

NEWS



January 2014

A WONDERFUL, GENERATIVE, FULFILLING 2014 TO ALL



Prof Denise Zinn, Executive Dean, addressing staff at the welcome breakfast on the 27th of January 2014

“One thing that has struck me most forcibly looking at this hive of activity that is our faculty, is that we, as a faculty, have become a **LEARNING ORGANISATION**”

At the recent faculty welcome breakfast, Prof Denise Zinn, Executive Dean, welcomed all staff to the 2014 academic year ahead, including newly joined staff and those who are returning from sabbaticals. She remarked on the great deal that happened during 2013 in the faculty, and the strategies for 2014, whilst commenting on the success of the January programs as demonstrated by the numerous curriculum renewal and related workshops. Some staff have already attended or hosted a conference, such as the very successful *SAARMSTE 2014* Conference held at NMMU, hosted by our faculty in the week of 12 January - our congratulations to Tulsı and the team of colleagues and students who helped organise the conference with such efficiency and hospitality.

“One thing that has struck me most forcibly looking at this hive of activity that is our faculty, is that we, as a faculty, have become a *LEARNING ORGANISATION*. This is something that Shervani, way back in Nov 2009 (at the workshop at The Plantation), placed into her vision the kind of environment the faculty should be. There is a multitude of definitions of a learning organization as well as their typologies. One of the main proponents is Peter Senge, who in his book *“The Fifth Discipline”* has described a learning organization as one which exhibits five main characteristics: systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, a shared vision, and team learning.”

Furthermore the Dean expressed enthusiasm about the year ahead, explaining that as “we enter a year in which we will be truly engaged as a learning organisation, getting ready to submit our work in progress curriculum, it is going to be very hard work, often frustrating because of all the mistakes we are going to make along the way. I ask of you that you be kind to yourselves and each other, to exhibit and remind yourselves of our cover story, in particular learning to embody a humanising pedagogy.”

Extracted from Prof Denise Zinn's welcome address



Faculty of Education Students embark on Qumbu outreach Programme

A group of PGCE English Methodology students namely Kayleigh Heideman, Jai du Toit, Jacques Batista, Langley Geldenhuis, Rhudene Barnard and Christopher Edley recently participated in an outreach matric intervention programme in Qumbu that focused on the presentation of revision classes, on the prescribed matric English first additional language poems, to matriculants from rural contexts.

Their interest in participating in an outreach programme was spurred on after a lecture in which their English methodology lecturer, Logan Athiemoolam, shared his experiences of working with his own ACE-LLT students in Qumbu and Bizana and the outreach programme that he and Nokhanyo Mayaba embarked on in 2010 to assist rural matriculants in the field of poetry and short stories. After the class, a group of interested students asked the lecturer whether he could organise such a trip for them as they would like to have such an alternative experience even if they had to pay for their own transport and accommodation. Logan then consulted Dr Kathija Adam, the Director of the school for Continuing Professional Development in Education to establish whether she would be available to accompany the group and whether there was a possibility of acquiring funding for the project. She was excited about the initiative and was able to receive financial support from Professor Zinn, the dean, who unhesitatingly agreed to fund the project as she felt it would be beneficial to both the students and lecturers alike.

The preparation of the students involved an in depth analysis of all ten prescribed poems and a careful study of matric questions based on the poems so that they were fully prepared to discuss both the figurative and literal interpretations of the poems.

Nasreen Adam, a first year foundation phase teacher trainee, requested to join the group as she was eager to expand her insights beyond her present confined experiences. Logan Athiemoolam and Nokhanyo Mayaba worked with the students and discussed some of the strategies that they could use to teach the poems to the matriculants.

Yolisa Dudulu, the NMMU (Faculty of Education) centre manager of the Qumbu off campus site made all the arrangements for the intervention programme by liaising with the teachers to accompany learners to the site for the revision classes. She managed to recruit at least 40 learners and some teachers from a range of secondary schools in Qumbu.

The group consisting of two lecturers, namely Logan Athiemoolam and Kathija Adam, seven trainee teachers and Kathija's four year old son set out on the journey with much anticipation and excitement. Nokhanyo accompanied the group the next day on their journey to Qumbu.

After a well-deserved rest in a comfortable guest house, the group left early the next morning on their journey to Qumbu, a 70km drive away from Mthatha. Upon arrival at the centre, Dudula was there to meet them and to introduce them to the learners and teachers. Both the learners and the trainee teachers were divided into two groups. While the one group of trainee teachers namely Jai, Langley and Jacques supported by Nasreen taught five of the poems by adopting a team teaching approach, the other group namely Christopher, Kayleigh and Rhudene taught the remaining five poems by capitalising on their own unique styles as potential teachers.

