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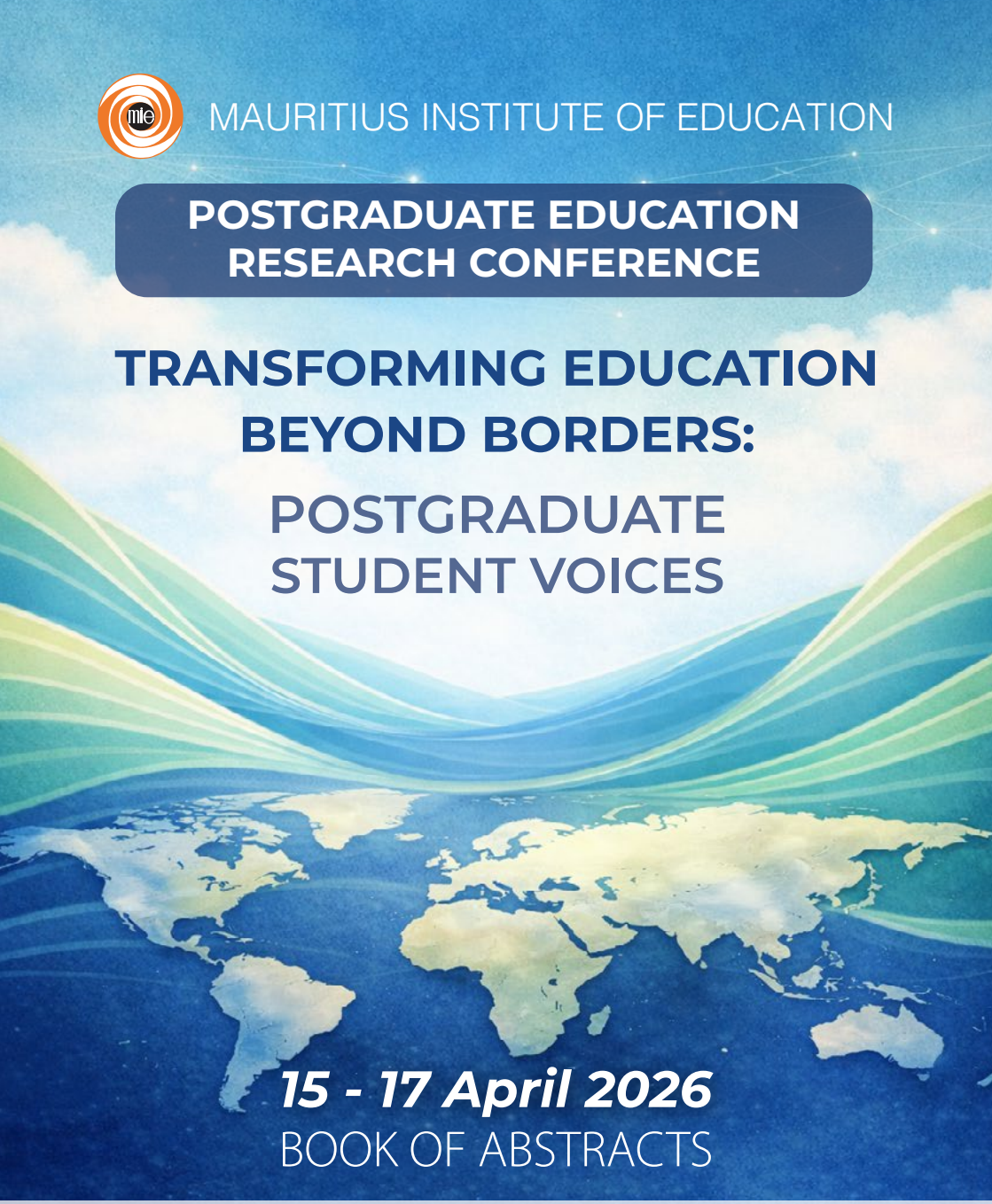
POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION RESEARCH CONFERENCE

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION BEYOND BORDERS:

POSTGRADUATE STUDENT VOICES



15 - 17 April 2026

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

unesco Chair

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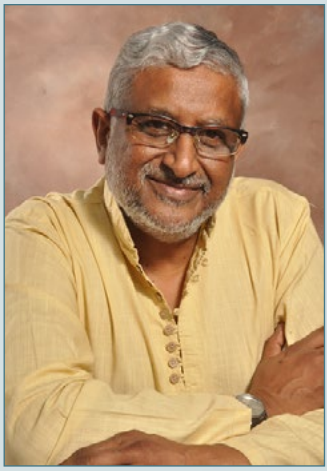
KEYNOTE

Biography of Professor Michael Anthony Samuel



Professor **Michael Anthony Samuel** *(School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal-UKZN)* is currently involved in designing and supporting postgraduate studies, and in mentoring the capacity development of supervisors in a range of contexts nationally and across the continent. He has previously served as Dean of the Faculty of Education at UKZN, and on the Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education, developing national policy on teacher education. His research interests include higher education studies, curriculum development and professional development. His books, (1) *Changing patterns of teacher education in South Africa* and (2) *Continuity, complexity and change: Teacher education in Mauritius* explore the challenges of (inter) national reform initiatives in teacher education policy development. His methodological insights are captured in his book (3) *Life history research: Epistemology, methodology and representation*. (4) *Disrupting higher education curriculum: Undoing cognitive damage* explores options for imaginative curriculum redirection. In 2023, he launched a co-edited anthology on (5) *Transforming postgraduate education in Africa*. He has also reviewed the book (6) *Education research in African contexts* (2024) critiquing the saviour research mentality of methodological choices for education research design. His recent publications foreground future directions for postgraduate education in complex times: *Remembering forward: Memory work principles in transformative postgraduate supervision* (2025) and *Paradoxes of pilgrim's hope: A kaleidoscopic decolonisation* (2026). He is the 2022 recipient of the South African Education Research Association (SAERA) Research Recognition Award for his distinctive contribution to educational research. Amongst other journals, he serves on the editorial board of the journal of the *Scholarship of teaching and learning in the South* and the *Journal of Education of Teachers*. He is the recipient of the Turquoise Harmony Institute's National Ubuntu Award for Contribution to Education. He is also in the top 100 most cited education scientists in Africa in 2024**:** https://www.adscientificindex.com/top-100-scientist/?tit=Educat

Title: **Counting graduates or cultivating scholars? Reclaiming postgraduate studies as a public good**

Presenter: **Michael Anthony SAMUEL** School of Education, Higher Education Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa

Abstract

Postgraduate education is too often captured by narrow instrumental logics. Students pursue doctoral and master's degrees for job promotion, professional credentialing, or the social cachet of a new title. Institutions, in turn, are incentivised by government subsidy structures and ranking systems to maximise the quantitative throughput of graduates rather than attend to the quality of scholarly formation. These converging pressures — economic, individualistic, and performative — quietly colonise the postgraduate enterprise, rendering it complicit with production agendas that sideline its deeper intellectual purpose.

This keynote address directly challenges these assumptions. It asks — and insists we answer honestly — what the PhD and master's degree are actually for, whose interests they serve, and what kinds of knowledge and human capacity they are genuinely meant to generate. The argument is that postgraduate education must be reclaimed as a site of rigorous academic scholarship oriented towards the public good rather than private advancement, and towards systemic critique rather than institutional self-congratulation.

The address draws on two experiential anchors. The first is the collaborative doctoral partnership between the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), which the presenter was instrumental in establishing. This partnership was deliberately conceived not as a vehicle for quantitative credential production, but as a multilayered scholarly intervention — engaging teacher education, institutional governance, basic schooling, and higher education research across Mauritius's layered education system. The doctoral cohort model developed through this partnership offers a qualitative alternative to the competitive, throughput-driven paradigm: one premised on collective scholarly development, contextual relevance, and systemic contribution.

The second anchor is a critical reading of the 2017–2022 South African National Review of Doctoral Qualifications — a comprehensive peer-driven quality assurance process through which institutional self-

evaluations were interrogated against nationally constructed standards. This review surfaced urgent questions about the relationship between increasing doctoral outputs and declining scholarly rigour, and generated recommendations for future provisioning and resourcing. These lessons are offered here as a provocation: as Mauritius contemplates its own national review of doctoral education, what frameworks of quality, what standards of scholarly purpose, and what modes of collaboration should guide that exercise?

Underpinning both interventions is an argument about Southern scholarship. As a small island developing state (SIDS), Mauritius occupies a particular geopolitical position in the global knowledge economy — one that renders it vulnerable to the isomorphic borrowing of external models and theories of "doctoralness." The keynote insists on an agentic rather than mimetic engagement with knowledge from beyond its borders: one that theorises from within the Mauritian and broader African context rather than simply importing frameworks from the global North.

The address concludes by inviting recent graduates and their supervisors to interrogate their own postgraduate journeys: not merely what they studied, but how their research has contributed — or might yet contribute — to the quality of public life. The future of doctoral education in Mauritius depends on the courage to ask these questions.

Keywords: *quality academic scholarship, public versus the private good of postgraduate studies, small island developing states and Southern scholarship, theoretical and policy borrowing in research, student voices*

Title: **Between proximity and interpretation: Narrative inquiry as ethical practice in a Mauritian teacher education institution**

Presenter: **Suryakanti FULENA,** Mauritius

Abstract

Insider research is known for providing unique contextual insights. Yet, it also exposes the interpretive, relational and ethical challenges that proximity introduces, especially in qualitative research. This paper proposes a methodological innovation situated at the intersection of narrative inquiry, reflexive writing and insider positionality within a Mauritian Teacher Education Institution (TEI). It draws from a study on teacher educators' (TEs) assessment literacy (AL), where conventional coding risked fragmenting the rich accounts of participants, generated through semi-structured interviews, into reductive themes. Such fragmentation clashed with the relational, situated and complex nature of TEs' AL. Thus, this paper explores how narrative inquiry can be deployed as an ethically and epistemologically grounded approach, capable of honouring the inherent complexity of insider research, rather than used for mere representation.

As an insider working with the same institutional discourses, policies and constraints as my participants, I recognised that analytic decisions could not be disentangled from questions of power and interpretive bias. This necessitated a shift toward an approach that privileged temporality, voice and meaning-making. This paper presents a multi-layered methodological innovation consisting of (1) iterative and immersive memoing, (2) the crafting of stylised narrative accounts shaped by the contemplative tone of Saint Exupery's 'The Little Prince' to give voice to my participants, and (3) adoption of 'The Visitor' as narrative device in a reflexive attempt to foreground ethical distance and researcher attentiveness. This approach offers three methodological contributions. First, it demonstrates how narrative inquiry can be operationalised as an ethical approach for insider research, revealing the tensions and contradictions embedded in the AL of TEs. Second, it addresses the methodological challenge of proximity by constructing narrative distance while protecting participants' anonymity and retaining the conceptual depth and richness. Third, it may provide a model for qualitative researchers seeking to integrate narrative methods within complex institutional ecosystems, particularly where hierarchical accountability structures shape professional discourse.

Keywords: *insider research, narrative inquiry, reflexivity, assessment literacy, complexity*

Title: Decolonising EdTech: Safeguarding epistemic diversity in the global South

Presenter: Gangadharsing Gulshan SOOKLALL, Mauritius

Abstract

Technology integration (TI) in education is currently framed as a global imperative, yet the digital advancements and pedagogical models driving this movement are predominantly centred in the Global North. The Global South has historically been at the receiving end of these technopedagogical innovations. The TI movement is also heavily consolidated by the influence of Big-Tech and narratives of innovation and efficiency to make digital transformation appear both necessary and inevitable. Within this landscape, the adoption of technology often becomes a performative act-driven by top-down institutional policies and profitability concerns rather than bottom-up, practitioner-led and discipline-considerate needs.

The onset of the pandemic transformed this imperative into an emergency, often further obstructing opportunities to understand how these technologies align with context and discipline specific pedagogical affordances. This persistent disregard increases the risk of what de Sousa Santos termed 'epistemicide' which is the systematic erosion of diverse knowledge systems in favour of dominant, standardised paradigms.

The concern regarding the potential loss of epistemic diversity prompted a critical investigation into the unique Global South and diaspora-related setting of Mauritius as part of an MPhil in Education. This research presents findings from the thesis exploring the experiences of nine higher education academics in the fields of Indian Languages, Indological Studies, and Indian Performing Arts. Utilising an interpretivist paradigm, a collective case study design and TPACK and Disciplinary Culture Theory as lenses, this study examined how the academics navigated TI during a formal blended learning project.

Findings strongly indicated that top-down integration of technologies, which are often not fully adapted to the nuances of these disciplines, creates a profound tension with deep-rooted epistemological traditions. Specifically, this research highlights the friction between asynchronous digital platforms and the millennial tradition of Guru-Shishya Parampara centred on pedagogical intimacy and embodied knowledge. Furthermore, a series of technical limitations of existing

platforms, at times as basic as the inability to support non-Roman scripts or diacritical marks, demonstrate how generic tools can inadvertently marginalise disciplinary specificities and the values attached to them.

Based on these findings, this paper advocates for a decolonial approach to TI which is transformative yet respectful of disciplinary cultures and epistemic diversity. It calls for institutional policies to shift from performative, top-down mandates toward contextually grounded frameworks that value practitioner voice and recognise academics as 'disciplinary sensitive technological innovators' rather than passive recipients of technology. It argues that by prioritising contextually grounded frameworks, educational authorities can ensure that digital transformation sustains, rather than "irons out" the cultural and pedagogical identities of Global-South disciplines.

***Keywords**: technology integration, decolonising EdTech, Global-South, disciplinary culture, blended learning.*

Title: The importance of integrating values in Zimbabwean secondary school history: Towards a framework

Presenter: Hlengiwe NCUBE, Zimbabwe

Abstract

This paper reports findings from a doctoral study that focused on the teaching of values through the secondary school curriculum which is mandatory in Zimbabwe. Value-based history taught in secondary schools aims to foster civic responsibility, cultural awareness and moral development amongst learners.

