



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

Teaching & Learning Centre **NEWSLETTER**



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INCOMING EDITOR'S NOTE

BY DR BUSISIWE NDAWONDE

We are pleased to present the second edition of the Teaching and Learning Centre Newsletter for 2024. We hope that reading our 2024 Newsletter and its later Special Issues was enjoyable. I am Busisiwe Ndawonde (Ph.D), your incoming Editor for the TLC Newsletter. I modestly take over from the outgoing Editor who worked tirelessly and ceaselessly to improve and maintain the standards of our Newsletter at the competitive world level for the past decade. Indeed, the Newsletter enjoyed a wide readership thanks to the outgoing Editor and her Editorial team.



Dr. Busisiwe Ndawonde is a Teaching and Learning Consultant at the Teaching and Learning Centre of the University of Fort Hare, Alice Campus. Her duties, among others, include providing Curriculum Development Support to the University of Fort Hare. Dr. Ndawonde holds a Doctorate degree in Science Education from the University of Zululand. She has over a decade of teaching experience in Higher Education. She is a registered professional scientist with the South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions (SACNASP). Dr. Ndawonde has co-developed science education programmes for the Bachelor of Education degree qualification. She has published academic papers at both the national and international levels in accredited Journals. She has also presented similar papers in peer reviewed national and international

conferences. Dr. Ndawonde specialises in Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Life and Natural Sciences Education, and Curriculum Development in Higher Education. She blends her academic expertise with her commitment to science education development. In this respect, it is her wish and responsibility to ensure that the TLC Newsletter is elevated higher than its current excellent level, given the massive work done by the outgoing Editor. It is hoped that maintaining the high standards of the Newsletter would ensure that the massive work done by the outgoing Editor is sustained. My regime, therefore, starts with the second edition of the 2024 TLC Newsletter.

BECOMING A TEACHER WORKSHOP



Figures 2: First-year students at the 'Becoming a Teacher' workshop, 2024



Figures 3: Dr. Chris Mdingi addressing students during the workshop.

The Faculty of Education, in collaboration with the TLC, facilitated a workshop whose theme was; 'Becoming a Teacher'. The workshop was held on the 31st of August 2024. The workshop introduced the Bachelor of Education 'First-year Students' to the teaching profession. Several first-year students undergoing the teacher training programme at the university attended the said workshop.

Several speakers were invited to provide their inputs about one becoming a teacher. Mr. M. Dlepu (a Bachelor of Education final year student) shared his experience as a student teacher. He highlighted the importance of self-discipline if one wanted to successfully complete the teaching degree courses. Mr. Dlepu informed the attendees that the Bachelor of Education courses were not easy to pass as some (here) assumed.

One of the invited guest speakers from outside of the university was Dr. Mdingi, a Director of The Stakeholder Management and Citizen Care Services.

In his address, Dr. Mdingi narrated his life story from the time he grew up until he became a teacher. His experience ranged from being a post-level 1 teacher to being the Director of Stakeholder Management and Citizen Care Services. He emphasised the importance of one having a positive attitude and love for the teaching profession as the stepping stone towards achieving their goals. Dr. Mdingi reminded the attendees that teaching is a noble calling. It was not about how much money one would be paid afterwards. Most importantly, he stressed the satisfaction one gets when they bring positive change to society. Dr. Mdingi argued that teachers are, therefore, positive-change-agents. In that sense, added Dr. Mdingi, teachers have become lifelong learners and positive change aspirants because they always look for better ways to bring about positive change in their communities.

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INNOVATIVE TEACHING WEBINAR SERIES

The Teaching and Learning Centre hosted the Innovative Teaching Webinar Series whose theme read; 'Embracing the Future: Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Teaching and Learning'. The Teaching Webinar Series were a precursor to the Teaching and Learning Week. The latter was held from the 14th of August 2024 to the 28th of the same month. The webinar series aimed at giving an academic insight into leveraging AI tools to the advantage of students. Doing so enabled students to learn more effectively. The series provided helpful tactics and resources for incorporating AI into teaching practices, regardless of the expertise of the students in teaching technologies.