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The journey was an enriching experience for all the participants including the students, learners and the lecturers. Whilst the trainee teachers commented on how disciplined and interested the matriculants were, the learners expressed their appreciation for, as one learner put it: "making the poems come alive to us".

The lecturers were particularly impressed by the trainee teachers' enthusiasm, active participation and engagement with the poems that they were teaching. It was evident from the positive manner in which they engaged with the learners that they were thoroughly immersed in their teaching experiences in alternative contexts. The trainee teachers commented that even though the learners' contexts were different their English was of an acceptable standard and that they were not as marginalised and disadvantaged as they imagined them to be.

A number of students questioned the deficit approach that we tend to adopt when creating a divide between learners from rural and urban contexts which may not always be a true reflection of reality.

In reflecting on his experiences in Qumbu, Jai du Toit summed up his viewpoints of the trip as follows: *"The trip was a humbling experience that opened my eyes not only to the difficult conditions our learners face, but the hunger they have for education and self-improvement. What we did was a step in the right direction and a beacon of hope for the future of education in our country."*

The Qumbu outreach initiative, which provided all participants with invaluable learning experiences and insights, will surely be indelibly imprinted on their memories for years to come.

Logan Athiemoolam

Various Curriculum Renewal workshops

Colleagues in the Faculty of Education commenced the new academic year with a series of stimulating and enriching workshops, all contributing in various ways to the ongoing project of educational transformation, curriculum renewal and enhanced teacher education.

On 20 January, colleagues teaching various generic Education Theory modules shared their syllabi, reflections and plans for the year. The clear and focussed presentations generated important discussions related to relevance, coherence, integration with other components of the current and envisaged curriculums, and so forth. The resultant thinking will be used as lenses to improve this year's delivery, but also to refine the proposed new curriculums. Many thanks to Tobeka, Thandi, Les, Shervani, Deon, Mathabo, Pat and Skura for well-prepared presentations. And many thanks to the rest of us who survived the heat and remained engaged...

On 22 January, we embarked on the first of a series of module design engagements as we move into the next phase of our CR journey. In a much cooler venue (thanks to all who brought fans) we were introduced to 'the thinking behind the thinking' when thinking about a module's design. (Clearly significant thinking involved - no premature writing...) Colleagues who designed diverse modules shared their stories and strategies. Again, the idea was to learn from one another as we move towards designing our own, authentic faculty-generated module design, rather than merely importing an external design. Our next task will be to identify certain core 'thinking behind the thinking' elements that could constitute an authentic faculty-owned design model, which arose organically 'from within'.

Thanks again to CTLM (for guidance), Les, Kathija, Andre, Mathabo, Nadeema, Robin and Pat for sharing the thinking behind their thinking when they designed some current modules. Thanks also for your willingness to make yourself vulnerable, welcoming and dealing with the critique in a matured fashion, characteristic of true academics! We have learnt a lot and were all truly inspired. Again, these presentations stimulated further critical interrogation of our proposed new curriculums.

On 24 January, the week's series of stimulating workshops concluded with a successful workshop during which we revisited our understandings of 'teaching practice' vs 'work-integrated learning'. Thanks to Dave for paving the way with his initial research on policy, HEQC reports, national and international trends and research studies, local interviews, data obtained from our own indabas, etc. etc. You have done groundbreaking work, Dave and your engagements clearly accelerated and enriched our transformations towards a more comprehensive understanding and implementation of WiL. Again, our new insights and understandings will help us to refine our new proposed curriculums. Thanks to all colleagues who attended and engaged actively as we attempted to (re)conceptualise "this thing called WIL". Thanks in particular to Naydene who, in her usual calm and charming manner, opened our minds to different forms of WIL, particularly when including rural schools.

Prof Aletta Delpont

Exploring a Humanizing Pedagogy



What does a Humanising Pedagogy mean in practice and theory? What should our praxis be, in relation to our curriculum renewal? These were the questions that informed the Humanizing Pedagogy workshop, held on 27 January 2014, which gave staff of the Faculty of Education the opportunity to truly embrace and experience a Humanizing Pedagogy.

Through various innovative exercises, such as poetic inquiry, performance and world café discussions that were facilitated by Dr Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan from UKZN and our Dean, Prof Denise Zinn, staff were challenged to articulate what their own understandings of a Humanising pedagogy, what it means to them and their colleagues, and how it is explained in the literature. In small group discussions, colleagues interrogated what a Humanizing Pedagogy really is, and how best it can be practiced.



