



Unisa Western Cape Region 11th Annual Academic Development Symposium

in partnership with the
**Academic Development Open Virtual Hub
(ADOVH)**

18 & 19 September 2025

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Rethinking Teaching, Learning, and Student Support

Exploring Opportunities for Innovation and Shaping Future-Ready Graduates in the Age of AI and 5IR

Thursday, 18 September & Friday, 19 September 2025

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Introductory Message



“Technology will never replace great teachers, but technology in the hands of great teachers can be transformational” (Couros, 2022).

Unisa Western Cape Region warmly welcomes you to our 11th Annual Academic Development Symposium, one of our flagship regional events. This year, we are delighted to collaborate with the Academic Development Open Virtual Hub (ADOVH), which has played a pivotal role in advancing Unisa’s transition to online platforms.

Our theme, *“Rethinking Teaching, Learning and Student Support: Exploring Opportunities for Innovation and Shaping Future-Ready Graduates in the Age of AI and 5IR,”* invites us to reflect on the rapid technological changes transforming higher education. These shifts challenge institutions not only to adapt but also to innovate, ensuring that technology serves as a catalyst for both learning and community transformation.

The symposium continues to serve as a platform where stakeholders across the education landscape come together to share insights, best practices, and transformative experiences. As we engage in this year’s conversations, let us explore how emerging technologies can be harnessed to strengthen our practices, enhance student support, and shape graduates who are ready to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

We wish you an engaging, collaborative, and inspiring symposium.

Yours sincerely

John Abrahams

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Welcome Message from the Regional Director



Welkom | Welcome | Wamkelekile | Kenang ka kgotso!

It is with great pleasure that the Unisa Western Cape Region welcomes you to our 11th Annual Academic Development Symposium. This year, we celebrate a significant milestone: an additional year to our decade-long journey.

Over the past decade, this Unisa Western Cape symposium has evolved into a platform where both experienced and emerging professionals in education can share best practices and insights. Since then, it has fostered meaningful connections that lead to key opportunities in classrooms and lecture halls.

This year's theme focuses on teaching, learning and student support while addressing important issues in the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR). As digital landscapes intersect with fundamental pedagogical practices, there is a pressing need for digitalisation to align with modern demands while also providing necessary care and counteracting digital marginalisation. This year's symposium will explore the intersection of access, innovation, support, care, graduate agility, and collaborative solutions through dialogue and ongoing discussion.

We, at the Unisa Western Cape Region, encourage all participants to engage creatively and collaboratively around this theme. We hope that lessons learned, and discussions held will yield practical solutions for the African education landscape. I hope that the symposium will enhance our approaches and strategies in practice, adding value and providing solutions to help us cultivate local, national and global connections across Africa, while delivering service and quality to all our communities.

Yours sincerely,

Motale Nkgoang

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Programme Director



Dr Denzil Chetty is a graduate of the University of Durban-Westville, now known as the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He is currently leading two institutional strategic projects. Firstly, he heads the Academic Development Open Virtual Hub (ADOVH), which aims to enhance students' digital competencies for effective online learning in a technology-mediated environment.

Secondly, he leads the Advancing African Digital Humanities Ideation Hub (AADHIH), an interdisciplinary initiative within the College of Human Sciences. Dr Chetty's expertise is multifaceted, encompassing technology and society, education and technology, and digital humanities. Over the years, he has received numerous prestigious awards recognising his contributions to academia.

Some notable accolades include the 2003 Abe Bailey Fellowship in the United Kingdom, the 2011 UNISA Award for Innovation in Teaching and Learning, the 2014 Shanghai Open University African Visiting Scholar award in China, and the 2015 Unisa Excellence Award in Teaching and Learning, all of which acknowledge his significant contributions to institutional knowledge.

Day One – 18 September 2025

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Welcome Address



Ms Liana Joubert is a graduate of the School of Business Leadership, University of South Africa. She took up relevant leadership positions after majoring in Advanced Financial Management and Strategic Management. For more than 24 years, being in leadership positions has strengthened her ability to lead and direct a diverse workforce to give expression to change and transformation imperatives.

Academically, she enjoys researching management philosophies and principles and translating these into practice. Furthermore, her career develops around applying innovative solutions to preserve and create shareholder value. This value creation is centered around governance, planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation, financial management, quality assurance, and promoting and maintaining a future sustainable organisational position. These principles are all-inclusive and form the nexus of any organisation. It requires adaptable leadership to make provision for the changing higher education landscape; hence, it remains exploratory and thought-provoking for her. She best functions in a dynamic learning working environment that allows for creativity and innovation to promote sustainable growth.

She has a very strong ethical work ethos, and her leadership style is participatory in nature. Depending on the circumstances or strategic nature of the task, she can adapt her management style to achieve the agreed-upon outcomes. Socially, she develops strong and healthy relationships to interact with all stakeholders harmoniously. Throughout her career, her social competence has assisted in building an internal moral compass. She can interact with all stakeholders irrespective of level and position and build rapport through mutual attentiveness and positivity.

Opening Address



Prof. Moloko Sepota is a teacher by profession who began his career as a high school teacher in rural South Africa. He later became a lecturer at a College of Education and subsequently joined the erstwhile University of the North (now the University of Limpopo), where he became an Associate Professor of African Languages and Acting Director of the Academic Development Unit. He then joined the Unisa administration as Deputy Director, followed by his appointment as the Unisa Limpopo Regional Director and later as the North Eastern Regional Director after the merger of the Limpopo and Mpumalanga regional offices.

Over the past three years, he has served in the office of the University Registrar, acting as both Deputy Registrar and Registrar, and he continues to serve as the University Registrar. He has also held various roles in professional organisations, including executive member and treasurer of the South African Folklore Society (SAFOS) for the Northern Region and later at the national level. Additionally, he served as an Exco member of the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA), convenor of the Northern Region Foundation Programmes Special Interest Group, and as a member of the African Languages Association of Southern Africa (ALASA).

Prof. Sepota has a keen interest in Higher Education Foundation Programmes, Language and Development, Language in Education, and Indigenous Knowledge Systems, as demonstrated by several conference presentations, articles, and books he has published in these fields. Beyond his academic pursuits, he is actively involved in national bodies related to foundation provisioning in South African higher education, serving as a member of the Ministerial Task Team since 2011. He holds a D.Litt. from the University of Stellenbosch.

