

*Assessment through
Digital Platforms within
Higher Education Studies*

Editors

Labby Ramrathan
Ruth Hoskins
Veena S. Singaram



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Digital Platforms within Higher Education Studies. Volume #12.

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Higher Education Studies*

Editors
Labby Ramrathan
Ruth Hoskins
Veena S. Singaram

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Email: cssall123@gmail.com
Editor-in-Chief: Prof J.A. Smit
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Email: smitj@ukzn.ac.za

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Preface

Following on from the effects of COVID-19 and its disruptions to the teaching, learning and assessment within higher education nationally, and indeed, globally, this volume of the *Alternation African Scholarship Book Series* (AASBS) focuses on assessments using digital platforms during the time of COVID-19. The digital platform was the major technology that allowed the academic enterprise, and especially assessment, to continue during the pandemic period. Having produced seven volumes of the book series on the impact of COVID-19 on higher education, this additional volume shifts the focus to assessment within higher education and engages with academic staff's accounts of their experiences and insights using digital platforms for assessment. So, the chapters in this volume emerged from experiences across South African and regional institutions of higher learning, which were shared at a colloquium hosted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal, College of Humanities in 2021. As such, the volume, therefore, also wishes to contribute to the missing element in the triad of teaching, learning and assessment.

Noting the impacts of COVID-19 on the Higher Education sector, at all levels, and the publication of the mentioned seven volumes of the AASBS, a gap related to assessment was noted in the series. This volume, therefore attempts to address this gap by contributing to the discourse and debates on digital platforms beyond the centrally focused matter of the continuation of teaching and learning using digital media, during the pandemic. While digital platforms for assessment has been used in the past, the grand scale rapid introduction of assessment using digital platforms warranted a capture of the first experiences and impressions of academics who, many of them, have used these platforms for the very first time. This volume, then, captures some of these experiences, views and theorisations of their rapid transitions to using digital platforms, to conduct their assessments for their respective modules.

The research produced and published through the AASBS, and also the participants in this project, provide a space, and academic leadership, for the critical assessment and related planning associated with the acceleration of academia into the digital era. This volume, under the excellent leadership of Labby Ramrathan, Ruth Hoskins and Veena Singaram, is significantly contributing to this unfolding and growing scholarship on higher education teaching, learning and assessment. Under the leadership, the volume importantly

brings to the fore some of the key issues and considerations for the future developments of research on the utilisation of digital platforms in tertiary assessment studies. And while COVID-19 formed the broad-based globally complex space in terms of which this research focus originated, the sheer speed in terms of which academia, and all its branches of study and research, accelerated into the digital, online, cyber or virtual age confronts us with both opportunities and challenges. So, as tertiary education accelerates from this point forward, in this newly-founded space, we will certainly also have to think through the optimal uses of digital technologies, in coming unfolding contexts and times.

Education beyond the pandemic, and especially with the primary objectives to deliver the highest levels and quality of education, research and assessments to even the most remote areas of our country, continent and planet, has certainly profoundly gained through the development and applied uses of new teaching and learning and research software and technologies. And, given the huge role that the whatsapp app has played in South Africa and Africa in this regard, we may just imagine the role apps will also play in research-led teaching and learning in future. It is our sincere hope that the related possibilities will also play a central role in how the Humanities and Social Sciences apps of the future, will transformatively impact the wellbeing and the improvement of the quality of life of communities. We hope that individuals and communities benefitting from online education will then not only benefit through their access to and experiences of excellent education, but also internationally benchmarked assessments, qualifications, and capabilities development. We also hope that it will also benefit both the quality and quantity of future contextually-relevant African scholarship research outputs in South Africa, and abroad, and so, contribute to the growing and advancing the profile of the AASBS, as well as knowledge formation and development in the disciplines articulated with research in Higher Education Studies.

