



WITS
UNIVERSITY

Conference booklet

Echoes of Protest, Visions of Praxis

Shaping Equitable Futures Through Learning and Teaching

#FEESMUST
FALL

Wits Conference on Learning & Teaching
Hybrid & online: 9 to 11 September 2025



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About this Conference

This year marks a decade since the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall movements shook the foundations of higher education across South Africa. In 2025, the Wits Centre for Learning, Teaching and Development (CLTD) invites you to join a powerful three-day engagement with how Wits University continues to respond to those calls for transformation, access, equity, and decolonisation in teaching and learning.

The conference, under the theme “Echoes of Protest, Visions of Praxis: Shaping Equitable Futures Through Learning and Teaching”, seeks to move beyond theory. We aim to highlight how academics and learning support professionals at Wits are practically implementing change — inside classrooms, through curriculum design, in their engagement with students, and across the broader teaching and learning landscape.

Each day will be shaped around a focused theme:

Day 1: Echoes of Change

Revisiting student demands from #FMF/#RMF and critically examining institutional and individual academic responses since 2015.

Day 2: Enacting Equitable Practices

Showcasing current practices that drive inclusive, student-centred, decolonised, and technology-enhanced learning.

Day 3: Forging Our Future

Co-creating a vision for the future of learning and teaching at Wits — grounded in social justice, relevance, and partnership.

Programme: 9 September 2025

Echoes of Change

Hybrid (Face-to-Face: Senate Room, 2nd floor Solomon Mahlangu House, SHB Room & Online)

Padlet link

09:00	Registration & Tea	
10:00	<p>Opening & welcome Dr Gerrit Wissing (Director: CLTD)</p> <p>Opening address Professor Nicole De Wet-Billings (Senior Director: Academic Affairs)</p>	<p>Session chair: Fatima Rahiman MS Teams Link</p>
10:30	<p>#FMF Student Activists Panel Discussion: 10 years on Facilitator: Dr. Bernadette Johnson Thato Mokoena, Shaazia Ebrahim, Zama Mthunzi, Omhle Ntshingila</p>	<p>Session chair: Nozuko Makhuvha Chat moderator: Natasha Munsamy MS Teams Link</p> <p>Padlet link</p>
11:30	Tea	
11:45	Interactive Session	Session chair: Fatima Rahiman
12:15	<p>Making a difference to communities that students value: Reflections from the WSOA Bridging Community to Classroom Nonkululeko Vilakazi, Lucky Moeketsi</p>	<p>Session chair: Nazira Hoosen Chat moderator: Antoinette Malgas MS Teams Link</p> <p>Padlet link</p>
13:00	Lunch	
13:45	<p>Academics and students co-creating learning, teaching, research and scholarship: A COIL exploration Rieta Ganas, Mosima Tsweleng, Eka Bikramchund, Lesego Setshela</p>	<p>Session chair: Mei Lou Chat moderator: Shane Pachagadu MS Teams Link</p> <p>Padlet link</p>
14:30	Interactive Session for 20 mins followed by a breakaway	
15:00	<p>Beyond English: Multilingualism, Power and Access in Higher Education Selvarani Moodley, Seun Olukanmi</p>	<p>Breakaway 1: Senate Room Session chair: Mueletshedzi Ndawambi Chat moderator: Dominique Woolridge MS Teams Link</p> <p>Padlet link</p>
	<p>Decoloniality and Curriculum Relevance: Revisiting the Relevance of Relevance Veerle Dieltiens</p>	<p>Breakaway 2: SHB5 Session chair: Zamalotshwa Mlotshwa Chat moderator: Neo Pettele MS Teams Link</p> <p>Padlet link</p>
	<p>Rethinking professional identity formation amidst protests and social upheaval: A journey in Africa Mantsoa Mokhachane, Ann George, Tasha Wyatt, Ayelet Kuper, Lionel Green-Thompson</p>	<p>Breakaway 3: SHB1 Session chair: Shane Pachagadu Chat moderator: Sandile Mthembu MS Teams Link</p> <p>Padlet link</p>
15:30	Breakaway and comfort break	
15:40	<p>Indigenising Mentorship: Towards a Framework for Early Career Academics in African Higher Education Mbuti Moloi, Raeesa Manjoo-Docrat, Raesetsa Hopane, Mosebudi Matlou, Tatenda Nharo, Lisa Galvin, Lebogang Phehla</p>	<p>Breakaway 1: Senate Room Session chair: Dominique Woolridge Chat moderator: Mueletshedzi Ndawambi MS Teams Link</p> <p>Padlet link</p>

	<div> <p>Charting the Path Forward: Lessons from Health Sciences Curriculum developments Carol Hartmann, Aashay Roop, Lato Sele, Angelina Chabalala</p> <p>Breakaway 2: SHB5 Session chair: Neo Pettele Chat moderator: Jean-Luc Greyvenstein MS Teams Link</p> <p>Padlet link</p> </div> <div> <p>Harmonising Research, Teaching, and Citizenship to Enhance Student Learning: Perspectives from Mid-Career Academics at Wits University Neo Ligaraba, Natalie Benjamin-Damons, Catherine Musuva, Mpho Molete, Nicholas West</p> <p>Breakaway 3: SHB1 Session chair: Shane Pachagadu Chat moderator: Sandile Mthembu MS Teams Link</p> <p>Padlet link</p> </div>
16:20	<div> <p>Closure</p> <p>Conference evaluation form</p> </div>

Programme: 10 September 2024

Enacting Equitable Practices

Online
Padlet Link

09:30	Welcome & reflection Dr Gerrit Wissing	Session chair: Fatima Rahiman MS Teams Link
10:00	Keynote Address: Deliberations (with educators) on that made fragile: Academic commemorations of #Fallists' calls for decolonisation a decade on Prof. Dina Belluigi	Session chair: Prof Siphwe Dube Chat moderator: Tania Van der Merwe MS Teams Link Padlet Link
11:00	Guest Speaker: SRC President Nombulelo Chiya	Session chair: Nazira Hoosen Chat moderator: Mottlatjo Mabeba MS Teams Link Padlet Link
11:45	Comfort Break	
12:00	Panel discussion: Towards Critical Inter / Trans / Post-Disciplinarity: Reflections from the WSOA's Interdisciplinarity Study Group Panellists: Andrea Hayes, Prof. David Andrew, Prof. Brett Pyper	Breakaway 1 Session chair: Natasha Munsamy Chat moderator: Mei Lou MS Teams Link Padlet link
	Round Table: Digitally Mediated Zones of Proximal Development: Generative AI, Socioeconomic Stratification, and the Future of Equitable Learning Sithenjisiwe Dube, Malcolm Weaich, Rodney Genga, Raazia Moosa, Fatima Rahiman, Laura Dison, Fiona Macalister, Shirra Moch, Thabang Kaneli, Fezile Wagner, Greig Krull, Lindelani Mnguni, Marike Kluyts, Kershree Padayachee	Breakaway 2 Session chair: Rieta Ganas Chat moderator: Jean-Luc Greyvenstein MS Teams Link Padlet link
13:00	Lunch	
13:45	Round Table: Thinking or delegating? The University's Authority in the Age of AI Dr. Daniel Wilke	Breakaway 1 Session chair: Dominique Woolridge Chat moderator: Nozuko Makhuvha MS Teams Link Padlet link
	Round Table: Opening Peer Conversations about Reading Presenter: Fouad Asfour, Kgaogelo Lekota, Lerato Seohatse, Nobantu Shabangu, Annabel Nyongwana, Rachel Kongolo, Joshua Ward, Gabrielle Mudiwa	Breakaway 2 Session chair: Mei Lou Chat moderator: Zamalotshwa Mlotshwa MS Teams Link Padlet link
14h45	Comfort break	
15:00	Teaching Pathology with a Twist: Exploring the Use of an Integrated Chatbot Sunila Savage-Reid	Breakaway 1 Session chair: Antoinette Malgas Chat moderator: Arshad Moolla MS Teams Link Padlet link
	Digital Arts and Audiology Collaboration for Development of Afrocentric Digital Audiology Material and Resources Selvarani Moodley	Breakaway 2 Session chair: Jacqueline Johnson Chat moderator: Shane Pachagadu MS Teams Link Padlet link
	Rooted in Justice: Transgressive Pedagogies for Inclusive and Sustainable Science Education – a cross- university initiative within South Africa Prof Shalini Dukhan, Dr Tonderai Muchenje, Dr Sakiywa Boateng, Dr Buyiswa Hlangothi, Prof Tendani Mawela, & Prof Kershree Padayachee	Breakaway 3 Session chair: Tania Van Der Merwe Chat moderator: Natasha Munsamy MS Teams Link Padlet link
15:35	Reimaging Learning in undergraduate teaching, a case study of storytelling as an inclusive pedagogical strategy Johan Ferreira	Breakaway 1 Session chair: Antoinette Malgas Chat moderator: Arshad Moolla MS Teams Link Padlet link