Keynote Address 1



Dr Azwinndini Christopher Tshivhase is a distinguished leader in higher education, currently serving as the Acting Vice Principal for Teaching, Learning, Community Engagement, and Student Support at the University of South Africa (Unisa). Previously, he was appointed Executive Director of Academic Planning in 2023. In these pivotal roles, he manages Unisa's extensive Programme Qualification Mix (PQM), overseeing nearly 500 accredited programmes.

Dr Tshivhase holds extensive and impressive academic credentials, culminating in a PhD in Policy Development and Implementation from the University of Pretoria (UP). His career features significant leadership positions across South Africa's higher education and public sectors, including roles at the Vaal University of Technology (VUT), the Council on Higher Education (CHE), the University of Zululand (UNIZULU), and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

His expertise is further enhanced by substantial international experience. He has played a key role in NEPAD initiatives across Africa, delivered training at numerous universities on the continent, and presented at conferences throughout Europe and the United States. His specific focus on open distance and e-learning has led him to conduct key benchmarking studies in the United Kingdom, Canada, and the USA, establishing him as a respected authority on global educational models and curriculum transformation.

Topic: The impact of AI and 5IR on education

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Keynote Address 2



Mr Juan Benjamin is the Chief Director for Curriculum Management and Teacher Development, a position he assumed in October 2022. His distinguished career has progressed from classroom teacher to senior educational leader.

Starting as a teacher at Grassdale and Ocean View Secondary Schools, his foundational experience significantly informs his approach. He joined the Metropole South Education District in 2003 as Assistant Director for School-Based Management, where he led the revision of the School Finance Manual, helped establish the Certificate for School-Based Administration, and chaired the Dennegeur Bus Disaster Relief Fund task team.

He later served as an internal presiding officer for Labour Relations and as a Circuit Team Manager before being appointed Director of the Cape Winelands District in 2014. A respected voice in educational theory, he has guest lectured at both Stellenbosch University and the University of Cape Town.

His expertise has been recognised internationally through departmental delegations to various countries, including England, Norway, Switzerland, China, and Brazil. In his current role, he is the provincial lead for the critical Back-on-Track programme, South Africa's only state-funded learning loss recovery intervention. Mr Benjamin holds a H.Ed., B.Ed (Hons.), and an M.Ed, blending his practical leadership with strong academic scholarship. His career is defined by a steadfast commitment to improving education systems and outcomes.

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) in South African public schools: Challenges and Opportunities with a specific lens on the Western Cape.

Abstract

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a form of digitalisation has fundamentally reshaped education globally. In the South African context, more teachers and learning support practitioners have integrated digitalisation with their teaching and learning strategies, based on the fact that it provides unprecedented opportunities in terms of learning approaches, strategies and principles to personalise instruction. In addition, with its benefits, it has also assisted with automating administrative tasks and assessments to equip learners for a digital future. However, in pedagogical spaces of teaching and learning and modern-day classroom, fundamental pedagogies still persist. The integration of digitalisation is not without significant challenges. These challenges include persistent gaps in infrastructure, varying levels of teacher readiness and the inchoate spectrum in which AI operates, resulting in grave ethical concerns regarding data privacy and algorithmic and perceptual bias, brought along by the complexities of digital adoption.

This presentation delves into the realities of AI implementation within South African classrooms, with a specific focus on schools in the Western Cape public schools. It will yield a theoretical discussion and explore tangible experiences of educators and learners at ground level. This study will also look at the role of national and provincial initiatives, and how to bridge the divide between the potential of AI and practice. The objective of this presentation is to provide insight into key considerations to provide educators and policymakers with practical insights. This is then followed by a dialogue on the strengths, challenges, opportunities and areas for consideration to ensure that the adoption of digitalisation in the classroom is truly inclusive, effective and sustainable in the future.

Keynote Address 3



Prof. Daniela Gachago is an Associate Professor at the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Her current research focuses on academic staff development in designing blended and online learning for higher education, emphasising the creation of socially just learning environments and curriculum designs rooted in co-creation and equity-oriented compassionate design principles.

Gachago teaches in the PG Diploma in EdTech and the Master's in EdTech programmes, convenes the Master's in Higher Education Studies (HES) at UCT, and oversees a new Postgraduate Diploma in Blended and Online Learning (BOLD). She holds a Master's in Adult Education from the University of Botswana and a PhD from the School of Education at the University of Cape Town. She is a C1-rated researcher and a 2022 Fulbright Scholar who has published over 80 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters.

Additionally, she serves as the managing editor of CriSTaL, the journal for critical studies in teaching and learning in higher education. Daniela also maintains a blog at <http://danielagachago.blogspot.com> and tweets under the handle @dgachago17.

Towards Compassionate Learning Design: The Praxis of Participation, Justice, and Care

Abstract

In education, teaching, and learning designers often hear about “empathy”, “care”, “compassion”, “inclusive design”, and “trauma-informed” as part of their professional work. Although consensus around the intended meanings is not fully contextually accounted for, critical engagement with these concepts should lead to guiding questions to expand on traditional instructional/learning design and develop learning design models that would put empathy at the centre of learning design decisions.

This conversation leans towards compassionate learning design and will explore strategies of care and compassion in times of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI). Through a series of guided questions, participants will share their own concerns but also approaches to creating a caring and compassionate learning environment for their students and themselves. In addition, it will highlight some key aspects of the praxis of participation, justice, compassion, and care.

Parallel Sessions

**Innovative teaching and learning practices
in the age of AI and 5IR.**

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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.

Perception And Challenges Of Computer-based Examination Among Library And Information Science Students In Federal Polytechnic Ede, Nigeria

Abstract

The Federal Polytechnic Ede uses a mixed method in the conduct and administration of examinations. The paper-based system was solely in use until 2015, when the computer-based system was partially introduced. In 2023, the institution upgraded its computer-based system and integrated mobile devices for use in examinations. All of these initiatives aimed to enhance the examination experience of the students. It became imperative to examine the views of the students regarding the computer-based mode of assessment. This study assessed the perception and challenges of CBE among Library and Information Science students in Federal Polytechnic Ede with the view to understanding how it impacts their academic experience.

The descriptive survey design was employed. The population comprised 1,095 LIS students in the institution. Krejcie and Morgan's sampling formula was used to determine the sample size of 278 students randomly selected across the four levels in the Department. A structured and validated questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings showed a positive perception of CBE among the students despite notable challenges. The study further revealed a significant positive impact of CBE on the students' academic experience. The study recommended, among others, that the management of the institution should resolve the challenges affecting CBE, such as unstable power supply and poor internet connectivity.



