MY LIFE STORY

ANDRÉ DU PLESSIS

PREAMBLE AND INTRODUCTION

In 'My Life Story' I present in a narrative format who I am by means of critical self-reflection. My story consists of two main sections. Section 1 provides an overview of:

- My early teaching and academic years
- My recent academic university career: My newly developed philosophy and what I profess
- Reflection from 2015-2017: Where am I now in terms of thinking about myself, my humanness and pedagogy at THIS moment in 2017?

Section 2 portrays my story related to:

- Qualifications and Discipline Knowledge
- Teaching and Learning
- Research and Creative Works and
- Academic Engagement

It is humanly impossible to remember everything and to tell everything. However, I found great comfort in the words of Adler (2001, p. 46) as she states regarding the narrative that *"The story I tell is partial. However, partiality is a feature of all social research, an inescapable reality rather than a necessary weakness."* Although this narrative that I am presenting is not for research purposes, it is a story that I tell. Hence it is my *'authentic'* data, but my story cannot encompass everything, it is partial and at the same time my best attempt at trying to tell mine, yet, reminiscent and revelatory regarding my academic involvement.

SECTION 1

My early teaching

I started teaching in 1993 as a primary school teacher. Within three and a half years I was promoted as Head of Department at Mount Pleasant Primary School in July 1996. I felt I had achieved a great deal over those short years, and the inspectors and the principal were very positive about my contributions and leadership.

In 2001, while Head of Department, I enrolled at Rhodes University in order to learn more about Information Communication Technology (ICT) in education, as well as to obtain greater clarity and insight into the theory behind outcomes based education. The MEd study at Rhodes University opened my eyes, as the lecturers did not just *'talk'* theory; they also modelled situations and allowed for in-depth questions and discussions. They highlighted the positives and negatives of whatever they had modelled. We had more than enough time for discussions on issues, so time was not really a barrier. We were introduced to learning theories and the practical implementation of constructivist principles. Assessment practices accompanied the constructivist learning principles and theory on assessment, and again more than enough time was allocated for discussion. We were also provided with a vast range of extra reading material on all of the above-mentioned. During these years I was also introduced to the readings of Jürgen Harbermas, a German sociologist and philosopher. His critical theory and pragmatism impacted greatly on me as human being.

It was during the MEd at Rhodes that I started to explore the use of ICT on a much deeper level than previously and started to become *'converted'* to constructivist principles, as I saw the value of being an active learner. I began to implement constructivist principles in my primary school classroom and started to invite fellow staff members to my classroom to share with them what I was doing. As a result, the principal asked me to host staff development sessions for the rest of the staff regarding my practice and thinking. I was able to win over some of the staff members to try out some of the new things that I modelled. This was very enriching for me as a person.

I became an advocate of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) and hosted teacher development sessions in the district in collaboration with Dr Robert Gerber and Mrs Elsa Lombard of the then PE Technikon. The Department of Education (DOE) invited me to share with their staff and teachers how I used various forms of assessment, how I designed my learners' portfolios and OBE report cards, etc. At the same time, it is important to state that I realised that what OBE envisaged, would not be easy for all teachers to do as OBE requires access to resources that many disadvantaged schools did not have and still do not have and, in general, teachers are resistant to change.

Due to my explorations, I moved from seeing teaching as a craft and as labour, to seeing teaching as an art and as a profession (Hoban, 2002). I transcended seeing teaching as just the development of a repertoire of skills, competencies and techniques that can be accumulated over a period of time. Teaching was now more an art to me, as an art implies seeing teaching and learning as something *'messy'*, and something that is not always crystal clear. Thus, what works for one group of learners, might not work for another group, and what worked this year, will not necessarily work well the next year. Furthermore, I realised that one has to constantly examine one's practice by means of reflection; hence I started to design simple questionnaires and journals in which learners could record their experiences of my classroom, their feelings and their learning experiences.

My recent academic university career: My newly developed philosophy and what I profess

In 2006 I started to work on my PhD and in May 2007 as I was appointed at the NMMU. The more I read, the more I realised how little I really know. I started to grapple with concepts, for example *'teaching'* and *'learning'* and what these concepts really meant. For some people these words imply that if one teaches, then students learn. This is quite a narrow conceptualisation of these two terms, as teaching and learning are not synonyms, *i.e.* to teach does not necessarily result in student-learning in the classroom or lecture hall. It is thus quite possible that some, or even many students, may leave my classroom without having a clear understanding of what has been taught. They might only learn and have an understanding of what I as the lecturer envisaged at a later stage, or they could even carry these gaps in their understanding with them for a long period. Thinking in this manner really started me to question what I am doing even more and to interrogate who I am, what I stand for and how I view teaching and learning.