This study addresses a gap on how the teaching of values is implemented in secondary school history in Lupane District which is an unexplored area. This qualitative interpretive case study used Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) which was developed by Vygotsky to promote an understanding of human activities within their sociocultural context as lens. CHAT was triangulated with Ubuntu; a moral theory to ensure a comprehensive exploration of the problem from an interpretivist paradigm. The use of CHAT and Ubuntu enabled the exploration of values teaching in history lessons as an activity system that involves a collective interaction amongst various elements. Participants were purposively selected from three secondary schools. Data was collected from six history teachers through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions conducted with eight history learners per school. Lesson observations were also conducted as well as review of National Curriculum Framework, history syllabus and teachers' schemes of work to ensure data triangulation and comprehensive understanding. Data was analysed using the thematic method. History teachers were able to identify values to be taught in policy documents and they used learner-centred pedagogy to teach values. Teachers also assess the acquisition of values through observation and projects.

The application of CHAT helped to identify several contradictions within the activity system which prevent effective teaching of values in history lessons. These include lack of clear articulation of guidelines for the implementation of values in policy documents as well as lack of planning for teaching of specific values in history lessons. Participants also mentioned the absence of a values component in history textbooks. There is also lack of proper teacher training with regards to the implementation of value-based history education, which

poses a challenge. Furthermore, there is limited use of procedural and substantive history concepts to facilitate the teaching of values in history lessons. Therefore, this paper recommends that policy makers amend the Curriculum Framework and History syllabus to ensure that they provide clear guidelines on values and values inculcation. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should also train history teachers and ensure provision of resources for the implementation of values inculcation. Furthermore, history teachers should use substantive concepts as authentic reference point and procedural history concepts as tools to examine values and their applicability in human experiences.

This study develops a History Education Values Integration Framework to promote an organised implementation of value-based secondary school history education. Considering the principles of CHAT and Ubuntu, the framework specifies the significance and roles of different elements involved in the activity of teaching values. Overall, this study makes a clarion call for a systematic approach to values education in secondary school history to promote an understanding and application of values by learners in Zimbabwe and beyond.

Keywords: *values, values education, secondary school history curriculum, Zimbabwe*

Title: Reimagining resilience: Leveraging Unhu/Ubuntu and community action to address intergenerational school dropouts in Zimbabwe

Presenter: Dadirayi MUDZENGERERE, Zimbabwe

Abstract

School dropouts remain a persistent challenge in Zimbabwe and other developing countries in the Global South. According to Yildirimer (2023), dropout is a global educational problem that affects individuals, families, and communities, and has far-reaching consequences for society. School dropout factors are diverse and context-dependent, influenced by a range of individual and external elements. This study investigated the causes and effects of school dropouts at primary level. The research explored how indigenous values and collective community responsibilities can be harnessed to improve learner retention and reduce school dropouts. Grounded in Freire's Critical Pedagogy Theory, the study situates the dropout phenomena as a manifestation of broader societal challenges. Situated in Tsakare Resettlement area in Mount Darwin District, the study adopted an action research framework that positions communities not merely as subjects of inquiry but as co-creators of sustainable educational solutions. Purposive and snowball sampling were used to select 2 school heads, 18 teachers, 5 village heads, 1 councilor, 5 village health workers and 100 villagers. Qualitative data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions and participant observations. Data was subjected to thematic analysis to illuminate socio-cultural drivers and community-based copying strategies. The findings revealed that school dropouts in Tsakare Resettlement area were driven by a complex interplay of factors including poverty, early marriage, poor academic performance, lack of parental support, and weakened community-school linkages. Therefore, the study highlighted how Unhu/Ubuntu can serve as a powerful lens for reimagining resilience, not as an individual but as a collective capacity to nurture, protect and sustain educational journeys. The study concluded that sustainable solutions to school dropout must be locally grounded and culturally responsive. Leveraging Unhu/Ubuntu fosters inclusive, collective responsibility that not only improves learner retention but also strengthens community resilience. The findings have implications for policymakers, educators and community stakeholders seeking to address intergenerational school dropouts and promote educational resilience in Zimbabwe and similar contexts. Furthermore, partnerships

between schools, families and local governance structures should be deepened to ensure education becomes a shared community mandate.

Keywords: *community, educators, parents, school dropouts, sustainable development*

Title: Exploring the innovation-practice gap in high school history: A call for targeted policy support

Presenter: Nkanyiso William MPANZA, South Africa

Abstract

Ongoing technological change continues to influence discussions about educational transformation, particularly the development of critical thinking and higher-order cognitive skills among learners. However, subjects such as high school History often remain rooted in traditional instructional methods that prioritise the extraction of level 1 information from sources rather than deeper analytical engagement. This study explores the innovation–practice gap in History education by studying the disjunction between teachers' stated vision for pedagogical innovation and their day-to-day classroom realities. Grounded in Curriculum Studies and framed by the Historical Thinking conceptual framework, the research seeks to contribute to policy-oriented discussions that move from knowledge articulation to informed action. Although located within one national context, the issues raised may be relevant to other education systems facing similar challenges in translating reform goals into classroom practice.

The study employed a qualitative, interpretivist, exploratory case study design, focusing on the strategies used by four Grade 12 South African History teachers in teaching source-based content. Data were generated through lesson observations and one-on-one semi-structured interviews. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts and observation notes were coded, compared, and grouped into themes to identify patterns across participants. Two major themes, with related sub-themes, emerged from the interview data, while three themes emerged from the lesson observations.

The findings indicate that participating teachers shared a common understanding of innovation. They described it as the purposeful use of technology-enhanced resources, including internet-based and multimedia tools, to make History more interactive and to foster deeper understanding. Reported strategies, such as the use of digital materials for primary source analysis, reflected this perspective. However, classroom observations showed that the integration of technology was not consistently evident across all four lessons. For several participants, its use appeared occasional rather than routine.

The study also found that some teachers continued to rely on traditional strategies, such as textbooks and chalkboards, which they associated with curriculum pacing requirements (ATP) and limited teaching resources. The findings suggest that while teachers value innovative and learner-centred approaches, their implementation is shaped by contextual and structural factors. The study, therefore, highlights how reform-oriented ideas may be mediated in everyday classroom practice. The study recommends that teachers prioritise innovative, learner-centred strategies and empower learners to take ownership of their learning, thereby developing critical thinking skills. It also recommends that the Department of Education provide targeted support to help History teachers develop the skills and confidence needed to use innovative teaching strategies, especially for History source-based content.

In relation to the conference theme, this postgraduate research offers classroom-based insight into how transformation efforts are experienced in practice. It suggests that policy change should be accompanied by practical support, including professional development and improved resource provision. Although based in South Africa, the identified tension between innovation goals and classroom realities may resonate beyond national borders, particularly in systems seeking to strengthen critical thinking and learner-centred teaching. By providing empirical evidence, the study contributes to context-sensitive discussions about transforming education beyond borders.

Keywords: *history, source-based content, teaching, innovation, learning*

Title: From screen reel to really seen: Using re-visioned fairy tales in films as pedagogical tools for gender-critical literacy in English classrooms

Presenter: Sohani Natasha CHUNDHUR, South Africa

Abstract

This paper is drawn from my doctoral study in English Education at a university in South Africa. It examines how re-visioned fairy tales in films can be mobilised as resources for gender-critical literacy in secondary English classrooms (Grades 10-12) within the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) framework used in South African schools. The study considers how globally circulated films can be recontextualised from a Southern curriculum perspective. The purpose of the study is to examine the traditional portrayals of female characters in classic fairy tales, how these roles are transformed in selected contemporary film adaptations, and if and how these adaptations challenge societal norms and expectations of gender. The study also investigates why these re-visioned portrayals of female characters are pedagogically relevant for critical reflection on gender in education contexts.

Methodologically, the study aims to develop a four-stage model that offers an accessible pathway from feminist interpretation to pedagogical design. It draws on feminist theory and Michel Foucault's concept of biopower to analyse how gender is represented and regulated within cultural texts. The films selected for qualitative analysis were *Maleficent* (2014) and *Damsel* (2024). A scene-based, multimodal feminist thematic analysis of these films was conducted by purposively selecting key scenes and examining how gendered meaning is constructed through both narrative and film form, including framing, costuming, performance, and dialogue. Selected scenes were iteratively coded, recurring patterns were consolidated into themes, and these themes were interpreted through feminist theory and biopower. The resulting themes were then translated into CAPS-aligned critical literacy prompts and tasks.

Preliminary findings indicate that both films disrupt the binaries of the 'evil witch' and 'damsel-in-distress' characters by constructing protagonists whose agency is negotiated rather than guaranteed through romance or rescue. However, the analysis also identifies moments in which gender regulation re-enters through glamourised suffering, heroic individualism, and narrow femininity ideals, thereby

highlighting the need for guided pedagogical mediation. By engaging transnational media texts from a Southern curriculum perspective, the study offers a 'beyond borders' insight into how cross-cultural screen narratives can be re-contextualised to speak to local struggles over gender, power, and patriarchy, while also contributing to comparative debates in education.

Keywords: *feminist pedagogy, critical literacy, re-visioning, gender representation, fairy tales*

Title: Perceptions of secondary school educators on the integration of generative artificial intelligence in professional development: A secondary school-based case study

Presenter: Tejsree BEHAREE, Mauritius

Abstract

Using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods case study, this research explores educators' perceptions of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) in professional development. The study focuses on how teachers understand and engage with GAI in this context. Located in a small island in the Global South, this study engages with comparative and transnational literature on AI adoption in teacher professional learning. Conducted at a private secondary school in the east of Mauritius, the study responds to global interest in AI-enhanced learning and the local need for flexible, self-directed professional development.

While AI-in-education research has largely focused on student learning in well-resourced contexts, this study foregrounds teacher professional development in a relatively underexplored small-island setting, where infrastructural and contextual factors shape adoption. It is guided by a context-sensitive framework integrating constructs from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT). These constructs are user-friendliness, perceived utility, cultural and contextual relevance, and work environment, which were operationalised deductively and further refined through qualitative analysis.

Anchored in a pragmatic paradigm, the study adopts a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were collected through a census of 80 educators. This was followed by a semi-structured focus group with 10 purposively selected educators, representing all departments, ensuring disciplinary diversity in perspectives. This design enabled the integration of quantitative and qualitative strands, moving beyond identifying patterns to explaining them within context. While the quantitative phase established trends across key constructs, the qualitative phase provided deeper insight into how these are experienced and shaped by institutional conditions. It also allowed the deductively derived constructs to be refined through participants' perspectives, revealing contextual dimensions that may not be captured through a single-method approach.

The findings indicate a generally positive outlook on GAI-enhanced professional development as self-directed learning. The work environment emerged as the strongest determinant of adoption, particularly access to infrastructure, leadership support, and an innovation-supportive culture. This finding confirms existing technology adoption literature and extends it by emphasising the strong influence of institutional and infrastructural constraints in a small-island Global South context. Intrinsic motivation also emerged as a key factor, with educators driven by curiosity and professional ambition. This extends existing technology adoption models and aligns with self-determination theory, emphasising agency in professional learning.

Overall, the study highlights contextual and motivational dynamics in a small-island Global South setting, offering implications for context-responsive professional development models and policy approaches across similar education systems.

Keywords: *professional development, Generative Artificial Intelligence, mixed- methods, educator perceptions*

Title: Exploring creative methods through a reflective research exhibition

Presenter: Malini CALLIMOOTOO-JEEWON, Mauritius

Abstract

This research exhibition highlights the creative methods used to explore how teachers integrate visual arts into teaching within Special Educational Needs (SEN) contexts at primary level for learners with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities (Eisner, 2002; Leavy, 2015, 2017). Grounded in Vygotsky's Social Development Theory, the study investigates how teachers mediate and scaffold learning through visual arts integration, with a focus on engagement, reflection, and socially mediated interaction within learners' Zones of Proximal Development. While visual arts integration is increasingly recognised as an inclusive pedagogical approach, there has been limited empirical research that has examined how teachers, particularly those without formal training in visual arts, conceptualise and enact such practices in SEN classrooms. Based on Eisner's (2002) conception of the arts as a form of knowing and Leavy's (2015, 2017) articulation of arts-based research as transformative inquiry, this exhibition positions creative methodology as both an epistemological and methodological intervention.

The exhibition, therefore, highlights not only pedagogical practice but also the methodological processes through which the research has been crafted and interpreted to "produce knowledge in new shapes" (Leavy, 2020, p. 303). Displayed artefacts include teachers' participant-generated conceptual maps, teaching artefacts, and selected excerpts from I-poems constructed by the researcher through a voice-centred approach informed by Gilligan's conceptualisation of qualitative inquiry (Gilligan, 2015; Gilligan and Eddy, 2017). These multimodal representations foreground participants' voices while revealing the mediational and relational dimensions of visual arts integration. As such, the exhibition highlights how scaffolding and mediation are enacted within creative pedagogical spaces in the SEN context.

All visitors, including a targeted audience of educators, researchers, and practitioners, are invited to engage with guided prompts, rearrange I-poem excerpts, or respond reflectively on the canvas. This participatory dimension does not generate new thesis data; rather, it provides a structured space for dialogue and reflexive

consideration of methodological choices and interpretive processes. Through poetic inquiry and multimodal artefacts, it foregrounds the embodied, affective, and socially mediated dimensions of teaching that are often marginalised in conventional qualitative designs. By making the research process dialogic, visible, and participatory, this exhibition positions methodology itself as a site of exploration. It invites critical engagement with how knowledge about teaching practice is constructed, whose voices are amplified, and how socially mediated learning is conceptualised within SEN contexts.

