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# CONTENTS

### FOR STARTERS

- **2** Editorial
- 2 Letterbox
- 5 Wordwise



- **20** MDEA is contributing to credible, free and fair elections
- 24 A day in the life of the SARChI Chair in Development Education





### CHANGE AGENTS

- 26 Alumnus championing human rights
- 28 Women abuse tackled through sign language and art
- **30** Everything happens for a reason, including prison!
- **32** Research could prevent some sideeffects of cancer treatment
- **34** Highest recognition for remarkable researchers
- **36** Unisa salutes its remarkable graduates

### SUPPORT

**42** R99 million for student success ... this is how it was spent



### REGULARS

44 Unisa in brief

- 54 Shelf life
- **56** Study and career advice from the experts: Take your career online

### AFRICAN TO THE CORE

- 6 I am an African
- **10** What it means to be an African university
- **14** Decolonising education
- **17** To decolonise is to finally breathe



## Editorial

## Changing times

Visionary Marshall McLuhan's 1962 prediction has come to pass, and the world has truly become a global village. Across temporal, cultural and geographical boundaries people, countries and continents are engaging in, amongst others, education, innovation and socioeconomic matters. Africa is a key stakeholder within this global context. To ensure that the continent's impact and influence continues to increase, it will be imperative for Africa not to dance to the tune of geopolitical super powers, but to find its own rhythm.

Africa's history has been marred by exploitation and oppression. For centuries Africa and its peoples were subjected to imperialism and subsequent colonial domination. But Africa's time has come. The continent is rich in natural and human resources and has a growing population of young people who are now part of the global network of knowledge workers. Africans are ready to celebrate their identity and take pride in who they are.

As a university, Unisa is asking itself what can be done to embrace our African identity. Is our dream and vision statement, our curricula and our research, to mention but a few aspects, representative of what is dear to Africa? Read more about some Unisa experts' views on matters related to decolonialisation and being African. In this issue of *YOUNISA* we also celebrate the achievements of our graduates, alumni and staff. They are geared to participate at a global level and are shaping the future of our beloved continent, Africa.

For centuries Africa and its peoples were subjected to imperialism and subsequent colonial domination. But Africa's time has come.



### **Letter**box

We look forward to your thoughts on the articles published in this issue and any news or information you would like to share with your fellow students and alumni. Tell us about yourself and what has inspired you to further your studies through Unisa. We would be especially interested to hear why you think higher education is important in a developing country like South Africa and, indeed, whether it is doing enough to remain relevant. Weigh in on the conversation by sending an email to younisa@ unisa.ac.za, or post a letter to the following address:

*YOUNISA*, Department of Institutional Advancement, PO Box 392, Unisa, 0003.

Please note that the editorial team reserves the right to edit and shorten articles if appropriate.

### Skills development and entrepreneurship: the panacea to solving Africa's challenges

It is an indubitable fact that the Africa of today is dissimilar from the Africa of the 60s, 70s and 80s. During that era, most African countries were burdened by the struggle for self-determination and liberation from colonialism. This was a toilsome undertaking and, no sooner had these countries gained independence, than they joined the fight to liberate other countries from the pangs of colonialism, while also dealing with varied domestic problems of their own.

In southern Africa, Zambia played a cardinal role in aiding the liberation movement. This was followed by various challenges arising from global politics and a global economic system that disfavours African countries' endeavours to gain economic self-reliance. Interestingly, Africa is still circumnavigating the means and ways to deal with high levels of poverty, disease, ignorance, conflict, poor technology and general underdevelopment. The situation is exacerbated by organisational chaos in governance, oppressive regimes, corruption, tribalism and opportunism, in addition to ideological mix-ups. While the majority of countries outside Africa are making steady progress at every level of human endeavour, Africa, despite being the richest continent, is still struggling to get a grip on its resources for the benefit and development of its people. Africa remains a "rich-poor person", who goes around like a panhandler asking for handouts.

With so much natural and human resources and relatively major investment in education, health and infrastructure, why should Africa remain a hobo and disfavoured?

### Africa remains a "rich-poor person", who goes around like a panhandler asking for handouts.

The answer to this question is complex, however, in the current epoch, it is my view that Africa should focus on skills development and dependable entrepreneurship, which, in the long run, will be the manufacturing base for the entire continent. Viewed over time, one can adduce that, for the most part, the African education system grooms students for white collar jobs, which is not a solution to the current economic challenges. We are still facing the same multifaceted threat of neo-colonialism in form of exploitation of Africa's natural resources by multinational companies.

The University of South Africa's model of creating education opportunities for the millions of youths across the continent should be commended, as it buoys up skills that are essential for entrepreneurship and Africa's general development. In addition to the above, African youth should use technological advances to cross-pollinate business ideas. This is the panacea to the multifaceted malaise Africa faces today. Quality skills development that responds to peculiar developmental glitches should be a cornerstone of the agenda of every African government.

> Bonaventure Mutale (Unisa Alumni Zambia Chapter Convenor)



### Giving to **Unisa** made easy

I was born short-sighted and started to wear spectacles while in high school. Studying has always been difficult, as I struggled to read on the chalkboard to the extent that I had to rely solely on what teachers said and not what they wrote.

After completing matric, I continued to study at the University of Limpopo's Turfloop Campus in 2009. It was difficult and, every day, I had to battle to find a front seat in order to be able to read the notes on the writing board. As we moved from one lecture hall to another for the various classes, I was not always able secure a place in the front row seats.

Since I come from a poor background and is, therefore, dependent on NSFAS funding, I could not afford lecture-specific study guides and, due to my This is my message to anyone with a sight, hearing or any other physical impairment: Unisa is there to ensure access to equal education for all!

short-sightedness, I also could not manage to copy the notes in class. Hence, in 2010, I lost hope and dropped out. However, I realised how convenient distance learning through Unisa could be and I registered for a Diploma in Security Management in 2012. I was able to study at my own pace and completed my studies and graduated in 2016. I am currently registered for a BTech Degree in Forensic Investigation.

Thanks to Unisa, I have obtained a tertiary qualification, despite my disadvantages. My study material always arrived on time and the lecturers are always available to assist me. This is my message to anyone with a sight, hearing or any other physical impairment: Unisa is there to ensure access to equal education for all! Thank you, Unisa!

> Thabang Bogopa

### **Domestic work –** my answer to higher education

In the current situation, as students demonstrate against expensive tertiary education, what is the solution for those of us who simply cannot afford to pay such fees? Do we let go of our dreams, because it's just too expensive? Or do we wait for government, or other bursary institutions, to fund our studies? If so, how long will we wait and how many students are on the waiting list?

### My solution? Domestic work! Yes, I said domestic work!

As a young girl in Malawi, my home country, I had all these dreams of what I would do after I finish school. However, when my father, the only breadwinner, was diagnosed with terminal cancer and passed away my dreams faltered for a while. I thought about what to do next. Do I just forget about my passion to work in broadcasting? How will I pay for my studies? Thankfully, a South African family took me in, to work for them as a domestic worker. When I got the work, I did not hesitate for a moment, nor did I consider what my friends would think of me or, even, what skills I would need for this new job. From the onset, however, I was honest and I told my employer of my ambitions and how I plan to achieve them. In August 2014, I applied to study for the Higher Certificate in Archives and Record Management at Unisa. I completed the course in June 2016 and I passed with six distinctions. I am currently studying towards a BA degree in Communication Science with Unisa, which I plan to finish in 2019.

From my salary as a domestic worker and without outside help, I have paid for my tuition and bought the prescribed books. I am proud of what I have achieved. I look to the future with high hopes, as my eyes are set on the prize, which is to work in the broadcasting industry. Domestic work is demanding, frustrating and tiring, but I was focused on my goal, which is to earn a salary to pay for my studies. I look at domestic work as a channel through which greatness can be achieved.

I therefore urge you, all my fellow students, who are struggling financially, to try to find work to fund your studies, even if it is menial work. Do not wait for help to come to you, rather go out and look for help. Don't look for "blessers", because God blessed you already, with life and a free will. Use it wisely and become a blessing to others. Do not wait for a bursary, like the Israelites waited for manna in the wilderness, rather do something with your hands to earn money to pay for your tuition fees.

Let us all be examples to those young children, especially those from the rural areas, who have lost hope of furthering their education due to their financial situation! Hopefully, the decision about funding will be resolved soon. In the meantime, let's keep #Defining our tomorrow with Unisa, our key to realising those long-standing dreams.

> Evelyn Chirwa

### **Technology is tops**

Technology assists in making learning fun and easy. It reduces the frustrations of having to submit written assignments the old-fashioned way, for instance, having to write to submit a handwritten assignment or posting it, and thus saves time and energy. Technology makes it possible for lecturers and learners to communicate in an efficient, practical and comfortable way. Technology thus enhances the teaching-learning experience. It gives lecturers a chance to express their point of view and to share their knowledge without being interrupted by students as would be the case with lectures at contact universities. By offering e-tutoring lessons, the learning experience has become more convenient.

Technology also gives students a chance to get to know fellow students and to assist and guide one another.

What's more, because of technology, students no longer have to worry about getting their study material on time, as they can access and download all of this through myUnisa. Students also have access to the myUnisa Wi-Fi, which allows them to do their research and to study without experiencing any pressure about time or lack of data and so forth.

There are advances in technology every day, which makes life easier for all of us.

> Shemane Mosaka

### Changing times and racism

Racism has been (and still is) used to destroy humanity. Defining and understanding the concept of racism is important if we want to find a solution to combat this scourge.

In liberal democratic systems, racism is defined as prejudice or the stereotyping – by destructive extremists – of baseless ideas about the "other". Many theorists have defined racism as being structural or institutional in nature. In South Africa, racism was institutionalised through the promulgation of racist laws, rules and regulations, such as the Bantu Education Act.

There were different markers of racism in our history: in some instances, skin colour was used to differentiate between peoples, and during the colonial era people of colour were kidnapped, held captive and traded as slaves. Throughout the history of the world, colour, religious identity, ethnicity and language were used as markers of race, with the sole intention of inferiorising others, usually to divide and rule.

The influential philosopher and writer Frantz Fanon acknowledged how deeply inculcated racism is: it not only about being discriminated against in labour markets. There are plenty of examples of pedagogical racism, spiritual racism, linguistic racism – and they are all damaging to the very fibre of society.

To advance the notion of decoloniality, we need to define racism in terms of the way it manifests now. Racism is about the differential, materialist domination of one race over another, but it begins with one person discriminating against another. In the end, all of humanity can only lose if we deny the significant contribution a unified, multicultural, multinational and multilingual society can make.

> Itumeleng Molefe



### In *Wordwise*, we take a closer look at interesting words or concepts that are often used in the university environment. Universities are in the business of knowledge: teaching existing knowledge or discovering new knowledge through research. However, how often do we consider the role that oral tradition plays in preserving and advancing knowledge?

Oral tradition is a form of communication where knowledge, art, ideas and cultural material are received, preserved and transmitted orally from one generation to another. A society transfers oral history, oral literature, oral law and other knowledge from one generation to the next through speech or song, without a writing system or in parallel to a writing system.

Oral tradition should not be confused with oral history. Oral tradition is information, memories and knowledge held in common by a group of people, over many generations. As an academic discipline, it refers both to a set of objects of study and a method by which they are studied.

(Source: Wikipedia)

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## I am an African

Africa is the second-largest continent, both in terms of size and population. The Nile, snaking through 11 countries, is the world's longest river, while the Sahara is the largest desert and the Victoria Falls the largest waterfall on the planet. However, Africa is known not only for its natural landmarks, breath-taking scenery and abundant wildlife; it also is a continent blessed with a rich cultural heritage and diversity.

Africa captures hearts and minds. Thabo Mbeki, former President and Unisa Chancellor, inspired with his moving speech titled "I am an African". YOUNISA asked alumni members to add their voice to his and tell us: "I am an African because ....". We were delighted to have received more than 200 replies. Unfortunately, we are not able to include all contributions in the magazine and to fit in more responses some were shortened. However, all contributions can be read on the alumni website, www.unisa.ac.za/alumni



I am an African because I am able to understand and practise the concept of **ubuntu**. Africa has diverse individuals that make us a colourful continent – I am proud to be an African!

I am an African because I respect and love people of different colour in the same way I love myself. I am an African because I respect the universe at large. I am an African because I believe in ubuntu: "Motho ke motho ka batho" (a person is a person because of other people).

I am an African Not because I can speak Swahili, Shona, Zulu or Xhosa But because my heart is Shaped like a question mark Just like Africa



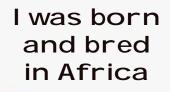


I'm an African because I believe in the **sustainable use of natural resources**; future generations will benefit from our conservation.

I am an African because I care. I am an African because I share. I am an African because I can never care without sharing.

I am an African because I give. I am an African because I love. I am an African because I can never love without giving.

I am an African because I let others stand on my shoulders as I stand on the shoulders of others. **Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu** 



I am an African because of my roots and upbringing. My parents and grandparents have all been Africans. I wouldn't be where and who I am today if it wasn't for the tough conditions I was raised under – the barefoot walks to school, shepherding family cows and goats, eating pap for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Cabbage, potatoes, eggs, vegetable seeds were some of the side-dishes. That's what makes me an African.

I am an African because of my love for my people and my continent. I am an African because we Africans are friendly and caring people.



