



Unisa Western Cape Region

12th Annual Academic Development Symposium

*Higher Education as Catalysts for Future-Ready Learning
in a Rapidly Evolving Technological Landscape*

*Building AI-Responsive Collaborative Ecosystems for
Teaching, Student Support, Employability and Research*

 **17 & 18 September 2026**



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WELCOME

12th Annual Academic Development Symposium

Higher Education as Catalysts for Future-Ready Learning in a Rapidly Evolving Technological Landscape: Building AI-Responsive Collaborative Ecosystems for Teaching, Student Support, Employability and Research.



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Introductory Message



As we developed this year's symposium, one question increasingly shaped our thinking: How do we, as higher education, embrace the reality of rapid technological change, with artificial intelligence emerging as one of its most significant drivers, while engaging with these developments thoughtfully and critically, and ensuring that they strengthen rather than diminish teaching, learning, student support and human capability?

That thinking is reflected in our theme: Higher Education as Catalysts for Future-Ready Learning in a Rapidly Evolving Technological Landscape: Building AI-Responsive Collaborative Ecosystems for Teaching, Student Support, Employability and Research.

The emphasis for us is very much on building, moving the conversation from ideas to practice and considering what we are actually doing, and what we still need to do, in our teaching, student support, research and preparation of graduates for a changing world of work. We have also deliberately sought to bring different voices into the same conversation. Academic development involves academics, student-support practitioners, professional and administrative staff, librarians, researchers, students, industry, TVET colleges and our broader communities. Central to this conversation is the student voice, including how students themselves are experiencing these changes, the opportunities they see, the concerns they have and the support they believe they need.

Our hope is that the symposium will stimulate new conversations, constructive engagement, collaboration and research partnerships that continue beyond these two days. We look forward to hosting you and sharing two days of thoughtful discussion and learning from one another.

John Abrahams
On behalf of the Organising Committee



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Welcome Message from the Regional Director



Welkom | Welcome | Wamkelekile | Le ya amohile! Le a mohelehile

It is with great pleasure that the Unisa Western Cape Region welcomes you to our 12th Annual Academic Development Symposium. As we enter the second decade of this symposium, we continue to build on its role as a platform for dialogue, collaboration and the sharing of practices that strengthen teaching, learning and student support. This year's theme, Higher Education as Catalysts for Future-Ready Learning in a Rapidly Evolving Technological Landscape: Building AI-Responsive Collaborative Ecosystems for Teaching, Student Support, Employability and Research, reflects the need to move beyond conversations about technological change towards how we respond to it in practice.

Artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies are changing how we teach, learn, conduct research, support students and prepare graduates for the world of work. Our challenge is therefore not simply to adapt, but to work collaboratively in shaping responsive and inclusive higher education environments that harness technology while remaining attentive to human capability, access and student success.

We encourage all participants to engage openly, creatively and collaboratively. We hope that the research, practices and experiences shared will contribute to practical solutions, stronger partnerships and meaningful connections between universities, TVET colleges, industry and communities.

It is my hope that the symposium will strengthen our collective capacity to improve practice, build knowledge and contribute to a responsive and future-ready African higher education landscape.

Mr. Motale Nkgoang
On behalf of the Western Cape Region

Baie dankie | Thank you | Enkosi | ke a leboha!



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Day One – 17 September 2026



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Programme Director



Dr Letlhogonolo Marumolwa, also known as Tlhogi, is a higher education and professional services technology leader with two decades of experience driving enterprise technology implementation, governance, and data strategy. With deep expertise across Software Engineering, Business Intelligence (BI), and Data Analytics, he has built a robust career progressing from Software Engineer and BI Architect to his current role as Director of Business Intelligence at the University of South Africa.

Tlhogi leads high-performing teams of analysts and developers to deliver complex analytics solutions that empower C-suite and executive decision-making. His technical leadership and advisory portfolio spans multinational organisations such as AB InBev and Uber, listed entities like ADVTECH and SAB, and state agencies including the Council for Geoscience.

Notable Key Achievements:

Uni-telligence: Implemented the Enterprise Data Hub for the largest ODeL university in Africa.

KITSO: Implemented the Advanced BI and Analytics Platform for Higher Education at the Independent Institute of Education (IIE).

IIE Marque: Pioneered and implemented the first digital qualification verification system in South Africa.

Evitelligence: Implemented a best-practice Evidence Management System for road incidents, endorsed by the RMTC.

Enterprise Digitisation: Led the implementation of various core ERPs, including CAMS (Student System), CRM (Sales & Marketing), and AX (Finance).

Sector Innovation: Developed multiple industry-leading technology solutions across the higher education, government and professional services sectors.

He holds a PhD in Information Technology Management and an MBA, underpinned by foundational degrees in IT and Programming. A DAMA-certified professional, a Microsoft Certified Professional and Certified Trainer, amongst various other international certifications, his thought leadership bridges the gap between academic theory, practical gaps and enterprise execution. He is a published author, a frequent speaker at local and international conferences, events, and symposiums, and a member of various professional bodies, including IITPSA and SAAIR. His academic activities include teaching MBA/MBL and Executive Education courses in Big Data, Analytics, and Technology Management, with a research focus on open data, big data, artificial intelligence, learning analytics, and dark data ecosystems. He also reviews manuscripts for various journals and books at IGI Global and supervises doctoral and master's students. He provides advisory services to entities in the public and private sectors.



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Welcome: Regional Director



Mr. Motale Nkgoang is an accomplished leader in higher education, with a distinguished career at the University of South Africa (Unisa). Appointed as the Regional Director for the Western Cape Region in January 2025, he brings extensive experience from his previous role as the Eastern Cape Regional Director, a position he held effectively from 2013 to 2024.

As a leadership strategist, Mr. Nkgoang holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Unisa. His core responsibilities include overseeing institutional governance, ensuring statutory compliance, and developing strategic policies and procedures. He is skilled at managing complex stakeholder relationships, both within the university and with external partners. Mr. Nkgoang's extensive governance experience is evident through his service on key Unisa structures, including the Senate and the Institutional Forum. He currently chairs the national Regional Services Quality Committee and serves on the University Quality Committee. His expertise has also been sought on steering committees for critical national audits, including the Council on Higher Education (CHE) Institutional Quality Audit.

Beyond Unisa, he has made significant contributions to broader societal development. He served as a Council Member of the Eastern Cape HRD Council, reporting to the Premier, and is currently a Trustee of the Equal Opportunity Foundation. A professionally affiliated member of the Institute of Directors South Africa (IoDSA), his leadership extends to the sporting sector, where he previously served as Deputy Chairperson of the Bush Bucks Soccer Academy. His career is further distinguished by his long-standing commitment to labour relations, having served as a NEHAWU shop steward for 14 years.



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Opening Address



Professor Moloko Sepota is an educator by profession whose career spans teaching, academia, and higher education leadership. He began his professional journey as a high school teacher in a rural area before serving as a lecturer at a College of Education. He subsequently joined the then University of the North (now the University of Limpopo) as a lecturer, where he progressed to the rank of Associate Professor of African Languages. During his tenure, he also served as Acting Director of the Academic Development Unit. He later joined the University of South Africa (Unisa) in an administrative leadership role as Deputy Director. He was subsequently appointed Regional Director for the Limpopo Region and later Regional Director for the North Eastern Region, following the merger of the Limpopo and Mpumalanga regional offices. He went on to serve for three years in the Office of the University Registrar, holding the positions of Acting Deputy Registrar, Acting Registrar, and Registrar. He currently serves as the University Registrar at Unisa.