The first webinar held on August 14, 2024 was facilitated by Mr. Dennis Nevels, a Senior Educational Consultant from Global Education Services: Anthology. Mr. Nevels addressed the gathering about the theme; 'Data-Driven Decision Making: Utilising AI'. The idea was to help students to analyse data to make informed instructional decisions. In his presentation, Mr. Nevels emphasised using AI to analyse students' data so that the academics could make the best informed instructional decisions. Through detailed data analysis, Mr. Nevels demonstrated how AI could improve the learning experience of students to boost their performance. The focus also shifted to how academics could extract and analyse data using the blended learning platform Blackboard.

Prof. Roxanne Piderit (The Deputy Dean of Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Management and Commerce at the University of Fort Hare) dealt with the theme; 'Ethical Considerations: Addressing AI's Ethical Implications and Challenges in Teaching'. She addressed the gathering on the 21st of August, 2021. The Prof. discussed, among other issues, possible privacy, biases in AI algorithms, and the effects of AI on academic honesty. The significance of upholding ethical norms when implementing AI technologies in the classroom was the fulcrum of her discussions. Prof. Piderit explained how AI in higher education could improve content development, streamline assessments, and support creativity. However, concerns about academic integrity, privacy, and the potential loss of critical thinking skills were raised. Prof. Piderit emphasised that to mitigate the above risks, academics should develop ethical guidelines, promote AI literacy, and align AI applications with educational goals. She advised that balancing technological innovation with academic values was crucial for the successful implementation of AI.

On the 28th of August 2024, Mr. Siyabulela Sabata (a Teaching and Learning Specialist in Curriculum Transformation) and Mr. Mfundo Zwane (a Teaching and Learning Specialist in Data Analytics) from the University of Western Cape (UWC) had their presentations. The focus was on 'Exploring AI-driven Platforms and Tools' that could aid in curriculum transformation, personalised learning, and assessment. Their discussion centred on the critical interrogation of AI implementation in universities. They also suggested promoting a humanising pedagogy grounded in local philosophies like Ubuntu. The two speakers also emphasised that curriculum practices could be reshaped by framing graduate attributes as identities to foster a just and inclusive educational environment. Adopting the AI-powered teaching tools in South African universities raises questions about the colonial power structures and perpetuates inequalities, the gathering heard. The concerns raised include the fact that the AI tools are primarily developed in the Global North, prioritise economic outputs over transformative educational goals, risk dehumanising students, and perpetuate 'digital colonialism'.

The webinar series delved into the potential of AI in Higher Education, highlighting its ethical implications in a neocolonial context. The series emphasised the need for culturally sensitive approaches and a balanced approach to AI integration. Academics were urged to consider ethical guidelines, digital colonialism, and humanising education to ensure a transformative impact on our Higher Education system. Another emphasis was the importance of the responsible and inclusive use of AI for genuine transformation.

UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR ACADEMICS

The TLC supports academics through The New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) and Nurturing Emerging Scholars Programme (NESP), among other programs under the University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG). Both the nGAP and NESP are prestigious programmes under the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). These programmes involve the recruitment of highly capable scholars as new academics (SSAUF, 2022). The recruitment of these academics is based on the carefully designed and balanced equity considerations. Furthermore, the recruitment is done in light of the disciplinary areas with the greatest needs in the higher education system such as, for example, Science, Mathematics, Technology, and Engineering. The UFH participate in these programmes through the TLC support initiatives for the Faculties. There are academics who have done their studies up to Ph.D level through the TLC support.

NURTURING EMERGING SCHOLARS PROGRAMME GRADUATES: REFLECTION BY MR SHINGA

Mr. Phindile Shinga reflected on the theme, 'Testimonial: A Journey Covered'. Mr. Shinga is a Nurturing Emerging Scholars Programme (NESP) graduate.

The journey of Mr. Shinga_ the NESP Scholar who joined the Academic Internship year at the University of Fort Hare from 2022 to 2023. was nothing short of transformation. It offered him many development opportunities that did not only enrich his academic knowledge but also profoundly impacted his personal and professional growth. As he reflected on his time as a NESP scholar. Mr. Shinga was grateful for the experiences and lessons that shaped the trajectory of his academic career. He added that one of the most significant aspects of his journey was being selected as one of the five scholars in the French Cohort (Phase 1) at De Université Côte d'Azur (Nice, Alpes-Maritimes). That opportunity allowed him to engage in an international academic environment to broaden his perspectives and enhance his research skills in ways he could have never imagined.