"DO I WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE WELFARE OF ALL PEOPLE LIVING ON THIS CONTINENT?" IS THIS NOT THE ULTIMATE AND ONLY QUESTION THAT DEFINE WHETHER YOU ARE AN AFRICAN OR NOT?

I am an African because I bel ieve in African solutions to African challenges!



I am African not because of the colour of my skin but because of what I can do and contribute to the growth of the African continent.

I believe that the African continent and its challenges need the commitment of African people and an African style of leadership for Africa's renewal. Africa is a continent of natural resources like oil, gold, coal and natural gas, to name a few. I fully support the renewal of the African continent which was destroyed by colonialists. I am proud to say I am an African.



I am an African because I am enlightened and empowered Entrusted and assigned for Africa Placed in Africa for the African



l am an African because African values rooted in me proudly feed the "Africanness" in me. I am an African because I am determined to be part of the pioneers who will uplift the African continent and her people for future generations - to discover and implement innovative ways to boost the rise of Africa through the beneficial use of her arable land and favourable climatic conditions, her vast seas and ocean life. Robust nations add value to her wealth of natural resources through education and skills development. I am not leaving. I am here to stay, to discover, to teach, to build and to learn.





**I AM AN AFRICAN BECAUSE** I WAS BORN IN AFRICA AND AFRICA IS BORNE IN MY HEART.

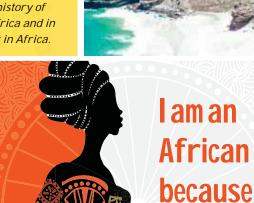


I am an African because I was born and bred in the abundant and mysterious wisdom of Africa, in the deep and hidden knowledge of Africans, in the hidden history of Africa, in the ubuntu of Africa and in the godly spirit abundant in Africa.

I am an African because my presence is felt everywhere I go. I choose my battles wisely – I embrace the ones I've won and learn from those I've lost.

can.

I am an African because God saw in me a change for Africa.



I am an African because of my oneness with and dependence on nature and the environment. Hence you will never see me hunting for fun and amusement. I am an African because my education is in the bushes where I am taught about life and its sacredness; not about prejudice and hatred. I am taught to always respect my elders, and those younger than me. I am an African because of the value and prestige we Africans used to bestow on our women.



I am an African because my heart beats Africa. I am an African because Africans are humble individuals who believe in themselves, who strive for unity on the African continent. They embrace good achievements and treat other people with the respect and dignity they deserve. They are a caring nation who believe that all resources should be shared equally among all the people who live on this continent. Africans always strive for excellence in everything they do. They don't discriminate in terms of colour, creed or religion.



I am proudly African. I love being an African, living in a village where there is a sense of humour. Ubuntu is what describes me as an African, being able to live with others in harmony, accepting one another, helping others, respecting one another.



I am an African because of the way I value and take education seriously. I know that education for myself is the only thing that can get me out of poverty. I am a hardworking and proud African woman – born in the village but that couldn't stop me from hustling. African hustle, that's within us.

I am African because I was born and raised and will most likely pass on in this land. It is my home in good and bad times. Being African may mean inferiority to the world but I know my land. It has built me strong no matter how hard, how poor, how deprived and alienated my people are, we have survived to be much stronger and to weather all storms.



## What it means to be an African university

Unisa's vision statement is bold and clear: the university aspires to become "the African university shaping futures in the service of humanity". But what defines an African university, and what distinguishes an African university from any other westernised university? The journey towards transforming and expressing its identity as an African university is not unique to Unisa, as over the past few years, higher education has been increasingly turning its attention to what the postcolonial university entails.

YOUNISA asked Professor Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Director of Scholarship at Unisa's Change Management Unit and listed among the ten greatest minds on decolonisation and decoloniality by the respected French newspaper Le Monde in 2016, to share his thoughts on the continuing struggle for an African university and the unfinished business of decolonisation. The expression 'decolonising the university' has become too common nowadays. What is still lacking is a clear understanding of precisely what that means and where the process of decolonising should start. We also need to understand efforts already made in this domain so as to avoid the shortcomings of the past.

The 'university in Africa' has a long history dating back to the year 859, when the University of Al Quaraouiyine was founded in Fez in Morocco. The precolonial African/Arabic/Muslim wellspring of the university in Africa is nevertheless only one of its three sources, as the African university also stems from an imperial/colonial past while simultaneously having an anticolonial African nationalist liberatory developmental foundation. The most enduring influence, however, has been that exerted by the western imperial/colonial tradition, from which South African universities emerged.

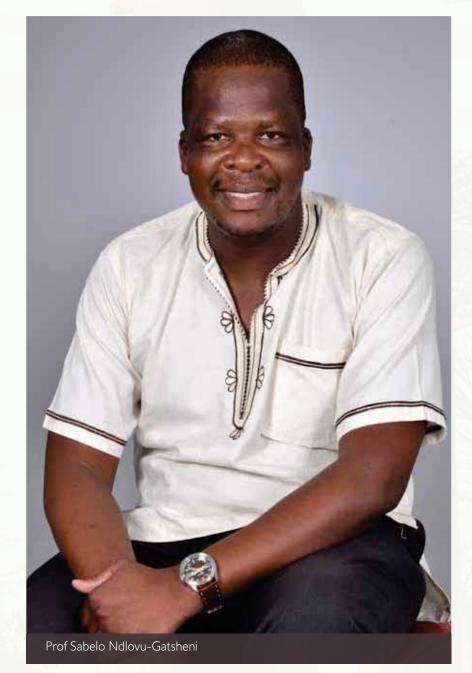
### Defining and creating the African university

The endeavour to free higher education from the grip of colonialism and to assist universities in Africa in becoming truly African universities is not a recent phenomenon. Fundamentally, this entails the formulation of a new philosophy of higher education informed by African histories, cultures, ideas, and aspirations as well as a thorough redefinition of the role of the university.

The Association of African Universities (AAU) was established in Morocco as early as 1967, with the main aim of formulating a new philosophy of higher education and developing institutions of higher learning that were truly African in nature.

Unfortunately, the 1970s were difficult years, and attempts to create an African university coincided with the realities of collapsing African economies. The 1972 AAU workshop entitled 'Creating the African University' took place within a context of crisis and was bound to fail, however well-meaning its resolutions on the invention of relevant universities reflecting an African identity and African soul.

The 1980s and 1990s were equally challenging years that saw the continued decline of African economies, the migration of academics to Europe and North America, the rising tide of political authoritarianism, and the marginalisation of Africa in global affairs.



We (African academics) cannot afford to be intellectual outsiders in our own land. We must reconnect with the buried alluvium of African memory, which must become the base for planting African memory anew in the continent and the world. - Ngugi wa Thiong

### Higher education in South Africa

The journey towards establishing and entrenching the identity of an African university was no easier in South Africa. From the outset, South African higher education was shaped by a strong racial and ethnic paradigm of difference that produced 'English universities,' 'Afrikaans universities,' 'universities for coloureds and Indians,' and 'universities for natives,' which were from 1959 designated as 'black' universities.

Although the quest to Africanise and decolonise South African universities began in the 1960s and 1970s, entailing largely superficial changes such as the renaming of universities, the appointment of black chancellors and vice-chancellors to take over the administration of universities, increasing the number of black academics and black students, and including some work by African academics in the curriculum; in South Africa this commenced only after the dismantlement of juridical apartheid in 1994. All that this achieved was the inclusion of Africans in the long-existing 'European game', the rules of which stayed the same. Che current decolonisation struggle, however, is aimed at changing the very rules of the game. It is about transforming from a 'university in Africa' into an 'African university'.

The current decolonisation struggle, however, is aimed at changing the very rules of the game. It is about transforming from a 'university in Africa' into an 'African university'. The 2015 Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) and 2016 Fees Must Fall (FMF) movements must be understood broadly as heirs to the long-standing struggle for an 'African university' and the wider decolonisation of Africa. What South African students proposed was the continuation of the struggle for decolonisation even after the dismantling of direct colonial administrations and juridical apartheid.

The RMF and FMF movements have drawn attention to the long-standing but unresolved issues of access by all to learning and education as promised by the South African Congress Alliance in the Freedom Charter of 1955; the rescuing of the university from capture by neo-liberal market forces and its repositioning as a public good; the rethinking and redefinition of the university as a truly African public institution serving African communities; the rethinking and rearticulation of the broader philosophical foundations of higher education in Africa to enhance relevance; the financing and funding of higher education to permit access by all; the decolonisation of epistemology, curriculum and institutional cultures of universities; the democratisation of student–staff relations to enhance teaching and learning; the use of indigenous languages for learning and teaching; an end to the dehumanising outsourcing of black workers; and the depatriarchalisation, deracialisation, and dewesternisation of universities.

### What is to be done?

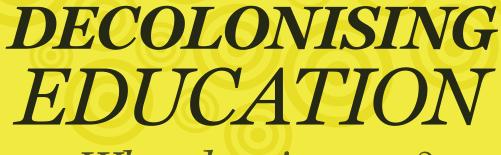
African academics need to engage in four processes that must underpin the current initiative of doing decolonial change. First, they have to secure Africa as a legitimate epistemic base from which to look at the world. As Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o warned, African academics cannot afford to be intellectual outsiders in our own land. We must reconnect with the buried alluvium of African memory, which must become the base for planting African memory anew in the continent and the world.

Second, African academics must consistently shift the geography and biography of knowledge. What is perceived to be 'global knowledge' often is in essence European and North

American knowledge. That centre must be moved so as to privilege Africa-centred knowledge.

Third, African academics need to invest in rethinking thinking itself. They must fully embrace the idea that all human beings are born into valid, legitimate and functional knowledge systems. An African-centred knowledge system is as valuable as a Eurocentric one.

Finally, African academics must be true to themselves and accept that they are products of 'westernised' universities, and consistently open up to the painstaking but decolonial process of learning to unlearn in order to relearn.



What does it mean?



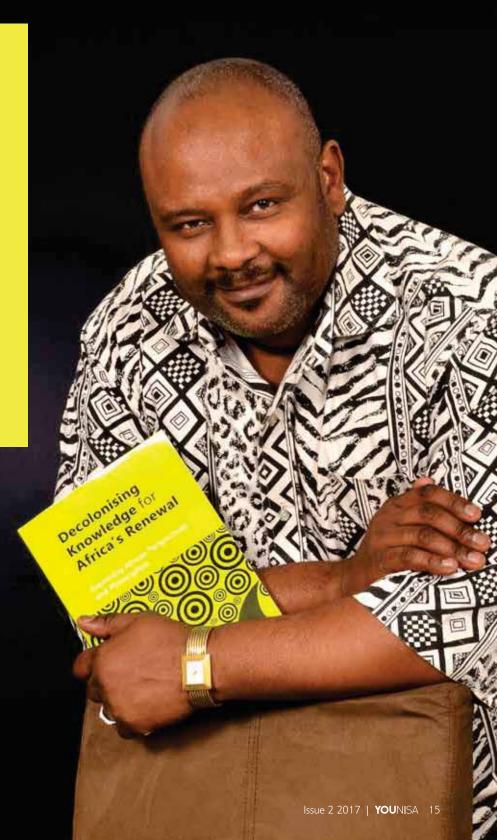
In 2015 and 2016, students in South Africa stood up to demand, not only a free education, but a decolonised, African-focused education. "The call for the decolonisation of knowledge is the ultimate call for freedom. It is the call for an African identity that affirms African values and beliefs and looks critically at Western hegemony," says Professor Vuyisile Msila, Director: Leadership in Higher Education in Unisa's Change Management Unit.

To get a better understanding of what the decolonisation of knowledge entails, **YOUNISA** asked him to share with readers more of his thoughts on the topic.

#### Professor Vuyisile Msila's latest book, Decolonising knowledge for Africa's renewal, was launched in August.

Featuring essays from some of the world's leading minds on African perspectives, the book explores how to create a society that is devoid of colonialism and is ready for a renewed Africa. "The book highlights the practical steps that need to be taken to decolonise knowledge and ultimately achieve an African Renaissance," explains Professor Msila.

Decolonising knowledge for Africa's renewal includes contributors from a wide range of academic institutions and expertise, both locally and internationally, including Kenya, Nigeria, Malawi, South Africa and the Unites States of America.





### There is a call to "decolonise (higher) education", but what does it mean and what is involved in the process?

Decolonising higher education refers to bringing forth a rehumanising education, stripped of colonial and apartheid vestiges that seek to dehumanise. A decolonising education upholds the interests and values of Africans, as it endeavours to overcome the remnants of Eurocentrism. Eurocentrism is debilitating to African culture and identity. Decolonising also implies the disruption of the current systems and others might even speak of the need to re-Africanise in order to decolonise. The call to decolonise is a call to overhaul an objectionable system, which is based on colonial, demeaning and segregating ideologies; it is a concept that has an even deeper meaning than transformation.

## What would the decolonisation of the curriculum entail?

The decolonisation of the curriculum entails and implies a number of things. Firstly, it entails changing the mindset of the teaching staff. The decolonisation project will stall, and the curriculum will hardly change, without the positive mindset of the teaching staff. This means the necessary development of a decolonial consciousness and this is the "mother of all" challenges when it comes to curriculum transformation. All other things will follow when the teacher embraces and believes in the new decolonial paths.

Secondly, what is critical in the decolonisation of the curriculum is the preparation of students. Students, like their teachers, need to believe in the new approaches to curriculum theory. The curriculum helps to define the mission of the university. It is through the curriculum that we may see the values, culture and worldviews critical in an institution.