I also realised that we as lecturers are actually guiding our students towards an unknown future, thus they are *'learning for an unknown future'* (Barnett, 2004). Yes, the future has always been unknown to us, but *'learning for an unknown future'* also calls for an ontological turn (Barnett, 2004). The problem is, *'How can we learn for a future if it is unknown?'* This is caused due to the fact that the world as we know it, is not stable, not even complex anymore, it is super-complex (Barnett, 2004), thus there is not *'one truth'*; there are multiple truths, multiple perspectives and more and more uncertainties. Hence, the more we know, the more uncertainties and anxieties are created. It has therefore become important to me to realise that I cannot provide my students with all the knowledge and all the skills, as knowledge is not finite; and furthermore, the skills that we *'teach'* today may be out-dated in a few years' time. Hence, I need to instil

self-confidence, self-belief, self-motivation and life-long learning in order to assist our students to deal with learning for an unknown future, *i.e.* how to deal with *'being'* (Barnett, 2004). At the same time, I have a responsibility to prepare my students for the 21st century school and 21st century learning (Prensky, 2009) e.g. behaving ethically, thinking critically, setting goals, having good judgment, making good decisions, planning, solving problems, self-directing, self-assessing, iterating, taking leadership, communicating, interacting with society and the world using technology, learning creatively, learn to tinker and adapt ideas, design, reflect, assist to take risks, etc. (Prensky, 2009).

So where do I stand? My students are no longer *'tabula rasa'* or *'empty vessels'* to be filled with knowledge, as they come to my classroom with prior knowledge and experiences. I cannot provide them with all the knowledge, as knowledge is not finite (Nations, 2001; Dochy, 2001). The Internet Web Publishing and Book Publishing explosion is evidence of this phenomenon (Dochy, 2001) and as a result it should be my aim to assist students not to get lost in the *'oceans of data'* (Du Plessis, 2004), but to prepare them to access and use information effectively, to filter through information and to distinguish between what is relevant, irrelevant and even *'artificial'* information (Eriksen, 2001). My students have to tinker, design and adapt in order to develop creative thinking.

I see myself as a lecturer-facilitator who believes in constructivist principles, but at the same time, my principles are eclectic. Ontologically, I acknowledge the existence of multiple subjective realities. Epistemologically, I see 'how we come to know' as an active construction process of knowledge (Brooks & Brooks, 1999), not the passive consuming of information. In knowledge construction, knowledge is constructed socially and individually through a social interactive process (Gagnon & Collay, 2001; Marlowe & Page, 2005). Hence, learning is about understanding, applying, thinking and analysing and not about accumulating, memorising and repeating of information (Marlowe & Page, 2005). My focus is on authentic and meaningful learning through a process of bridge building between what students already know and what they are expected to learn, resulting in the creation of artefacts such as posters or mind maps of mathematical concepts and processes that represent their thinking (Gagnon & Collay, 2006). Therefore, for learning to become meaningful, it has to transcend the focus on mere factual information as *"meaning assigned to facts and facts alone are meaningless until they are interpreted and added up into a coherent picture"* (Hinchey, 1998, p. 45). I therefore administer informal class tests, for example on fractions to my intermediate phase student teachers, to analyse misconceptions in order to try and re-built sound foundations. I discuss these misconceptions with my students and provide them with input on, for example, why they think these misconceptions exist and how we can try to remedy them. These misconceptions are from real-life examples, mistakes that learners also often make.

Although I believe in the power of social interaction, it is important to note that "*Constructing implies that learners construct knowledge for themselves: individually and socially*" (Hein, 1991: IS, p. 1). Thus, we cannot negate or nullify the role of the individual, as it is the individual who still has to make meaning of the constructed knowledge in the end, even when involved in a social constructivist context.

Reflection plays a vital role in my learning armour, as I constantly ask my students, by means of journal writing and reflection questionnaires, how they experience my classroom and their learning experiences. My rationale behind these reflection opportunities is that I am of the opinion that it could assist in making learning and teaching more meaningful to both me and my students. I believe that my students realise that I do value their opinions, as I provide feedback to them about positive and negative responses that I receive. Hence, I hope they see that I value their inputs.

I am also very well aware of the fact that language can be a great barrier to many of my students, hence I encourage them to converse in their own mother tongue with students who speak the same mother tongue when possible when they find themselves uncertain, including when in heterogeneous groups.

