

NEWS

Nov / Dec 2014



Nelson Mandela
Metropolitan
University

for tomorrow

Port Elizabeth & George



Dr Vukile Tshazibana with 2014 BEd Graduates.

Summer Graduation

On 09 Dec 2014 Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) piloted its first summer graduation where a total of 403 students graduated with undergraduate and post-graduate qualifications. This special occasion was hosted at the Vodacom NMMU Indoor Sports Centre, South Campus, Summerstrand where more than 1200 friends and families were invited by graduands to share this life time achievement.

A total of 373 Master's, Honours, Postgraduate Certificates and undergraduate qualifications were conferred to students in the Faculty of Education while the remaining Master's and Doctoral degrees were conferred to candidates in the Faculties of Arts, Business and Economic Sciences, Engineering, the Built Environment and Information technology, Health Sciences, Law and Science.

Of the 373 qualifications awarded from the Faculty of Education, 74 qualifications were completed *Cum Laude*.

NMMU "salutes and applauds" this kind of achievement. Chancellor Santie Botha and Vice-Chancellor Derrick Swartz' Congratulatory message notes that earning an 'excellent academic qualification is but a stepping stone towards each graduands' tomorrow'.

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END OF YEAR **3**

TYLULWAZI **9**

CHRISTMAS
WITH THE AGED **11**

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Dr Tulsi Morar with his family and Mrs Taryn Isaacs De Vega with graduates Ginique Brown and Lauren Geduld.



Cricketer and FoE graduate Josh Dolley with his mom, dad and sister.



BEd graduates taking a selfie at the auspicious occasion.



In the spirit of recognising our humanity and respect for diversity, each graduand's 'tomorrow' is in fact, a shared tomorrow – a tomorrow of responsibility, social justice and excellence. On this note, both Chancellors said, "it is our wish that you will leave here today as proud NMMU graduates who will continue to champion social justice and equality, and be a change agent in building a better society and a better world."

These words are such an encouragement especially, to in-service teachers graduating from the Faculty of Education. While the quality of South African schooling is threatened by an array of problems, these student teachers are encouraged to rise above these challenges and strive to be agents of hope and agents of action until it dawns to everyone that education is truly, a human right.



Graduates Unathi Damse (PGCE) and Faith Molefe (BEH Honours) — with Unathi Damse



Awatif Human (BEH Intermediate) — with Salma Savahl, Leigh Bezuidenhout and Zaheer Human.



George PGCE graduates - MM Dukwana, A Jojo, S Mangqishi, NW Gozongo and L Malaba (in no particular order)



On the 4th December the staff of the Education Faculty took off to Addo Elephant National Park for a day of team building, strategic planning and the end of year soirée. The Blunden Bus trip departed from NMMU at 8:30, providing a leisurely opportunity to relax and distress after a busy year

On arrival we started on the strategic planning for 2015, consulting on the idea of “how to work smarter, not harder” and “how to create more revenue for the FOE”. In clusters we brainstormed practical ways of creating a more productive and lucrative faculty, with the support of all constituencies. Many insightful ideas came from the collective and will definitely be implemented in 2015.

After the team, building exercise came the time to say farewell. It was with heavy hearts that we bid farewell to the many enthusiastic, intelligent and hardworking FOE staff that ended their term of appointment this year. Firstly, administrators Kelley Felix, Debbie Botha and Tashriquah Dolley were honored and thanked by their peers for their time, dedication and legacy built in the FOE. Secondly, we bid farewell to academic staff members Darrylin Bradley and Ron Beyers, both of whom made a great contribution to the students development in years passed. Thirdly we thanked Director of Centre for Community School Al Witten for his groundbreaking work with CCS. And finally we said farewell to the retirees of 2014, Dr Raj Kurup, Dr Sindi Mbokodi and Prof Nonnie Botha, who have jointly served the FOE for 56 years.

To all the retirees we thank you once again for your service and dedication to the students of the FOE, your legacy will be honored in years to come and your contributions fondly remembered.



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The last order of business was for Prof Denise Zinn to officially end her term as Dean of the Education Faculty, as she takes her new position as Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Teaching and Learning. We wish Prof Zinn well on her new venture and look forward to collaborating on research projects in the future.

