



2016

National Excellence in Teaching Awards

HELTASA Conference

University of Western Cape,
Stellenbosch University,
Cape Peninsula University of Technology,
University of Cape Town

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Association of Southern Africa



FOREWORD

Diane Grayson
Director: Institutional Audits, CHE

2016 has been a year of enormous upheaval in many parts of the world. Natural and political disasters, caused, or at the very least exacerbated, by human greed and selfishness, have resulted in enormous suffering for millions of people. The disparities between rich and poor are increasing, with half of the world's wealth held by 1% of its population. Higher education in many countries, South Africa included, has a vital role to play as an escape route from a life of poverty for individuals and a foundation for social and economic development for nations. Being a university teacher is therefore a heavy responsibility – so much is at stake for our students and the communities of which they are part.

In this year of turmoil, I have had the privilege of spending a day at nearly all of South Africa's universities as part of the Quality Enhancement Project (QEP). The QEP, which began in 2014, is a national project lead by the CHE to improve student success in higher education in South Africa, by which we mean, "enhanced student learning with a view to increasing the number of graduates with attributes that are personally, professionally and socially valuable"¹. In this first phase of the QEP we have asked universities to engage with four focus areas: enhancing academics as teachers, enhancing student support and development, enhancing the learning environment and enhancing course and programme enrolment

management. In 2014 universities submitted a baseline report on what they were doing in each focus area that was working and how they knew, what they tried that was not too successful and why, and what they planned to do in the near future. At the end of 2015 they reported on what they had done or were planning to do to improve in each focus area. This year, peer reviewers and I have visited institutions as critical friends, using Appreciative Inquiry² as a frame, to talk about the journey to improvement.

1 http://www.che.ac.za/focus_areas/quality_enhancement_project/framework

2 Cooperrider, D.L. and Srivastva (1987). Appreciative inquiry in organizational life. In Woodman, R.W. & Pasmore, W.A. (Eds), *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, Vol.1 (pp 129-169). Stamford, CT: JAI Press.

One of things that emerged clearly from these visits is the benefits of having members of a university community reflect together, deeply and honestly, across siloed structures and past jealously guarded turf, on what is being done for and with students, and what could be done differently, done better, restructured, renewed, reimagined. Another thing that has emerged is that there is, not surprisingly, much that can and should be shared among universities. While there are clear differences in institutional culture and context, the broader socio-political-economic environment is shared. Each university has something innovative, interesting, ingenious to share, and each has something to learn. Therefore, in the QEP visits we often suggest that one university that is grappling with a particular problem contact another one that has made some headway in addressing that problem. Student success is not an area in which we can afford to compete – we all need to do everything in our power to help as many students as possible to succeed. And central to this is the quality of university teaching.

From the QEP reports and visits we see numerous ways in which universities can enhance and assure the quality of teaching. And education development professionals have a vital role to play, as more and more academics are appreciating that good university teaching requires knowledge, insight and skills that they do not typically acquire while doing a PhD in their discipline, and more universities are requiring and rewarding good teaching.

I said at the beginning that university teaching is a heavy responsibility. It is also a great privilege. University teachers have the opportunity to engage their students in life-changing, transformative experiences. That is what the National Excellence in Teaching award winners are doing, each in his or her own way. They do it in different subjects, in different institutions, and using different approaches. What is common is their commitment to their students and to enabling them to succeed, not just in their exams, but in their lives. Abundant congratulations to each of our winners for 2016.



INTRODUCTION

Amanda Hlengwa
HELTASA Chairperson

The increased pressure on higher education in South Africa is difficult to ignore. Now, more than ever our context requires a rigorous, contextualised, reflexive, creative focus on teaching and learning. The National Teaching Excellence Awards is an initiative supported by the Council on Higher Education in partnership with HELTASA. It is poised to be a national resource for scholarly and considered engagement with what is required in 21st Century teaching.

In a country such as South Africa, quality teaching attends to contemporary challenges as well as utilising disciplinary frameworks to transcend the constraints of the present to a desired future. This requires consistent and considered reflection on a number of key elements: students, knowledge, and disciplinary, institutional and national context. These are not exhaustive but arguably critical in the quest to ensure that teaching is bestowed the equivalent recognition and prestige as research.