I also create practical opportunities for my students to experience, for example, cooperative learning through the use of the *'Jigsaw'* and *'Numbered Heads'* exercises in a practical real-life context of the module in which they are engaged. I create opportunities for them to ask questions and let many of these student questions drive the mathematics teaching and learning, especially when related to misconceptions. I also pose many questions, which are then discussed in groups, after which the answers are reported to the rest of the class. Thus, I try to create opportunities during which my students can voice their collective understanding. I also make use of more capable peers to assist students to move other students through their Zones of Proximal Development (ZPD), as I am of the opinion that if another student can clear up the *'blurs'* or misunderstandings of fellow students, this is an indication that these capable peers have a good understanding of the contents and concepts being explained. In addition, I also provide opportunities for my students to show their understanding of mathematical processes in front of the whole class, which result in in fellow students asking questions. To some this process is quite uncomfortable, but the majority rise to the occasion.

Assessment in mathematics creates a lot of *'angst'* among many students. Therefore I provide my students with multiple opportunities to improve their marks, for example, those who performed well do not have to re-write a test, but those who do want to improve, may take another scheduled test. I use the test answers of the students as a learning opportunity by sharing what I have noticed. Thus, assessment goes beyond the mere recording and accumulation of marks.

Students are also provided with memos and sample previous tests on the NMMU iLearn portal, especially first-year students, who are still very *'fresh'* in their first six months at university. The same applies to written assignments, as students are given a second opportunity to obtain a minimum pass mark for an assignment, if they did not meet the requirement in the first instance.

The focus in my class is thus not on teaching or instruction, but on learning. I also try to instil critical and creative thinking within my students, self-worth, concern for others, and tolerance for diversity, life-long learning and self-management. Furthermore, I constantly share with them my personal past-classroom experiences in order to develop their *'being'*, as my modules are not just about knowledge and skills, but for the preparation of ways of dealing with educational and pedagogical *'being'*, showing them that there is not just one-way of dealing with reality.

However, it is also important to state that I do lecture in the traditional manner at some stages, as instructivism does have a place according to a well-known constructivist such as Von Glasersfeld (1995), and according to the constructionist Papert (1991), but I am cautious as the traditional mode does not necessarily leads to proper understanding in all instances. But then, I also acknowledge that not all constructivist learning contexts always lead to clear understandings either.

Reflection 2015-2017: Where am I now in terms of thinking about myself, my humanness and pedagogy at THIS moment in 2017?

As academic and HOD/HOP in the Faculty of Education, I was part of a journey in which I interrogated myself pertaining to a drawing that I have made that depicted a humanizing pedagogy and how I see myself within the faculty. I also had to reflect what I saw in fellow HOD/HOP's drawings pertaining to a humanizing pedagogy. The following became eminent after reflection regarding practicing a humanizing pedagogy and how a view my humanness as lecturer at the NMMU.

Uniqueness

When we talk, discuss, read and listen to someone else's opinions, perceptions and understanding of a concept or observation, we tend to think that our thinking and understanding is similar about a concept, even

after we have articulated our understandings. This seems to be the ideal, but then our background and cultural tools are different. We cannot claim to be part of one objective reality; rather, we are part of our own subjective reality that suggests that there are multiple realities.

Social responsibility and sensitiveness towards others

As human beings, we have a responsibility to show that we care, but not wrapping another person in cotton wool. We have to reach out, but at the same time be conscious that our position does not have to be identical to those of another fellow human.

Equity and sincere in learning

Academic staff seems to see themselves as on another level when they think of and compare themselves to their students. We seem to think that we are more knowledgeable and skillful. This probably emanates from the way that we saw our teachers and lecturers when we were at school and studying at university, as the system perpetuates the lecturer or teacher as the knower and the student or learner as the inexperienced empty vessel. This is exactly what a humanizing pedagogy tries to change as it aims to promote co-learning and rethinking our current 'power' relationship.

I am a co-learner

Revisiting my picture, I became aware that it actually portrays me to a great extent. The learner or student is not the solo learning person; I am also a learner during our interactions:

Disagreements and not knowing it all are part of learning

Learning does not imply the mere agreement and acceptance of everything from the lecturer. It is much more than agreement, in fact, learning happens when the mind is stretched and when we are challenged, when our thinking about something is turned into disequilibrium.

It is in order to NOT always to know all the answers as leader

Leaders are fallible; we do not always have the answers. It became clear to me that leadership is not just about changing others; it is also about transforming yourself, *i.e.* your thinking, doings and perceptions as leader of what is *'right'* and what is the way forward.

Learning and doing has no end

Learning what a humanizing pedagogy is, is not a solo endeavour, it is a collective activity that is on-going and does not have an end. The spiral in the *'hand'* drawing represented the above to me. Equally important, there is not just one finger on each hand, all the fingers need their fellow fingers to work

Sharing and receiving is vital

A humanizing pedagogy does not imply a one sided dimension, *i.e.* one person giving and the other merely receiving. It is about giving and sharing from both parties.