	<p>Reflections on responses to disruption: Divergences in understanding of Teaching & Learning needs & experience-based solutions for access in a large undergraduate course</p> <p>Kate Bernberg, Catherine Duncan</p>	<p>Breakaway 2 Session chair: Shane Pachagadu Chat moderator: Naledi Phahlamohlaka MS Teams Link Padlet link</p>
	<p>Humanising the Tech Curriculum: A Pedagogy of Empathy in Post-Fallist Computing Education</p> <p>Rennie Naidoo</p>	<p>Breakaway 3 Session chair: Sandile Mthembu Chat moderator: Natasha Munsamy MS Teams Link Padlet link</p>
16:10	<p>Closure Nazira Hoosen</p>	<p>MS Teams Link Conference evaluation form</p>

Programme: 11 September 2025 Forging Our Future Hybrid (Face-to-Face: Senate Room, 2nd floor Solomon Mahlangu House and Online) Padlet Link	
09:00	Registration & Tea
09:30	Welcome & reflection Dr Gerrit Wissing Session chair: Nazira Hoosen MS Teams Link
09:45	Keynote Address: " Reimagining Futures: Reclaiming the Social Mandate of South African Universities" Prof. Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis Session chair: Tania Van Der Merwe Chat moderator: Rieta Ganas MS Teams Link Padlet link
10:45	Poem: I am Mbali Zondo Session chair: Motlatjo Mabeba MS Teams Link
11:00	Session chair: Jacqueline Johnson Padlet Link Tea with Poster Presentation in Foyer Reimagining Postgraduate Learning: Reflexive Insights from a Tracer Study and the Lived Realities of New Wits Postgraduates Tanya Meyer
11:15	Dream Routes: Student Voices from Wits' OSUN Research-Creation network course on the Arts & Migration Prof. Brett Pyper Session chair: Nozuko Makhuvha Chat moderator: Fatima Rahman MS Teams Link Padlet link
12:15	Evaluating Health Science Educators' Awareness of Digital Game-Based Learning: A Step Toward Equitable Teaching Practices Amanda Jankowitz Session chair: Nazira Hoosen Chat moderator: Jean-Luc Greyvenstein MS Teams Link Padlet link
13:00	Session chair: Zamalotshwa Mlotshwa Padlet Link Tea with Poster Presentation in Foyer Reimagining Postgraduate Learning: Reflexive Insights from a Tracer Study and the Lived Realities of New Wits Postgraduates Tanya Meyer
13:45	Learning through play: Using gaming in academic advising Elizabeth Ndofirepi, Constance Khupe, Nabeelah Bemath, Shyla Pillay Breakaway 1: Senate Room Session chair: Antoinette Malgas Chat moderator: Motlatjo Mabeba MS Teams Link Padlet link
	Code Allergy and Anaphylaxis: Playing to Prepare - A Hands-On Workshop in Gamified Emergency Simulation for Pharmacy Students Amanda Jankowitz, Amber Cheng, Eileen Du Plooy, Ane Orchard Breakaway 2: SHB5 Session chair: Jean-Luc Greyvenstein Chat moderator: Dominique Woolridge MS Teams Link Padlet link
14:30	Session chair: Sandile Mthembu Padlet Link Tea with Poster Presentation in Foyer Reimagining Postgraduate Learning: Reflexive Insights from a Tracer Study and the Lived Realities of New Wits Postgraduates Tanya Meyer

15:00	Reimagining Social Work Education in South Africa: Authentic E-Learning and the Legacy of Fees Must Fall Agrippa Mabvira		Breakaway 1: Senate Room Session chair: Arshad Moolla Chat moderator: Mueletshedzi Ndwambi MS Teams Link Padlet link
	Learning in another tongue: Undergraduate occupational therapy students' experiences at Wits Erica Conibear, Lethabo Mahapa, Nompumelelo Tsotetsi		Breakaway 2: SHB5 Session chair: Tania Van Der Merwe Chat moderator: Neo Petlele MS Teams Link Padlet link
15:35	Comfort break		
15:40	Beyond the Clock: Reconceptualising Instructional Time Through Learner Engagement in South African Education Belinda van der Westhuizen		Breakaway 1: Senate Room Session chair: Rieta Ganas Chat moderator: Arshad Moolla MS Teams Link Padlet link
16:10	Closure Gerrit Wissing		Session chair: Fatima Rahiman MS Teams Link Conference evaluation form

Welcome to our conference



Prof Nicole De Wet-Billings

Senior Director: Academic Affairs

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this timely and vital conference, *Echoes of Protest, Vision of Praxis: Shaping Equitable Futures Through Learning and Teaching*. As educators, scholars, and change-makers, we gather for this conference not only to reflect on the resonances of past and present struggles for justice, but also to envision and enact transformative practices in our classrooms,

institutions, and communities. This space is an invitation to engage critically, collaboratively, and creatively with the challenges and possibilities of equitable education.

As Senior Director of Academic Affairs, I am deeply inspired by the commitment each of you brings to this convening. Your presence signals a shared dedication to reimagining learning and teaching as tools for liberation and social change. May this conference be a catalyst for bold conversations, meaningful connections, and actionable insights that shape a more just and inclusive future for all.

Welcome, and thank you for being part of this journey.

Keynote speaker Day 2: Professor Dina Zoe Belluigi



Dina Zoe Belluigi's research considers intellectuals' negotiation of the politics of participation in universities in contexts undergoing transition from conflict and oppression, and the conditions for the enactment of authorship, authority, flourishing and freedom. She has been fortunate to learn from the various methodologies of collaborating with educators, artists, storytellers and researchers based in South Africa, India, the island of Ireland and beyond. She is currently Professor of Authorship, Representation and Transformation in Academia at Queen's University Belfast, a Visiting Professor to the School of Women's Studies at Jadavpur University and to the

Chair for the Critical Studies of Higher Education Transformation (CriSHET) at Nelson Mandela University and serves on the Scholars at Risk Ireland committee.

Deliberations (with educators) on that made fragile: Academic commemorations of #Fallists' calls for decolonisation a decade on

In what ways may, and do, academic educators commemorate the radical calls of #Fallist movement a decade on? In the concept note for the University of the Witwatersrand's academic development conference, it is posited that there is virtue in remembrance through educational practice. This invited keynote reflects, firstly, on such possibilities of recollection for historical consciousness and praxes within the 'post'-colonial academy. Secondly, it connects with transnational scholarship on why the decolonisation of 'knowledge' (single) *within* the university matters, to discuss what this means for knowledges (plural) made fragile. As a deliberation for and with educators, it recognises the intellectual authority of educators in academia and affirms their individual and collective political agency to engender counter-hegemonic and reclamatory transformations through their professional freedoms, public intellectualism and social engagement. The talk draws primarily from "Why decolonising 'knowledge' matters: Deliberations for educators on that made fragile", a book chapter in *Higher Education for Good: Teaching and Learning Futures* edited by Laura Czerniewicz and Catherine Cronin (2023), Open Book Publishers, <https://doi.org/10.11647/obp.0363.05>

Keynote speaker Day 3: Professor Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis



Emnet Tadesse Woldegiorgis is a Professor and Director at the Ali Mazrui Centre for Higher Education Studies (AMCHES), University of Johannesburg. He holds a PhD from the University of Bayreuth, Germany, where he also worked as a researcher between 2015 and 2019. Emnet holds a joint master's degree in Higher Education Studies from Oslo University (Norway), Tampere University (Finland), and Aveiro University (Portugal). He is an established researcher with a portfolio of over 45 peer-reviewed academic publications, primarily focusing on research in higher education. Emnet has received advanced-level research

training in higher education from the Centre for Institutional Cooperation (ICIS) at Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, as well as specialised training in Leadership and Management of Higher Education Institutions from Maastricht School of Management. Emnet is currently the Chair of the World Council for Comparative Education Societies (WCCES) Peace Education Task Force. He is also an advisory board member of the Finnish Higher Education Partnership Programme (HEP) and a member of the Advisory Committee for the Danish Knowledge and Innovation Programme. Prior to pursuing his PhD, Emnet served in various roles, including Head of the Quality Assurance Office and Department Head of various academic entities.

Reimagining Futures: Reclaiming the Social Mandate of South African Universities

South African universities stand at a historical crossroads, caught between the unfinished business of post-apartheid transformation and the intensifying pressures of neoliberal globalisation. While significant progress has been made in expanding access and diversifying student demographics, deep systemic fractures remain, manifest in persistent inequalities, governance failures, epistemic marginalisation, and the corporatisation of academic life. This paper advances the argument that reclaiming the social mandate of South African universities requires reimagining their futures not merely as sites of knowledge production but as ethical, responsive, and socially embedded institutions. Drawing on global and local debates on social responsibility in higher education, the analysis emphasises the need to shift from a

supply-driven model of academic excellence to a demand-driven responsiveness to societal challenges, including inequality, decolonisation, and sustainable development. Ubuntu philosophy is invoked as a counter-hegemonic epistemology that transcends the public–private good binary by reframing higher education as a relational and shared good, fostering both individual flourishing and collective well-being. At the same time, strategic transformation requires moving beyond compliance-based reforms towards participatory governance, futures literacy, and ethical leadership. The paper contends that universities must reclaim their legitimacy through an emancipatory praxis that integrates responsiveness, epistemic justice, and social solidarity. The paper concludes that reimagining the future of South African higher education entails reclaiming the university's social mandate as a philosophical and practical project of humanisation, justice, and transformation.