## How will the Africanisation of the curriculum support decolonisation and transformation?

Africanisation of the curriculum supports decolonisation in that it will bring the idea of identity and culture to the debates. People like Cabral talk about a need to "deAfricanise" in order to "reAfricanise". These initiatives are critical when one focuses on the affirmation and inclusion of African cultures in the curriculum.

### Is there not a danger that the Africanisation of the curriculum might result in isolating ourselves knowledge wise?

The idea of Africanisation as ghettoisation of knowledge is a deliberate misinterpretation. Our vision, as we seek to decolonise, is a vision based on openness, not closure. That is what the ideal African university should do. But, what is happening now is that the African institution is too open to knowledge produced in Europe and North America and too closed to the local, where it is situated. We need a bouquet of knowledges though, where knowledges are perceived and regarded as equal. For centuries, the African university has marginalised that which is African. Africanising the curriculum is also about presenting Africa from a position of strength; presenting to the world its own (African) face.

## Will the Africanisation of the curriculum apply equally to all fields of study?

Yes, it should. So far, the Africanisation and decolonisation debate has been relegated to the social sciences only. People assume that it is an imperative of the social sciences; however, the truth is that even the natural sciences have to undergo Africanisation. What does that mean? It means taking Africa seriously, recognising it as being epistemically fecund when exploring its knowledges.

### How do you move the centre?

Decolonising the curriculum means moving the centre of knowledge. The Western epistemology states that even if we say we accept the global economy of knowledge, it has a centre and that centre is Europe. Decolonising means moving that centre from its current position to other centres. Decolonising means opening up, particularly, subjugated knowledges. We establish what we call, "ecologies of knowledge". This means that as we decolonise and attempt to move the centre, we also have an obligation to democratise knowledge. Sometimes this is met with resistance, because role players will display epistemic deafness, which tends to delay the endeavours to move towards the centre knowledge.

## To decolonise is to finally breathe

he student protest movements, #Rhodesmustfall and #Feesmustfall, which hijacked the media space and attracted much public attention since 2015, emphasised the urgent need for revisiting higher education in South Africa. Statues and fees were merely the symptoms of a deeper dissatisfaction with the status quo of higher education in South Africa, which was largely toeing colonial lines. The need to decolonise education, however, has been an ongoing conversation at Unisa for many years.

It officially started in 2011, when the Africa Decolonial Research Network (ADERN) was established in the College of Human Sciences (CHS). The network consisted of scholars who grew tired of the lack of change and academic spaces being stuck in a colonial mindset and thinking. ADERN organised (and continues to organise) readings groups and seminars and also a visit to Barcelona where they attended a Summer School on Decoloniality. While ADERN has since moved out of the college, the network of decoloniality scholars within the organisation has grown and, in 2014, the CHS was ready to host its first Summer School on Decoloniality, positioning itself as a pioneer of decoloniality scholarship in South Africa.

Opened by former South African president and current Unisa chancellor, Thabo Mbeki, the first summer school focused on issues of power, knowledge and identity linked to decoloniality. Mbeki emphasised that there is a great need for progressive African scholarship to ensure the kind of progressive change required on the continent. He highlighted that the challenges facing the continent are violence and instability, poverty and underdevelopment, nation building as well as national unity and social cohesion, among others. "While these are not new challenges," he said, "the approaches conceptualised to address them have either failed or yielded very few results." He added, "Progressive scholarship is therefore required; African leaders will fail to remake this continent without it."

This first summer school paved the way for future schools filled with rich thought and dialogue. In 2015, the daughter of decolonial thinker and writer, Frantz Fanon, and president of the Frantz Fanon Foundation, Professor Mireille Fanon-Mendes France, delivered the keynote address, which was nothing short of provocative. She reflected on the traits of colonialism that still haunt France to date and on how discrimination and racial profiling are systematic in a "civilised" France".



Former South African president and current Unisa chancellor, Thabo Mbeki, opened the first Summer School on Decoloniality.

The success of the summer school continued in 2016 and 2017, with international decolonial scholars such Dr Enrique Dussel (Professor at the Universidad Autonoma de Mexico), Professor Ramon Grosfoguel (University of California, Berkeley), Professor Nelson Maldonado-Torres (Rutgers University) and Professor CK Raju (Centre for Studies in Civilisations) as well as local scholars, Professor Sabelo Gatsheni-Ndlovu (Head: AMRI), Professor Tendayi Sithole (University of Witwatersrand), Professor Tendayi Sithole (Unisa) and Professor Siphamandla Zondi (University of Pretoria).

Professor Puleng Segalo, Head of Research and Graduate Studies in the College of Human Sciences, who has also been involved with the summer school since its inception, says the aim of the summer school is to create a space for scholars to engage on the topic of decoloniality and with issues of epistemological violence within the academic sphere; a form of violence which ultimately bleeds into the broader society. Furthermore, the intention is to confront the perpetual coloniality of knowledge, power and being.

"To decolonise is to confront, challenge and reject the status quo. This came about as many academics, students and activists felt suffocated within the various spaces they occupy and wanted to 'speak back'. Decoloniality is about acknowledging that knowledge is produced from a body, which then implies that we think, feel and act from a particular position. Knowledge is socially and historically situated and with this, one can see how the idea of universalism becomes problematic," she explains.



She further adds, "Decolonisation is about where we locate ourselves. Many students felt that they could not locate themselves in the courses they are being taught and as a result felt the need to call for the decolonisation of curriculum within institutions of higher learning. The academic space has been one of the many platforms that remind us of the legacy of apartheid and colonialism."

Professor Segalo says that, since hosting the first summer school in 2014, the Unisa decolonial project has started to progressively shift the centre from privileging Eurocentric/ Western forms of knowledge to centring and allowing space for pluriversality, where multiple forms of knowing and understanding the world are offered space. "As a result, the college has introduced an honours module on decoloniality; this module is not limited to any specific discipline as the idea was to break away from disciplinary boundaries. Furthermore, we have introduced discussion sessions live on Unisa Radio, a platform that takes the conversation outside the confines of the academic space. The number of postgraduate students using a decolonial lens as a theoretical framework has also increased as a result of many staff members having attended the summer school and other related decolonial seminars and gaining a theoretical grounding that assists them to guide students through their research journeys," Professor Segalo further clarifies.

Other outputs, she continued, included books published on decoloniality, special decoloniality journal issues, as well as having a voice in the news space. "The university, like other institutions of higher learning in South Africa, is currently going through a transformation process and, among others, this entails having to go through re-curriculation processes, where modules are reworked and this has created an opportunity of ensuring that a decolonised lens is used when new study materials are developed," she explains.

"Finally, a number of Unisa academics are increasingly invited by other institutions as speakers and contributors in their transformation processes. The college has also established The Archive Project, which aims at ensuring that local artists' work is given space in the library. This is aimed at making audible the voices of local artists that have for a long time not deemed as 'academic'."

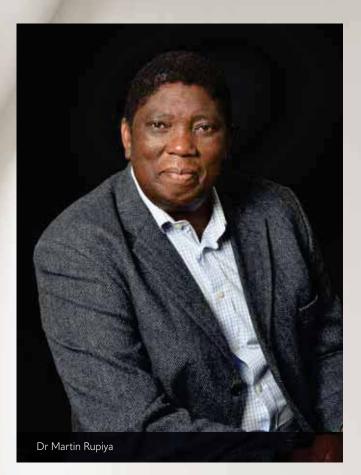


Looking ahead to the 2018 summer school, Professor Segalo says that the college has ensured that the majority of the speakers are South African. "This shift was a conscious effort to allow space for engaging with our local experiences and to offer a platform to our scholars, who have been engaging with decolonial work. Additionally, we intend to have panel sessions with non-profit organisations who are doing decolonial work on the ground."

Concluding, Professor Segalo emphasises that decolonisation is not an arrival, but a historical ongoing process, which engages imperialism and persistent colonial tendencies at multiple levels. "We have long called for the acknowledgement of people's agency, identity, language, history, and ethics, from their own vantage points. We will continue to call for the space to breathe."

## MDEA is contributing to credible, free and fair elections

Thus far, 2017 has provided an endless supply of global, continental and national drama, intrigue and conflict, including Brexit, Trumpism, Russia, China, North Korea and Syria, while, on the African continent, we have seen reluctant or overly zealous regime change. The time and need for sound and transparent governance and ethical leadership, on our continent and worldwide, have never been greater. In this regard, the Management of Democratic Elections in Africa (MDEA) programme plays an important role– especially when it comes to the critically important acceptance of the outcomes of properly managed democratic elections. This will only happen when there is trust in the transparency and ethics of the election process.



Dr Martin Rupiya, Researcher for the Institute for African Renaissance Studies (IARS) at Unisa, explains that MDEA harnesses the technical expertise of South Africa's Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), and benefits from the intellectual capital and extensive experience of IARS, and of institutions and capacity building projects in Africa.

#### Growing demands by African countries

Since 1999, South Africa has been assisting over 10 African countries' Election Management Boards (EMBs) with technical and human resource training and support. The capacity building is aimed at enhancing the preparation and management of national, local and presidential elections within their own countries. However, the growing demands by African countries to undertake urgent, but specialised, capacity building soon revealed a need to engage with institutions that are properly equipped to undertake the specialised task.

In support of a memorandum of understanding between Unisa and the IEC, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has provided funding for the development the MDEA programme. It certainly has grown since its inception in 2011.

Credible, free and fair elections are at the centre of electoral participatory democracy and constitutionalism, which is in line with the African Union's African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007). Speaking on the importance of credible elections and the MDEA programme's involvement, Professor Mandla Makhanya, Principal and Vice-Chancellor at Unisa, says that the gains from free and fair elections extend far beyond the election process itself; they contribute, in a very significant way, to embedding a culture of responsible citizenship, on the one hand, and the holding to account of those who are elected into office, on the other. "One trusts that, over time, as the democratic election processes mature and are seen to be working as they should, voter fear and apathy, which are the outcomes of corruption, dictatorship and scare tactics, will be replaced by informed participation. Voter education and demonstrably free and fair elections, managed and run by well-trained electoral bodies and officers, are the only antidotes to these ills; hence, the importance of the MDEA programme," says Makhanya.

#### **Building a community of practice**

Rupiya explains that the MDEA programme is all about serving Africa and that the progress made thus far has been impressive and is steadily shaping a community of practice in the management of elections in Africa.

"The MDEA programme entails a four-week residential course, hosted twice per year (during June and July) at Unisa. On average, 30 people, from about 15 African countries, enrol for the programme. Based on the initial success, the second approach, known as the country-based MDEA programme, was introduced. In this instance, the host country pays for the training. On average, 50 facilitators are trained in the country-based programme. South Africa, Botswana (twice) and Lesotho have done this and, as a result, boast a high number of trained EMB officials within their structures," explains Rupiya. Right now, MDEA-IARS has received requests for country-based training from Malawi, Mozambique, Kenya and Liberia.

The MDEA programme has established a special MDEA alumni chapter, which provides alumni with networking opportunities with former graduates, organised as subregional chapters in the Southern African Development Community (Gaborone), East African Community (Dar es Salaam), Economic Community of West African States (Lagos) and the Economic Community of Central African States (Lusaka). North Africa, however, remains outstanding.

The first MDEA Election Observer Mission, which is composed of facilitators and alumni, was also recently established.

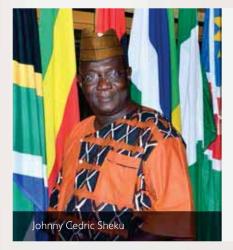
The MDEA programme is uniquely designed to strengthen and promote electoral democracy and develop knowledge and expertise in election management and administration through the provision of education and training programmes for electoral management bodies. Since its inception in 2011, 365 officials have been trained and have benefited from generous funding by the USAID.

The capacity building is aimed at enhancing the preparation and management of national, local and presidential elections within their own countries.



YOUNISA spoke to some of the students, who were in South Africa for this year's programme, to hear their thoughts on the current state of elections in their respective countries and what they hoped to take back home from the MDEA programme. Posing proudly in front of their respective countries' flags, this is what they had to say:







#### Varnetta Johnson Freeman (Liberia):

"Liberia goes to elections in October (2017) and this election is very critical to our democracy, because it's a transitional period for us. This will be the first election without any interruptions – such as war or any kind of coup. It is also very critical, because we have been through 14 years of civil war, which was very brutal, so these elections, if not managed properly, could just take us backwards. I work for an organisation that has a civil society arm and a media arm. The role of the media, in elections, is very critical, because it has the power to incite people to do the wrong thing, but also the power to educate people to do the right thing. Whatever I'm gaining from this training, I'll use back home, as I go about my work as a journalist and also as a civil society activist. I'm also going to use the skills that I have gained from this training to report on events in a different way; different to the way that every other media practitioner is reporting. I want to, as an example, focus on positively highlighting women's participation in the elections."



#### Johnny Cedric Sheku (Sierra Leone):

"I'm a Senior Electoral Officer at the Managing Department Unit of the National Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone. The main objective for coming here, to Unisa, for this programme, is about capacity building for our EMB. For the past four years, we have been sending colleagues to participate in the programme and to capacitate themselves so that we can strengthen the professionalism of the commission. Also, the aim is to go back and spread the objectives of this programme. The MDEA programme is a very interesting and educative programme and, in my view, it's not just about learning, but also about going back home and sharing what I have learnt."