Learning from one another is the key to progress

We learn from one another all the time. Learning from one another is vital. Everyone has something to contribute in his/her way. The size can differ, but it still counts. It entails moving into and out of the centre and standing on the periphery at some times, probably most of the time.

Conclusion: What emerges?

It is evident that I have been transformed in so many aspects. This application and the story that I tell by means of reflections is testimony to it. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that my personal transformation has not ended, as it is an on-going dynamic life-long process.

SECTION 2

Qualifications, Current Position and Discipline Knowledge

I completed my MEd at Rhodes University cum laude in 2004 and my PhD at the NMMU in 2010. I am currently a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the NMMU, as well as Head of Programme (HOP) of the Post Graduate Certificate in Education qualification. I have fifteen years of school-based experience, two years of part time experience at the NMMU and nearly eight years of full time experience.

It will become evident in the next three sections that I have excelled during my NMMU years on all fronts: Teaching and Learning, Research and Creative Works AND Academic Engagement. I have attached several NMMU references, local South African references as well as international references at the end of my presented case that will be able to attest to my academic excellence.

Teaching and Learning

I have taught Primary School Mathematics Content and Method from year one to three at NMMU, Secondary School Mathematics Content and Method, Research modules in the BEd Senior Phase and Further Education and Training Phase for in-service teachers, Portfolio Based modules for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), ICT for School Leadership and Media and ICT, to mention a few only. I have also assisted with the Research Module at Honours level.

I have designed, re-designed and adapted several modules too. After one year at the NMMU, Dr Jeff Ilsley approached me to take over and redesign the PSED301 BEd Senior primary and FET: Research Methodology in Education module, as it was a module that was offered on various off-site sites and was deemed problematic in its current format. This once problematic module was conceptualised differently with clear guidelines in order that students could produce a final research project in incremental stages. This resulted in a much better research experience for the students with improved projects and pass rate.

In a similar manner, I was handed the PICM202 and PICM301 modules in 2008. These modules' module guides and conceptualisation had to be adjusted, as it was not up to the standard that Dr Ilsley expected. I consulted with Dr Pam Austin and Dr Lonnie King and used our collective input to design two new module guides to be proud of. Dr Austin and I also upgraded the PICM201 first year mathematics method module in order to make it as comprehensive and useable for future primary school mathematics teachers. In fact, teachers from schools often inquire whether they can be provided with copies of our module guides and content. This is testament to its value. Although I am not teaching PICM301 currently, this module is still being used in the manner I designed it, testimony to its breadth and depth – quality.

During my first four years at NMMU under the leadership of Dr Jeff Ilsley and Prof Paul Webb, I taught and trained several NMMU tutors that facilitated our BEd SP and FET upgrading degree, as well as tutors tutoring on the NPDE coordinated by Mr Neville Rudman. I also played an instrumental part in the design of the mathematics modules in the revamped NPDE and served as module coordinator too.

The use of ICT as medium for teaching and learning is very close to my heart. As such, I have developed my own online videos using the iPad and computer for mathematics. I also use these videos in class and make them available to my students on the NMMU iLearn portal. In addition, I have designed various creative

student mathematics assignments that students share and present to their peers in such a manner that not only their peers benefit from it, but that the individual and group presentations also instils confidence within the students.

I am using the Moodle Platform on the NMMU LEARN Portal for teaching, learning and managing my modules. I do all the design myself. I also create online digital content using the Apple iPad, as well as Windows Based Software such as CamStudio and BlueBerry Express. I am a firm believer in Open Source Software and try to use Open Source and Freeware whenever possible as an alternative to expensive software. I have also used Linux, the Zorino Educational Platform. In addition, I have extensive experience how to use freeware software on various content areas and how to implement it and pass these skills on to others. My undergraduate students have indicated in their module evaluation forms as well as in the semester as a whole evaluation forms that they do value and hold my teaching and their learning experience in high esteem. My teaching and learning efforts have been recognised within the Faculty of Education and the NMMU as I have been awarded with the Emerging Teacher of the Year in the Faculty of Education in 2010, Teacher of the Year in the Faculty of Education in 2011 AND NMMU Teacher of the Year in 2011 too.