Through reflective and participatory framing, this exhibition demonstrates how arts-based approaches can unsettle conventional qualitative practices, expand interpretive possibilities, and reconfigure the relationships among researcher, participant, and audience to make the research 'accessible, evocative, and engaged' (Chilton and Leavy, 2020, p 601).

***Keywords**:* creative methods, arts-based approaches, Visual Arts integration, I-Poem, and special educational needs

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Title: **Bridging horizons: Enhancing engineering education and curriculum transformation for the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) in the United States and South Africa**

Presenter: **Leroshka (Leroo) MURUGAN,** South Africa

Abstract

In the face of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the imperative for curriculum transformation, research insights illuminate critical pathways for academic institutions in the United States (US) and South Africa (SA). The integration of emerging technologies within educational frameworks presents both opportunities and challenges, necessitating a significant understanding of the social and economic contexts underlying curriculum changes (Maimela & Mbonde, 2025; Al-Maskari et al., 2022; Lubinga et al., 2023).

In SA, the decolonisation of higher education curricula is paramount, particularly in engineering, educational and technical fields, where indigenous knowledge systems could be integrated to foster social justice and equity (Chawaremera, 2024; Moremoholo, 2023; Mashilo & Govender, 2023). This aligns with broader educational trends that advocate for the convergence of disciplines, promoting interdisciplinary approaches that are essential for preparing students for the dynamic complexities of the 4IR (Lubinga et al., 2023; Kasule et al. 2023). For example, Maimela and Mbonde (2025) emphasise that the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in shaping educational trajectories, either perpetuating inequalities or driving transformative change, depends significantly on institutional strategies and policy frameworks aligned with broader educational goals.

Moreover, flexibility in curriculum design that embraces both local contexts and global competencies is vital in ensuring that graduates are not only technologically adept but also culturally literate (Mapuya, 2023; Dube, 2021). As highlighted by Huston-Pretorius et al., (2024), the narratives of change within South African tertiary institutions should account for historical injustices while focusing on current socio-economic imperatives. Curricular initiatives that influence 4IR readiness are imperative, as they directly affect students' engagement with technology and their preparedness for the workforce (Makeresemese & Mahlomaholo, 2023; Bühler et al., 2022; Yusuf et al., 2020).

In the US, the challenges posed by the 4IR further necessitate a re-evaluation of educational practices to ensure inclusivity and access, as highlighted by Ajani (2023), who advocates for equitable teaching practices that reflect diverse epistemologies. With an increasing focus on creativity, problem-solving, and collaborative skills within engineering and education sectors, reforms in curricular structure are essential for fostering environments conducive to innovative thinking and adaptability (Bühler et al., 2022; Sibanda, 2021).

Through the synthesis of global insights, it becomes evident that both the US and South African educational landscapes must take deliberate steps toward redefining curricula that reflect local contexts, facilitate technological integration, and promote inclusive educational practices. The intersection of policy frameworks and educational reform is critical for producing not only effective professionals but also engaged citizens who can navigate the multifaceted challenges of the 4IR (Ramonyai et al., 2022; Kamaruzaman et al., 2024).

Keywords: curriculum transformation, Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), engineering, education, technology

Title: Bridging the neuro-cognitive gap: Empowering Mauritian educators through metacognitive and neuroscience-informed training

Presenters: Tandabarni Aroonassala PATTEN and Farouk HAMUTH, Mauritius

Abstract

While research has contributed valuable understanding into learning processes, translating these insights into everyday classroom practice in Mauritius remains an ongoing challenge. Allybokus (2015), in her EdD study of learner-centred teaching in Mauritian state secondary schools, found that despite policy documents emphasising learner-centred pedagogy, classroom practices remained predominantly teacher-centred, with educators often reverting to transmissive methods due to examination pressures, large class sizes, and entrenched instructional habits. Presently research in educational neuroscience and cognitive psychology has generated substantial insights into how learning occurs, particularly through mechanisms such as working memory, long-term memory consolidation, cognitive load, and metacognition (Dehaene, 2020). However, many educators have limited opportunities to translate these findings into pedagogically meaningful classroom practices. This review argues that meaningful improvement in educational outcomes in Mauritius requires professional development approaches that strengthen teachers' understanding of learners' neuro-cognitive processes, with particular emphasis on metacognitive regulation.

When teachers have limited grounding in how students think and learn, instruction often remains teacher-centred, with an emphasis on explanation and content delivery. This restricts students' opportunities to reflect on their thinking, regulate their learning, and develop autonomy. Evidence from Mauritian secondary schools support this pattern, with Illahibaccus-Sona (2024) reporting that, despite curriculum reforms promoting deeper learning, classroom practice remains largely rigid and knowledge-centred, making the shift towards more reflective and student-centred approaches an ongoing challenge. Teacher education models aim to help teachers develop students' metacognitive skills, while considering local and systemic challenges. One well-researched approach is the IMPROVE framework (Mevarech and Kramarski, 1997), which uses metacognitive questioning, practice, peer discussion, and feedback. Studies with seventh-grade students in countries like Israel and parts of Western Europe show that students taught with IMPROVE

enhance in math problem solving, self-regulation, and motivation (Mevarech and Kramarski, 1997; Kramarski and Mevarech, 2003; Hattie, 2009). However, this evidence comes from monolingual, well-resourced contexts. There is no research yet on how IMPROVE works in Mauritius, where schools are trilingual (English, French, and Mauritian Creole). Resources are limited, and learning norms are different. So, while global research suggests IMPROVE can help, we cannot assume it will have the same results locally without testing and adapting it to the Mauritian context.

Rather than advocating a radical transformation of existing practices, this review proposes a deliberate pedagogical reorientation within teacher education which embeds metacognitive principles into current curricular and assessment structures. For educators, such an approach may enhance instructional effectiveness and intentional lesson design (Mevarech and Kramarski, 1997). For learners, it supports the development of self-regulation, problem-solving skills, and academic resilience. In the Mauritian educational context, this review contributes by critically examining how internationally informed neuro-cognitive frameworks can be thoughtfully adapted to local realities, thereby supporting sustainable, evidence-informed educational practice.

Keywords: *teacher training; metacognition; IMPROVE framework; educational neuroscience; evidence-based practice.*

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Title: Beyond the Eco Club: Learner voices advancing sustainability in school curriculum policy

Presenter: Bibi Nazneen RUSTOM-HUSNOO, Mauritius

Abstract

This presentation explores how sustainability initiatives can become a core educational practice rather than a hobby for learners at a boys-only regional state secondary school in Mauritius. Employing a small-scale qualitative case study design, it examines the extent to which sustainability initiatives are integrated into everyday school practices at school X and identifies factors that enable or constrain this process. The rationale behind this study stems from the fact that despite increasing policy emphasis on sustainability education, there remains limited empirical research examining how sustainability initiatives are translated into everyday practices within Mauritian secondary schools.

The study is situated within the growing global emphasis on Education for Sustainable Development and the Mauritian educational policy context. The National Curriculum Framework (2016), which endorses the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), emphasises learners' acquisition of knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development and adopt lifelong sustainable practices. This policy priority is particularly significant for Mauritius as a small island developing state increasingly vulnerable to climate change impacts, including flash floods, prolonged droughts, and mounting pressure on energy and water resources. The United Nations Environment Programme Report (2023) projected that Mauritius would become water-stressed by 2025, a prediction that has since materialised last year. Therefore, embedding sustainability initiatives as a core school practice represents an important step towards raising environmental awareness, conserving resources, and empowering future generations to respond to national challenges.

A qualitative case study approach was adopted to facilitate an in-depth exploration of learners' perceptions, experiences, and engagement with sustainability initiatives through the school's Eco Club. Data were generated through student questionnaires and focus groups and analysed using Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis (2022).

Findings reveal that learners demonstrate a limited understanding of sustainability and the Sustainable Development Goals, with engagement in sustainability initiatives remaining largely event-based and optional rather than embedded within routine school practices. However, the study also identifies enabling conditions, particularly learners' strong preference for active, hands-on learning experiences that enhance student agency and motivation. Key barriers include limited resources, inconsistent curriculum implementation, and irregular maintenance of initiatives.

Drawing on these findings, strategies are proposed to embed sustainability more firmly within the school culture. These consist of collective responsibility of all stakeholders, strong leadership and teacher role modelling and cross-curricular integration. The study concludes with policy recommendations focusing on professional development programmes, consistent implementation of sustainability education in the school curriculum at national policy levels and school-community collaboration to embed sustainability initiatives as a core practice in secondary schools in Mauritius at school policy level. Overall, the findings contribute to broader regional and international debates on the institutionalisation of sustainability education within school systems in small island developing states.

***Keywords**: sustainability, case-study, secondary school, active learning, curriculum integration*

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Title: Exploring the role of non-formal education delivered through non-governmental organisations in promoting social justice in Mauritius

Presenter: **Preetima MOTEEA,** Mauritius

Abstract

Educational inequality remains a persistent challenge in Mauritius. Nearly 60% of students who began their primary schooling did not complete the Cambridge A Level examinations (Capery, 2024 cited in L'Express, 2024) owing to the disenfranchising effects of successive educational reforms (Reedoy, 2024 cited in L'Express, 2024; Thomas, 2024 cited in Defimedia, 2024). Drawing on research conducted for a master's thesis, this paper examines whether and how non-formal education (NFE) programmes implemented by two Mauritian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) promote social justice. Whilst contributing to the lack of empirical research on alternative educational trajectories of young people in Global South contexts (Ahimbisibwe *et al*., 2025), this paper argues that NGO-led NFE has the potential to create transformative educational spaces that actively model alternative approaches to justice-oriented pedagogy.

NFE refers to any organised and systematic educational activities occurring outside the formal schooling system (Sharma and Choudhary, 2015 cited in Namoog and Agyekum, 2024). In Mauritius, approximately ten NGOs currently provide literacy and numeracy programmes for young people who have disengaged from formal schooling (ACTogether, 2025).

The analysis is informed by Fraser's multidimensional theory of social justice. Fraser (2010) argues that justice requires dismantling institutionalised barriers that prevent individuals from participating as full partners in social life, a condition she terms "participatory parity". Her framework distinguishes three interrelated dimensions of justice: redistribution (economic justice and equitable access to resources), recognition (cultural respect and the absence of misrecognition), and representation (political voice and participation). The framework provides a scaffold which allowed the current study to encompass the historical and cultural complexities of Mauritius.

Two NGOs providing literacy and numeracy programmes for children who had dropped out of, or never attended formal schooling were selected as case studies. Purposive sampling (Charmaz, 2006) was used

to identify participants, including two NGO directors, three teachers, and three adult students who had previously attended NFE programmes. Eight online semi-structured interviews were conducted. Data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2022) reflexive thematic analysis framework to identify patterns relating to Fraser's conceptualisation of social justice.

The findings reveal that many learners attending NGO programmes have experienced intersectional marginalisation, particularly Creole students living in conditions of socio-economic precarity. First, NGOs contribute to forms of economic justice by providing access to learning opportunities that combine play-based pedagogies and alternative forms of educational capital (Wang, 2016) linked to employability. Second, cultural justice emerges through pedagogical practices that integrate local language and cultural references into curriculum and teaching approaches. Teachers actively challenge patterns of misrecognition by cultivating egalitarian student–teacher relationships. Finally, NGOs promote forms of political justice by encouraging student voice and participation.

NGOs running educational programmes question and model an alternative conceptualisation of transformative education. Despite its localised focus, the findings of this study have salience for policymakers, educationalists, teachers and other stakeholders in the education sector to create inclusive and socially just learning environments beyond borders.

Keywords: *non-formal education, social justice, non-governmental organisations, educational inclusion, intersectional discrimination*

Title: **"It's not fair that kids don't get to have their voice heard just because they're little" – Developing a child-centred collaborative approach to research**

Presenter: **Karen FOX,** England

Abstract

This research presentation explores how a collaborative methodology was developed with 23 children, aged 9 and 10, in Year 5 at a UK primary school. The doctoral study examined children's understanding of their identity and whether they can see themselves in the books that they read.

The methodological approach is informed by a critical realist perspective and an understanding that children have individualised experiences of an external reality shaped by ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Critical realism recognises the fallibility of knowledge; therefore, involving children as co-constructors of knowledge, rather than passive subjects, is crucial. Lundy's (2007) model of participation underpinned the research design, ensuring the child's voice was central. Incorporating children's voices, perspectives, and insights at every stage has been a foundational principle of the methodology, ensuring the process is truly child-focused and informed by their lived experiences.

The presentation will critically explore how methods of data collection and data analysis were developed with the children, and how the vocabulary of research was re-positioned with the children. For example, data collection' became 'ways of discovery' and 'data analysis' became 'moments of realisation'.

The creative methods employed in the research, such as the use of found poetry and making artefacts like identity boxes, promote children's rights to participation and maximise inclusivity (BERA, 2024). This creative approach ensured the children's engagement and motivation as empowered participants in research (Craft, 2010) throughout the project. This, in turn, enabled the children to find their voice and become collaborative researchers.

The presentation will explore the different modes of discovery employed with the children and will offer insights into how children construct and express their sense of identity. This presentation will also demonstrate how children can, and do provide meaningful, and reliable answers to questions and make valuable contributions when they are given the opportunity to respond to events that are meaningful to them (Lundy, 2007; Kellett, 2004).

Keywords: *children's voice; child-led methodology; identity; inclusivity; creative data analysis.*

Title: Weaving stories: Exploring primary teachers' lived experiences in design and technology through creative narrative methods

Presenter: Janine PAVLIS, England

Abstract

This creative methodology presentation emerges from my doctoral research examining the impact of primary school teachers' lived experiences on their motivation to teach Design and Technology (D&T) in England. This work specifically traces my methodological journey toward creative, arts-based approaches. Situated within a humanistic and feminist paradigm, the study positions teachers as storytellers. While semi-structured interviews and focus groups form the structural basis of the research, they are intentionally interwoven with creative methods, including individual narrative collages, photo elicitation, collaborative collage-making, and a video essay. This methodological layering reflects a commitment to art activism, where creative expression becomes a mode of visibility and transformation.

