



Friday Feel-Good News FACULTY OF EDUCATION

9 June 2023

The North-West University greets Prof Kobus Mentz

It is the end of an era for Prof Kobus Mentz at the North-West University (NWU). Prof Mentz started his career as a Mathematics teacher, and in 1985 became a lecturer and researcher at the then Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (PU for CHO), currently known as the North-West University.

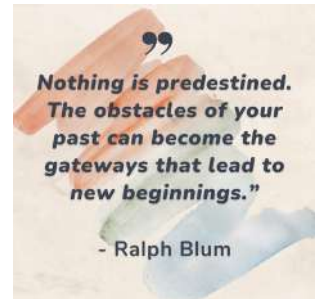
The School of Professional Studies in Education (SPSE) held farewell functions for him on the three campuses. Being the gentleman that he is, Prof Mentz seized the opportunity to visit all three campuses for old times' sake to greet the individual campus staff members and to spend some quality time with them.

During the last farewell event on the Potchefstroom Campus, Prof Lloyd Conley thanked Prof Mentz for his outstanding leadership qualities and contributions to the NWU, and especially to the Faculty of Education, where he held the position as school director of the SPSE.



This is not only the end of an era for him at the NWU, but also the beginning of a new era for Prof Mentz. He has been appointed and will take the reins as the rector at the "Akademie Reformatoriese Opleiding en Studies" (Aros).

We at the NWU would like to wish Prof Mentz all the best in his new position and we know that he will lead that institution to the best of his ability too.



Literature Day, 19 April 2023

Sponsored by the English for Education subject group and the student literary arts group known as the [Jagger Bee Society](#), Literature Day surpassed the expectations of its 2023 theme, **“Literature Alive!”**.

In this annual celebration on the Potchefstroom Campus, students, faculty and staff take a moment from their regular routines to acknowledge and celebrate the importance of books and reading in their lives. Perhaps you saw the Literature Day programme on the student-created poster that accompanied a curated book exhibit at the main library on 19 April? Most of the day’s literature-inspired activities took place in C6, the Education Building, which became the stage for impromptu photo shoots of literary characters dressed in **“Can you guess who I am?”** costumes.

Imagine Dorothy and Toto from *The Wizard of Oz*; Alice who dropped in from *Wonderland*; Coraline from Neil Gaiman’s eponymous novel; Dr Strauss from *Flowers for Algernon*; Hazel Grace from *The Fault in Our Stars*; as well as Sherlock Holmes, all four *Little Women*, and even Hannibal Lecter.

Other participatory activities included a four-hour read-a-thon during which students and faculty members read aloud from Lois Lowry’s *The Giver*; a collaborative writing venture in which

students contributed sentences from prompts that created stories in the categories of adventure, South Africa, science fiction/fantasy, humour and mystery; literature-themed performances (short monologues and group dramas) in the C6 hall; and a literary scavenger hunt during which students matched quotations on the walls of the building to their authors and characters.

The 2023 version of Literature Day expanded the festivity’s reach with two “stories and strings” performances, a melding of oral literature and the language of music. A noontime reading session on the portico of C6 featured a poetry reading with guitar accompaniment. In the late afternoon, a student storyteller in the lobby of C6 presented an indigenous story with English translation alongside music students playing the violin and the uhadi, an African stringed instrument. Finally, throughout the day, the entire NWU community joined in the fun as they listened to administrators, lecturers and a student reading literary excerpts on 93.6 fm, the campus radio station. Clearly, the campus enjoyed a literary buzz in April this year!



Super teachers in the making through WIL excursions



Between 2 and 24 May 2023 the first-year Bachelor of Education (BEd) students at the North-West University attended several successful virtual or face-to-face excursions. The excursions were specially designed to develop a sense of belonging for these students and sensitise them to the complexity of the teaching profession. Two sets of excursions were held: six face-to-face excursions for contact students and five synchronous virtual (online) excursions for the distance students. Groups averaging 450 students from the Mahikeng, Vanderbijlpark and

Potchefstroom campuses attended the face-to-face excursions in sets of three days each. The virtual excursions averaged group sizes of 100 distance students from different locations in sets of two days each.

Through discussions and hands-on activities that included aspects of cultural inclusion and social justice, the role of the teacher as an agent of change, engaging pedagogies that best facilitate learning in the classroom and some aspects of entrepreneurial learning, students were expected to reflect on what it means to become a SUPER teacher.

