

Education

FOR TOMORROW

NMMU's Foundation Phase degree programme to set benchmark in meeting education needs in SA

Growing next generation teachers

THERE is a national shortage of teachers in the Foundation Phase – that critical first phase of a child's schooling – and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University has made significant changes to grow the teacher pool and also enhance how learners are taught.

A key change has been to adopt a tried-and-tested, learner-centred philosophy that is helping Foundation Phase teachers make a greater difference in the lives of the learners they teach. It's a benchmark approach in South Africa's Foundation Phase education.

The second major change is shifting the BEd Foundation Phase programme from NMMU's South Campus to Missionvale Campus, where it is better placed to reach the schools where strong Foundation Phase teachers are needed most – to truly make a difference (see page 2).

Over the past few years, the curriculum for the BEd Foundation Phase Programme has been re-designed, based on leading educational research, notably the Reggio Emilia philosophy, psychological research and learning theories.

The Reggio Emilia philosophy of child development with its metaphor of the "hundred languages of children" (see page 5) was developed by Italian educational psychologist Loris Malaguzzi. He felt that traditional education's one-size-fits-all approach was limited and therefore developed an alternative, innovative philosophy of education that draws on art, drama, languages and music to maximise the potential and many different forms of intelligences of all children. The new curriculum has been developed to give all children, including children from disadvantaged areas, an equal opportunity education-



A BETTER FUTURE ... Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University's Foundation Phase programme aims to benefit all children with their new curriculum, new philosophy of teaching and new location at Missionvale Campus. See pages 2 and 3. Photo credit: Riaan Labuschagne

al springboard. "At NMMU we strongly recognise Foundation Phase teaching and all teaching as an incredible profession and a daring profession to be part of," said Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning, Professor Denise Zinn. Foundation Phase teachers are responsible for the educational foundation of children from Grade R to Grade 3. How and what they teach, and how they engage in the classroom, profoundly influences the life path of these children.

"Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University is proud to say it has the leading Foundation Phase degree programme

The Foundation Phase covers the first few critical years of formal schooling where learners from Grade R to Grade 3 are equipped with the bedrock on which they will build the rest of their education. Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University is increasing both the quality and quantity of tomorrow's teachers with its re-curriculated, benchmark Foundation Phase programme.

in South Africa, with a wealth of experience in this area dating back several decades," says the Executive Dean of Education, Dr Muki Moeng.

"Where the Foundation Phase is concerned, we have to get the message

out there that if we do not get the foundations or basics right, the rest of the building is not going to stand.

"Our new programme is aimed at addressing this and attracting committed students and scholars who will

go on to become quality Foundation Phase teachers at schools throughout the Eastern Cape and beyond." The Faculty is proactive about implementing the Department of Education's new policy of "More Teachers, Better Teachers" – which sparked the redesign of the curriculum for the BEd Foundation Phase Programme.

"We need to re-imagine and re-imagine the teaching profession where we dare young people to teach. We need to encourage new generations of teachers to be change agents, inspired by models of possibility, and we need to 'Dare to Lead' as a university."

ALL too often, the prevailing (and skewed) perception in many communities is that a Foundation Phase teaching qualification is less prestigious than a senior level qualification.

It has negatively impacted on the self-image of Foundation Phase teachers in schools where there is a lack of awareness of their key human development role. This is one of the reasons why "re-imagining and re-imaging" the teaching profession – as Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University is doing – is so essential in the Foundation Phase. NMMU's Foundation Phase programme sets out

The tall task of moulding little people

to change skewed perceptions by producing a new generation of Foundation Phase teachers and also by working with existing Foundation Phase

teachers in the Eastern Cape. Many of these teachers feel out of their depth in the teaching of subjects like mathematics. NMMU is confident that the new generation of Foundation Phase educators will emerge without these encum-

"These teachers could not have a more important role. From mathematical ability to language and literacy to self-concept and self-confidence, the Foundation Phase teacher carries the responsibility of the development of each child."

brances. "They will leave our University as confident, committed, critical thinkers and agents of hope, change and social justice, and will enter communities throughout the Eastern Cape where they will make a difference," says Deputy Vice-

Chancellor: Teaching and Learning, Professor Denise Zinn. "Wherever they are, they will create classroom environments that encourage the verbal, symbolic and expressive languages spoken by Foundation Phase learners (Grade R - Grade 3)." These are teachers who will: thrive on learning from and with the children in their classes; excite their curiosity and creativity, and

stimulate their intellectual potential; understand the importance of developing children's critical thinking skills from a young age; and be receptive to the diverse abilities that children bring into the classroom – from knowing how to count cows to operating a smartphone.

"These teachers could not have a more important role. From mathematical ability to language and literacy to self-concept and self-confidence, the Foundation Phase teacher carries the responsibility of the development of each child," said Prof Zinn.

P2:
SA's
need
for
teachers



P3:
A new
building
for a new
approach



P5:
A new
teaching
philosophy



P7:
Meeting
community
needs



Raising the bar: Why NMMU needed to change

QUALITY education is always a priority in a society that is committed to excellence and the development of its citizens. Higher Education institutions have a huge responsibility to provide access to quality education and make sure that students are able to succeed once they enter the system.