With the ever increasing and competing demands on higher education, we ought not to lose focus on the effort to ensure that our students are prepared to be critically engaged citizens of the future. This entails that we examine whether our curriculum development processes encourage innovative approaches designed to improve the student experience. Such processes need to

acknowledge and incorporate into the learning experiences the rich diversity of our student population and ensure that they are taught by disciplinary specialists committed to scholarly enquiry. The complexities involved in quality teaching also require that we take into account the impact of local, global and social contexts on efforts made by disciplinary communities.

Twenty-two years into the democratic dispensation and eight years of this national initiative, we know that quality teaching can mean the difference between a student passing or failing, getting a degree and finding highly paid work, or continuing in the cycle of poverty which may have dogged their family for generations. Changing the way we value teaching in our universities has potentially life-changing implications and the National Teaching Excellence Awards needs to be seen in this context.

The 2016 National Teaching Excellence Award winners come from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds and institutional contexts. Common to them all is the ability to create environments in which their students can flourish as learners regardless of what or where they are learning. Given the very different levels of resourcing in this country and the diverse nature of institutions and programmes, the ability to respond to challenging contexts whilst, at the same time, creating in students the belief that they can reach the expectations their academic teachers have of them is

critical. All of the Awardees this year have demonstrated to a committee of peers judging the awards that they can do this - and much more besides.

As the outgoing HELTASA President, it gives me immense pleasure to once again salute another group of exemplary academics. I congratulate the winners and commendees of the 2016 Awards on their achievements. Even more importantly, along with many others, I look to them to provide the leadership and direction in teaching and learning our country so badly needs.



WINNERS: Teaching Team

Astrid Schmulian and Stephen Coetzee

Astrid Schmulian and Stephen Coetzee, Chartered Accountants from the Department of Accounting - University of Pretoria, co-teach as the International Financial Reporting Standards 'Rookies Team' (<http://www.ifsrookies.com/>). Their aim is that their students learn actively, through observing their interaction with one another, and through their interaction with their students, to think more critically, read more attentively, communicate more precisely, while growing as independent thinkers and life-long learners.

Their classes are characterised by controlled chaos - boot camps, cases, discussions, debates and role plays. They have flipped the rule-based lecture online and complimented their class with webinar-based tutorials.

Through co-teaching they have woven their individual experiences, perspectives and personalities into a cohesive learning experience that is intellectually challenging and pedagogically engaging. Their research flows from and informs their teaching.

They were the first South African-based authors to publish in *Issues in Accounting Education* and are jointly ranked 8th on the Brigham Young individual accounting education rankings for 2015, contributing to UP's Top 5 Brigham Young institutional ranking and the Department's ranking in the Top 200 on the QS World University Rankings by Subject.



WINNER

Philip Baron

Philip Baron started his lecturing career at the age of 20 at the former Technikon Witwatersrand. His teaching technique is based on a cybernetic approach, which involves the regulation and evolution of systems. He is inspired by Von Foerster's premise that the listener, and not the speaker determines the meaning of an utterance. This implies that the learner's own expression of understanding is more important than the teacher's.

Philip uses Teachback amongst other conversation theory tools to engage learners. He follows the thinking that knowledge and knowing are different. The difference lies in that knowing requires a knower, and is tied to context and observation. Thus, he strives to work with the individual understandings of each of the actors within the class by creating a scope for each person's own frame of reference within the learning system.

He uses the learners' background as part of the curriculum making the course content personal to the learners, while also creating scope for a collaborative learning environment where cultural diversity and different language systems are integral parts of the learning process.



WINNER

Zafeer Nagdee

Zafeer Nagdee is a senior lecturer of governance at the University of Johannesburg. He is also a qualified Chartered Accountant (SA) and Registered Auditor (SA), having previously worked with several of South Africa's largest listed companies before transitioning into academia. His teaching work has involved the development of South Africa's first accredited leadership programme for prospective chartered accountants through which he was recognised as one of South Africa's Top 35 Chartered Accountants under the age of 35.

