

# NEWS



November 2013

## WORD FROM THE DEAN'S OFFICE

It was my great privilege and joy to attend the recent materials exhibition presented by our FP students and teachers in the CCS FP Project on the Missionvale Campus.

First, the work -- focussed on materials to develop learning through multiple literacies and languages -- presented was creative, innovative, and inspiring -- well done to all of you involved! As I commented to some of the students, it made me wish I were 4 or 5 years old again, to be able to possibly be in one of your classes in the FP. BUT I was able to imagine the joy, the excitement, the curiosity in the kids, that having teachers like these, with materials like these, could evoke and inspire in their learning futures.

Second, it was also so significant that this happened in such lovely space on the MV campus, surrounded on our borders by children in homes in the settlements surrounding the campus, many with no electricity, possibly very little to eat, to get a sense that we hold some part of their futures in our hands. That the FP programme is going to be located there in a few years' time imbued this 'event' with a significance we felt in the atmosphere, but still have to realise in reality.

Lastly, I want to thank the FP team who put so much effort, energy, creativity, joy and love into this work with their students and teachers. The atmosphere was ease-full, bright, joyous, with a sure sense of purpose, accompanied by the upbeat easy harmonies of the musician. How proud all the parents, partners, friends and colleagues were -- thanks for creating this opportunity for Foundation Phase to shine, in this significant 'space and time' (which many of you will recognise as part of the title of one of our modules).

Forward, FP, Phambili!

Yours towards a humanising education,

Warmest Wishes  
Denise Zinn



## Materials Development Exhibition



By: Nadeema Musthan & Robin Notshulwana

We celebrated many things at our materials development exhibition, some of which couldn't be put on show for others to see. The evening was an acknowledgement of a few different, though interrelated processes, whose focus was on creating appropriate materials for the South African child. You'll note that I did not say, for the South African classroom, because at the centre of all the materials that were made was the child. In all the materials displayed one could see and sense the fun, the colour, the excitement of little hands eager to play, as well as the creativity, the pedagogical know-how and the passion of their creators. And at the centre of all this were children's stories and the medium through which they are shared, language.

For the first year FP students the process began in April with the setting of an assignment. It seemed fairly benign: choose 5 children's books, summarize the books in 3 languages, develop activities in line with your understanding of how children learn to read and write, in ways that follow natural learning process and are engaging! But the sum was indeed worth more than its parts. Many students took their books and activities into school settings, many used more than 5 books. Most students made charts and games and apparatus using easily accessible, low cost materials and found ways to teach the content of the curriculum in novel and exciting ways. And over the months of redrafting built up a file of ideas that we hope they will carry with them into their future classrooms and share among colleagues.

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For the teacher's from the Manyo Network that displayed their self-authored and illustrated children's books, the process began over two days in mid-September. It was school holidays, and a public holiday on the 24th, yet all the teachers barring one, returned to complete their books and songs. They danced and sang, they cut and pasted (with glue!), they laughed and shared and in the end, Mrs Vantyi's comment, "This gives me lis to be a teacher!" seemed to sum up the collective sentiment.

The other set of materials that are being developed are the teacher educator materials by the FP lecturers as part of a consortium materials development project funded by the EU. These sets of materials are focused on deepening teacher educator knowledge of feedback and assessment. The aim: to improve the quality of Foundation Phase teacher education.



Of course, the goal was that all these materials be multilingual, in nature and/or form, if they are to reflect the reality of our children and our classrooms. It was taken for granted that what we can say/do/think in one language, we can do in any other, and in fact must do if the LOLT differs from the languages children bring into the classroom. Much of this work required that people put themselves in places of vulnerability where they did not know things, or couldn't understand something, or felt that this new knowledge went against their 'common' knowledge. It was in this space that we learned from each other and started creating a community of practice. It brought issues such as language attitudes, competence and expectations to the fore.