Mr Mokopane Marakalala worked as a Junior Investigator for Forensic Services at SNG Grant Thornton for three years before joining Unisa. His responsibilities included investigation, risk management, and corporate governance in both the public and private sectors. He began at Unisa as a Postgraduate Research Assistant on the Grow Your Own Timber (GYOT) project and was later appointed as a permanent lecturer in the College of Law, School of Criminal Justice, Department of Police Practice in 2021. In 2022, he was promoted to Senior Lecturer.

His research interests focus on Forensic Science and Criminal Investigation. He has published 17 articles in reputable journals and presented papers at international conferences on topics related to forensic investigation.

Mr Mokopane is also the Project Leader for the Youth Network Engaged Scholarship Project, where he is developing a Short Learning Programme and an Online Textbook on Financial Fraud and Commercial Crime Investigation. Additionally, he serves as the CLAW APSA Representative and is a member of the Unisa Institutional Forum.

The Effectiveness of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) in Education: Innovative Teaching and Learning Best Practices

Abstract

A review of the literature on the effectiveness of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) in education highlights the transformative potential of these technologies. The emergence of AI and 5IR mitigates the technocentric behaviour often associated with the latter by promoting collaboration. While the 5IR initially focused less on the foundational principles of social fairness and sustainability, it has increasingly emphasised digitalisation and AI-driven technologies to enhance production efficiency and flexibility. To achieve the study's objective, a literature analysis was conducted, and secondary data were evaluated and deconstructed. This paper primarily aims to explore the effectiveness of AI and the 5IR in education.

The inquiry specifically examines young people's reliance on and use of AI and their adaptation to digitalization in educational settings. The study presents recommendations for potential research topics that the education sector could pursue to develop and enhance AI and 5IR models in education. It employs a qualitative methodology, producing descriptive data, particularly through a Systematic Literature Review with explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria for data collection. Recommendations regarding risk and protective factors are categorised into five domains: individual characteristics, peer groups, school, families, and neighbourhoods/community. The relationship between the number and type of risk factors significantly influences an individual's likelihood of becoming a substance abuser or engaging in delinquent behavior.



Dr Xolani Khalo is a Senior Lecturer in Curriculum Studies at the University of Fort Hare, recognised for his strong commitment to advancing pedagogical innovation. His academic career is driven by a passion for developing teaching methodologies that are both effective and transformative.

Dr Khalo has actively led and contributed to a diverse portfolio of research projects, demonstrating a remarkable interdisciplinary approach. His scholarly work focuses on critical areas such as error analysis in Financial Mathematics, aiming to identify and address learning obstacles. He is also a staunch advocate for Inclusive Education, researching practices that ensure equitable access and participation for all learners. Additionally, his research into Climate Change Education seeks to integrate vital environmental awareness and sustainability into curricula, preparing students to become conscientious global citizens.

Beyond his research, Dr Khalo is dedicated to shaping the next generation of educators, mentoring them to adopt reflective and inclusive teaching practices. His unwavering commitment to academic excellence, combined with a deep belief in education as a tool for community development, solidifies his status as an asset to the University of Fort Hare and a respected voice in the broader educational landscape.

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Reimagining Life Sciences Education with AI Utilization in Initial Teacher Education

Abstract

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Life Sciences education has the potential to revolutionise the learning experience. This study explores the effectiveness of AI-powered tools in enhancing student learning outcomes and engagement in Life Sciences. The study seeks to address the question of how AI-powered learning tools impact student learning outcomes and engagement in Life Sciences education. The study is underpinned by the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), which serves as the framework that examines the acceptance of technology, determined by the effects of performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions.

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach, sampling 65 final-year Bachelor of Education students to share their experiences with the use of AI-powered learning tools to supplement their Life Sciences coursework. Analysis of student performance data, thematic analysis applied to one-on-one interviews and focus groups will provide insights into the effectiveness of AI-powered learning. The findings of this study may guide the integration of AI-powered learning tools into Life Sciences curricula, influence the change of approach in initial teacher education, and effectively incorporate AI-powered tools into their teaching practices. This study will contribute to the growing body of research on AI-powered learning tools in Life Sciences education, providing insights into their effectiveness and potential applications. The findings will empower teacher trainers, educators, policymakers, and researchers with innovative approaches to recognise and accommodate AI, ultimately enhancing student learning outcomes and engagement.

Parallel Sessions

Student support and care in a digitally evolving environment

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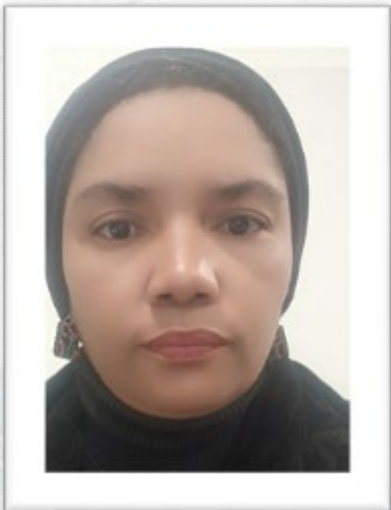


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Ms Jennifer Malgas-Esau is a dedicated educator and researcher with a profound commitment to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). With over two decades of specialised experience in facilitating life skills education, she brings a wealth of practical knowledge to her current role as a lecturer and a PhD candidate. Her academic foundation is both robust and comprehensive: she holds a Master of Education (M.Ed.) Support degree from the University of Stellenbosch, a BA Hons and a BA in Health Care Studies from the University of the Western Cape, and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) from the University of South Africa (Unisa).

Her research is deeply personal and impactful, focusing on the holistic development of TVET students. She investigates critical areas such as the efficacy of vocational programmes, the essential role of parental support, and the unique experiences of mature women students within the tertiary education system. As a qualitative researcher, Jennifer employs innovative and empathetic data collection methodologies. She utilises in-person interviews, photo-novellas, journaling, and the river of life technique to capture the rich, nuanced narratives of her participants, ensuring their voices remain central to her work.

This unique blend of extensive field experience and rigorous academic inquiry positions Jennifer as a thought leader who bridges theory and practice. She is not only contributing valuable scholarship to the field of TVET but is also actively shaping educational practices that empower students with the essential life skills needed for personal fulfilment and professional success. Her work promises to provide significant insights for educators, policymakers, and institutions dedicated to enhancing the TVET landscape.

The reimagined, smart, and technologically enhanced TVET

Abstract

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges are among the largest higher educational institutions to enrol both school leavers and adults who want to learn. TVETs offer a variety of programmes that give people the skills and information they need to live the kinds of lives they think are valuable and fulfilling. However, many students returning to TVET struggle to attend daily face-to-face classes, because they pay a high price for education. A phenomenological study based on capability theory, was conducted to find out how compulsory life skills classes for first-year vocational students in TVET change the opinions of older students about their own well-being and careers.