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#### Nomvula Dlamini (Swaziland):

"I work for the Elections and Boundaries Commission in Swaziland. I manage and monitor elections at a regional level. We will be having our elections in 2018, when we will be electing our members of parliament at constituency level. The reason why I came for this course was to gain more experience as we prepare for the elections. I want to learn how to manage, not just elections, but democratic elections. When I left Swaziland, we were doing voter education and civic voter education, so I wanted to learn more skills in this regard. The course has been very insightful and I have learnt so much already. I am hoping that when I go back to my country, I would have gained more experience and skills, and the ability to share what I've learnt."





### Bridgit Ndong (Kenya):

"The reason I chose to do this course is because I've learnt, from the previous elections to date and from the recent nominations, that the Kenyan voters' mindset has changed completely. People are voting according to their conscience and they are more aware of their rights. I believe this course is a steering point for me and it will also steer the electoral process. It is a learning experience and it will improve my view and expectations of what a proper democratic election should look like."







"In Nigeria, when it to comes to elections and voting, there was a certain degree of apathy. However, this has changed since 2015. Nigerians have started to realise that politicians are not doing what is expected of them, so citizens came out and really voted for the change they desired. I chose to participate in this programme so that I could be updated on some of the modern electoral systems. Also, I'm enjoying exchanging views with other participants from countries, because it gives me a clear view of what I want to achieve in the near future."



#### Alistair Kaleji (Zambia):

"We've had our general elections in 2016 and so far so good in terms of Zambians understanding what elections are and the purpose of voting. It was great to see large numbers turn up to vote. In terms of the MDEA programme, this is a capacity building programme targeted at EMBs, but the most important part is that they are also targeting civil society organisations, because these are our partners when it comes to elections and voter education. I'll apply the knowledge I have acquired from participating in the programme when I get back home, because in our organisation, we regularly engage with stakeholders and, to promote capacity building, we also train our staff. Therefore, this is cutting across everything, as we are dealing with human rights, democracy and other factors. I truly feel I'm doing this course at the right time."



Tshepang Monare



Tshepang Monare (Electoral Commissions Forum of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries):

"We support all the SADC country member states in terms of elections. We want them to come together for peer reviews and capacity building. Recently, we observed elections in Lesotho. Our observations are very different, in the sense that we do not pronounce if an election was free and fair. Our work is to assist and ensure that they are following legislation. I have learnt a whole lot from this course, which is going to assist me in my work as an advocacy officer. Now I will have a rooted understanding of how elections are conducted and I have also gained more insight, as we have been learning about elections in other countries through case studies."

### A day in the life of ...



### A day in the life of the SARChI Chair in Development Education

he Department of Science and Technology (DST)/National Research Foundation (NRF) South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) Chair in Development Education at Unisa is committed to moving the higher education system beyond post-colonial theorisations towards transformative intervention.

The chair introduces a new pedagogy in academic research and citizenship education, which takes human development as the goal. Through its research, postgraduate teaching and community engagement programmes, it seeks answers to some of the most taxing and exciting questions about development, knowledge production and science. It explores what kind of transformative actions is needed for both restorative action and sustainable human development in Africa, and elsewhere, and investigates how key areas of disciplinary knowledge production (such as science, economics, education and law) can be reconstituted to bring about just and human-centred development on the continent.

YOUNISA captured a typical day in the life of the SARChI Chair.



### Meet the team

The SARChI Chair in Development Education has three staff members: Chair incumbent, Professor Catherine Odora Hoppers (middle); Programme Administrator, Tebogo Buntu (left); and Personal Assistant, Charity Mnisi.



Staff members go through their e-mails.

### 08:30

Professor Hoppers convenes a meeting with the team to map out the day and to discuss plans for the forthcoming SARChI Retreat. The SARChI Retreat is held every November and it brings together the cohort of international and national fellows, advisory faculty of elders, SARChI postgraduate students, selected vice-chancellors, different government officials and opinion makers.

Also under discussion is the Department of Science and Technology Interface Conference, which is funded separately by the DST. This conference brings together scientists from 17 universities and science councils, their students and other knowledge holders from across South Africa. The conference will take place after the SARChI Retreat.

The SARChI team goes through the pre-retreat activities such as the postgraduate student defence session and visits to communities where transformative interventions have been led by the elders and the SARChI alumni.



Tebogo Buntu and Charity Mnisi draft the memos for the retreat to prepare them for signatures by the University management.

### 12:30

Professor Hoppers participates in a Skype conference with the PASCAL network, which has its origins in a conference hosted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

### 13:30

Tebogo Buntu sends students information regarding their studies and follows up on her e-mail queries, while Charity Mnisi makes travel arrangements for Professor Hoppers.

### 14:00

Professor Hoppers attends a meeting with the DST to update them on the Retreat and the Interface Conference.

### **16:30**

The team wraps up for the day before leaving the office.

#### In a nutshell

The SARChl Chair in Development Education is funded by the Department of Science and Technology, administered by the National Research Foundation and hosted by Unisa. The Chair follows a transdisciplinary outlook through the constitution of fellows in fields like quantum physics, law, economics, medicine and the history of science from all over the world including South Africa. The Chair has also established an International Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) Advisory Faculty to promote dialogue, co-existence and co-determination in knowledge production.

AFRICAN HEALTH LEADERS

Chair holder, Professor Hoppers, has an extensive list of publications to her name and is considered by many as an African leader.



Transforming Society · Securing Rights

Celebrating

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## *Alumnus* championing *human rights*

By Busisiwe Mahlangu

If the responsibility of upholding, respecting, protecting, promoting and fulfilling the rights as contained in the Bill of Rights.

The seemingly complex task of upholding human rights is an area in which Buang Jones (32) thrives. An attorney by profession and alumnus of the University of South Africa, Buang has been the provincial manager of the Gauteng office of the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) since April 2017. The United Nations recently accredited the SAHRC as an 'A' status national human rights institution in the world.

"I oversee and manage the provincial operations of the Gauteng Provincial Division of the South African Human Rights Commission," he says. It is a position that enables him to ensure the effective and dual implementations of the SAHRC mandate, including both its provincial annual performance and strategic plans.

Buang shares that his work is not far removed from his childhood dream, which was to bring recourse to the social injustices he had witnessed within his environment. He would ponder endlessly even at that young age, he says, "on what could remedy the effects of apartheid – a system that offered black people inferior government services".

At the time, he knew the socioeconomic conditions that were evident in his hometown of Bloemfontein could not be ignored. The persistent lack of amenities such as water, electricity, health care and sanitation, combined with rampant social ills such as racism, poverty, economic inequalities and other injustices, spawned an unstoppable motivation within him to use the law to bring about social change.

When Buang registered for his first law degree with Unisa after a stint at North-West University, he says he had these experiences in mind. He felt that people did not know how to go about finding redress for those infringements.

His current role fits this scenario perfectly as he is tasked with fostering public understanding of human rights. "We have to keep ensuring a human rights approach to policy-making so that any policies passed by government are consistent with the Constitution," he maintains.

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Buang acknowledges that even though the SAHRC has made positive strides since its establishment, more work still needs to be done. He argues that without a knowledge of human rights, people cannot claim their rights. While the SAHRC is accessible in all the provinces, it also has the hard task of creating public awareness in order to help develop a better understanding of the county's Constitution.

"Many people do not know the lengths to which we go to address issues especially those that you hear of in the public domain. Recent cases, especially those that have garnered publicity, have, for instance, warranted us to lobby the legislature and other authorities to influence outcomes. We have in many instances acted as an intermediary between the people and government, especially where the government was found to have violated people's rights. In those cases alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and litigations that redress the infringement of rights were used."

Buang believes that for a human rights culture to prosper and social justice to prevail, public education is key. "This inherently places state organs at the forefront of the dissemination of such knowledge and, together with non-governmental organisations and civil society, contribute immensely towards the transformation of society," he says.

It does not take long to identify some of the many hopes Buang has for his own life. "My age can still afford me to expand into other areas and one day become a diplomat for the country, a chief executive in a private or public sector and possibly a judge in the court of law. All are underpinned by a legal background," he says.

Buang's life is fully anchored in church where he serves as a preacher. His role, he says, is entwined with the values he embraced during his student days at Unisa which required him to be self-driven, disciplined and motivated.



By Nomshado Lubisi



Duduzile Mlilo, an alumnus of Unisa's Department of Art History, Visual Arts and Musicology, recently received an exciting opportunity to exhibit her artwork at the Pretoria Art Museum. With her artwork centring on the deaf and women abuse, and having received an award for being one of the top students when she obtained her multimedia degree, there can be no doubt that Mlilo's work is refreshingly unique.

Speaking to YOUNISA, she says her fascination with the deaf stems from having an older brother, who is deaf. This gave her the vantage point of growing up with him and experiencing the world with him. Through that experience, she has learnt to see the world from a different perspective.

Mlilo says she was not really motivated to study art, as she wanted to be a doctor, but she did not meet the admission requirements. "And so, my father filled in my university application forms and chose advertising as a career path which had visual and multimedia subjects in it," she reveals.

While she is still discovering her capabilities and abilities as an artist, and what art means to her as an individual, she says she is passionate about capturing moments, be it in her writing, sketches or even her photography.

Her artwork that is based on women abuse, she says, was created with the intent to provide perspective on the current reports of abuse, murder and violence against woman in South Africa. "I wanted to give them a voice," she explains, "because I was moved by the #menaretrash discourse and I tried to imagine this view from a deaf person's perspective. So, I decided to ask a deaf woman what her take was on the news stories about violent acts perpetrated against women in South Africa."

In her exhibition, which ran in July, she used a series of photographs to illustrate her poem, *A woman screams*, by selecting key words and using sign language to show the representation of the words by a young lady, named Morongwa, who is hearing-impaired. The poem reads as follows:

A woman screams! Her fear, her grief, Her suffering, Her **only sound!** She is abused, She is raped, She is murdered! Her fear, Her grief, Her suffering, Her **only sound!** 

She elaborates that the photos show the sign language representation of the words from the poem and the intent is to freeze the word for a more lasting impression. The hands of the signer are coated in dust to add an emotive element to the word, almost similar to how a word, spoken with a certain pitch or tone, would cause a different experience compared to monotone sound.

"Sign language," she explains, "is a visual language and the gravity of how inadequate our sight is, will be better experienced when confronted with a visual rendition of a language that only a few can decode."

Mlilo's intent with the work is to raise awareness of how these disheartening stories, which we view on the news every day, can actually be more frightening to the disabled. She further explains, "Sometimes, their crying out leads to the salvation! Sometimes, ... most times, it is too late. We often hear, after the fact, people saying, 'I heard her say she wanted help, but I didn't think it was so bad'. Now, imagine how it must be for an individual who signs out for help? Who has a chance of hearing that?"

She says exhibiting at the Pretoria Art Museum was a humbling experience. She is also very grateful to have had the backing and support of Dr Gwen Miller, Senior Lecturer in the School of Arts, who offered wonderful advice and encouragement.

Looking ahead, Mlilo says that while she is not working on any new projects, she is hard at work on building her brand and is excited about what the future holds.

## Everything happens for a reason, including prison!

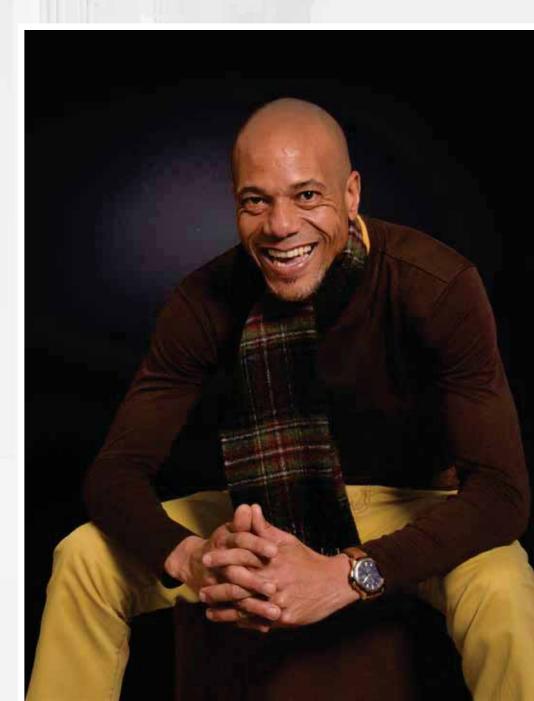
Everything happens for a reason, they say, but Psychology lecturer and PhD student Mbongiseni Mdakane is still figuring out the reason behind the 10 years he spent in a prison cell. "I did introspection while I was there, asking myself why I was where I was; what was the meaning of my being in prison? You could say it was because of circumstances but you never know the real reason until a later stage. Only then can you say, 'Ah, so this is why it happened'."

Meanings behind meanings are starting to emerge for Sowetoborn Mdakane, who poured his heart and soul into studying psychology as a way to heal. "My heart was broken while I was in prison. All that negative energy... I needed something to focus on, something positive to take my mind off things. Some people drink alcohol as a way of forgetting; I drown my sorrows in academic work. That's where I find my solace."

It's clearly an outlet that works. Mdakane completed his master's in Psychology cum laude in 2016, and it was the same with his undergraduate studies. This was despite undeniably difficult circumstances.

"I was released from Leeuwkop Correctional Centre on 22 October 2010, a Friday. The previous day, I was writing my exam and feeling so much anxiety. I hadn't been outside for 10 years and I was worrying about how people would perceive me, and at the same time, I had exam anxiety."