Zafeer holds a Master's degree in International Accounting and is also an award winning researcher who has published his works internationally. As a recognised thought leader within business, Zafeer regularly delivers talks at events both locally and abroad, having recently been invited to speak at the Wharton Business School within the Ivy League institute of the University of Pennsylvania.

Zafeer has also been recognised through accolades from the private sector as an advocate of responsible business practice, principled progress and innovation in addressing world-scale issues.



WINNER

Rosemary Quilling

Rosemary Quilling is a senior lecturer in Information Systems & Technology at the University of Kwazulu-Natal. She sees teaching and learning as a way of life, a way of “being and becoming”. As such she challenges herself and her students to question the assumptions they bring to learning. Her modes of delivery range from classroom based active learning techniques to emerging technologies. These tools support her view of teaching as a conversation, with participation and the construction and sharing of artefacts of learning, as key processes.

Since 2002 she has used more than 10 applications like WebCT, Moodle, Mahara, Ning and Edmodo. The challenging of assumptions is supported by boundary-crossing initiatives such as placing her Honours students in a collaborative classroom with Kenyan Computer Science Honours students (Daystar University) and in another instance; with American MBA students (University of Massachusetts), by using virtual worlds, social networks, cloud-based storage and YouTube.

Aside from other IS&T research and her previous work in Ocean Climatology, Rose has 6 journal papers, 20 conference presentations and 4 research grants that focus on the SOTL and the use of educational technologies in particular.



WINNER

L.J. (Nic) Theo

Nic's educational background is interdisciplinary, spanning a BA in English literature, a post-graduate LLB, a Masters in African Studies based in philosophy and feminist sociology, and a PhD in Gender Studies focused on the epistemic representation of subjectivities in psychology.

His professional experience includes practice as an attorney, film production and commercial consulting. As a Senior Lecture in CPUT's Media Department he manages the Film Production Programme that follows an explicit mandate to foster social redress and encourage vocational career growth for historically disadvantaged students. His teaching, which covers diploma courses in screenwriting and communication science, is strongly informed by the importance of self-awareness, and of empathy with students as individuals from complex communities who must develop a pro-active sense of agency.

His work supervising Masters and Doctoral research in Media Studies is fed by a growing research portfolio focused on the communications architectures of (visual) media. In part this means interrogating semiotic and narrative paradigms in mass communication as they engage discursively and phenomenologically with subjectivities, and exploring how this enables or occludes unusual voices and expressions of individual agency.



COMMENDATION

Chrisna Botha-Ravyse

Chrisna Botha-Ravyse realised that she needed to be the change she wanted to see in her classroom when she was confronted with the realisation that students of today are not living in her times, but she is in fact living in theirs. She found that in order to reach this generation on their level she will have to change her teaching strategy but also broaden her knowledge of the students she is involved with every day.

She started her journey on really become expert in teaching with technology. She rolled out an electronic multimedia with embedded study guide and she also designed and successfully implemented a serious game to help with the teaching of soft-skills in the classroom. She was also faced with the reality that not all her students had ready access to technology or experience with its use. She consequently also broadened her

research focus to field of health education with technology. She became team leader of the sub-program: An institutional perspective on using and evaluating technology for learning in HE, training, and industry of TELIT SA a research focus area on Vaal Triangle Campus. Dr Botha-Ravyse believes that excellence in teaching is to be able to adapt in change in such a way that your students will look at you and tell you that you are a great teacher.



COMMENDATION

Joanne Hardman

Joanne Hardman is a senior lecturer in Educational Psychology at the School of Education (UCT) where she teaches on all postgraduate courses across the school. A Commonwealth Scholar, she obtained her PhD in Education in 2008. She currently holds the Distinguished Teachers Award at UCT for her work with students and in curriculum design and implementation. She is also a recipient of the Mellon Young Scientist award and an NRF C2 rated scholar. While her academic research is well respected nationally and internationally, it is in her role as a teacher that Joanne thrives.