The findings of the interviews and diary entries, which were thematically coded and analysed, showed that the TVET curriculum is outdated, that well-being themes were not taught adequately, and that the Open Learning Centre was pleasant for students. At the same time, a militancy towards students' regular face-to-face classes puts a lot of stress on their physical, emotional, and financial health, as well as their relationships with family and friends, leading to frequent student absences and making student dropout seem attractive. It is thus timely that a re-imagined curriculum should be prioritise considering the exchange and implementation of empirical evidence of student well-being as we transition to a smart, technologically evolving higher education system that will exist by 2030.



Dr Motlokwe Thobejane is the Executive Director of ICT Infrastructure and Systems within the ICT portfolio at the University of South Africa (Unisa). He holds a BSc in Computer Science and Statistics from the University of Limpopo (UL), a BSc Honours in Information Systems from Unisa, an MPhil in Informatics from the University of Pretoria (UP), and a PhD in Information Technology Management from the University of Johannesburg (UJ).

His research focuses on cloud computing, artificial intelligence, project management, cybersecurity, and digital education. Recently, he co-authored and presented a paper on online learning for rural students with Dr Eva G. Makwakwa, which led to this co-presentation at the symposium.



Dr Eva G. Makwakwa is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Mathematics Education at the University of South Africa (Unisa). She holds a BSc Honours in Statistics, an MSc, and a PhD in Statistics Education. Her research focuses on the teaching and learning of statistics, data handling, and probability, as well as emerging areas such as online learning, artificial intelligence, and academic integrity.

Recently, she co-authored and presented a paper on online learning for rural students alongside Dr. Motlokwe Thobejane, her co-presenter at the symposium.

Navigating the Digital Divide: Students' Perceptions and Preparedness for Online Learning

Abstract: Dr Motlokwe Thobejane & Dr Eva G. Makwakwa

The shift to online learning has transformed the educational landscape, yet the experiences and perceptions of rural students remain understudied. This systematic literature review synthesises existing research on rural students' perceptions of online learning, utilising both external and internal frameworks to identify the key factors influencing their experiences and outcomes. A comprehensive search of major academic databases and journals yielded 109 studies that met the inclusion criteria.

The findings highlight a complex interplay of external factors, such as infrastructure, policy, and socioeconomic challenges; internal factors, including teacher knowledge and pedagogical practices, in shaping rural students' perceptions of online learning. Based on these insights, the study offers recommendations to enhance online learning experiences for rural students. These include policies to support equitable digital tools, initiatives to strengthen technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPCK), efforts to improve digital literacy for teachers and students, and investments in infrastructure and living conditions. The findings have implications for educational practice, policy development, and future research aimed at improving online learning in rural contexts.



Prof. Jeanette Maritz is a distinguished academic and C2-rated NRF researcher. She serves as the Head of the Institute for Social and Health Sciences at the University of South Africa (Unisa) and holds the position of Professor Extraordinary at the Stellenbosch Business School. Her career is marked by a unique integration of expertise in mental health nursing and leadership coaching, which she applies to advance postgraduate education and research.

With a strong track record in mentoring, Prof. Maritz has successfully supervised over 60 master's and doctoral students to completion. Her research primarily focuses on postgraduate student wellness, neurodiversity, and developing inclusive, personalised approaches to supervision that transcend one-size-fits-all models. She is a passionate advocate for creating supportive, innovative, and future-ready academic environments.

Her scholarly work includes extensive publications and conference presentations, concentrating on the development of psycho-socio-educational support systems for both students and supervisors. Key areas of her academic interest include research development and innovation, coaching and mentorship, and mental health. This focus is underpinned by a deep commitment to ethics and cultural diversity within the health sciences.

Through her rigorous research, dedicated student development, and thought leadership, particularly within a global south context. Maritz is widely recognised as a leading figure in shaping a more empathetic and effective future for postgraduate education.

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Reimagining Postgraduate Supervision and Student Wellness: Integrating Human, More-than-Human, and AI-Informed Approaches for Future-Ready Graduates

Abstract

This presentation explores how postgraduate supervision can better support student wellness in changing higher education environments. Drawing on a scoping review of postgraduate support after COVID-19 and a case study of 'Lindi,' a neuroqueer postgraduate student, it highlights the gaps in support for students who are often marginalised, including LGBTQIA+, neurodiverse students and those with mental health challenges.

In many settings, supervision takes place where formal systems of support are limited, and students rely heavily on informal networks. Lindi's story shifts the focus from simply belonging towards becoming, showing how environments, relationships, and even non-human supports influence postgraduate journeys. The presentation also considers how AI tools such as early warning systems, adaptive platforms and wellbeing applications could be used responsibly to strengthen supervision. It concludes with a call for more inclusive and contextually relevant practices that enable diverse students to flourish as future-ready graduates

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Dr Carol Edson-Ashley is a dedicated higher education professional and scholar whose diverse career spans academia, research, and educational support services. Her academic foundation is built on a robust multidisciplinary background, with undergraduate and postgraduate studies in Literature, Linguistics, and Philosophy. This unique synthesis of the humanities and critical thought informs her holistic approach to education. Her scholarly excellence was recognised early when she received the *Babette Taute Award* from the University of South Africa (Unisa) during her Honours studies. As a research scholar, Edson-Ashley was awarded a prestigious European Commission Scholarship from 2012 to 2013, enabling her to conduct advanced research in Europe in the fields of Neuropsychology and Neuroscience. This experience highlights her exceptional intellectual versatility and commitment to interdisciplinary inquiry.

Building on this strong academic foundation, she has gained extensive experience in the higher education sector. She has served as a Senior Lecturer, examiner, and study guide creator, playing a key role in shaping curricula, mentoring students, and upholding rigorous academic standards. Her practical experience in designing and assessing courses provides her with deep, firsthand insight into the needs of both students and institutions.

Currently, Edson-Ashley leverages her wealth of experience as a freelance academic editor and course designer, supporting scholars and institutions in achieving clarity, rigour, and impact in their educational materials. Complementing her professional pursuits, she is also a committed community volunteer and serves as the Financial Officer for an NGO connected to the Cape Town Central Library, demonstrating her steadfast dedication to social development and the promotion of literacy and learning beyond the university walls.