His exam anxiety turned out to be unwarranted. Mdakane passed that test with flying colours and a year later, in 2011, completed his BA Psychology with distinction.



### Open and shut, inside and out

Less straightforward was his experience on the outside and the reception he has received as a person with a criminal record for robbery. On the one hand, doors have opened for Mdakane on the strength of his excellent academic record; on the other hand, some doors remain shut.

One of the first to open was that of Professor Eduard Fourie of Unisa's Psychology department. "Prof Fourie is involved in community psychology and I did a community psychology module in 2010, before I was released. I wasn't aware of any community except the prison community, so I wrote about that and got 99% for the paper," he says. "So I came here, to Psychology, in January 2011 to see Prof Fourie."

One thing led to another. Initially, he volunteered as a peer helper with Unisa's Career Counselling and Academic Development Directorate. After about seven months, he was appointed on contract at the university's Finance Department, doing bank reconciliations. He also co-founded and became deeply involved in Inside-Out, Outside-In, a community engagement and outreach project for the empowerment of offenders. Mdakane is probably uniquely qualified to be

"I was released from Leeuwkop Correctional Centre on 22 October 2010, a Friday. The previous day, I was writing my exam and feeling so much anxiety. I hadn't been outside for 10 years and I was worrying about how people would perceive me, and at the same time, I had exam anxiety." involved in a project of this kind. While serving his sentence, he became an Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) tutor, trained as a peer counsellor and completed the larger portion of his BA in Psychology. He also understands all too well the stresses and strains of incarceration.

As he used to say to his professors: "At 4pm, when the cells are locked, you go home. We never go home."

### Taking the past home

When he did finally go home in late 2010, his past went with him. As an ex-offender, he has so far not been permitted to register as a research psychologist, despite having served his sentence and achieved brilliant academic results.

"It hurts. You have been duly sentenced and served time; you have been incarcerated to pay for your crimes," Mdakane says. "Having paid, the stigma of a criminal record stays with you, like another form of punishment."

He refuses to give in to negative thinking. "I just keep moving. Challenges come and go, and I brush them away and forge ahead. And yes, it is possible that an offender can outlive their criminal career and reach the point where crime doesn't make sense."

Mdakane observes that "recidivism" is a term familiar to most people, meaning the tendency for ex-offenders to reoffend. Much less familiar is the word "desistance", defined as the cessation of offending or other anti-social behaviour.

This contrast was the focus of his master's thesis, the topic of which was "Defying the odds of recidivism: an ex-offender's narratives of desistance".

Now a Psychology lecturer on contract at Unisa, Mdakane is working on his proposal for his PhD and continuing his work on the Inside-out, Outside-in South African Corrections Interest Group. "There are a multitude of offenders who would like to pursue studies or careers, and we help them do that." This wide-ranging support includes donating books, holding career expos at correctional facilities and assisting offenders to find funding for their studies, among other things. While his future is still uncertain, there are some things he is sure of. "I know that I love what I am doing and I know my niche area. I have first-hand experience and can share and integrate my life experience with my research experience. What I bring is unique."

Ah. Perhaps this is why it all happened.

## RESEARCH COULD PREVENT SOME SIDE-EFFECTS OF CANCER TREATMENT

Chemotherapy treatment for cancer is notoriously unpleasant. The good news is that Unisa biochemistry researchers may have found a way to ease some of the side-effects of treatment, notably the debilitating fatigue most patients experience.

"The problem with chemotherapy is that it does not only kill cancer cells but normal ones as well. That's why patients on treatment feel so tired and have other side-effects such as nausea, diarrhoea and hair loss. With our strategy, it's possible that patients undergoing treatment might not feel quite so exhausted as is usually the case," says Professor Monde Ntwasa of Biotechnology, Department of Life and Consumer Sciences at the College of Agriculture at Unisa.

Simply put, his research group's strategy is to sabotage the cancer cells during chemotherapy by bringing in pyruvate. This is a molecule the body produces all the time when it breaks down glucose. When pyruvate is introduced externally, however, in tandem with chemotherapy, cancer cells can't cope and they die.



Prof Monde Ntwasa

### TARGETING FAST-GROWING CELLS

Fast-growing cells in the body are found in hair follicles, nails, the lining of the stomach, the bowels and the mouth. Why they are so important in research on cancer treatment is that cancer cells, too, are fast growing. Conventional chemotherapy targets all fast-growing cells, normal and cancerous alike, and so both kinds are adversely affected when chemotherapy is carried out.

The question is: how will fast-growing normal cells react when pyruvate is introduced? Will they change their metabolic programming and, if so, recover from chemotherapy? Or will they, like cancer cells, fight a losing battle and die?

At this point, the Ntwasa team's findings indicate that their pyruvate strategy works in protecting non-fast-growing cells during chemotherapy, so side-effects such as tiredness would be eased. The rest, from hair loss to diarrhoea, will likely come as the research proceeds.

Some of their research findings are already being published. Plos One, an international peer-reviewed journal, will later in 2017 publish an article Ntwasa has authored on how pyruvate can protect a normal lung cell from chemotherapy-induced death.

### FIRST OBESITY, NOW CANCER

Ntwasa, who joined Unisa in late 2016 and delivered his inaugural lecture on 3 August 2017, is quick to say that pyruvate itself is not new. "It has been patented by others for obesity. What is new is our strategy of introducing it exogenously (from an external source) during chemotherapeutic treatment."

This strategy has already passed its first hurdle: intensive laboratory testing use fruit flies. The flies are kept in vials and given food laced with a chemotherapeutic agent. Pyruvate is then introduced and the researchers monitor their recovery from the chemotherapy.

Apart from the burden of chemotherapy, these are healthy flies, not flies that have been genetically manipulated to induce illness. This is a deliberate part of the research strategy. "We wanted to see the effects of our strategy on normal cells," says Ntwasa, who previously lectured at Wits University and has a PhD in Biochemistry from Cambridge University.

The next phase of the team's research will go several significant steps further.

"What we would like to do in the pre-clinical phase is check whether the strategy works with all cancers and all combinations of chemotherapeutic drugs, and how it interacts with fast-growing normal cells."



### WHY THE FRUIT FLY?

In the meantime, a question begging to be answered is why the fruit fly is the chosen candidate for the team's research.

The answer is that the organisation of fruit fly genes is very similar to that of human genes, which is why the insect has been used for genetic research since the start of the 20th century.

Ntwasa himself is a fan of the fruit fly, having previously used it to study embryo development. "The molecular pathways are the same as for humans, and there are similarities between the way an embryo develops and cancer develops."

So one thing led to another. In a few more years, it might lead to a drastic reduction in the unpleasant side-effects of treatment for cancer.

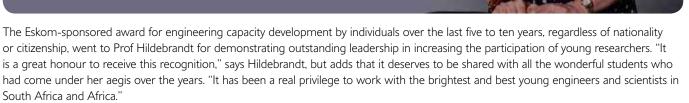
## Highest recognition for remarkable researchers

Unisa's Professor Diane Hildebrandt, Director of the Material and Process Synthesis Research Unit (MaPS), and Professor Bhekie Mamba, Executive Dean of the College of Science, Engineering and Technology (CSET) and Director of the Nanotechnology and Water Sustainability Unit (NanoWS) were honoured at the NSTF-South32 Awards for their outstanding contributions to science, engineering and technology (SET) and innovation in South Africa. Prof Hildebrandt won the award for capacity building in engineering and research and Prof Mamba for water research and innovation. The awards are referred to as the 'Science Oscars' of South Africa, as it is the largest, most comprehensive and most sought-after national awards of its kind.

### Energy for Africa

Prof Hildebrandt has been training students to lead and green the African process industry. Her research focuses particularly on how to convert carbon-containing waste in fuel and electricity to supply energy. This is research with a double impact because affordable energy is generated and the environment is cleaned up. Environmental nightmares become opportunities as municipal and agricultural waste, sewerage and stranded gas (gas that is wasted or unused) are used to produce fuel and electricity.

Heading the MaPS unit, Prof Hildebrandt has mentored and supervised many students, shaping tomorrow's scientists and building research capacity. "We want to use our technology, research and expertise to benefit South Africa and Africa. I am particularly passionate about how we improve the quality of life of our people. The African equation is that if we are going to create quality of life, we have to increase access to energy," said Hildebrandt, adding that this needs to be done cheaply, efficiently and with minimal impact on the environment.



### Water is precious

Prof Mamba received the NSTF-Water Research Commission Award for sustainable water management, knowledge generation and solutions, which was awarded for the first time. Prof Mamba has made significant scientific and technological contributions to the fabrication of advanced nanostructured materials and systems for water treatment.

Disadvantaged communities are the main beneficiaries of the outcomes of Prof Mamba's research. New nanotechnology-based systems were developed that assist in providing communities with safe and clean water. Prof Mamba says a prototype solar-powered membrane filtration system is already being tested for full-scale implementation.

Prof Mamba also says that it was an honour to be recognised and to be the first recipient of the water research and innovation award. "I wish to thank my colleagues, collaborators (local and international) and current and former postgraduate students who have worked hard on various aspects of the water quality research project. It is heart-warming to receive an award sponsored by the Water Research Commission, from whom the first research grant for this project was received 15 years ago."

The NSTF-South32 Awards, formerly the NSTF-BHP Billiton Awards, is a collaborative effort to recognise outstanding contributions to SET and innovation in South Africa for researchers and other SET-related professionals. This includes experienced scientists, engineers, innovators, science communicators, research and engineering capacity builders, organisational managers/leaders, and research managers.



# Unisa salutes its remarkable graduates

nisa provided the country's workforce with a healthy injection of newly qualified candidates during the 2017 autumn graduation period. The figures indicate that a total of 31 967 degrees, diplomas and certificates were awarded during this period, including 184 doctorates and 792 master's degrees. The figures also show an increase in doctorate, master's and honours degrees in comparison to the 2016 autumn graduation figures.

Officiating for the first time in his capacity as Unisa Chancellor during the Autumn ceremonies, Dr Thabo Mbeki, remarked: "There is something special about these ceremonies that has as much to do with the personal achievement of an important academic milestone and goal, as it does with the ceremony itself. There is indeed a sense that this is one of those rare, defining moments when a truly joyful celebration is merited."

Unisa graduates are not only successful students, they are remarkable individuals. To graduate from an open distance learning institution requires self-discipline, dedication and commitment. Unisa salutes all its graduates and share a few graduates' success stories.

THEO VAN WI



When the academic door closed for Iranian-born Fatima Akabari (not her real name) in her own country, Unisa was able to open a new one for her. Denied access to higher education in Iran, Akbari continued her studies through Unisa's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) programme to complete her BA Honours degree, with distinction, in Church History. Now that she has experienced academic success, Akbari is excited to continue with her studies. Going forward, she is really keen on doing research. "I want to study more and more, and focus on historical topics; considering them from different angles and finding answers to them," she said.



Lettah Sikhosana says that studying through a distance learning institution taught her independence. She has graduated with a Bachelor of Education degree in secondary education and FET phases, earning 27 distinctions during her undegraduate studies. Sikhosana has proven that she's a dedicated and ambitious student. With her mother working as a domestic worker and her father a truck driver, there has been many financial challenges; however, this has not deterred this bright student, who has graduated cum laude. Sikhosana, who is also the College of Education's Student Association Deputy Chairperson, has now registered for an honours degree in Environmental Education.

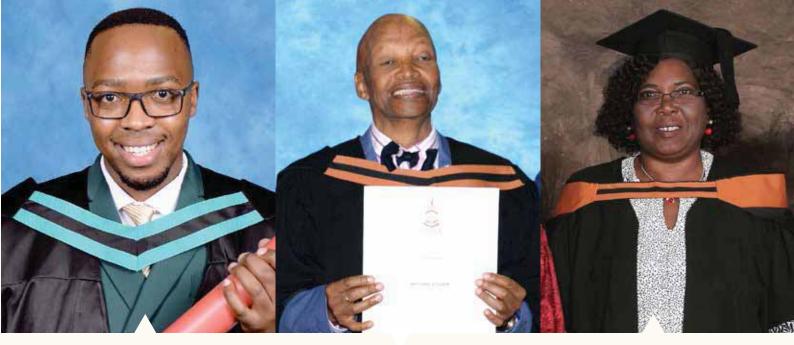




From FIFA referee to LLB graduate, Chris Harrison does a lot of things: not only is he a teacher, a (FIFA and PSL) referee, knows sign language and speaks Sotho fluently, but he also managed to earn a second degree. On 6 April 2017, Harrison graduated with an LLB gualification from Unisa. Born and bred in Johannesburg, this determined referee is equipped and on his way to defining his tomorrow, studying further and leaving a legacy. According to Harrison, time management is always a big thing when it comes to balancing studies, football and teaching. "It's been difficult and there have many sleepless nights, but today, standing at my graduation, it feels worth it," he said with a smile. He said his focus, going forward, is to make a difference and a valuable impact through his work.

Pebetsi Matlaila, from the popular youth TV drama, Skeem Saam (playing the role of Mokgadi), obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Health Science and Social Services as conferred by Unisa Chancellor, Dr Thabo Mbeki. Matlaila explained that we live in a society where we are meant to believe that education is no longer important. "We live in a society that makes us believe that shortcuts can give you access to wealth and riches and the life that vou desire. The truth of the matter is that those shortcuts are short lived." she said. She believes that education is quite important, because you're not going to change your world with talent alone. "Education is something that stays in your mind and nobody can take that away from you. Invest in yourself by getting yourself educated."