Invited speaker Day 2: SRC President Ms Nombulelo Chiya



Nombulelo “Mkabayi” Chiya is a young, dynamic woman hailing from the heart of KwaZulu-Natal, who journeyed to the City of Gold with little more than a vision—to influence, to uplift, and to lead. Armed with resilience and a deep sense of purpose, Nombulelo has carved out a thriving path in both academia and activism.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in International Relations and Media Studies, and is currently pursuing her Honours in International Relations. Her academic pursuits are driven by a strong interest in conflict resolution, peacekeeping, and economic liberation on a global stage. For Nombulelo, these are not just theoretical interests, but urgent imperatives that shape the lived

realities of millions—particularly on the African continent.

Central to both her scholarly work and activism is a commitment to African self-determination and women empowerment. She believes that African challenges must be addressed by African people, through African solutions, and that women, especially young Black women, must be at the forefront of this transformation. Her values are deeply inspired by thinkers such as Siphamandla Zondi, who affirms that “We need to think about Africa from Africa in a way that restores the dignity of its people.”

Nombulelo stands as a testament to this vision—intellectually grounded, socially conscious, and unapologetically African. She embodies a new generation of young leaders who are not only dreaming of a better world, but actively working to create it—one lecture, one protest, one policy at a time.

Invited speaker Day 3: Mbali Zondo



Mbali Zondo is one of the five Siyaphumelela scholars for 2025. She had the opportunity to develop and present her "I Am" poem at this year's Siyaphumelela conference. She will recite this poem – a powerful expression of her personal journey, identity, and aspirations – at our conference.

Mbali is an Honours student in Health Systems Sciences at Wits University, originally from Johannesburg South. She holds a Bachelor of Health Sciences degree and is passionate about health equity and student advocacy. In 2023, she served as the Founder and Chair of Uthingo LwaseWits, an all-female student society. Mbali also served on the SRC Policy and Transformation Subcommittee and volunteered for two

years with Friends of Doctors Without Borders. She trained as a Gender Equity Office Advocate and supported students through the Office of Student Success. In 2022, she was named Wits' Most Outstanding Club and Society Leader. She is currently a graduate recruitment intern at the Wits CCDU where she assists in bridging the gap between students and industry.

Student Panel

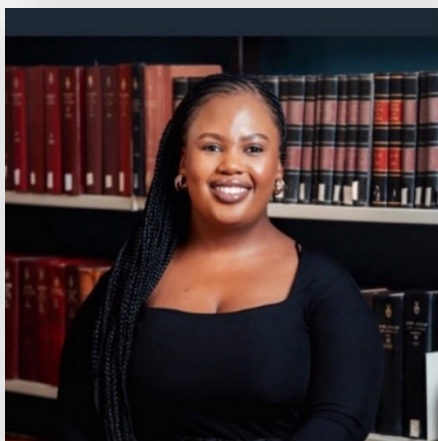
Panel Discussion: Echoes of Change: #FMF/#RMF's Call for Transformed Learning and Teaching at Wits

Facilitator: Dr Bernadette Johnson



Thato Mokoena

Thato Mokoena is a researcher and development practitioner working in education, youth development, and public policy. A former student leader during the #FeesMustFall movement at Wits and SRC Transformation Officer (2016–17), Thato's activism centred on access to higher education and institutional transformation—issues that continue to shape his academic and professional journey. He is the co-founder of Afromanifesto, a non-profit initiative tracking African election commitments to strengthen political accountability, and has worked in youth development, including running a civic and political education programme at Afrika Tikkun. Thato also designed and delivered a critical soft skills programme at BluLever Education, an artisan training institution. He is currently pursuing a Master's in Inequality Studies at Wits, focusing his research on the social impact of austerity and economic downturns on the African continent.



Omhle Ntshingila

Omhle Ntshingila is a South African writer, researcher, and activist. She serves as Project Coordinator at the Right2Protest Project, where she works on campaigns, research and strategic litigation protecting the right to protest and challenging state and corporate repression. Ntshingila is currently completing her master's in development studies, with research focused on gendered dynamics and transnationalism in informal cross-border trade. Ntshingila is also an author focusing on freedom of assembly, civic space, political memory, and leads cultural and policy work commemorating movements like #FeesMustFall. Ntshingila is passionate about youth development and works toward their realisation of their civic freedoms.



Zama Mthunzi

Zama Mthunzi is a Global Campaign Coordinator - transforming public education systems to be anti-racist – building a global movement on anti-racist public education and connecting with over 100 anti-racist education initiatives. This includes a strategic link to the University of Bristol School of Education (leading academics on race and education) and close work with global education movements. Zama was a #FeesMustFall/#RhodesMustFall movements leader of 2015/2016 at Wits University, in which he convened the direct-action task team of the movement and also initiated and led a protest against racism at Wits.



Shaazia Ebrahim

Shaazia Ebrahim (she/her) is the Digital and Communications Specialist at the Climate Justice Coalition, a South African alliance of trade unions, civil society, grassroots, and community-based organisations. She holds an MA in Transnational Queer Feminist Politics from SOAS, University of London. Her dissertation, titled 'Towards Queer Utopia: Building and Sustaining Feminist Revolution in South Africa', was awarded with distinction and received the Centre for Gender Studies' Dissertation Innovation Award.

She completed her Joint Honours in Politics and Philosophy at Wits University in 2016–2017, during the second wave of the Fees Must Fall protests, an experience that deepened her commitment to radical transformation and feminist theories of change. Shaazia was a journalist at The Daily Vox from 2016–2019 where she reported on everything from politics to pop culture, with a particular focus on protest movements - including Fees Must Fall and feminist mobilisations. Her work is grounded in a deep commitment to social justice, with particular interest in social movements, activist burnout, and the pursuit of radical but sustainable change.

Making a difference to communities that students value: Reflections from the WSOA Bridging Community to Classroom

Nonkululeko Vilakazi, Lucky Moeketsi

Colleagues and students in the Wits School of Arts (WSOA) have been responding in various ways to the imperatives surfaced by the #FeesMustFall (#FMF) and #RhodesMustFall (#RMF) movements. Several of these initiatives have converged in recent years to build a community of practice committed to connecting lecture and seminar-based engagement with experiential learning in community settings. Buttressed by a Bridging Community to Classroom grant from the Open Society University Network (OSUN), colleagues from five departments in the WSOA have been sharing their respective perspectives on experiential learning across a variety of undergraduate and postgraduate courses and across a range of arts disciplines. We draw on a range of scholarly approaches in advancing this work and share a strong interest in Etienne Wenger's cognizance of the importance of providing access to resources that enhance student participation in learning trajectories they can identify with. Crucially, this entails involving students in "actions, discussions, and reflections that make a difference to the communities *that they value*" (Wenger 2009, 215, emphasis added). Framed by an overview of all the participating courses in the WSOA's Bridging Community to Classroom community of practice, for this presentation, two courses will be reported on in more detail as case studies: service learning in Community Music, and Dance in Education.

Reference

Wenger, E. (2009). A social theory of learning. In Illeris, K. (Ed), Contemporary theories of learning: learning theorists in their own words (209-218). Oxford: Routledge.

Academics and students co-creating learning, teaching, research and scholarship: A COIL exploration

Rieta Ganas, Mosima Tsweleng, Eka Bikramchund, Lesego Setshele, Mathinus Van Staden, Jacqueline De Matos Ala, Neo Ligaraba, Ayanda Magida

Since 2015, higher education (HE) has become a fast-changing neo-liberal environment. This environment is characterized by digitally driven innovation, increased global competitiveness, massification and increasing sociocultural diversity demanding decolonization and transformation not only to curricula but the university itself. These influencing factors have led to unprecedented disruptions and protests challenging entrenched curriculum design, hierarchies, alienation and gatekeeping disciplinary practices. COVID 19 resurfaced and exacerbated these curriculum issues. The slow pace of curriculum decolonisation and transformation was recognised. However, the acknowledgement of innovative digital pedagogical and curriculum practices began to overshadow ongoing epistemic access and social justice limitations. An effective academic project required research-informed, multidisciplinary, contextually responsive and relevant curriculum agency to foster co-creation towards HE and societal transformation. Professional learning opportunities like the Post Graduate Diploma has strengthened academics' praxis towards curriculum change. Negotiated and co-created learning, teaching, research and scholarship practices with students, though, has remained elusive and vulnerable for both students and academics.