And so what was not on display were the various conversations, both orally, as a group, or personally in journal writing with lecturers, during which we grappled with the realities of low and high status languages and the effects on children's self esteem and performance, inequality and injustice in educational delivery, the power of story and the almost irreplaceable value it has in providing a medium through which to acquire literacy meaningfully. These are important discussions that we need to sustain and attempt to address. But for that night, in our heels and our sparkly dresses, we simply enjoyed a glass of wine, appreciated each other's inner child and reaffirmed our love for children and teaching



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## Meetings, cultural visits, and outcome

We find it important to sum up also extra-curricular activities as they all contribute to our academic intercultural work. Without these experiences we cannot even begin to understand in what way the South-African teachers would be able to fill and use the framework of *Reel Life*. These intercultural encounters made it possible for us to relate to the students we taught, and to adapt our teaching accordingly.

**Molly Blackburn High School:** At Molly Blackburn we met two deputy school principals and a young teacher (responsible for incubator projects). The school is the only focus school for the Ministry of Education in the Eastern Cape (one out of 60 schools). They started in 1991 as a Community Project, then they shared building with another school, according to a platooning system – one school in the morning, another one after lunch. They became accredited in 1993. Until then they survived on community funding. Performance rate from 15% at the start, 40% pass rate in 1995, and now 1700 pupils, with a performance rate of 80-90 % of finishing students.

Commitment is the key, the teachers/principals informed us – “we were young, and new teachers then, necessary qualities are enthusiasm, dedication, diligence, discipline”. There are 60 staff, 32-53 students in a class. We visited the premises (surrounded by the township, and protected by fences and barbed wire), and saw a computer lab that was equipped with 30 computers and their own server, this computer lab was their pride. We also visited their library with completely empty shelves. Since the number of students increases all the time, they had built two new buildings – however, they had only had funds enough to furnish one of the classrooms. The rest stayed empty and unused, even though they had a great need for the space. Three movable science labs had been given to the school

(see <http://wikivillage.co.za/molly-blackburn-high-school>).

**Charles Duna Primary School:** a school located in a run-down township with a wonderful, dedicated, committed principal. She had been there for 15 years, grew up in the township and had returned to make a difference. 14 years without water - parents brought in buckets of water every day to flush the toilets (or they had been forced to close the school). Electric light came in 2004, before that they studied by candlelight. The school has 1500 learners. Some classrooms could not be used in winter, as they are too cold. Some rooms become too warm in summer, but the windows are sealed to prevent them from falling out. The library was full of donated books, but hardly any shelves. The principal had introduced a food scheme, the growing of vegetables in the schoolyard to provide nutrition for the learners. The school fee was 40 rand per year, as compared to up to 14000 rand per year for a “good” school (see <https://www.facebook.com/CharlesDunaPublicPrimary-School>).

**The Masifunde Project in Walmer location:** It is a project that selects children already in kindergarten to be bussed out from the township to good schools – they are then expected to bring knowledge and learning back to the children at home. Students from NMMU participate as volunteers here – and our BIKK exchange students have all worked in Masifunde. The children are selected on account of three aspects: academic potential, dedicated parents who understand the value of education, poverty. We were guided by Flip, ANC member and an earlier council member for Walmer location, and as such he stood behind the building of decent housing in the township. We travelled and walked inside Walmer in a way that very few white South-Africans have ever done ([see www.masifunde.com](http://www.masifunde.com) ).

**Theatre development project in township schools:** We attended a drama session at the NMMU in which young learners had taken up the issues that they found were important in school today – problems that needed addressing. They took up drug abuse, pregnancy, school drop-out, lack of discipline, lack of parental support. All ended with a beautiful delivery of a poem by a boy in Xhosa and English – “We are the seeds!” We will get the videotaped version of this performance sent to us for further analysis.

**Contact with the International Office:** We visited the office just to bring greetings from Norway and keep in touch.

## Look to the future

We have initiated a co-operation with our contact at NMMU, Lyn Webb. She will now become part of *Reel Life*, and we will sum up and write a joint article on the results from our work in South-Africa. It will be submitted to a high-ranking academic journal in teacher education, disseminating the method to its readership.

We have been given access to Dr Webb’s research in the classroom on language and its importance for identity development. Her work on poetry, language and communication will be very useful indeed for our master students in “*Fremmedspråk i skolen*”. There is also a possibility to develop joint master projects with NMMU for our master students who work under the umbrella of *Reel Life*.

