' choice for Lecturer of the Year as well as the new Education Student Committee (ESC). Photos of the fourth-year dance and students during their practical education are shared. The success stories of fourth-years who share their experience over the past four years should interest readers.

Everything considered, this is an exciting edition that will be well worth the read. Happy reading!

**Prof Michael le Cordeur**



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# Message from the Dean



PHOTO: Stefan Els



As we start the new year, it is with great pleasure that I extend my heartfelt appreciation to each one of you for your unwavering commitment and hard work that has defined the success of our faculty in the last academic year. Our collective efforts have propelled our faculty to new heights, marking a successful and transformative period in our academic journey.

The highlight of last year has undoubtedly been our remarkable ascent in the global standing of education, as reflected in the 2023/2024 Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings by Subject. Our faculty has surged ahead by an impressive 50 places, solidifying our position among the top 200 faculties of Education globally. This accomplishment resonates with our shared vision of becoming a leading research-intensive institution recognized for excellence, innovation, and inclusivity.

Your dedication and hard work have not only contributed to our global standing but have also been instrumental in successfully completing our first faculty review since 2012. The approval of the final reports by all relevant structures, including the Senate, and the high commendation received from the Quality Committee underscore the diligence and commitment demonstrated by our faculty members. We eagerly anticipate the implementation of the improvement plans over the next two years.

Despite the challenges faced in teaching, particularly due to high enrolments, I am pleased to report that our student throughputs remain high. Over 500 undergraduate students, about 70 honours, 20 masters and 9 PhDs graduated at the end of 2023. Special congratulations to Prof Le Grange, who has played a pivotal role in guiding five PhD candidates to successful completion.

In the realm of research, our faculty has maintained a robust output, fostering research capacity and international collaboration.

We continued to improve our faculty infrastructure. The renovation of our 5th Floor meeting space is nearing completion, enhancing the overall environment for collaborative work. Our commitment to technological advancement is evident in the upgraded ICT infrastructure, state-of-the-art technologies in the Ed Psych Hub, and improved Wi-Fi capabilities throughout the building. Plans are underway to transform our Library into an ICT Education Hub.

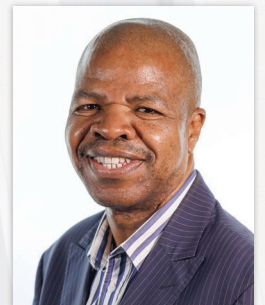
Financially, our faculty remains robust, with a significant increase of our budget allocation, bucking the trend seen in other faculties facing budget cuts. This financial strength enables us to sustain our operations and meet our salaries obligation including the proposed four percent salary increase.

I am delighted to announce several well-deserved promotions and appointments within our faculty, recognizing the outstanding contributions of individuals such as Dr Moen who was promoted to associate professor level and Drs Jacobs and Tshuma who have been promoted to senior lecturer level. Congratulations to all of them for their achievements.

We also bid farewell to the following colleagues at the end of last year: Prof Yusef Waghid, Prof Doria Daniels, Prof Faaiz Gierdien, Mrs Sally le Roux and Mrs Jeannie Saffier.

Lastly, I would like to extend my gratitude to my Vice Deans, Faculty Manager, and Department Chairs for their hard work and support to me throughout the year.

**Prof Mbulungeni Madiba**





# Proud graduates celebrate

More than 500 education students graduated on 15 Desember 2023.

This includes Bachelor of Education (BEd), honours, masters, Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) students. Graduates and guests celebrated together at the Alumni Clubhouse (*Die Stal*) after the graduation ceremony.

*PHOTOS: Stefan Els*









# First students of the Advanced Diploma in School Leadership and Management graduated



The first group of AD SLM students graduated in December 2023. In front (second from left) is Dr Pauline Hanekom (Administrative Coordinator SUNCEP), Prof Mbulungeni Madiba (Dean) and Dr Jennifer Feldman (Course Coordinator, Department Education Policy Studies) with some of the students.

PHOTO: Stefan Els

## The first 50 students of the Advanced Diploma in School Leadership and Management (AD SLM) graduated in December 2023.

The new AD SLM qualification aims to empower school leaders to develop the skills, knowledge and values needed to lead and manage schools as complex learning organisations in a time of diverse changes, challenges and opportunities in order to effectively contribute to improving the implementation of quality learning and teaching in schools. The programme is targeted

at school management team members who have management experience and are practicing or aspirant school principals.

The programme follows a practice-based philosophy of teaching and learning to bridge the gap between theory and practice and is offered part time over two years (both online and face-to-face).





**In what ways has the course contributed to your personal and professional growth?**

This course was an eye-opener in terms of understanding and implementing policies. It made clear the importance of knowing

the background of the policies that we have in our schools. I learned that no policy should be in contradiction of the supreme law of the country (the Constitution) and that all other legislation is derived from and based on the Constitution. For instance, the Labour Relations Act (LRA) gives effect to the right to fair labour practice.

I never thought that the LRA was important to education. I have been treating these acts in isolation, but the Advanced Diploma in School Leadership and Management (AD SLM) taught me that they are interlinked and for a school to be functional, it needs a leader who is able to apply these laws and ensure that they are implemented. The policies that should be implemented at schools are derived from the national policies and are then tailored into school policies, which are also tailored to become grade/phase/subject policies.

This course has helped me understand that knowledge of the policies enables one to deal with any situation and to guide the school management team (SMT), school governing body (SGB) and the whole school. One can deal with finances and apply the legislation to ensure that the correct procedures are followed when dealing with school finances and one is also in a position to guide the SGB and the finance committee. It has also helped me to understand the concept 'in loco parentis' and I am now able to explain its meaning and the consequences of neglect to my colleagues.

The lecturer gave us an example of a swimming coach who did not take all the precautionary safety measures before going to the place of coaching. He did not have a list of the learners attending the coaching session; he did not have an educator accompanying the learners and the parents were not informed in advance. One of the learners accidentally drowned and the coach did not notice this even after one of the other learners informed him that one of the learners was missing. He ignored this until the parents of the missing learner started following up on his whereabouts. It was only then that he started to realise the importance of an attendance register. This made me realise that some of the things we regard as just a burden are, in actual fact, necessary.

**"The AD SLM course has taught me the skills to lead and inspire colleagues to achieve their best."**

The AD SLM course has taught me the skills to lead and inspire colleagues to achieve their best. These skills have proven to be the driving force behind the values embedded in leading a functional school.

**What are the most significant insights or developments you have experienced?**

The community of practice (CoP) project taught me how to plan a project, how to form a project leadership team and how to ensure that the project is sustainable. At first, I thought I would never be able to start a project from scratch and run it with the assistance of the committee members and end up yielding good results. However, I was able to initiate a project for rainwater harvesting and secured funding from donors for the supply and fitment of water tanks. This project was, at first, aimed at reducing the amount paid for municipal water usage by harvesting rainwater and utilising it for flushing toilets.

We experienced good rains and could expand the project to also start a vegetable garden, which helped to provide fresh vegetables to the kitchen. This meant that learners were able to benefit from this project academically and nutrition-wise. They were taught to calculate the amount of water used to water a specific area of the garden given the rate of water dripping per minute and also to calculate plant population. This gave them the opportunity to practice mathematical skills not only in class, but also in practical situations.

The second project that I initiated was "Reading for meaning", which involved our learners in the leadership of the school and thus gave them skills by improving their vocabulary and understanding. It also taught me the skill of delegation, which I was not good at.

I am now confident enough to start a project and know how to set the goals, implement the plans and ensure that they are monitored and evaluated. I am confident enough to take risks and to make changes along the way where necessary.