Faculties of education have an added responsibility of ensuring the professional development of teachers, thereby enhancing their status, morale and professionalism. A new narrative that casts greater integrity on the teaching

profession is thus necessary. At NMMU we take this responsibility very seriously. We have been offering teacher education for more than 20 years. With the introduction of the Minimum Requirements of Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) we took the opportunity to rethink the content, pedagogy [science of teaching] and practice of teacher education.

We knew that we could no longer explain the current realities and experiences through the old lenses through which we viewed the world. Instead we

could reconsider, re-imagine and re-imagine the future teacher of the 21st century. Our curriculum renewal therefore is one that is underpinned by a humanising pedagogy (humanising education: explained on P5) that connects both the lecturer and the students' realities to learning. We believe that education is a social activity that requires a well-integrated framework that links teacher education, student teachers, learners and the community to improve the lives of people. Foundation Phase is the cornerstone of any education.

This is the phase that introduces the child to education and lays the foundation for a better economy, environment and society. It is through good quality Foundation Phase teaching that we can have hope of developing the young to become critical problem solvers of the future. Our Foundation Phase complex on Missionvale Campus will allow us to do just that – ignite and uncover the potential of children to better understand, appreciate and create new meaning reflecting upon the world around them.



Dr Muki Moeng
Executive Dean of Education

Bursaries, revamped curriculum part of plan to increase FP teacher numbers

A critical shortage of essential teachers

Although Foundation Phase teachers play a pivotal role in the lives of each and every learner, there are simply not enough to go round. NMMU is trying to grow more teachers through its innovative new Foundation Phase programme and available bursaries.

STATISTICS show that the lowest enrolment in teacher education in all the phases (junior and senior levels) is the foundation phase.

NMMU is working on considerably increasing this number through its new Foundation Phase programme and its bursary offerings, the largest of which is the Funza Lushaka bursary.

far greater than what universities are able to supply.

"In the Eastern Cape, the Department of Basic Education calculated that 973 new Foundation Phase teachers were needed in 2012 to fill the posts of teachers leaving the system. Only 240 were available," said NMMU's Head of Programme for the Foundation Phase,



MEETING A NEED ... NMMU students Rozanne Schnautz (left) and Charnel Welmans revel in the opportunity of making a difference as Foundation Phase teachers throughout the country.

hoped that the linked bursary offerings, the largest of which is the Funza Lushaka bursary, will also attract potential teachers. Introduced in 2007, the Funza Lushaka bursary is funded by the Department of Basic Education (funzalushaka.doe.gov.za).

Out of the 374 Foundation Phase students registered with NMMU this year, almost half are on the Funza Lushaka bursary programme. A further four Foundation Phase students at NMMU receive funding from the European Union.

NMMU is looking at increased bursary support as it is working towards increasing its 374 Foundation Phase students in 2015 to approximately 500 by 2022, with an emphasis on teachers who are able to speak isiXhosa.

From this year, Foundation Phase students can only apply for the Funza Lushaka bursary if one of their mother tongues is an indigenous African language. Once they qualify, all students on this bursary are placed in public schools throughout the Eastern Cape or anywhere in South Africa, according to need.

Preparing teachers for multilingual classrooms

THE schools in the Eastern Cape most in need of Foundation Phase teachers are those where isiXhosa is the home language of the majority of learners.

For this reason, NMMU's new Foundation Phase programme includes an emphasis on the training of student teachers who can speak isiXhosa as well as upskilling all students in indigenous language skills.

In the Eastern Cape, the multilingual classroom includes English, isiXhosa and Afrikaans. NMMU's Foundation Phase programme includes an isiXhosa module to ensure that all students are, at the very least, conversationally able to engage in all three languages.

"We prepare all of our students for the real conditions that exist in schools for the majority of people in the province," said NMMU's Head of Programme for the Foundation Phase, Dr Deidre Geduld.

She said research had shown that it was critically important that mother tongue was the primary medium for learning to maximise every young learner's cognitive development and uptake.

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FAST FACTS: NMMU'S FP

- Since 2010, the number of students that have enrolled for the Foundation Phase degree programme has jumped by over 40%, from 262 in 2010 to 374 in 2015.
- The number of students who have applied to study towards the Foundation Phase degree in 2016 currently stands at 449.
- Of these, the top 150 will be selected – as this is the number of first year students the programme can accommodate.
- Students in NMMU's Foundation Phase programme come from all over South Africa – from major cities like Johannesburg to deep rural villages like Comfivaba.
- The total number of education students at NMMU (across all courses/degrees) for 2015 is 1544.

Dr Deidre Geduld. That same year, there was an estimated national demand for 5505 new African language Foundation Phase teachers, but only 345 graduated in South Africa as a whole. Each year, the need grows.

"The Department has identified Foundation Phase teacher development as an area needing urgent intervention," said Dr Geduld.

In addition to growing the number of teachers through its recurriculated Foundation Phase programme, it is



FUN WITH LEARNERS ... NMMU Foundation Phase student Karla Rheeder facilitates a discussion among a group of young learners from Alfonso Arries Primary School in Chatty.



BRIGHTENING OUR WORLD ... The artwork of children will be used within the interiors of the new R54m building.

