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Institutional and Student Involvement in Diversity Activities

Editorial by Bhekumusa Zikhali

The Office for International Affairs is excited to present its first-ever Booklet on Institutional and Student Involvement in Diversity Activities for 2022!

Internationalisation has become essential for the university's expansion, guided by the UFS Internationalisation Strategy (2018-2022). The university's core business has benefited significantly from internationalisation and continues to do so. Led by Bulelwa Moikwatlhai, the University of the Free State has been celebrating cultural diversity activities since 2018, namely Africa Day[1], the Umoja Buddy Programme,[2] and the International Cultural Diversity Festival[3].

Cultural diversity in higher education refers to the presence of individuals from different cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds in colleges and universities. It encompasses various components: race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and age. Cultural diversity in higher education has come to recognise the importance of creating a welcoming and inclusive environment where all individuals, regardless of their background, should feel valued and supported. This phenomenon has become increasingly important in higher education institutions.

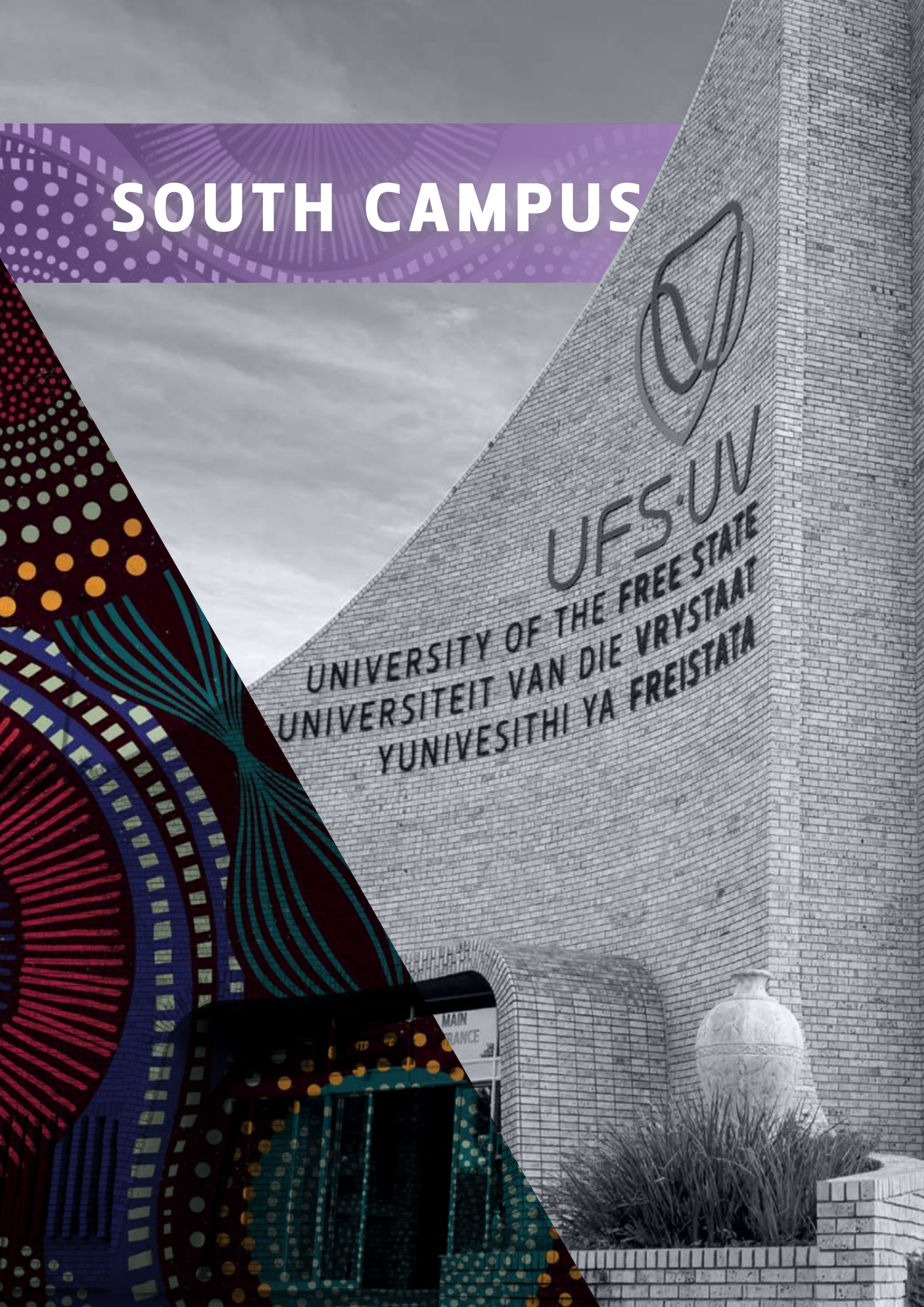
The world is becoming more interconnected and diverse; therefore, staff and students must develop the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate a rapidly changing global landscape. By participating in cultural diversity activities, they can gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of different cultures, beliefs, and ways of life, and learn how to engage meaningfully with people from diverse backgrounds. As an office, we also acknowledge the need for institutions to reflect the diversity of the wider community and prepare staff and students for success in a globalised world. It is essential for promoting understanding, respect, and empathy for different cultures and ways of life and for fostering critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills necessary for success in society today.