Prof. Johannes A. (Jannie) Smit
Chair: Humanities Institute
University of KwaZulu-Natal

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❧ Contributors ❧

Dr. Mandana Arfa-Kaboodvand is a lecturer, Department of Academic Communication Skills, University of Eswatini. She holds a PhD in TESOL from the University of Exeter, UK. She has worked as a language teacher, university lecturer and teacher trainer for more than 30 years in Iran, Uzbekistan and Eswatini. She regularly presents in international conferences. Some of her works have been published in well-established magazines and journals. Her research interests include language teacher education, language teaching and culture, and EAP. m_arfa@yahoo.com; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0617-2060>

Professor Sarah Bansilal, Department of Mathematics Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban. She is a full professor of Mathematics Education in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. She is the Cluster Leader for the Mathematics and Computer Science Education cluster. Bansilals@ukzn.ac.za; <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5445-5612>

Mr. Adrian Hugh Bellengère, is a senior lecturer, Faculty of Law, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban. bellengerea@ukzn.ac.za; <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1575-7594>

Sakyiwaa Boateng is a lecturer at the Walter Sisulu University. She holds a PhD in science education from Wits University. Sakyiwaa is an early career researcher and passionate about science teacher professional development, especially looking at those affective aspects that science teachers consider as making teaching as a profession worthwhile. She is also looking at breaking down the disjunction between science/ culture and meaning and focusing on 21st-century teaching, science education and science teacher training Walter Sisulu University. sboateng@wsu.ac.za; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1604-5487>

Alex Boateng is an educator with extensive experience within the field of education. He holds a Master's degree in psychology and is currently a PhD student at UNISA. Alex is currently also a full-time educator, teaching at a

Contributors

high school level. He has also worked as a teaching assistant for the University of South Africa and liaises with other professionals to write research articles. His research interest is interdisciplinary research, and covers the field of education, psychology and commerce. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1995-1431>

Dr. Dusty-Lee Donnelly, is a senior lecturer, Faculty of Law, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban. She is an admitted advocate of the High Court of South Africa, and joined the School of Law after practicing first as an attorney and then as a member of the KwaZulu-Natal Society of Advocates in the areas of civil litigation and maritime law. She is a presenter on the LLM Maritime law program and has supervised a number of Masters students in maritime and business law. donnellyd@ukzn.ac.za; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5574-7481>.

Willy Hannes Engelbrecht completed a PhD in Tourism Management at the North-West University in 2015 and an MEd: Educational Management with the University of Johannesburg (UJ) in 2021. Willy is currently the Dean: Research and Postgraduate Studies at The Independent Institute of Education (IIE) where he also served in various other managerial positions within the Faculty of Commerce. Willy has teaching experience in both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in both local and international institutions. Willy actively participates in research and has presented and published a number of papers at both national and international conferences and journals related to tourism and education. He has contributed to various textbook publications and is editor of 5 textbooks and serves on academic advisory boards for various higher educational institutions. He furthermore supervises at Masters and Doctoral level and also acts as an external examiner for master's and doctoral theses. He is also an external reviewer for both national and international academic journals. wengelbrecht@ie.ac.za; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6983-0032>

Professor Karen Ferreira-Meyers is an Associate Professor and Coordinator of Linguistics and Modern Languages, Institute of Distance Education, University of Eswatini, Eswatini. She teaches French (language, literature, culture), researches in a wide range of domains (Open Education, Distance and e-Learning, Teaching and Learning of Languages French-English-Portuguese, Autofiction and Autobiography, Crime and Detective

Contributors

Fiction, African Literatures). She publishes regularly, is a keen editor, proof reader, translator and interpreter. kmeyers@uniswa.sz; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4418-269X>

Professor Ruth Hoskins is a full professor and the current College Dean of Teaching and Learning in the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal. HoskinsR@ukzn.ac.za; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9099-5544>

Professor David Lokhat is an associate professor and the Academic Leader for Chemical Engineering at UKZN. He is also the head of the Reactor Technology Research Group within the School of Engineering. His research interests are in catalysis and chemical reaction engineering, specifically process intensification in reactor technology with a focus on the development and application of advanced materials for more efficient and environmentally benign reaction and separation systems. lokhat@ukzn.ac.za; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1604-0627>

Professor Meahabo Dinah Magano is a full professor in the Department of Psychology of Education at the University of South Africa (UNISA), specialising in psychology of education, with a passion for teacher education. Professor Magano spent 22 years as a high school educator, head of department and deputy principal and acted as a principal. She joined academia in 2007 as a senior lecturer at UJ where she got promoted to Full Professor in 2015. She was the chairperson of the Education Association of South Africa 2016 - 2017. Currently, she is the Chairperson of Unisa Women's Forum 2021 - 2023. maganmd@unisa.ac.za; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7562-0333>