In addition, we have already discussed possible projects in teaching and methodological development for the future. To realize this, we would have to return to NMMU sometime during spring 2015.

In conclusion, we achieved what we had hoped for – *Reel Life* has now a wider perspective including also non-Western views. Furthermore, we gained even more than that. We have now a solid South-African partner at NMMU for future research projects within education, and in particular, intercultural teacher education.



# Beyond the Classroom

FP student, **Qaqamba Tungata** (above, left, with lecturer Thandi Hlam and fellow student), participated in NMMU's 2013 Beyond the Classroom (BtC) voluntary leadership programme. The programme introduces students to the requirements of leadership in a practical and creative manner, assisting them to develop skills needed for effective, ethical leadership. It further explores and addresses the importance of diversity in daily interactions, encourages teamwork with others from diverse backgrounds, enhances skills in conflict resolution and communication, and encourages intellectual growth over a year-long period. Students are required to complete 20 hours of community service, however Qaqamba completed 85 hours! "This is the most rewarding co-curricular activity I have ever signed up for. I also received an award for completing 85 hours for community involvement. I am really proud of myself"



# "Day of the girl"

On 4-5 October 2013, a small group of young first year women education students, hailing from the rural areas of the Eastern Cape, came together for a research workshop with Prof Naydene de Lange (NMMU) and Prof Relebohile Moletsane (UKZN). The focus of the research workshop was to explore the use of innovative approaches to programming, policy-making, and communication in reducing sexual violence amongst young women. This was the first phase of the project where the young women students engaged in 'cellphilm' making and focus group discussions, in relation to various issues that are associated with young women and sexual violence in the age of AIDS.

The workshop was successful and insightful of the experiences and perspectives of young rural girls. As the saying goes "all work and no play ...", so there was no dull moment! It was reassuring to see how the young first year women took charge, spoke about and considered addressing sexual violence in and around the university. One of the envisaged outcomes of the project with these young women is to inform policy change contributing to addressing sexual violence in South Africa. Indeed, these young women demonstrated that it is the "time of the girl!" a time to take charge and a time to lead.

Vimbiso Makamure



## The faculty's Centre for the Community School (CCS) meet reps from George student body, Super Ed



# ALUMNI KEEP DRAMA FLAG FLYING IN SCHOOL

Two of our alumni from the Faculty of Education are keeping the flag of drama-in-education flying in the school where they are currently teaching. Both Shamim Cassim (an ex-FET student) and Salma Emamboccus (nee White, an ex-PGCE student) joined forces at the Woolhope Secondary School, where they are currently teaching, to form a drama society in January 2013. Even though the school's drama society is a fairly young one, they came second in the Edu-Drama section of a competition launched by the Eastern Cape Liquor Board and Shoprite (PE Express, 13 November 2013, p8). The setting of the play, which was a typical 'house party' scene, focused on the dire consequences of alcohol abuse on the lives of individuals. The two aspiring directors are working on another follow up play that focuses on the abuse of women across the globe.

Both students were introduced to process drama in Logan Athiemoolam's classes where the seeds of drama-in-education were planted. While Shamim was exposed to drama-in-education and process drama in the PGED 302 module (Issues and challenges in education), Salma received fairly intensive training in the English methodology module presented to PGCE students. She also participated in the English methodology group production entitled 'Coconut Syndrome' in 2010, a play that was loosely based on the script 'Happy days for Harrison Gumedi' by Ronald Byron. It is inspiring to read via the media that our alumni are making an effort to enrich the lives of the learners through cultural activities such as drama.

Logan Athiemoolam



## BRIEFS

# Congratulations



Dr Nokhanyo Mayaba has taken over as head of the Action Research Unit. She has plans in mind for expanding the activities of the unit both within the Faculty and the NMMU at large.



Dr Andre du Plessis will head the SMATE unit as from January 2014. We wish him and the team all the best for their endeavours.



Eileen Scheckle has been appointed as RASA's National Chair. And Dr Margie Childs has been appointed their new Eastern Cape chair.



# ACE-SL MINI- CONFERENCE A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

By: Logan Athiemoolam



The ACE-SL conference which has been an annual feature since 2007 on the Faculty of Education's calendar of events was held at the Missionvale campus on the 26th of October 2013. The first group of students who presented their research papers in 2007 were part of the Delta Foundation's pilot group specialising in School Management and Leadership.