Engaging in a collaborative online international learning (COIL) project enabled the Wits team of COIL facilitators, academics and International Relations Master's students to experience new ways of equitable multidisciplinary curriculum negotiation and co-creation. Wits was paired with Kenyan academics and part time Master of Education Students from Kenyatta University. Responding to the broader COIL project based on An Enlightenment of Different Knowledges: Voices from Africa and Asia, COIL 3 focussed on the exploration of the enactment of digital democracy, through social media, for educational purpose. The curriculum was designed to use the knowledge focus area of Digital Democracy across both contexts as a pedagogical vehicle to enable the rethinking of research practices. This design facilitated the re/positioning of an experienced and emerging researcher's voice and social presence (personal, professional and public) from the global South. The co-created design enabled us to embrace the characteristics of researchers working with a wicked problem, reflect on our digital footprint and take ownership of our embodied stories. This was enacted through reflexive sharing of contextual knowledges on the value and impediments related to digital democracy and research enablement and challenges. We were further enabled to debate and challenge our taken for granted

assumptions with the entrenched norms of research practices that limits a researcher from the global South.

As COIL 3 participants, we have all experienced more than what was intended. We argue that productive curriculum disruption of traditional disciplinary design towards a co-created inter/trans/multi/cross disciplinary curricula can enhance epistemic access, learning and teaching agency and collective transformational intentions and experiences.

The proposed roundtable discussion will explore how the broader Wits community can productively shift towards co-created inter/trans/multi/cross disciplinary curricula aimed at contextually responsive graduates. Discussions will be initiated by a series of questions posed after an introductory presentation by Wits Coilers: What conditions would be necessary, at Wits, to enable the successful practice of co-created inter/trans/multi/cross disciplinary curricula? What can be the possible barriers to this process at Wits? In what ways can institutional leadership, management and policy enable this productive curriculum shifts while mitigating the risks to success?

Beyond English: Multilingualism, Power and Access in Higher Education

Selvarani Moodley, Seun Olukanmi, Pinkie Segodi, Alain Nyembwe
Jennie McAdam Naude, Liztie Prinsloo

Background: Despite South Africa's rich linguistic diversity, English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) continues to dominate academic spaces, often marginalising local languages and placing pressure on lecturers and students alike. The University of the Witwatersrand is a multilingual South African higher education institution and convenes numerous programmes to facilitate the successful onboarding of newly appointed academic staff. Against the background of the broader Higher Education landscape which is positioned in a country that has twelve official languages, it was noted that the staff onboarding process did not include specific attention to the University's language policy, nor awareness-raising regarding the realities of multilingualism and translingualism in this context. An exploration of the lived experiences of academics for whom English is not their first language but who engage in English Medium Instruction is therefore timely.

Aim: This study aims to investigate how university lecturers in a multilingual South African higher education institution navigate English Medium Instruction (EMI) in their teaching and learning practices.

Methods: Grounded in a social realist paradigm and informed by the concept of situated agentic work, this study adopts a pragmatic mixed methods approach. Data will be collected to explore lecturers' linguistic profiles, confidence levels, and pedagogical strategies in EMI contexts. We propose a panel discussion (led by the research group second language English speakers), with an invitation by conference attendees to contribute to the discussion. An invitation to participate will be circulated once ethical clearance is obtained.

Conclusion: The research aims to identify the challenges lecturers face when teaching complex or discipline-specific content in English and the strategies they use to support student understanding. The results will inform both institutional practices and scholarly discourse. Findings will contribute to debates on language policy, decolonisation, and inclusive pedagogy in higher education.

Decoloniality and Curriculum Relevance: Revisiting the relevance of relevance

Veerle Dieltiens

Amongst the demands of the #FeesMustFall movement was that curriculum should be relevant. The decolonialists understood curriculum relevance to be responsive to local social and economic imperatives and to identity and cultural issues. The curriculum, it was argued, ought to reflect the histories, culture and knowledge of the colonised. That take on relevance was a rejection of the idea of universities as 'ivory towers built on the shoulders of western intellectuals', on theories that have little resonance with African episteme or practical application to the problems of a developing country.

Some of the demands for relevance were vague. What were the parameters around 'local' and cultural identity? To what extent was 'Western' knowledge irrelevant and to be jettisoned? What was to be done with courses that were theoretically esoteric?

In this presentation I revisit the decoloniality ideal of relevance and the limits to which it is possible to implement.

I draw on an honours course on education theory to think through the implications of the demand for relevance. The course curriculum dates from before #FeesMustFall and studies topics on epistemology including positivism, interpretivism and critical realism. It also covers liberalism, Marxism and postmodernism. The readings are predominantly classical texts – Kant, Comte and Marx. The course outline notes that: "This course offers a challenging, reading intensive introduction to educational issues and debates arising from the theory of knowledge, and from considerations of educational institutions, curriculum, teaching and learning."

I unpack three areas in which this course might fail the relevance test set by #FeesMustFall: in its content (and readings), curriculum structure and in its very aim. I will argue that the main failing of this course in terms of relevancy is its aim – that is, it's implicit assumption that it is preparing future academics. Changing the aim of the course to be more relevant (to the students enrolling in the course and to the needs of the education system) may impact the course content and structure, but not as much as decolonialists might expect.

The proposal for the conference is to present a paper under the theme 'Echoes of Change' and for the audience to interrogate the argument and the conclusions I arrive at. The paper is my attempt to lay the groundwork for redesigning the course on educational theory, but also of use to the wider Wits community, it is meant to reflect on the purpose of an honours level course in the post-#FeesMustFall era.

Rethinking professional identity formation amidst protests and social upheaval: a journey in Africa

Mantooa Mokhachane, Ann George, Tasha Wyatt, Ayelet Kuper, Lionel Green Thompson

Introduction: The under-representation of minoritized or previously oppressed groups in research challenges the current universal understanding of professional identity formation (PIF). To date, there has been no recognition of an African influence on PIF, which is crucial for understanding this phenomenon in places like South Africa, a society in which the inequity of the apartheid era still prevails. In addition, there is little data examining how social upheaval could impact PIF.

Methodology: It is a qualitative phenomenological study with an African ontological grounding exploring medical students' lived experiences during medical training, which took place between 2015 to 2020. This study uses interviews conducted in 2020 with medical students and recent graduates to explore PIF within the context of social upheaval during the 2015–2016 protests that rocked South Africa when students challenged asymmetries of power and privilege that persisted long after the country's democratic transition. Thirteen participants were enrolled, 8 students and 5 recent graduates. Of these 13 participants, 9 were African while 4 were white. The participants were in years 1 to 4 of the Wits medical program during the #FeesMustFall protests.

Findings: In this paper, the combination of the primary author's (a Wits graduate who qualified as a medical doctor in 1988) autoethnographic story, weaved into the South African sociohistorical context and ubuntu philosophy, contributes to this study of PIF in the South African context. Using the participants' data, an African metaphor, the calabash, allowed the reorientation of PIF to reflect the influence of an ubuntu-based value system. Participants' experiences were framed and organized in two ways: a calabash worldview and the campus calabash. The calabash worldview is a multidimensional mixture of values that include ubuntu, reflections of traditional childhoods, and the image of women as igneous rocks, which recognizes the power and influence on PIF of the women who raised the participants.

Conclusion: Introducing an African ubuntu-based perspective into the PIF discourse may redirect the acknowledgement of context and local reality in developing professional identity. It also adds to the decolonisation agenda locally and internationally.

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Indigenising Mentorship: Towards a Framework for Early Career Academics in African Higher Education

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The envisaged study explores current mentorship practices in African higher education institutions and proposes a framework grounded in African epistemologies. Many current mentorship programs rely on Eurocentric models that may not fully align with the cultural and epistemological contexts of early career academics (ECAs) in Africa. These models often fail to reflect African values, worldviews, and leadership styles. This limits the authenticity and effectiveness of the mentoring experience for ECAs. Furthermore, this misalignment can hinder ECAs' professional development and the relevance of teaching and learning practices in African settings. By critically examining the integration of African-centred philosophies, such as Ubuntu, into mentorship, this research aims to develop a contextualised framework that fosters inclusive and empowering support for ECAs, rooted in indigenous African knowledge systems and practices. Through a qualitative case study of the Early Career Academic Development (ECAD) program at the University of the Witwatersrand, the study will use both interviews and focus groups to capture individual experiences and collective perspectives on mentorship. This approach, allows for a nuanced understanding of culturally relevant and contextually grounded practices, ensuring the proposed framework reflects both personal and communal realities. The findings will inform a mentorship framework emphasising relationality, communal learning, and holistic support. This framework aims to enhance ECAs' professional growth and teaching practices, creating inclusive and principle-based learning environments. Aligned with the conference theme, *Echoes of Protest, Visions of Praxis: Shaping Equitable Futures Through Learning and Teaching*, this work responds to calls for indigenisation by centralising African ways of knowing, empowering ECAs to contribute to a transformed, equitable African academy. Keywords: Indigenisation, mentorship, African epistemologies, early career academics, higher education, Ubuntu.