The students who attended the face-to-face excursion had a unique and immersive experience.

They had the opportunity to participate in various activities, to learn from practice, to attend the bonfire, to celebrate the rainbow nation through a cultural concert, play drums and hike. They could see, touch, and interact with the exhibits or surroundings, which provided a multi-sensory experience. The students could engage in direct conversations with facilitators, tour guides and peers, fostering social interaction and collaboration.

On the other hand, the students who attended the virtual excursion had a different but equally enriching experience. Despite not being present physically at the location, they were able to participate virtually through the Zoom online platform. Through high-quality multimedia presentations, videos and live streaming, the students could still observe, work in small groups and engage in critical discussions. They had the advantage of accessing a wide range of resources, including virtual reality simulations and interactive tools, which enhanced their understanding and engagement. The virtual excursion also provided flexibility in terms of time and location, allowing students to participate from their homes or classrooms.



Although they missed out on the physical presence and direct interaction, the virtual excursion offered convenience, accessibility, and the opportunity to explore destinations that otherwise may have been inaccessible.



Open Day: Vanderbiljpark Campus

On 13 May 2023, the Vanderbiljpark Campus kicked off their Open Day with an unforgettable showcase of what the faculty has to offer. Dr Elize Kung, acting deputy director of the School of Language Education, and Mrs Janet Kruger conducted a slide presentation on the APS scores and prerequisites for BEd studies in the hall of the Samanco Building. Lecturers and administrators were located outside the hall to answer any queries that students had and prospective students received flyers about the different qualifications our faculty has to offer.

The day was a great success. Many thanks to the staff members who assisted the prospective students to discover their future path to success.



Open Day: Mahikeng Campus

On Saturday, 20 May, the Mahikeng Campus held its 2023 Open Day. The occasion was an extreme success. The day was blessed with the presence of our executive dean, Prof Conley, our deputy dean for Research and Innovation, Prof Dudu, our deputy director for the School of Language Education, Prof Hove, and a team of both academic and administrative staff, together with our student leadership, who all contributed towards the success of the day. Prospective students had an opportunity to visit the faculty,

where presentations were made on the programmes within the faculty that are available to them. The faculty set up a stall, which was colourful, fun and interactive, with various games being played and some prizes to be won. The bright eager faces of our prospective students made all the efforts put into the 2023 Open Day worthwhile.



Open Day: Potchefstroom Campus



Open days are always a thrill! Meeting new prospective students, sharing our experience in the Faculty of Education and providing advice in terms of career choice. This year, the African Languages subject group decorated their table beautifully with their African artwork, the Technology group showcased their projects, and we also had the Afrikaans group brightening our campus with LEGO. Our prospective students had fun playing games and building cool stuff.

Vast numbers of learners filled our SAC stall, which was beautifully decorated, to ask for information, play games and win some cool stuff. Despite the Education campus being far from the main campus, many learners attended the information sessions and were keen to find out more about our programmes. We met a lot of super future teachers and we cannot wait to welcome them to our faculty next year.



Kiddi Beat Workshop



The Kiddi Beat Practical Workshop focusing on Music Education for children aged 3 to 6 years was organised by Ms Benita Taylor and Dr Stef Esterhuizen from the COMBER ECD strand.

The workshop was arranged with skills development in mind.

Practitioners from ECD centres in North West and Sedibeng East attended the workshop on Friday, 21 April 2023 from 13:00 to 17:00.

The 35 practitioners form part of the Bafenyi Project in North West and the Thutopapadi Project in Sedibeng East, Gauteng.

The practical and interactive workshop was presented by Ms Grethe Uren, director and owner of Kiddi Beat MSP Potchefstroom, and consisted of a theoretical part and a practical part in which

practitioners divided into five groups to create musical instruments. The workshop also included discussions and demonstrations on how these instruments, made from recycled materials, can contribute to promoting learning in the early years. Practitioners thoroughly enjoyed the workshop, as can be seen in the photos attached.

Our sincere appreciation to the National Research Foundation (NRF), who sponsored the workshop.

Nurturing a research partnership with the University of Crete

Prof Charl Wolhuter and Prof Ewelina K Niemczyk, Edu-HRight Research Unit members, visited the University of Crete, with which the research unit (including Prof Johan Botha) has a long-standing research partnership. The visit included participation in the conference funded by the European Union to address the skills mismatch between education and employment. Prof Wolhuter delivered a keynote address titled “Education Skills Mismatch: Perspectives from Comparative and International Education Paradigms”. Meanwhile, Prof Niemczyk presented a paper co-authored with her MEd student, Mariska Basson, on optimising the quality of higher education in a constantly changing world, focusing on the South African context. The visit also allowed for setting a sustainable research agenda with Prof Konstantino Karras and his research team.