Beyond his institutional leadership roles, he has made contributions to the higher education sector through professional associations and national initiatives. He served as an Executive Committee member and Treasurer of the South African Folklore Society (SAFOS), first at the Northern Regional level and later nationally. He has also served as an Executive Committee member of the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA), Convener of the Northern Region Foundation Programmes Special Interest Group, and a member of the African Languages Association of Southern Africa (ALASA).

His scholarly interests include Higher Education Foundation Programmes, Language and Development, Language in Education, African Languages, and Indigenous Knowledge Systems. These interests are reflected in his numerous conference presentations, peer-reviewed journal articles, and books published in these fields.

In addition to his academic and administrative responsibilities, he has played an active role in shaping national policy on foundation provision in South African higher education. Since 2011, he has served as a member of the Ministerial Task Team on Foundation Provisioning in Higher Education. He holds the Doctor of Literature (D.Litt.) degree from Stellenbosch University.



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Keynote Address 1



Ms Liana Joubert is a highly accomplished higher education executive with more than 34 years of experience in institutional planning, governance, quality assurance, strategic management, and financial management. Holding a Master of Business Leadership (MBL) from the University of South Africa, she has spent over 24 years in senior leadership positions, driving transformation, organisational effectiveness, and sustainable growth across leading South African higher education institutions.

Currently serving as Deputy Registrar: Student Administration and System Integration at UNISA. Liana provides executive leadership in student governance, academic administration, systems integration, and service optimisation. Throughout her distinguished career, she has held executive and senior management roles at UNISA, the University of the Free State, the University of Pretoria, and Monash South Africa, leading major initiatives in strategic planning, quality assurance, institutional research, business intelligence, transformation, and resource allocation.

Recognised for her strong ethical leadership, collaborative management style, and expertise in governance, organisational sustainability, and stakeholder engagement, Liana is passionate about translating management theory into practical solutions that create long-term institutional value. Her ability to combine strategic vision with operational excellence has enabled her to successfully lead complex transformation and innovation initiatives within the evolving higher education landscape.



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Keynote Address 1

Building a university that is digital by default, human when it matters.

Higher education has reached another inflection point. COVID-19 demonstrated how rapidly universities could redesign teaching, assessment and student support when circumstances demanded it. Artificial intelligence now presents an even more significant opportunity: not simply to automate existing processes, but to redesign how universities understand, communicate with and support their students.

In this keynote, Liana Joubert explores how AI, institutional data, intelligent student communication, digital assessment and purposeful physical infrastructure can create a more responsive and agile university. Drawing on practical experience, including the implementation of an AI-enabled student communication bot, the address argues for a future in which routine transactions are automated while human expertise is concentrated where judgement, empathy and intervention matter most. The central proposition is simple: the university of the future should move from reactive service to anticipatory support, from transactions to relationships, and from digital transformation to human-centred intelligent transformation.



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Keynote Address 2



Professor Oludayo Olufolorunsho Olugbara graduated from the University of Ilorin in 1991 with a first-class B.Sc. (Hons) in Mathematics. He was retained as a Junior Research Fellow in 1992 while completing his master's degree in Mathematics with a specialization in Computer Science in 1995 before earning a Ph.D. in Computer Science from the University of Zululand, South Africa. He began his academic career as an Assistant Lecturer in 1995, progressing to Lecturer in 1998.

In 2002, he joined Covenant University in Nigeria as a Lecturer and was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 2005. He later joined the Durban University of Technology (DUT) as an Associate Professor in 2010 and became a full Professor in 2011. He continued to contribute to academia, serving as a Visiting Professor at Covenant University in 2015 and later as a mentor at the Tianjin Vocational Institute in China in 2021.

His research spans machine learning, image processing, exponential technology, and technology acceptance for smart societies. Prof Olugbara has trained over 250 undergraduate, 38 master's, 24 doctoral students, and 6 postdoctoral fellows, published more than 200 research outputs, and examined 10 doctoral theses and 14 master's dissertations. His honours include the IFIP TC2 award sponsored by Microsoft Research Cambridge (2007), the Meritorious Research Paper Award at IAENG's International Conference on Machine Learning and Data Analysis (2012), the Outstanding Scientist award from Venus International Foundation in India (2015), and an NRF C2 rating (2023).

He holds memberships including ACM, CSSA, and University Scholar status at Ilorin, and reviews for journals such as Scientific Reports (Nature), PLOS ONE, and several MDPI and Springer titles. He founded the ICTAS Niche Research Group at DUT in 2017, which runs an annual IEEE-indexed international conference. He currently serves as Executive Dean of the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics, MICT SETA Research Chair, Senate Representative on the University Council, and a member of the DSBD research ecosystem committee (2026).



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Keynote Address 2

Enhancing Student Learning through the Engineering Practice Innovation Project Teaching Mode

Society 5.0, Industry 5.0, and Education 5.0 share a common goal of transitioning from pure automation to a harmonious, symbiotic relationship between humans and intelligent technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). These concepts profoundly influence educational service delivery, future jobs, and emerging skills. However, the core issue of AI in education extends beyond its responsible use; educators must reconcile preparing students for future jobs with developing traditional academic skills. This presentation describes the Engineering Practice Innovation Project (EPIP). This novel teaching mode is designed to transform traditional models, contributing to the central debate on AI in education while enhancing student learning and real-world preparation.

The EPIP method bridges theory and practice by emphasising student agency and social processes, drawing from cognitive, humanistic, connectivism, and experiential learning theories. It places innovative projects, transdisciplinary teams, engineering practices, and skills development at the core of learning instruction. These quintessential components create a Dynamic Learning Ecosystem (DLE) where students are active participants in hands-on learning, and not passive recipients of information. This practical implementation demonstrates significant gains in concept mastery, peer collaboration, critical thinking, and innovation consciousness. Portfolio assessments of real projects highlight learner ownership, sustained curiosity, and increased confidence in applying empirical knowledge to solve challenging problems.

The presentation will provide an overview of the theoretical foundations underpinning EPIP, implementation protocols, curriculum integration, assessment strategies, and empirical evidence validating its effectiveness. Adopting EPIP at an institutional level demands a structural evolution in curriculum design and assessment practices. Standardised, memory-based examinations must be replaced with formative, performance-based rubrics that accurately measure critical thinking, systemic problem-solving, and innovative creation. This orientation requires a reassessment of the central role of an educator, moving from an authoritative lecturer to an adaptive facilitator. Finally, EPIP provides administrators with a replicable plan to build a DLE. This environment cultivates adaptive learners who use technology to adjust their learning pace based on real-time needs and performance.



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PARALLEL SESSIONS

VENUES

B01

B02

B1-41

Staff Research Hub

Online participants, please consult the programme for links to join.



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VENUE B01

**11h00 –
11h30**

Curriculum Transformation in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Preparing Graduates for Employability in an AI-Driven Economy

Dr Carol Edson-Ashley

Independent Higher Education Consultation

**11h30 –
12h00**

Fostering Future-Ready Human Capability: An IOP Framework for AI-Driven Technological Change, Employability, and Curriculum Innovation

Mr O G Nodipha & Mr D Hogg

University of South Africa (UNISA)

**12h00 –
12h30**

Academic professional development in the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Mr G Makubalo

Sol Plaatje University



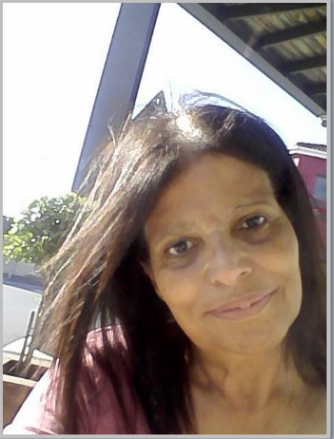
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Dr C Edson-Ashley is a senior lecturer and has been in education for two decades. Carol is passionate about education and its future.