**What expectations did you have of the AD SLM course and how did they match your experiences?**

At first, I thought this course was just to increase my academic knowledge. I realised that it is far

more than that and includes many other aspects of leadership and management that I never thought formed part of school leadership and management. I never thought, for example, that data handling and collection form part of the school leadership and management. I learned that data collection, analysis and handling are key to improving learning by learners and the level of service delivery by the educators. I am grateful for the encouragement of the presenters.

### Ronald Presher



**In what ways has the course contributed to your personal and professional growth?**

Embarking on the journey of the Advanced Diploma in School Leadership and Management (AD SLM) has been a transformative experience, both personally and professionally.

The course has significantly contributed to my growth in various aspects and provided invaluable insights that have reshaped my approach to leadership in the educational context.

### **What are the most significant insights or developments you have experienced?**

One of the most impactful contributions of the course has been its emphasis on strategic leadership. I gained a comprehensive understanding of organisational dynamics and learned how to formulate and implement effective strategies. This knowledge has not only enhanced my decision-making skills but has also equipped me to lead with a long-term vision, considering the dynamic challenges in the field of education and the changes that need to be adapted to.

The course exceeded my expectations by offering a diverse curriculum that covered not only theoretical aspects but also practical applications of leadership and management principles in co- and extra-curricular activities.

Engaging with real-world case studies allowed me to bridge the gap between theory and practice, and prepared me for the complexities of educational leadership in the various contexts of our diverse country. The emphasis on collaborative learning and the implementation of group projects in some modules provided an opportunity to exchange ideas with peers, which fostered a rich learning environment.

“Engaging with real-world case studies allowed me to bridge the gap between theory and practice, and prepared me for the complexities of educational leadership in the various contexts of our diverse country.”

The practical application of the knowledge and skills acquired through the Workplace Project has been evident in my day-to-day professional life. For instance, I have successfully implemented change management strategies in my school, specifically pertaining to the moderation process, which resulted in improved efficiency and a positive organisational culture.

The course's focus on communication and interpersonal skills has enhanced my ability to foster a cohesive team and effectively communicate with stakeholders, including learners, parents and fellow educators.

Looking ahead, I foresee applying the principles of leadership and management not only in my current role but also in future academic and professional endeavours. The strategic planning skills acquired will be crucial as I aspire to take on higher leadership roles within the education sector. Additionally, the course has instilled in me a 'continuous learning' mindset and encouraged me to stay abreast of emerging trends and innovations in education leadership.

### **What expectations did you have of the AD SLM course and how did they match your experiences?**

Overall, the course has been instrumental in my personal and professional development. It has not only met but exceeded my expectations, and provided a robust foundation for leadership and management in the dynamic and challenging field of education.

The knowledge and skills acquired will undoubtedly serve as a guiding force in shaping my future contributions to the academic and professional realms.



## Silokazana Mpahlwa

**In what ways has this course contributed to your personal and professional growth, and what are the most significant insights or developments you have experienced?**

I am glad that the school emails convinced me to embark on the course. I felt that I was stagnating in my position as a school manager and wanted to experience some growth and development. The course proved to be a valuable experience that boosted my morale and provided me with a fresh perspective on the different spheres of teaching and learning, leadership and management, and educational policies and systems.

The lecturers were knowledgeable and provided deep insights into the course material. We also had the opportunity to engage with professional visitors and other professional school managers, which helped me gain valuable knowledge and skills. The course has led to a significant shift in the way I perform as a leader at my school. Overall, I am grateful for the experience and the opportunity to learn and grow.

The first step was to understand who I am as a person and how I can uphold ethical values in everything I do. The course helped me to understand my school culture and the community I work for. By understanding my school context, I was able to compare how we do things to other schools and gain a better perspective on how to deal with the challenges we face as a school negatively impacted by the apartheid legacy. As a school manager, I realised that despite the realities and complexities we face, we need to bring change that will benefit learners, staff and the community. I apply, with confidence, the knowledge of policies, educational processes and systems gained to our management, curriculum and assessment collaborations with stakeholders, whether formal or informal. I am also much better at decision making and problem solving than before the course.

**What expectations did you have of the AD SLM course and how do they match your experiences?**

I gained much more than I had expected through the course. While I had anticipated learning about leadership and management, teaching and learning skills, and other useful information about school operations, what I actually gained was a deeper understanding of myself as a school manager and teacher. The course provided me with a comprehensive understanding of educational systems and processes, including different leadership styles, South African educational legislation, and concepts such as decolonisation, 'hidden' curriculum, and LGBTQI issues. Some of these concepts were familiar to me, but the course helped me to understand them more deeply and apply them more effectively.

I found that group discussions during the course helped me to expand my network and gain valuable information. In all modules, we reflected on our progress and implemented improvements to ensure excellence in all areas of our school and that is what I will emphasise we do most often.

Additionally, the course required me to do more studying, research and reading, and to apply that knowledge to assessments, which broadened my understanding. The course also helped to reinvigorate me by requiring me to demonstrate my understanding and application of knowledge – something that I had long forgotten.

"Through the course, I have acquired a diverse set of skills and knowledge that I have successfully applied in various school scenarios."

**How have you applied the knowledge and skills acquired in this course to practical situations, and in what ways do you foresee using them in your future academic or professional endeavours?**

Through the course, I have acquired a diverse set of skills and knowledge that I have successfully applied in various school scenarios. Currently, we are in the final term and are planning for the upcoming year. We are doing strategic planning to ensure that we are well-prepared and have taken into account our SWOT analysis. In everything we do, I make sure we all work together to bring better ideas and empower one another.

The communication skills gained helped me to be able to use the tools and techniques I learned to build positive relationships, resolve conflicts, and ensure clear and consistent communication with everyone. I approach any necessary changes with caution, offer advice and take small steps to avoid overwhelming others. I understand that implementing changes to curricula, policies, systems and processes must be done gradually to ensure a smooth transition. I plan to utilise the knowledge and skills I have acquired to the best of my ability and keep myself updated on the latest trends and developments in education. My goal is to remain competent and knowledgeable as a school professional and manager.

Juggling coursework, school work, and personal and family life has been a challenging task that I have had to learn to balance. However, it has been a rewarding journey for me and I have embraced the phrase 'I CAN' as my personal mantra.

## SciMathUS plays a critical role in Fisher-Smith's academic success

When Nadia Fisher-Smith's two sons Daniel and Matthew heard she was going to receive the title of "doctor" at Stellenbosch University's (SU) December graduation, they were excited that their mom was going to heal people. "I had to explain to them that I will not be that kind of doctor," Fisher-Smith laughs. "So now they refer to me as a scientist. My husband Charlton reckons we share the title, so when he introduces himself, he says 'I am half doctor Smith.'"

Her loved ones' massive excitement about Fisher-Smith's PhD in genetics at Stellenbosch University (SU) is for a good reason. She's the first in her family to reach this academic milestone.

Originally aspiring to pursue a career in dentistry after completing matric at Belhar Secondary School, her plans changed when SU's dentistry programme moved to the University of Western Cape in 2004. This prompted Fisher-Smith to pursue a Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree at SU.



PHOTO: Stefan Els

She attributes her academic success over the past decade to a transformative intervention at SU that changed the course of her academic career from the very beginning.

### Early intervention

"When I applied at SU, I unfortunately did not meet the requirements for the BSc programme. A mentor stepped in to provide guidance and support. She suggested I repeat matric mathematics, and importantly, she informed me about SciMathUs, a programme offered by the University designed to help students improve their academic performance," Fisher-Smith explains.

"The SciMathUs programme not only enhanced my mathematical skills, but I also received valuable support and resources to excel academically."

Joining SciMathUS was a significant turning point. "When I entered the programme, it became evident that I was not fully prepared for the rigours of university-level studies. The SciMathUs programme



not only enhanced my mathematical skills, but I also received valuable support and resources to excel academically. In retrospect, SciMathUS provided me with an invaluable opportunity to push my boundaries and exceed my expectations.