Makeresemese Rosy Mahlomahola is a lecturer in Commerce Education, UKZN, Pinetown. She has a PhD in Curriculum Studies where she advances boundaries of knowledge around what is termed critical accounting education. To date, as a lecturer, she uses transformation as the backdrop against which she paints the tapestry of her research. The Fourth Industrial Revolution with its attendant concepts of Adaptive Learning, block chaining, use of sensors and sophisticated mathematical algorithms has taken her to new heights. QhosolaM@ukzn.ac.za; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0543-1948>

Professor Sechaba M.G. Mahlomahola is a Professor of Education, Univer-

Contributors

sity of Mpumalanga, Siyabuswa. His area of research lies in the creation of sustainable learning environments in terms of teaching, learning curriculum and governance. Theoretically he experiments with all the eight moments of a bricolage, from the traditional through to the fractured futures, to bring to light deeper understanding of multiperspectival and multilayered approaches to education. He is a graduate of the Universities of the North, Western Cape and Harvard and has guested several accredited Education journals nationally and continentally. Geoffrey.Mahlomaholo@ump.ac.za; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6811-1626>

Frank Joseph Mensah, is a lifelong educator and development practitioner. His current research looks at transformation in both basic and higher education. He holds a D.Ed. from the University of Zululand and currently a high school principal. joemenscrow2@gmail.com; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4966-0638>

Lina Methi is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology of Education at the University of South Africa. She was previously an education specialist for the Department of Basic Education, supporting and training teachers on inclusive education and addressing barriers to learning. Her responsibilities, presently, include teacher training (tuition), postgraduate supervision, research, and community engagement projects. Her research interests include building resilience in support of learners, psychological assessments, counselling, and qualitative research. Her first book chapter is currently under review and she also presented papers at various national and international conferences. Emethilm@unisa.ac.za; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8584-9243>

Professor Vusi Mncube is the Dean of the Faculty of Education, University of Fort Hare. He has published intensively on democracy and education. His research focuses on good governance, with a special focus on school governance, democracy and education, democracy for education and social justice. Within this area of good governance and democracy he has published a number of research articles in reputable academic journals and has supervised to completion a sound number of masters and doctoral studies. He is also an expert on research on Violence in schools having published several research reports, articles and a book, a 2nd edition of such a book is to be published soon. He is the co-author of three books, the most recent being,

Contributors

Violence in Schools: South Africa in an International Context (with CR Harber, 2018, UNISA Press). In 2018, this book won the prestigious ‘Hiddingh-Currie Award’ at UNISA. In 2012, he published *Education, Democracy and Development: Does Education Contribute to Democratisation in Developing Countries?* (With CR Harber, Symposium Books, Oxford, United Kingdom). In the same year (2012), Vusi Mncube and Professor Clive Harber co-authored a Unisa report entitled: *The Dynamics of Violence in South African Schools*, which was published by UNISA (Pretoria: UNISA Press). In response to Covid-19 pandemic, Prof Mncube published a number of articles looking at the integration of ICTs in teaching and learning in higher education institutions. Vusi also serves as peer reviewer for a number of national and international journals. vmncube@ufh.ac.za; <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2103-2530>

Dr. Gill Mooney is the Dean: Academic Development and Support at The Independent Institute of Education. Before joining the IIE, Gill lectured in the Department of Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. Her PhD is in the area of teaching and learning in higher education in South Africa, specifically developing higher order skills in a large, diverse range of first-year students. She is a member of the Editorial Advisory Board for the *Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning*. Gill has published several journal articles in teaching and learning in higher education and Vygotskian theory. She has written numerous book chapters in a range of areas, including an instructors’ guide for teaching first year students and Developmental Psychology. She has presented a number of papers at both national and international conferences and has supervised many postgraduate students at the honours, masters and PhD levels. gmooney@iie.ac.za