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Impact of student evaluations on lecturers' mental wellbeing & practice in private Higher Education

Abstract

Procedures and processes are necessary in higher education to ensure structure and quality; these include student evaluations of lecturers. While such an assessment is important at institutions, it also has negative implications, which is the focus of this paper. Students are able to digitally provide their evaluations of their lecturers by following a link and completing an online assessment. Historically, their reviews have been dismal.

These evaluations have impacted lecturers negatively and have affected their performance. While many resources are available for student support, these are rarely available for lecturers, especially in higher education. Digital resources have been made available to enhance classroom capability; however, there are seldom support services to protect lecturers' mental well-being.

The methodology applied is comparative, using secondary literature in the context of the interpretivism paradigm. According to the interpretivist worldview, humans may best understand reality via their own personal experiences (Darby & Fugate, 2019). Finally, recommendations are included to suggest alternative and amended methodologies.



Mrs Bronwyn Wright 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 over nineteen years of dedicated experience in the higher education sector, she is deeply committed to future-proofing the workforce. Her expertise focuses on upskilling and reskilling employees through cutting-edge, evidence-based teaching and learning methodologies, strategically aimed at enhancing 4IR readiness and fostering essential competency development for the modern workplace.

Beyond her technical focus, Wright is passionate about cultivating optimal psychological functioning and is a dedicated advocate for holistic employee well-being. Her research in this field provides valuable insights to the academic community and directly informs the practical interventions she designs to build resilience, boost productivity, and promote sustainable well-being within organisations.

Wright holds an M.Com (Industrial and Organisational Psychology) degree with distinction and is an active member of several prestigious professional bodies, including the HPCSA, SABPP, the Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology of South Africa (SIOPSA), the South African Mindfulness Learning Association (SAMLA), and COMENSA. This involvement underscores her reputation as a respected leader in her field.

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Reigniting Work Engagement Through Coping Strategies for Burned-Out Academics: A Comprehensive Open Distance e-Learning Context

Abstract

The South African higher education sector has experienced major shifts over the past five years due to government directives, the Covid-19 pandemic, and digitalisation. These changes have heightened stress among academics, who balance teaching, learner support, community engagement, and research. While such demands can cause burnout, some academics remain resilient and sustain work engagement.

This study develops a framework to investigate coping mechanisms among academics in an open, distance, and e-learning (ODeL) institution. Using a qualitative, interpretive approach, it explores coping strategies of academics experiencing burnout, identifies work environment factors, and highlights strategies that promote engagement. Data were collected through purposive and random sampling.

Findings emphasise the role of emotional support, personal-level coping, and professional-level coping in managing evolving teaching and learning demands. Emotional intelligence and adaptive coping strategies reduce burnout risk and enhance well-being and engagement.

Given the limited qualitative research in the South African ODeL context, this study amplifies the voices of academics and supports evidence-based interventions to strengthen resilience, productivity, and well-being in the higher education sector.

Unisa Law Clinic



Mr Mbuzo Vena was born in Cape Town. As a determined and passionate professional, he has built his career on the pursuit of justice and excellence in the legal field. He earned his LLB degree from the University of South Africa in 2019, consistently achieving academic excellence. Currently, he is a candidate attorney, gaining firsthand experience in the legal profession and preparing for various roles, including litigator and claims assessor.



Mr Reckon Beau Mathebula is an LLB graduate from the University of the Western Cape and a master's candidate in Labour Law. He is currently working on a thesis titled "*Unfair Dismissals in the Workplace: Can the CCMA Play an Active Role in Dismissal Proceedings?*" and exploring how this could affect the employment relationship. He was a trade union official for two years while also serving as a student legal representative for students at the student disciplinary court at the University of the Western Cape. During his time at the university, he was part of several readmission committees for faculties such as Arts, Law, Community Health Sciences, Economic Management Science, and Education. He currently serves as the deputy chairperson of the Unisa Western Cape Research Committee.

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The Role of the Unisa Law Clinic's Street Law Programme in Empowering Communities through Student-Led Legal Education

Abstract: Mr Mbuzo Vena & Mr Reckon Beau Mathebula

The Unisa Law Clinic's Street Law community outreach initiative is a co-curricular programme designed to equip law students with the skills to communicate legal concepts in plain language. Students deliver presentations in public spaces such as schools, workplaces, and community centres, making the law more accessible to ordinary citizens. The programme is open to students across all year levels, with the core aim of ensuring that every law student is capable of explaining legal principles in a way that is understandable to the general public.

As UNISA is an Open Distance Learning (ODL) institution, the majority of the programme is conducted online, with only the final presentation phase taking place in person. The programme consists of four phases: application (online), training (online), rehearsals (online), and presentations (in person). The online component is particularly critical. Since 2024, applications have been submitted via Microsoft Forms, significantly increasing student participation. In 2023, just under 700 students applied, while in 2025, applications reached a record high of 3,285.

Following the application and vetting process, students receive training from either legal academics or practising legal professionals. These topics are selected based on their relevance to the communities being served. Students then participate in rehearsal sessions to practise delivering legal content in accessible, everyday language. Presentations are conducted in various community settings, including schools, old-age homes, community centres, and other relevant institutions. The impact of the programme is twofold: firstly, it enhances students' legal knowledge and communication skills; secondly, it contributes to improving legal awareness among community members. The programme has been positively received by both students and the communities they serve.

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Dr Mohammad Pourbehi 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 of Engineering Education (SASEE). He currently serves as 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).

His role includes academic leadership, curriculum development, postgraduate supervision, and quality assurance aligned with national higher education and ECSA standards. With a background in Civil and Structural Engineering, he has led advanced research and consulting projects in concrete deterioration, seismic tank design, and sustainable construction materials. His contributions span academia and industry, with a strong focus on innovation, ethics, and sustainable development.

He holds MEng and PhD degrees in Civil Engineering and has presented and published extensively in national and international forums. Through his ongoing professional development and leadership, he actively contributes to the transformation and relevance of engineering education in South Africa.

Embedding Computational Thinking through Project-Based Learning in Civil Engineering: A Case Study on Seismic Analysis of Water Tanks

Abstract

The evolving demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the anticipated transitions into the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) necessitate pedagogical models that foster computational thinking, analytical reasoning, and technological integration in higher education. This paper presents an innovative project-based learning (PBL) intervention implemented in a core module—*Numerical Methods in Civil Engineering (NMC580S)*—within the Bachelor of Engineering Technology Honours in Civil Engineering at a South African University of Technology.