She develops course material and is an academic editor for postgrads at three major universities. She started out as a philosophy lecturer and also taught journalism and media for a decade.

Carol has undergrad and postgrad qualifications in English, Linguistics and Philosophy. She studied Neuropsychology and Neuroscience at the University of Granada in Andalusia. Currently, she is studying Russian at St Petersburg State University (SPSU).



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Curriculum Transformation in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Preparing Graduates for Employability in an AI-Driven Economy

Dr C Edson-Ashley

Abstract

Curriculum Transformation in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Preparing Graduates for Employability in an AI-Driven Economy

The rapid integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into different sectors in the workplace cannot be ignored. It has transformed our approach to the economy and should also caution us to adapt our approach to employability and existing curricula.

Importantly, knowledge, skills, and competencies required of graduates entering the labour market have shifted alongside an AI-driven economy. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have traditionally focused on disciplinary knowledge and technical expertise; in the scenario of AI-driven education and technology, the need for a fundamental adjustment of curriculum design has arisen to ensure graduate employability. This paper explores the implications of AI for curriculum transformation, based on the rationale that universities must move beyond digital literacy to AI literacy, and especially towards critical thinking, ethical reasoning, creativity and adaptability.

Based on contemporary literature, employability studies and AI-enabled learning, the paper critically examines the alignment between existing curricula and emerging labour expectations, taking into account how assessment practices, teaching methodologies and interdisciplinary approaches may be redesigned to prepare graduates to use AI technologies efficiently, to work effectively alongside them while exercising sound professional judgement.

Hence, the paper proposes a conceptual framework for curriculum adaptation that balances technological competence with uniquely human capabilities that cannot easily be automated, proposing that HEIs must proactively embed AI-related knowledge and transferable skills across disciplines rather than treating AI as a specialised field of study and offering practical recommendations for curriculum innovation.



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Ongeziwe Gift Nodipha is an Adjunct Lecturer in the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the University of South Africa (Unisa). He holds a Master of Arts in Industrial Psychology and is a registered HR Associate with the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP).

His research interests encompass employee wellness, work engagement, digital work transformation, women's empowerment, and the decolonization of Industrial and Organisational Psychology, with a theoretical grounding in the Job Demands-Resources model and embedding Bosadi theorization.

Gift has contributed to accredited scholarly literature, including publications in *Frontiers in Psychology*, and remains deeply committed to academic development and innovative student support.



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Dustin Hogg is registered as an Industrial Psychologist with the HPCSA and a Master HR Professional with the SABPP, as well as a Chartered Fellow membership with the CIPD internationally.

Academically he holds Master's Degree in Industrial and Organisational Psychology as well as an Honours degree in Business Management and several other degrees including an undergraduate Ministry Leadership in Biblical Studies.

As a seasoned People Development Leader as well as a certified Coach and Mentor he brings practical wisdom through reflective growth and learning to his clients, he is a focused, performance driven and dynamic professional and has a diverse portfolio with more than two decades of hands-on experience both on a strategic as well as operational level within the Mining, Minerals, Manufacturing, and Academic sectors.

His proven leadership has seen him serve on various Boards and Governing Bodies, as well as being the recipient of multiple awards in his field.

Dustin firmly believes that everyone has a purpose and with the right process, persistence and passion, one will not just realise their potential, but will perform exponentially beyond it, and thus advocates for continued personal and professional development.

His motto: "Success is not an option; it's a requirement."



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Fostering Future-Ready Human Capability: An IOP Framework for AI-Driven Technological Change, Employability, and Curriculum Innovation

Nodipha Ongeziwe Gift & Dustin Hogg

Abstract

The accelerating integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the workplace is fundamentally reconfiguring the nature of work, presenting both significant opportunities and challenges for employee well-being, job design, and organisational sustainability (Bankins, 2024). This conceptual paper examines the implications of AI-driven technological change through an Industrial and Organisational Psychology (IOP) lens, focusing on the intersection of graduate employability, human capability development, and proactive curriculum innovation. As routine cognitive and administrative tasks become increasingly automated, durable human capabilities, including critical thinking, emotional intelligence, communication, and adaptability, have emerged as critical differentiators in AI-augmented work environments (Cardon & Marshall, 2025). Drawing on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and the professional personas and capabilities framework for digital-era people practitioners, this paper explores how emerging professionals can maintain psychological well-being and flourish amidst systemic disruption rather than merely cope with it (Coetzee & Veldsman, 2022).

The paper further addresses the imperative for higher education institutions to bridge the widening gap between traditional academic training and the demands of an AI-responsive workforce. We propose an agile, assessment-first curriculum innovation framework that embeds digital literacy, durable skills development, and continuous learning mindsets into core curricula (GenAISA Project, 2026). The paper argues that future-ready employability depends not only on technical competence but on cultivating resilient human capabilities that enable individuals to adapt dynamically to evolving technological landscapes, positioning IOP practitioners as leaders in AI adoption, workforce reskilling, and ethical governance (Lally, 2025). The theoretical and practical implications for workforce preparedness, institutional design, and IOP practice in changing socio-economic environments are discussed.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Future of Work; Human Capability; Employability; Curriculum Innovation; Industrial and Organisational Psychology; Durable Skills; Psychological Capital



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Mr. George Makubalo is a Manager for Academic Professional Development in the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Programme Development (CTLPD) at Sol Plaatje University (SPU) in Kimberley.

He has over 15 years' experience in higher education, where he has worked as an academic developer and manager in student support, curriculum development, and quality assurance.

As a higher education practitioner, his current research interests are in curriculum development and higher education leadership. He is driven to contribute to building capacity in higher education to build the resilience of institutions and their capacity to contribute to the development of communities, the country, and the region.



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Academic professional development in the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

George Makubalo

Abstract

Academic development, from its earliest development, has been concerned with supporting academics to do their job effectively, principally their teaching (Knapper, 1997). Consistent with different areas of professional practice, academics are often called upon to perform tasks for which they were not directly prepared (Schon, 1983). Academic development, as a discipline that supports academics, has grown significantly in South African universities, with separate departments, standardised activities and tasks, opportunities for professional growth for practitioners' professional growth, and dedicated professional communities of practice.

However, artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education, as in other sectors, has disrupted and transformed practice and brought about levels of uncertainty that have not been experienced before (George and Wooten, 2023). In this context, academic development practitioners in this context deal with academics struggling to manage the disruption brought about by AI, which often evokes anxiety and frustration about how students use (or abuse) these new technologies. This paper discusses how academic professional development practitioners will have to support academics and navigate the complex environment of academic development in the age of AI. The paper is a conceptual paper drawing on the experience of an academic developer who is also a former academic. It argues for the development of a praxis that embraces disruption and uncertainty, promotes collaborative practice, and centres student learning.



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VENUE B02

**11h00 –
11h30**

The “Social Glue” of Disruption: Navigating AI in Higher Education through Shared Adversity and Hierarchies of Actualisation

Dr MS Pourbehi

Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)

**11h30 –
12h00**

Building Pathways for Future-Ready Graduates: An Industrial Psychology Case Study on Graduate Employability

Ms M Kumbi & Ms N Ntshona

University of South Africa (UNISA)

**12h00 –
12h30**

Building Pathways for Future-Ready Graduates: An Industrial Psychology Case Study on Graduate Employability

Prof D Mabunda

University of South Africa (UNISA)



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Dr Mohammad Pourbehi is a Senior Lecturer and Head of Programme for the Bachelor of Engineering Technology Honours in Civil Engineering at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, CPUT. He is also the Head of the Research Unit of Engineering and the Built Environment Education, RUEBEE, where he leads initiatives focused on advancing engineering education, curriculum innovation, student success, professional development, and research-informed teaching practice.