NESP PROGRAMME RECIPIENT

Dr. Stemele started her career when she taught Mathematics in one of the high schools in the Gauteng Province before joining the NESP programme. The financial and structural aid provided by the NESP allowed her to concentrate in her studies, particularly at the Ph.D level. After completing her Master's degree at the University of the Witwatersrand, Dr. Stemele joined the University of Fort Hare and enrolled for the Ph.D programme.

In her concluding remarks, Dr Stemele expressed her gratitude to the University of Fort Hare. She said that the institution has not only given her the opportunity to hone her teaching and academic skills but has also helped to build her identity as a future academic member. She was appreciative for the guidance, opportunity, and support she received during her academic journey. The experience motivated and made her confident as she continues to strive for greatness in Mathematics Education and beyond.

NGAP REFLECTIONS

Dr. Tobeka and Dr. Mlala were some of the nGAP graduates who provided sermons about their academic journey in that respect. The following is what they said concerning their studies as nGAP beneficiaries.

Dr. Tobeka and her nGAP journey

Dr. Naki Tobeka explained that her journey as a Ph.D candidate began in May 2019 when she was employed as an nGAP lecturer

Dr. Tobeka is currently a lecturer in the 2nd and 3rd Year Computational Chemistry. She also co-supervises both the Honours and Master's students in addition to assisting the department with administrative duties. Dr. Tobeka participates in the Faculty of Science and Agriculture community engagement programme.

The last aspect of her eulogy was directed to all those who facilitated the financial support from Sasol and the NRF.



ANOTHER NGAP ACADEMIC REFLECTIONED THOUGH NGAP JOURNEY

Dr. Sethembinkosi Mlala was another recipient of the nGAP scholarship. Dr. Mlala was born and raised in the Gusi Location at Elliotdale of the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa. He enrolled at the UFH in 2014 for his Master of Science degree (MSc) in Chemistry. He graduated cum laude under the supervision of Prof. Oyedeji. Dr. Mlala was promoted by Prof. Oyedeji for his Ph.D thesis in Chemistry at the same university. After completing his Ph.D, Dr. Mlala joined the nGAP Programme under the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in 2020. He worked in the Department of Chemistry at the University of Fort Hare, Alice Campus, under Prof. Oyedeji.

In terms of opportunities, Dr. Mlala stated that the nGAP opened doors for him, especially regarding teaching and learning, supervision, publishing, presenting in local and international conferences, community engagement, workshops, training, funding as well as being a Faculty of Science and Agriculture board member.

He has supervised the BSc. Honours and MSc. students in Natural Product Chemistry. Dr. Mlala has also published papers in the DHET-accredited journals. Another milestone in his career so far is that he has presented a paper whose title reads; "Drug Discovery of Anti-cancer with Nitrogen-carrying Constituents, Privileged Derivatives, which Originate from the Pentacyclic Triterpenoids" at the 20th Annual Congress of the International Drug Discovery Science and Technology (IDDST) held in Osaka, Japan in May 2024. Similar with Dr. Tobeka, the former visits schools around Alice and Debe locations for motivational talks to Grades 11-12. The idea is for the high school learners to continue with their studies with knowledge of what Chemistry is all about. Dr. Mlala also received the NRF's Emerging Research Grant and GMRDC Seed Grant while doing his Ph.D. He did some writing retreats to complete his articles to a specific location as a lecturer under the nGAP. Dr. Mlala had the opportunity to attend the ACS Outreach Summit held in Stellenbosch, Western Cape, from the 29th of September to the 2nd of October, 2024. Dr. Mlala also attended several trainings and workshops under the nGAP on top of the Mentor and Mentee programme he attended. He has gained a lot of academic skills that include Proposal Writing, the SPSS Quantitative and Questionnaire Design, NRF Rating Workshop, and the referencing workshops, among others.

PEER FACILITATORS ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, 2024



The peer facilitators were also recognised for the wonderful job they do in their respective areas. The university did so by awarding them with special awards to that effect. In turn, the peer facilitators expressed their insight regarding their role in the TLC and how their involvement in peer support enhances their experiences to bolster their academic achievements. This section is about the significant moments when the peer facilitators were publicly recognised for what they do for the university. To that end, Miss. Nomava Kona, a Supplemental Instruction Leader based at the UFH Alice Campus, provided the following inputs to the Newsletter.