The project, centred on the seismic analysis of circular water storage tanks, integrates fluid-structure interaction (FSI) concepts, numerical methods, and engineering software to cultivate real-world problem-solving competencies. Students were guided through a phased approach, starting from deriving theoretical models (Helmholtz equation and mass-spring models) to developing modular MATLAB scripts that calculate hydrodynamic pressures and structural stresses. The project culminated in finite element modelling using Abaqus, where students validated their analytical results. Furthermore, data handling and report automation using Excel-MATLAB integration prepared students for data-centric professional environments.

This paper explores how such a structured, computation-intensive project supports the development of future-ready graduates. It highlights student engagement, self-directed learning, and the enhancement of digital literacies essential for thriving in AI-augmented engineering workplaces. The intervention demonstrates that embedding computational thinking within disciplinary contexts is a critical step toward reimagining engineering education for 5IR.



Ms Adèle Blacker is a respected leader in higher education and community development, particularly in community-based learning within marginalised and resource-constrained environments. Her current research focuses on understanding how living in rural areas, being deeply embedded in the community, and facing compounded marginalisation affect the quality and relevance of education, especially within distance learning frameworks. Through her work, she has become a leading advocate for addressing the educational challenges faced by underserved communities.

Blacker's leadership extends beyond academia; she actively drives initiatives to empower communities in the Western Cape. For instance, she has led projects that provide marginalised women with income-generating skills such as bread-making and sewing, demonstrating her commitment to fostering economic independence and uplifting the community. Her dedication to social change has earned her widespread recognition and respect in the field of educational leadership.

As a leader and coordinator at Unisa, Blacker has played a crucial role in establishing strategic partnerships with local municipalities, educational institutions, and NGOs to enhance the university's community outreach efforts. One notable achievement under her leadership is the implementation of a groundbreaking robotics programme for inmates at Pollsmoor Prison. This initiative exemplifies Unisa's commitment to engaged scholarship and expanding educational opportunities for marginalised populations. Additionally, Blacker has been instrumental in organising workshops focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), youth development programmes, and entrepreneurship seminars. Many of these initiatives have become integral components of Global Entrepreneurship Week activities in the Southern Cape. Throughout her career, Blacker has consistently demonstrated her unwavering commitment to education, leadership, and community engagement. Her efforts have played a pivotal role in shaping inclusive and sustainable educational practices.

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The 'Relevance' Paradox: A critical reflection on a Coding and Robotics programme in socially and economically disadvantaged communities in the Southern Cape.

Abstract

This research study is largely based the relevance of Coding and Robotics programmes in socially and economically disadvantaged communities. In an engaged scholarship project focusing on coding and robotics for these communities, a complex educational and social landscape emerges. In a world where the youth, regardless of their interest in further studies, are more consumers of technology than creators or innovators; digital awareness and literacy become essential for connecting individuals to regional and global markets. In an area where economic diversification, empowerment and agency are crucial, digitalisation is critical as much of the district's economy relies on seasonal tourism and economic development. Thus, the infusion of STEM-skills into emerging economies has led to increased digitalisation, remote work, and technology-enabled agriculture (agri-tech) and sustainable tourism.

This study employs a qualitative methodology to examine instances where coding skills have proven relevant in youth development centres, as well as their impact on digital self-confidence in communities where limiting narratives have hindered progress and how a sense of agency in digitalisation is embraced.

The findings indicate that teaching coding and robotics not only foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and forecasting skills that are important for their future careers but also provides relevance in STEM-related fields aligned with the innovation demands of the modern economy. In addition, this study identifies critical gaps in these communities that hinder digital inclusion in STEM-related career choices, such as inadequate infrastructure, unaffordable devices, and socio-economic pressures. Furthermore, amid ongoing efforts to promote successful careers in Coding, Robotics and STEM-disciplines, this study explores community perceptions regarding preferences for conventional career paths, which are exacerbated by siloed community development that stifles innovation.



Mr. Sultan Beg is a dedicated and skilled Human Resource (HR) Practitioner with a career spanning over fifteen years. He is currently a valued member of the Human Resource Staffing division at the University of South Africa (UNISA), where he applies his extensive expertise to support one of the continent's largest academic institutions. His comprehensive experience includes deep proficiency in all facets of the employee lifecycle, with specialisation in recruitment and selection, meticulous contract management, and fostering positive employee relations. This well-rounded skill set enables him to effectively manage talent acquisition and retention while ensuring compliance with best practices. Mr. Beg's professional practice is underpinned by a strong academic foundation.

He holds a National Diploma in Human Resource Management, which laid the groundwork for his career. Demonstrating a commitment to continuous learning, he further enhanced his qualifications by earning an Honours degree in Labour Law from the University of Johannesburg. This advanced specialisation has equipped him with a thorough understanding of South Africa's complex labour landscape, allowing him to navigate employment legislation confidently and provide insightful, legally sound solutions to a wide range of workplace issues. His combination of practical experience and formal legal education makes him an invaluable asset to the Unisa community.

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Mr Mmaphuti Donald Tjikana is a Human Resources (HR) Practitioner with over 14 years of experience in various HR functions. He is currently employed at the University of South Africa (Unisa) as an HR Practitioner, focusing on decentralised services. In this role, he oversees the recruitment, selection, and appointment of E-Tutors, Teaching Assistants, and Face-to-Face Tutors within the Student Support portfolio, managing a workforce of more than 500 tutors across the College of Accounting (CAS) and the College of Economic and Management Sciences (CEMS).

In addition to his operational responsibilities, Mr. Tjikana is a member of the ITMC Committee, where he serves as an HR stakeholder, enhancing teaching, learning, student support, and community engagement.

He holds a National Diploma in HR and is pursuing a BCom Honours in Business Management. To further strengthen his expertise, he has completed advanced certifications in Strategic HR, Workforce Planning, HR Business Partnering, and Project Management. Driven by a passion for people development, Mr. Tjikana views his work in HR not just as a career but as a calling. He is deeply committed to guiding, supporting, and empowering individuals to reach their full potential.

The Symbiotic Relationship: Empowering Students and Enriching Alumni at Unisa

Abstract: Mr. Sultan Beg and Mr Mmaphuti Donald Tjikana

Unisa Alumni can play a pivotal role in student support by bridging the gap between academic knowledge and real-world application for current students. With their firsthand experiences and insights into the educational journey, they may be empowered to provide holistic and personalised mentorship, fostering a supportive learning environment.

Additionally, they can facilitate networking opportunities, enhancing students' professional connections. This symbiotic relationship between alumni and students not only aids students in academic achievement but also enriches alumni with a sense of community and fulfilment, creating a cycle of support and growth within educational institutions.