"We live in a society that makes us believe that shortcuts can give you access to wealth and riches and the life that you desire. The truth of the matter is that those shortcuts are short lived."



In a race of his own, France Ntlahla completed his gualifications in record time. At just 28 years old, he has a number of qualifications that he can already boast about including a National Diploma in Marketing Management from King Sabatha Dalindyebo TVET College; LLB (Law), from Walter Sisulu University; Professional Legal and Training, from Unisa; Postgraduate Diploma in Tertiary Education (specialising in Curriculum Development) from Unisa. He's currently enrolled for an LLM (master's degree) in Labour Law at Unisa. Ntlahla, a lecturer in Law at King Sabatha Dalindyebo TVET College, believes people need to equip themselves with knowledge. He says our environment continues to change and it is therefore vital that we keep up by equipping ourselves with knowledge and skills.

Age was no obstacle for 77-year-old Eastern Cape jazz legend, Retsi Pule, who graduated with a National Diploma in Public Relations Management. Although he encountered many challenges along the way, such as financial constraints and struggling to get a placement for work-integrated learning (WIL) with companies or government departments because of his age, that did not deter him from reaching his goal. Pule thanked Unisa's regional office for assisting him in compiling his portfolio, which he had to submit since he was unable to get a placement. He emphasised that if it was not for the support of the office, he would not be graduating. Pule intends to share his artistic expertise with all aspiring and talented youth who are interested in music and come from underdeveloped communities in the Eastern Cape.

Elly Namasiku Mutabani,

Queen of the Mafwe Tribe in Namibia, graduated with a Bachelor of Information and Library Science degree.

"Studying through a distance learning institution taught me independence."



## Leading by example

 nisa's Student Representative Council (SRC) members led by example on the academic front, as they successfully completed their studies and graduated during the autumn graduations.

**Zandile Sodladla**, the National SRC President, graduated with a Bachelor of Social Work Degree.

Sodladla says that student leaders rely on a well-planned study time-table, to ensure that they are also able to attend to the needs of students who regularly ask for help from the SRC.

Being raised by a single parent together with her five siblings served as a source of strength for Sodladla and made her passionate about education. "I cannot describe the feeling I have, since I am only the second graduate in our home. This is a big achievement, not only for myself, but for the family as a whole. My mother has been sick since my father passed away and, with my graduation, she felt like God has answered her prayers," she says.

Asked what advice she wants to share with Unisa students, Sodladla said students must prioritise their studies and they will reap the benefits.

According to **Tsholofelo Kgaswane**, Secretary-General of the NSRC, being a student activist and leader comes with enormous responsibility and unquestionable commitment to serve. He graduated with a National Diploma in Human Resource, majoring in Business Management, and he is currently studying towards a Postgraduate Diploma in Labour Relations Management. Kgaswane says his graduation was a significant milestone in his family's history, as he was the first Kgaswane to graduate from university.

He urges students to remain determined and focused on their studies. He adds that students must realise that studying is the most wonderful opportunity a person can use to shape the course of history and to redefine their own path. "As a student, you are given an excellent opportunity to develop, not just your study skills, but also many other skills useful in life. These skills will help you to succeed beyond graduation," he says.

Pictured at the graduation ceremony in Mpumalanga: Simon Matshushu Khoza (prison inmate, who graduated with a BA Applied Psychology for Professional Contexts); Dr Sibusiso Chalufu (Dean of Students); Duduzile Lushaba (Unisa SRC member, who obtained her Bachelor of Social Work degree) and Moloko Sepota (North Eastern Regional Director at Unisa).

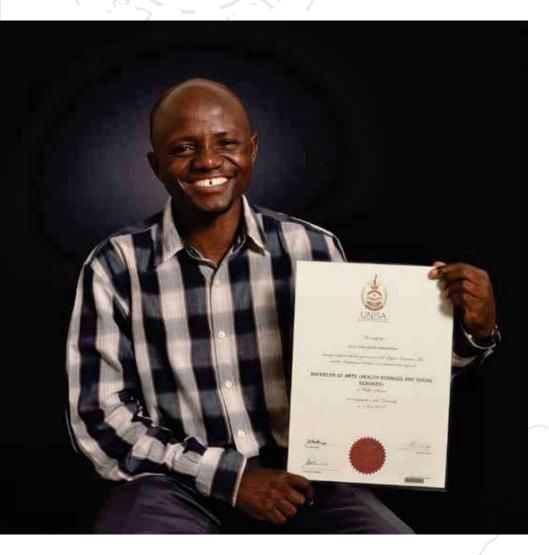


During the May 2017 graduation ceremony in Polokwane, two Regional SRC members graduated, namely **Tebogo Mabidilala** and **Rito Mathevula**. Tebogo Mabidilala, SRC Regional Chairperson, graduated with a National Diploma in Public Relations Management, while Rito Mathevula, Regional Secretary, graduated with an LLB degree. They both agree that student leadership should serve as an example.

Two members of the SRC from Mpumalanga also graduated during the autumn graduation ceremonies, namely **Leticia Mashego** and **Duduzile Lushaba**. Leticia Mashego graduated with a National Diploma in Management and Duduzile Lushaba obtained her Bachelor of Social Work Degree. Professor Moloko Sepota, North Eastern Regional Director at Unisa, says it is encouraging to see SRC members doing well academically.



## **Conqueror** who has overcome the odds



Ally G Mweni is living proof that grit, determination and hard work can overcome the direst of circumstances.

Ally's life journey from Kizimia, a village on Lake Tanganyika in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where he was born in 1987, to Unisa, where he graduated in 2017, has been an exceptional one. Due to civil unrest, his family decided to flee to Tanzania by boat. On the first leg of the journey, heavy storms forced the captain to divert the boat and Ally and his siblings were on to another destination, the port of Kagongo. They were safe, but there were no facilities for refugees. They were later reunited with their parents in Karago, but years of hardship and uncertainty followed.

"For my future," he says, "it is extremely important for me to find a way to work with refugees from anywhere in the world.

Ally graduated from a primary school that was funded by the United Nations Children's Fund, but secondary schooling was not free. By cutting and selling straw, Ally raised enough money to buy and sell paraffin and managed to fund his first years at secondary school. Despite his parents returning to the DRC at the end of his Grade 11 year, Ally was determined to achieve his matric. With the help of his uncles, he did it so well that his own high school employed him as a teacher.

However, Ally knew he had to find a way to further his education. With the help of his eldest brother, he left the refugee camp and embarked on a gruelling, month-long journey through Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, to his destination, South Africa. Here he worked as a car guard, taught himself English and then used his meagre savings to open a street corner hair salon. English classes at a refugee training centre brought him his English competency certificate within six months and he could register to study social work at Unisa. Without funding (he only had R2 000 in the bank), Ally realised that hard work in his little salon would have to see him through.

The next few years Ally ran into many challenges but he persevered and today he is the proud holder of a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Health Sciences and Social Services, specialising in Social Welfare.

"For my future," he says, "it is extremely important for me to find a way to work with refugees from anywhere in the world. I speak French, English and Swahili and I am available to any person or company in need of a fit, passionate, qualified person ready to work with the vulnerable".



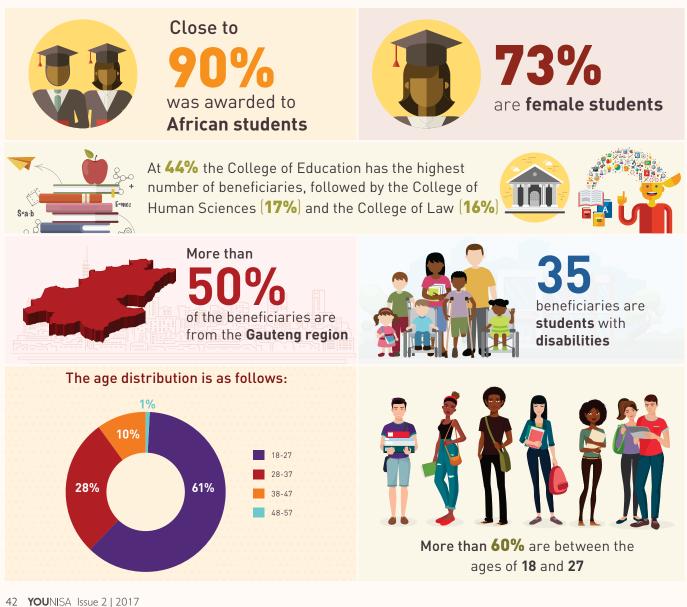
Unisa's Council Bursary of **R99 million** is going a long way towards making education possible for needy students, and improving throughput rates.



Half of the funds was specifically earmarked for bursaries for undergraduate students. Thus, close to R50 million was made available to assist deserving students, who would not have been able to further their studies at Unisa due to a lack of funds. The rest of the funds, or approximately R49.5 million, went towards incentives for both undergraduate and master's and doctoral students who have completed their qualifications within the minimum prescribed period of time, by refunding 30% of their study fees. This is a win-win situation: diligent students completing their studies within the required time will, in turn, contribute to an improved throughput rate for the university.

To date, close to R44 million of the bursary part of the funds has been utilised to assist 5 263 students with study bursaries. Who benefitted? Below is a synopsis of how the funds were distributed.

#### Profile of the beneficiaries



#### **Dear Unisans**

The University of South Africa (Unisa) has launched a special appeal for donations towards student bursaries, scholarships and the overall advancement of education at the university. Our appeal will be visible in the various media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and radio to raise **R61 million** over the next 12 months.

Alumni, students, staff, friends and supporters can contribute a minimum of **R61** as a once-off or on a monthly basis. The target supports Unisa's awareness of its social responsibility in shaping futures in the service of humanity.

Visit www.unisa.ac.za/donate today to donate towards Student Access and Success.

Call +27 12 441 5879 for more information.

Unisa Institutional Advancement

Disclaimer: All funds raised are administered by the Unisa Foundation.





PONATE

Unisa in brief

Bite-sized news snippets from your university

## Changing inmates' lives forever



At the MoU signing were Marianne Johnson (DCS), Dr Minette Plaatjies (Deputy Commissioner: Personal Development, DCS), James Smalberger (Chief Deputy Commissioner: Incarceration and Corrections, DCS), Prof. Mandla Makhanya (Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Unisa), Prof. Gugu Moche (Vice-Principal: Teaching, Learning Community Engagement and Student Support), and Prof. Michael Temane (acting University Registrar). The formalisation of a fruitful and long-standing relationship—one that has produced thousands of graduates over decades—took place on 9 June 2017. Unisa and the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) concluded a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to continue to provide tertiary education for inmates in South Africa's correctional facilities.

DCS Unisa hubs were established in 2014 at the various correctional centres around the country to provide administrative support to offenders studying through Unisa. The hubs offer access to laptops with internet, printers, scanners, Unisa library materials, tutorial services and on-line submission of assignments. The hubs also enable Unisa to provide assistance to students and assign face-to-face or on-line tutors in accordance with their study needs.

### You have the power to change your world

Prince Mashele delivered Unisa's twelfth Annual Peace, Safety and Human Rights Memorial Lecture at the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg on 29 June 2017. Within the context of a society that is experiencing a disintegrating economy, increasing unemployment, and rising social despair, Mashele told his audience: "What you do today will be your past tomorrow, and it will be your legacy forever. Let your will be guided by hope."

The lecture draws on the legacies of human rights activists Abdullah Omar and Joe Moabi, who fought an uncompromising battle against inequality and oppression and embodied compassion, selfrespect, and dignity despite being faced by momentous struggles.



Their legacies remind us that the fight against oppression and inequality consistently requires renewed commitment to equality and freedom, and that we need to guard against complacency.

# Fair weather ahead for meteorology partnership



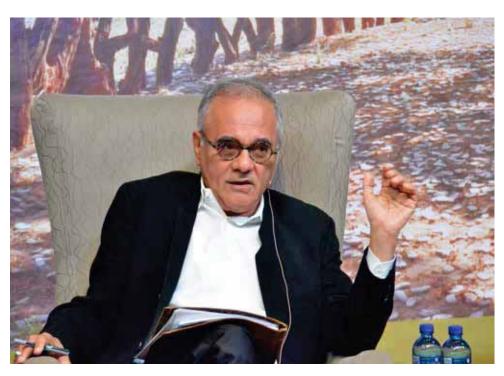
A memorandum of understanding between Unisa and the South African Weather Service will empower postgraduate research students through training and exposure to modelling, monitoring, and forecasting. Finalised on 10 July 2017, the MoU recognises that Unisa, as one of the biggest universities in the world, will allow the parties to engage with a much wider international and, specifically, African pool of researchers, academics, experts, and students.

Jerry Lengoasa (CEO: SAWS) and Prof. Bhekie Mamba (ED: CSET) sign the MoU.

### Africa should be a centre of knowledge production

Liberal democracy is under enormous pressure and its hegemony is eroded while the world is facing a general immigration crisis. This was the sentiment of Professor Mahmood Mamdani at the eighth annual Thabo Mbeki Africa Day Lecture at Unisa on 25 May 2017.

Mamdani, Director at the Makerere Institute for Social Research at the Makerere University in Uganda and professor at Columbia University in the United States, urged Africans to create their own theories and find their own solutions to their problems. "We need to rethink our aspirations, not just import theory from outside; aim differently, not just higher," he said.