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Charting the Path Forward: Lessons from Health Sciences Curriculum developments

Lato Sete*, Angelina Chabalala*, Aashay Roop*, Carol Hartmann

In response to the evolving needs of health sciences education and the imperative for more equitable, student-centred, and decolonized curricula, the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) has initiated a structured and iterative curriculum development process across its undergraduate programs. This initiative foregrounds the processes of mapping, auditing, and engagement as critical drivers of informed decision-making and sustainable curriculum transformation.

This process includes the use of LOOOP, a curriculum mapping tool that enables transparent visualization of what is taught, by whom, and where across departments. By systematically mapping courses and aligning them with programme outcomes, the tool not only supports conceptual coherence but also enables targeted discussions about workload equity, credit distribution, and content redundancies.

Complementing this are analytics-driven reviews of student throughput and workload—each offering a lens through which to interrogate curriculum design and its impact on progression and learning experience. This section of curriculum development focuses on key statistical inputs such as Throughput & Progression Analysis which is used to analyse student progression patterns year-on-year but as well as identifying equity gaps based on performance or retention trends.

By showcasing these processes, this contribution highlights how structured, participatory, and data-rich approaches can promote transparency, and drive responsive curriculum re/development. Attendees will engage in the processes conducted by FHS to better understand the steps that can be taken to better their curricula or field which they are in.

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Harmonising Research, Teaching, and Citizenship to Enhance Student Learning: Perspectives from Mid-Career Academics at Wits University

Neo Ligaraba, Natalie Benjamin-Damons, Catherine Musuva, Mpho Molete, Nicholas West

This paper presents practical strategies for balancing the interconnected roles of research, teaching, and academic citizenship; collectively known as the academic triangle, to sustain academic integrity and enhance student learning. When harmony exists among research, teaching, and academic citizenship, academics can effectively manage demands without compromising the quality and integrity of their scholarship. Conversely, imbalance threatens both professional integrity and the quality and justice of the student learning experience. Drawing on one year of collaborative inquiry with five mid-career academics from diverse faculties at Wits University, we apply a social realist framework to demonstrate how structural conditions, institutional culture, and individual agency can be leveraged to optimise academic role performance. We highlight targeted institutional practices such as senior mentorship programmes, HR systems that recognise diverse forms of scholarship, and streamlined administrative processes that create enabling environments expanding academic agency. These support systems empower lecturers to harmonise their evolving roles, align personal aspirations with institutional priorities, and deliver rigorous, and transformative scholarship. By centring academic voices and fostering inter-faculty cocreation and peer mentoring, the academic triangle emerges as a dynamic, integrated tool for cultivating inclusive, socially responsive, and student-centred universities, where academic integrity and student success mutually reinforce one another.

Towards Critical Inter / Trans / Post-Disciplinarity: Reflections from the WSOA's Interdisciplinarity Study Group

Andrea Hayes, David Andrew, Brett Pyer

This panel reports on a UCDP-supported project that explores how interdisciplinarity is understood and taught within the Wits School of Arts (WSOA). Against the backdrop of national crises such as #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall, and the Covid-19 pandemic, through this case study we investigate how disciplinary boundaries are being challenged and reconfigured to enhance epistemic access in South African tertiary arts education. During times of crisis, colleagues and students called, among many other imperatives, for a more agile approach to the traditional academic disciplines, often looking to interdisciplinarity as a potential solution. Several WSOA departments have subsequently expanded their interdisciplinary course offerings at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and some departments have even been renamed to convey disciplinary reconfigurations. This panel reports on a collaborative project that documents and analyses how interdisciplinarity and related concepts are understood and taught in different disciplines and by different stakeholders in our school. If a crucial component of a curriculum lies in making explicit to students how particular disciplines tend to work, lecturers teaching interdisciplinary fields/regions need to make multiple modes of disciplinary thinking explicit in comparative perspective. This entails more than teaching more than one discipline at a time: it relativises disciplinary knowledge in ways that can be demanding for both students and lecturers as they adopt meta-disciplinary perspectives. We are responding to a strategic need to develop a critical understanding of interdisciplinarity and its relationship to disciplines to enhance teaching and learning in the arts.

Digitally Mediated Zones of Proximal Development: Generative AI, Socioeconomic Stratification, and the Future of Equitable Learning

Sithenjisiwe Dube^(a), Malcolm Weaich^(a), Rodney Genga^(a), Raazia Moosa^(a), Fatima Rahiman^(a), Laura Dison^(a), Fiona Macalister^(a), Shirra Moch^(a), Thabang Kaneli^(a), Fezile Wagner^(a), Greig Krull^(b), Lindelani Mnguni^(c), Marike Kluyts^(a), Kershree Padayachee^(a).

As generative artificial intelligence (GAI) becomes increasingly embedded within higher education, it has begun to reshape pedagogical practices and transform how students interact with knowledge and one another. However, its potential to support scaffolded progression within students' zones of proximal development (ZPD), as positioned by Vygotsky, (1978), particularly through informal pathways that position GAI as an 'artificial' more knowledgeable other ('A'-MKO), is an ongoing inquiry. This UCDP-funded study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from an institutional survey with qualitative insights drawn from six focus group discussions to examine and explore engagement with GAI tools and its perceived impact on the students' zones of proximal development. Findings interpreted and explained through a constructivist paradigm reveal a possible shift and a dual narrative in students' engagement with GAI. Thematically analysed data from focus groups, together with existing literature, suggests students may now experience greater autonomy and flexibility in engaging with curricular content, suggesting that students are less reliant on formal instructional pathways. The data also suggests the potential for increased self-paced learning and a reduction in cognitive strain. This could have implications for the approaches to learning and the development of less tangible outcomes, such as time management, flexibility and adaptability. An added layer of complexity is the significant disparity in GAI engagement, demonstrated by the quantitative inferential analysis. GAI engagement across socioeconomic groups ($U = 44,207.5$, $p < 0.0133$), highlighted that undergraduate students on financial aid (NSFAS) interact with GAI tools less frequently ($U_a = 100,992.50$, $U_b = 68,078.50$, $p < 0.0133$), unable to tap into the full benefits of GAI as an 'artificial' more knowledgeable other ('A'-MKO). We propose the Paradox of Digital Scaffolding (PDS), the purpose of which is to explain the tension wherein GAI may represent a democratising force, and a mechanism that entrenches existing inequities. It signals the emergence of a stratified learning ecology, conceptualised here as the 'Digitally Mediated' Zone of Proximal Development ('dm'ZPD), a space where students' ability to leverage GAI as an 'artificial' more knowledgeable other ('A'-MKO) is shaped not only by cognitive readiness but by socioeconomic positioning. Beyond issues of access, GAI, as an 'artificial' more knowledgeable other ('A'-MKO), may be viewed as an additional dimension to existing peer-to-peer engagement by granting access

to foundational learning otherwise constrained by limited digital literacy, language proficiency, or prior educational exposure. The Paradox of Digital Scaffolding (PDS) warrants critical dialogue on how 'Digitally Mediated' Zones of Proximal Development ('dm'ZPDs) can be intentionally shaped within higher education to foster equitable peer learning, and how GAI-facilitated engagement might be leveraged to disrupt, rather than reinforce, epistemic stratification.

Keywords: *Autonomous Equitable Learning, Artificial-MKO, Digitally Mediated Socio-Constructivism, Digital Scaffolding, Generative Artificial Intelligence*

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Thinking or Delegating? The University's Authority in the Age of AI

Daniel Wilke

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) reshapes higher education, universities face a critical crossroads framed by the conference theme, which invites reflection on historical challenges and future possibilities in education, calling for active, equitable responses rather than passive adaptation. Against this backdrop, universities must ask: Will they maintain their role as epistemic authorities that are responsible for defining, verifying, and cultivating knowledge and understanding with critical human judgment, or will they delegate this role to automated systems? This presentation examines how AI is transforming assessment, learning, and motivation, highlighting the urgent need for praxis that resists epistemic erosion and centres equity, integrity, and critical engagement. Through intentional design and ethical stewardship, universities can harness AI not as a replacement but as a catalyst for deepening their role as guardians of intellectual development and equitable futures.

Assessment reflects and reinforces the university's authority as a trusted institution of criticality and knowledge. When online or AI-assisted assessment is poorly designed, universities risk not just weakened learning outcomes but the erosion of their credibility as assessment authorities. If the public loses trust in the university's capacity to evaluate knowledge rigorously and fairly, it undermines the institution's unique role. While online platforms may offer faster, scalable, on-demand, potentially more affordable and better provisioning of content, they do not certify learning in a way that is epistemically accountable, pedagogically grounded, or reflective of a person's actual competence with certainty. Certification must signal more than completion; it must represent verified, contextualised understanding. Without this, universities risk becoming indistinguishable from online content providers, losing their authority to shape, assess, and uphold the value of knowledge, which is socially trusted and meaningful.