He is a registered Professional Engineer, PrEng, with the Engineering Council of South Africa, ECSA, and a member of the South African Institution of Civil Engineering, SAICE, and the South African Society for Engineering Education, SASSEE. He holds MEng and PhD degrees in Civil Engineering and has presented and published extensively in national and international academic and professional forums.

Dr Pourbehi's academic leadership spans curriculum development, postgraduate supervision, quality assurance, professional accreditation, and the alignment of engineering programmes with national higher education priorities and ECSA standards. His work is strongly positioned at the intersection of engineering practice and engineering education, with a particular focus on ethical leadership, sustainable development, digital transformation, and the future readiness of graduates in a rapidly changing professional environment. Through his teaching, research leadership, and engagement with professional bodies, Dr Pourbehi contributes to the transformation and relevance of engineering education in South Africa. He is committed to strengthening socially responsive, technologically enabled, and ethically grounded engineering education that prepares graduates to address complex challenges in industry, society, and the built environment.



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The “Social Glue” of Disruption: Navigating Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education through Shared Adversity and Hierarchies of Actualisation.

Pourbehi, Mohammad

Abstract:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) represents a fundamental disruption in Higher Education, presenting engineering educators and students with a profound state of "shared adversity". This paper theorises that collective struggle acts as a biological "social glue", triggering shortcuts to intimacy and cooperation that solitary environments cannot replicate. By reframing the "pain" of technical disruption as a catalyst for trust, academic communities can enhance their collective creativity and resilience.

This transition necessitates a shift away from traditional hierarchies of domination, which rely on top-down control and fear, towards "hierarchies of actualisation". In these partnership structures, educators act as facilitators who inspire and empower students, ensuring that accountability flows reciprocally and high-value human empathy scaffolds responsible AI use. Ultimately, this framework proposes that the "wealth" of an academic department lies in its relational resources, reframing disruption not as a threat but as an opportunity for systemic empowerment.



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Ms Mmehela Kumbi is a registered Industrial and Organisational Psychologist, qualified Life Coaching Practitioner, coach in the UNISA Talent Optimisation Programme, and lecturer in the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology. She is currently pursuing a Doctoral degree in Psychology at the University of South Africa (Unisa).

As Chairperson of the Industrial and Organisational Psychology (IOP) Wellness Committee, she leads initiatives that promote workplace mental health, wellbeing, and sustainable organisational development. Her research interests include Coaching Psychology, Green Entrepreneurial Psychology, Artificial Intelligence and STARA, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), organisational change, and employee wellbeing.

Ms Kumbi is also the Project Leader of the EmpowerED Community Engagement Project, which focuses on education, mentorship, psychosocial support, career development, and youth empowerment. Through her teaching, coaching, research, and community engagement work, she is committed to advancing individual wellbeing, organisational effectiveness, and positive societal impact while preparing individuals and organisations for the future world of work.



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Ms Noluthando Ntshona is a registered Industrial Psychologist (HPCSA Registration No. PS 0163554) with extensive experience in industrial and organisational psychology, talent management, organisational development, psychometric assessment, recruitment and selection, and career development.

She holds a Master of Commerce in Industrial and Organisational Psychology from the University of South Africa (Unisa), complemented by academic qualifications in Psychology and Health Sciences. With over a decade of professional experience across the public sector, organisational consulting, and psychological assessment services, Ms Ntshona has successfully applied evidence-based psychological principles to enhance individual, team, and organisational performance.

Her areas of expertise include psychometric assessment, talent acquisition, competency-based selection, leadership development, succession planning, workforce planning, organisational development, and career counselling.

Ms Ntshona is passionate about advancing employee wellbeing, organisational effectiveness, and sustainable workplace performance through ethical, scientifically grounded, and people-centred psychological practice.



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Building Pathways for Future-Ready Graduates: An Industrial Psychology Case Study on Graduate Employability

Ms Mmehela Kumbi & Ms Noluthando Ntshona

Abstract.

The rapidly changing world of work, driven by digital transformation and evolving labour market demands, requires universities to prepare graduates who are not only qualified but also adaptable, resilient, and future-ready. This paper examines graduate employability through an Industrial and Organisational Psychology lens, focusing on students participating in the EmpowerED Community Programme, a university initiative aimed at enhancing employability and supporting postgraduate aspirations.

A mixed-methods approach will be employed, combining survey data with qualitative interviews and reflective narratives to explore students' perceptions of employability, career adaptability, and future-readiness. This approach will provide both measurable insights and a deeper understanding of students' lived experiences.

The study is guided by Career Construction Theory and the Graduate Capital Model, which together provide a framework for understanding how students develop the skills, resources, and adaptability required to navigate an increasingly complex career landscape.

The findings are expected to contribute to the South African higher education context by informing career development initiatives and employability programmes that support graduates in becoming adaptable, resilient, and career-ready professionals.

Keywords: Graduate Employability; Future-Ready Graduates; Career Adaptability; Graduate Capital; Higher Education.



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Dumisani Quiet Mabunda is a Full Professor in the Police Practice Department at the University of South Africa. He received his Ph.D. in Police Science from the University of South Africa. He published papers in accredited peer-reviewed journals.

Mabunda supervised and continues to supervise Doctoral and master's students. He also attended and presented papers both locally and internationally, focusing on the role of traditional leadership in community policing and forensic investigation (Morocco, Rabat, Lincoln University – UK, United States of America (New York), Adelaide - South Australia (Flinders University), University of Ottawa (Canada). Before joining the University, he served in the South African Police Service (SAPS) for twenty-six (26) years and left holding the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in 2011.

He spent part of his SAPS career as a Criminalistics Expert (Fingerprint Examiner, Photographer, Crime Scene Manager) at various Local Criminal Record Centres in Gauteng Province. He received training in England, UK – Sussex Fingerprint Bureau (Scene of Crime Office – SOCO), United States of America - Cognitech (Pasadena – Los Angeles - Photogrammetry), and International Law-Enforcement Agency (ILEA) - in Gaborone, Botswana, among others. He also contributed a chapter to the book Contemporary Issues in Criminology in Africa. The book chapter is titled "Prison Challenges: A South African Perspective," published by Nova Publishers (2021), ISSN: 0000-00-9138-7065. Mabunda acted as Chair of the Department of Police Practice, College of Law, University of South Africa, on numerous occasions, and is a member of the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, CRIMSA, POLSA, and the International Fingerprint Association.



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Student Support and Success in AI-Responsive Learning Environments in South Africa

Prof Dumisani Mabunda

Abstract

Learning, tuition, and student support systems in South African higher education institutions face challenges due to the emergence of artificial intelligence and innovation. Despite various mechanisms designed to warn learners about plagiarism, many students appear determined to use AI to avoid detection. Institutions of higher learning struggle to discourage learners from submitting AI-assisted assignments in the absence of clear AI policies and guidelines.

Some learners are determined to bypass plagiarism-detection software, regardless of the adverse consequences. Sanctions for plagiarism violations can include a lifetime ban from other institutions. This study explores the nexus between student support, student performance, and student retention in AI-responsive learning environments.

A qualitative-descriptive approach was adopted, using literature review, policy documents, and empirical studies on AI in institutions of higher learning worldwide. The results indicate that student performance, engagement, and retention can be significantly improved when relevant AI is integrated into the learning environment. This paper seeks to assist in developing approaches that will help students use AI responsibly. The pertinent question is: How can students balance ethics and integrity in the learning environment? Answering this question will contribute to policy development, governance, and learning environment efficiency.