"During my time at SciMathUS, I had a profound realisation that forever altered my perspective and approach to life. It emphasised the value of hard work, unwavering determination and the importance of exploring alternative pathways to achieve one's goals. It was a profound experience that has left an indelible mark on my personal and academic development.

"One of the most significant insights I gained from SciMathUS was that setbacks and unexpected detours in one's educational journey can be transformed into opportunities for growth.

"One of the most significant insights I gained from SciMathUS was that setbacks and unexpected detours in one's educational journey can be transformed into opportunities for growth. SciMathUS played a crucial role in fostering this mindset. It taught me that adversity, rather than being a roadblock, can be a stepping stone to success if met with the right attitude and a willingness to persevere. This lesson has been a guiding principle in my educational journey since then, empowering me to overcome challenges and continue striving for my goals.

"As a result of my improved academic performance, I was able to secure admission to pursue a bachelor's degree in natural science at the SU. This achievement was a direct outcome of the preparation and support I received through SciMathUS. It's a testament to how the programme had effectively readied me for the challenges of university studies."

### Invaluable mentorship

After obtaining a BSc degree, Fisher-Smith's passion for genetics led her to earn an honours degree in the subject and pursue a master's degree in the same field, engaging in advanced research projects.

She felt "incredibly honoured" when her genetics lecturer, Prof Anna-Maria Botha-Oberholster, selected her to be part of her research team. "She

was both my mentor and current supervisor and has provided crucial financial support and moral encouragement in my academic journey. Her faith in my potential fuelled a deeply personal determination to validate her selection," Fisher-Smith says.

The title of her PhD dissertation is An investigation into the wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L.) host response to Russian wheat aphid (*Diuraphis noxia* Kurd.) feeding. Aphids are insects that feed on wheat plants and can significantly harm crops, lowering yields in farmers' fields, Fisher-Smith explains. "My study aimed to investigate whether genetically modified wheat could be more tolerant to aphid attacks. I now look forward to continuing my work as a geneticist, making meaningful contributions to the scientific community and balancing my roles as a dedicated researcher, a loving wife and a proud mother."

Fisher-Smith says she feels overwhelmed by all the messages of support and congratulations she's been receiving from friends and family. Her journey has been a remarkable and fulfilling one, Fisher-Smith notes and she's immensely grateful for the privilege of pursuing a dedicated path in science through academia. Looking forward, the talented geneticist is excited to start postdoctoral research in 2024. For students facing uncertainty and challenges, Fisher-Smith offers words of wisdom:

"Don't hesitate to seek guidance and support from mentors, teachers or programmes such as SciMathUS. Mentors played a pivotal role in my journey, and having someone who believes in your potential can make a world of difference.

"Remember, your journey is unique, and your potential is boundless. It may not be a straightforward path, but with determination and endurance you can navigate the twists and turns, ultimately reaching your destination. The most important thing is to keep moving forward, even when the road seems uncertain because it's the journey itself that shapes who you become."

- Hannelie Booyens

The most important thing is to keep moving forward, even when the road seems uncertain because it's the journey itself that shapes who you become."

# A proud Protea

## Nicola Smith

Hard work and much support from family helped Nicola Smith to get where she is today – a Protea netball player who represented her country at the 2023 Netball World Cup and the Commonwealth Games. She studied BEd (Intermediary Phase) from 2019 to 2022 and received her degree at the end of 2022. It took careful planning to complete her studies while also having to often travel for netball responsibilities.

### How did it feel to play in the Netball World Cup?

It was wonderful to be able to play in the Netball World Cup. For me, the home crowd was the best. To be able to see my family and familiar faces after every game just made everything more worthwhile. To be able to represent your country in such a tournament and in your own country and the area where you grew up is a feeling that I cannot explain to anyone. I am very grateful for the opportunity.

### Were there any challenges during your netball career?

My biggest challenges were definitely injuries. I had one or other injury before a big tournament every year. Thanks to Karen Frey, my physiotherapist in Durbanville, I was, fortunately, always back on the court in time. I had to work very hard to be able to participate in the Netball World Cup. It did not come easily. I underwent knee surgery in December 2022 and it took many tears and prayers to recover and still be included in the team. Through the grace of God, I was able to achieve this, and I give Him all the glory.

### How did you keep up with your studies while you had so many responsibilities with netball?

It was rather difficult. Because we are on tour and away from home so much for netball, it was very difficult to attend classes and to hand in tasks and tests on time. My lecturers were very helpful and gave me reasonable extensions on my tasks and tests, as the circumstances with the netball made studies a bit complicated. I would like to thank Dr Chrischar Rock in particular – I would not have my degree today if it were not for her.

### Why did you decide to study education?

I love children and want to work with them. I would also like to give back to my community (Durbanville) what they gave me in terms of my netball. Teaching is my passion. My grandfather was a professor in statistics at Stellenbosch University and my aunts are teachers.

### Where did you go to school?

I attended Durbanville Preparatory School, Durbanville Primary School and Durbanville High School from grades 1 to 12. There are three people I have to mention for their contributions to my school netball career: Miss Adél Mostert – she was my Grade 2 teacher, but is now the principal. Miss Anne-Marie Stoffberg of Durbanville High School was my English teacher and also our netball organiser at the school, and the opportunities she offered us are something to be thankful for. Grant Daniels was my coach from Grade 8 to matric. If he had not moved me from goal attack (GA) to goalkeeper (GK), I do not know where I would have been with my netball today.

### What are your plans for the future?

For the time being, I would just like to play netball. It is a bit difficult to be a teacher and to have a training camp every month, or to be on tour and not be at school. I will be going to England in 2024, where I will be playing netball for six months. When my netball career comes to an end, I would like to teach. I must say that I am looking forward to having my own class one day.

### What advice do you have for young sports stars?

The most important is to always back yourself and put in those extra five minutes of training that the rest of the players do not. Also, get yourself a strong support group – you cannot do without this.

### Who inspires you?

My mother is definitely my inspiration. She is my best friend and we do everything together. Without her and my father, my netball career would have come to an end after school.







"The most important is to always back yourself and put in those extra five minutes of training that the rest of the players do not. Also, get yourself a strong support group – you cannot do without this."

PHOTO: Stefan Els



# National Teachers' Award for Dillon Henwood

"Make it your mission to be the most competent, most creative, most compassionate and most dedicated teacher you can be. Children's lives depend on it ... and so does the fate of our country."



*PHOTO: Supplied*



Alumnus Dillon Henwood received a National Teachers' Award in 2023. He is a teacher at Elnor Primary School in Elsies River and received the award for Excellence in Primary School Teaching (grades 1-7). He studied at the Faculty of Education from 2015 to 2018.

**How do you feel about this award?**

Receiving this award was an absolute honour. It serves as confirmation that I am on the right track, and it has stiffened my resolve to continue being the best teacher I can possibly be.

**Please tell us about the projects you started at your school.**

I started and coordinated several programmes:

- A holiday feeding scheme in 2019 that serves approximately 400 meals per day to learners and community members
- Substance abuse programmes at the school
- Truancy and dropout programmes to retain learners in the schooling system and return dropout learners to school
- A straddled learning programme to improve learners' access to the curriculum
- A dignity programme that supplies stationery, school uniforms, sanitary ware and other essentials to learners in need
- Annual educational camps for our Grade 5, 6 and 7 learners at no cost to the learners
- A literacy programme for learners who cannot read that will commence in January 2024
- Having been a main editor at Die Matie, I started a school newspaper at the school. Learners wrote the articles, did editing and proofreading, took photographs, assisted with translations, etc. Unfortunately, however, the school no longer has the financial resources to print the issues, so this project is on hold.

**What motivates you?**

Simply put, my love for children.