Learning spaces will embrace a new creative, child-centred philosophy of teaching

A new building for new times

NMMU’S flagship Foundation Phase programme starts its new life on Missionvale Campus next year in a building that has been specifically designed to accommodate its new curriculum – and the philosophy behind it.

THE Foundation Phase programme for 2016 will see third and fourth-year students attending lectures in a new building on Missionvale Campus, while all Foundation Phase students will shift to Missionvale Campus from 2017.

The students will learn in the brand new R54m building – which architect Neal Fisher has designed specifically to accommodate the Foundation Phase programme, and the pioneering teaching philosophy on which it is based.

The Reggio Emilia philosophy of child development with its metaphor of “the hundred languages of children” draws on drama, music, art and languages to help teachers tap into the full potential of the children they are teaching.

The new building features inviting, versatile learning spaces with movable furniture that can be used for lectures or music, drama and meeting rooms. They can also be utilised for afterschool programmes such as literacy development.

Postgraduate facilities have been included to encourage greater numbers of students to conduct postgraduate research in Foundation Phase education. Several Master’s and PhD students are already enrolled.

The Resource Centre that will be part of the BEd Foundation Phase building will complement the needs of Foundation Phase students, by offering access to key materials that accommodate their teacher-educator needs. These will include a variety of literature, tools, models, posters and other teaching materials.

The Resource Centre will be technology-enabled and offer students access to Wi-Fi, the internet, computer, printing and other facilities that can assist with their academic preparation. It will also feature an exhibition space to showcase the work the students have produced.

NMMU’s Vice-Chancellor, Professor Derrick Swartz, calls the new Resource Centre the “Resource Commons” because it will serve as a common area where Foundation Phase students of the Faculty of Education share resources and have combined ownership of a specially designed space. It will reflect the calibre of education that Foundation Phase students receive at NMMU and what their ideal teaching environment would be.



FUTURE-FOCUSED ... An artist’s impression of the new Missionvale Campus building, which has been specially designed to accommodate NMMU’s BEd Foundation Phase programme.



WORK IN PROGRESS ... Construction on the building is nearing completion, and will be ready for occupation from January 2016.



Missionvale library – a beacon of hope

THE impressive Library and Information Services on Missionvale Campus built in 2009 will complement the Resource Centre.

It is equipped with over 60 000 books and journals (including e-books and e-journals). It seats 410 people, has 32 internet stations and forms part of NMMU’s network of libraries. Traditional library systems and latest technologies in ICT merge to ensure that users have access to a variety of study materials.

All students and staff of NMMU, upon registering, qualify for free membership of the Library and Information Services. Training is offered to new users and the committed team of librarians is readily available to assist.

In line with NMMU’s core values of respect for the natural environment, Missionvale’s library is one of NMMU’s environmentally-friendly buildings, specifically designed to optimise energy usage and efficiency.

The R38.5m “green” building was among the first in the country to incorporate the Digital Address Lighting Interface (DALI) system. The system relies on sensors to control lighting levels.

The building also uses carbon dioxide sensors to ensure that the ventilation system is energy efficient. The building was declared as one of the “most advanced buildings of its kind in South Africa” when it was opened in 2010.

Missionvale Library. Photo credit: Ross Charnock

NMMU’s Missionvale Campus ideally located to make a difference where most needed

Shifting campus, serving communities

FOR universities to make a real difference in school education in South Africa, they need to get involved at the schools that face the worst challenges.

They need their student teachers to see where the need is greatest – and develop a heart for making a difference where it’s needed most.

That is why, from next year, NMMU’s Faculty of Education is shifting its new Foundation Phase degree programme – which is nurturing future teachers for Grade R to Grade 3 – from the comfortable corridors of South Campus in Summerstrand to Missionvale Campus, surrounded on all sides by townships.

“We have deliberately chosen Missionvale Campus as the location for the re-curriculated Foundation Phase

“The new buildings and facilities at Missionvale Campus will send a direct message to all communities that all children receive a first-class educational start in life.”

programme, as it is situated close to a large number of primary schools in Zwide, Missionvale and New Brighton.

“Its situation complements the Foundation Phase programme’s practice of partnering with schools that provide the challenges we need to address in South Africa if education, and teacher education is to make a real difference.”

So says Dr Tulsi Morar, Operations Manager of the Faculty of Education at NMMU, who is committed to professional teacher development in disadvantaged communities.

“The entire Foundation Phase project reflects an extremely important unity of communities that demonstrates that there is no place for ‘us’ and ‘them’ in an NMMU university education.” The Foundation Phase complex and Missionvale Campus are being showcased during a number of open days where all students and their families will be invited to experience this inspiring environment.

Logistical requirements such as student transport from South Campus and elsewhere to Missionvale Campus have all been included in the roll-out plan.

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University is moving its Foundation Phase degree programme from its South Campus to Missionvale Campus – to be closer to schools where it can make a real difference.



MEETING NEEDS ... Placing the Foundation Phase programme at Missionvale Campus means the University is better placed to serve the needs of the surrounding community. Photo credit: Riaan Labuschagne



TOP FACILITIES ... Missionvale Campus offers its students excellent facilities and expertise including the Missionvale Library that its interior is shared here, a student hub, several state-of-the-art laboratories and the largest indoor sports centre in terms of seating in the province. Photo credit: Ross Charnock

Following in the footsteps of UJ’s Soweto Campus

NMMU has thoroughly researched what is required to reinvent a campus that is not only situated some distance from the mother campus but is also situated in a township environment.