Ms. Kona stated their role as regular meetings they always have with their peers. Those meetings were key to fostering an environment of openness and teamwork. Their coordinator and assistants always ensured that those meetings were spaces where they voiced their challenges while brainstorming for solutions. The peer facilitators work as a team. Ms. Kona mentioned that the PASS venue duties enhanced the relationship she has with the other facilitator. The mid-year training was another key experience where they not only improved

their facilitation skills but also grew as aspiring academics and individuals, added Ms. Kona.

The facilitation process itself has sharpened their public speaking and interpersonal skills, which would help them to be more sensitive and empathetic individuals in their future workplaces.

She ended her talk by extending her appreciation to Miss. Mabece, who she affectionately referred to as 'Kay', for her assistance to all peer facilitators at the university. The next section looks at the experiences of lecturers whose students were helped by the peer facilitators.

Lecturer feedback: Work of Supplemental Instructional Leaders and Resident Buddies, UFH Alice campus

To complement the insights of the peer facilitators, this Newsletter presents the experiences of lecturers whose students received services from the peer facilitators. The SIL assists with Test and Assignment briefings and preparation sessions. This has helped to reduce first-year anxiety and stress levels, and to gain competence and confidence through exposure. This was said by Mr. Brendan Boyce, a lecturer at the Department of Human Settlement, Faculty of Humanities.

Mr. Boyce explained that student engagement has also been stimulated and sustained via the SI Programme. Student performance has improved since the start of the said programme. That is, the students pass modules well, some with excellent pass rates and averages. Similarly, class attendance also improved, with students becoming fully engaged in lectures and other class activities, added Miss. Siphesihle Booi, an Economics lecturer. Miss. Booi expressed her gratitude to the TLC for providing her ECO121F/L students with facilitators who offered valuable support to their learning. To Miss. Booi, it was a pleasure working with the SI leaders. Nangamso and Thandeka were hands-on throughout the semester. The two also went above and beyond their work by making themselves available for invigilation as well. Nangamso and Thandeka demonstrated their tendency to initiative issues. They were also proactive in seeking guidance or advice whenever needed, thereby ensuring smooth collaboration in class. Once more, Miss. Booi thanked the peer facilitators for their continued support.

In her report, Mrs. Rashmi Scott (a lecturer in the English Department) also expressed her utmost appreciation and satisfaction with the work done by the SIs in the courses she taught in the 2024 academic year. The peer facilitators were said to have been professional, cordial, and diligent when performing their duties. Mrs. Scott said

that she had no reason to complain about any shortcomings. 'Thank you for the services that your unit provides, as it is so helpful to both our students and academic staff members', concluded Mrs. Scott.

Ms. Nombulelo Nondwengu (a lecturer in Psychology) added her voice concerning the significant role the peer facilitators play in the academic development of UFH students. She stated that the facilitators were consistent in doing consultations and sessions with the students (the PSY1 and PSY2 students) in the first and second semesters. The students and peer facilitators were linked to the modules on Blackboard. The latter conducted online sessions and also via WhatsApp. Even those students who are often off-campus were able to carry out their duties effectively. The above were said by students when providing feedback to their lecturers. Students attended online classes. This was done to align students with the course content taught at that particular time. Students also sought for study materials from lecturers. Ms. Nondwengu claimed that the peer facilitators successfully provided services to their students. She recommended them to be allowed to continue rendering the services they provide in 2025.

The above illustrates that the TLC has done exceptionally well. For example, the SI for the PAC 110 (Basic Chemistry) and PAC 121 (Descriptive Chemistry) was praised by Prof. Opeoluwa Oyedeji in the Chemistry Department. The peer facilitator for Chemistry in the Faculty of Science and Agriculture attested to the fact that the facilitators were always ready to assist students at any given time. That peer facilitator was adjudged to be the future teacher/lecturer. There was no doubt that she helped in making sure the department obtained a higher pass rate than in 2023 in those modules, said Prof. Oyedeji.



One of the signifying milestones for the TLC peer facilitators was when they excelled academically. Different faculties, including the Faculty of Science and Agriculture, rewarded their top achievers in academic performance. For the Faculty of Science and Agriculture Ms. Majeza and Madosi; received the Best 3rd Year Student, Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (Agricultural Economics) and Best 3rd Year Student, Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (Agricultural Economics), 2024 respectively.

FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND AGRICULTURE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



Miss. Chipo Majeza; Best 3rd Year Student, Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (Soil Science), 2024.



Miss Charlene Madosi; Best 3rd Year Student, Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (Agricultural Economics), 2024.