The students are prepared for the research presentations in the PSML 101 module on Effective Language Skills presented by Logan Athiemoolam. They are then guided in workshops on the selection of their topics, the design of their research presentations and the use of a variety of strategies to convey their research in interesting and novel ways. Although they are exposed to the finer design and presentation skills in the PSML 101 class, their final papers are a combination of the various skills which they have acquired in other management and leadership modules offered by Vuks Tshazibana and Sindy Mbokodi and power point skills which they acquire in the Computer module offered by Joy Turyagyenda. The team of lecturers work collaboratively to assist the students with their research presentations in the various modules that they present. This conference is a very good example of how a team of lecturers could work together to prepare the students for a critical event such as a mini-conference. This year's conference was jointly organised by Logan Athiemoolam and Vuks Tshazibana with the support of Gishma Daniels who made all the arrangements for catering and the certificates and Sherwin King who attended to all the logistical arrangements.

The programme director for this year's event was Vuks Tshazibana who inspired the students and those present with his words of wisdom on management related themes. Dr Katija Adam, the director of CPD, who was invited as the guest speaker and who also served as the adjudicator of the presentations, rendered a motivational talk that lifted the participant's spirits. This year's mini-conference commenced with a short drama piece which included poetry recitals that focused on teacher and learner relationships, a group choral recital of Kalil Gibran's poem entitled 'Our children are not our children', and a group rendition of the song 'The Greatest Love of all'.

Thereafter the students presented their research papers in an animated style with vim, gusto and vigour. The following papers were presented at the mini conference:

- Strategies to prepare teachers to teach learners with fetal alcohol syndrome by P Booysen
- Addressing parents' concerns to improve parent/school relationships by W Damse
- Teenage pregnancies at schools by E N Dywili
- An analysis of the throughput rate of learners in a secondary school: A case study by R D Fortuin
- The National schools' nutrition programme: Challenges and solutions by S A George
- Positive vs Negative reinforcement by S Gerber
- Low participation in adult classes by J T Gxwali
- Strategies to assist grade 12 Maths literacy learners in Multilingual classes by M I Harris
- Shifting the school's focus from problematic learners to those who are interested to learn by N O Khelekethe
- Developing a model to address factors impacting on learners academic performance by C McCabe
- Transport problems experienced by learners in rural areas: A case study by N E Ndabeni
- Safety and security in schools by L B Xaluva
- Using cellphones to facilitate learning in classroom contexts by T M Nenga
- Reasons for young learners attending AET classes by N Niyabo
- Intervention strategies to assist learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds by N P Nkumba
- An auto-ethnographic account of my multicultural education experiences by N C P Nkume
- Strategies to address disciplinary problems in the Intermediate and Senior Phases by P Williams

The adjudicator was very impressed by the range of topics covered and the standard of the presentations. All participants presented their research papers with conviction and spoke fluently and articulately even though none of them are English home language speakers. The mini-conference was concluded with the awarding of certificates to all the participants and a vote of thanks by Logan Athiemoolam. One of the presenters namely Melissa Harris, who is a Maths Literacy teacher at Gamble Street Secondary school, was invited to present her paper on 'Strategies to assist grade 12 Maths literacy learners in multilingual classes', to the faculty at the TLC meeting.

# ACE-LLT MINI- CONFERENCE IN QUMBU



By: Logan Athiemoolam

The annual ACE-LLT mini-conference that is one of the critical events in the PLE 106 module (Reflection on language in learning and teaching) co-ordinated by Logan Athiemoolam, was held in Qumbu on the 19th of November. The students presented a range of interesting papers that focused on a reflection of their own challenges relating to teaching language in rural contexts. Eighteen papers were presented in the field of language at the mini-conference in two parallel sessions adjudicated by Joe Slingers and Logan Athiemoolam.

The students were very well supervised and mentored by Nandipha Ngesi, who serves as the tutor for the module in Qumbu.