Historically marginalised, D&T continues to be shaped by policy pressures that contribute to uneven teacher confidence across the sector. Misconceptions about the subject's value and purpose persist and are continually reinforced through policy and practice. Creative methods offer a way to disrupt this marginalisation. Drawing on the iterative and process-oriented nature of D&T, the research aligns the act of making with acts of inquiry. Data were generated through a series of interconnected, creative methods that unfolded iteratively across the research process. Through individual narrative collages, teachers pieced together their thoughts and feelings about what D&T means to them, provoking dialogue around their professional identities. Through photo elicitation, they used photographs as artefacts of meaning to explore how D&T is understood across their institution and community, and how they navigate this as subject leaders. Through collaborative making, they negotiated shared concerns and hopes for the subject. Finally, through a video essay, participants reflected across all data collection points and considered the future of D&T, offering a concluding face and voice for primary D&T. In keeping with the creative methodology, analysis was reflexive and process-oriented, using visual mapping and reflexive thematic analysis to make visible relationships across narratives and visual data.

Overall, this presentation demonstrates how arts-based research generates rich, embodied knowledge and serves as a form of activism. The data collection points foreground teachers' professional agency and experiences that are often muted in traditional research accounts. The presentation positions creative inquiry as a critical and deeply human way of understanding D&T teaching. Making, and researching through making, opens generative spaces for voice and change.

Keywords: *D&T education, lived experience, arts-based research, creative methods, activism*

Title: Beyond the classroom walls: Amplifying women students' voices in resisting and transforming the hidden curriculum

Presenter: Phakamile MAZIBUKO, South Africa

Abstract

In higher education, curriculum transformation is often conceived through formal syllabi, teaching policies, and assessment frameworks. Yet, education extends far beyond classroom walls. This paper presents methodological innovations from a doctoral study that explores women students' lived experiences of negotiating gender within university residences in and around Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. By reconceptualising residence life as a site of informal and hidden curricula, the study expands understandings of how learning, identity, and belonging are shaped in higher education spaces.

Guided by intersectionality theory and grounded in a narrative inquiry, the study employs participatory visual methods, specifically collage-making, to centre women students' voices and visual storytelling. This methodological approach transcends traditional textual data by allowing participants to express complex, embodied experiences of gender, sexuality, and power. It further illustrates how creative, feminist research tools can foster epistemic justice by validating alternative forms of knowledge production.

Findings reveal that women students face intersecting oppressions such as gender-based violence, harassment, and bullying manifested through the informal and hidden curricula of residence life. However, the study also uncovers powerful acts of agency and resistance, as students reimagine residence spaces as communities of care, advocacy, and transformation.

This paper contributes to methodological debates by demonstrating how participatory visual and narrative methods can transform postgraduate research into both inquiry and intervention. It underscores the potential of curriculum studies to cross disciplinary and institutional borders by linking feminist inquiry, visual arts, and critical pedagogy to advance gender equity and inclusive higher education.

Keywords: curriculum, students, higher education, transformation

Title: **Voicing praxis from the global South: A methodology for democratising knowledge in education research**

Presenter: **Thandi GUMBI,** South Africa

Abstract

In contexts like South Africa, the reality of pervasive structural violence creates an urgent need for peace and justice educators who embody a holistic repertoire of competencies. Yet, many of these critical professional skills and attributes are not formally taught; they are learned informally through practice, relationships, and lived experience. As a result, much of this expertise is tacit, embodied, intuitive, and operating beneath conscious awareness until it is surfaced through reflective examination (Eraut, 2000; Polanyi, 1966).

The tacit nature of practitioner knowledge poses a methodological challenge. Conventional qualitative tools, especially interviews alone, may not offer practitioners the support needed to express deeply embodied competencies. Without methods that help surface this knowledge, research risks reinforcing what Fricker (2007) terms epistemological injustice. Of particular relevance here are two forms of such injustice: testimonial injustice, in which speakers are afforded reduced credibility, and hermeneutic injustice, in which individuals lack the shared conceptual resources necessary to interpret and communicate their own experiences. This raises a central question guiding this paper: What research methods are appropriate for ethically eliciting, articulating, and collectively theorising the tacit skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values (SKAVs) of community-based peace and justice practitioners?

This paper responds by presenting and reflecting on the research design of a doctoral study with six South African peace educators. The overarching methodology was intentionally grounded in Paulo Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy due to its commitment to non-extractive, justice-oriented inquiry, its analytic tools for understanding structural violence, and its emphasis on conscientisation, bringing tacit knowledge to consciousness through reflection on lived experience. These commitments required a research process that was dialogic, participatory, and centred on practitioner agency. Therefore, the study took the form of an intensive three-day participatory workshop, a duration necessary for building trust and enabling deep reflection. A suite of creative, participatory methods—including narrative story

writing, visual mapping, symbolic representation, and embodied role plays—supported participants in exploring lived experience and positioning themselves as co-theorists of their own practice.

The main argument of this paper is methodological. It suggests that research designs grounded in dialogic and reflective practice provide a powerful approach for research seeking to surface tacit practitioner knowledge ethically. While participatory research often focuses on community action (Reason & Bradbury, 2008), this design is tailored to the epistemological task of eliciting and co-theorising tacit professional knowledge. The paper will first present the methods used, then offer a critical reflection on their potential and limitations. It then considers how such reflective, dialogic approaches may contribute to broader conversations about democratising knowledge production in postgraduate research—offering a situated example of how research processes themselves can counter epistemic injustice and contribute to equitable ways of knowing across contexts.

Keywords: *participatory research, epistemological injustice, democratising knowledge, tacit knowledge, peace education*

Title: Is the FIT-Choice framework globally applicable? Examining its relevance in understanding teacher motivation in Mauritius

Presenter: Divyashali SOWDAGUR, Mauritius

Abstract

Understanding the motivations of individuals to join the teaching profession has been a central concern in educational research (Han and Yin, 2016), leading to the development of several models and frameworks that can explain career choice (Richardson et al., 2014). One such model is the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT-Choice) framework by Watt and Richardson (2007). Although developed several years ago, it is still being used across diverse global settings (Virtanen et al., 2025), including in the Global South, to investigate the factors that motivate individuals to become teachers. However, the literature reviewed indicates that no teacher motivation frameworks have been specifically developed for Global South contexts. Many studies instead tend to rely on dominant theoretical frameworks such as the Self-Determination Theory or the Two-Factor Motivation Theory (Mohammed and Abdulai, 2022).

The FIT-Choice framework organises motivation into predefined and hierarchically structured categories, such as intrinsic, altruistic, and extrinsic factors, allowing motivations to be measured and compared across contexts. This structuring, however, risks oversimplifying the career decision-making process. While previous studies have modified the FIT-Choice scale to incorporate contextual variables, they still operate within the same assumption that motivation is composed of identifiable, measurable categories that can be extended. This presentation calls into question this assumption. Rather than proposing modifications to the scale, it argues that a mixed-methods approach can reveal how, in small island developing states such as Mauritius, context does not merely add new motivational factors or explain existing ones. It rather reshapes how motivations are experienced, prioritised, and articulated.

This presentation draws on a mixed-methods study undertaken as part of an MPhil in Education programme, in which the original FIT-Choice scale was administered to 195 early career primary school teachers. Consistent with international research, quantitative findings revealed that intrinsic and altruistic motivations were the most

prominent among participants. Extrinsic considerations, such as job security and stability, also played an important role, particularly for early career teachers who had transitioned from less secure forms of employment. These numerical findings indicate that the FIT-Choice framework provides a useful theoretical foundation for identifying key motivational drivers. However, qualitative findings from semi-structured interviews with six participants revealed more complex and contextually embedded narratives. Participants described how religious and personal values, negative past employment experiences, and a restricted labour market shaped not only what motivated them, but how they understood and justified their decision to teach.

While grounded in Mauritius, the insights generated extend beyond local borders. They invite researchers working in other contexts to reconsider how motivational frameworks are interpreted and applied in settings where social, economic, and cultural forces intersect in complex ways.

Keywords: *FIT-Choice Framework, teacher motivation, educational research in Global North and South*

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Title: Learner autonomy in higher education: Insights from mature students in Mauritius

Presenter: Shanita BURRUN-JOOTUN, Mauritius

Abstract

Learner autonomy is a key educational objective of higher education institutions worldwide, reflecting its growing prominence in academic literature (Holmes, 2021). It is generally defined as the "capacity of individuals to take responsibility for their own learning" (Holmes, 2021, p.12). Its positive value is widely acknowledged among scholars who perceive learner autonomy as a pedagogical strategy, particularly, for improving adult students' academic achievement (Daflizar, 2021; Vellanki *et al*, 2024). Additionally, higher education institutions are welcoming an increasing number of adult students beyond their twenties, usually employed and seeking to upgrade their professional skills, while balancing their personal work and family commitments (Kalvane and Zeide, 2023). Although learner autonomy is widely recognised as an essential factor transforming adult learning, limited attention has been given to exploring its development among this group of adult learners, commonly referred to as mature students. Therefore, this paper draws on research insights into learner autonomy by focusing on mature students of a developing country and contributing to current discussions on transforming education beyond borders.

To that effect, this paper is based on a study that explored the development of learner autonomy among mature undergraduate students at a public higher education institution in Mauritius. This research employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, which consisted of a web-based questionnaire administered to a sample of 50 respondents and individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews with a sample of five interviewees. The data were then analysed using the Multiple Linear Regression Model and the Reflexive Thematic Analysis of Braun and Clarke (Braun and Clarke, 2012).

The data analysis indicated an interconnection between the dimensions of learner autonomy (namely the metacognitive, social and motivational) that collectively contributed to the evolution of learner autonomy (Saeed, 2021). The findings of this investigation also revealed the self-determination and resilience of mature learners in

their efforts to succeed, despite facing professional and family challenges, highlighting the dominance of the motivational dimension in the development of learner autonomy (Busher and James, 2019). These findings corroborate studies on learner autonomy in higher education within and beyond developing nations.

Nonetheless, the study identified a key difference from the current literature: learner autonomy was conceptualised primarily as a process rather than a product. In other words, autonomy is perceived as a product of learning when higher education institutions assess students' autonomous behaviour. However, it is viewed as a process when its development is facilitated by both educators and students (Holmes, 2021). Consequently, based on these research findings, this paper seeks to highlight learner autonomy as a transformative tool in higher education, offering insights into mature students (an under-researched population), and showing that its development varies according to how institutions and learners conceptualise autonomy. Such research insights may inform educational practices that promote lifelong learning and ongoing professional for mature learners in local higher education institutions.

Keywords: *learner autonomy, mature students, metacognitive dimension, social dimension, motivational dimension*

Title: Narratives of inclusion in higher education – The case of female academics in Mauritius

Presenter: Kishan THUMADOO, Mauritius

Abstract

This study explores the narratives of female academics in Mauritian higher education institutions (HEIs), focusing on their experiences of equity and inclusivity through an intersectional lens, that explicitly considers the Small Island Developing State (SIDS) context. Despite national and international policy frameworks advocating for inclusion in educational settings, persistent cultural, structural and institutional barriers continue to shape the career trajectories of female scholars.

Drawing on Crenshaw's (1991) intersectionality theory and grounded in a relativist ontology and constructivist epistemology, this study adopts a qualitative narrative inquiry design. The Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) was used to gather rich and contextual stories from two academic women, who were purposively selected for this research. The BNIM enabled the co-construction of detailed personal accounts, which were analysed using Polkinghorne's (1995) dual topology of narrative analysis, instead of fragmenting the data into codes or categories. Initially, the narrative mode (narrative analysis) was applied to compose two distinct stories and later the paradigmatic mode (analysis of narrative) was employed to conduct a cross-reading of the two narratives.

The findings revealed that the professional trajectories of female scholars are shaped by entrenched patriarchy, gendered institutional hierarchies, informal gatekeeping practices, tokenistic inclusion, silencing of dissenting voices, performative visibility and biased professional legitimacy in HEIs. These barriers are further compounded through intersecting identities such as career-stage, institutional weight and disciplinary domain among others, illustrating how gender intersects with other axes of inequality in SIDS HE contexts. The narratives highlight how women experience, negotiate and contest overt and covert exclusionary practices throughout their daily professional activities.

This research contributes to a contextually grounded understanding of equity and inclusion in SIDS HE, emphasising the importance of intersectional approaches for interpreting women's lived experiences.

While the findings may not be generalisable and transferable, the narratives offer critical insights for policymakers and academics seeking to reimagine equitable and inclusive professional environment in Mauritius and similar contexts.

Keywords: *BNIM, female academics, higher education, inclusivity, intersectionality*

Title: Investigating the washback effects of end-of-year high-stakes standardised assessment at primary school level

Presenter: Dheeanishaa Bye ITTOO, Mauritius

Abstract

Washback has been defined as the effects of tests on teaching and learning, a phenomenon widely documented in international research on high-stakes assessment systems. Despite the introduction of educational reforms under the Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE), high-stakes examinations such as the Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC) continue to exert a strong influence on teaching and learning.

This study adopted a pragmatic research paradigm and employed a mixed-method sequential explanatory design within an instrumental case study framework to investigate the washback effects of the PSAC on teaching practices and student learning. Quantitative data were collected from 80 primary school teachers via questionnaires to capture diverse classroom perspectives, and eight semi-structured interviews were conducted for the qualitative part to provide deeper qualitative insights. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse quantitative data using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), while qualitative data were analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic framework to explain and elaborate the quantitative results.

Findings show that the PSAC examination significantly influences teaching methods, causing teachers to prioritise examinable content and use the teacher-centred approach, which are consistent with findings reported in international research on washback. Results also show the influence on students' learning where students act merely as passive learners, having a recall to memorisation and rote learning. On the other hand, positive washback effects were also observed, such as improved curriculum alignment and structured lesson planning. The study concludes with implications for teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers, advocating for ongoing international policy discussions on more balanced assessment strategies that promote creativity, critical thinking, and holistic learning.