Keywords: Student support, student success, Artificial Intelligence, learning environments, higher education, South Africa



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VENUE **B1-41**

**11h00 –
11h30**

Reframing employability for the AI era: Career theory, skills gaps and the role of Industrial Psychology

Ms M Mokwele & Ms B Mahlangu

University of South Africa (UNISA)

**11h30 –
12h00**

AI, Financial Wellbeing, and Sustainability in Life Skills taught at TVET

Ms Jennifer Malgas-Esau

Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)

**12h00 –
12h30**

Advancing Students' Academic Writing Through Critical Dialectical Thinking in a Generative AI and Translanguaging Era

Dr P Sefalane-Nkohla & Dr L Nendauni

Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)



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Ms Mmapitsi Mokwele is an HPCSA-registered Industrial and Organisational Psychologist, Adjunct Academic in the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the University of South Africa (UNISA), and a PhD candidate.

Her interests include employee well-being, workplace mental health, and change management. She is part of the Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology of South Africa (SIOPSA) and actively involved in the Mental Health at Work interest group.



Ms Busisiwe Mahlangu is a lecturer in the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the University of South Africa. She is a registered Psychometrist and a PhD candidate in Industrial and Organisational Psychology, with research interests in applied organisational neuroscience, emotional intelligence, leadership, and employee well-being.

Leveraging her academic background, she serves as a dedicated speaker and contributor to the field in her work as a committee member of the Interest Group for Applied Organisational Neuroscience (IGAON) under the Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology of South Africa (SIOPSA).



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Abstract Title: Reframing employability for the AI era: Career theory, skills gaps and the role of Industrial Psychology

Ms B Mahlangu, Ms L Langa & Ms M Mokwele

Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) and technological advancements are profoundly reshaping career development, graduate employability and human capability. In South Africa, these forms of transformation occur within a labour market characterised by high youth unemployment, a persistent skills mismatch and uneven access to quality education and training. This conceptual paper explores how career theory can be re-envisioned for the AI era and considers the implications for curriculum innovation in higher education.

This paper posits that career construction theory, social cognitive career theory, and sustainable career theory remain useful; however, they necessitate expansion to account for AI-mediated recruitment, algorithmic career information, digital work identities, human-AI collaboration, and continuous reskilling. Furthermore, the paper contextualises employability within the South African skills-gap landscape, where graduates require not only technical and AI literacy, but also adaptive capability, ethical judgement, critical thinking, interpersonal competence and self-directed learning. These capabilities are proposed as critical curriculum imperatives rather than optional add-ons.

The paper also examines the evolving role of Industrial and Organisational Psychology in technology-disrupted workplaces. Industrial psychologists are positioned as key actors in evidence-based workforce planning, career development, ethical selection and assessment, job redesign, reskilling interventions, psychosocial risk management and the governance of AI-enabled people practices.

In conclusion, the paper argues that curriculum innovation for the future of work should extend beyond training students to use AI tools. It should purposefully develop career adaptability, responsible AI literacy, assessment literacy, reflective practice and human-centred problem-solving. Employability is thus framed not only as readiness for existing jobs, but as the capacity to navigate, shape and sustain careers within increasingly algorithmic and uncertain work systems.



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Ms Jennifer Malgas-Esau's research addresses key challenges in post-school education. Her publications for 2026 include the sole-authored paper "The Implied Learner" in the International Journal of Adult, Community, and Professional Learning, and the co-authored study "Women TVET Student Voices on Health, Personal and Financial Well-Being in Life Skills Education" in Educational Research for Social Change.

Methodologically and conceptually, both works are grounded in Phenomenology and the Capability Approach.



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AI, Financial Wellbeing, and Sustainability in Life Skills taught at TVET

Ms Jennifer Malgas-Esau

Abstract

TVET colleges in South Africa are experiencing a demographic shift with increasing participation by women students, whose capability is deeply influenced by family and community wellbeing. The problem is that Life Skills curricula remain silent on equipping students with AI literacies, financial tools, and sustainability practices, leaving students underprepared for the digital economy and ecological transitions. This study asks: “What insights can be gained about financial wellbeing and sustainable living in Life Skills education, when integrated with AI tools, from the lived experiences of first-year women TVET students in vocational programmes?”

Using a descriptive phenomenological approach, seven women students were purposively sampled. Data were collected through individual interviews and arts-based methods, including photo collages and river-of-life displays, with trustworthiness ensured through member checks, participant validation, and triangulation. Guided by the Capability Approach and Ubuntu philosophies, the findings reveal that students’ flourishing is inseparable from family and community wellbeing, while AI-responsive spaces such as the student resource centre (library) and computer laboratories offer empathetic spaces. The study recommends reforming Life Skills education to embed AI technologies as tools for financial literacy and sustainable living, thereby supporting student success in AI-responsive learning and social environments and preparing learners for future work, relationships, and holistic wellbeing.



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Dr Puleng Sefalane-Nkohla holds a PhD in English, an MPhil in Higher Education, and an MA in Language Practice specialising in Language Technology. She works at Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) as an Academic Literacy Lecturer in the Writing Centre, with vast experience in leading and coordinating the Writing Centre at CPUT.

Her work focuses on advancing academic literacies as a socially situated practice, supporting students and staff in navigating the complex demands of disciplinary writing. Throughout her career, she has led initiatives that enhance writing support systems, integrate academic literacy into mainstream curricula, and respond to the evolving challenges of higher education. Her research interests are in student writing in higher education, second language writing, academic development of students, and leadership in higher education.



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Dr Lutendo Nendauni is a Senior Lecturer and Subject Head of Academic Communication in the Department of Accounting Sciences at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. He is an academic literacy specialist, researcher, and facilitator with extensive experience in higher education teaching, academic writing development, language education, and staff development.

Over the years, he has taught and facilitated modules in academic literacies, academic writing, communication, English language studies, and discourse analysis. Dr Nendauni holds a PhD in Linguistics and Literary Theory from North-West University and is currently pursuing a second PhD in Language and Literacy at the University of the Western Cape, focusing on academic integrity and generative artificial intelligence in higher education.

He has published widely in accredited national and international journals on topics such as academic writing, writing centres, multilingualism, decoloniality, student support, and artificial intelligence in higher education. He has also presented papers at several local and international conferences and has facilitated academic writing workshops at universities across South Africa. In addition to his teaching and research work, Dr Nendauni is actively involved in postgraduate supervision, academic mentorship, and institutional development initiatives. He is also a TAU 6 (Teaching Advancement at Universities) fellow



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Advancing Students' Academic Writing Through Critical Dialectical Thinking in a Generative AI and Translanguaging Era

Puleng Sefalane-Nkohla, Thembinkosi Mtonjeni and Lutendo Nendauni

Abstract

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has created new opportunities for reading and writing in higher education. Students increasingly use GenAI tools to access information, develop ideas, and support their writing processes in ways that were previously not possible. These tools can enhance the quality of academic writing and support the cognitive and linguistic processes involved in writing. However, the growing use of GenAI also raises concerns within a higher education landscape that is undergoing transformation and decolonisation. In particular, there are concerns about the possible weakening of students' critical thinking skills and the marginalisation of their lived experiences, contextual realities, and personal perspectives in academic writing.

This study aimed to advance students' academic writing through a Critical Dialectical Approach in the Generative AI and translanguaging era. Translanguaging and the Academic Literacies Approach were employed to enhance students' critical agency, academic writing capabilities, and engagement with disciplinary discourses. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Quantitative data were collected through surveys, while qualitative data were gathered through focus group interviews and document analysis. A total of 120 first-year students from six faculties at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology participated in the study, with 20 students selected from each faculty. The findings indicate that the integration of critical dialectical thinking, translanguaging practices, and structured engagement with GenAI tools significantly enhanced students' ability to construct coherent arguments, improved their critical engagement with disciplinary knowledge, and strengthened their academic writing confidence. The study also found that students benefited most when GenAI tools were used as scaffolding instruments rather than substitutes for independent thinking.