Meanwhile, Sithenkosi James from the Faculty of Law reflected on her efforts and abilities that prepared her to win the Academic Achievement Award.

FACULTY OF LAW ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



To Ms. Sithenkosi James, a 4th Year LLB students expressed that receiving the Dean's recognition through the Faculty of Law Student Excellence Award served as a powerful affirmation of her capability to achieve her goals and aspirations, provided that she remains determined and committed to her path. As she approached the completion of his LLB degree in 2024, she was excited about the future. She planned to pursue a Master's degree in Child Human Rights Law in 2025, followed by a Doctorate in the same field. Miss. James' ultimate ambition is to establish herself as a 'Child Law Expert', advocating for and protecting the rights of all children in the country

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS BY PEER FACILITATORS IN FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

The Faculty of Humanities awarded its students in different categories and departments including the Language Department among the award winning students are Mr. Tapiwa Mabhandi and Mr Ludwe Mbeceni.



Mr. Mabhandi acknowledged that achieving a second place in the esteemed Makgoba 2024 Essay Competition represents a significant milestone in his academic journey. Growing up in Gokwe South, a rural area in Zimbabwe with limited opportunities, that accomplishment was testament to the resilience and determination he has cultivated over the years. Coming second in the competition underscored his passion for contributing to the socio-economic development of communities, particularly within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. His aspirations lie in fostering trade and equitable economic integration among member states. He attributed much of that achievement to his role as a Language and Writing Consultant, which honed his academic writing skills and enhanced his ability to communicate complex ideas effectively. That experience has been instrumental in shaping his analytical thinking, written, and communication skills, all of which played a pivotal role in his success in the competition.

Looking ahead, Mr. Mabhandi was committed to advancing his academic and professional growth. His immediate goal was to pursue a Master of Commerce (Research) degree, a programme that would enable him to refine his research capabilities and deepen his expertise in economic policy analysis.

ENGLISH DEBATE WINNING AWARD

Four facilitators of the Teaching and learning Centre Nangamso Msongelwa, Banele Ntombela, Bulelani Mantshiyose and Siphokazi Katlego Tima, were chosen to represent UFH at the prestigious South African University Debating Council (SAUDC) in Botswana as debaters and adjudicators.

Banele Ntombela broke to semi-finals as a debater and Bulelani Mantshiyose won as best public speaker ranked as the 7th best speaker of the tournament.



The University of Fort Hare is proud of that the students are recognised for critical thinking, public speaking and teamwork that were showcased by the students during the competition. Some of these skills were mostly acquired from the TLC facilitator trainings. As their reflection, the students mentioned that their dedication and passion for intellectual engagement are contagious and have made a meaningful contribution to the SAUDC tournament.

We are extremely proud of our remarkable achievement, and we are thrilled to have showcased our skills in such fields and on the African level, highlighted by Mr. Nangamso Msongelwa, a SI Student Assistant Alice.

THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AWARD, 2024: MR. LUDWE MBECENI



Mr Mcebeni expressed his gratitude on winning the community engagement award. He said that the award is not just a personal achievement; it is also reflects the mission of his non-profit organisation named as Smart Choices, and the contributions he aspires to make to the academic success of University of Fort Hare students and the broader Buffalo City Municipality community.

UFH TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARDS, 2024

On the 14th of September 2024, the TLC hosted an award ceremony for the academics who excelled in their academic activities from different university faculties. It was yet another great milestone for the UFH to award its academics for their best achievements in the following categories;

- Developing Teacher
- Senior/Experienced teacher
- Teaching with Technology

DEVELOPING/EMERGING TEACHER AWARD:



Dr. Nkohla explained that his journey has been both inspiring and humbling. Preparing the portfolio and gathering supporting evidence required time, reflection, and a clear sense of purpose, which made the journey both rewarding and challenging. He was grateful to have had the opportunity to step back and look at his teaching philosophy and contributions with critical eyes. He appreciated the opportunity to share some insights from his experience. The process of compiling the portfolio allowed him to revisit his teaching methods, evaluate impact on student outcomes, and reflect deeply on the principles that guided his teaching.

Citing the award winning as a stepping stone towards sharpening his teaching skills, Dr. Nkohla pointed out that balancing his teaching load, curriculum development, and administrative responsibilities while working on the portfolio required careful planning.