Prof Charl Wolhuter & Prof Ewelina Niemczyk

COMBER welcomes international collaborations in early childhood education

Prof Chris Pascal (extraordinary professor in COMBER) and Prof Tony Pascal (Birmingham, UK) visited the Potchefstroom Campus from 21 to 25 May. The aim of the visit was to discuss research collaboration between the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC), the Childhood Association, Braga, Portugal, and COMBER. On Tuesday, 23 May, Prof Tony addressed the COMBER members on “The importance of transforming early childhood pedagogy for a post-pandemic future”. He argued for the importance of developing the individual potential of every young child to be the best he/she can be. Prof Chris Pascal explained why she felt that flourishing children matter, and she

based her explanation on evidence of eudaimonic well-being. She emphasised the importance of social interaction in allowing young children to flourish.

COMBER members accompanied the visiting professors to various project sites in Promosa, Potchefstroom and Tembisa to experience the everyday life of the young South African child in early childhood centres of education.

COMBER members are looking forward to continuing discussions at the APEI 30th European Early Childhood Education Conference (EECERA) in Portugal from 30 August to 2 September.



Participatory Visual Methods Workshop



Prof Lesley Wood, assisted by Dr Andri Schoonen, presented a workshop on participatory visual methods on Friday, 19 May. The workshop was aimed at students who would embark on their fieldwork soon, but it also attracted participants from Social Work and Urban Planning who are engaged in the DST Science Shop project led by Prof Lesley. Evaluations indicated that the workshop was fun, helpful and informative for all participants, who experientially learnt both theory and practice by applying their learning to conduct PhotoVoice data generation, analysis and problem identification, as well as by using collages for the same purposes. In addition, they composed a found poem and took part in object metaphor exercises.

Edu-HRight Virtual Discourse: 2023

The Right to Education in Rural South Africa: School Closures - a Best Practice and Research-led Approach

The research unit for Education and Human Rights in Diversity (Edu-HRight) presented a discourse that was held on 16 March 2023 in collaboration with the Legal Perspectives, Governance and Democracy research subarea, and the Education Law subject group. The discourse focused on the multiplicity of factors that need to be considered in reforming rural education policy to ensure equal and quality education in rural areas. It was facilitated by Dr Nicholas Mollo, the subarea leader. A keynote address that focused on getting maximum education from micro schools - meeting the multifaceted challenge of the case of rural schools was presented by Mr Christopher Cordeiro from LearnFree. Comments were made by Prof Jan de Groof (extraordinary professor at Edu-HRight and professor at the College of Europe).

Members of a panel, including The Hon M Sukers (MP) - member of the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education, Mr Ghalid Jacobs - manager of Institutional Management and Governance, Western Cape Education Department, and Mr Dumanisi Mabunda - secretary-general of the Congress of South African School Governing Bodies, made very important remarks during the discussion. Joining from the floor were executive director Tshegofatso Phala and senior attorney Anjuli Maistry from the Equal Education Law Centre. The notable persons in the audience were The Hon Dr Wynand Boshoff (MP) - member of the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Mr Daniël Eloff - director of Hurter & Spies Attorneys, NWU management, NWU academics and academics from other universities. Thank you to everyone who attended the discourse.

Promoting postgraduate students' partnerships in BRICS nations

On 25 April Prof Ewelina K Niemczyk, Edu-HRight member, along with her doctoral student, Mr Carlo Daniels, delivered a guest lecture about educational developments in BRICS countries to postgraduate students at the East China Normal University. The invitation to deliver a lecture originated from Prof Nicholas Peng with the intention of complementing his module about the exploration of educational reforms from a comparative perspective, as well as of expanding existing scholarly partnership.



Prof Niemczyk engaged in the interactive exchange of information with students, drawing attention to the origins, developments and complexities of the BRICS organisation. Meanwhile, Mr Daniels focused on the BRICS educational sector and the comparison between China and South Africa as member states. The three-hour guest lecture culminated in Prof Peng's call to create additional knowledge-exchange opportunities for postgraduate students at our respective universities.



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June 2023

Happy

Birthday

to everyone celebrating
their birthday this month