In support of the Teaching and Learning project, it has identified that over the years, there are insufficient Unisa alumni included in the tutoring and support of Unisa students. HR has also identified that some qualifications do not attract enough tutors to increase their pool of candidates.

As Unisa Alumni, they would have the ability to inspire students by sharing success stories, career pathways, and practical skills learned during their own studies. By actively including Unisa alumni, it can better prepare graduates for successful academic career pathways and enhance their overall employability for those who want to pursue a career in Higher Education, using the platform as a tutor, teaching assistant, or marker as a stepping stone towards their future career path.

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Closing and Word of thanks



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 2010 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. Mr Nkgoang has served on the Steering Committee of the Peer Review Audit Committee. He has represented the Regions during the CHE Institutional Quality Audit. Mr Nkgoang is currently serving on the Steering Committee of the CHE Institutional Implementation Plan, which is overseeing the implementation of the recommendations of the CHE Institutional Report. Beyond Unisa, he has made significant contributions to broader societal development. He served as a Council Member of the Eastern Cape HRD Council, a structure reporting to the Premier, and is currently a Trustee of the Equal Opportunity Foundation. As a professionally affiliated member of the Institute of Directors South Africa (IoDSA), his leadership also extends to the sporting sector, where he previously served as Deputy Chairperson of the Bush Bucks Soccer Academy.

Day Two – 19 September 2025

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Welcome



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Opening Address



Dr Phumza Makgato-Khunou is a high school teacher by profession and is currently the Director of Instructional Support Services at Unisa. She was the Deputy Director for User Education and Training in the ICT Department at UNISA from 2015 to 2020 and Chief Education Specialist – e-Learning and Curriculum Support from 2008 to 2015 at the Gauteng Department of Education, Deputy Chief Education Specialist – e-Learning (April – November 2008) at the Gauteng Department of Education, and a Senior Education Specialist – Computer Applications Technology at the North West Department of Education. She is an expert in the fields of e-Learning, ICTs in education and online teaching and learning. She is also a Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert.

She obtained the Online Teaching and Learning Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) in 2020 at the Centre for Lifelong Learning (C3L) at Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg, Germany, and a certificate of participation in a Blockchain in Education webinar series facilitated by the Commonwealth of Learning in 2020. She is a committee member of the National Association of Distance Education and Open Learning in South Africa (NADEOSA). Her research interests are in e-Learning, professional development, the design, use, and evaluation of educational systems and platforms, as well as user satisfaction.

Keynote Address 1



Dr Manager Muswaba is a Fellow of the Chartered Governance Institute (Chartered Governance Professional) with the Chartered Governance and Accountancy Institute in Zimbabwe. He holds a Doctoral degree in Business Administration (DBA), focusing on Corporate Governance and Strategic Planning, from the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) in South Africa. Additionally, he has a Master's of Business Administration (MBA) from the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) and a Master of Philosophy in Labour Law from the University of the Western Cape (UWC). As a multi-skilled academic and researcher, Dr. Muswaba possesses numerous undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications in the fields of Education, Strategic Management, Human Resources Management, and Information Technology. He is currently the Principal and CEO of the College of Cape Town.

Dr Muswaba has supervised postgraduate studies at the master's level and has presented at various national and international conferences, PhD symposia, seminars, and workshops. He serves on several technical committees as an editorial board member and peer reviewer for journals, including the African Journal of Science, Technology, Innovation and Development (AJSTID) and the Journal for Creativity, Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship (JCISE). He has published in several international peer-reviewed journals and conferences, with his current and future research plans centered on integrating African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into modern IT-intensive education.

TVET Perspective

Implications of 5IR in Education across Africa: Exploring how AI and 5IR are transforming education systems in Africa, from classrooms to policy frameworks.

Abstract

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) in African education presents both opportunities and challenges. AI and 5IR have gained traction and shown great potential to transform higher and vocational education worldwide. Research has also shown that AI and 5IR greatly offer personalised learning experiences, improve student outcomes, and automate administrative tasks (Maina & Kuria, 2024). AI and 5IR have started reshaping educational landscapes through adaptive testing, curriculum development, and enhanced graduate employability (Antwi-Boampong et al., 2025). Angwaomadoko (2025) in his research discovered that both AI and 5IR tools can revolutionise curriculum design, promote personalised education, and improve teaching methodologies.

However, African institutions seem to be facing obstacles around funding, intellectual capacity, and other support resources that promote AI and 5IR in the education sector. To fully leverage the benefits of AI and 5IR in promoting education, Africa needs to invest heavily in research and development so as to compete favourably in the global arena (Maina & Kuria, 2024). This research paper, therefore, looks at how Africa can use collaborative efforts involving governments, educational institutions, and the private sector in integrating these digital modes in African education.

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Keynote Address 2



Prof. Jacqueline Batchelor is an Associate Professor and Vice Dean: Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Education at the University of Johannesburg, where she is recognised as an innovative teacher and educational researcher specialising in the use of mobile learning and emerging technologies in teaching and learning. She has received local, national, and international recognition for her pioneering teaching practices, and has developed and facilitated numerous initiatives aimed at supporting innovative teacher development.

Her work focuses on conceptualising and executing learning events that pilot new technologies in collaboration with research institutes and partners, while also advocating for school leadership to actively integrate mobile technologies through supportive policies and guidelines. As a mobile learning specialist, she is committed to increasing awareness of the potential of mobile devices in formal education, driving research on the changing face of education, and contributing to discourse on preserving indigenous knowledge and developing new pedagogical approaches across Africa. Through her research, international collaborations, and practitioner focus, she advances the University of Johannesburg's strategic goals by leveraging mobile technologies to foster transformation, innovation, and inclusivity in education.

Topic: Considering our choices, decisions and actions in navigating the impact of AI and the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) in Higher Education.

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Panel Discussion



Ms Elizabeth Boo (University of the Western Cape) has built her career at the intersection of higher education and business intelligence, with extensive experience in data analytics, statistical modelling, and institutional research. She currently serves as the Business Intelligence Data Architect and BI Lead at the University of the Western Cape, where she develops and manages strategic information systems, dashboards, and analytics solutions to support evidence-based decision-making. Alongside her university role, she is the founder of Phambily Analytics, a consultancy that applies BI and data storytelling across sectors such as education, marketing, and finance. Earlier in her career, she worked as a BI developer and analyst, dashboard/report builder, and BI solution designer in both academic and industry settings and contributed to higher education as a Quantitative Literacy and Numeracy Facilitator at UNISA. Throughout these roles, Boo has combined technical expertise with a commitment to enhancing student success and institutional effectiveness through the ethical and strategic use of data.