Hence, as a portfolio, Internationalisation at Home – under the theme 'Making Internationalisation Everyone's Business' – has compiled rich, thought-provoking engagements that took place this year. The portfolio encourages participation in cultural and diversity-related activities as an essential dimension to enrich our community and drive the conversation on intercultural competencies, cultural appreciation, and understanding. Through these activities, the portfolio hopes to integrate views on how we celebrate our diversity; by embracing cultural diversity, we ought to create a more inclusive and dynamic learning environment that prepares the UFS community for success in an increasingly interconnected world.

Bhekumusa Zikhali
Research Assistant in OIA

1 https://www.ufs.ac.za/supportservices/departments/international-affairs/news-and-events/2022-events/africa-month-2022
2 https://www.ufs.ac.za/supportservices/departments/international-affairs/unlisted-pages/umoja-buddy/about-the-programme
3 https://www.ufs.ac.za/supportservices/departments/international-affairs/news-and-events/2020-events/international-cultural-diversity-festival

SOUTH CAMPUS



Africa Week welcoming remarks by Dr Marinkie Madiope

Dr Marinkie Madiope
Principal of the South Campus (UFS)

Representing Dr Marinkie Madiope, Ms Poloka Maswelele conveyed the following message in her absence:

"Thank you, Pule. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and a special welcome to the Rector of the institution – the Bloemfontein Campus, the South Campus, and the Qwaqwa Campus – Prof Petersen. You are welcome, sir, it is an honour to have you in this place. I am going to read the speech of the principal via Teams.

The Africa we want: 'embedding nutrition within the COVID-19 response and recovery' within higher education. Dumelang! Sanibonani! Hello! Jambo! Welkom, Le Amohetswi, Niamukelekile, you are all most welcome as we celebrate the 49th Africa Day. In the framework of the long-term vision encapsulated in Agenda 2063, aspiration one underlines the importance of nutrition for 'the Africa we want', with the goal of 'African people have a high standard of living, quality of life, sound health and well-being' and goal three of 'citizens are healthy and well-nourished, and enjoying a life expectancy of above 75 years.

Today, as we are gathered together in harmony, celebrating our diversity, we focus our festivities on recognising the value and importance of nutrition on our continent; I would thus like to dub today's Africa Day, the day of Reading, Eating, and Living Well. My prayer for us, our families, and our continent is that we experience prosperity, abundance, and our merciful Creator's grace and presence. As African academics and students, we have the privilege of not only fully indulging our senses in their desires and appetites, but we also have the latitude and means to improve and expand our tastes. This is mostly the case because we are healthy and well fed. Our mental states are always a reflection of our physical and nutritional states of well-being. For this wonderful reality, we ought not only be grateful, but also take the stance of paying forward the providence and the provision we have been blessed with.

As we place the emphasis on nutrition on this auspicious day – celebrating our continent – I believe we must foster ways to inculcate this critical biological need into our methods of disseminating and creating education. Our continent is one suffering terribly from the scourges of both malnutrition and strained delivery of basic education. How revolutionary would it be if we could simultaneously eradicate these vices by formulating policies, mechanisms, and vehicles that would enable us to feed, heal, and teach our people. It is incumbent on us as thought leaders to take the lead in this significant enterprise.

