

COMBER

Focus

Community-based educational research is defined as a partnership of students and community members who collaboratively engage in research with the purpose of solving a pressing educational problem to generate knowledge, skills, and processes that will enhance sustainable learning and development. The focus of COMBER is thus equally on two aspects of the collaborative and participatory research: 1) Researching with participants how to deal with issues they identify as impacting negatively on their lives. Since the researchers in this entity work in fields of Learner Support and Educational Psychology, the knowledge generated is related to the development of people, systems, and organisations to provide sustainable psycho-social support to actualize individual, relational, and collective strengths to optimise learning and development and minimise barriers that impede it. 2) Researching the process of forming and sustaining collaborative partnerships for transformation in education. Transformation is understood in this context as a movement towards the collaborative development of contextually-relevant education curriculum, systems, and policies that are inclusive, just, and democratically created.

Aims and objectives

The main aim of COMBER is to support community-based research aimed at the development of methodologies, theory, and practice based on a holistic, systematic, and integrated approach to the promotion of well-being. The knowledge generated will contribute to social transformation applicable to a local as well as a global scale. Specific objectives to reach this aim are:

- To develop theory to enable an improved systematic and critical understanding of how multiple systems interact to impact on the learning and development of various forms of community.
- To generate knowledge to inform the development of pre- and in-service teacher education (pre, postgrad) programs to promote an integrated holistic and ecosystemic understanding of learning and development within the educational context.
- To develop process-oriented, community- and evidence-based strategies to enhance the learning and development of educational communities, particularly those recognised to be most vulnerable.
- To develop holistic integrated strategies to facilitate enabling and inclusive spaces across all levels of interrelatedness in new communities,
- To develop the expertise of academics involved in the program to enable them to develop international research collaborations in this field.
- To take the research to scale whereby communities adopt and adapt processes that are informed by the knowledge generated by this entity.

Director

Prof Lesley Wood



Academic Qualifications:

- BA (Strathclyde, UK)
- BASS (Cum Laude) (UNISA)
- MA (UPE)
- DEd (UPE)
- PGCHE (Cum Laude) (NMU)
- DLitt (Moravian College, USA)
- Registered Social Worker

Research Interests - I am interested in researching aspects that impact on the psychosocial wellbeing of learners, teachers and other education stakeholders. I operate from a participatory transformative paradigm and partner with community stakeholders to help them to develop capacity to take action for sustainable change. My research has included projects with learners, teachers, school leadership, governmental officials, and the wider community. My specific expertise includes HIV/AIDS in education and related social justice issues, sexuality education, prevention of substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy, and action research for educational transformation. My methodologies are participatory with a specific focus on action research for social change and professional development. My students benefit from being part of projects funded by the NRF and various other external funders.

National research Foundation (NRF) rating: Category C2

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Deputy Leader

Prof Ansie Kitching



Academic Qualifications:

- BA (UFS)
- HED (Cum Laude) (UFS)
- BEd Psych Hons (Cum Laude) (UP)
- MEd Psych (Cum Laude) (UP)
- PHD Psychology (NWU)
- Registered Educational Psychologist

Research Interests - I focus on enabling school communities. The overarching aim of my research is to ensure that the health and wellbeing becomes part of the core business of schooling in South Africa. Although currently addressed in policy, efforts to promote mental health and wellbeing do not sufficiently include all stakeholders involved in school contexts. The current efforts mainly focus on serious problems of risks and are often fragmented in nature. I therefore identified a need for an alternative approach that is holistic in nature and aimed at the integration of the current efforts into an integrated multi-level, multisystemic process as proposed in research across the globe. My ongoing research focuses on the development and implementation of an integrated multi-level process to facilitate the promotion of holistic whole school well-being.

Under my guidance and supervision as an honours, masters, and PhD student, you will have the opportunity to develop skills to become a social change agent who is capable of facilitating the promotion of holistic wellbeing in various contexts. You will also become part of a network of people across the globe who believe that wellbeing should be the core business of schooling and work diligently to ensure that it is achieved.

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Adult and Lifelong Learning

Prof Akpovire Oduaran



Academic Qualifications:

- BEd Hons in History (University of Benin, Nigeria)
- MA in Adult Education Programme Development (Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria)
- PhD (University of Ibadan, Nigeria)

Research Interests - Adult and lifelong learning, continuing professional development, literacy, open and distance learning, intergenerational relationships.