Nandipha has acted in her capacity as a tutor on the ACE-LLT programme for a variety of modules since the programme was first introduced in 2010. She graduated with her Masters in Applied languages this year and will be joining the staff of the Walter Sisulu University's English Language Department in 2014. She ascribes her success to the invaluable skills which she has acquired while serving as a tutor for the ACE-LLT that forms part of the Faculty of Education's off campus unit. According to her the insights which she has gained and the training which she has received from the NMMU will hold her in good stead as she embarks on a new journey from the rural secondary school where she is currently teaching English to join the staff of the university.



## GENERATION<sup>X</sup>T

by Jacques Batista

One of the English methodology students who was part of a PGCE group that went out to Qumbu with Dr Kathija Adam and Dr Logan Athiemoolam recently, wrote a poem (alongside) to describe his experiences in Qumbu.

astride alliterations stepping down from temple steeples  
the twilight lights the Transkei home and land (re)formed bit by bit  
as a scatter chatter of stutter huts geometrically  
clap, click, slap atop the geology of the world's first word  
mewing, puking in the verses armed shaking spears as Shaka's  
Sharp will rising in pursuit of the morning (meta)morphing  
after noon into torched bearer for the Cheetah cheated by  
the Game's Keeper keeping Time who knows the slow air we blow tows  
behind the assonance of light's whisker's width fallen in the  
fight flung night-wide across personified windows' widowed sight  
where dawn breaks into the hush housed here outside the curfew  
tollgate's kneeling knell about to wake up a figure of speech  
double clicking neXt in line singing - 'ding-Dingaan...ding-Dingaan'



# Eastern Cape RASA



Prof Guthrie is pictured here with RASA national secretary, Marcelle Harran, Margie Childs, the new East Cape chair, and Eileen Scheckle, RASA national chair.

Eastern Cape RASA recently hosted Shine information session and Shine workshops on early literacy interventions. At the workshop R1800 was raised for reading materials for Shine reading interventions at Walmer primary schools.

Eileen Scheckle and Marcelle Harran took the opportunity to chat to the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, who opened the recent national RASA (Reading Association of South Africa) conference in Johannesburg at the end of October.

The minster not only opened the conference but welcomed questions from the floor. She also stayed for the evening panel discussion and posed some questions to panelists in response to comments on the current state of education in South Africa.

Following the conference, RASA in the Eastern Cape hosted emeritus professor of reading and engagement, Professor John Guthrie, from the University of Maryland, for three talks. He addressed over 150 education students about how to motivate their learners to read more and that engagement in reading could compensate for poor socio-economic background and low parental education.



Prof Guthrie also spoke at Rhodes university after which he and his wife visited an elephantless Addo on their return to Port Elizabeth.



# LINDA SHINES AT STAFF CONCERT



Linda Mani, one of our senior colleagues in the faculty who is like a mother to many of us; lecturers and students alike, mesmerised the audience recently with her riveting performance in a dance/drama presented at the staff concert. Linda is a member of the NMMU cultural group who performs regularly at various university functions. She and our ex-colleague Ndileka Jacobs also performed with the same group at the Multicultural Education conference organised by the Faculty of Education last year as well as at the Jomo Kenyata University in Kenya in 2012 as part of the inter-university cultural programme.

In their dance/drama piece entitled 'Kwela Dancers' the group used dance and mime to showcase a slice of life in a typical shebeen. The intricate dance movements, which were more akin to the rock and roll era of the 60's, were extremely well choreographed and brilliantly presented to the audience. Linda, who portrayed the role of the very sophisticated, well-dressed shebeen queen in this humorous piece of theatre, executed her role convincingly and both she and Ndileka captivated the audience with their memorable performances.

Linda is an extremely talented actress who demonstrated through her performance in the dance/ drama that she could rival any of the 'Generations' or 'Isidingo' stars. Although she says that she has embarked on her acting career rather late in her life, she serves as an inspiration and shining star to us all, demonstrating through her craft that we are capable of realising our dreams if we intrinsically believe that we can achieve them and work relentlessly to the achievement thereof. We are fortunate to have a colleague like her in the faculty as she brings so much light and wisdom into the faculty in her own quiet, unassuming and unique way.

*'Hold fast to dreams for if dreams die life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly' (Langston Hughes)*

Logan Athiemoolam