The peak moments Dr. Nkohla highlighted were the peer evaluation, which included the lecture observations that took place for the Multicultural Education Module with his Postgraduate Certificate in Education students. He mentioned that the session became different because he was in the process of developing his portfolio and had already reflected on some aspects of his teaching. The session reminded him of the unique opportunity he had to bridge disciplines and make learning relevant to diverse student contexts. Dr. Nkohla has taught that module since 2018 but that time around it was different, emotional, and personal. From planning to execution, it was another experience that he made a promise to himself. He was indebted when he received a notification of having won the award. 'It was an acknowledgement, not just of my work but also of the collaborative spirit among my colleagues and students who inspire me daily', concluded Dr. Nkohla.

DR. FUNDA: REFLECTION ON WINNING THE TEACHING AND LEARNING EXCELLENT AWARD

In his acceptance speech, Dr. Funda acknowledged that he was thrilled to have won the Vice Chancellor Emerging Teacher Award. Reflecting on his achievement was a meaningful experience to him, the experience that gave him the chance to plan for more growth. The following is what Dr. Funda said in his acceptance speech.

Going forward, Dr. Funda plans to deepen the interactive learning experiences such as developing more collaborative activities and integrating the AI driven tools that support the personalised learning pathways for his students. He hoped to publish studies on teaching innovations such as the impact of interactive learner guides. He considered Journals or conferences that focused on educational technology and teaching effectiveness. Collaborating with colleagues across disciplines to co-author papers, bringing diverse insights to publications and increasing the potential for impactful research were key to his future plans.



DR. FUNDA: REFLECTION ON WINNING THE TEACHING AND LEARNING EXCELLENT AWARD



Mrs. N.B. Mandlazi also got the developing teacher award category due to her outstanding performance and dedication to teaching and learning.

Mrs. N.B. Mandlazi is the Fieldwork Coordinator at the University of Fort Hare, East London Campus, at the Department of Social Work and Development. She holds a Master's Degree in Social Work and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Higher Education and Training. Mrs. Mandlazi is about to complete her Ph.D thesis in the same field. She has an extensive record of excellent work at the Department of Social Development. She has been honoured repeatedly for her outstanding contributions thereof. Her research interests are on occupational stress, gender, and fieldwork.

The journey of using an e-portfolio was shaped by the filing system challenges faced by The Department of Social Work and Development. The fieldwork modules, in particular, were mostly affected. Social work students are expected to submit a portfolio of evidence on all the activities that they do in the field. 'We have a very high number of students in social work, ranging from 60 to 80 students. Each student submits their portfolio at every level of study, starting from their second year. One can only imagine the volume of files we receive annually in our relatively small offices', lamented Mrs. Mandlazi. Like other award recipients, Mrs. Mandlazi explained that the development of the evidence portfolio was not an easy process. There were certain times where she felt motivated by the fact that the Head of the Department, Dr. Kim Schmidt, nominated her. Thus, giving up was not an option. It should be noted, however, that she also had joyous moments when putting together the portfolio because it presented the massive work she does.

Her greatest strength lies in her well-organized filing system. All the files she needed to upload as evidence were at her fingertips. The portfolio development also enhanced her e-skills. She was also grateful for the module on Technology Enhanced Learning, taught by Ms. S. Ntlabathi, which she completed as part of her Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education and Training. Even though she faced some challenges, Mrs. Mandlazi had a foundational understanding of what she wanted to do. She planned to build upon and enhance her current practices moving forward. Her appreciation went to the Department of Social Work and Development team, the fieldwork external supervisors, the TLC team, and the Head of Department.

REFLECTIONS BY THE SENIOR AWARD RECIPIENTS



Another category of the award was for the senior/expert teachers in teaching and learning in HE. Among the award winning recipients was Mrs. Dasheska.

Mrs. Dasheska gave her philosophy of teaching and learning as that aligned with two major philosophies, namely Constructivism and Humanism. She believes that each learner constructs their understanding and knowledge through experiences and reflections, thus allowing the individual student personal growth and self-actualisation. According to Mrs. Dasheska, her class environment is always relaxed and humorous. Her life experiences reflect her practice and impact on her clients, the pregnant women and their families. She strives to be both a role model and an influencer for her students in knowledge, practice, and professionalism.