The spirit of camaraderie and the willingness to push personal boundaries remained strong as the staff questioned their practice, and especially as they expressed their ideas of a Humanizing Pedagogy through various arts-based genre's - song, skit and poetry performances. With great appreciation, colleagues enjoyed witnessing that *"NMMU's Faculty of Education's got talent!"*

This workshop required the staff to deeply reflect on themselves and on their practice in ways that were participatory, accessible and fun. Many of the staff felt as though the workshop itself reflected a Humanizing Pedagogy, and the spirit with which the tasks were embraced reflected that the Faculty of Education is well into the journey of truly embodying a Humanizing Pedagogy.

Prof Denise Zinn
Ansuva Naguran



SAARMSTE 2014



A new year, a new debate – Mathematics, Science and Technology Education

This year the Southern African Association for Research in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education (SAARMSTE) conference came to NMMU for the second time, since 2000. Hosted by the Education Faculty from 13th – 16th January 2014, the event served as an international meeting place for academics and researchers in the mathematics, science and technology disciplines. Many countries locally and abroad were represented by the 220 delegates who attended; Namibia, Mozambique Australia, America, Serbia, Mauritius and South Africa included.

The four day conference comprised of plenary sessions, individual presentations and writing/learning workshops for emerging scholars. The highlight of the pioneering research articles, were presented during the plenary sessions on thought-provoking topics such as “Knowledge, power and plagiarism” by Professor Kgethi Phakeng, and “Large-Scale reform of instructional practice” by Professor Brahm Fleisch. The plenary sessions also tackled topics such as “Why is an understanding of multiple representations so important in learning science?” by Professor David Treagust and “The mythologising of preschool mathematics: what is it supposed to do?” presented by Professor Tamsin Meaney.

Staff members who attended the conference valued the plenary sessions, but found the daily sessions most rewarding, as expressed by Joy Turyagyenda who favoured the more diverse topics, such as Teacher Narratives of Parental Support as “these findings could enrich the programmes of post-natal clinics [because] social capital determines how different we grow to become!”.

To complement the high standard of academic research and engagement, many social opportunities were also available for delegates to network and share ideas on fieldwork. These events included the cocktail evening (sponsored by Taylor and Francis and the Faculty of Education) and the auspicious Gala Dinner at the Summerstrand Inn.

Due to the numerous efforts of the SAARMSTE team, the conference has been hailed as a success by delegates, organizers and staff members, conveying various sentiments of support. “All of the team who hosted our guests did a sterling job and for many who were at SAARMSTE for the first time expressed that they were deeply touched by the extra efforts of the NMMU hosts”, complimented Dr Kathija Adam. The four day conference can be viewed as accomplishment for the Faculty, subsequently laying the foundation for numerous collaborative research efforts for the future.

Taryn Isaacs



Alternatives to Violence Basic Workshop



The Centre for the Community School (CCS) kicked off the year with the Alternatives to Violence Basic Workshop that was conducted over two days. The 25 attendees included the CCS team and teachers and community members from the Manyano Network of Schools.

The aim of the workshop was to comprehensively introduce methods for reaching consensus and building relationships of reciprocity, resolving conflicts rather than simply reacting to them and learning communication skills that can de-escalate potentially violent and dangerous confrontations.

Many of the participants found the workshop to be deeply moving on a personal level, and were inspired to implement the skills they had developed in their day-to-day lives and in their communities.

Ansuya Naguran



Making safer sex a cool option



January 2013 came with a challenge from Prof N De Lange, the Chair for HIV and AIDS Research in Education, to ensure that students in the Faculty of Education were safe from HIV infections and to ensure that they are aware of how to take care of their sexual health. In a joint venture with the Campus Health Services I undertook the challenge to collect condoms from the clinic and place them in all toilets within the Faculty. I ensured that I collected the condoms, placed them in the toilets once a week and check for consumption twice a week. The Campus Health Staff were always very helpful and willing to assist in any requests I had. This project has been going on for the whole year. Now, in January 2014, it is time to take stock of the journey so far.

I must say it has been a worthwhile endeavour and has made me realise that we can make safer sex cool depending on how we sell the message to the youth. Within the span of the one year I have had several interactions with students from the Faculty of Education as well as those from other faculties who somehow make use of our ablution facilities as they pass by. I have had students from all over the university coming to me to ask for help with their sexual health issues. Some of these students were referred to me by those within the Faculty of Education who have had fruitful interactions with me or those who had listened to my 2013 Orientation Message to the first year students in the Faculty of Education. This has, indeed, been a humbling experience to realise that I can make a difference in the lives of young people.