**Why did you decide to become a teacher?**

I was always passionate about language, and I have a deep love for children. Teaching combines two of my greatest passions.

**How do you think the education system in SA can be improved?**

There are many different things that need to be done to improve the SA education system. Student teachers need to be better equipped to teach in impoverished school contexts.

Grade R must be compulsory and parents who fail to ensure the school attendance of children of compulsory school-going age should be penalised. Overcrowded classrooms must be reduced and educators must be trained in remedial teaching.

School-based support teams must be trained and equipped with appropriate resources and support structures. The progression and promotion requirements for learners need to be increased – too many learners who are not ready to progress are grade progressed and their barriers to learning only worsen.

Onsite social workers need to be appointed in public schools in impoverished communities. Further on, the education system can be improved by reducing unnecessary administrative tasks for teachers that consume teaching time.

More alternative schools (for example, special needs schools and schools of skills) also need to be established for learners who cannot cope in mainstream schools.

**Your advice for education students and young teachers:**

Make it your mission to be the most competent, most creative, most compassionate and most dedicated teacher you can be. Children's lives depend on it ... and so does the fate of our country.

**What are your future plans?**

My goal is to establish enough support structures at my current school and train enough educators to take over my roles before eventually moving to other schools to replicate these initiatives.



# Hard work rewarded

Stellenbosch University (SU) presented the annual Rector's Awards for Outstanding Achievement at the end of 2023. The formal gala dinner celebrated the outstanding achievements of students in academics and co-curricular areas. Alice Elizabeth White and Lynn Grant from the Faculty of Education received awards for academic excellence.

"Receiving this award came as a huge shock. I had never been thought of as academically strong in school and that stigma had stuck with me coming into university. Receiving this award proves to me that I can do anything I set my mind to and that I have the power to change the world in my own way," White said.

White currently is a schoolteacher and this award also enabled her to show her class that they should never let 'labels' define them and that they can achieve anything. She studied BEd (Intermediate Phase) and is currently doing her honours in Curriculum Inquiry: Science Education. Her research project is on the transition of science teachers' pedagogical approaches to the twenty-first century.

"You are going to put on the show of a lifetime and want to put smiles on the children's faces."

A highlight during her undergraduate studies was teaching practicals. "Practicals are like a medical student getting to perform their first surgery. You have prepped, practiced and panicked the whole night before. You are going to put on the show of a lifetime and want to put smiles on the children's faces. The memories you make with these children will last a lifetime."



*Prof Nico Koopman, Alice Elizabeth White and Prof Madiba*

"The Rector's Award is a special recognition for the hard work and sacrifices I put into my studies. It makes me feel seen and that what I am doing is worthwhile," Grant said.

"It makes me feel seen and that what I am doing is worthwhile."

She continued her studies with a BEd Honours in Curriculum Inquiry in 2023. From 2019 to 2021 she completed her BSc in Human Life Science and in 2022 she completed her Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE).

"I decided to pursue education because I have always had a passion for both biology and helping people understand things. My greatest influencers for my career choice are the wonderful teachers I had growing up, including Ms Jagesar, Ms Gevers and Ms Moolman," Grant said.

"A highlight during my PGCE year was being taught by Professor Nuraan Davids and Dr Marie-Louise Botha. They are both experts in their fields and it was such a highlight being taught by them," Grant said.



*Prof Nico Koopman, Lynn Grant and Prof Madiba*



# Education Student Committee strives for excellence



**Zoe-Grace Bennett**  
Chairperson



**Xavier Benyani**  
Vice-Chairperson



**Revando van Wyk**  
Secretary



**Nadia Parker**  
Treasurer



**Jodie Lewin**  
Marketing & Media



**Faizal Saban**  
Student Relations



**Nerisha Jagwanth**  
Events



**Siphumeze  
Tshongweni**  
Social Justice  
(Transformation)



**Tyrese Human**  
Professional  
Development



**Jade Hartnick**  
Social Impact

**2024 beckons with promise and potential, offering us a canvas upon which we shall paint the vibrant colours of our vision and values.**

The Education Student Committee (ESC) for 2023/24 embraces a steadfast dedication to upholding excellence, accountability, integrity, human dignity, respect and the promotion of innovation and ownership. Our unwavering commitment remains rooted in these values of our university, steering our focus towards our core mission in the forthcoming year. These foundational values are instrumental in nurturing a dynamic and supportive academic community and form the bedrock upon which our aspirations for 2024 are built.

The ESC is dedicated to fostering an inclusive and diverse environment and operates on guiding principles that shape our actions. We prioritise creating a welcoming space where each student, irrespective of their background or beliefs, feels valued and included. Our commitment to embracing diversity enriches our academic journey and bolsters the strength of our community. We firmly believe that offering opportunities is pivotal to students' accomplishments. Thus, our goal is to provide a platform where students can explore, grow and excel. Through nurturing a culture of respect and understanding, we aspire to enable

students to showcase their talents and achieve their utmost potential.

Integrity and accountability are fundamental to everything we do; they are the cornerstones of our efforts. Our unwavering goal is to uphold the greatest ethical standards by making sure that everything we do is characterised by accountability, honesty and transparency. As ESC members, we understand the importance of our position and continue to be committed to being responsible in meeting the needs of our students.

Furthermore, our vision underscores the importance of networking and collaboration across various faculty departments. We understand the integral role strong relationships play in supporting student success, fostering academic growth, and promoting excellence across disciplines. Through these collaborative efforts, we aim to create a network that amplifies opportunities, facilitates academic progression, and ensures that excellence permeates every facet of our academic community. As we embark on this journey into 2024, we invite you to join us in our efforts to create an environment that nurtures student success and academic excellence. Your support, guidance and collaboration are invaluable as we work together to achieve our shared goals.

*- Zoe-Grace Bennett*



# A dance to remember for the fourth years of 2023

The fourth-year dance with the theme, 'Classic Black and White: A Dance to Remember', was a lovely celebration to mark the transformative journey of our students on the path to becoming educators.

The success of this captivating event was made possible by the unwavering support of our esteemed faculty administrators and the devoted fourth-year dance committee. Their collaborative efforts paved the way for an unforgettable evening, attended by approximately 120 individuals, including the Dean, Prof Madiba, and other esteemed faculty members.

The event found its perfect canvas at La Pineta at Forest 44. The venue lent a hint of dreamy beauty to the occasion, elevating it to a truly memorable experience.

For our participating students, the event proved to be a significant moment on their journey. It was a celebratory way to end the academic time at Stellenbosch University. It marked the end of one era of their lives and the start to a new chapter.

"Some of our students said the dance was a beautiful tribute to the most extraordinary four-year-long journey!"

The fourth-year dance not only celebrated our students but also underscored the collaborative spirit that defines their academic community, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts and memories of all those who attended.

- Shené Stassen

PHOTOS: Supplied





# LOOKING BACK:

## Fourth year students share their experiences

2023's fourth-years began their student years with the challenges brought by COVID-19. Despite this, they have achieved success and are ready to take on the classrooms. A few students share their experiences.

### Charnay Mahoney

I would describe this past four years as a roller coaster ride. Not only was I one of the students who had to navigate our way through the challenges of Covid-19 and adapt to online learning, I also faced many academic and personal challenges and I had to decide how I would allow this to affect me.

All of this led to me becoming strong and resilient. It forced me to step out of my comfort zone and actively take advantage of opportunities for self-improvement and the development of skills that I can use in both the professional and personal sectors of my life.

The greatest part of this journey was the friendships I have built. This was something I often struggled with but this group of people is now my support system in anything I decide to take on. I have learnt that the people you surround yourself with are an extension of your energy, your beliefs and your goals. It is okay to be selective.