In December 2013 I was approached by the Director of School (DOS), Prof Alet Delport, and the Head of Programmes (HOPs) of the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase to redevelop the Media Module, a module that has not been well received by the students over the past years. Part of my brief was also to serve as a mentor and guide for a newly appointed colleague and to assist and enable her to take over the module in totality within a year. I have invested a great amount of time during December 2013 and January 2014 in order to have a product ready that will address the needs of the students and requirements of the DOS and HOPs. It appears at the end of 2014 from the students' electronic artefacts and student reflections that this module has been extremely well received to such an extent that many more students have during 2014 used ICT and Media during their practice teaching at schools. Students have also been extremely creative with electronic portfolio and CV design. Several students have also commented that they have been assisting teachers at school to design similar media, as these students have the necessary knowledge and skills to train teachers at school. In addition, the manner in which the module has been designed as well as all the personal online videos that I have developed and uploaded have provided this module with a platform that it can be delivered and facilitated totally online with minimum NMMU face-to-face contact in a NMMU venue.

One of my teaching and learning highlights in 2014, over and above the new media module and its success, was the NMMU Distinguished Teacher Award, an award that is awarded for five years. This award is also the highest award that one can receive for teaching and learning at the NMMU.

My role as PGCE HOP also entails the development of the annual PGCE Orientation Programme. In 2013 I reconceptualised the orientation programme in the light of what I have learned from my involvement with the Faculty Curriculum Renewal Process Journey. As a result, the orientation programme was made more interactive and media based – requiring student input and output. The focus is on developing a collaborative community of student teachers that are be able to reflect upon, think about, discuss and share in pairs, groups and within the whole group aspects pertaining to the '*I, Who, What and How*' in order to develop a community and social cohesion with the diverse group of students; to interrogate their choice of a career in education and teaching and learning within the SA context; to think deeply why they want to become a teacher and what they believe a good teacher is; to provide creative and art based opportunities to draw and share their educational experiences; to sensitize the students on who the majority of our learners are, their contexts and the challenges that this holds; to enable students to critically review how our learners of today think in comparison with their parents and previous generations; to introduce students to how educationalists and schools think and operate and why they think in this way; to reflect critically on the current way of thinking in education and become aware that change is vital; to think about and share their

interpretations on creativity and how it can be developed AND to develop dispositions to the aspects that they have been exposed to and to interrogate these.

Leadership wise, I have been instrumental in the PGCE Faculty Curriculum Renewal Process. The re-curriculated PGCE has been accepted by Faculty Board and APC in October 2014. The BEd FET, IP and FP programmes have also use certain sections of the PGCE application, as the HOPs and DOS have indicated that they appreciated the thoroughness and quality of our submission.

My academic leadership was also recognised by the Higher Education South Africa Council, HESA, as I was awarded with the HESA LEAD Leadership Scholarship in 2013. I have also been selected to participate in the 2017 LEAP NMMU Prestigious Leadership Short Learning Programme for young leaders.

On the school front, I have facilitated various training and development programmes of school-based teachers on various fronts, such as designing reports based on the RNCS (2005), portfolio assessment and the RNCS (2005), computer integration in the curriculum at the then Port Elizabeth Technikon (2004), training of staff in IQMS procedures (2004), developing textbook evaluation forms in collaboration with staff in (2004), development of rubrics, checklists and constructivist Theory for 50 teachers from Port Elizabeth (2002), etc. to name a few only.

Research and Creative Works

I have also published widely on the national and international front in education related journals, and have also presented papers related to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) nationally, as well as internationally. My field of specialisation research publication wise is School Leadership and ICT. ICT has been my field of specialisation at Masters and PhD (Doctorate) level and as such I am exceptionally well qualified and competent in this area. My research outputs have been recognised by the Faculty of Education and the NMMU as I was awarded the Emerging Researcher of the Year in 2012.

ICT implementation and school leadership go hand-in-hand. As a result, I have been very much involved in school leadership for ICT implementation and integration as well as in the development of ICT integration strategies for teaching and learning. The understanding of and planning for school management and leadership issues are vital for ICT integration to succeed. This is also where my supervision at Masters Level regarding conflict, causes of conflict, conflict theories, management theories, managing and dealing with conflict, managing and dealing with ICT implementation, challenges regarding managing and leading the implementation process, has come in handy. My research and engagement endeavours has assisted to pave the way for innovation in facilitating learning at the NMMU, as well as for engagement projects beyond the immediate NMMU classroom. My current belief is that the leadership and management for the 21st Century School will have to be strongly anchored within knowledge and skills pertaining to ICT leadership, management, implementation and integration. I am of the opinion that I do possess the necessary knowledge, skills and experience regarding the above to contribute to management and leadership facilitation at the NMMU, as well as to module design and writing, including research, pertaining to the above.

I have also studied how to infuse innovations and innovative practices and this resulted in the creation of the $C^2RHOAR^3FS^2R^2$ heuristic for ICT Professional Teacher Development and ICT Implementation which has been published internationally. In addition, I have also designed the ICT implementation heuristic for schools as a result of research and this has already been published in 2012. This tool has the potential to assist the leadership and management teams at schools with ICT implementation and integration and subsequently one of my Masters students have extended this tool based on research findings.