Regarding the award preparation process, Mrs. Dasheska said that her Head of Department nominated her for the VC Excellence Teaching and Learning Award. She was asked to prepare an electronic portfolio of evidence. As

with the other award recipients who shared that insights above, the preparation of the portfolio was a daunting task for Mrs. Dasheska, and hence the time to do the portfolio was her biggest challenge.

However, she decided to work on it immediately after her nomination with the help of the TLC staff members. The most positive aspect of developing the portfolio was that it allowed her to reflect on her teaching practice. She also managed to get an in-depth feedback from the three levels of the students she teaches. Reflecting on the portfolio document, she understood her value in their learning from their perspective.



ANOTHER SENIOR TEACHER AWARD FELLOW: PROF. OELOFSEN

Introducing her reflections on winning the award, Prof. works in the Philosophy Department at the University of Fort Hare. Prof. Oelofsen believes that the award for the Excellent Teacher was due to her deep passion for teaching, which was evident in the positive feedback she received from students. The students appreciated her engaging and effective lecturing style. The teaching philosophy of Prof. Oelofsen finds its foundation in the work of Paulo Freire's humanising pedagogy. She has endeavoured to put into practice his Pedagogy of the Oppressed across all her teachings.

At the UFH, she is experienced in teaching at all levels, ranging from the Foundation Phase through to the undergraduate and postgraduate lecturing. She has also been involved in developing and renewing the curriculum, specifically in taking part in workshops to renew and decolonise the Philosophy curriculum, and developing the Social Transformation Module. That course is an interdisciplinary one offered to all undergraduate students at Fort Hare. Finally, developing and implementing the new Philosophy, Politics and Law degree programme is her motivation.

Apart from my experience at Fort Hare, I am recognised nationally as an expert in curriculum development, as evidenced by the Durban University of Technology, which approached me to be part of an expert panel to review their General Education Programme', claimed the Prof. She added that she was also approached by the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland to offer a Master's level course that reads; 'Afro-communitarian personhood and reconciliation'. She presented that course in 2022, and it was well received. This shows that her teaching expertise is not only recognised nationally but also internationally.

THE THIRD CATEGORY FOR THE TEACHING AND LEARNING EXCELLENT AWARD WAS E-LEARNING EXCELLENCE. DR. FORD MARIE

Dr. Ford Marie received that award based on her passion in teaching with technology enhanced learning

Dr. Marie explained that she enjoyed putting together her submission portfolio for the e-learning award. Portfolio development afforded Dr. Marie an opportunity to reflect deeply about her experiences of using Blackboard and other digital learning tools. Dr. Marie said;

I have used many different e-learning platforms in my teaching over the past years but had not been aware of how much I had learned and how I had adapted my approach based on my observations and interactions with the students.

She had not appreciated, however, the use of a combination of e-learning platforms. Dr. Marie elaborated that she was now much closer to her students by staying in touch with how they manage their learning. To her, it was a bonus to discover that she would also get a monetary reward from ONE CONNECT. Dr. Marie concluded by pledging to continue improving her e-learning knowledge and skills. She would do so by using different apps and software to build a student engagement system for her classes. For example, her plans were to use the Canva system in her modules in 2025. Doing so would enable her students to create posters and videos about different businesses they analyse.



CHE VISIT TO THE UFH

On the 15th of October 2024, the Council for Higher Education (CHE) conducted a capacity-building workshop on Higher Education Practice Standard (HEPS) for the Modes of Learning and Teaching Provision at the Miriam Makeba Centre, University of Fort Hare. The targeted group were Quality Assurance staff members, including those who deal with the Accreditation of Programmes; Learning and Teaching Designers/Curriculum Designers; Teaching with Technology professionals and support staff; Academic developers/Continuous Professional Learning staff; and Academic staff members with plans to expand their teaching into alternative modes of provision.

The CHE presentation was based on the Higher Education Practice Standards for Modes of Learning and Teaching Provision. It was facilitated by Dr. Britta Zawada from the CHE.

The workshop had 50 participants from the academic staff members of the university. The discussions concerned the theme; 'Rethinking Education Delivery in Today's Dynamic Academic Landscape'. The HEPS document highlights the principles and rationale behind an institution's approach to structuring, implementing, and quality-assuring its educational offering. The emphasis is that decisions around teaching and learning should be aligned with the institution's objectives and the needs of its students and staff, focusing on impact and experiential quality. The HEPS encourages institutions to match their structural and technological arrangements with their educational outcomes, ensuring that online, digital, or hybrid methods are purposefully integrated and relevant.