### James de la Cruz

After four years of studying education at Stellenbosch University, I feel ready to be a positive influence on future generations of South Africans. Being a student at Stellenbosch University created a will to strengthen the minds of the youth as well as encourage constructive social change. Only after the completion of my fourth year, can I conclude that I am now equipped with skills that will inspire young minds, spark curiosity, and make significant differences in people's lives and communities, which was my initial goal.

The passion for learning that was created for me in lectures, will now live in my teaching environments, where I aim to foster the changing of lives and help to create a brighter, more educated world.



### Layla Taliep

We started in 2020. So, when I say we started with a bigger bang than most, it is true. The journey was long and hard, but I would not change it for anything. These were some of the best years of my life, and I am so glad for the help and support of the people I met while studying here.



### Emma Swart

Wow, where to begin? To put this experience into just a few words is a challenge. The past four years have been a journey, filled with both lows (such as being told to pack and go home, not knowing we would only return a year later) and highs (such as learning and preservice teaching alongside so many wonderful future teachers). I think to summarise this time in a few words, I would have to say it has been enriching, transforming and inspiring. I look forward to the change my year group will make to the education system and the many lives we will all touch.





# Practicals in schools equip students for the classrooms

Practicals in schools are an essential part of a student's education at the Faculty of Education. Practical Learning gives students the skills and confidence to step into their own classes and make a success of it. Read the full Practical Learning Newsletter by scanning the QR code.



PHOTOS: Pierre Rommelaere



Miguella Kennedy (B.Ed 379)

My best learning experience during my 2023 practical was being part of the concert and being part of the staff dance. The staff made me feel welcome and although they were all young, they showed me what a good team can do.

The kids made me excited to go to school. They made me look forward to having my own class one day! My mentor teacher was the best and I could learn so much from her practically every day!

"The kids made me excited to go to school. They made me look forward to having my own class one day!"

- Miguella Kennedy

"I learned to be patient and to use various teaching methods to support a diverse group of learners."

- Christopher Potgieter



Christopher Potgieter (B.Ed 477)

As a mathematics teacher, I had to share my passion for the subject with my learners as well as inspire them to gain confidence in their mathematical abilities. I learned to be patient and to use various teaching methods to support a diverse group of learners.

I followed an interactive and practical approach during most of my lessons to make new concepts clearer and saw its effectiveness in my learners' assessment. My time at Eikestad Primary School was a challenging but satisfying experience that deepened my own understanding of mathematics while helping the next generation to grow.



"Story time truly has the power to ignite a lifelong passion for learning and discovery."

- Wendy August



Wendy August (B.Ed 479)

During my teaching practice, I realised the incredible impact of story time on young minds. It was a magical experience witnessing their imaginations soar as they immersed themselves in the captivating tales we shared.

In my personal opinion story time became a cherished moment, fostering a love for reading and sparking curiosity. Seeing their faces light up with excitement and hearing their eager questions filled me with joy. Story time truly has the power to ignite a lifelong passion for learning and discovery.

"Being a strong communicator is a must, but listening well is also one of the most important skills needed to be a teacher."

- Juanika Fritz



Juanika Fritz (B.Ed 479)

To be an effective teacher, you need to know your learners. Knowing your learners enable you to prepare and set realistic expectations in the classroom.

As a teacher, you are a role model who sets the tone for the class. If you are able to show enthusiasm and commitment, your learners are more likely to reciprocate. Being a strong communicator is a must, but listening well is also one of the most important skills needed to be a teacher.

Being a great teacher involves more than showing sympathy and patience, it's about having a passion for learning and shaping individuals into strongminded people who's capable of chasing their dreams.



William Sezoe (B.Ed 477)

Gedurende my 2023 prakties het ek besef dat as klasonderwyser moet ek altyd seker maak my lesse is akkommodierend en inklusief sodat elke leerder daarby kan baatvind.



# Lecturer of the year 2023 awarded

Three lecturers share the award Lecturer of the year 2023 which was nominated by the students: **Ms Chelsea Bronn**, **Dr Chrischar Rock** and **Ms Agatha Lebethe**. Bronn and Rock share what it means to them.

## Chelsea Bronn

### What does this award mean to you?

I feel incredibly honoured to have received this award. As a young lecturer, it gives me confidence that the students have enjoyed attending my classes this year and that I have been able to make a positive impact on their academic year.

### What do you enjoy most about your work?

The most rewarding aspect of my work is my engagement with the students. For me, there is no better feeling as an educator than seeing one's students achieve their goals and grasp new concepts and skills that they have really been struggling with throughout the year.

### What motivates you?

What motivates me is to continuously strive to be a better educator, to strive to achieve the goals that I set for myself, to create new ways of delivering topics to maintain students' interest, and to ensure that my classes are an encouraging and safe space for learning to take place.

### Your advice to students?

My advice for students would be to always try your best and to never give up. I know that university can be overwhelming at times; however, with hard work and commitment you will achieve your goals and reap the benefits. Make the most of every opportunity that you are given and remember that great teachers are lifelong learners.

### Do you have a hobby, or what do you do to relax?

When I am not teaching, I enjoy catching up on my favourite series, going for long walks outdoors and, most importantly, reading a really good book while enjoying a cup of tea.

## Dr Chrischar Rock

### What does this award mean to you?

Receiving recognition from students is a great honour. In our day-to-day work we often forget that we are role models to our students, and we hope that the values we hold dear such as hard work, excellence and accountability come across in all that we do.

### What do you enjoy most about your work?

I thrive on interactions with our students and finding new and different ways to collaborate with colleagues to improve on our teaching, learning, assessment and research within teacher education.

### What motivates you?

I am motivated by the fact that I am able to impact the lives of so many young people who have the potential to do great things, locally and globally.

### Your advice to students?

Seize every opportunity that comes your way to be better and to do better.

### Do you have a hobby, or what do you do to relax?

I enjoy rock painting, nature walks and have a few crime novels I need to catch up on reading!



**Ms Chelsea Bronn**  
English and Literature  
Practical Learning  
Part-time Lecturer



**Dr Chrischar Rock**  
Practical Learning  
Coordinator  
Lecturer  
Department  
Curriculum Studies



**Ms Agatha Lebethe**  
Foundation Phase  
Coordinator  
Lecturer  
Department  
Curriculum Studies



# Five pillars saluted

At the end of 2023, five mainstays of the faculty retired. They are Prof Faaiz Gierdien, Prof Doria Daniels, Ms Jeannie Saffier, Ms Sally le Roux and Prof Yusef Waghid. Four of them share some of the highlights during their careers and in a separate article Prof Waghid's academic contributions are shared.

**Prof Faaiz Gierdien**



Prof Gierdien has been an associate professor in the Faculty of Education for 17 years. He shares a few of the highlights of his career.

- Mentoring Alwyn Olivier, which made me see the value and use of Excel spreadsheets as an instrument to deepen one's understanding of mathematics, especially algebra;
- Ongoing collaboration with Prof Cyril Julie from the University of the Western Cape, in the domain of professional development;
- Ongoing collaboration with colleagues from universities in the West Bank and Gaza, in occupied Palestine;
- Encouragement from Prof Aslam Fataar to study and 'open up' the GG Cillie Building in relation to the Visual Redress at Stellenbosch University initiative;
- Support from Prof Michael le Cordeur during his tenure as head of the Curriculum Studies Department; and last, but not least
- Dr Omar Esau for enabling me to participate in his South African Rugby Union (SARU) rugby legends project.

Prof Gierdien also mentioned that he will miss his interactions on mathematics education with Dr Erna Lampen and Agatha Lebethe and also the help he received from Nahmie Latief, Lorraine van As and Cyril Williams.