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Educational Psychology and Learner Support

Prof Johnnie Hay



Academic Qualifications:

- BA
- BA Hons (Clinical Psychology)
- MA (Clinical Psychology)
- PGCE (Guidance and Counselling) (PU for CHE)
- PhD in Child Psychology (UFS)
- Educational and Clinical Psychologist

Research Interests - Education Support Services, Inclusive Education, student learning, Life Orientation, registered counsellor training, and emotional issues of learners.

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Educational Psychology and Learner Support

Prof Macalane Malindi



Academic Qualifications:

- BEd
- BA Hons (Psychology)
- MEd (Special needs & Support Services)
- MEd (Educational Psychology)
- PhD (Learner Support)

Research Interests - Youth resilience (street-involved children, orphans, and teen mothers)

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Life Orientation

Prof Julialet Rens



Academic Qualifications:

- BA (PU for CHE)
- HED (PU for CHE)
- BEd (PU for CHE)
- MEd (PU for CHE)
- PhD (NWU)

Research Interests - Readiness of beginner teachers, Life Orientation and Life Skills as important school subjects and diversity and values.

Contact Information:

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Life Orientation

Dr Carolina Botha



Academic Qualifications:

- BSc (UFS)
- BSc Hons (UFS)
- HED (UFS)
- MTh (UNISA)
- PhD (UFS)

Research Interests - Beginner teachers, pre-service teacher education, reality shock, theory-practice divide, Work Integrated Learning, Teaching and Learning.

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Learner Support

Dr Elmari Fouché



Academic Qualifications:

- BA (NWU)
- BA (Hons) (NWU)
- MA (NWU)
- PhD in Industrial Psychology (NWU)
- ADT (Advanced Diploma in Teaching)

Research Interests - The well-being of the educator in SA and psychological health within educational settings.

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Life Orientation

Dr Carmen Joubert



Academic Qualifications:

- BPsych (NWU)
- MA (NWU)
- PGCE (NWU)
- PhD in Education Psychology (NWU)

Research Interests - Resilience of teachers using interventions to enable them.

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Educational Psychology and Learner Support

Dr Doret Kirsten



Academic Qualifications:

- BA (PU for CHE)
- NHOD (Cum Laude) (RAU)
- BEd Educational Psychology (Cum Laude) (RAU)
- MEd Educational Psychology (Cum Laude) (UJ)
- MA (Cum Laude) (NWU)
- PhD in Psychology (NWU)

Research Interests - Psychological well-being (measurement and promotion in various application fields). Mindfulness (measurement and promotion). Neuropsychology (executive functions).

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Educational Psychology and Learner Support

Dr Illasha Kok



Academic Qualifications:

- BSc (PU for CHE)
- HED (UNISA)
- BEd Hons (UNISA)
- MEd (PU for CHE)
- PhD (PU for CHE)
- BSc Hons (NWU)
- MSc (NWU)
- HPCSA Registered Psychologist

Research Interests - As Research psychologist my interest is focused on the improvement of psychological wellbeing of teachers in diverse school settings. One of the main aspects of health promoting schools is the wellbeing of teachers and I am especially interested in the advancement thereof in the South African school context. My research is motivated by the pragmatic paradigm and therefore I am compelled to mixing qualitative and quantitative models of research to provide me with the freedom to develop profound relationships with the participants to achieve the desired research results. I can support students in Learner Support to develop various research skills through conducting research independently and develop programs to assist teachers and enhance challenging areas in the fields of my expertise.

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Learner Support
Dr Thabo Makhalemele



Academic Qualifications:

- BEd
- BEd Hons (Guidance & Counselling)
- MEd (Special Needs & Support Services)
- PhD (Learner Support)

Research Interests - Learner Support and Inclusive Education.

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Continuing Education
Dr Moshweu Mampe



Academic Qualifications:

- PhD (NWU)

Research Interests - Inclusive Education.

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Educational Psychology

Dr Jeanne Meiring



Academic Qualifications:

- PGCE (cum laude) (UNISA)
- BSocSci (UP)
- BSocSci Hons (UP)
- BEd Hons (Cum Laude) (UP)
- MEd (Cum Laude) (UP)
- PhD (UP)
- Registered Educational Psychologist

Research Interests - Self-determination theory, identity, self-regulation and resilience.