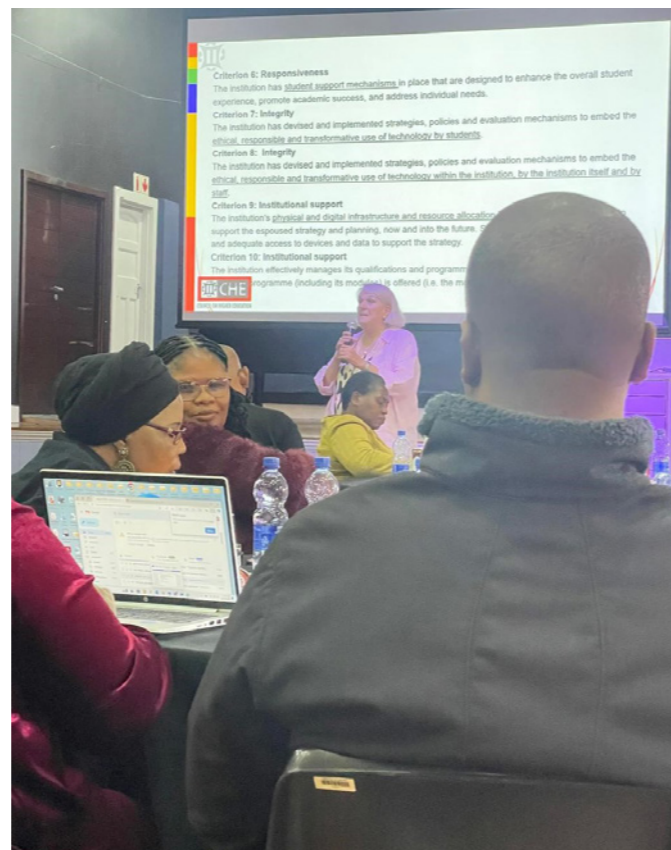
The HEPS views an institution's approach to teaching as a reflection of its identity, intersecting with other standards that shape its educational mission. It calls for the address of the longstanding bias toward traditional contact (in-person) learning, which often side-lines or places extra scrutiny on alternative formats like online or hybrid modes. The HEPS also advocates for all forms of provisions, including that contact learning should be deliberately designed and quality-assured. The aim is to level expectations across different teaching modes. By emphasising on the intentional design, the HEPS to encourage institutions to explore diverse approaches that optimise learning experiences, focusing on accessibility, inclusivity, staff readiness, and infrastructure. This approach necessitates a flexible framework that could adapt to technological advancements and the evolving needs of students and educators. The idea here is to facilitate broader definitions of success and flexibility within both the full-

time and part-time learning.

Ultimately, the HEPS promotes a forward-looking and adaptable approach to education that recognises the blurred boundaries across the teaching modes, challenges traditional definitions, and fosters an environment where all forms of the learning provision are thoughtfully designed and rigorously assessed. Dr. Zawada enabled the participants to work in groups to share ideas about developing the curricula that meet educational standards. In this way, students are prepared for the rapidly evolving world.

Key Takeaways

The session emphasised the importance of integrating technology and flexible curriculum design to meet the demands of modern learners. The participants explored ways to create inclusive and accessible learning environments that support student success in today's ever-evolving higher education landscape. Factors such as time-pace-space, preparedness, responsiveness, integrity, and institutional support might impact quality provision. The coordinating team should be applauded for the success of this event. The participants should be acknowledged for their robust engagement during the workshop.



CONCLUDING REMARKS BY THE EDITOR

The second Newsletter issue of 2024 builds on the previous newsletter editions that showcased the TLC activities in supporting all the Faculties of the UFH. In the next issue, we envisage to share more about the University Capacity Development Grant and how the university could benefit from that knowledge. As our end users, you are all welcome to share your views, suggestions, and feedback regarding the topical issues discussed in this second Newsletter Issue as well as those that affect our university and its Faculties.

Acknowledgements

My appreciation goes to the following individuals and groups of individuals who immensely contributed to this edition:

Dr. V. Dondolo, Ms. K. Mabece, and all the academic staff members and students who shared their stories for publication herein.

Warm Regards,

Dr. B.G. Ndawonde.



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Acknowledgements

Produced by Teaching and Learning Centre

Design and Layout: Michael Zantsi

Photography: Various Sources