**Prof Doria Daniels**



Prof Doria Daniels, Department of Educational Psychology, joined Stellenbosch University (SU) in 2001. As SU's Director of Community Impact, she established the Unit for Service-Learning and Community Interaction and started a process of institutional strengthening of community service as the third core component of the University's functions. She missed being an academic, so in 2003 she made the tough decision to return to teaching by joining the Department of Educational Psychology as an associate professor. In 2011, she was promoted to full professor. She shared some of her career highlights:

- I have a PhD in international and intercultural studies and did my dissertation research on educationally marginalised women's empowerment through adult basic education.
- A highlight in my second year as a university lecturer was when I was awarded the prestigious Cyril O Houle Fellowship for Adult and Continuing Education. This fellowship, sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation in the USA, allowed me to work with influential international adult education theorists and collaborators such as Profs Sharan Merriam and Karen Monkman.
- Another highlight of my career was when I became the first black woman professor in the Faculty of Education at SU. I delivered my inaugural address with the title, Decolonising the researcher's mind about southern research: Reflections from the field, in November 2011. Since then, only one other black woman professor has been appointed in the Faculty.
- Being invited as a visiting professor and scholar by influential higher education institutions is always a highlight in any established academic's career. I have had the privilege of four visiting professorships – two in the USA, one in Kenya and one in Germany.

Prof Daniels said that she will miss the daily scholarly interactions with students and colleagues. "In my 20 years as a professor in educational psychology, my path crossed with that of many individuals who impacted my life, and whose knowledge, work ethic and collegiality I will forever value. Some of these relationships will continue beyond retirement."

As an emeritus professor, her relationship with the Department of Educational Psychology and the Faculty of Education remains as she will continue supervising master's and doctoral students' research. She is also part of an international adult education research project on low literacy that is being piloted in five countries and a collaborator on an International Research Network (IRN) of the World Educational Research Association (WERA). She looks forward to pursuing her own research interests, and to writing the book that has been on the back burner for many years.

### Jeannie Saffier



Jeannie Saffier's journey at Stellenbosch University (SU) started 16 years ago. She started as an administrative officer for South-to-South at the Tygerberg campus of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences from 2007 to April 2016. On 01 May 2016, she started as a departmental officer in the Department of Curriculum Studies and concluded her time at SU as a principal finance officer in the Faculty of Education on 31 August 2023. She received a fixed-term contract as an administrative coordinator for the Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme from 01 September 2023 to 31 August 2025.

Jeannie shares some of the highlights of her career:

- Some of the highlights of my time at Stellenbosch have been effectively adhering to the financial policies to keep the departments on track as well as the opportunities for further studies in the financial field, which have helped me hone my skills in my role's function in the Department of Curriculum Studies.
- I have also enjoyed the opportunity to help with the Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme as I am passionate about providing students with the relevant support for this in our Faculty. This has been in addition to my role in the Department.

- I will miss the camaraderie of like-minded staff members, who have made the work environment light and fun.

Jeannie will continue to assist the Faculty with the Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme until 2025 and looks forward to having time for lots of travelling and to devote more time to the community initiatives she is already involved in.

### Sally le Roux



Sally le Roux left the Faculty of Education after 34 years. She started in the Department of Curriculum Studies, where she worked for approximately 16 years. Thereafter, she spent approximately 10 years in the Office of the Vice-Deans. She concluded her career in the Faculty as a senior administrative officer in the Postgraduate Office.

She shares some highlights of her career:

- To be able to establish the Department of Vice-Deans along with Prof Arend Carl (Teaching and Learning) and Prof Lesley le Grange (Research). This was a first for the Faculty and obviously also a challenge.
- Another highlight was the congress of the International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies (IAACS) that we hosted at the Lord Charles Hotel in 2009. I served on the steering committee. This was a very challenging time, but the congress was a huge success. Thereafter I was involved in another three congresses, and this is also where I met many of the academics that I still have contact with today.
- I will miss the people with whom I worked – at SU and outside the university. My work was of such a nature that I had a lot of contact with students and academics from other universities. I established many good relationships through the years.

Sally plans to put more time into her exercise programme and to take part in more challenging road races. She would also like to visit her daughter and grandchildren in Mauritius for one month of the year. Cansa and the Hospice are also close to her heart and she would like to become involved with them in some way.



# Prof Waghid's academic contributions celebrated before his retirement

Prof Yusef Waghid's phenomenal scholarship was celebrated in a seminar by the Department Education Policy Studies at the Faculty of Education in November 2023 before his retirement.

Prof Yusef Waghid, Distinguished Professor in the Faculty of Education, a leading African philosopher of education, holds three doctorates in the fields of education, policy, and philosophy from the University of the Western Cape and Stellenbosch University in South Africa, respectively. As a tenured professor since 2002 he was honoured with the title of distinguished professor (2014-2023) on the grounds of his research excellence at Stellenbosch University. He has been a prolific author with 419 publications to date of which 54 are academic books and edited collections and, 89 invited contributions to books. He promoted 35 PhD candidates to completion, examined 58 doctorates and received the Association for the Development of Education in Africa's prestigious Education Research in Africa Award: Outstanding Mentor of Education Researchers (2015).

Throughout his tenure, he occupied leading management positions at Stellenbosch University, such as having been appointed Chair of the Department of Education Policy Studies (2003-2007, 2022); and Dean of the Faculty of Education (2007-2012; 2017-2018). In the main, his long-standing relationship with education began as a high school science teacher (1979-1996) before he joined higher education as a senior teaching advisor to advance his professional career in higher education (1996-).

Prof Nuraan Davids, Chair Department Education Policy Studies, shared about her study as PhD student with Prof Waghid as supervisor. She thanked him for the very high standards he has set

"Lots of the thinking that goes into our intellectual work, happened casually. You don't have to have a formal meeting to talk about an idea."



and for the influence he had on many colleagues and students. "We can only aspire to do justice to the tone and expectations that you've set."

Prof Madiba, Dean of the Faculty of Education, thanked Prof Waghid for his tireless dedication, transformative leadership, and unwavering commitment to the advancement of education.

Prof Waghid said in his farewell message that he always knew there will come a day when he has to formally retire from an institution. He talked about three words which he thinks constitutes the platform which he used throughout his academic career. These words are wonder, wander and whisper. He said that wonder helps you because it transcends your human thinking capacity to go beyond the notions of reason and justification. "All the students that I've encountered they made me wonder because I would like to hope that I've done sufficiently enough for them to wonder themselves."

He said that travelling is what makes you wander and meander. He and Prof Nuraan Davids collaborated on sixteen books, and he said that sometimes those books were conceptualised on an airport or in the streets of a big city. "Lots of the thinking that goes into our intellectual work, happened casually. You don't have to have a formal meeting to talk about an idea."

He explained that the word whisper to him means that he doesn't have the answers so he doesn't say it out loud because there is the possibility that he might be wrong. "Whispering is the capacity of you to see your own faults."

# Bridging Horizons: A South African academic's journey at the SANORD Conference in Norway

Dr Elzahn Rinquist, a lecturer in the Department of Education Policy Studies, attended the SANORD conference in Norway in 2023 and shares her experiences.

In the heart of Norway, amidst the pristine fjords and towering mountains, I found myself immersed in a transformative educational experience that transcended geographical boundaries. As a South African academic, attending the international educational conference in Norway was not just a professional endeavour; it was a soul-stirring exploration of global pedagogical landscapes.

The conference, a melting pot of diverse ideas and perspectives, provided a unique platform for me to engage with fellow educators, researchers and policy makers from around the world. What struck me most was the seamless blend of Norwegian warmth and efficiency, which created an environment where collaboration thrived and knowledge flowed freely.

Norway's renowned education system, known for its innovation and inclusivity, became a living classroom. I had the privilege of attending sessions, led by pioneering educators, that delved into topics ranging from inclusive teaching methods to the integration of technology in classrooms.

Each discussion was a revelation and offered valuable insights that I could consider in our South African context. But beyond the conference halls, it was the interactions with fellow attendees that truly enriched my experience.