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Learner Support
Dr Marinda Neethling



Academic Qualifications:

- PhD in Learner Support (NWU)

Research Interests - My research and teaching-learning philosophy focuses on community engagement through a participatory way to enhance practical and contextualized teaching and learning. The aim is to encourage sustainable educational transformation. My vision and mission are to develop self-efficacy for students to become life-long, critical and innovative thinkers when implementing inclusive education in their classrooms.

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Educational Psychology and Learner Support

Dr Lynn Preston



Academic Qualifications:

- MEd
- PhD in Educational Psychology specialising in Trauma Interventions
- Registered Educational Psychologist

Research Interests - My research is conducted within COMBER, with a focus on community support in a medical environment by providing Psycho social education to the community. The main aim of the research is to encourage and promote health especially mental health in a primary care setting and ensure that it is acknowledged implemented and reaches everyone right down to the grassroots level.

Even though mental health is widely publicized, and many policies are in place it still sadly takes a backseat in South Africa. Due to this a more combined effort in the public primary care sector is needed to provide a holistic approach to mental health. This I feel can be achieved by combining the educational aspects of Health promotion and well-being with the medical needs of the individual. Furthermore, my research is transdisciplinary in nature which promotes cooperation and teamwork across all disciplines with all role-players.

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Educational Psychology and Learner Support

Dr Wanda van der Merwe



Academic Qualifications:

- BA (UP)
- BEd (UNISA)
- BEd Hons (UNISA)
- MEd (UNISA)
- PhD (UNISA)
- Registered Educational Psychologist

Research Interests – My research is conducted within COMBER with an emphasis on psycho-social wellbeing in a community context. The main goal of the research is to encourage and promote mental wellness, by means of expressive therapies, with a special focus on the utilisation of photo therapy.

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Learner Support

Dr Elsabé Wessels



Academic Qualifications:

- Higher diploma in Education (NWU)
- BEd Hons (NWU)
- MEd (NWU)
- PhD (NWU)
- MAPP (NWU)

Research Interests - Firstly, I do community-based research with teachers who work in under-resourced contexts because they face many challenges within the workplace that negatively affect their experiences of wellbeing. Reason being that research indicates that if teacher wellbeing improves the teachers create a more enabling climate for teaching and learning. I work collaboratively with teachers to help them find ways to improve their experiences of wellbeing following a participatory action learning and action research design (PALAR).

Secondly, I engage in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) to do research on how I can improve my own teaching practices when teaching language to Foundation Phase student teachers. I focus on covering the theory-practice gap. The research designs involve Self-Study Teacher Research (SSTR) and PALAR.

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Life Orientation

Me Lettie Botha



Academic Qualifications:

- BEd (NWU)
- BEd Hons (NWU)
- MEd (NWU)

Creative Arts Education

Ms Merna Meyer



Academic Qualifications:

- BEd (UP)
- BEd Hons (UP)
- MEd (NWU)

Early Childhood Education and Learner Support

Ms Andri Schoonen



Academic Qualifications:

- BEd (NWU)
- BEd Hons (NWU)
- MEd (NWU)

Learner Support

Ms Suegnet Smit



Academic Qualifications:

- MEd (NWU)

Research Fellow

Prof Petra Engelbrecht



Academic Qualifications:

- HED (UNISA)
- BEd (UP)
- MEd (Psych) (Cum Laude) (UP)
- PhD in Educational Psychology (UP)
- Doctor of Education (Honoris Causa):
University of Eastern Finland, Finland, 2014

Research Interests - Inclusive education in diverse cultural-historical contexts.

National research Foundation (NRF) rating:
Category B3

Extraordinary Professor

Prof Mary Brydon-Miller (University of Louisville, Kentucky)



Academic Qualifications:

- MA (University of Massachusetts)
- BA (University of California)
- PhD in Environmental Psychology (University of Massachusetts)

Research Interests - Educational and Community-based Participatory Action Research, International Higher Education, Research Ethics, Environmental Education and Climate Change Advocacy.

Honorary Research Fellow

Prof Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt



Academic Qualifications:

- PhD in Literature (University of Queensland)
- PhD in Higher Education (Deakin University)
- DLitt in Management Education (International Management Centre, UK)
- Honorary Doctor of Professional Studies
(Global University for Lifelong Learning, US)

Research Interests - Improving practice and advancing theory in higher education and communities through participatory methodologies of collaborative action learning, action research and action leadership, with an emphasis on social justice, sustainability, alternative globalisation, self-directed transformational learning, and knowledge creation as knowledge democracy.