Prof. Anné Verhoef (Northwest University) is a professor in Philosophy and Director of the North-West University (NWU) AI Hub. He holds a PhD from the University of Stellenbosch and a second one from the Free University in Amsterdam. His research interests are, among others, ethics, artificial intelligence and academic integrity, and the philosophy of happiness. He has published various academic articles on academic integrity in higher education. He is the co-founder and former associate editor of the academic journal *Transformation in Higher Education*. He is also the co-founder of AICSA – the *Artificial Intelligence Circle in South Africa* for higher education.

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Panel Discussion



Dr Nicola Pallitt (Rhodes University) is a senior lecturer and educational technology specialist at Rhodes University's Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning (CHERTL), where she helps academics integrate technology into their teaching through professional development and support. Her work focuses on designing innovative, technology-mediated learning experiences and promoting critical and compassionate approaches to educational technologies. She co-teaches formal and informal courses, supervises postgraduate students, and her research interests include online facilitation, learning design, and online professional development and supervision. Pallitt holds a PhD in Media Studies from the University of Cape Town (UCT). She is the team lead for the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA) Digital Learning and Teaching project team.



Dr Gloria Castrillón (University of Johannesburg) is the Senior Director for Teaching Excellence at the University of Johannesburg (UJ), where she oversees the Division for Teaching Excellence—including its Centre for Academic Planning and Quality Promotion (CAPQP)—and plays a key role in academic planning, quality assurance, staff development, and curriculum innovation. Castrillón has worked in higher education since 1994 in both public and private sectors, gaining extensive experience in regulatory environments and institutional planning.

At UJ she has been instrumental in developing strategies such as Quality Assurance Frameworks, supporting online, blended and hybrid learning modalities, coordinating institutional audits and evaluation processes, and contributing to national policy through projects on curriculum transformation, micro-credentials, teaching innovation and assessment integrity.

Panel Discussion



Dr Hanelie Adendorff (Stellenbosch University) is a Senior Advisor in the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at Stellenbosch University, with her primary appointment under the Faculty of Science. Since approximately 2002, she has worked in professional development for academics, initially focusing on blended learning and over time expanding her portfolio to include assessment practice, facilitation of collaborative learning and science education.

More recently, her work has incorporated curriculum decolonisation, generative AI, and institutional research on assessment, particularly in response to the shift toward remote and augmented teaching at SU. She supports faculty by advising on teaching-learning-assessment matters, works closely with the Vice-Dean (Teaching & Learning) in the Science Faculty, and participates in policy, workshop, and seminar initiatives aimed at enhancing scholarly teaching, assessment innovation, and inclusion in higher education.

Workshops

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Masterclass on Researching with Elicit AI



Dr Denzil Chetty is a graduate of the University of Durban-Westville, now known as the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He is currently leading two institutional strategic projects. Firstly, he heads the Academic Development Open Virtual Hub (ADOVH), which aims to enhance students' digital competencies for effective online learning in a technology-mediated environment.

Secondly, he leads the Advancing African Digital Humanities Ideation Hub (AADHIH), an interdisciplinary initiative within the College of Human Sciences. Dr Chetty's expertise is multifaceted, encompassing technology and society, education and technology, and digital humanities. Over the years, he has received numerous prestigious awards recognising his contributions to academia.

Some notable accolades include the 2003 Abe Bailey Fellowship in the United Kingdom, the 2011 UNISA Award for Innovation in Teaching and Learning, the 2014 Shanghai Open University African Visiting Scholar award in China, and the 2015 Unisa Excellence Award in Teaching and Learning, all of which acknowledge his significant contributions to institutional knowledge.

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Reflection and closing



Dr Shahieda Jansen is a clinical psychologist who has been serving as the Deputy Director of Academic and Technology Support at the Unisa Cape Town campus in the Western Cape region since 2016. Previously, she led the HPCSA-accredited student counselling centre at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), overseeing counselling services and providing clinical supervision for master's level psychology interns from both national and international backgrounds.

Dr Jansen's scholarly interest in relational humanity and male-focused development began with an accidental men's group she facilitated in 2009. Her recently published article, *"Inserting the African Multidimensional Personhood (AMP) Model Between the Personhood of the Mental Health Practitioner and Psychological Practice,"* was released by Taylor & Francis in 2025. Additionally, the book chapter *"Homo Moyanus, Not Homo Neoliberalus: Socio-Moral Subjectivity for a Transformed Higher Education"* has been finalised for publication.

Dr Jansen is the principal researcher for Unisa's Community Engagement project, *"School Belonging for Boys"*, which adds a critical layer of research by highlighting the systemic influences on boys' academic performance. Her longstanding commitment to prioritising humanity over gender is the focus of her book published by Unisa Press, *"Masculinity Meets Humanity: An Adapted Model of Masculinised Psychotherapy"*.

Curricularizing Relational Humanness for Innovative Teaching & Learning in the Age of AI and the 5IR.

Abstract

Higher education is being reshaped by the rapid advances of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) and the transformative power of artificial intelligence (AI). Yet, within the Global South—and South Africa in particular—questions remain about what kind of transformation is truly taking place. The transformative potential of AI is conditional on transformative education (TE), understood as *whole person* learning that fosters genuine human transformation.

AI and 5IR, however, are largely underpinned by a Global North model of humanness: a narrow, mechanistic conception that erases the relational, spiritual, and ethical dimensions of being human. In contrast, Global South epistemologies, including African perspectives, define humanity as inherently relational, spiritual, and ethical.

This workshop will interrogate African Multidimensional Personhood (AMP) as a model of relational-ethical humanness. AMP has the capacity both to disrupt the dominant Global North framing of AI/5IR and to provide a curricular foundation for innovation in teaching and learning. While AI and 5IR may be applied as technologies, true educational innovation requires rooting practice in ancestral and epistemic discourses that reflect the lived ontologies of the Global South.

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Word of thanks



Dr Zamangwane Khanyile is an Educational Psychologist and Head of Counselling and Career Development at Unisa. She holds a PhD in Educational Psychology and has over two decades of experience in student counselling. She has supervised psychology interns for nearly 20 years.

Formerly based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), she adapted international academic support models from the USA and UK to improve student retention and throughput. Dr Khanyile has presented at local and international conferences and is a member of Golden Key International Honour Society.

She is registered with the HPCSA and is committed to advancing decolonial and transformative approaches in psychology teaching and practice.