The pioneer of this approach is the University of Johannesburg’s (UJ’s) Soweto Campus.

In 2011, UJ’s Faculty of Education launched a number of their programmes on the University’s new and reformed, state-of-the-art campus in Soweto, including their BEd Foundation Phase programme.

The initial response to the Soweto Campus was mixed; some were very positive, others were very negative.

Open days and festivities were hosted on the Soweto Campus to familiarise staff, students and their families with the environment, which has several primary schools in close proximity to it and one on campus.

Four years later, it has proved a great success. It has created an academic and cultural union between the City of Joburg and Soweto. Demand for the programme has peaked, and the general sentiment today is one of enthusiasm and excitement for the unique educational and social engagement opportunities the campus provides. The new buildings and facilities on this campus have added to its desirability and stature.

As with the Soweto Campus, NMMU’s new state-of-the-art Foundation Phase building will send a direct message to all communities that the new building and programme are there to ensure that all children receive a first class educational start in life.

It will inspire learners and students to want to become teachers, and it will inspire students to want to be among the best Foundation Phase teachers South Africa has ever produced.

The situation and suitability of Missionvale was thoroughly interrogated by NMMU’s leadership, the Faculty of Education leadership and the Director of Missionvale Campus, Dr Phakama Ntshongwana and her team.

“We can bring teacher education closer to some of the communities we serve,” says Executive Dean of Education Dr Muki Moeng.

Understanding the many challenges that children face

NEXT year’s shift from South to Missionvale Campus for NMMU’s Foundation Phase degree programme has brought with it another important benefit: the education students will gain hands-on experience of the theory they are learning through Missionvale’s Psychology and Law clinics.

Through the Psychology Clinic – which has an 80% client base of children from the surrounding com-

Forthcoming collaboration with Missionvale Campus’s Psychology and Law clinics will help Foundation Phase students gain greater insight into some of the problems experienced by learners – and will equip them with greater knowledge about learners’ rights and the law as it pertains to schools.

munity – the students will learn more about learning barriers and the available tools to help address them. “The Foundation Phase education

students will be exposed to the full spectrum of assessment and remediation. Assessments are done by the psychologists and the reports will guide the remediation process. They will experience a wide range of specific disabilities and the multidisciplinary

approach used to understand scholastic barriers,” said NMMU Consultant Educational Psychologist Dr Rosemary Exner.

“The link with education is a new venture that we are hoping to grow rapidly ... children’s problems are

not insular and many disciplines are needed to assist the community.”

Working in the clinic are registered counsellors, first year psychology masters students, social work interns as well as a clinical social worker and a psychiatrist once a week.

The number of clients seen annually (children, adolescents and adults from the community) is about 200.

The links with the Law Clinic will give Foundation Phase students insight into the law as it pertains to the classroom and learners’ rights.

“Children’s problems are not insular and many disciplines are needed to assist the community.”

Teaching philosophy taps into curiosity, creativity to maximise every individual’s potential

Recognising every child’s talents

The Reggio Emilia teaching philosophy taps into children’s potential by allowing them to express themselves in multiple ways – including art, music, drama and more. It is an approach that focuses on building a schooling system that believes all children deserve good quality foundational education, not just those who can afford it.

YOUNG children often represent words as drawings, others represent thoughts, numbers and images as colours or shapes, while others express their feelings in words or music or in silence.

These are some of the languages that young children use, and Foundation Phase teachers need to continuously be responsive to them for they are the creative roots from which literacy, numeracy and life skills are nurtured.

way yet this is not how children learn. Malaguzzi put the child and the child’s learning in the centre – this immediately makes standardisation impossible. People all learn differently. Reggio Emilia is an example of true child-centred learning. [This is] something our own [South African] curriculum says it is based on, yet it does not put the child in the centre.”

Successfully practised for over 50 years in its namesake city and many

“NMMU’s Faculty of Education is committed to pioneering new methods of teaching, learning and scholarship. It supports a vision of a South African schooling system that encourages the expression of the true talents of every South African child,”

As Italian primary school teacher and educational psychologist, Loris Malaguzzi, said: “... the child has a hundred languages (and a hundred hundred hundred more) but they steal ninety-nine. The school and the culture ...”

After World War II, in the city of Reggio Emilia in northern Italy, Malaguzzi developed what is known as the Reggio Emilia philosophy of educational development, with its metaphor of the “hundred languages of children”.

It is an alternative, innovative philosophy of education that draws on art, drama, languages and music to maximise the potential and many different forms of intelligence of all children.

Nadeema Musthan, a lecturer in NMMU’s Foundation Phase programme, explains: “Traditional education attempts to standardise. Everyone is taught the same thing in the same

other parts of the world, this philosophy is the cornerstone of the flagship four-year BEd Foundation Phase programme within the Faculty of Education at NMMU.

“NMMU’s Faculty of Education is committed to pioneering new methods of teaching, learning and scholarship. It supports a vision of a South African schooling system that encourages the expression of the true talents of every South African child,” said Ms Musthan.