Dr. Siphwe Motloun Dr Siphwe Motloun is a Social Work lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal’s School of Applied Human Sciences, South Africa. She holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Social Psychology from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Master of Social Work (Clinical Practice) from the University of Natal and a Bachelor of Social Science (Social Work) from the University of Cape Town. She has a wealth of experience as a social worker in different organizations. She has served as a board member of a KZN-based NPO since 2010. Her research interests are race and racism, trauma, mental health and social work education. motloungs@ukzn.ac.za; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8921-0367>

Contributors

Mr. Bongane Mzinyane, is a Social Work lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's School of Applied Human Sciences, South Africa. He graduated with a Master of Social Sciences in Social Work and Bachelor of Social Work degrees from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Mr Mzinyane is currently pursuing his Doctor of Philosophy degree in Social Work, with a research focus on adult diversion and restorative justice. Prior to joining academia, he has worked for more than 8 years, in social work fields that are closely related to crime management and crime prevention. His research interests include restorative justice, therapeutic jurisprudence, social work education and socio-legal issues. Email: MzinyaneB@ukzn.ac.za; <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0684-0644>

Shepherd Ndondo is a postdoctoral research fellow in the Faculty of Education, University of Fort Hare. Shepherd has a keen interest in democracy and education issues, as well as the use of African philosophies in addressing contemporary problems in education. ndondosh@gmail.com

Emmanuel Olawale, is postdoctoral research fellow in the Faculty of Education, University of Fort Hare. His research interest is in democracy and education.

Babawande Emmanuel Olawale is a postdoctoral research fellow in the Faculty of Education, University of Fort Hare. bolawale@ufh.ac.za; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5265-1583>

Dr. Shamola Pramjeeth is the Deputy Head of School of Management at the IIE's Varsity College, a brand of the Independent Institute of Education (IIE). She is responsible for the academic management of the higher certificate and postgraduate qualifications within the school across 9 campuses. Shamola is a seasoned academic with over 17 years of experience in academia. Her career spans across both academia and industry, allowing her to bring a wealth of industry knowledge and practical experience into her classroom. Her qualifications include a Bachelor of Commerce Degree in Marketing and Business Management (University of KwaZulu-Natal), a Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Marketing (University of KwaZulu-Natal), a Master of Commerce in Management (University of KwaZulu-Natal), and a PhD in Leadership with the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In addition, Shamola is actively involved in her community and drives fundraising initiatives to assist

Contributors

the most vulnerable people within her community. Shamola is a published author, lecturer, supervisor and external examiner for Honours and Masters dissertations and a reviewer for two accredited DHET journals.

spramjeeth@varsitycollege.co.za; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8673-1634>

Priya Ramgovind is a Senior Head of Programme in the Faculty of Commerce at the Independent Institute of Education (IIE). Priya completed a Bachelor of Business Science and a Master of Commerce in Supply Chain Management from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education with the IIE. Priya contributes to the broad supply chain management discipline through the development of academic qualifications, the authoring of textbook chapters, as well as curriculum development and contributing to research publications.

pramgovind@iie.ac.za; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3171-7050>

Labby Ramrathan is a full professor in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. RAMRATHANP@ukzn.ac.za

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9963-0675>

Professor Veena S. Singaram is an Associate Professor and Academic Leader of Research in the School of Clinical Medicine, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban. She is responsible for research-related matters, including postgraduate examination processes. Prof Singaram has also actively contributed to capacity building and development of Health Professions Education and research that has led to novel innovations and significant contributions to the training of healthcare professionals. Her scholarly interests include: doctoral research, mentoring, technology-enhanced learning, formative assessment feedback, and collaborative learning environments within a transformative learning paradigm.

singaram@ukzn.ac.za; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6974-7423>

Dr. Upasana Gitanjali Singh is a senior lecturer in the Discipline of Information Systems and Technology. She is also Academic Leader, Information Systems & Technology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. She has a keen interest in Digital Teaching, Assessment and Learning Practices. She successfully implemented the first formative e-assessment in the School of MIG at UKZN in 2014. In 2019 she completed a 2-year training program in the ‘Teaching Advancement in Universities’

Contributors

(TAU) Fellowship. Singhup@ukzn.ac.za; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9943-011X>