Keywords: *washback, teaching, learning, standardised assessment, mixed-method research*

Title: A study on dialogic talk: Preliminary findings

Presenter: Komal Reshma GUNGAPERSAND, Mauritius

Abstract

This paper presents preliminary findings from my EdD study investigating dialogic talk as a transformative approach for the development of speaking skills in English in Mauritius. This study focuses on the persistent disparity between formal language-in-education policies and the pragmatic realities of the multilingual classroom. Grounded in Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and Bakhtinian dialogism, my study positions dialogic talk not only as a means to enhance communication, but as a tool for meaning making. By anchoring this research in an interpretivist epistemological tradition, I explored the shift from monologic to dialogic interactions in English lessons and the extent to which dialogic structures enhanced speaking skills.

Through a qualitative interventionist case-study, the research investigated how 7 English teachers in a private secondary school navigated classroom dynamics dialogically after their initiation into dialogic talk through a series of 3 half-day professional development workshops. These workshops developed awareness about how to use a dialogic talk approach to develop classroom dialogicity in English in Grades 7-9. Data was collected through semi-structured classroom observations two weeks after the workshops. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted before conducting the workshops to find out teacher's prior knowledge on dialogic talk and how they implemented their speaking lessons. Post-intervention interviews were conducted after observing a first lesson conducted by each of the participants in one of the lower grades in which they used a dialogic talk approach. The observations served as basis for the individual semi-structured interview questions which used stimulated recall to capture teachers' pedagogical shifts in developing a sense of agency to use a dialogic talk approach and ultimately transform their teaching of speaking skills. Data from the interviews was analysed thematically, providing a framework which enabled a more nuanced discourse analysis of classroom observations.

The findings accentuate the affordances as well as the challenges in the implementation of a dialogic talk approach. Supportive talk, provision of feedback, scaffolded dialogues and collaborative talk enhanced speaking skills while time constraint, class population and cumulative

talk were among the major hindrances to the development of speaking skills through a dialogic talk approach. The findings showed that most of the participants were innovative in planning their lessons and employed a dialogic talk approach with a creative flair which engaged learners dialogically. Insights gained through this research offer a scalable framework for teacher's learning in multilingual contexts which are similar to Mauritius where the gap between policy and classroom practice needs to be closed in order to develop speaking skills dialogically.

Keywords: *dialogic talk, dialogicity, supportive talk, collaborative talk, cumulative talk*

Title: Investigating tutor–student relationships in online teacher education: Methodological insights from a small-scale qualitative study

Presenter: Faraknaaz Bibi ESSMALLGEE, Mauritius

Abstract

This paper presents a small-scale qualitative research enquiry that examines the methodological considerations involved in investigating tutor–student relationships within the context of online teacher education. As higher education institutions increasingly adopt online and blended modes of delivery, understanding how relational and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning can be effectively researched in virtual environments has become an important methodological concern. This study is situated within postgraduate online teacher education and focuses on the challenges and opportunities associated with capturing relational experiences through qualitative research.

Adopting an interpretivist research paradigm, the study employs a qualitative research design to explore participants' perceptions of tutor–student relationships in an online learning context. Data were collected from postgraduate participants using qualitative methods selected for their suitability in eliciting in-depth reflections on interaction, communication, and tutor presence. Particular attention was paid to the design of data collection instruments to ensure clarity, ethical sensitivity, and alignment with the research aims. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the establishment of trust in an online research environment, were carefully addressed throughout the research process.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, enabling the identification of recurring patterns and themes related to relational presence, communication practices, and perceived support within online teacher education. The paper reflects on key methodological challenges encountered during the research process, including issues of participant engagement, researcher positionality, and the limitations of researching relational dynamics through online interactions. It also discusses strategies adopted to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, such as reflexive practice, careful coding procedures, and transparency in the analytical process.

The paper offers methodological insights and lessons learnt that may be of value to postgraduate researchers undertaking qualitative studies in online higher education contexts. It highlights the importance of intentional research design and ethical reflexivity when investigating relational dimensions of teaching and learning in digital spaces. The study concludes by outlining implications for future qualitative research on tutor–student relationships and by reflecting on how methodological rigour can contribute to the production of meaningful and contextually grounded knowledge in online teacher education.

Keywords: *qualitative research, methodology, online teacher education, tutor–student relationship, thematic analysis*

Title: **Exploring school leadership behaviours that can contribute to enhancing teacher job satisfaction: The case study of a Rodriguan secondary school.**

Presenter: **Mélanie FELICITE GOPAUL,** Rodrigues

Abstract

Teacher job satisfaction and school leadership behaviours have been widely researched and are recognised as context-dependent constructs across educational and cultural settings (Ma and Marion, 2025; McGee *et al*, 2023). However, existing research is predominantly survey-based and quantitative (Buckman and Pittman, 2021; Ertürk, 2021), with limited focus on close-knit, small-island contexts such as Rodrigues. This qualitative single-case study explores how school leadership behaviours can contribute to enhancing teacher job satisfaction in Rodriguan secondary school X.

The study provides context-specific insights that extend current understandings of teacher job satisfaction and school leadership behaviours. Data was collected through online questionnaires administered to all 35 secondary school teachers at school X, of which 25 responded. Six one-on-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face. The findings show that the teachers conceptualise job satisfaction as an emotional and motivational connection to their work. School leadership behaviours are understood as the rector's overall conduct in leading the school, encompassing leadership style, decision-making, practical actions, daily school operations and relational dynamics. Teachers identified assertive, strict and relational school leadership behaviours, such as effective communication, approachability, ethicality, trust, professionalism and support, as central to enhancing their job satisfaction. In close-knit contexts like school X and other secondary schools in Rodrigues, where many teachers know the rector personally before working together, data revealed that the rector's ability to uphold professional boundaries, avoid favouritism and separate personal connections from professional responsibilities was also perceived as contributing positively to teachers' job satisfaction.

Based on these findings, I argue that effective leadership contributing to teacher job satisfaction in the Rodriguan context aligns with Farh and Cheng's (2000) model of paternalistic leadership, which combines authority and discipline, moral conduct and benevolence. The study

contributes to the field by providing empirical evidence on the specific combination of leadership behaviours that contribute to enhancing teacher job satisfaction. It also conceptualises teacher job satisfaction and school leadership behaviours within the practical realities of secondary school teachers in a small-island, close-knit educational setting. For similar contexts, the findings highlight the importance of preparing leaders to develop relational skills, maintain ethical boundaries and exercise assertiveness and strictness to sustain teacher job satisfaction.

Keywords: *teacher job satisfaction, school leadership (rector), school leadership behaviours, Rodriguan secondary school teachers.*

Title: Across epistemic borders: Decolonial feminist praxis in black African women's writing

Presenter: **Nomonde CELE,** South Africa

Abstract

Efforts to decolonise education continue to confront the persistence of colonial epistemologies that shape what is recognised as legitimate knowledge within research and knowledge production. Despite increasing attention to epistemic transformation across the Global South, educational scholarship often remains confined within disciplinary boundaries that marginalise literary and cultural forms as sites of theory and knowledge generation. Black African women's writing in (post)apartheid South Africa constitutes a significant site of African-centred knowledge production. Yet, it is frequently approached through representational or thematic readings that overlook how literary form, language, and narrative strategy function as epistemic practices. This paper responds to this gap by examining how decolonial literary practices within this corpus offer insights for rethinking knowledge production within decolonising education.

Emerging from doctoral research, this paper presents an analysis of selected works by Black South African women writers to examine how linguistic choice, narrative form, authorial agency, and positioning are mobilised within literary practice. The analysis identifies how these strategies function as decolonial literary approaches that challenge dominant epistemic hierarchies and positions literary writing as a site of knowledge production with relevance for educational transformation.

The analysis is grounded in a decolonial feminist framework informed by Lugones (2010), Oyěwùmí (1997), and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018). This framework foregrounds epistemic justice, relational knowledge, and the recovery of marginalised ways of knowing, enabling Black African women's writing to be approached as intellectual praxis rather than representation. From this perspective, literary narrative becomes a site through which colonial distinctions between knowledge and experience, theory and creativity, and culture and education are unsettled, making visible alternative epistemologies embedded within literary practice

The paper adopts a qualitative interpretive design grounded in a decolonial research paradigm (Quijano, 2000; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). The sample consists of purposefully selected

contemporary literary works by Black South African women writers and semi-structured interviews conducted with their authors. Data collection involved close reading of the textual data, guided by analytically defined decolonial literary indicators. Data analysis employed reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019; 2021), with interpretation undertaken through a decolonial feminist analytical lens to produce meaning across both datasets.

The findings show that Black African women's literary practices function as epistemic interventions that unsettle dominant knowledge hierarchies and reposition literary writing as a site of knowledge production. The paper therefore contributes to the theme of transforming education beyond borders by demonstrating how literary approaches expand the epistemic resources available to education research and opens alternative pathways for engaging knowledge beyond disciplinary and epistemic boundaries. By foregrounding literary practice as a site of theorisation, the analysis illustrates how literary methodologies can inform decolonial education research and how postgraduate scholarship from the Global South contributes to reconfiguring understandings of knowledge, pedagogy, and educational transformation.

Keywords: *Black African women's writing, decolonising education, epistemic justice, literary methodologies, knowledge production*

Title: From theory to practice: Preparing pre-service English teachers for culturally responsive poetry teaching

Presenter: Sibongile Melody DLAMINI, South Africa

Abstract

Poetry is a perfect tool for cultural exchange and awareness as it conveys complex yet real social, historical, political, and cultural messages emanating from the vast array of poets' feelings and experiences. Using culturally responsive pedagogy for poetry teaching fosters critical interpretation and meaning-making, enabling the connection of poems to real-world social problems. Therefore, it is educationally imperative that teacher educators teach pre-service English teachers to scrutinise poems and strengthen their poetry understanding and pedagogical capability.

Although there is more research in South African English teacher education on culturally responsive pedagogy, research specifically focusing more on preparing pre-service English teachers for culturally responsive poetry teaching is limited. This paper explores how culturally responsive poetry teaching enables or constrains pre-service English teachers' meaningful engagement with poetry and how it prepares and empowers them for their future practices. Drawing on insights from Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), this paper discusses how the pre-service teachers' meaningful poetry knowledge construction can be deeply influenced by their cultural and historical contexts.

Data were collected from two South African universities through one-on-one interviews with teacher educators, lecture observations, and focus group discussions with pre-service English teachers. Thematic data analysis indicates that while some teacher educators foreground personal and cultural connections to poetry, others consider literary theories as effective tools for meaningful and critical poetry teaching. Both approaches contribute differently to equipping pre-service English teachers with critical tools to approach poetry not just as print-based, but as a voice of identity, culture, and inclusion. Using culturally responsive poetry pedagogy in English teacher education broadens pre-service teachers' engagement with poetry while developing their ability to teach learners to interrogate meaning beyond the surface.

This paper highlights the importance of integrating culturally responsive poetry pedagogy in English teacher education. It also calls

for teacher educators across diverse multicultural education contexts to employ this pedagogy to develop pre-service English teachers' poetry knowledge and an ability to use poetry as a tool for social justice and transformation.

Keywords: *English teacher preparation, culturally responsive pedagogy, poetry teaching, Cultural-Historical Activity Theory, meaning-making*

Title: Addressing language barriers during clinical placements: The case of international students in a higher technical and vocational education training (TVET) institution in Mauritius

Presenter: **Rajeshwaree CHENGELVOYEN,** Mauritius

Abstract

This presentation argues for the need to consider inclusive and equitable learning experiences for international students during placements in multilingual contexts where they are not familiar with the local language(s). For this purpose, I draw on a research-based assignment from my PGDip Ed course, which used an evaluative case study approach to examine the effectiveness of strategies developed to address language barriers faced by anglophone international students enrolled in undergraduate nursing programmes in a higher TVET institution in Mauritius. The programme alternates between campus-based instruction and clinical placement during each of the six semesters. English is the official medium of instruction on campus, while the placements are in public hospitals where local patients and nurses communicate largely in Mauritian Creole, making language a barrier for the international students. Consequently, understanding of instructions from nurse mentors, effective patient care, or integration into the hospital environment are all negatively impacted, resulting in poor student learning experiences.

The two strategies developed, a translation manual and a buddy system, were implemented. Benchmarking against the research of Mayyas, Yunus, and Mayyas (2020) and Nuuyoma, Muvumwaeni, and Chihururu (2024), these strategies were selected because they support comprehension and linguistic inclusion in multilingual contexts. The translation manual aimed to enhance students' understanding of common words and basic medical terminology used in Mauritian Creole, while the intent of the buddy system was to pair local students with international ones to foster peer-to-peer learning. Adopting a quality assurance perspective, key concepts like the resource-input model, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, and continuous quality improvement have been employed to align language use, clinical learning experiences, and quality education standards.

The findings revealed that the translation manual functioned as a highly valued pedagogical resource that contributed significantly to

the international students' linguistic competence. Some participants reported that the availability of this resource from the onset would have been most useful. The findings also demonstrate that interaction with the manual contributed to supporting strong self-efficacy in initiating basic conversations in Mauritian Creole during placements. Another significant finding is that the buddy system facilitated meaningful peer relationships between local and international students, which not only reduced anxiety, isolation, and uncertainty but also boosted confidence and engagement. In terms of the challenges, pronunciation difficulties while using the translation manual and dependence on local buddies were highlighted.

These findings have policy implications not only for the institution where the study was undertaken. Similar strategies can be embedded in various programmes with placements, especially when one of the aims of the local higher education sector is internationalisation. Institutions, in a bid to ensure quality educational provisions, will need to facilitate inclusive and equitable learning experiences for their international students. These findings have the potential to be transformative beyond the local shores as well. Indeed, the insights from this study may be supportive of the educational experiences offered to students by other higher education institutions in multilingual contexts in the region.