LEARNER-CENTRED APPROACH ... Youngsters at Children’s World Pre-School in Port Elizabeth – which embraces the Reggio Emilia philosophy – investigate what happens when ice melts or when they put water on nasturtium leaves (right). The school is starting a Reggio-inspired Grade 1 class next year (which will follow the National Curriculum) to launch its expansion into a primary school. Photo credit: Emma Jensen



Travels to the city of Reggio Emilia

IN April next year, a team from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University will travel to the northern Italian city of Reggio Emilia – where the educational philosophy of the same name was conceived – as part of the Reggio Children International Study Group.

The NMMU team includes Executive Dean of Education Dr Muki Moeng, Director of the School for Initial Education Prof Alette Delport and Head of the Foundation Phase programme Dr Deidre Geduld.

“The Africa Reggio Emilia Alliance (AREA) has arranged trips annually since 2012 for South Africans to participate in the Reggio Children International Study Groups in Reggio Emilia, Italy. To date we have had principals, teachers, parents and lecturers attend,” said Tessa Browne, Reggio Coordinator for AREA. Besides NMMU, the universities of Cape Town, Witwatersrand and Pretoria, UNISA and Vaal University of Technology have been represented on these trips.

“These Study Groups are attended by 400 to 450 English speakers from all over the world ... Reggio Children also arranges many other study groups (in English and in other languages) to explore the educational philosophy of Reggio Emilia’s municipal preschools and infant toddler centres.

“The Africa Reggio Emilia Alliance endeavours to create ongoing dialogue about the Reggio approach.”

Ms Browne said Port Elizabeth’s first workshop on the Reggio approach was held in August at Theodor Herzl School, and was attended by 70 participants from various schools and institutions in the area.

Walmer pre-school Children’s World has been using the Reggio approach for several years and from next year, with the launch of its primary school, will be offering Grade 1, also following the Reggio approach.

Finding the heart of the classroom with humanising pedagogy

THINK back a decade or two to the classrooms and lecture halls of yesteryear.

Typically, the teacher was boss, and filled the learners’ minds with knowledge. Rote learning, in many classrooms, was the order of the day. There was little room for discussion or debate.

At universities, a lecturer might tell his or her students: “Look around you, two thirds of you will not be here next year. Only the cream will pass.” And victory would go to those who persisted despite being discouraged.

Times have changed, learners and students have changed. Indeed, the education context has changed and a new teaching and learning approach is needed.

NMMU understands the need to “humanise education” and has become

Gone are the days when learners were regarded as blank slates, waiting to be filled with the knowledge and philosophy of their teachers, and repeating this in exams. Today, the skills, intellect and experience of each learner has a place in the classroom.

a leader in the field of “humanising pedagogy”, which drives this approach. The principles of this teaching and learning model have been embraced by NMMU’s new Foundation Phase programme.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning Prof Denise Zinn explains that humanising pedagogy is about re-looking at who owns the power of knowledge in the classroom, and recognising that it is not only the teacher, but that learners and students bring their

own knowledge and intelligence, which needs to be acknowledged and encouraged by the teacher.

“[In the Faculty of Education] it is about developing teachers and students who go beyond just getting a degree; it is about igniting young minds to take flight and become passionate, compassionate, effective teachers. It is about holding people to high expectations and helping them to achieve this.”

Director of the School for Initial Teacher Education at NMMU, Prof

Alette Delport, explains it further: “It is about creating a new educational curriculum and environment where teachers and learners feel supported, excited, expanded and aware of the possibilities of who they are and the gifts they have.

“It is about re-looking at who owns the power of knowledge in the classroom, and recognising that it is not only the teacher, but that learners and students bring their own knowledge and intelligence ... ”

“It is about drawing on learners’ capacities, irrespective of their background, and helping them to develop through approaches that lead to them feeling inspired, empowered and capa-

ble. It is about catalysing a culture of intelligence and curiosity.”

Humanising pedagogy also recognises the need to leverage the cultural and intellectual wealth that South Africa’s diverse communities offer, and to incorporate homegrown knowledge into education and the curriculum.

It recognises the diversity of backgrounds in which learners grow up and ensures this is recognised and developed within schools and universities.

MEET THE TEAM

NELSON Mandela Metropolitan University's Foundation Phase academic team is deeply committed to driving impactful change in education in South Africa.

Each member of the team – which is headed up by Executive Dean of Education **Dr Muki Moeng** – has robust academic and leadership skills, and significant experience in Foundation Phase classrooms, in a range of diverse contexts.

NMMU also acknowledges the contribution of two other Foundation Phase teachers not included here — **Dr Sara Joff** and **Thandi Hlam**.



Dr Tulsī Morar
Operations Manager of the Faculty of Education

"Every person is a lifelong learner who has the potential to develop as they interact with each other in a supportive, socially-constructed environment. Teachers, in a nurturing and caring environment can make a difference in moulding the minds of their learners with whom they interact. An empowered teacher is one who acts responsibly in the classroom and who, with passion, develops the knowledge, skills and attitudes of learners."

Prof Alette Delport
Director of the School for Initial Teacher Education

"I firmly believe that all human beings are unique 'power houses' of unlimited potential. The teacher (and lecturer) has the opportunity to, and is privileged to, unleash this potential. It is our task to 'enable the becoming' of competent, yet well-rounded, caring, altruistic human beings, who can think for themselves, and are capable and committed to the enhancement of the broader society."