Mamdani was critical about the state of politics across the world and the implications this has for Africa. He said Africans must understand the shift in the balance of power in the global space in order to reposition the continent as a formidable player in charge of its own destiny.



## New order of business for Unisa Ombud

Dr Maria Peenze intends to be an effective resource for the university and the public by facilitating the resolution of problems and complaints in a fair, impartial and timely manner, providing meaningful feedback, and influencing positive change at Unisa.

"Our office offers a safe place where community members may discuss problems or issues relating to poor administration or service delivery. We listen to visitor concerns, facilitate constructive dialogues, and assist in evaluating available options. All inquiries are treated as confidential," Peenze explained.

**Contact details of the office of the Ombudsman:** Sunnyside North Campus, Building 6, Room 40, 012 481 2874, hlabadd@unisa.ac.za



Pretoria jazz vocalist Tshepo Tshabalala and Cape Town soprano Palesa Malieloa were the two winners of the second Unisa National Voice Competition. They were victorious after four gruelling live rounds that took place in July. Each of them takes home R70 000 and they have automatic entry into the prestigious Unisa International Voice Competition that will take place in 2018.



Tshabalala dominated the Jazz Category throughout the competition and two special prizes of R5 000 each were also awarded to him for the best performance of an up-tempo jazz standard in the first round and for the best performance of a South African composition in the second round.



## **Restoring the balance**

CEDU's Professor Phillip Higgs told the fifth World Congress on Education Research in Russia that it was necessary to reassert the significance of indigenous African knowledge in the face of hegemonic Western forms of knowledge.

"Much of the history of Africa has been dominated by colonial occupation, and colonialism in Africa has provided the framework for the organised subjugation of the cultural, scientific, and economic life of many on the African continent. This subjugation ignored indigenous African knowledge systems and impacted on African people's way of seeing and acting in the world," says Higgs, who laid out the need for further research into the dilemma.

## Meet Thabo Albert Mokhele - the deaf barista

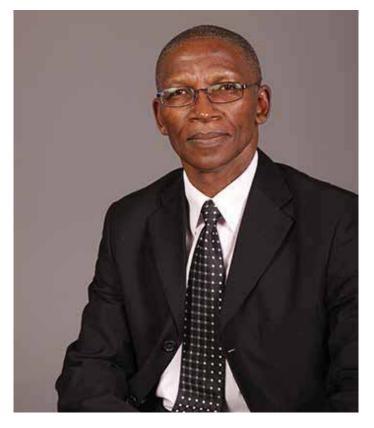
The need to empower deaf communities for employment has resulted in Unisa creating the officially accredited Short Course in Barista Skills, a one-month course with a five-day practical. The practical component of the course is conducted at the Ciro Coffee Academy in Bryanston, Johannesburg.

Mokhele is one of the first batch of baristas to pass the course. He describes himself as a humble man who respects everyone and who loves nothing more than serving a hot cup of coffee, made with love and accuracy. Why accuracy? He says that if he had only one barista trick to share with ardent coffee-drinkers it would be this: It's all about accuracy, whether you're a hearing person or a deaf person.



According to Unisa's Professor John Dewar, "in combining employment and social responsibility, we are pleased to note the interest shown in the course shown by industry and we look forward to the general positive impact of employment of the students that complete the course".

## Unisa to establish **UNESCO** Chair on ODL



The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has given Unisa the go ahead to establish the University Twinning (UNITWIN)/UNESCO Chair of Open Distance Learning (ODL) research and capacity development at Unisa. The Chair on ODL seeks to promote an integrated and coordinated system of research, staff research training, production and dissemination of knowledge on ODL at the university.

The initiative to establish the chair was spearheaded by the College of Education's Professor Moeketsi Letseka. "Unisa is the largest and the only dedicated ODL institution on the African continent. UNESCO plays a major role in advancing the realisation of sustainable development goals through support of education. Therefore, this initiative will go a long way to support sustainable development goals through distance learning," said Letseka.



Unisa's 2017 Learner Research Summit at the Science Campus on 2 September 2017 attracted more than 300 participants keen to hone their skills in science, engineering and technology (SET).

The summit is not only aimed at promoting SET as a possible career choice to learners, but also at nurturing the research skills of learners. Every year the learners are given a research theme to work on in collaboration with College of Science, Engineering and Technology academics, who guide them through the research process. The theme for 2017 was "Application of science, engineering and technology in an African context". The learners researched a variety of very pertinent topics relevant to the continent such as renewable and sustainable energy, recycling of waste for the benefit of the environment and the community, food and water safety, overpopulation, curbing water wastage, and technologies used in curbing crime. They also made the audience aware of technologies used by criminals in their communities.



# Reach youth through their language

So says Napjadi Eugene Letsoalo, who received the annual young linguist award for the best conference paper in linguistics by a first-time presenter at the Conference of the Language Associations of Southern Africa (CLASA) 2017.

Letsoalo said even though he was nervous, he was happy that he could fly the Unisa flag during the conference. "Presenting for the first time in front of field experts was terrifying. I thought that if I made one mistake, they were going to grill me alive, but surprisingly I overcame the fear and everyone enjoyed my presentation and found it interesting with new insights.

"My paper was based on the verbal morphophonemics of Sepedi. It analyses the internal structures of Sepedi verbs found in different contexts, then relates the processes of verb formation to current theories of phonology."

### Rediscovering our continental connectedness

A recent international conference highlighted that there is indeed an African way of resolving conflicts and that these mechanisms are harmonious and indigenous to the respective communities in Africa.

The Harmony Model Conference was organised by the Centre for Dispute Resolution (CDR), Institute of Population Studies (IPost) of the Mekelle University (MU) in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Foreign Relations Strategic Studies Institute (EFRSSI), and the Institute for Dispute Resolution in Africa (IDRA) at Unisa's College of Law.



Ethiopian politicians and scholars from around the world embraced this conference. In attendance from Unisa were Dr Andreas Velthuizen, acting head of IDRA, and two institute researchers, Adv. Sipho Mantula and Macdonald Rammala.



## SA needs more innovators, not more job-seekers

With youth unemployment approaching 50% in South Africa, it makes little sense for students to consider finding a job as their only option after graduating. Instead, they should be looking at opportunities to become entrepreneurs and "intrapreneurs".

This was the message of S'onqoba Maseko, chief operations officer of Sifiso Learning Group and the guest speaker at the awards ceremony for Unisa's 2017 Research and Innovation Student Showcase, held at the Sunnyside Campus in Pretoria on 18 August.

> "Congratulations to Unisa for coming up with this Showcase and for sustaining it over the years," she said. "I have done research and postgraduate studies, and haven't seen anything like this before – and that's a big deal coming from a Wits graduate!"

### PhD student wins gold at ICT4D conference



Paul Sambo, Unisa PhD student in Information Systems in the School of Computing, has won gold for his paper at a conference in Cameroon.

The International Conference on Information and Communication Technology for African Development (ICT4AD) in Douala, Cameroon, took place earlier this year. It was here that Sambo presented a paper that he co-authored with his supervisor, titled *Quality of experience: A case study of the Namibian eVoting System.* This was a case study of the behavioural issues affecting its implementation in Namibia and South Africa, supervised by Emeritus Professor Trish Alexander.

Sambo explained that this paper reveals the importance of quality of experience elements, such as credibility, trust, security, transparency, integrity, accessibility, availability, secrecy, verifiability in the implementation and adoption of an eVoting system.



# Borderless and boundless nature of media

The Minister of Communications, Ayanda Dlodlo, said at the COMSA Media Dialogue on 4 August 2017 that the introduction of digital media had allowed ordinary people to share instant information that went viral in a matter of seconds. This had taken away the monopoly control of information from the traditional media.

#### Absa allocates over R6 million for disadvantaged Unisa students

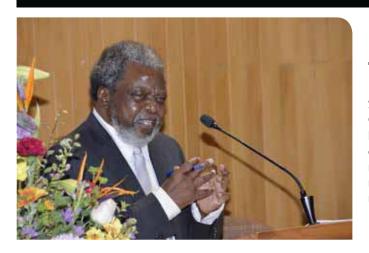
Absa, one of South Africa's leading financial institutions, has allocated R6.5 million for Unisa to assist students from disadvantaged families with scholarships for the 2017 academic year.

Unisa and Absa also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on 22 August 2017 to formalise a long-standing publicprivate partnership to enhance education through the Unisa-Absa Public-Private Partnership Scholarship Programme.



When institutions like Unisa and Absa come together, great things happen. Pictured at the cheque hand-over and MoU signing on 22 August 2017: Fuad Adams (Relationship Executive, Absa), David Farirai (Director: Institutional Advancement, Unisa), Phumulani Zwane (Chief Financial Officer and Vice-Principal: Finance, Unisa), Prof. Mandla Makhanya (Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Unisa), Oscar Siziba (Absa Managing Executive: Northern Region), Marius Alberts (Regional Executive: Retail Bank), Jessica Cronje (Team Leader: Corporate Coverage), and Khanya Mahlare (Executive Director: Department of Institutional Advancement, Unisa).

The scholarship programme is aimed at tackling social changes and driving economic growth by contributing to the improvement of enterprise skills, financial skills and life skills of the next generation through the awarding of scholarships to disadvantaged, deserving young people, and enabling them to realise their potential.



# Carry out radical transformation

Speaking at the Unisa Founders Lecture on 15 August 2017, Council member Professor Muxe Nkondo said that relations between people and groups must not be relations of marketdriven desire, exclusion, and competition. "South Africans must multiply and consent in ever-new ways, freeing up negative identities and territorialities for the construction of new social arrangements."

### Radical African scholars are not in African universities



They are sitting in Columbia, Michigan, and elsewhere in the US and Western Europe, said Professor Adam Habib, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand, at an international Unisa conference hosted by the Change Management Unit and the Archie Mafeje Research Institute for Applied Social Policy on 16 August 2017. "The day the African university is truly transformed is when it has the ability to attract radical African scholars back to African institutions."

## Unisa women win at WiSA

Professor Azwihangwisi Mavhandu-Mudzusi of the Department of Health Studies won the South African Women in Science Awards Distinguished Woman Researcher award in Humanities and Social Sciences on 17 August 2017. Professor Venitha Pillay, Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Management, College of Education, was a runner up in the same category.



Pictured: Naledi Pandor (Minister of Science and Technology), Prof. Azwihangwisi Mavhandu-Mudzusi (Winner of the WiSA Distinguished Woman Researcher award in Humanities and Social Sciences), Prof. Venitha Pillay (Second runner up), Prof. Saloshna Vandeyar (University of Pretoria, first runner up), and Mmamoloko Tryphosa Kubayi (Minister of Energy)

Mavhandu-Mudzusi said that she is feeling an overwhelming sense of joy and appreciation when she thinks about where she's come from. "The journey was not easy. It was not even part of my dream to be at this level. But I have realised that with passion, commitment, perseverance, humility, empathy and trusting in God, one can reach the highest possible height which cannot even be limited by the sky," she shared.

For Pillay, the entire event was inspiring. "To see so many women doing such amazing work was wonderful. To know that government supports us is good. I feel energised to persevere and deeply appreciate the recognition of my research," she said.

### Unisa wins platinum at 2017 Garden World Festival

Each year, Horticulture students volunteer to assist College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences (CAES) staff with the construction and design of a landscaped garden according to the annual theme set by the exhibition organisers.

The theme for this year's Garden Show was 'Colour my World' and the garden that Unisa showcased was titled 'De-stress Hour'. This theme was inspired by the office environment, which lacks mental stimulation because of an overwhelming workload and little exposure to nature. The garden introduced the concept of how the environment can help calm and ease stress for employees if they spend an hour in natural surroundings.



The main feature highlighted in this garden is the garden mural on the wall that will bring about visual calming effect. The sound of the running water creates a relaxing atmosphere. A colourful, low water requirement zone welcomes you into the garden and leads the eye to a space where you can de-stress

Students involved in the design, layout and construction of these show gardens have gained excellent hands-on experience, which counts towards their work-integrated learning requirements. The show garden projects have also given students an opportunity to interact with potential employers in the green industry.

# Disheartening economic conditions of women not changing fast enough

"We belong to nobody! Sexism and patriarchy is a social disease and we must cure ourselves now," said Judith Matlou, Public Relations Manager and Project Coordinator for Motheo Psych. Matlou, who is also a Unisa student, was speaking at the annual Unisa Feroza Adam Memorial Lecture on 11 August 2017.

Matlou pointed out that what Feroza Adam stood for and fought for was the dignity of women. "The dignity of women lies in their ability to self-determine. It lies in their ability and indeed their freedom to exercise their economic power," she said.

She believes that ours is not a democracy in good standing when a woman, in this day, finds herself limping into welfare just because a man decided to leave her for another. "There is something terrible about the state of times today when a woman still holds two jobs but barely has enough to take her daughters to proper schools and afford herself adequate healthcare. There is something very wrong when daughters inherit the struggles of their mothers even though they are born decades apart."