Keywords: Generative Artificial Intelligence; academic writing; translanguaging; academic literacies; critical dialectical thinking.



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VENUE Staff Research Hub

**11h00 –
11h30**

Human-Centred Student Support in AI-Responsive Learning Environments: An Industrial and Organisational Psychology Perspective

Ms C Murabi & Mrs B Wright

University of South Africa (UNISA)

**11h30 –
12h00**

Reimagining Student Evaluation of Teaching as a Student-Centred Mechanism for Pedagogical and Curriculum Enhancement in Higher Education

Dr S Machingambi

Sol Plaatje University

**12h00 –
12h30**

Information Literacy Skills and Open Online Educational Resources Use among Undergraduates in University Lagos, Nigeria

Dr Uwaebuka Wisdom MADU

University of Lagos, Nigeria



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Bronwyn Wright is a Lecturer and researcher in the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the University of South Africa (Unisa). She is an Industrial and Organisational Psychologist registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and an accredited Learning and Development professional with the South African Board of People Practice (SABPP).

With 20 years of experience in higher education, her work spans teaching, research, academic coordination and student support. She holds an MCom in Industrial and Organisational Psychology, completed Cum Laude, and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy.

Her research interests include employee well-being, work engagement, workplace psychology, organisational behaviour and student support. She is particularly interested in psychological functioning and well-being within changing work environments and in research that contributes to healthier, more sustainable workplaces.



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Ms Charmaine Ntsundeni Murabi is a Junior Lecturer and researcher in the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the University of South Africa (Unisa). She holds a Bachelor's degree and an Honours degree in Industrial and Organisational Psychology, which she completed Cum Laude, and is currently pursuing a Master of Commerce in Industrial and Organisational Psychology.

Charmaine has more than eight years of experience in higher education administration, academic coordination, teaching, and research at Unisa. She has held progressively responsible roles, including College Academic Coordinator: Programme Qualification Mix for the College of Economic and Management Sciences, Research Assistant, and Administrative Officer, supporting executives, academic staff, and students across various departments.

Her academic and professional interests include Industrial and Organisational Psychology, employee well-being, organisational behaviour, and workplace psychology. She is passionate about advancing research, supporting student development, and contributing to the discipline through evidence-based practice and academic excellence.



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Human-Centred Student Support in AI-Responsive Learning Environments:

An Industrial and Organisational Psychology Perspective

Ms. Charmaine Murabi & Mrs. Bronwyn Wright

Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly changing the higher education landscape, presenting novel opportunities to advance teaching, learning, and student support. While much of the current discourse focuses on AI as a learning aid for students, less attention has been given to how AI can strengthen the people and support systems that contribute to student success. From an Industrial and Organisational Psychology (IOP) perspective, effective student support relies not merely on technology but also on the collaborative efforts of academic and professional staff, the design of support processes, organisational culture and evidence-based decision-making.

This conceptual paper explores how AI can be used to create more integrated, proactive and student-centred support systems in higher education. Instead of perceiving student support as the sole responsibility of individual units, the paper advocates for an AI-responsive ecosystem where academic staff, student advisors, librarians, counsellors, career practitioners, learning designers and information technology specialists work collaboratively to provide coordinated support throughout the student's academic journey. Within this ecosystem, AI enables earlier identification of students who require support, personalised guidance, improved communication among support services, and data-informed interventions, all while maintaining the human relationships essential for student engagement and success.

The paper argues that AI should be regarded as an enabler of collaboration rather than a substitute for human support. Drawing on principles from Industrial and Organisational Psychology, it proposes that student success is enhanced when technology, people, and organisational systems are deliberately harmonised. The paper concludes by introducing a conceptual framework designed to assist institutions in developing AI-responsive support ecosystems that are ethical, collaborative and focused on the holistic needs of students.



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Dr Severino Machingambi is a Director for the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Programme Development at the Sol Plaatje University since September 2024. In this role he supports the office of the DVC, Teaching and Learning in developing, implementing and evaluating the institutional learning and teaching strategy.

Prior to that he was Deputy Director in the Academic Support Services Division at the University of Mpumalanga (UMP). Before joining UMP he worked as deputy director in the Centre for Teaching and Learning Development at the Mangosuthu University of Technology. Prior to that he was a Teaching Development Consultant at the Walter Sisulu University.

Dr Machingambi holds a PhD in Educational Foundations specializing in Educational Sociology. He has a keen interest in the scholarship of teaching and learning, education and transformation, pedagogy, social class and differential educational achievement.

He has published extensively in these areas in both national and internationally reputable journals. He has also presented widely on the same in local and international conferences. Dr Machingambi has served as examiner for masters and doctoral level study with several universities in and outside South Africa.



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Reimagining Student Evaluation of Teaching as a Student-Centred Mechanism for Pedagogical and Curriculum Enhancement in Higher Education.

Dr Severino Machingambi

Abstract

Student evaluation of teaching and learning has gained new legitimacy in many higher education institutions the world over, owing to the student-centricity imperative. This practice is predicated on the premise that students, as essential partners in the teaching and learning process, deserve a strong voice in judging the quality of teaching that they receive. The student evaluation of teaching process can also be viewed as a crucial way of aligning teaching and learning with the diverse needs, expectations and aspirations of students. Feedback from the student evaluation of teaching process has huge implications for the pedagogical, assessment, and general curriculum provisioning process. Feedback data derived from the student evaluation of teaching process are fundamental to the renegotiation and co-creation of a robust and relevant system of student evaluation. This paper has been prompted by the author's more than two decades-long experiences and observations of teaching and learning and student evaluation in higher education institutions in both South Africa and beyond. Over the years, the author has observed that the student evaluation of teaching process is rigid, with a standard set of questions that hardly stimulates student interest. As a result, student participation in the evaluation process has remained very low, making it very difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions from the unrepresentative data. The paper uses a critical approach to critique the existing models used in the universities' student evaluation of teaching processes. The paper mainly argues that existing practices in the evaluation of the teaching process are generally ineffective as they are routine, compliance-driven and do not really transform student learning outcomes in any impactful way. In particular, the paper challenges the adequacy and efficacy of relying on highly structured questionnaires that have been used repeatedly across the years for students studying different courses and who are at different levels of study. The paper adopts a critical analytic approach that is meant to stimulate an academic conversation among higher education practitioners with a view to rethinking and reimagining the student evaluation of teaching process.

Keywords: Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET); Student Participation; Student Voice; Teaching Effectiveness; Higher Education



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Dr Uwaebuka Wisdom Madu is an academic and lecturer in the Department of Library and Information Science at the Federal Polytechnic Ede, Nigeria. He holds a Bachelor's degree from Abia State University, Uturu; a Master's degree from the University of Uyo; and a Doctorate degree in Library and Information Science from Adeleke University, Ede, Nigeria.

As a scholar, Dr Madu has made significant contributions to his field. His publication record includes one authored book and three co-authored titles, along with numerous research papers published in reputable national and international journals. An active participant in the academic community, he regularly shares his findings at various national and international conferences, presenting his research to peers and thought leaders.

His research interests are diverse and critical to the modern evolution of libraries, encompassing Library Marketing and Patronage, the application of ICT in libraries, Library History, and the emerging field of Infopreneurship. Through his dedicated research and scholarly output, Dr Madu demonstrates a strong commitment to addressing contemporary challenges in library science and shaping the future of the profession.