Dr Muki Moeng
Executive Dean of Education

"Teaching is about taking your students along with you in a participatory and engaging journey of learning. As a teacher, one needs to acknowledge that both the teacher and students carry with them realities and experiences that form part of the learning process. It is in negotiating and navigating between these realities and experiences, coupled with the content and practices of discipline, that meaningful learning takes place."

Dr Deidre Geduld
Head of NMMU's Foundation Phase Programme

"Teaching for me is about heart: commitment and profound caring. I specialise in inclusive education and school leadership, and I strive to nurture a joy and passion for teaching in our students that speaks to the hearts and minds of learners. This encapsulates the values on which my teaching is built. To me, it is important to witness a student's growth, because it confirms that my efforts to support another human being bring about some difference to his/her sense of self and ability to influence the lives of the marginalised learners he/she teaches."



Marinda van Zyl
Lecturer in the Foundation Phase Programme

"As a Foundation Phase Mathematics teacher educator and researcher, I strive to support student teachers in the development of their own knowledge and understanding in order to promote innovative school-based classroom teaching, learning and inquiry. At the same time I believe in developing skills and attitudes that excite a desire for lifelong learning and continuous professional development."



Sanet Deysel
Lecturer in the Foundation Phase Programme

"My philosophy on education is based on an integrated approach that enables students and me to explore, question and challenge boundaries. All aspects of teaching as a profession are critically reflected on and analysed. My interaction with students is rooted in compassion, commitment and love. Knowledge is shared and explored, which leads to personal growth and development of both the students and myself, as lecturer. Safe spaces are created where students are free to express their vulnerability while they find their voice and establish their identity as future teachers."



Robin Notshulwana
Lecturer in the Foundation Phase Programme

"I believe that education is one of the core spaces that can bring about social change. Education, in my view, is a social exchange, an exchange of knowledge in its broadest sense (from content knowledge to self-knowledge). I hope that in my teaching I can facilitate our students' ability to further understand who they are and the relationships between who they are and the children and communities they serve."



Pam Roach
BEd Foundation Phase Programme Administrator

"I have been the administrator for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes during the ten years that I have worked at NMMU. I have enjoyed, and do still enjoy, experiencing first-hand the individual characteristics and challenges associated with each phase of the student's development towards becoming ever more mature, experienced, capable and well-qualified teachers."



Nadeema Musthan
Lecturer in the Foundation Phase Programme

"My interests lie in preparing Foundation Phase teachers for the multilingual realities of our classrooms, with a specific focus on literacy. I am also concerned with the critical development of our students, to enable them to contribute to the meaningful transformation of our society through their work as critical, engaged intellectuals."

PROTECTION SERVICES AT MISSIONVALE CAMPUS

AN ANTI-CRIME campaign for NMMU, including Missionvale Campus, has been implemented to better protect staff and students at the University.

Prospective students and their parents have expressed concerns about safety at NMMU's Missionvale Campus. NMMU is aware of this. As a result, its Protection Services team has initiated a number of plans to improve security on the campus and in the immediate vicinity.

"The safety of our staff and students is of key importance to us. We are constantly seeking ways of improving present systems and implementing new initiatives," says NMMU Head of Protection Services **Derek Huebsch**.

Part of the anti-crime campaign by NMMU at Missionvale Campus is the provision of an off-campus safe route patrol vehicle and additional CCTV to monitor areas just off the campus.

"We're also considering an SOS cellphone panic button system for all students, not just at Missionvale," says Mr Huebsch, adding that there were fewer incidents of petty crime at Missionvale Campus than at any of NMMU's other five campuses.

Other initiatives in place include increasing the University's relationship with the local community policing forum and SAPS; a greater visibility of on-site security personnel and better communication with staff and students via social media.

"Our staff is trained to respond to emergencies, such as protest action in the area. We will communicate such information. We also have safe routes out of the campus at such times," says Mr Huebsch.

He says that additional staff are deployed to Missionvale Campus during exams, registration and other high-risk periods.

Teaching where it counts most

NMMU’s new Foundation Phase programme aims to make a difference in impoverished schools and ultimately nurture teachers who develop a heart for teaching in the schools that need them most.

IMPOVERISHED schools – which make up about 90% of South African schools – don’t fit the mould of traditional, well-functioning schools.

They cannot focus on pure academics – teachers simply taking learners through the required academic paces to pass the year – because the challenges the schools and their learners face are so enormous.

Many lack resources, sufficient management, a culture where learning can take place effectively and the capacity to ensure all learners receive an adequate education. In the classrooms, learners are from different socio-economic backgrounds and, in many cases include learners from different African countries. These new multidimensional classes are in themselves challenging as issues that emerge (besides the cognitive challenges) pertain to class, race and language, with a large majority of learners not able to learn in their mother tongue.

NMMU established its Centre for the Community School (CCS) as a means of engaging with the communities in which schools are located in an attempt to address some of the challenges that prevent all children from receiving quality public education.

CCS’s main focus is to harness complementary support from external stakeholders that can make a real difference at these schools: from universities to learners’ parents to companies able to fund projects that enhance learning and even create future career opportunities for learners (e.g. reading programmes, entrepreneurial and arts and crafts programmes).