### Madonsela calls on Unisa to tell stories of faceless women



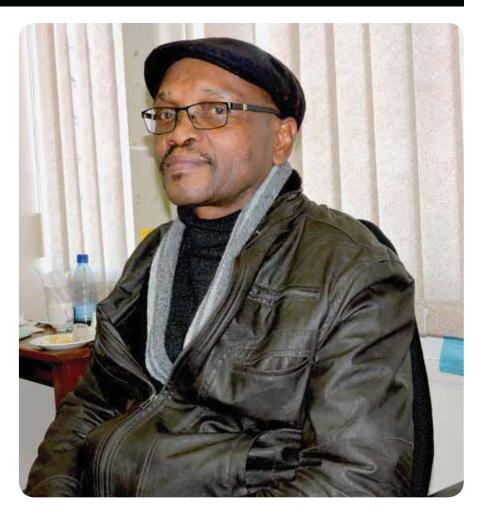
"Unisa, you are leading without a title when it comes to putting women at the centre of peace processes across the world. You are a generalist institution, but by choice you have joined UN Women and SAWID in placing women at the centre of conversations around democracy, peace, and development. I think this is very important," said Advocate Thuli Madonsela, Chief Patron of the Thuli Madonsela Foundation.

Madonsela was speaking at the Women's Month dialogue hosted by Unisa, South African Women in Dialogue (SAWID), and United Nations (UN) Women, which took place on 10 August 2017. This was premised on the theme *Reclaiming African women's dignity as a human right: In memory of the* 1956 Women's March.

Madonsela believes there are many more stories to tell, further than just 1956. "Women didn't just do 1956 so I hope that Unisa can help document something broader about the role of women, where we were, and where we are today. 1956 was one moment, but before 1956, there were others," she said.

## Decolonising indigenous languages: A case of missed opportunities

The decolonising of previously marginalised indigenous languages is no doubt one of the most important tasks facing the country today. People's dignity and self-esteem are restored and identity and respect maintained if they speak and use their mother tongues. "People's language is a heritage bequeathed them by their ancestors. But the latter generations of our people dumped it and embraced the foreign tongue," says Phumzile Arthur Sotashe from the CHS Department of African Languages.





#### Multilingual Education for Africa: Concepts and Practices

#### Edited by Russell H. Kaschula and H. Ekkehard Wolff

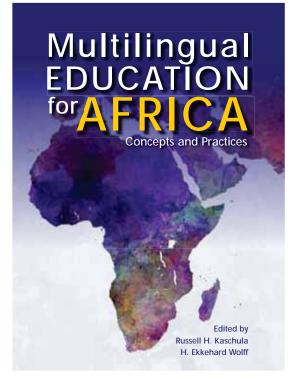
The common thread in this book is the exploration of innovative pedagogies in language teaching and language use in education. The greatest danger facing educators is one of complacency.

Whether set in Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, South Africa or elsewhere in Africa, all the chapters in this book emphasise the imperative for educators to constantly revise curricula and teaching methods in order to find the most appropriate ways of teaching and using language in multilingual settings.

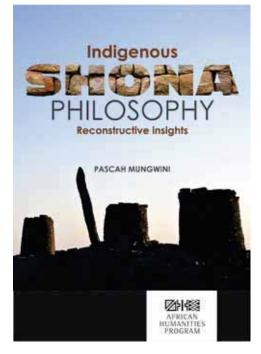
The chapters in this book place the mother tongue at the centre of learning, while developing the use of exoglossic languages such as English. The book will be of interest to educators at all levels of the education system.

Comprising of 17 chapters, the book is divided into three parts, which addresses the multilingual context of education in Africa, the teaching of additional language in schools, and additional language tuition in higher education.

Anyone interested in comparative education models, language teaching, and language use in multilingual contexts of all cycles of education, will find this book useful.



## Philosophy in world cultures: Reconstructive insights into aspects of indigenous Shona philosophical thought



#### Pascah Mungwini

Some of the most provocative questions confronted by philosophers in Africa are grounded in historical memory. Among these are the experiences of conquest and the subsequent peripheralisation of most things African, including its knowledge and philosophy.

Philosophy in world cultures: Reconstructive insights into aspects of indigenous Shona philosophical thought by Pascah Mungwini, published by Unisa Press, is in part a response to this nemetic experience. The book is a critical reconstruction of indigenous Shona philosophy as an aspect of the African intellectual heritage. It aims to retrace the epistemic thread in the indigenous traditions of the Shona and to lay out the philosophy imbued in them.

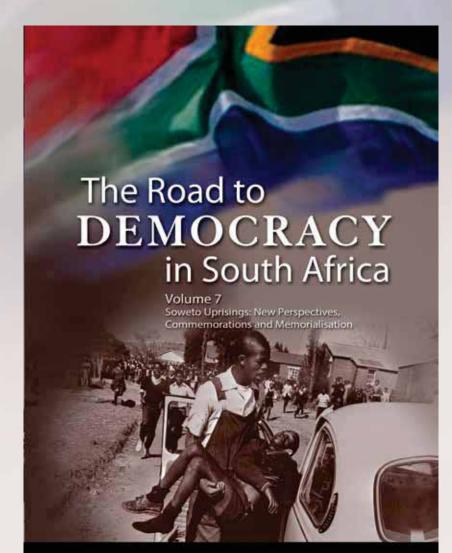
Every civilisation constructs for itself an intellectual heritage and archive from which it draws inspiration. In this book the author argues that philosophy in Africa has a historical responsibility to help drive the unfinished humanistic project of decolonisation and to reclaim the African past in search of identity and authentic liberation. That entails, as the author points out, opening up those indigenous horizons of thinking and knowing that have been held hostage by colonial modernity and which now face potential extinction.

On this basis, African philosophy will be able not only to set itself on the path to total self-affirmation, but also to repair the colonial wound and deal with various forms of epistemic injustices that afflict the continent.

By reconstructing the philosophy of one of Africa's indigenous cultures, Mungwini not only lays down the basis for dialogue across cultures, but he also opens the opportunity for scholars in Africa to dialogue with their past, critically analyse it, and, where possible, appropriate its ideals to improve humanity.

## The Road to Democracy Volume 7

Soweto Uprisings: New Perspective, Commemorations and Memorialisation



South African Democracy Education Trust

#### About the book:

This latest contribution to The Road to Democracy series deftly analyses commemorations and memorialisations of the 1976 uprisings in Soweto. Voices of authorities, police and veterans of the struggle are shared through collective memories, eyewitness accounts, and oral history testimonies. These voices, and the experiences of activists, participants and observers of the uprisings, provide readers with a palpable and arresting 'truth' more compelling than that of a dispassionate history text. This volume, the seventh in the series, postulates that history is about change at a given time: while pursuing a fragile balance between partisanship and objectivity, history is open to continuous reassessment and reappraisal, revision and re-examination, construction and reconstruction.

This volume, rooted as it is in primary evidence and archival material, rather than in abstract theories, offers readers rare insights from the voices and sometimes piecemeal memories of the students, parents and authorities who lived through those turbulent and momentous days.

ISBN: 978-1-86888-908-2 Prices: R530 (incl VAT) Prices E-book: R450 (incl VAT)

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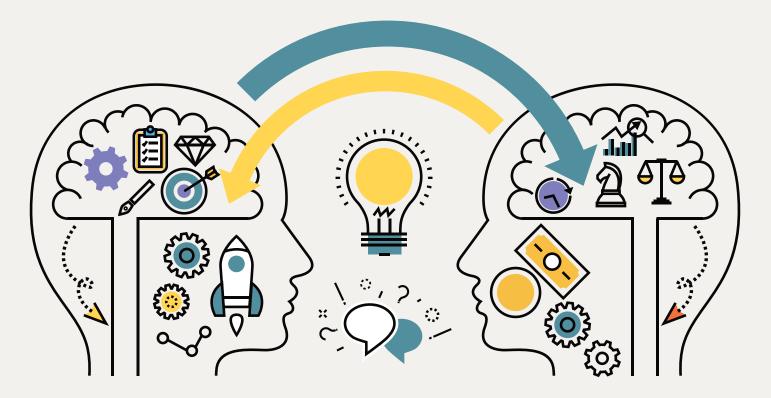
Thabo Mbek



## Study and career advice from the experts

By Deirdre Potgieter, Unisa Directorate for Counselling and Career Development (DCCD)





#### My memory: Can I improve it?

You have probably found that you are expected to do a number of things with your learning material when you are doing assignments or writing exams. Often one is required to argue a point of view, form an opinion, or critically analyse academic text. To do so, you need to develop your reasoning skills – and for this you need a sound foundation of facts, ideas and key words.

In this article, the focus is on memory strategies which you can use in your studies. Students go about their learning differently and we cannot expect everyone to use the same memory strategies. However, we would like to help you find a memory strategy that suits you and that you will find useful in achieving your goals. Memory strategies help you to improve your memory. They help you both to remember facts accurately, and to remember the structure of the information.

It is not always easy to change our learning pattern. Why?

- It is difficult for some to un-learn rote-learning techniques.
- It seems to threaten our ways of doing things.
- It takes time and effort to change entrenched habits.
- The new advice sometimes sounds unappealing and impractical.

You could probably add a few of your own reasons why you find it difficult to change old habits.



### What can I do to help my memory?

You will often have to commit facts, ideas and key words to your memory, before you will be able to argue a point of view, or think critically about what you have been studying. All this starts with reading for *meaning*.

#### **Reading for meaning**

The purpose of reading for meaning is not to be able to store the whole text in your mind. What is important is that you should be able to use authors' ideas in your own arguments or critical thinking. As you read, write down the main ideas and key words that you remember. Remember that it is **what you understand** that counts.





### How do I go about remembering facts that I understand?

You can use memory strategies to help you remember information from your academic texts. Here are some memory strategies you might consider using when studying.

#### 1. Classification

To get some order in your studies, you will usually start by classifying information. You will often need to restructure and reorganise the material if you want to understand it better. Classification means that you group information on the same topic together. First, choose a heading. Use an appropriate word that best defines or explains the information, in order to summarise the information. Once you have found an overall heading, you can break up the information into smaller parts on the basis of shared characteristics. Classification forms the foundation for your mind-maps or linear summaries.

#### 2. Acronyms

Acronyms are widely used for the names of associations, organisations and government agencies. An example of an acronym is Unisa, which stands for the University of South Africa. But acronyms can also be used fruitfully in your studies.

Forming an acronym involves identifying the key words in your reading passage, and then using the first letter of each key word to form a new word from the letters. This memory strategy works very well in helping you remember basic facts.

A very well-known acronym used by Physics students to remember the colours of the spectrum, is the name ROY G. BIV. This name represents red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet – all the colours seen in a rainbow.

Suppose you are a Geography student who has to remember the five great lakes of America. These lakes are Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie and Superior. By following the principle of taking the first letter of each keyword to form a new word, you would select H, O, M, E, S. In other words, your acronym would be HOMES. Remember to always check whether you have remembered the acronym correctly and also, that you apply it correctly to the original text.

#### 3. Association

Can you draw a rough outline of Italy? How about Egypt, or even South Africa? You will probably do better with Italy. Why? Perhaps because somebody once pointed out to you that Italy looks like a boot. This illustrates the use of association. Association is a memory strategy in which you relate something you already know to the learning material that you would like to remember.

Association never occurs on an unconscious level. As you read, you may be seeing something in your mind's eye or hearing something with your mind's ear. Although you automatically associate everything you study with information already in your brain, consciously making the association allows you to retrieve new information more easily and more effectively. Once you have created an association, strengthen your memory by repeating it several times, either in your head or aloud. It is important to write the association down next to the text or your summary. It may also be helpful to consider any feelings that might be linked with the association, and write these down next to your summary. When you try to remember the academic text, you will remember the association and the feelings you associate with the topic.









#### 4. Visualisation

As many adult learners are not used to picturing things, visualisation may feel unnatural to them. However, this is one of the most powerful memory improvement techniques and it can be used very successfully in your studies.

Instead of repeatedly going over the information in your learning material, you could try using visual images. The visualisation technique involves consciously creating visual images in your mind of the information you would like to remember. Research has shown that learners who use visual imagery perform better in exams than those who do not make use of it, or who are unaware of this technique.

You are probably wondering how to go about forming effective visual images. Think about it in this way: What do you do when asked how many windows there are in your house? In finding the answer, you have probably searched your memory for more visual information and conjured up a mental image of each room in your house.

Visualisation can be used to great advantage in every study session. It is also very effective when learning a foreign language. In a study, people who did not know Spanish had to learn a list of Spanish words. They heard each word pronounced in Spanish and saw its English equivalent on a screen. They were later tested and asked to give the English translation of each Spanish word. The learners who used rote-learning methods got an average of 28% correct, whereas the learners who used mental imagery got an average of 88%.

The main advantage of imagery and visualisation is that, apart from making learning more effective, it can also make learning more fun. Students find it more interesting to picture images and associate them with existing links in their mind, than merely reading the text repeatedly.



#### 5. The link system

The link system (sometimes called the chain system), involves taking the first image of a key word/concept that comes to mind, and creating a connection between it and the next image. You then move on in the list of key words, and link each image with the next. This works by coding information into your memory through evolving images, and then linking these images together. It is important to remember that the most effective visual associations are those that use images, which are bright and clear, and, perhaps, a bit silly. You could also make your images interact in some way.

Remember, the more practice you give yourself with these memory strategies, the more effectively you will learn to use them. Many of these memory strategies can even be used in your everyday life. For example, try using the link system when writing a shopping list, and see how many items you remember.

Try these memory strategies in your studies, especially with the keywords you have difficulty remembering, and see how your memory starts working for you!



l am not African because l was born in Africa but because Africa was born in me.

- Kwame Nkrumah