Keywords: *international students, language barriers, clinical placements, quality assurance, Mauritius*

Title: Placing a premium on the natural world: An ecolinguistic analysis of eco-friendly proverbs in Akan

Presenter: Abdulai AKUAMAH, Ghana

Abstract

The current ecological crisis represents an unprecedented devastation of the Earth's natural life in the twenty-first century. According to previous studies in the field, there is an urgent need for deliberate and concerted interdisciplinary research efforts to propose sustainable developmental solutions. Within the field of language studies, research efforts have intensified to highlight these concerns and, more importantly, to search for positive stories (Stibbe, 2017; 2021). However, most studies predominantly focus on ecodestructive narratives, particularly in advertising. Ecolinguists have therefore called for alternative discourses that promote sustainability and respect for nature. To date, limited research has examined such discourses within the indigenous African context.

This study examines the linguistic strategies employed by the Akans in their proverbs to articulate the ecological significance of natural elements, including non-human animals, rivers, and trees. While scholars such as Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) and Mühlhäusler (2001) have identified terminological and conceptual challenges in the nascent stages of this field, Skutnabb-Kangas, in particular, questions the integration of 'eco' and 'linguistics,' highlighting the diversity of approaches that may be encompassed by this term, which are occasionally superficial. In this context, Arran Stibbe's ecolinguistics offers a significant perspective, defining ecolinguistics as the role of language in the life-sustaining interactions among humans, other species, and the physical environment, a stance adopted in this study. By subjecting Akan proverbs to ecological analysis and scrutinising lexical choices and imagery, this study seeks to elucidate how the Akans utilise these linguistic devices to construct themes that prominently emphasise ecological concerns.

This research addresses this gap by exploring ecological narratives embedded in Akan proverbs through the application of Stibbe's (2021) ecolinguistic model. The model is employed to uncover the narratives within the selected proverbs, which are evaluated against the underlying ecosophy to ascertain whether the narratives are beneficial, destructive, or ambivalent. The study primarily draws on

data collected through semi-structured interviews with five purposively selected experts in Akan proverbs, including a chief linguist, elders, and an educationist. Additional insights were obtained from secondary sources, including relevant documents and purposively selected audio-visual materials from Facebook and YouTube. The findings indicate that Akan proverbs frequently employ positive discursive strategies, including naming specific non-human entities, using shared pronouns and proper names for salience, and deploying verbs involving embedded material, mental, verbal, and behavioral processes. Through these strategies, the creators of Akan proverbs express ecological knowledge and worldviews that resist both speciesism and anthropocentrism.

The study concludes that the linguistic forms used in Akan proverbs are ecologically beneficial. It is recognized that, through the use of Akan proverbs, indigenous speakers employ linguistic strategies—whether intentionally or unconsciously—that portray the natural world as being ecocentric. Insights from an ecolinguistic perspective expand the scope of Stibbe›s models and suggest that Akan proverbs indicate complex and potentially diverse representations of the more-than-human world, warranting further investigation.

Keywords: *Akan proverbs, ecolinguistics, salience, sustainability, nonhuman animals*

Title: Analysis of small data sets: Insights from partial least squares structural equation modelling

Presenter: Devendra BABOOA, Mauritius

Abstract

Researchers often face challenges in gathering enough data to test their hypotheses, mainly due to the small size of the target group(s). These obstacles can lead to data sets that are too limited for the complex statistical models needed to answer the research questions. Small sample sizes are a common issue. In such cases, it is recommended to use the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) method (Hair *et al*., 2011; Willaby *et al*., 2015; Rigdon, 2016; Hair and Alamer, 2022; Ringle *et al*., 2024). The minimum sample size for a Partial Least Squares (PLS) algorithm, which analyses parts of the model in an iterative process, is assessed with a single step rather than the entire model, as in Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The required minimum sample size varies depending on the model's complexity and is usually based on the ratio of sample size to parameter estimates (N:q), ranging from 5:1 to 20:1 (Jackson, 2003). Typically, smaller sample sizes can still produce stable estimates with PLS compared to SEM (Willaby et al., 2015). To overcome the constraints associated with small sample size analysis, the Structural Equation Modelling using the Partial Least Squares (SMART-PLS) software package was chosen over the commonly used AMOS software package to test the fit of the Artificial Intelligence literacy model scales, which were the subject of our research study. The multivariate analysis showed that SMART-PLS could generate a structural equation model confirming the relationships between the observed variables and the latent variables. The analysis of the small sample size with SMART-PLS revealed that several measurement items with numerical values could be extracted, including Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted for the latent variables. However, the results obtained through bootstrapping were inconclusive, which highlights one of the limitations of using the SMART-PLS technique.

Keywords: *SMART-PLS, PLS, SEM, small sample size, multivariate analysis*

Title: The role of visual aid tools as methodological innovation for improving accessibility and inclusivity in online teaching and learning settings

Presenter: Onick GWAYI, Malawi

Abstract

Over time, educators have adopted new approaches and digital techniques in online teaching and learning environments. Visual aid tools are resources and technologies designed to support learners with diverse needs, enhancing their ability to access and engage with online content. Studies have shown that visual aids can improve online learning: 70% of students and teachers agree that visual aids boost motivation, 75% agree they clarify complex concepts, and 82% believe they enhance academic performance (Haidar, 2015). However, there is a digital divide in the use of visual aid tools between the Global North and the Global South. The Global North is significantly more advanced than the Global South. Yet, limited studies have confirmed the impact of visual aid tools as a methodological innovation for improving accessibility and inclusivity in online teaching and learning within schools located in the Global South, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

It is against this background that this paper draws on findings from a study that examined the impact of visual aids in promoting inclusivity and accessibility in online teaching and learning environments in Malawian context. Dual Coding Theory (DCT), proposed by Allan Paivio, suggests that the human mind uses two distinct systems for processing information: a verbal system for language-based information and a non-verbal system for images and other non-linguistic representations was used to compare visual aids versus text-only online teaching and learning groups across three Mzuzu city public secondary schools. The Dual Coding lens was also employed to analyse how visuals and text/audio influence accessibility, and to evaluate engagement, satisfaction, and outcomes for diverse learners in online teaching and learning settings.

The study employed cross-sectional comparative design with a mixed methodology to evaluate and compare the impact of visual aids in ensuring accessibility and inclusivity in online teaching and learning across different groups and participating Mzuzu city public secondary schools. Data were gathered from 30 randomly selected participants

through questionnaires, focus groups, lesson observations and document analysis. The Concurrent Triangulation Strategy was used, where quantitative and qualitative data were collected, analysed, and interpreted at the same time. Data were integrated throughout the study to enhance knowledge claims, confirmation, corroboration, and cross-validation within a single context study.

Although common visual aids identified in the study include brief, screen reader-compatible text, alternative formats such as tactile diagrams, video captions, uncluttered visual aids, and digital copies, integrating interactive visual aids can enhance students' engagement and accessibility to online content. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles can achieve this by creating innovative, inclusive, and accessible online teaching and learning tools and content. Additionally, educators and communities can work together to ensure that visual aids are provided for every student.

Keywords: *accessibility and inclusivity, dual coding theory, online learning, Universal Design for Learning, visual aid tools*

Title: **Deconstructing the supervision process: Perspectives of a Gen Z student and a Gen Y supervisor**

Presenter: **Asmara MARI,** South Africa

Abstract

Traversing the supervision process can prove tedious and frustrating for many supervisor-student pairs, especially when they are generationally diverse, with varied lived and academic experiences. Considering this, the paper is guided by the research question: 'How does a Gen Y supervisor engage in an intergenerational supervisory process?'. The objective is to contribute to the growing discourse on supervision as an intricate academic journey.

Drawing upon autoethnography, this study provides insider perspectives on the complexities of relational supervision between a Generation Y supervisor and a Generation Z student. Underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm, to ensure reflexivity, trustworthiness, and analytic transparency, the authors engaged in rigorous self-journaling, self-observation practices, and focused discussions where data collected were reflected upon. This allowed the researchers to present thick, critical reflections of their subjective lived experiences in an intergenerational supervision.

Using social exchange theory to analyse the findings, this study highlights how identity, power-dynamics, and communication are negotiated throughout the intergenerational supervisory process. The findings further emphasise the importance of empathy, mutual objectives, respect, and open communication in fostering a successful supervision process. It offers a reflective examination of how identities influence the supervision process, focusing on the aspects that affect power-dynamics and communication between the supervisor and the green student.

The results indicate the need for supervisors to become more culturally competent and to reinvent supervision methodologies by adopting unconventional supervision practices to holistically support the new generation of students. From the student's perspective, the results specify that a supervisor's methods must be reflective of the generation they supervise. Therefore, the authors declare that for a postgraduate student to experience a positive supervision experience, a supervisor must be willing to be flexible, relatable, motivational, modest, and understanding.

Given that green researchers and postgraduate students require consistent commitment to clear communication and guidance from their supervisors, this does not dim the budding academic within them. Accordingly, the authors propose a model to achieve an effective supervision process, transform current supervision systems, and bridge the gap that exists between supervisor-student pairs with diverse generational identities. The 'I'm model', created by the authors, encompasses five tenets: mutual respect, dismantling power-dynamics, consistent and clear communications, multi-perspectivity, and emotional intelligence. Applying the tenets warrants a more productive supervision experience and develops more confident and capable young academics who can enrich research spaces. In conclusion, the authors advocate the use of the 'I'm model' to create an optimal environment that supports high-quality, good supervision where academic transactions can yield maximum gains with minimum losses.

***Keywords**: postgraduate, supervision, intergenerational, deconstructing, model*

Title: A systematic literature review on next-generation teaching and learning frameworks in global South higher education: A critical application of the Kitchenham approach

Presenter: Chitisha GUNNOO, Mauritius

Abstract

This Systematic Literature Review (SLR) investigates the evolution of Next-Generation Teaching and Learning Frameworks (NGTLF) within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), specifically focusing on the contextual needs of the Global South. While the review utilises the Kitchenham approach for its methodological rigor, this study moves beyond mere application; it critically adapts this traditionally Northern-centric meta-analysis framework to evaluate how NGTLFs can be decolonised and made culturally relevant. The research seeks to produce transformative knowledge by questioning the origins of current teaching theories and exploring how their implementation in Southern contexts can move from passive adoption to active, contextualized innovation.

Following Kitchenham's three-phase process: planning, conducting, and reporting, the review establishes a transparent selection protocol. Inclusion criteria are specifically designed to prioritise scholarship from the Global South, focusing on published, peer-reviewed studies that address digital equity, local epistemologies, and socio-economic barriers. This selection process is theoretical as much as operational, ensuring that the "quality" of a study is measured by its relevance to Southern educational realities rather than just Western citation metrics.

Data synthesis identifies key patterns in student outcomes and systemic challenges. By analysing these findings through a transformative lens, the review highlights best practices that empower local academic identities. The findings contribute to the field by providing HEIs with a roadmap for adopting NGTLFs that are not just "next generation" in technology, but "next generation" in their ability to foster knowledge production and bridge the digital-pedagogical divide in the Global South.

Keywords: *systematic literature review, Global South, Kitchenham methodology, higher education, transformative pedagogy*

Title: Deconstructing Procrustean practices: Developing a pedagogical framework for recognising Tacit Knowledge in South Africa's Occupational Qualifications

Presenter: Elector NYANDORO, South Africa

Abstract

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is widely recognised as a critical mechanism for widening access to education and training and for recognising competencies acquired outside formal learning environments. In post-apartheid South Africa, it serves as a vital tool for redress**.** However, the implementation of RPL within occupational qualifications continues to face significant challenges, particularly in relation to the validation of tacit, experiential, and contextually embedded workplace knowledge. Current assessment approaches often struggle to recognise these forms of knowledge, thereby privileging knowledge that can be more easily codified and aligned with formal curriculum requirements, while excluding invaluable workplace knowledge (Bernstein, 1999; Eraut, 2000). Similarly, Harris (1999) describes such tendencies as "Procrustean practices," wherein experiential knowledge is constrained into rigid assessment frameworks designed for institutional learning contexts. Despite sustained policy emphasis on RPL within the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system, the pedagogical processes through which assessors interpret and validate tacit workplace knowledge remain under-theorised (Cooper & Ralphs, 2016).

This study aims to address this persistent misalignment by developing a pedagogical framework for validating workplace knowledge within RPL. It adopts a Design-Based Research (DBR) methodology, characterised by iterative phases of analysis, design, testing, and refinement (McKenney & Reeves, 2019). The empirical component draws on qualitative data generated through document analysis of RPL policies and assessment instruments, portfolios of evidence, as well as semi-structured interviews and observations involving purposively selected stakeholders, including RPL assessors, Quality Assurance Partners (QAP) and RPL candidates across three occupational qualification contexts. The data are analysed using thematic analysis to identify patterns in assessment practices, underlying power dynamics, interpretive challenges, and systematic constraints in recognising workplace knowledge. These

insights inform the co-design of a pedagogical framework through stakeholder engagement workshops (QAP, RPL assessors), which is subsequently refined through iterative feedback cycles to enhance its contextual relevance and applicability.

Drawing on Fraser's (2008) concept of parity of participation, the study interprets the marginalisation of workplace knowledge as a form of epistemic injustice embedded within prevailing RPL assessment regimes. The anticipated findings highlight the need for pedagogically informed approaches capable of recognising diverse epistemologies of practice. By articulating a pedagogical framework for the validation of tacit and workplace knowledge, the study contributes to enhancing the epistemic legitimacy, credibility, and inclusivity of RPL assessment practices, while advancing its transformative purpose.