CCS enables the community to play a role in supporting the objectives of schooling at impoverished schools.

The Centre works with over 100 schools through Nelson Mandela Bay (Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage) and stretching as far as Addo and the Sundays River Valley.

“Through one of our programmes, we are working with School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and School Management Teams (SMTs) at over 50 schools [e.g. running elections and giving training in financial management], to assist the principals,” said CCS Project Administrator Jabu Bam.

CCS also has a network of 14 schools – the Manyano schools – with which they work closely, with the aim of cultivating well-functioning schools that can be models for other nearby schools.

Working hand in hand with the CCS and its vast network of schools is



DEVELOPING LEARNERS ... NMMU’s re-curriculated Foundation Phase degree programme is cultivating teachers who will play a greater role in boosting education in impoverished communities. Photo credit: Riaan Labuschagne

“The reality is that newly graduated teachers tend to choose the more affluent schools, but there is a much greater need for them in impoverished schools.”

NMMU’s Faculty of Education, which hopes to make a real difference through its re-curriculated Foundation Phase programme.

The Foundation Phase provides the starting blocks for young learners – that push them into the longer race that is their school career.

Without that boost, learners fall behind and, unable to catch up in the higher grades, many drop out.

“The importance of Foundation

Phase education – with its emphasis on the foundations of literacy, numeracy and life skills – simply cannot be overstated,” said Head of the Foundation Phase programme Dr Deidre Geduld.

By shifting its Foundation Phase programme to Missionvale Campus, and exposing its students to impoverished schools in the area, Dr Geduld hopes that more of its students will opt to complete their work-integrated learning (prac teaching) at these schools –

and that many will ultimately choose to teach in these schools.

“The reality is that newly graduated teachers tend to choose the more affluent schools, but there is a much greater need for them in impoverished schools,” said Bruce Damons, Principal of Sapphire Road Primary School in Booyens Park, which is one of the Manyano schools.

To encourage more emerging teachers to consider posts at impoverished schools, he arranged for 60 NMMU student teachers to visit his school – and was encouraged by their positive responses.

“We need those students to come into our schools, to create new wonderful multidimensional schools and contribute to our kids’ development. I am fighting for this to happen.”

Principals from Manyano schools

have also been invited to speak to students about the contextual reality they face in their schools.

Students are being exposed to schools which need them most. At the same time, there is a “sharing of information”. The students can test the University’s theory in practice – and assess what works and what doesn’t – and the schools can provide input about other areas the University should focus on to equip the teachers it is nurturing.

“We want to influence what is being taught in the University,” said Mr Damons.

“How do you create this bridge where theory influences practice – and influences how we do our work? It’s about reciprocal engagement [between schools and the university] and collective knowledge. This fits in with the model of the Community School.”

Will the Reggio Emilia approach work in impoverished schools?

STUDENT teachers’ work-integrated learning (prac teaching) at schools throughout Nelson Mandela Bay provides an opportunity for NMMU to implement its newly-curriculated Foundation Phase programme in practice.

“Schools create a good platform for us to collaborately engage with ideas and concepts. We don’t teach in isolation,” said Head of the Foundation Phase programme, Dr Deidre Geduld.

The new model was inspired by the Reggio Emilia teaching philosophy, which recognises that all children are different and come with unique talents and intelligences. These can be expressed in different ways – from music to art, drama and languages – and teachers should use these and other creative means to attempt to help each learner reach his or her maximum potential. It’s a shift away from traditional education, which lumped all learners together in the same box.

But will it work in the often over-crowded classroom of the impoverished school?

Sapphire Road Primary School principal Bruce Damons said the concept was “fantastic” – given that “a more fluid type of learning process and curriculum” was required at schools which accommodated children from so many diverse contexts. However, he said its application would depend on the individual teacher.

“If you are the type of educator who is only focused on meeting the requirements of ‘the man’ (in this case, the Department of Education), it will be impossible. But if you are the type of educator who puts the learning of the child at the centre, you will become more creative in your approach. You will become less fearful of ‘the man’ – and I’m sure the outcome will be what ‘the man’ requires.”

He said a very rigid educational approach often led to children not being able to receive the quality of education they deserved. “This dysfunction could be seen as a crisis, which is centred around, but not exclusively confined to, the quality of teaching, and extends to poor school infrastructure, unemployment and ac-

companied social evils like abuse and disease, and little parent support for schools because of the relationship between schools and communities.

“Eighty per cent of South African kids ... as teachers and school leaders we need to be more creative in engaging with these challenges. But schools can’t do this alone.”

Hence the need for organisations such as NMMU’s Centre for the Community School (CCS), which is working with schools to develop knowledge and programmes that can develop models of schooling that can engage with these challenges. This is achieved with its links to NMMU and its various departments and other stakeholders.

“Even in the more affluent schools, it cannot just be about pure academics. Schools should be centres of hope in impoverished communities with a core focus on the business of teaching and learning.”

Finding their feet as fully-fledged teachers

NMMU’s Foundation Phase graduates love what they do – and hope to make a difference despite the challenges most South African classrooms face.