Later that afternoon staff were treated to a delicious braai and gifts from the faculty, before hopping on the busses for a game drive around the elephant park. The day ended back at NMMU and allowed time to reflect on 2014, plan for 2015 and enjoy time with colleagues who are also friends. Special thanks to the committee who put the day together.





Writing retreats

Research is of the utmost importance to the academics at the Education Faculty. Many write for journals, books, course materials and the Department of Education. To inspire 'research output' the faculty hosted two writing retreats to assist emerging and established researchers with their writings. The first retreat in the Zuurberg Mountains gave an opportunity to emerging researchers to have a guided writing process over the 24 – 27 November 2014.

Whilst the second retreat at the Tsitsikamma Lodge over the 31st November – 3rd December focused on the established researchers, providing the space and the resources to complete articles that were close to publication. A total of 20+ staff members took part in the initiative, all of whom indicated that they would like to participate in similar ventures in the future.





Eileen Scheckle

RASA conference at Rhodes

Literacy lovers gathered at Rhodes University for the annual conference of the Reading Association of South Africa in September. It was the first conference held in their new Education Building and the Dean, Di Wilmott was delighted that this honour fell to a literacy conference given the critical place of literacy in all educational endeavours. Margie, as the East Cape chair, and Eileen as the National chair, were delighted that so many colleagues, researchers NGOs and consultants, made the trip to Grahamstown to share and learn about literacy practices and research. It was an opportunity to reconnect with literacy partners in other Faculties at NMMU and at UCT, Wits, Fort Hare, Stellenbosch and further afield.

Multilingualism in literacy teaching and learning was a strong theme as evidenced in the keynote presentation by Russell Kaschula, the launch of Multilingual Universities in South Africa: Reflecting Society in Higher Education edited by Liesel Hibbert and a thought-provoking workshop by Esther Ramani, Nompumelelo Frans & Michael Joseph, entitled Teacher Development through a task-based approach to biliteracy. Together they reported on a co-taught bilingual FP class where learners were exposed to an additive approach to reading and writing in English and isiXhosa. This was a dynamic emergent exploration of how learners and teachers engage in translanguaging as part of everyday life. An exciting site where theory and practice come together!

9th Pan-African and 10th RASA conferences for 2015

Earlier this year the Reading Association of South Africa was asked to also host the biennial Pan-African Reading for All conference, or PARFA. The International Reading Association, the IRA, had felt that with Ebola and Boko Haram threats, Nigeria was no longer suitable and RASA eagerly accepted the challenge.

The second call for papers has been sent out and anyone with an interest in literacy in Africa should plan to attend at UCT, from 2nd to 5th September, 2015. The theme is Imagination and Literacy: Theory and Practice and various international speakers, like Viv Edwards and Barbara Comber, have confirmed their attendance, as well as locals like Gcina Mlope. For more information and to submit your abstract, visit the conference website at <http://www.rasa2015.co.za/>

See you at RASA and PARFA in September.



Staging a heritage day concert at a farm school in one day



(Excerpts from my Diary)



Background and Preparation for the Project

During one of my lectures with my IP third year language students on social justice issues in the PGED 302 class on 'Issues and Challenges in Education', one of the students suggested that we visit a farm school for a more authentic experience. The student indicated that her aunt, who managed a farm school in the vicinity of Jansenville, would be very eager to host the class. She provided me with the contact details of her aunt and said that I should communicate with her directly as she was eager to forge closer ties with the university.

I informed the students about the project at Toekomst Primary School and invited them to participate. Eventually 16 students indicated their willingness to be involved and collaboratively agreed that the best time to undertake the project would be during the University September recess.

In reflecting on what could be achieved in one day at a school using the suggested theme I surmised that a Heritage day concert could be quite a novel and fitting idea. The IP class approved of the idea and, in reflecting on how the project could be realised, agreed that groups of students would have to work with specific classes or groups of learners to devise an item for the school concert.