My research, leadership and innovation has also been recognised by the International Organisation of Science and Technology Education (IOSTE) as I have been elected on their executive in 2010 and is also in charge of their web page, http://ioste.nmmu.ac.za, which I designed and maintained. My international presentations at IOSTE in 2010 in Slovenia, in 2012 in Tunisia and at Curtain University's 2012 conference in Oman, have resulted in invitations as plenary speaker to a conference in Lithuania in 2013 and as plenary speaker in 2014 in the Czech Republic. In January 2014 I was invited to deliver another keynote at a conference in Lithuania, but due to my academic involvement and the re-curriculation, I was not able to honour this invitation. However, the organising committee wanted me to present and share my thinking and as such requested that I make a video of my presentation and upload it to DropBox. My presentation was screened as a video keynote at the national Natural Science Education in Comprehensive Schools 2014 Conference in Panevėžys in April 2014. A special certificate of appreciation was snail mailed to me. I have realised the impact of my video keynote during my keynote in the Czech Republic in September 2014 when a Russian from St Petersburg approached me and started to talk about my presentation, as well as when academia from Slovenia approached me regarding my video presentation too.

In addition to the above, I have also been invited to present at the Walter Sisulu University, the Department of Basic Education in the Eastern Province and at the annual ICT Conference in Johannesburg, South Africa. I have also presented on invitation to Faculty and University during NMMU Faculty of Education's lunch hour presentations and have been invited to present during the Faculty of Education's Humanising Pedagogy's week in 2014.

In order to promote academic writing, peer reviewing and the publication of academic research theory and results, I have initiated the double blind peer reviewed journal, Educational Research for Social Change (ERSC). I am also one of the three co-editors in chief of ERSC. This online journal resides with the Faculty of Education at the NMMU (http://ersc.nmmu.ac.za). Prof De Lange and I have applied for accreditation at the Department of Higher Education as well as to Thompson Reuters. We are awaiting their response which will probably be February 2017.

In addition, I also serve on the editorial of prestigious Eastern Europe academic journal, Journal of Baltic Sciences, a journal that is held in high esteem in the eastern part of Europe. Furthermore, I am acting as reviewer for several academic journals such as Perspectives in Education, African Journal of Research in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education and the Journal of Baltic Sciences. Furthermore, I have also examined theses of a number of universities.

Despite my 'newness' to academia and being an HOP, I have managed a combined journal output and conference presentation output of 3 per year. During my sabbatical in 2011, I had to produce and submit two articles to accredited journals, but I was able to complete five articles, all published. In addition to all of the above, both my MEd students graduated cum laude. This also highlights the quality I invest in my students. At this stage of my academic journey, I am focusing on the development of postgraduate students to be competent researchers and as such have applied for the NMMU DAAD initiative.

Research wise, my Google Citations are 28 and my h-index 5. On Research Gate, I have an RG score of 10.22 which is 42.5% higher than all Research Gate members and 456 reads.

Academic Engagement

From a traditional perspective, I have served and am still serving on a number of research and academic engagement related committees at the NMMU. These include Faculty ERTIC, TLC and FMC. I have also developed an ICT SLP for Educators that can be used for engagement purposes. I also serve as the Head of Science Mathematics and Technology Unit in the Faculty of Education with its primary focus on engagement

and research. In addition, I also serve as Chairperson of the School Governing Body of Summerwood Primary since 2012.

I have been involved with ICT in schools with the ABSA SMIS DELL computers in schools at Missionvale: Developing teachers for ICT implementation and Integration at their schools since 2008 project and we are still supporting the schools with the internet, fixing of equipment and teacher development when required. I have been responsible for the coordination and management of the Hermann Ohlthaver Trust ICT project. In both these projects we serve and assist schools in the Missionvale, Kwamagxaki and New Brighton Area. This project was awarded the Emerging NMMU Engagement Award in 2012. My research and my engagement has been a tremendous fulfilling experience.

Recently, in 2014, I played an instrumental role in collaboration with Prof Paul Webb, the Herman Ohlthaver Trust, SAB, Mr Preston Geswindt, Viv England and NMMU ICT Services (Steve Viljoen and Eldridge van der Westhuizen) with our Skype-Lync science teaching project and CAMI maths project with a school in Paterson. This requires that we provide synchronous science lessons online via video from Port Elizabeth and here Dr Jeff Ilsley has served as facilitator for this SMATE Research Project. We have assisted this school, as they have no science teacher at school. Due to the nature of my engagement, I have been invited by Prof George de Lange to present on Engagement at the Engagement Colloquium Presentation in October 2014, held at the North Campus Conference Centre.