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Uwaebuka Wisdom MADU & Adebowale Aanuoluwa ADEYEMI

Abstract

The global shift towards digital learning, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, forced educational institutions to adopt online and hybrid learning models. Consequently, the use of digital resources skyrocketed, making learning more flexible and accessible. One of the major products of ICT that facilitates free and open access education is Open Online Educational Resources (OOERs). Despite the growing availability of these resources, studies have revealed a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding how well undergraduates possess the necessary information literacy skills to effectively utilise the resources for academic success.

This study, therefore, investigated the influence of information literacy skills on OOERs use among undergraduates in the Faculty of Education, University of Lagos, Nigeria. The descriptive survey design was employed. The population consisted of 2,853 undergraduates in the faculty. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 286 final-year students across the 7 departments in the Faculty. A Structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Analysis of data was done using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings showed a high level of awareness of OOERs $\bar{x} = 3.42, \delta = 0.68$, The purposes included, getting resources for assignments and projects; and deepening understanding of topics. The study also revealed a high level of information literacy skills among the students $\bar{x} = 3.13, \delta = 0.84$, which has a significant positive influence on their OOERs use. The study recommends that the university library create more awareness of OOERs through their user education programmes to improve awareness and usage levels of OOERs among the students.

Keywords: Information Literacy Skills, Open Online Educational Resources, Use, Undergraduates.



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Workshop: ADOVH



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Workshop

From Prompt to Persona: Designing Reusable System Prompts for AI-Responsive Higher Education

Creating Consistent, Context-Aware and Responsible AI Assistants for Teaching, Learning and Student Support

This hands-on, 50-minute workshop guides academic and support staff from one-off AI questions to reusable persona prompts tailored to higher education. Using a downloadable, editable template, you will define an AI assistant's role, purpose, tone, behaviours and ethical boundaries, then test and refine your design through guided activities and peer feedback.

With applications in teaching, learning, student support, employability and research, the workshop connects practical prompt design to the symposium's focus on AI-responsive collaborative ecosystems. Privacy, academic integrity, inclusivity, verification and human judgment remain central throughout. You will leave with a personalised prompt prototype and a repeatable process for reviewing, adapting and improving it with colleagues. No coding is required.



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Closing remarks and Word of thanks



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Dr. Zamangwane Khanyile is an Educational Psychologist and Senior Student Counsellor at the University of South Africa (UNISA), Western Cape Region, where she heads Counselling and Career Development.

She holds a Master's degree in Psychology and a PhD in Educational Psychology and is registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). She is a member of the Golden Key International Honour Society.

Her professional and scholarly interests include student mental wellness, emotional intelligence, developing a growth mindset, academic and career development, and student success in higher education. She has gained international exposure to student support and development through professional engagements in the United States and United Kingdom and has presented at both local and international conferences.



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Thank You



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Day Two – 18 September 2026



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Welcome and Opening Remarks



Mr. Motale Nkgoang is an accomplished leader in higher education, with a distinguished career at the University of South Africa (Unisa). Appointed as the Regional Director for the Western Cape Region in January 2025, he brings extensive experience from his previous role as the Eastern Cape Regional Director, a position he held effectively from 2013 to 2024.

As a leadership strategist, Mr. Nkgoang holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Unisa. His core responsibilities include overseeing institutional governance, ensuring statutory compliance, and developing strategic policies and procedures. He is skilled at managing complex stakeholder relationships, both within the university and with external partners. Mr. Nkgoang's extensive governance experience is evident through his service on key Unisa structures, including the Senate and the Institutional Forum. He currently chairs the national Regional Services Quality Committee and serves on the University Quality Committee. His expertise has also been sought on steering committees for critical national audits, including the Council on Higher Education (CHE) Institutional Quality Audit.

Beyond Unisa, he has made significant contributions to broader societal development. He served as a Council Member of the Eastern Cape HRD Council, reporting to the Premier, and is currently a Trustee of the Equal Opportunity Foundation. A professionally affiliated member of the Institute of Directors South Africa (IoDSA), his leadership extends to the sporting sector, where he previously served as Deputy Chairperson of the Bush Bucks Soccer Academy. His career is further distinguished by his long-standing commitment to labour relations, having served as a NEHAWU shop steward for 14 years.



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Address from the Deputy Registrar



Professor Elias Oupa Mashile is an accomplished academic leader and Associate Professor in the Department of Science and Technology Education at the University of South Africa (Unisa). He holds a Doctor of Education (DEd) specializing in the Psychology of Education. Throughout his distinguished career, Professor Mashile has driven institutional innovation in Open Distance and e-Learning (ODEL). He is currently the acting Deputy Registrar: Student Administration and Systems Integration, overseeing critical university workflows, student data, and academic support frameworks.

Previously, he served as the Executive Director of the Department of Tuition Support and Facilitation of Learning (DTSFL), where he championed student success initiatives and spearheaded the rollout of South African Sign Language (SASL) programmes. An active researcher, journal reviewer, and Editor-in-Chief of *Progressio*, his scholarly work focuses on teacher education, technology instruction, e-tutorship, and online assessment.



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Keynote Address 1 ETDP SETA



Mr Mabutho Raphotle matriculated in 1987 and acquired the Primary Teachers Diploma from Soweto College of Education in 1990; Bachelor of Arts Degree from Wits University in 1994; A Post graduate Certificate in Business Leadership from UNISA in 2002; an Advance Project Management Certificate (APM) from UNISA in 2005; and Master of Business Administration degree (MBA) from Milpark Business School in 2011.

He started his career as a Mathematics high school teacher in 1994 in Klerksdorp. He later joined a Maths Centre in 1999, an NGO specialising in developing and implementing mathematics materials and programmes for Mathematics primary school teachers. He worked for Maths Centre for 4 years, where was promoted to the national training manager, before being employed by the ETDP SETA in late 2003 as skills development project leader. He was promoted to a team supervisor from 2008 to 2011.

He was promoted to a Senior Manager for Skills Planning and Research, a position he has held from 2012 to 2026, where he initiated and managed research projects and also responsible for compiling Strategic, Annual and Operational as well as sector skills planning documents for the ETDP SETA. He was further promoted to the Chief Executive Officer on 01 September 2026.



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Keynote Address 2



Mr Lungisa Mbulawa is the Principal of West Coast TVET College and has extensive experience in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training sector. He began his career as a Business Studies lecturer in 1998 and later served as Campus Manager of False Bay College's Khayelitsha Campus. He joined West Coast TVET College as Deputy Principal: Corporate Services before assuming the role of Principal in 2019. A CPUT alumnus, Mr Mbulawa also serves as the provincial chairperson of the South African Public College Organisation (SAPCO), contributing to leadership and collaboration across the public TVET sector.



Mr Sulaiman G Maeresera is an experienced ICT and Management Information Systems leader with more than 15 years' experience in the education sector. He currently serves as MIS and ICT Manager at West Coast TVET College and also as Acting Deputy Principal: Corporate Services. His work focuses on digital transformation, ICT governance, data-driven decision-making, project management and business process improvement. Mr Maeresera also contributes to the broader higher education and TVET sector through professional and advisory roles, including serving on the Project Management Advisory Committee at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and as Chairperson of the ITS User Group.



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Decoupling and Institutional Isomorphism in South African Higher Education: Explaining the Gap Between Policy Rhetoric and Classroom Reality

Sub-theme: Diagnosing Policy-Practice Gaps in Post-Apartheid Higher Education Governance

There is a perception of the imbalance between academic institutions' public promise and what they practically deliver. Drawing on the "HE ON TRIAL" summit report (CHEC & WCG, 2026) as primary source data, the paper is underpinned by institutional theory to explain this phenomenon. This conceptual/documentary analysis argues that coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphic pressures produce decoupling between policies and practices in institutions of higher learning (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Eight charges from the summit, which include, among other things, curriculum irrelevance, exploitation of academic personnel, perpetuation of inequality and governance paralysis, are analysed as manifestations of decoupling.