The opportunity remains that when designed with intention, AI can enhance the university's epistemic authority, learning and research mission. AI can automate administrative burdens, enabling educators and students to shift from task-driven learning to deeper conceptual engagement. It can support timely feedback, personalised learning pathways, and structured iteration. Crucially, AI should not replace academic judgement but extend it within systems that uphold rigour, challenge passive use, and require human-led direction and verification of AI outputs. This presentation will share experiences and opportunities on how AI can scaffold critical thinking rather than automate outcomes; how to design assessments for iteration, reflection, and sustained motivation; the institutional risks when

assessment systems lose human oversight; AI co-creation opportunities; and the responsibility of critical verification. These points aim to stimulate future discussions on future-oriented AI integration in learning and assessment anchored in the university's enduring role as a site of critical thinking, fair evaluation, and stewardship of knowledge and insight.

Roundtable discussion: Opening Peer Conversations about Reading

Fouad Asfour - Wits Reading & Writing Centre (RWC) and the Wits Writing Programme (WWP) team i.e Kgaogelo Lekota, Lerato Seohatse, Nobantu Shabangu, Annabel Nyongwana, Rachel Kongolo, Joshua Ward, Gabrielle Mudiwa

Two posters: Collaborative experimental writing and Fanon isiZulu Reading Group poster

In this roundtable discussion, the team of the Reading and Writing Centre (RWC) will present activities and projects towards a variety of reading-rich programmes and projects for the Wits community. In partnership with Wits Departments, Schools and Libraries, projects are currently developed for a pilot phase which aim at opening up conversations about reading, how to cultivate peer learning and to create spaces for reading for pleasure. The Centre works in collaboration with Writing Intensive courses that are coordinated by the Wits Writing Programme (WWP) which will also host the Wits Writing Festival in late October 2025. The presentation aims to inform Wits colleagues about its work, to inspire possible points of collaboration and to hear feedback and questions about its work.

The presentation responds to the theme of the second day that asks about current activities that will generate environments of more equitable and student-centred learning. In our contribution we want to highlight how the Reading and Writing Centre (RWC) continues to offer spaces based on reading and learning in community, inspiring students to learn from each other through peer review and by creating spaces that invite communal reading to highlight togetherness, slowness and mindfulness. We will present existing and planned reading-rich projects that are developed in partnership with Wits Departments, Faculties, Schools and Libraries, aiming at facilitating spaces for informal learning. For the second half of the year, the team is working, among others, on Open Mic and Poetry readings, the Reading Nook Initiative, the continuation of the Fanon isiZulu Reading Group, Black Praxes and other Reading and Writing Groups and the Wits Writing Festival.

These main focus of the RWC is to facilitate trans-disciplinary spaces of informal learning by initiating reading for pleasure events and by developing further opportunities to students to enjoy reading. One of the key elements of RWC is the space on the ground floor of Wartenweiler Library which reflects our drive towards non-hierarchical interdisciplinary collaboration. It breaks away from the top-down lecture hall style and instead functions as an open and adaptable space. As many of you will know it can be a space which invites one-to-one consultations, the

meetings of reading and writing groups, an adaptable room for workshops, a stage for poetry readings, book launches, festival sessions. The WWC has been a flexible gathering space responding to audience demand. The RWC team hopes to engage the audience of this conference in a conversation about how to create conducive spaces and opportunities for deep and pleasurable reading, which put the reader first and allow them to browse, learn, and enjoy. We know the context: the fragmentation of learning due to information disorder, the de-skilling of students due to the ubiquity of AI suggestions, the lack of concentration because of the lure of the phone. How can we bring back alternative spaces, which offer the experience of deep reading, human to human exchange, as a crucial part of the repertoire of learning in the 21st century?

Teaching Pathology with a Twist: Exploring the Use of an Integrated Chatbot

Sunila Savage-Reid

This contribution aligns with Day 2 of the CLTD conference, showcasing PathPal as a digital innovation that enhances student engagement and supports inclusive, self-directed learning through AI in an integrated curriculum in undergraduate medical education.

PathPal is a closed, AI-powered chatbot developed collaboratively developed by 4 departments within the School of Pathology. It has been integrated into ulwazi for the GEMPIs. Unlike discipline-specific bots, PathPal adopts an integrated approach, offering MBChB students a single, unified platform for engaging with the diverse subfields of pathology. This contribution supports the University of the Witwatersrand's integrated teaching philosophy by leveraging digital innovation to create a cohesive and engaging learning experience across the boundaries of multiple disciplines. PathPal embeds AI-driven support within undergraduate medical education to promote critical thinking, self-directed learning, and meaningful student engagement within an integrated curriculum, and paves the way for future integrated AI tools across different levels.

PathPal supports student agency through active, self-paced exploration and critical engagement with pathology topics. Its accessibility fosters equitable learning opportunities, particularly for students from under-resourced backgrounds. The bot's integrated design helps break down disciplinary silos—supporting epistemic justice and promoting a more holistic, decolonial understanding of medical knowledge.

Digital Arts and Audiology Collaboration for Development of Afrocentric Digital Audiology Material and Resources

Selvarani Moodley

South Africa is the only country in Africa with consistent access to audiology services and the longest history of training audiologists. The impact of this on the attainment of SDGs in Africa needs to be seriously considered, and plans made for developing this area of healthcare and inclusion of disability.

In addition, it is essential to develop programme material and services that are Afrocentric, accessible and relevant to the population. Digital arts technology has the potential to revolutionize how audiologists interact with patients, especially in remote or telehealth settings. In addition, it has the potential for the creation of digital technology that is Afrocentric and relevant to the developing world context.

The following projects are part of an existing collaboration between the digital arts and audiology departments. The project aims to create Afrocentric digital material to improve audiology access and resources that will be applicable for use in African countries

- a) Development of an interactive, story-driven game that educates users on audiology appointments and hearing tests, promoting hearing health awareness among various age groups.
- b) An awareness website targeted towards South African youth aged 18 to 35, aiming to promote hearing health education and inspire behavioural change through engaging with digital media and content.
- c) creating an Afrocentric digital avatar that would appeal to different age groups and cultures for a practitioner that could ask case history questions.
- d) explores the development of a culturally grounded mobile video game designed to support early hearing screening for children aged five and older in South Africa.
- e) develop, deploy, and analyze a culturally appropriate VR-based system for evaluating an aspect of vestibular function.

We propose a discussion of the projects (by the students) and a showcasing of the collaborative work that is being done across departments, to address unique African challenges and to develop Afrocentric materials and resources for healthcare.

Rooted in Justice: Transgressive Pedagogies for Inclusive and Sustainable Science Education - a cross-University initiative within South Africa

Shalini Dukhan, Tonderai Muchenje, Sakyiwa Boateng, Buyiswa Hlangothi, Tendani Mawela, Kershree Padayachee

This cross-institutional TAU project responds to the theme Enacting Equitable Practices: Current Academic Practices for Student-Centred Learning and Teaching, Decolonised Curricula, and Responsive Teaching Praxis. It spans five South African institutions, including Wits, that reimagines science education through the lens of social justice, sustainability, and epistemic access. Using the Baobab tree as a central metaphor, the initiative grounds curriculum transformation in resilience, identity, sustainability, and ethics of care. It highlights how academics are enacting equitable practices through student-centred, inclusive teaching approaches that bridge access gaps and promote socially just knowledge production. One component addresses science and mathematics anxiety among STEM students by adopting emotionally responsive, resilience-building pedagogies. These include academic and affective self-regulated learning strategies that improve retention, reduce anxiety, and promote career readiness in humanising learning environments. Another component tackles the lack of science career awareness among youth by sharing video interviews of diverse biologists. These narratives promote belonging, provide relatable role models, and connect academic content to real-world professional pathways. In the postgraduate ICT curriculum, social justice is embedded through critical reflection activities that prepare students to act as ethical and community-focused ICT4D practitioners. These activities are integrated into an online module to develop student agency and critical awareness. A pedagogy of care underpins digital learning practices, promoting emotional and academic well-being through trust-building, personalised tools, and relational equity. The initiative advances transgressive sustainability teaching by integrating diverse knowledge systems, encouraging students to question dominant paradigms and explore the interconnectedness of ecological, social, and economic systems. Through critical engagement, students reflect on power in science and its societal role. This contribution is proposed to be delivered online in a Showcase format and offers participants practical insights into how South African academics are transforming science education to be more equitable, responsive, and socially relevant.

Reimagining learning in undergraduate teaching: a case study of storytelling as an inclusive pedagogical strategy

Johan Ferreira

Traditional approaches to teaching statistics often prioritise theoretical exposition and technical application. However, these conventional methods can be supplemented by unconventional means to address diverse student needs and views, particularly to circumvent barriers to access and engagement, given the current speed at which data and information are consumed by students inside and outside a lecture hall. In response, we designed an assignment-style concept to complement a third-year statistics course to incorporate a creative, student-centred intervention: the development of fictional narratives where statistical concepts become characters in original short stories. This initiative draws on literature in creative cognition and inclusive pedagogy, aiming to foster deeper conceptual understanding through imaginative engagement.