Keywords: *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), tacit knowledge, epistemic injustice, occupational qualifications, workplace epistemologies*

Title: Cultivating positive learner behaviour in my teaching: Secondary school self-study

Presenter: Mdletshe LINDOKUHLE, South Africa

Abstract

The purpose of this self-study research was to explore how positive learner behaviour could be cultivated through teaching practice, with the aim of minimising learner misconduct and developing a classroom culture grounded in virtuous values. The study also sought to contribute to teacher learning through purposeful reflection to improve my overall teaching practice and generate knowledge that can inform broader advocacy for positive and inclusive approaches to learner behaviour. Two research questions guided the study: (1) What can I learn from personal history about positive learner behaviour? and (2) How can I cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching? The study was informed by sociocultural theory, which emphasises that learning occurs through social interaction and mediation by others. This theoretical perspective enabled a nuanced reflection on how personal history and prior experiences shape learners' behaviour and classroom practice. It also supported recognition of learners' diverse cultural and social backgrounds, and the mediational tools they bring from their home and community contexts into the classroom.

A self-study methodological approach was adopted within the qualitative research paradigm, positioning the teacher as both participant and researcher. Data were generated using memory-work and arts-based methods, including memory drawings, photographs, memory self-boxes, and collages. The use of arts-based methods represents a methodological innovation by enabling embodied, visual, and reflective forms of meaning-making that extend beyond conventional textual approaches to researching learner behaviour. These methods further enabled systematic reflection on personal history and classroom practice, and supported the design of lessons that cultivated positive interaction, collaboration, and respect among learners.

The study was conducted at a multiracial secondary school in Greytown, KwaZulu-Natal. Participants included two Grade 8 classes (n = 90). The findings revealed that sociocultural theory provided a valuable framework for cultivating positive learner behaviour through social interaction and collaborative learning. Strategies such as co-constructing

classroom rules, designing group-based activities, and using icebreaker tasks contributed to the development of respectful relationships and positive learner engagement. Beyond classroom practice, the findings offer insights that can support advocacy for learner-centred and relational approaches to discipline and inform school-level and policy discussions on positive behaviour support. Key insights highlight the importance of positive teacher–learner relationships, a supportive classroom environment, learner autonomy, and social-emotional learning in fostering positive learner behaviour.

Keywords: *self-study, positive learner behaviour, teacher professional learning, rapport*

Title: Empowering educators for sustainable futures: Teacher agency and the SDGs in Zimbabwe

Presenter: Dadirayi MUDZENGERERE, Zimbabwe

Abstract

Zimbabwe, like other developing countries in the Global South, faces various challenges that need immediate intervention. The challenges include poverty, drug and substance abuse, school dropouts, climate change, and other economic problems. In addressing these multifaceted issues, Early Childhood Development (ECD) teachers, with their experience in community development, can play an important role, fostering resilience and positive growth within communities. The study explored how ECD teachers could help address the problems, ultimately enhancing children's learning outcomes and community resilience. The research identified practical approaches that teachers can use to tackle the challenges and promote positive outcomes.

Grounded in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory, the research situates teacher practice within interconnected systems, including family, school, community, and policy. This qualitative research used Murewa District in Mashonaland East Province as a case study. Purposive and simple random sampling were used to select 115 participants, including 3 school heads, 3 teachers in charge (TICs), 9 ECD teachers, 9 village heads, 90 villagers, and 1 councilor. Data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. Data were analysed thematically to capture the lived experiences and perspectives of participants.

The research findings highlighted that ECD teachers play a pivotal role in shaping sustainable communities by integrating social values, environmental awareness, and economic empowerment into early learning and community-based initiatives. They play a pivotal role in delivering foundational education to learners as well as engaging parents and communities towards sustainable development initiatives. The findings revealed that ECD teachers can contribute meaningfully to several SDGs including SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 13 (Climate Action). When empowered and supported, they can effectively lead community development initiatives, transforming schools into hubs of sustainable development.

It was noted that their deep-rooted connections with families and local stakeholders position them as trusted agents of change, capable of mobilising resources, fostering collaboration, and driving grassroots solutions aligned with sustainable development goals. These initiatives not only enhance environmental awareness and resilience but also foster inclusive participation, intergenerational learning, and local empowerment. The study concluded that strengthening teacher agency through targeted training, policy support, and community collaboration is essential for realising the SDGs and building sustainable futures in Zimbabwe and beyond.

Keywords: *community development, early childhood development, environmental education, sustainable development, quality education*

Title: An organisational analysis of the technical and vocational institutional architecture that produces a specific outcome of chronic low throughput rates: A case study of Elangeni TVET college

Presenter: **Thiloshnee DOOKHI,** South Africa

Abstract

Chronic low throughput in South Africa's TVET sector limits its capacity to develop holistic skills aligned with labour market needs. This study investigates systemic factors within institutional architecture that cause poor throughput in the National Certificate (Vocational) [NCV] programme. It analyses interdependent subsystems and their interactions to understand learner progression and retention challenges. The research is motivated by the need to close industry skills gaps through vocational training aligned with labour market demands, a goal undermined by weak completion rates.

Existing studies often isolate variables and overlook systemic interconnections; instead this study examines dynamic relationships and weaknesses across subsystems to identify root causes and propose improvements. Four systemic levels exist: namely the exo, macro, meso and micro levels.

Policy enforcement has been weakened by long-standing problems caused by governance failures, unstable leadership, poor staffing, and weak infrastructure. It is exacerbated by curricula that is overly theoretical and formative assessments tasks which are weak, and summative exams which do not measure practical skills. Additionally, workshops and labs are underfunded, and lecturers are poorly trained, with little to no industry experience. Misalignments also exist between subject expertise and teaching ability, and between academic preparation and workplace needs. The support systems (monitoring, mentoring, psychosocial care) exist but are applied inconsistently. Finally, Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) requires strong industry partnerships and reliable funding for infrastructure, materials, and student stipends, all of which are just not available.

Using Systems Theory, the study conceptualises the Elangeni TVET college as a complex, interconnected system, showing how leadership, staffing, funding, curriculum, quality assurance, and partnerships may synergise or misalign. This framework identifies negative feedback loops reinforcing underperformance, and positive loops fostering

improvement. Mapping structural and operational architecture reveals subsystem interconnections and misalignments. Positive loops, such as viable WIL partnerships, strengthen curriculum relevance, learner outcomes, and industry investment. Strategies around redesigning assessments, improving academic monitoring, identifying at-risk students, incentivising completion, and enhancing WIL partnerships illustrate tensions in the subsystems.

This research will be conducted at two campuses of a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Employing a case-study approach allows the research to combine qualitative and quantitative data. This incorporates enrolment and exam records, interviews, focus groups, document analysis, surveys, and questionnaires. The combination employed here will allow the researcher to triangulate findings and improve validity. Participants include ten lecturers, two heads of department, two senior lecturers, a council member, two deputy principals, and a regional DHET official.

Limitations encompass possible data inaccuracies, limited generalisability, social desirability bias, and the complexity of multimethod approaches. Credibility is supported through triangulation, audit trails, and rigorous statistical analysis. Ethical safeguards include informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality. Ultimately, the study seeks to expose the governance, process, and policy dynamics that determine throughput, offering evidence-based strategies to improve performance in the TVET sector.

Keywords: *throughput, systems theory, governance, work-integrated-learning*

Title: Teacher voice in professional identity construction

Presenter: Joann Davenia PERMALL, Mauritius

Abstract

Teacher Professional Identity (TPI) is increasingly conceptualised as a dynamic, negotiated, and contextually situated process rather than a fixed set of professional attributes. This study adopts a methodological positioning at the intersection of interpretivist and critical traditions, recognising identity construction as a process of meaning-making while also attending to the power relations and policy discourses that shape teachers' professional lives. Within this framework, the paper foregrounds teacher voice as a central site through which professional identity is constructed, negotiated, and advocated for, arguing that the act of articulating professional experience constitutes both sense-making and an enactment of professional agency.

Drawing on narrative inquiry as both a methodological approach and an epistemological stance, this study positions teachers as active interpreters of their professional experiences. Narrative interviews are designed as dialogic spaces that enable participants to articulate what it means to them to be teachers, how they understand their professional role, and how they navigate tensions between personal values and institutional expectations. In line with an interpretivist orientation, the study focuses on teachers' meaning-making processes, while the critical perspective sensitises the analysis to the ways in which teachers' voices may be shaped, constrained, or marginalised within institutional and policy contexts. As the researcher engages in the interpretive processes of transcription and analysis during the data production phase of this doctoral study, teachers' narratives reveal the depth and reflexivity with which participants make sense of their professional worlds. In this sense, voice emerges not merely as data but as a form of professional advocacy through which teachers actively assert authorship over their professional identities.

The analysis draws on Korthagen's Onion Model (2004), which conceptualises teacher identity across several interconnected dimensions: environment, behaviour, competencies, beliefs, identity, and mission. While the model proves to be useful in exploring the multiple dimensions shaping teacher identity, teacher narratives suggest that these dimensions are permeable. Participants' accounts

reveal ongoing movement and negotiation across them, where beliefs, values, professional practices, and contextual demands continuously interact. In this sense, the model serves as an analytical entry point to examine how teachers make sense of tensions between inner dimensions such as beliefs, values, and sense of purpose and external professional mandates, while also highlighting the relational and dynamic nature through which identity is constructed.

Creating research spaces where teachers speak reflectively about their lived professional realities therefore becomes both an epistemological and ethical act. By centring teachers' voices, this paper contributes to contemporary debates on TPI by demonstrating how narrative sense-making functions simultaneously as identity construction and advocacy. It argues that teacher voice should be recognised not only as a source of insight into professional identity, but also as a vital mechanism through which teachers actively assert meaning, legitimacy, and professional agency within complex contemporary educational landscapes.

Keywords: *Teacher Professional Identity (TPI), Teacher voice, teacher agency*

Title: **Transforming teacher education beyond borders: Student-teachers' voices in a philosophical pedagogy of disruption**

Presenter: **Clive Jimmy William BROWN,** South Africa

Abstract

Situated within a South African university of technology, navigating its transition from a former technikon, this postgraduate-led study interrogates how philosophical pedagogy may operate as a disruptive and transformative force within initial teacher education (ITE). Responding directly to the conference theme, *Transforming Education Beyond Borders: Postgraduate Student Voices*, the paper foregrounds the author's positionality as a doctoral scholar-practitioner and centres first-year student-teachers' reflections as legitimate epistemic contributions to debates on teacher preparation across the Global South.

"Beyond borders" is conceptualised in three interrelated ways: (1) structurally, in moving beyond technicist and compliance-driven models of ITE; (2) epistemically, in challenging inherited hierarchies that marginalise student voice; and (3) transnationally, in situating South African student-teachers' experiences within broader comparative conversations about precarity, accountability, and teacher agency in postcolonial education systems.

Empirically, the study draws on qualitative data generated through a researcher-designed online questionnaire administered to a cohort of 87 first-year Intermediate Phase student-teachers following a structured three-week face-to-face philosophical engagement. Open-ended responses were subjected to iterative thematic analysis, combining inductive coding with conceptually informed categories derived from critical phenomenology and democratic theory. This analytic process identified four dominant thematic clusters: administrative overload, infrastructural scarcity, hierarchical power relations, and ethical tensions in learner accountability.

Philosophical inquiry was operationalised pedagogically through guided dialogical sessions, collective problem-posing, and structured reflective writing tasks that invited students to interrogate these themes through normative questioning. Rather than treating philosophy as abstract content, it functioned as a method of critical sense-making.

Findings suggest that when student-teachers' perceptions are reframed as sites of ethical and political inquiry, they begin to articulate agentic and advocacy-oriented professional identities. The paper argues that philosophical pedagogy enables postgraduate and undergraduate teacher education spaces to move from knowledge consumption to knowledge-for-action, thereby cultivating democratic participation and policy voice. In doing so, ITE becomes a border-crossing project that repositions emerging teachers as intellectual actors capable of contributing to educational transformation within and beyond national contexts.

Keywords: *philosophical pedagogy, transformative teacher education, student-teacher agency, policy engagement, critical reflexivity*

Title: Beyond the policy-practice divide: Stakeholders' voices on teacher professional development within an educational reform

Presenter: Moohktaseemah HEETUN, Mauritius

Abstract

Educational reform is frequently articulated as a transformative policy agenda aimed at improving quality and global competitiveness, often requiring teachers to engage in adaptive forms of professional development aligned with evolving policy expectations. However, such reforms are commonly designed within policy arenas that remain epistemically and experientially distant from the lived realities of teachers and their professional development. While scholarship on Teacher Professional Development (TPD) largely focuses on teachers and reforms, it often overlooks the broader constellation of stakeholders whose interactions shape the enactment of policy, practice, and TPD. This narrow focus limits understanding of how TPD functions as a mediating site for reform, bypassing the complex negotiations that occur when diverse stakeholders engage with policy intentions. This paper, therefore, conceptualises TPD as a key lever of educational reform, highlighting how it becomes a site where policy intentions are translated through the perspectives of diverse educational stakeholders within the Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE) reform.

The paper draws on findings of a doctoral study that investigates multiple stakeholders' conceptions of TPD within an educational reform. Grounded in a Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenological approach, the study foregrounds lived-experience and meaning-making as central analytic concerns. Data were generated through dialogical interviews, policy document analysis, and Word Clouds. Analysis was carried out using the Interpretive Phenomenological Approach and the hermeneutic circle. This process facilitated double hermeneutics, ensuring high degree of reflexivity as I made sense of participants' reflections on their experiences of TPD in implementing policy directives embedded in the NYCBE reform agenda.