Furthermore, I have also initiated and organised the provincial 'Inspiring Teachers and Student Teachers Conference' with ICT: Social Media, iPads and the Y-Generation as Main Themes in August 2012. This was held at the NMMU in the auditorium at South Campus. As a result of this conference and my presentation, I was invited by a school in East London to come and present to their whole staff.

I am of the opinion that I have a great deal of experience with engagement and the management of projects. This also included the financial planning of the project and writing reports related to projects. I am an innovative leader, someone who is prepared to take calculated risks when it comes to innovations and hence, I push the boundaries regarding new developments and innovation.

My innovations, engagement and research have made significant contributions to the development and implementation of ICT and teaching and learning. My interventions, as can be seen from the above, have made contributions to enable communities which are not as fortunate as others. As such, these interventions also resulted in learners being connected to the www and using the www for learning, as well as teachers that have enabled themselves to use ICT. From no one having a laptop at school, my interventions have led to nearly every 2nd teacher at school having his/her laptop and internet connectivity. Teachers have also started to use ICT in their own classroom space besides the computer laboratory.

As such, I am of the opinion that the engagement activities have contributed to the NMMU vision and values as my engagement, research and teaching and learning appears to have assisted with developing and being a staff member that assists with the development of *'a dynamic African university, recognised for its leadership in generating cutting-edge knowledge for a sustainable future. This vision will be achieved by offering a diverse range of quality educational opportunities that make a critical and constructive contribution to regional, national and global sustainability'.* My engagement has also assisted with developing the ideas and talents of collaborators at the NMMU and at schools, as well as research outputs, outputs that is evident in my CV. In addition, I have conducted my engagement and research by through living out and pursuing the NMMU core values of respect for diversity, excellence, *Ubuntu*, integrity, responsibility and respect for the natural environment.

CONCLUSION

I see myself as a leader, someone who is prepared to take calculated risks when it comes to innovations and hence, I push the boundaries regarding new developments and innovation. I am a very fast learner and in addition, I have the ability to sense how people really feel and am able to assess and summarise a situation quickly. I also have chaired many and varied meetings and am of the opinion that meetings have to keep its focus and should be productive.

In the 21st century, there is a need for dynamic creative and inspiring persons in organisations, attributes that I do exhibit. I am a 'go-getter' that does not know the words "It cannot be done" or "This won't be possible". I see problems as challenges that can be overcome, not as obstacles. I am a team player, but I can also easily work alone. Furthermore, I am a perfectionist who takes great pride in all that I do. As noted above, I am also a very fast learner and have very good inter-personal skills. A crucial skill in the present day educational environment is the ability to network and negotiate and I have ensured that I have honed these skills, thus enabling to network and negotiate extensively on various fronts.

I do believe that I have performed holistically and consistently at the NMMU at real high levels and this has been recognised through the various NMMU excellence awards that I received consistently for teaching and learning, engagement and research.

I am of the opinion that I will be a great asset, as I will be able to assist with enhancing and extending initiatives for the continuous improvement of teaching, learning, assessment, research, engagement and ICT to higher levels in collaboration with all involved. My record of accomplishment and achievements in my curriculum vitae is testimony to the above. I am of the humble opinion that the evidence provided, serves to portray a coherent and holistic overview that substantiates that I am _living_ the NMMU values and attributes that the University profess and as such have assisted to contribute to the NMMU's standing locally and abroad.

ASSOC PROF ANDRÉ DU PLESSIS
HEAD OF PROGRAMME PGCE: FACULTY OF EDUCATION

http://andreduplessis.nmmu.ac.za

REFERENCES

Adler, J. (2001). *Teaching Mathematics in multilingual classrooms*. Mathematics Education Library, Vol 26. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Barnett, R. (2004). Learning for an unknown future. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 23(3), 247-260.

Brooks, J. G., & Brooks, M. G. (1999). I*n Search of Understanding: The Case for Constructivist Classrooms*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Dochy, F. (2001). A New Assessment Era: Different needs, new challenges. *Research Dialogue in Learning and Instruction*, *2* (2001), 11-20.

Doll, W.E. (1989). Foundations for a post-modem curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *21*(3), 243-253.

Du Plessis, A. (2004). Learners Perceptions of Creating a Collaborative Hypermedia Product: An Exploratory Study at Mount Pleasant Primary School. Unpublished MEd Thesis, Rhodes University: South Africa.

Eriksen, T.H. (2001). Tyranny of the Moment: Fast and Slow Time in the Information Age. London: Pluto Press.