Students voluntarily participated in this storytelling exercise, which was designed to activate alternative cognitive pathways and reduce anxiety often associated with complex statistical content. The activity can also be viewed as a decolonial pedagogical strategy, challenging traditional epistemic hierarchies by valuing diverse modes of expression and knowledge-making. After suitable collation and editing, a collection of short stories from consenting participants was published as an open-access short story anthology. Subsequently, this newly developed resource "by students, for students" was piloted in a large undergraduate class to establish its potential for pedagogical value. Through initial qualitative analysis of student reflections, we explore how this approach supports inclusive, project-based learning and peer-led knowledge construction.

Initial findings suggest that integrating creative writing into the statistics curriculum not only enhances critical engagement but also bridges access gaps (digital, cultural, and cognitive) by offering multiple entry points into advanced statistical thinking. This work contributes a practical and potentially replicable model for curriculum supplementation that aligns with the broader goals of equity, inclusion, and autonomy for students in higher education.

Reflections on responses to disruption: Divergences in understanding of Teaching & Learning needs & experience-based solutions for access in a large undergraduate course

Catherine Duncan, Kate Bernberg

This research examines the recent redesign of the first-year arts theory course, *Film, Visual and Performing Arts 1A* (FVPA1A), in response to the past decade of contextual instability and evolving student needs. Originally launched in the early 2000s as the undergraduate academic major for all professional arts degrees at the Wits School of Arts (WSoA), FVPA1A continues to be a focal point for broader debates around curriculum design for a diverse student body. In 2024, the Department of Interdisciplinary Arts and Culture Studies (IACS) initiated a series of consultations with WSoA colleagues to reassess the course's content, structure, and pedagogical priorities.

This paper reflects on the decisions made in response to this feedback. This redesign was informed by the incremental shifts in teaching practice over the past decade, many of which were shaped by external disruptions such as emergency remote teaching and the move into blended instruction, the #FeesMustFall movement, Covid-19 lockdowns, and the emergence of generative AI.

Developing a curriculum required a cumulative response to these changes where we found structural interventions, rather than seeking consensus on either content or teaching practice, offered an effective means of addressing disparate concerns from the various stakeholders in the course. At the same time, we found our touchstone pedagogic principles of authenticity (Villarroel et al., 2019), constructive alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2011), and active learning (Biggs, 1999) outpaced by prevailing issues in South African Higher Education and indicating a need for re-engagement and adaption. In this paper we share key outcomes from the redesign that improved student experience, reflect on the changes that have not been as successful or straightforward, and propose ways that we might mitigate against future difficulties we encounter.

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Experiences of First-Year Students of a Critical Social Justice and Citizenship Module at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

Sebastian Sanjigadu*, Marcia Ngubane, Zamokuhle Magubane, Sphamandla Nkambule, Antoinette D'amant

The transition to university presents both academic and social challenges, particularly in courses that engage with critical social justice and citizenship education. This qualitative case study explores the experiences of first-year students enrolled in a Critical Social Justice and Citizenship module at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Using Education for Transformation as the theoretical framework (Mezirow, 1991; Freire, 2000), the study examines how students engage with transformative learning, reflect on their positionality, and navigate issues of power, privilege, and identity within the module. Data was generated through student reflections and individual interviews with 20 participants, providing rich narratives of their engagement with the course content.

The study is informed by scholarship on critical pedagogy and social justice education (Walsh, 2025; Chianese & Bombardelli, 2024), which emphasizes education's role in fostering civic engagement and challenging systemic inequities. Findings highlight themes of personal growth, resistance, and shifts in critical consciousness, shedding light on the transformative potential and challenges of social justice education in higher education contexts. These insights align with research advocating for a critical-democratic approach to citizenship education (Rye, 2024) and the promotion of active global citizenship (Laia & Djaya, 2025). This study contributes to the discourse on transformative pedagogy, emphasizing the role of critical education in fostering active citizenship and social change.

Keywords: *Social justice, Consciousness, Education, Democracy, Action*

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Reimagining Postgraduate Learning: Reflexive Insights from a Tracer Study and the Lived Realities of New Wits Postgraduates

Tanya Meyer

This presentation offers a reflexive and practice-based engagement with the postgraduate student experience at Wits. It draws on a tracer study of MA Social and Psychological Research cohorts from 2015 to 2023, as well as our perspective as recent entrants to both the programme and the institution. Situated within broader debates on transformation and decoloniality in higher education, this presentation examines how postgraduate programmes might better accommodate the diverse academic and professional pathways of students in research-focused disciplines.

Reflections on the tracer study showed that graduates follow diverse, non-linear paths shaped by both local contexts and global academic demands. This raises questions about whether rigid curricula can meet the varied goals of postgraduate students. We suggest introducing flexible content streams within existing modules, allowing students to engage with topics relevant to their intended pathways without expanding the formal curriculum. This approach could offer more responsive learning while maintaining coherence across the programme.

Aligned with the theme of Day 3, which focuses on forging our future through academics co-creating the next decade of learning and teaching, our reflections speak directly to Wits 2033's strategic commitments to flexible and lifelong learning, expanded postgraduate education, and inclusive learning environments. We also engage with the 2025–2029 Learning-and-Teaching Plan, particularly its goals of empowering self-directed learners and supporting student success through responsive systems.

Our contribution takes the form of a poster presentation and invites participants to reflect on how these insights might inform programme-level dialogue. In addition to proposing greater curricular flexibility, we extend our reflections to related areas of support that emerged through our experience. These include the need for clearer orientation processes and structured mentorship opportunities. Taken together, these suggestions could help students navigate diverse trajectories and build a stronger sense of belonging within the postgraduate environment.

Dream Routes: Student Voices from Wits' OSUN Research-Creation network course on the Arts & Migration

Brett Pyper

Since 2022, the Wits School of Arts' Department of Curatorial, Public and Visual Cultures has invited postgraduate students from across Wits to apply for a free, extra-curricular, cross-campus course focusing on migration viewed from the perspectives offered by art practices. This network course has been taught in collaboration with La Universidad de Los Andes (Bogotá, Columbia) and Bard College (Berlin, Germany) and has been supported by the Open Society University (OSUN). Within Wits, it has also featured a pertinent case study located in the African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS), the *Atlas of Uncertainty*. This hybrid course explores ways in which research-based art-making practices can generate new insights about the perennially urgent question of migration and displacement globally. Participating students have had an opportunity to read and engage across disciplines, interact with guest artists, visit sites of migration and artistic presentation, and gain experience in mounting a performance/exhibition in a space that is mutually selected. The class has offered opportunities for collaboration between students with mutual thematic and/or methodological interests, as well as online exchanges with students taking the same course in Berlin and Bogotá. This year's cohort comprised fifteen students who mounted a co-curated closing exhibition at The Origins Centre in May. This contribution to the conference, which aligns with the theme of Day 2 (Enacting Equitable Practices) will foreground a selection of these student works and voices. Particular emphasis will be placed on experiential learning and on the efficacy of an itinerant pedagogy that resonates with the critical theme of migration.

Evaluating Health Science Educators' Awareness of Digital Game-Based Learning: A Step Toward Equitable Teaching Practices

Amanda Jankowitz

This presentation introduces a rigorously developed and validated survey instrument designed to assess health science educators' awareness, understanding, and implementation of Digital Game-Based Learning (DGBL) and gamification at the University of the Witwatersrand. In response to the increasing demand for student-centred and technologically integrated pedagogies, the study employed a comprehensive literature review and expert validation process to ensure the instrument's clarity, relevance, and reliability.

The survey development followed a structured methodology, including a scoping review, item generation from five key studies, and iterative feedback from experts in health sciences and educational technology. Face and content validity were established through expert panels using visual analogue scales and qualitative feedback, resulting in a refined instrument that captures educators' use of technology, conceptual understanding of DGBL, and practical application in teaching.

Aligned with the CLTD 2025 theme of "Enacting Equitable Practices," this work underscores the potential of DGBL to foster inclusive, engaging, and transformative learning environments. The findings reveal both enthusiasm and uncertainty among educators, highlighting the need for clearer definitions, targeted professional development, and institutional support for integrating game-based strategies.

The session will be delivered in person as an interactive showcase. Participants will explore the validated survey, engage in a hands-on DGBL activity, and reflect on the ethical and practical implications of gamification in health sciences education. This collaborative format encourages dialogue, co-creation of knowledge, and shared strategies for advancing equitable teaching practices.

By offering a validated tool and a platform for critical engagement, this presentation contributes to the broader discourse on innovation in higher education and supports the development of responsive, inclusive curricula in the health sciences.