The one group of students decided to leave on Tuesday the 9th of September to have a more authentic farm experience, while the other three groups left in separate cars on the morning of the visit to Toekomst. A noteworthy feature of the project was that it was financed by the group themselves with yeoman support in the form of meals and accommodation being provided by the philanthropic Lise Anderson.



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The Day of the concert

I travelled with Mr Schutters, one of the IP students, who drove the four of us; three other students and myself, safely to Toekomst primary school in two hours in spite of the one rather onerous stretch of 27km gravel road that we had to traverse to reach the school. Upon our arrival we were warmly welcomed by Lise, her friendly staff and the group of students who had spent the previous night there, and invited to a hearty breakfast consisting of steaming coffee, freshly baked farm bread and 'vetkoek'. Thereafter Lise provided us with a background to the school, introduced us to each of the classes and informed us about the school's projects.

During a short brainstorming session with the IP students on the programme, it emerged that the group that arrived the previous day had collated an interesting script based on Heritage Day which they were eager to present to the school as an opening item. The students were then divided into groups and assigned to specific classes to commence with their preparation for the concert. One of the students, who had experience in team building, invited the entire school consisting of 110 learners to participate in a team building exercise, which he co-ordinated. This introductory exercise, which was well received by the learners, provided a sound basis for the preparation of the group items that were part of the concert programme. While the IP students worked with their groups of learners, I moved around from group to group observing what they were doing and was impressed by their enthusiasm and their passion for teaching.

After rehearsing for about one and a half hours the learners were ready to present their items to the rest of the school. The concert, which was a one hour affair from 1.00 to 2.00, afforded the learners an opportunity to showcase what they had co-constructed with the students in one day to the rest of the school. The items presented included plays, songs, dance and poetry. After the concert the learners received refreshments and Lise invited our NMMU group to the family homestead for lunch.

On our journey back to Port Elizabeth in Mr Schutter's car our group, in reflecting on our experiences, agreed that the visit to Toekomst Primary School, was surely one of the most memorable experiences of our lives and that Lise was probably one of the most dedicated, committed and devoted teachers that we ever had the good fortune to meet. She was not only an inspiring and uplifting teacher, but an amazing philanthropist who dedicated her life to the service of humanity.

Sadly, two weeks after returning from Toekomst, we received the news of Lise's untimely death. She was living proof of an awesome, magnanimous human being who lived out the humanising pedagogy in action, words and deeds thereby transcending empty rhetoric and mindless theorising of what the humanising pedagogy ought to be. We were truly blessed and fortunate to experience the humanising pedagogy in action first-hand. Like the concert that was organised in one day will be etched on the minds and memories of those learners for years to come, Lise's legacy will continue to inspire those of us whose lives she was able to touch in merely one day!

Dr Logan Athiemoolam





A REFLECTIVE ACCOUNT OF AN ALTERNATIVE TEACHING PRACTICE APPROACH AT TYLULWAZI HIGH SCHOOL

During the first semester, while teaching the PGCE English Methodology home language students, I spoke about outreach programmes and provided them with possibilities for projects in alternative contexts; markedly different from their teaching practice experiences in the former model C schools. Whilst some students were eager to embark on such alternative experiences, others were visibly resistant and reluctant and others still indifferent and nonchalant. Nevertheless I persevered in spite of the initial resistance from some quarters.



My idea was to create a team teaching work integrated learning experience in a previously disadvantaged school with a focus on providing revision classes on the poetry section of the literature paper to English first additional language matriculants. I divided my students into groups and distributed the matric prescribed poems amongst the various groups. The groups had to research their poems thoroughly and plan interactive lessons using power point, video clips and include other interactive approaches into their lessons as well. At the end of the first semester the groups presented their well-prepared lessons to the class for discussion and commentary. A noteworthy feature of the presentations was the manner in which the members of each of the groups complemented each other and acted like well-connected talk show hosts.

In the meantime I visited the school and discussed the possibility of providing matric revision classes to learners during the second semester. Both the principal and the matric English teacher expressed their interest in the project and invited us wholeheartedly to work with the learners as they felt it would be beneficial to them in preparation for the final examination.