Here on the UFS South Campus, we will be embarking on various initiatives through our Women's Forum to further this vital cause of meeting the most basic needs of those closest to us. Celebrate with us and commit to our endeavour by offering your services, skills, and time. Together, we will create a bright, happy, and healthy future for Africa.

As I close, I am reminded of the beginning of the 'I am an African' speech by former president Thabo Mbeki whenever someone asks the question – 'what does it mean to be an African?' "I am an African, I owe my being to the hills and the valleys, the mountains and the glades, the rivers, the deserts, the trees, the flowers, the seas and the ever-changing seasons that define the face of our native land." Thank you."

Message of support from the Office of the Free State Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation

Ms Zola Thamae
Acting HOD Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation (FS)

The HOD in the office of the Free State Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation, Zola Thamae, delivered a message of support on behalf of the MEC:

"Dumelang (vernacular), good afternoon, my name is Zola Thamae (vernacular). Let me start by greeting Prof Petersen, the Rector of the University of the Free State, and all the colleagues on my right, protocol is observed. All the guests, students, all the structures of the university. I am the acting Head of Department for the Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation and I am sitting here, and I feel like there is more to be done.

It was said that I must come and represent the MEC – and let me apologise for the MEC – the MEC is on sick leave, she has just been admitted to hospital.

As a government official, I feel that there should be much more collaboration with the university. I have my friend on the right there – Prof, we were together when we celebrated an award for one of the authors, a Sesotho author for that matter, Dr Mapala, and we shared a platform and interacted afterwards. Those are the engagements that we should be doing. My department focuses on cultural affairs, which includes heritage, museums, and the language act, and policies of the Free State government. This includes the week you are celebrating – Africa Week, with Africa Day on 25 May. It includes the libraries and archive services, as well as sport and recreation, and I am saying that there is much more that we can do together, much more, Rector, much more that we can do together.

There are courses where our students will need to do experiential work. When they apply for a job, it is said that you must have three years' working experience in this or five years in that, depending on the level of the post. If we don't create those platforms for our students to get that experiential work, we will be failing in our duties, because somehow, unfortunately we cannot follow an education system that lowers the norms and standards every time, to say in order to pass, you must have 33% or 45%; we cannot go that route. Ours is to create an enabling environment for our students; but are our students ready for the job market; or do we like the comfort zone of saying to our parents – I haven't passed some of the modules, I am carrying these modules – because you want to be on the campus, you are afraid of the job that you need to go to one day. Or are we enjoying NSFAS? I want to cling as long as possible to the university until I am told you have been paid long enough; you should be working by now. What type of a student do you want to become? Do you realise what is happening in Africa today? Do you realise that even in the restaurants, the people that are appointed there are people coming from North Africa, because we don't take up the space. We always have excuses as to why something is not done or why I cannot do this, it is not fit enough for me. Are we that nation that is always looking at things that are given to you on a silver platter? Wake up, Africa, wake up.

I was saying to my colleagues, I've never seen someone who sells drugs that their kids are consuming. The drug dealers, the drug lords – their kids are safe and secure somewhere, they don't consume drugs. But who is consuming all of that – it is an African child. Go out there and see what the drugs have done to our kids, to our youth; it is a shame, and it pains me as a parent, it really pains me as a government official to see what the drugs can do and can destroy our future leaders, because you are the future leaders.

Thank you for the invitation, just to have a sense of what is happening at the universities. I have a sense now, I am a good observer and I have a sense,

Rector, and I think we need to collaborate more. I am looking at library services – we have that, we buy books, and people are authors. If you look at the Free State in terms of which is the first language and the second and the third and the fourth, and you find that our people are writing in English, all of them, and English is number six in the Free State. It is your Afrikaans, your Tswana, your Sotho, even Xhosa that is spoken more than English, and then you find that the industry for English writers and authors is saturated; we need more in Afrikaans and Tswana and Zulu and Xhosa. The space, the budget is available for that, and you cannot use it for something else. We need to collaborate in order to inform people about the industries and avenues that are available so that you refrain from going to congested directions. Thank you for the invite."