Learning through play: Using gaming in academic advising workshop

Elizabeth Ndofirepi, Constance Khupe, Ms Nabeelah Bemath, Shyla Pillay

In this workshop, we will showcase and play the Wits Success Prints Crash Course board game. The Success Prints Crash Course® game was developed at Montana State University in the USA and after securing licensing agreements, we customised it for the Wits University context. The customisation was multi-phased: 1) trial playing of the original game with students; 2) gathering information from the university website and other sources, focusing on key spaces, places, processes, and the ways things are done, thereby creating the Wits story; 3) focus group discussion with staff and students to validate and consolidate previous data; 4) customisation of the game elements; 5) production of prototype and trial sessions with senior management, teaching staff and academic advisors at Wits University, student support practitioners at the University of Johannesburg and some delegates at the 2022 FYE SANRC conference; 6) revision as per feedback from trial play and, 7) final production and launch of the Wits edition, featuring participation from senior management, staff, and students. We use the Wits game as a support intervention during orientation to help students navigate the university environment, learn academic and life skills, and address campus challenges without real-life consequences. The game can also be an icebreaker, team-building and social networking tool. The Wits Success Prints Crash Course game has expanded from teaching and learning to First Year Experience initiatives and in university residences, catering for a diverse student population. We have received positive feedback for our gameplay as facilitators. Evaluation of this intervention is ongoing. This process highlights the importance of thoughtful customisation and involving multiple stakeholders. We propose to hold a workshop that begins with a brief background on the game intervention, followed by a play session with attendees, and concludes with a discussion on the gameplay experience and its potential application in participants' contexts. Keywords: board game, gameplay, academic advising, intervention, customisation, orientation.

Code Allergy and Anaphylaxis: Playing to Prepare – A Hands-On Workshop in Gamified Emergency Simulation for Pharmacy Students

Amanda Jankowitz, Amber Cheng, Eileen Du Plooy, Ane Orchard

This workshop introduces *Code Allergy and Anaphylaxis: Pharmacy Edition*, a simulation-based learning game designed to enhance pharmacy students' preparedness for managing anaphylactic emergencies. Developed using Articulate Storyline and grounded in constructivist and behaviourist learning theories, the tool integrates gamification with clinical decision-making to foster critical thinking, real-time responsiveness, and reflective learning.

Participants will engage in a live demo and guided playthrough of the simulation, stepping into the role of a pharmacy student navigating a high-stakes emergency. The session will unpack the game's pedagogical foundations, design strategies, and feedback mechanisms that support inclusive and student-centred learning. Insights from pilot testing, including student feedback and engagement data, will be shared to illustrate the tool's impact on confidence and competence.

The workshop will also include a collaborative discussion on adapting and scaling similar tools across disciplines, with a focus on equitable access, digital inclusion, and ethical integration of technology in learning environments.

Aligned with the spirit of #FMF/#RMF, this session showcases how digital simulations can transform emergency preparedness training, making learning more relevant, responsive, and empowering. Attendees will leave with practical ideas for reimagining teaching praxis through gamified, participatory learning.

Keywords: *gamification, simulation, pharmacy education, emergency preparedness, inclusive learning, digital pedagogy*

Reimagining Social Work Education in South Africa: Authentic E-Learning and the Legacy of Fees Must Fall

Agrippa Mabvira

The unpredictability of the future warrants academics to deeply review the way learning and teaching occurs. This presentation shares insights from a project involving South African social work educators who together redesigned social work courses using authentic, technology-enhanced learning methods. Motivated by a shared commitment to pedagogical innovation, decolonisation and social transformation through education, this project developed real-world scenarios, strategies and guidelines to improve teaching and learning in social work. The project emphasised co-learning and democratic, decolonising collaboration amongst the educator researchers. Accordingly, this presentation seeks to highlight how some of the practical outcomes of the project are in fulfilment of demands of the #FeesMustFall movement such making education more accessible and inclusive. The presentation will also highlight how the redesign of social work courses in line with authentic e-learning elements such as multiple perspectives, authentic real-world context and reflection meet the #FeesMustFall demand for decolonised and African-centred education. The presentation outlines the key steps taken in the redesign process, including participatory planning, curriculum alignment, and integration of contextually relevant digital tools. I will further examine the nexus between these pedagogical shifts and the broader demands of the #FeesMustFall movement. It is anticipated that this presentation will contribute to debates on visionary yet practical proposals for future Wits curricula that are deeply decolonised, locally and globally relevant.

Key words: *Authentic E-Learning, Decolonisation, #FeesMustFall, Social Work Education*

Acknowledgement: This work was supported by the National Research Fund under Grant [numberSRUG2204264860]

Learning in Another Tongue: Undergraduate Occupational Therapy Students' Experiences at Wits

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Supervisor: Mrs Erica Conibear

This study explores the experiences of undergraduate occupational therapy students at the University of the Witwatersrand who speak English as an additional language, focusing on how linguistic diversity shapes their engagement with the curriculum. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with twelve first- and second-year students, the research reveals how language proficiency intersects with academic participation, often limiting access to conceptual understanding and classroom interaction. Importantly, students themselves articulated these challenges, as well as the innovative strategies they employ to navigate them—such as using AI tools, peer learning, and personalised study techniques. The findings underscore the need for institutional support mechanisms, including language-sensitive tutorials, peer-led initiatives, and accessible learning materials. By centring student voices and resisting deficit-based narratives, this study contributes to a praxis of equity in higher education. It aligns with the conference theme by echoing the protest against linguistic exclusion and envisioning transformative practices that foster inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments. In doing so, it offers actionable insights for institutional transformation and the cultivation of occupational therapy practitioners equipped to serve diverse communities.

Beyond the Clock: Reconceptualising Instructional Time Through Learner Engagement in South African Education

Belinda van der Westhuizen

Instructional time in South African education is traditionally defined through policy-mandated seat time, yet this narrow measure overlooks the quality and depth of learner engagement that truly drives transformative learning. Responding to Fallist calls for more equitable, student-centred learning environments and aligning with the conference theme of shaping equitable futures through praxis, this conceptual paper reimagines instructional time from an engagement-based perspective. Drawing on Kahu's (2013) Engagement Theory and Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural constructivism, the paper examines behavioural, cognitive, emotional, and contextual dimensions of engagement that extend beyond mere physical attendance. Methodologically, it combines a conceptual analysis of key policy documents (e.g., DBE, UMALUSI) with a synthesis of active learning research, including the ICAP framework (Chi & Wylie, 2014). Findings suggest that instructional time should be reconceptualised as "time spent in demonstrable, meaningful engagement," applicable across face-to-face, hybrid, and asynchronous contexts. This engagement-based approach provides a practical pathway to address persistent inequities in access and participation by valuing diverse modes of learning and recognising students' lived realities. The paper proposes an actionable framework to guide policy reform and teacher professional development, advocating for measures of instructional time that capture active participation, cognitive processing, and emotional investment. This redefinition aligns with global shifts towards competency based, learner-centred education and offers concrete tools for Wits academics and policymakers to design and assess more inclusive and effective learning experiences. By moving beyond traditional seat-time, this work presents an original, policy-relevant perspective that foregrounds engagement as central to educational equity and quality. The paper ultimately contributes to current debates on decolonisation and transformation by centring student experience and shared responsibility for meaningful learning.

Keywords: *Instructional Time, Learner Engagement, Active Learning, Educational Policy*

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Humanising the Tech Curriculum: A Pedagogy of Empathy in Post-Fallist Computing Education

Rennie Naidoo

This presentation shares findings from a study that explores how humanising pedagogies can be applied in computing education to support inclusive and socially just learning. The intervention took place in a final-year Systems Analysis and Design course, where students from diverse disciplinary and educational backgrounds engaged in a User Experience (UX) Design Thinking project. The aim was to introduce empathy-driven methods in a traditionally technical and efficiency-focused curriculum. Students developed UX maps, including personas, customer journey maps, and empathy maps, each linked to a real-world social issue aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This shift repositioned the learning focus from technical outputs to emotional understanding, relational care, and user-centred problem solving. The project aimed to challenge dominant models of computing education shaped by corporate logic and to make space for more responsive, ethical design thinking. To evaluate the impact, a phenomenographic methodology was used to examine the variation in how students experienced and understood the UX tools. The study identified four categories of student experience: scepticism, adjustment, practical utility, and user-centeredness. These categories reflect students' differing ways of making meaning, influenced by their backgrounds and prior exposure to design thinking. The findings reveal that empathy-based design tools can support deeper engagement, critical reflection, and inclusive thinking when introduced with care and context. The study concludes that one-size-fits-all approaches in computing education often fail to accommodate learner diversity, and that post-Fallist curricula must be both technically rigorous and grounded in care, justice, and co-creation. This presentation offers a practical example of how educators can redesign technical courses to support more equitable futures by embedding empathy, listening to student perspectives, and transforming how we think about design itself.

Keywords: UX design thinking, inclusive pedagogy, phenomenography, decolonial curriculum, user-centred learning, empathy, curriculum transformation, computing education, humanising pedagogy