I engaged in passionate dialogues about the challenges and triumphs of education in different corners of the globe, and found common ground in our shared dedication to empowering students and fostering a love for learning. The cultural



exchange extended beyond formal sessions. Exploring the picturesque Norwegian town of Hamar with newfound friends, savouring local cuisine, and understanding the nuances of their educational ethos provided a holistic perspective that transcended academic boundaries.

Leaving Norway, I carried with me not just a trove of knowledge but also a renewed sense of purpose. The experience had broadened my horizons, reminding me that education is a universal language that binds us all, regardless of our origins. Inspired and invigorated, I returned to South Africa, eager to implement the lessons learned and contribute to the global dialogue on education.

My journey to Norway was more than just a conference; it was a transformative odyssey that reaffirmed my belief in the power of education to bridge cultures, inspire minds, and create a brighter, interconnected future for us all.

- Dr Elzahn Rinquist



## GET TO KNOW: Dr Paseka Chisale

### Lecturer: Department Curriculum Studies

Dr Paseka Chisale joined the Faculty of Education in January 2024 as lecturer in Life Skills. He shares about his career and goals.

#### **Please tell us about your career until now.**

I am currently a lecturer at the STADIO School of Education in Pretoria. I hold a BEd with an art education and physical education specialisation, a BEdHons in assessment and quality assurance in education and an MEd, and I am currently completing a PhD in education, which will explore a self-study in creative arts teacher education. My research interests include the exploration of arts-based enquiries and creative arts teaching practices. Before joining STADIO Higher Education, I taught art education at the University of Pretoria and the University of the Free State.

#### **Why did you accept the position at the Faculty of Education?**

I have always aspired to teach at Stellenbosch. However, I always saw myself coming to Stellenbosch University as a seasoned scholar. Now I get the opportunity to build my career at this prestigious institution.

#### **What is your vision and goals for 2024?**

My vision for 2024 is to make use of my own experiences and research to inform my practices and provide my students with intentional spaces for art education engagement. My goals include at least two publications and securing funding to continue with my research.



#### **What role do you think education can play in South Africa?**

Education plays a vital role in addressing socioeconomic issues and shaping the trajectory of our nation. It has the power to hold those tasked to govern our country accountable and to find practical solutions that can drive our nation forward.



## GET TO KNOW: Dr Koopman

### Senior Lecturer: Department Curriculum Studies



Before I started my academic career at Stellenbosch University, I had a rich and rewarding professional history of 24 years (1999 to 2023). My academic career started towards the end of 2008 in the Faculty of Education at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), where I was a lecturer.

At that time my focus was on teaching chemistry and curriculum studies at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

In 2013, after I successfully completed my doctoral studies at Stellenbosch University, I started to find my niche area, phenomenology, in research. In 2017, my commitment and contributions to research were recognised by a promotion to the position of senior lecturer in science education.

Prior to my university career, I served as a teacher in various secondary schools and specialised in mathematics, physical science, and life sciences for grades 10 to 12. This journey reflects my unwavering commitment to improving the quality of education and research, and continuous personal and professional growth. I approach the next chapter at Stellenbosch University with enthusiasm, optimism and a fervent desire to contribute meaningfully to the academic community.

This institution resonates with my aspirations and provides an ideal platform to actualise my professional goals and bring to fruition the vision I hold for my role. My primary objective is to collaboratively engage with top academics worldwide, fostering an environment conducive to groundbreaking contributions in my field. This year, I had the honour of inviting the Provost (Deputy Vice-Chancellor) of New Orleans University in the United States to deliver a guest lecture on assessment practices to my Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students. This initiative aimed to provide an international perspective on assessment to enrich the academic experience for my students. I co-authored a book, *Decolonisation of the South African University: Towards Curriculum as Self-Authentication*, published in the distinguished book series of William Pinar, *Curriculum Studies Worldwide*. Pinar is renowned as one of the foremost curriculum scholars alive today. Another highlight this year was a webinar I conducted for both staff and students at Ghana University.

These experiences affirm that my decision to join Stellenbosch University was wise. The institution not only aligns with my academic and professional aspirations but also offers a stimulating environment where collaboration, research and innovative teaching thrive. I am excited about the prospect of contributing meaningfully to this dynamic academic community and confident that this move marks a pivotal and fulfilling chapter in my career.

As academics within the Faculty of Education, our role is underscored by the imperative to mould the knowledge workers of the future. This necessitates a transformative commitment to equipping preservice teachers with the requisite knowledge and skills essential for excellence in their professions. The impact of our efforts extends across diverse fields including medicine, science, engineering, software development, architecture, social sciences, psychology and politics, among others.

The quality of the teachers we cultivate becomes the cornerstone upon which these professional landscapes are built. Consequently, our task is monumental, requiring a conscientious awareness of our role as educators and exemplars. Our responsibility transcends the mere dissemination of knowledge – we must inspire future teachers to envision and pursue the diverse roles of those that they will shape in the future.

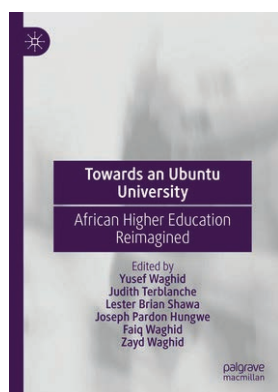
"In essence, my vision encompasses a holistic commitment to inspiring excellence, advancing research and fostering inclusivity within the educational landscape."

Very importantly, my ambition lies in cultivating close and meaningful relationships with principals, teachers and learners in historically disadvantaged schools. I recognise the unique challenges faced by these schools and am dedicated to assisting in the fostering of an environment that nurtures academic growth, promotes equity and provides essential support. In essence, my vision encompasses a holistic commitment to inspiring excellence, advancing research and fostering inclusivity within the educational landscape.

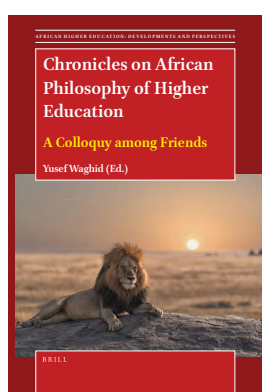


# Published books by Faculty of Education staff

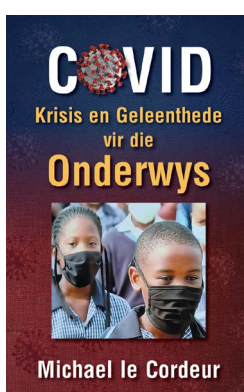
The Faculty of Education's staff boasts several books that were published during 2023. Congratulations to Prof Yusuf Waghid, Prof Micahel le Cordeur, Dr Oscar Koopman, Prof Nuraan Davids and Prof Aslam Fataar.