In collaboration with my students and the school, it was agreed that revision classes would commence on the 30th of September 2014 after the matric trial examination and conclude on the 3rd of October, on the last day of the third term. The eventual programme included 3 poems on day 1, two poems on day 2, two poems on day 3 and three poems on day 4. The sessions commenced at 9.00 and ended at 1.00 on most days. We were thus able to complete revision of all 10 prescribed poems within 4 days.

During days when students presented their poetry lessons, all the groups, who were scheduled to teach, met at the Missionvale campus and travelled with me to the school situated in Zwile. The matric teacher was so kind to organise tea and biscuits for us every day. We sat together as a group in the staffroom after the teaching sessions to discuss the various lessons presented by sharing our personal reflections. After this short session at the school we returned to the Missionvale campus to continue our intimate conversations over coffee adopting the 'Coffee Conversations' style of discussion.

On the last day, after the presentations, we had a party for the matriculants and those who were confident enough entertained us with their special talents such as poetry writing, rapping and singing as a gesture of appreciation to the students' for their effective revision classes.

The English Methodology students agreed that their alternative teaching practice experience at the school was a great success and probably the highlight of their PGCE year.

The positive features for them included the hospitality of the school, the committed and well behaved learners who were eager to learn, working in teams and their own learning that took place by observing their peers teaching their poetry lessons.

Dr Logan Athiemoolam

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REFLECTIONS ON THE TYILULWAZI EXPERIENCE

BY CHANEL KILIAN

(English Methodology (HL) –PGCE student 2014)

Changing someone else's life doesn't have to be a major development with fanfare and acknowledgement. It doesn't have to be an event; there need not be thousands of spectators to boost one's own ego. It need not be a fairytale; a knight in shining armour. You don't need to save the damsels in distress or turn the ogre into a man.

Changing someone's life could be giving the damsel the confidence to save herself, teaching the so-called 'ogre' to accept himself as perfect; just the way he is. Changing a life is in simple words, 'good', 'excellent', 'wonderful'.

We don't always realise how often we get to choose to change someone's life for the better, even in the smallest way. We often don't think that the next thing we say or do could impact someone so profoundly that we could change the course of their lives forever.

Tyilulwazi was such a choice; a coin toss in destiny – an experience that could change the lives of learners as well as our own. Teachers often fail to understand that sometimes one lesson could change the future of their learners' lives irrevocably.

By letting go of our fears, choosing not to 'flip the coin' and simply saying 'Yes!' we changed how those learners felt about English, we boosted their confidence for the exams and who could ever say how else those lessons might have changed the course of their lives and their destiny.

The lessons at Tyilulwazi also changed my life and made me aware of so many discrepancies in society at large. It opened my eyes to the reality of schooling in South Africa, where, in spite of the challenges experienced by marginalised learners in township schools, they still have a yearning desire to be educated and want to learn. All in all it was a simply amazing experience; one that I will treasure for the rest of my life and that will be indelibly imprinted on my mind for years to come.



FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN

By KIRSTY MACDOUGALL

(English Methodology (HL) –PGCE student 2014)

We want to be teachers that make a difference;
Yet we are immobilised by fear of leaving our comfort zones.

At first we were reluctant and resistant;
Yet we were met by a welcoming school:
Met by learners who wanted to learn
Greeted with eagerness, cooperation and appreciation.

We hopefully left Tyilulwazi having helped these learners
Who undoubtedly taught us
What education is and should be about.

FOE celebrates Christmas with the aged



As an ode to the season of giving, the academic staff of the faculty lead by admin forum chairperson Jackie Hay undertook a project to benefit the aged. The staff collected toiletries, personal items, hygiene products and money, to create gift and goody baskets for the aged in old age homes. The Malabar Old Age Home and the Huisgenot Old Age Home in Algoa Park were the recipients of this year's gifts. On the 10th December staff members visited the homes to deliver a message of home and festive cheer, spend time with the aged and distribute the gifts to all.



WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS

As we come to the end of 2014, we celebrate a year of hard work, innovation and success. May your festive season be filled with sunny days and starlit nights. Wishing you a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year!

#christmasinspiration

The photos below are supplied by Mary-Anne Laufs of the Laufs' home in Boknes. As a tradition the extended family come together to decorate the home and garden for Christmas.