The research finds that South African institutions of learning are over-regulated and under-trusted (Scott, 2014); this has led to a situation of protecting form rather than purpose. The paper, therefore, recommends reducing decoupling through trust-based governance, transparency on workload, articulation reform, and context-based quality assurance. The analysis further reveals that decoupling is mostly in curriculum design, where global blueprints clash with labour market needs, and in quality assurance where box-ticking audits replace academic improvement. The pattern sustains a system which supports reputational legitimacy rather than functional effectiveness. By applying institutional theory to the summit's eight charges, the paper provides a diagnostic framework for identifying and explaining persistent policy-practice gaps in post-apartheid South African higher education governance. It is, therefore, imperative that restoring alignment requires a shift from compliance-driven governance to relational accountability, supported by transparent workload models, and collaborative curriculum creation with industry and communities.

These policy-practice gaps become particularly significant in a rapidly evolving technological landscape, where developments such as AI are placing new demands on curriculum responsiveness, governance, and institutional practices.

Keywords: Decoupling, institutional isomorphism, TVET colleges, South African Higher education, Policy-practice gap, academic labour



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Plenary



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Roundtable discussion



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Case Study: Developments at NWU.



Prof Anné Verhoef is Professor of Philosophy and Director of the North-West University Artificial Intelligence Hub. He holds PhDs from the University of Stellenbosch and the Free University in Amsterdam. His research focuses on academic integrity, artificial intelligence ethics, and the philosophy of happiness.

He has published widely on academic integrity and AI in Higher Education, is co-founder and former associate editor of the academic journal Transformation in Higher Education, and is a NRF Rated Researcher.

He also co-founded AICSA, the Artificial Intelligence Circle in South Africa for Higher Education. Under his leadership, NWU became the first university in South Africa and Africa to officially approve an AI policy. The NWU AI Hub was selected as a finalist in the Gartner 2025 Eye on Innovation Awards for Education in Higher Education for the APAC and EMEA regions.

In 2024, he received the NWU Silver Wings Award for his work on academic integrity, and in 2025, the NWU Teaching and Learning Leadership Award for his work on AI in Higher Education. His latest book, Happiness, Unhappiness and Chance, was published by Bloomsbury at the end of 2025.



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Panelist- CPUT



Prof Muhammad Nakhoda is an Associate Professor of Biotechnology at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). He serves as the Learning and Teaching Coordinator in the Faculty of Applied Sciences, where he oversees Curriculum and Academic Development, and provides guidance in the scholarship and practice of Learning and Teaching.

His academic interests span various areas of Plant Ecophysiology and Biotechnology, Curriculum Development, Academic Literacies, and Student Success in Higher Education. He has led the development of CPUT's AI Practice Guide for students, and formed CPUT's first Student AI Club, which has gone on to provide workshops, skills- and applications development to address student needs and concerns in the context of a university of technology.



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Panelist- UWC



Mr. Fundile Nkunge is the Manager of Digital Academic Literacy and ICT Skills Training at the University of the Western Cape.

He holds a BCom Honours degree and has built extensive expertise in digital literacy training and academic development. His portfolio includes the design and implementation of large-scale training initiatives that integrate digital literacy into academic curricula, supporting both student success and staff development.

His work focuses on bridging digital divides, enhancing digital competencies, and promoting academic enrichment through innovative teaching and learning practices. Fundile actively collaborates with institutional stakeholders and external partners to ensure sustainable digital transformation in higher education.



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Panelist- UWC



Mr Faried Ahmed is currently employed as an Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Facilitator at the Centre for Innovative Education and Communication Technologies (CIECT) at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). He has nineteen (19) years of experience in Higher Education, with eighteen (18) of those years serving as an ICT Facilitator within CIECT.

In his current role, he is involved in computer software application development, as well as facilitating short courses and providing ICT and AI training to staff and students at the Centre for Innovative Education and Communication Technologies (CIECT).



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Panelist- UWC



Mr. Khaalid Khan Information and Communication Technologies facilitator at the University of the Western Cape.

The ICT team is responsible for the facilitation of emerging technologies to staff and postgraduate students at the university, including the integration of Artificial Intelligence into new and existing tools and platforms. Khaalid, under the ICT team, frequently researches and tests new tools and platforms that may be of benefit to the university ecosystem



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Panelist- UCT



Dr Greig Krull is an Academic Staff Developer and Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) at the University of Cape Town. His work focuses on post-digital education, including blended and online learning, AI integration, assessment, facilitation and learning analytics in higher education.

He teaches on the School of Education's Postgraduate Diploma and Master's in Educational Technology, the Postgraduate Diploma in Blended and Online Learning Design (BOLD), and a range of short courses. He also supervises postgraduate students in the field of educational technology and higher education. He is a member of the coordinating council of HELTASA.



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Panelist- UCT



Dr Ncediwe Mdlulwa is a Lecturer in the Academic Staff Development cluster at the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) at the University of Cape Town. She teaches on the Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Technology and contributes to a range of short courses offered through the School of Education and CILT.

Her work focuses on the integration of artificial intelligence and innovative approaches in higher education teaching and learning, with particular attention to perspectives and contexts emerging from the Global South. Recent research has explored the effectiveness of AI in postgraduate supervision practices and the policy implications of AI use in South African higher education. She also supervises Master's students within the Educational Technology programme.



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Panelist- SU



Dr. Jan Petrus Bosman is Director of the Centre for Learning Technologies (CLT – www.sun.ac.za/clt) at Stellenbosch University (SU), South Africa. He trained and taught in the field of Theology at SU before becoming involved in academic development work.

After working at the Centre for Teaching and Learning at SU as well as a start-up educational software company, he became Head and later Director of the CLT, a Centre that spearheads and supports SU's strategies for the meaningful use of learning technologies in Teaching-Learning-Assessment.

His teaching and research interests are around blended learning, graduate attributes, the evolving digital scholar, and, more recently, the scholarship of educational leadership and artificial intelligence in higher education. He is busy with his second PhD (KU Leuven & Stellenbosch University) in the field of Academic Advising and the use of AI-infused advising systems.

He currently lives in Cape Town with his wife, two kids, and two cats.



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Panelist- SU



Ms Yakhuluntu Dubazana is an Advisor: Digital Learning in the Centre for Learning Technologies at Stellenbosch University. Her work sits at the intersection of academic development, digital pedagogy, and emerging technologies, with a particular interest in AI literacies, inclusive learning design, student agency, and the changing role of educators in higher education.

She contributes to institutional thinking and work on AI in teaching, learning, and assessment, as well as broader digital learning initiatives. Outside of higher education, Yakhuluntu enjoys hiking, discovering new places and expressing herself through personal style.



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Closing Remarks and Words of Thanks



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Ms. Lesego J. Mothowagae is the Manager: Finance and Operations for Unisa's Western Cape Region, with over 20 years of experience in higher education administration and management. She provides strategic leadership and oversight across financial management, operations, governance, risk management, procurement, facilities, and institutional support services within the Region.

She holds a Master of Business Leadership, an Honours degree in Business Management, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Financial Management. She is also a Professional Accountant (SA) and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Business Leadership at Unisa. Her doctoral research focuses on developing a risk management framework for South African universities, with particular emphasis on mitigating organisational threats within smart campus environments.

Lesego is passionate about effective governance, institutional sustainability and creating enabling environments that support the broader academic and student success mandate of higher education institutions.



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Thank You



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