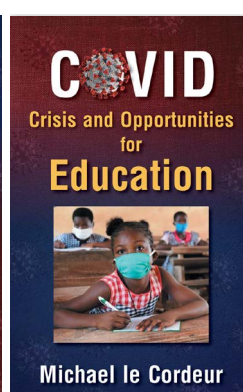
*Prof Yusef Waghid*



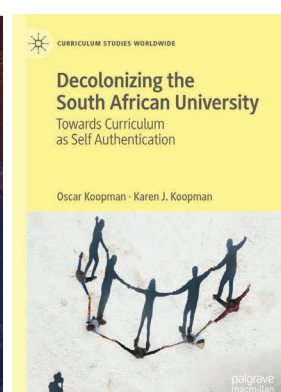
*Prof Yusef Waghid*



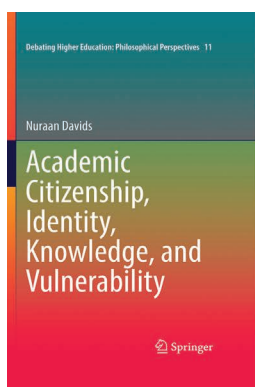
*Prof Michael le Cordeur*



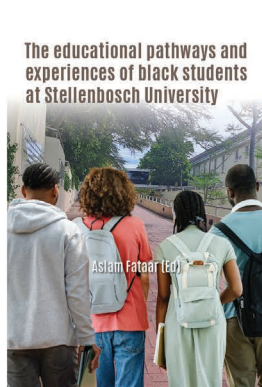
*Prof Michael le Cordeur*



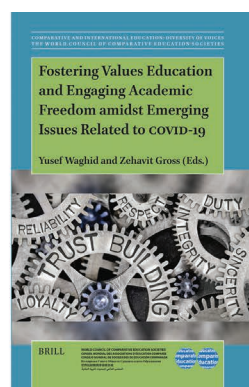
*Dr Oscar Koopman*



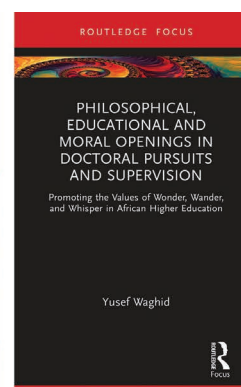
*Prof Nuraan Davids*



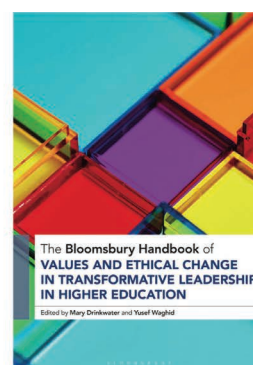
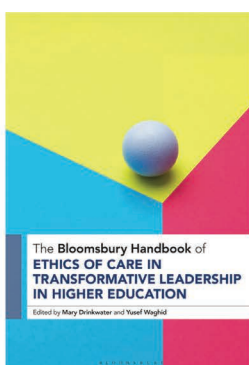
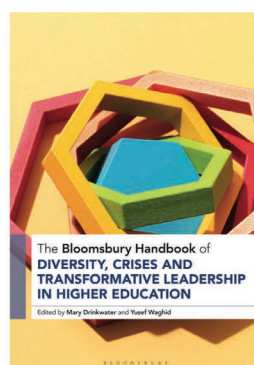
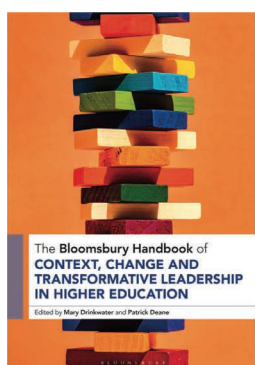
*Prof Aslam Fataar*



*Prof Yusef Waghid*



*Prof Yusef Waghid*



*Bloomsbury book series: Prof Yusef Waghid*

# SU explores **outside-the-box** learning with digital escape room assessments

A lecturer in education at Stellenbosch University (SU) with an innate curiosity and interest in innovative learning has challenged her student teachers to explore the world of gamification to bring educational material alive in their classrooms.

Most learners will tell you that there's nothing fun about assessments. But what about assessments that take place in an online escape room where the questions are clues and only correct answers will open the door? Delecia Davids, a lecturer in SU's Faculty of Education with an interest in design-based learning, is pushing the boundaries of conventional assessment by promoting gamification as a teaching tool.

The idea was born shortly before the pandemic of 2020 when Davids was inspired by a project called "The deeper learning puzzle bus", developed by the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University in response to findings that standardised tests seldom measure important skills such as critical thinking, collaboration and communication. The bus is in fact a delivery truck that has been reconfigured as a mobile escape room. It travels around to various schools where children can actively engage with learning material and solve clues to exit the escape room.

Intrigued, Davids had just started considering a similar application in local classrooms when the pandemic hit, and schools and universities were forced to close. So, Davids had to adapt and consider ways an escape room could work in an online space, and whether she could find a way to encourage her students to collaborate when they were unable to physically interact. "The intention at the time



Final-year students (2023) in SU's Faculty of Education: Annie Thomson, Michaela Chetty, Tiffany Reynolds and James de la Cruz with lecturer Delecia Davids, in front of Davids' virtual escape room. PHOTO: Supplied



"The intention at the time was to think about how to help students design something similar for their subject specialisation."

was to think about how to help students design something similar for their subject specialisation." She used Google Slides and a Google Form as a base for the escape room, and embedded a timer, puzzles and clues with hyperlinks. She admits to rigorously testing her escape room before sharing it with her students. "I was confronted by my own vulnerability about technology. Before I let my students experience the room I had designed, I sat and tested my links. I learned with my students."

She then demonstrated the concept to her students before asking them to design their own escape rooms. They were also encouraged to test their designs in the educational space by incorporating them into the curriculum. Davids admits that when presented with the escape room challenge, her students were less than enthusiastic. They were particularly concerned about getting to grips with the technology to create the online assessment, and how they would find the time to incorporate these assessments into their lessons. However, once they had experimented with the escape room and designed their own in groups, they could see how effective it could be as an assessment tool.

Annie Thomson, a fourth-year education student, has enjoyed great success in her Grade 4 classroom with her online escape room. She used a Microsoft PowerPoint platform so that her learners would be able to access the game even with connectivity issues. Her learners had to complete an assessment activity at the end of their lesson segment and Thomson says she used the escape room "to make the lesson more interesting and involve some aspect of learning, not just revision". As the assessment happened to fall on Harry Potter Day, Thomson's game was based on a Hogwarts theme and set in Professor Sprout's herbology class. Only once learners had successfully answered the questions and unlocked the clues, were they able to exit, thus completing the assessment.

Final-year student, Tiffany Reynolds, notes that gamification works particularly well for children in

the intermediate phase, from Grade 4 to 7, who tend to be resistant to learning. "This shows them that knowledge is fun and desirable." She says teachers need to keep learning with their learners. "We had to embrace the wrestle and learn (how to apply the technology) ourselves." James de la Cruz, also a final-year student, says that while finding the time to include games into the curriculum will be a challenge, he does see the benefits of incorporating them into his lesson plans.

The objective was to shift students away from agnostic teaching methods – where they only teach what they know, explains Davids. "We need to build creative confidence in teachers." This is why it was important for her to model the use of the application herself, while showing her student teachers that making mistakes is a necessary part of the process. "The most exciting aspect of the whole journey was learning with the students and seeing them go beyond what was expected." Michaela Chetty, another one of Davids' final-year students, says, "Now we can take what we have been given (the tools to include games) and revolutionise it." The gamification of learning encourages greater engagement, and it is an ongoing process of learning for teachers and their classes.

"As a product, the escape room assessment can be commercialised or provided as open source to schools."

Although still very much in the early phase, SU's online assessment approach has caught the eye of educational publishers. "As a product, the escape room assessment can be commercialised or provided as open source to schools," says Davids. Her interest in this field is ongoing, and she recently presented a poster named "Using escape rooms to develop the digital competencies of Natural Science pre-service teachers" with Dr Anthea Jacobs, an academic advisor at the SU's Centre for Teaching and Learning, at the 30th International Conference on Learning in Brazil.

Davids also co-authored a book chapter with Elzette le Roux, an academic advisor in online learning at the Centre for Learning Technologies at SU, on the conceptualisation of the digital escape room as an assessment strategy, which will be published soon.

- Anél Lewis

# For your diary

**15 March**

*TeacherCalm event*

**12 April**

*Staffroom Chatter Podcast*

Challenges in the classroom and how I overcame them.

**22 June**

*TEDx Stellenbosch Ed event*

**21 September**

*For principals: Breakfast with the Dean*

**4 October**

*World Teachers' Day panel discussion*

More information will follow on social media.



<https://www.sun.ac.za/english/faculty/education>