As a teacher, Joanne's identity is one of mediator, or active guide, who assists students to achieve success in their chosen degree courses. Joanne is a teaching/learning specialist and locates her pedagogical philosophy in the cultural historical and socio-cultural work of Vygotsky, Luria and Leontiev. Essentially, this philosophy promotes a transformative pedagogy, understanding that no student is unable to achieve optimally in the academy in the presence of the appropriate scaffolding and mediated, or guided instruction. This is quite a labour intensive way of teaching as it requires that one

is able to meet the learning needs of heterogeneous students, giving individual attention where it is needed (sometimes to classes as large as 190 students).

Over the years, she has had to develop curricula to meet the needs of students' who present as significantly under prepared for university study. Joanne has been instrumental in developing two core streams in the School of Education, Masters in ICTs and Masters in Primary Education. As a teaching/learning specialist, her research in this area naturally informs her practice.



COMMENDATION

Leonie Goosen

Leonie Goosen is currently a lecturer in Pharmaceutical Chemistry in the Faculty of Pharmacy at Rhodes University. She graduated with a PhD in Organic Chemistry from the University of the Free State in 2007 and a PG Dip (HE) with distinction from Rhodes University in 2014. She received the Rhodes University Vice Chancellor's Distinguished Senior Teaching Award in 2014 and the Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences of South Africa's Distinguished Teacher of the Year Award in 2016.

Her 30-year career dedicated to teaching encompasses curriculum design and teaching at many different levels in a range of subject areas related to chemistry. This includes High Schools, Universities, NGO's, in-house training in Chemical Industries as well as in service training of high school educators. She believes that teaching should not just come from the head, but also from the heart and draws from different disciplines in the social sciences to enhance the motivation, self-efficacy, loci of control, meta-cognition and other life skills of her students. She combines this with her knowledge and acknowledgement of the multiplicity of life histories and experiences of her students to create safe spaces where her students can learn a traditionally complex and difficult subject without fear of ridicule and censure.



COMMENDATION

P.K. Ramdayal

P.K. Ramdayal holds both a BSc and BSc (Hons) degree in Computer Science from UKZN, having branched into the information and knowledge management space when he enrolled for an MPhil degree in Information and Knowledge Management at the Centre for Knowledge Dynamics at Stellenbosch University.

P.K. is a lecturer in the Department of Information and Communication Technology at the Mangosuthu University of Technology. He has been involved in higher education for the past two decades, having previously served in the IT departments at UDW (UKZN), MLST (DUT), and TSA (UNISA). P.K.'s overall approach to teaching is a holistic one based on the notion that the purpose of higher education is "to make students employable", so that they may be sufficiently skilled to lead productive and meaningful lives. His materials design efforts are aimed at helping students to develop abilities and skills to access, extract and synthesise knowledge, so that they may be empowered to operate in the information age and new knowledge society. Consequently, independent learning is encouraged through graded activities requiring students to discover knowledge (outcomes are deliberately vague). Exposure to new and emerging technologies is key to preparing students for the world of work, and he achieves this through a series of Saturday seminars.

He makes extensive use of the Blackboard Learning Management System for TLA activities. In particular, he makes use of blogs to develop English language skills and puzzles such as Sudoku to develop logic and numeracy skills. P.K. is a strong proponent of the mixed methods research methodology, believing that pragmatism in academic enquiry is a major prerequisite to ensuring that research into educational matters are reflective of the current diverse state of affairs in the higher education sector in South Africa. His work is driven by the firm belief that ICTs do not merely reinforce the infrastructure of higher education but greatly increase our power to implement the academic ideal that knowledge is important. P.K. is currently a National Vice-President of the Higher Education Information and Communication Technology Association (HEICTA) of South Africa, an organisation representing the interests of IT lecturers at Universities of Technology and Comprehensive Universities in South Africa. The organisation is primarily concerned with curriculum matters and is deeply involved in advancing the interests of the IT HE sector.

EVALUATION PANEL



Sioux McKenna
Rhodes University



Amanda Hlengwa
Rhodes University



Diane Grayson
Council on Higher
Education



Kwena Masha
University of
Limpopo



Langutani Masehela
University of Venda



Jean Farmer
Stellenbosch
University



Masebala Tjabane
Vaal University of
Technology



Rubby Dhunpath
University of
KwaZulu-Natal



Lindsay Clowes
University of
Western Cape



Marianne Engelbrecht
Council on Higher
Education

