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## AWARDS: EASA Medal of Honour 2020

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**Prof Josef de Beer**

Prof Josef de Beer was the proud recipient of the prestigious Medal of Honour for 2020. He is a research professor at North-West University, and holds a C2 NRF rating. He is well known for his high-level achievement in the field of education research. He has 29 years of teaching experience in higher education (three years in the Faculty of Science at the University of Pretoria; the other 26 years in teacher education, at respectively Vista University, the University of Johannesburg, and currently North-West University).

Prof de Beer has published in highly regarded international journals such as the *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *Research in Science Education*, and the *American Biology Teacher*. In addition, he has also published in local high-impact journals such as the *African Journal of Research in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*. He is the co-editor of the acclaimed Pearson publication, *Becoming a Teacher*, and has recently published an AOSIS scholarly book, titled *The decolonization of the curriculum project: The affordances of indigenous knowledge for self-directed learning*.

In addition to his record of consistent publication in renowned academic journals and scholarly books, Prof de Beer's significant contributions to the field of Education is evident in the numerous awards he has received over the years. These include the HELTASA National Excellence in Teaching award (2009), the University of Johannesburg's Vice-Chancellors Distinguished award for Teaching Excellence in (2008), and the USA-based National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT) Research award (2012). At his current institution, he has received the award of most productive researcher in the Faculty of Education (external funding) for both 2016 and 2017. Most recently, Prof de Beer received the prestigious 2019 NRF National Excellence in Science Engagement award for his ongoing work and contribution to engaging societies in the natural sciences.

Prof de Beer has successfully supervised 35 post-graduate students (17 Masters and 18 PhD students) to date, at respectively the University of Johannesburg and North-West University. Some of these students have become leaders in education, e.g. Dr Neal Petersen (Director: School of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education) and Ms Lizanne de Villiers, who received the Vice-Chancellors medal for the best Masters study in 2017.

Prof de Beer is an active member of the National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT) in the USA, and received accolades in the form of an Excellence in Life Sciences Research Award in 2012, for his contribution to the Association and the work they promote. He specifically focuses on enhancing the international footprint of NABT.

He has succeeded in securing research funding over the years and has managed funded research projects with great success. He was the recipient of one of twelve national Fuchs Foundation flagship programme awards, to the value of R 2.5 million in 2016. During the period 2016 to 2019, he (and his team members) presented short learning programmes (SLP's) to Natural Sciences and Mathematics teachers, and workshops to school learners, on indigenous knowledge related to science and mathematics themes, with the ultimate goal of promoting learner interest in STEM themes. The Fuchs Foundation funding (as well as NRF funding: CPRR [98915] and IKS [99014], to the value of R 3 million) made it possible to present these SLP's and workshops across the country (North-West, Gauteng, Free State, Limpopo, Northern Cape, Western-Cape and KZN), and to also provide teachers with classroom resources.

During the past three years and as a result of his ongoing work in the field, Prof de Beer and his team has provided professional development interventions to around 600 teachers. The impact of this involvement may in turn have affected the lives of thousands of school learners, who may as a result better appreciate the role of science in their everyday lives.