One thing that has struck me is that the youth want to be safe from STIs and HIV, but they also need to belong with other youth. Free condoms have always been labelled negatively and the several recalls of whole batches of condoms by the Ministry of Health have not aided things for young people. The belief that free condoms are not totally safe and are for poor people makes it difficult for young people to freely access and make use of such condoms. Those who have no other choice but to use the free condoms feel cheap and not cool. But the challenge is: whether cool or not young people need to be safe from HIV infections. So how do we ensure that they use what they have?

In my engagement with the young people I have come to realise the importance of positive messages regarding their health and sexuality choices. I tell my students that they have a right to choose to be safe and they are the ones who can ensure their safety from HIV and other STIs.

One important lesson that we have learnt is that “we cannot fit a square peg in a round hole” so we have to make do with what we have. We have to appreciate our strengths and acknowledge our weaknesses so that we can grow. Through talking to them about the importance of being safe irrespective of what other people may think, I have come to notice a growth in the self-confidence of many young people who were afraid of accessing and using the ‘CHOICE’ condoms. Thus my students and I have learnt that we can make safer sex cool.

Placing the condoms in the toilets on a weekly basis has provided a private space where young people can access the condoms without prejudice or discrimination. They are free to go into the toilets when there is no one around and get the condoms. For those whose confidence has grown, they are free to access the condoms at any point when they want to. Some students would come to my office to let me know that the condoms have run out in the toilets and even help me replace the stock. This has been a big indication of the value the students place on having the free condoms in the toilets for easy access.

All in all, the journey has been very exciting so far and I am looking forward to an even more exciting 2014 in which the university moves towards ZERO new HIV infections among the student body. Thus, this January I am posing my own challenge to other Faculties within the university to dare make safer sex cool. I dare other faculties to take on the challenge of providing condoms in their toilets and ensuring consistent supply so that our young people can lead healthy and responsible sexual lives. I dare other lecturers to make time to talk to young people so that they can make informed decisions regarding their sexual health and reproductive rights.

Mathabo Khau

Super Ed visits Port Elizabeth



Super Ed, based on the George campus, comprises a group of passionate and enthusiastic students who go beyond the call of duty to make a difference in schools in their areas. The Super Ed team was invited by our Dean, Prof. Denise Zinn, to visit Port Elizabeth to partake in discussions around the idea of starting similar initiatives on the Port Elizabeth Campuses.

The Super Ed team met class representatives from the Faculty of Education with whom they shared their story of how Super Ed came to be, their highlights and challenges so far, and how the class representatives might work with Super Ed to create similar student initiatives in Port Elizabeth.

Super Ed chairperson, Rochelle Van Rooyen, reported that one of the highlights of the team's visit was meeting members of Unako a Community Based Movement based on the Missionvale campus that also has strong focus on school improvement. Van Rooyen said, "It was really an inspiring experience to hear of projects Unako had taken up. It opened our mind to different ways of unlocking potential that lie in the minds of many children".

The Super Ed spoke at the first-year orientation on the South campus, addressing approximately 400 students. The team addressed the students on a truly personal level as they shared what inspired them to become educators and the Super Ed journey so far. Van Rooyen described the experience as "an amazing honour".
Ansuya Náguran

A group of 15 prospective teachers put NMMU on the map by winning first and second place in the McGill International Cellphilm Festival held on the 4th December 2013 in Canada. The group of girl activists working with Prof Naydene de Lange and Prof Relebohile Moletsane in the "Girls leading 'from the ground up' in policy-making in addressing sexual violence" project (funded through the NMMU Research Theme grant) talked about issues they experience and witness regarding sexual violence. This was done through cellphilming their stories and having discussions. The girls come from a rural background and were not acquainted with this technology and methodology but in the project learnt how to make cellphilms.

After learning how to use their cellphones to make cellphilms they decided to enter the International Cellphilm Festival with the theme, 'BRIDGING COMMUNITIES'. The girls submitted two cellphilms, competing against other global entries. We proudly announce that their cellphilms won first and second place in international section of the competition!

The girls express their gratitude to Prof Naydene de Lange, Prof Relebohile Moletsane, Vimbisio Makamure and Veronica Msutwana who invited them to be part of their research project, showed them how to make cellphilms and assisted them in entering the Cellphilm Festival.

Students win first and second place in McGill International Cellphilm Festival

Veronica Msutwana



Zethu Jiyana, Bongwiwe Maome, Wandiswa Momoza, Zamahlubi Mabhengu, Lelethu Mlobeli, Asisipho Mntonga, Bongwiwe Mhambi, Sonwabe April, Thina Kamnqa, ZikhonaTshiwula, Happy Mthethwa, Sandisiwe Gaiza, Takatso Mohlomi, Elethu Ntsethe, Philiswa Lufele

Mosaic of moments

January 2014

Registration



SAARMSTE



HP Workshop