2014 FOUNDATION Phase graduate Caryn Heynsen has been teaching at Machiu Primary in the Northern Areas suburb of Salt Lake for just over a year. She loves her job – despite the challenges of an overcrowded Grade 1 classroom and a general lack of resources.



SELFIE FUN ... NMMU teaching alumnus Kelly Williams with some of her Foundation Phase pupils at Victoria Grey Primary School.

“I wouldn’t change it for anything. I absolutely love my school.” She feels her teaching degree from NMMU has equipped her with the tools to make a real difference in learners’ lives – particularly with its focus on each child, individually.

“The Foundation Phase is so important. It teaches children how to read and write. This all starts in the beginning, and carries on and on [through their school career]. Without a good foundation, a child can get lost.”

Though she loves the Reggio Emilia philosophy behind NMMU’s approach, she said it was challenging to implement this in an overcrowded classroom. Her Grade 1 class last year had 42 children and this year has 35.

“There are kids who need the one-on-one attention, but it’s difficult to give one-on-one.”

She said most of her learners were from disadvantaged backgrounds – and the school was under-resourced, making it difficult to include Reggio Emilia components such as art or music. Victoria Park Grey Grade 3 teacher, Kelly Williams, graduated from NMMU in 2008, before the



MAKING A DIFFERENCE ... NMMU teaching alumnus Siobhan Day, a grade 2 teacher, is one of hundreds of young people who chose teaching so as to positively contribute to young lives. Photo credit: Ross Charnock

curriculum was reworked, however she now works closely with student teachers completing their work-integrated learning – so has kept up-to-date with NMMU’s new approach. “I think the system they carry with them into schools is beneficial to the learners, but not all of it worked in practice. It’s different when you have physical little people in front of you. You have to adapt and change where necessary.” She said the Foundation Phase years were critical.

“Grade 1 is the only grade where learners walk in with a blank slate and, by the end of the year, have learned how to read, write and can count and do sums. The amount of growth in that child in a short space of time, is amazing. Teachers are moulding children.”

New generation teachers for today’s new generation children

Final-year student teachers reflect on the four years of their re-curriculated Foundation Phase degree programme – and how they feel it will equip them to be better teachers, and enable a better learning experience for those they teach.

NMMU’S revised Foundation Phase programme is cultivating teachers who will be taking a pioneering approach into classrooms – with the aim of helping a greater number of learners, particularly in impoverished schools, to reach their full potential.

The first cohort of students learning under this new child-centred approach – which was introduced in 2011, and is inspired by the Reggio Emilia teaching philosophy – are just about to complete the four-year BEd degree programme.

Reggio Emilia, conceived after World War II by an educational psychologist in the Italian city of the same name, recognises that children express their talents and intelligences in a number of different ways – including art, drama, music, languages and more – and rejects the one-size-fits-all teaching approach typically offered by traditional education.

“I have gained more than I expected,” said final-year student Nosisi Duma, who is from George. “I expected the course just to be about teaching but have been learning more about the child. That’s what is special to me.”

“A child is a human being – you have to consider their different backgrounds, cultures, households and so on. You can’t just educate in one way.”

For the duration of this year, Duma and the rest of the fourth-year group have been completing work-integrated learning (formerly known as prac teaching) four days a week – in order to translate theory into practice, in preparation for their roles as fully-fledged teachers next year.

“The approach [adopted by NMMU’s Foundation Phase programme] has helped me understand the different behaviours of a child ... it’s a very different approach from when I was a learner being taught at school. At that time, it was just about learning and memorising.”

She said learners participate in their learning. “For instance, when we narrate a story, we then ask the learners to say it back to us in their own words. They are able to express what they have learned. “I think my studies at NMMU have prepared me to be a better teacher. Learners have a better experience, because there are lots of different learning angles. They have a choice about how to learn.”

She said NMMU’s approach helped learners to become more independent and responsible. “Children learn to look after themselves. They can start a project without depending on the teacher [to initiate it]. I think it will make a very big difference in learners’ lives.”

Another final year student, Nazeefah Raban from Port Elizabeth, called NMMU’s Foundation Phase programme a “very modern approach”.

“The course propagates that you do not ‘box’ learners – you accommodate and you go beyond [what is traditionally expected]. A child is a human being – you have to consider their different backgrounds, cultures, households and so on. You can’t just educate in one way.”

“It really opens you up to be a critical teacher and a critical thinker. The course goes beyond what’s expected of a teacher ... it teaches us to deal with today’s generation of children.”

Another student, Busisiwe Kabini from Johannesburg, said the Foundation Phase was “very important to help the kids develop themselves and find themselves”.

She said her year of work-integrated learning had enabled her to put theory into practice. “There were a few challenges. Everything [you try] obviously doesn’t always work.”

She also became acutely aware of the barriers posed by language in the former model C school in which she was placed – with isiXhosa kids taught in English, but also having to learn Afrikaans. “Some learners do struggle ... for me, personally, I want to teach them in English so they get to understand [the language] but without forgetting their mother tongue is important ... perhaps the way is to teach English and isiXhosa at the same time, for instance, by telling a story in one language but translating it into a second language.”



NEW GENERATION TEACHER ... Fourth-year Foundation Phase student Nazeefah Raban loves taking NMMU’s modern learner-centred approach into the classroom.



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