Eyler, J. and Giles, D.E (1999). Where's the learning in service-learning? San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Flemming, D., & Lynch, G. (2005). Innovative Learning and Unlearning. In C. Looi, D.H. Jonassen and I. Mitsuru, Towards Sustainable and Scalable Educational Innovations Informed by the Learning Sciences: Sharing Good Practices of Research, Experimentation and Innovation (pp 93-100). Amsterdam: IOS Press.

Fullan, M., & Smith, G. (1999). *Technology and the problem of Change*. Available from home.oise.utoronto.ca/~changeforces/Articles_98-99/12_99.pdf

Gagnon, G.W., & Collay, M. (2006). *Constructivist Learning Design: Key Questions for Teaching to Standards*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.

Gamache, P. (2002). University students as creators of personal knowledge: an alternative epistemological view. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *7*(3), 277-294.

Harel, I., & Papert, S. (eds.) (1991). Software Design as a Learning Environment. In I. Harel and S. Papert (Eds.), *Constructionism: Research Reports and Essays 1985-1990 by the Epistemology and Learning Research Group* (pp. 41-84). New Jersey: Ablex.

Hein, G.E. (1991). *Constructivist Learning Theory*. Available from http://www.exploratorium.edu/IFI/resources/constructivistlearning.html

Hinchey, P. (1998). Finding freedom in the classroom: A practical introduction to critical theory. New York: Peter Lang.

Hoban, G.F. (2002). Teacher Learning for Educational Change: A Systems Thinking Approach. Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Jonassen, D.H., Myers, J.M., & McKillop, A.M. (1996). From Constructivism to Constructionism: Learning with Hypermedia/Multimedia rather than from it. In B.G. Wilson (Ed.), *Constructivist Learning Environments: Case Studies in Instructional Design* (pp. 96-106). New Jersey: Educational Technology Publications.

Kafai, Y.B., and Resnick, M. (1996). Introduction. In Y. Kafai and M. Resnick (Eds.), *Constructionism in practice: Designing, thinking and learning in a digital world* (pp. 1-8). Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kagan, D. (1992). Implications of Research on Teacher Belief. *Educational Psychologist*, *27*(1), 65-90.

Kolb, D. A. (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as a Source of Learning and Development*, Prentice Hall.

Prigogine, I & Stengers, I. (1984). *Order Out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature*. London: Heinemann

Marlowe, B.A., & Page, M.L (2005). *Creating and Sustaining the Constructivist Classroom*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Corwin Press.

Mellon, C.A. (1999). Technology and the Great Pendulum of Education. *Journal of Research on Computing in Education*, *32*(1), 28-35.

Moll, I. (2002). *Clarifying Constructivism in a context of Curriculum change. Journal of Education*. No 27, February 2002, pp. 1-32. Available from http://www.edu.unp.ac.za/joe/joe_issues.htm or http://www.edu.unp.ac.za/joe/joepdfs/joe%2027%20moll.pdf

Mumtaz, S. (2000). Factors affecting teachers' use of information and communications technology: a review of the literature. *Journal of Information Technology for Teacher Education*, 9(3), 319-342.

Nations, C. (2001). How Long Do Our Children Have to Wait?: Understanding the Children of the 21st Century, the Need for Pedagogical Change, and Technology Integration. Available from http://pt3.nmsu.edu/educ621/cynthia2.html

Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research*, *62*, 307-332.

Papert, S. (1991). Situating Constructionism. In I. Harel and S. Papert (eds.) (1991). *Constructionism: Research Reports and Essays 1985-1990 by the Epistemology and Learning Research Group* (pp. 1-12). New Jersey: Ablex.

Perkins, D. N. (1986). *Knowledge as Design*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Prensky, M. (2001). *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants* (From On the Horizon, NCB University Press, Vol. 9 No. 5, October 2001). Available from http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part1.pdf

Prensky, M. (2009). *Marc Prensky's Essential 21st Century Skills.* Available from http://www.ukhambacareers.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Marc-Prensky_essential-21st-century-skills.pdf

Salomon, G. (1998). *Novel Constructivist Learning Environments and Novel Technologies: Some Issues to Be Concerned With* (This paper is based on the author's Keynote Address presented at the EARLI Meeting, Athens, August 1997). Available from http://cybercon98.harvard.edu/wcm/salomon.html

Schön, D. A. (1983) *The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action*, Basic Books.

Von Glasersfeld, E. (1995). *Radical constructivism*. Washington DC: Falmer Press.

Wilson, L. (2005). *Beyond Bloom - A new Version of the Cognitive Taxonomy*. Available from http://www.uwsp.edu/education/lwilson/curric/newtaxonomy.htm

================================