Theoretically, the analysis is informed by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory and Barad's Intra-Action Theory. These frameworks illuminate how TPD is constituted within layered ecological systems and through relational entanglements among stakeholders, contexts, and temporalities. Findings indicate that while stakeholders share

a common goal of continuous and inclusive education for all, their understanding of TPD is influenced by what the study conceptualises as 'bounded temporalities' and 'bounded contexts'. 'Bounded-time/temporalities' suggests that the progress of the educational reform is relative to the type of TPD teachers require at specific 'times' of the reform agenda. 'Bounded-contexts' denote that TPD is bounded by multiple micro-contexts, such as schools, departments, policy units, and classroom, that mediate and constrain its enactment within the broader ecology of educational reform. It is within these 'boundedness(es)' that TPD is conceptualised.

Building on this conceptualisation, the paper argues that fostering intra-action among stakeholders within and across these bounded spaces, through which policy and practice are co-constituted, enables a more dialogical and reciprocal relationship between them. Within this dynamic, the paper further claims that educational reforms are disruptive forces that unsettle established norms while simultaneously opening possibilities for reimagining TPD. Such transformation, however, occurs not simply through policy design, but through dialogic engagement across stakeholder groups positioned at different nodes of the reform ecology. Ultimately, if reform is to genuinely transform education beyond borders, it must move beyond prescriptive frameworks and engage with the interpretive work undertaken by those positioned at the policy-practice interface.

Keywords: *educational reforms, teacher professional development, intra-action, boundedness of time, boundedness of context*

Title: From knowledge to action: Advocacy and policy change – An exploration of foundation phase teachers' experiences in supporting learners with reading challenges

Presenter: **Bheki Welcome MASONDO,** South Africa

Abstract

Reading is the cornerstone of learning and the foundation for future academic success. However, many South African (SA) learners in the Foundation Phase (FP) continue to struggle with basic reading skills, which affects their broader educational progression. Despite the introduction of national literacy interventions (2015) and inclusive education policies (2001), the gap between policy intentions and classroom realities remains significant. Most teachers struggle to support learners with diverse reading needs through paired or group reading strategies. This study, titled "From Knowledge to Action: Advocacy and Policy Change- An Exploration of Foundation Phase Teachers' Experiences in Supporting Learners with Reading Challenges," sought to explore the voices of teachers and transform their lived experiences into actionable insights that may inform literacy policy and practice.

This study used a qualitative research approach with a case study design to explore FP teachers' experiences in identifying and supporting learning for students with reading challenges in a diverse SA context. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing teachers to reflect on their daily realities, strategies, and challenges. The research was underpinned by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasises that learning occurs through social interaction and within specific cultural and contextual settings. This theoretical framing provided a lens for understanding how teachers scaffold literacy learning amid systemic constraints.

Findings reveal that FP teachers display strong dedication, creativity, and adaptability in supporting learners with reading challenges. Teachers employ innovative strategies such as dialogic reading, gamified literacy activities, and guided reading enhanced by digital storytelling to strengthen comprehension and sustain learner engagement in the Foundation Phase. They also incorporate translanguaging and project-based literacy tasks to connect reading to learners' linguistic resources and real-world experiences. However, their efforts are constrained by systemic challenges, including overcrowded classrooms, a lack of

teaching resources, limited professional development opportunities, and minimal support from educational authorities. Many teachers expressed frustration at the disconnection between policy expectations and the contextual realities of under-resourced classrooms.

The study underscores the need to move from knowledge to action by positioning teachers as key advocates in shaping responsive and inclusive literacy policies. Their experiential knowledge offers valuable insights into what works in practice, highlighting the importance of involving teachers in policy formulation and curriculum design. By centring teacher voices, this research bridges the gap between classroom practice and policy discourse, contributing to more grounded, context-sensitive educational reforms.

The educational change highlighted in this paper spans systemic, pedagogical, and policy-level transformations. Postgraduate research can inform context-responsive literacy policies that move beyond one-size-fits-all curricula by recognising multilingual classrooms, socio-economic inequalities, and diverse learning needs. At the classroom level, this change involves inclusive, evidence-based reading practices, including early screening, differentiated support, and teacher-led interventions grounded in learners' lived realities. At institutional and policy levels, it calls for strengthened teacher professional development and the meaningful inclusion of teacher voices in policy formulation, promoting greater equity in literacy outcomes and reducing early learning barriers for marginalised learners. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that meaningful policy change begins in the classroom.

Keywords: *foundation phase, reading challenges, teacher experiences, literacy development, policy change*

Title: Shaping school leadership policy: Insights from educators' perspectives on job satisfaction

Presenter: Mohammad Yassine Ibne Dawood AUMERALLY, Mauritius

Abstract

This study explores how educators make sense of leadership and how these interpretations shape their experience of job satisfaction within a grant-aided private secondary school in Mauritius, reflecting challenges shared across global contexts where leadership is interpreted relationally and impacts educators' professional fulfilment. Leadership is approached not as a checklist of behaviours but as something lived, felt, and shaped by context, reflecting an interpretivist tradition that views leadership as meaning-making through lived experience.

The study integrates Bass and Avolio's Full Range Leadership Theory, which provides a lens for categorising leadership behaviours, with Herzberg's Two-Factor Model, which interprets how these behaviours shape educators' job satisfaction, thereby creating a coherent analytical framework applied through a two-phase qualitative case study of questionnaires and interviews. Data were analysed through reflexive thematic analysis, revealing that educators responded more to tone, emotional presence, and relational engagement than to formal leadership actions.

These findings extend existing leadership and job satisfaction literature by foregrounding emotional-relational dynamics often overlooked in Global South and small-island education contexts, while also challenging Western-centric models that emphasise structural or behavioural dimensions. Experiences of exclusion and abrupt communication led to disengagement, while empathy and openness fostered trust. These insights point to the need for leadership policies and professional development frameworks that embed emotional literacy, relational communication, and inclusive practices into institutional guidelines. The study also reflects on the ethical demands of insider research, particularly the challenges of positionality, power relations, and confidentiality in a small-island, faith-based educational context, requiring reflexive awareness and methodological transparency.

In response to the findings, a Relational Leadership Forum is proposed to promote emotionally attuned and inclusive leadership, offering a framework that can inform policy development and professional practice not only in Mauritius but also in comparable small-island and Global South education systems. The research thereby contributes to a more human-centred understanding of leadership in education, reinforcing its transnational relevance and supporting advocacy and policy-change agendas in education systems facing similar relational challenges.

Keywords: *leadership, leadership styles, job satisfaction, relational leadership, interpretivist inquiry*

Title: From knowledge to action: Advancing advocacy and policy reform to strengthen interpersonal and intrapersonal skills development in Mauritius secondary schools

Presenter: Devasree GANGIAH, Mauritius

Abstract

This presentation highlights key findings from a postgraduate study on the challenges and opportunities Mauritian secondary school educators face in developing students' interpersonal and intrapersonal skills through the curriculum. While the full study explored multiple dimensions, this presentation focuses specifically on the implications for advocacy and policy change. In the 21st century, success depends not only on mastery of academic content but also on skills such as communication, empathy, critical thinking, and self-awareness. These are commonly referred to as soft skills. They are considered essential for 21st-century learning and sustainable development.

The study used a qualitative approach to analyse non-numerical data and interpret participants' experiences. Data were collected through one-to-one semi-structured interviews with five secondary educators from different schools in Mauritius, and triangulation ensured methodological rigour. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) (MIE, 2015) was also analysed as documentary data, serving as a policy benchmark to triangulate findings with the interview data.

The findings reveal several systemic barriers that limit the meaningful integration of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills into the curriculum. These barriers include a bulky and rigid syllabus, an exam-oriented culture, limited socio-emotional learning (SEL) training, insufficient professional support, large class sizes, assessment constraints, and infrastructural challenges. The strong emphasis on examination performance narrows pedagogical flexibility and constrains holistic student development. The presentation highlights the convergences and divergences in the findings identified through the triangulation method. For instance, both the educators and the NCF recognise the importance of skills development for students' personal and professional spheres. The NCF promotes an inclusive and sustainable learning environment that unveils diverse perspectives, social and emotional growth, mindset improvement, empathy, self-understanding, self-confidence, independence, and respect. On the

contrary, this presentation examines the diverse challenges faced by educators in effectively promoting inclusive and sustainable education, particularly in relation to the challenges outlined above.

Despite these challenges, the presentation highlights significant opportunities for transformation. Educators demonstrate strong commitment and innovation by embedding collaborative learning, project-based learning, reading aloud, and quick-pair-share strategies into their lessons. These practices illustrate that even within structural limitations, classrooms can become spaces where academic learning and socio-emotional growth reinforce one another.

The transformative potential of these findings lies in the need for systemic alignment. This includes curriculum reform that explicitly integrates interpersonal and intrapersonal learning outcomes. It also requires the development of holistic assessment models that value both learning processes and performance. In addition, sustained professional development in socio-emotional learning is essential. Finally, improved school infrastructure is necessary to support interactive pedagogical approaches. By shifting from an exam-dominated paradigm to a balanced model that values human competencies, education can move toward preparing students not only for examinations, but also for life, work, and responsible citizenship.

This presentation argues that empowering educators to intentionally cultivate these skills can redefine educational success in Mauritius and beyond, transforming current constraints into opportunities for innovation, resilience, and lifelong learning in a rapidly evolving world.

Keywords: *interpersonal, intrapersonal skills, education reform, 21st–century education, sustainable future*

Title: Investigating the impact of digital readiness of educators on teaching mathematics at upper secondary level in Rodrigues

Presenter: Mary Jane Hilary CASIMIR, Rodrigues

Abstract

This study critically examined the digital readiness of mathematics educators in Rodrigues, a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) and its influence on teaching practices at the upper secondary level. While global frameworks, such as UNESCO's ICT Competency Framework for Teachers and the TPACK model, provide guidelines for integrating technology in education, little is known about how these frameworks translate into practice within a resource-constrained island like Rodrigues. Thus, by connecting these global frameworks to the lived experiences of mathematics educators in Rodrigues, the research sheds new light on the meaning and challenges of technology integration in a SIDS.

The study employed a qualitative case study design grounded in a constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. Data were collected from ten mathematics educators through questionnaires, and from the pool of respondents, five participants were purposively selected for a semi-structured interview. Content analysis was applied to the questionnaire data to identify recurring patterns, themes, and variations in digital literacy, technology use, and infrastructural support. Semi-structured interviews were analysed using the six-phase thematic analysis framework of Braun and Clarke. This analysis enabled a deep exploration of underlying meanings, contextual constraints, and interconnections between educators' experiences, institutional realities, and cultural and pedagogical beliefs. Triangulation of the findings from the questionnaire and interviews ensured credibility and provided a robust understanding of the barriers and enablers of technology integration.

Findings reveal that, although educators recognised the potential of technology to enhance mathematical understanding, particularly through visualisation, modelling, and interactive learning, their overall digital readiness was low. Participants reported outdated and insufficient ICT training, limited infrastructural support, and generational divides that reinforced reliance on traditional behaviourist teaching methods. Both first-order (external) barriers, such as poor internet access and

inadequate hardware, and second-order (internal) barriers, including entrenched pedagogical beliefs, were identified as interdependent factors that imped the integration of technology in teaching. The study also highlighted the unsustainable expectation for educators to act simultaneously as teachers and informal ICT technicians, as well as the influence of cultural norms on instructional decisions.

This research has demonstrated that meaningful integration of technology in teaching mathematics requires contextual adaptation rather than policy transfer. It has provided an evidence-based framework to rethink professional development, infrastructure investment, and institutional support in SIDS. By advocating for constructivist-oriented training, specialised ICT support, and collaborative professional learning communities, the study advanced a knowledge-to-action plan, promoting pedagogical empowerment rather than technological access. In doing so, the study has also positioned small island contexts as critical sites for generating globally relevant insights for equitable and sustainable educational transformation.

Keywords: *digital readiness, pedagogy of mathematics, small island developing states (SIDS), integration of technology in teaching*

Title: Digital literacy as a pathway to rehabilitation: Technology access and educational rights in South African correctional centres

Presenter: Ntuthuko Sibonelo MATHENJWA, South Africa

Abstract

Digital literacy has become an essential component of rehabilitation in correctional centres, particularly for incarcerated youth who must reintegrate into a technology-driven society. This study examines how youth offenders navigate digital tools within restrictive correctional environments. Historically, South Africa's Department of Correctional Services (DCS) prohibited the use of personal computers in prison cells, citing security risks. These restrictions limited offenders' opportunities to develop digital competencies critical to employment and reintegration.

A significant shift occurred following the Constitutional Court ruling in 'Minister of Justice and Correctional Services and Others v Ntuli,' which declared such prohibitions unconstitutional on the basis that they violated Section 29 of the Bill of Rights. The judgment affirmed that technology-enabled learning is integral to rehabilitation and mandated policy reforms allowing supervised, disconnected computer access for registered students. This reflects a growing recognition that correctional education is rehabilitative rather than punitive.

The study is located within the critical paradigm. It employed a qualitative research design and a narrative inquiry approach to illuminate the lived educational experiences of incarcerated youth. Informed by Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and broader critical theory, the methodological orientation foregrounded issues of power, inequality, and structural constraints shaping digital literacy in correctional settings. Purposive sampling was used to recruit eight incarcerated youth registered for the National Senior Certificate at a KwaZulu-Natal correctional centre. Data were generated through in-depth semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of patterns related to digital access, rights, and rehabilitation.

Findings reveal that although digital literacy opportunities are emerging, implementation remains uneven due to inadequate infrastructure, limited staff training, and persistent stigma associated with offender education. Many young offenders continue to face barriers that hinder their ability to develop essential digital skills. The study argues that access to educational technology is a rehabilitative necessity rooted in

constitutional and human rights obligations rather than a discretionary privilege. A rights-based, security-conscious approach to digital inclusion can enhance self-efficacy, promote social justice, and support successful reintegration. The study calls for comprehensive strategies that balance security concerns with the imperative to provide meaningful digital learning opportunities in South African correctional centres.

Keywords: *digital literacy, correctional education, rehabilitation, incarcerated youth*

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