In conclusion, she reiterated the following:

> ***Perhaps the university should prepare our youth for future job opportunities to prevent disqualification due to small errors. I want to say to you – read, educate yourself, so that you can change your background and be a better person. Thank you so much.***

Opening speech to Africa Week with the theme "Celebrating African Education"

Prof Francis Petersen
Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Free State

Prof FW Petersen set the tone for the week as he highlighted the importance of education and redefining our academic spaces.

"Thank you, thank you very much for the kind introduction, and good afternoon to all of you. I have never seen the South Campus like this before, and I would also just like to say thank you to the acting head in the Department of Sport, Culture, Arts and Recreation. And I do agree with you; I think collaboration is so important, specifically with organisations and government departments so close to us as the Free State Province. During COVID-19, the word collaboration has actually morphed into what I would call co-creation, where we worked together, and the thoughts we had were thoughts done and articulated and conceptualised between the different parties, so it was not only collaboration, but co-creation. I also hope that, since the last time you were on the South Campus, you can see how we have evolved as a campus. We try to work very hard as a university to bring across not only a narrative but also the way in which we act as one university with three campuses. We have the Bloemfontein Campus, the Qwaqwa Campus, and the South Campus, and it is indeed an honour and a pleasure for me to kickstart our Africa Week celebrations on the South Campus. We will have other celebrations on the Bloemfontein Campus, and hopefully on Friday when I am in Qwaqwa, we will try to take everything from what is happening today and on Wednesday and culminate it in a commitment in Qwaqwa in respect of Africa Day, Africa Week, and also Africa Month.

So, I believe as fellow Africans, we have much to celebrate in terms of culture, in terms of creativity, natural beauty, diversity, character, and wisdom locked up in the people and places that make us so unique as a continent. We have seen some of the flags of the different regions, of the different countries, but the regions that we have in Africa – we listened to a phrase from the 'I am an African' speech of former president Thabo Mbeki, and I realised what value, actually what immense richness, we have as a continent.

But when it comes to educational development, there is certainly no other continent that has faced the same trials and challenges as ours. Decades of oppression, slavery, colonisation, inequality, war, and division have left an indelible mark on Africa, and one of the inevitable, most significant, casualties has been the education of our children. But in the harsh crucible of history, character, tenacity, and the sense of Ubuntu were forged, translating into an exciting, fertile breeding ground for new knowledge creation, independent thought, and innovation. I think the acting head of the department has challenged us, not only as students but also as staff, to see to what extent we can bring out that creativity, that innovation, that independent thought, not only as individuals or as a collective within the university, but as a collective across the discrete boundaries of organisations, so that we can work together, that we can co-create, and that we could actually say this is what Africa can offer as a collective.

Over the years, we have been blessed with visionary leaders who have realised the unique potential locked up in our continent. One of them was Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of an independent Ghana and keen promoter of Pan-Africanism. He said, 'It is clear that we must find an African solution to our problems, and that this can only be found in African unity. Divided we are weak; united, Africa could become one of the greatest forces for good in the world'. More recently, Paul Kagame, who is the President of Rwanda, echoed the same or similar sentiment when he said, 'Africa's story has been written by others; we need to own our own problems and solutions and write our own stories'. These were quotes that I put forward from both

Kwame Nkrumah and Paul Kagame, and over the past decades on many fronts and in many spheres – also in education – this is exactly what has been happening.

Today, Africa has come a long way in shaking off the image of a continent that is consistently trailing the rest of the world for investment, for development, for direction, and probably also for validation. We are diversifying our economies to move away from economic dependence on the Global North, and actively searching for African solutions to African problems, and later on – on Wednesday – we will have a panel discussion where we are going to talk about what I just said in the context of internationalisation. The value that we from Africa could offer to curricula in the North is substantial, and I don't think we have explored that fully. There has been a lot of value through COVID-19, where we revisited and looked at internationalisation in a totally different way, where Africanisation and the knowledge of Africa could be infused and put on the same pedestal as what we would call knowledge, global knowledge, or knowledge from the North. While Africa has established itself as an attractive investment destination, it is now more sought after for its people than for its physical assets. And its people have been driving exciting and encouraging developments in education, so I just want you to listen to the following: Across the continent, education has expanded dramatically in recent years. The proportion of children completing primary school across [African] countries has risen from 27% to 67% between 1971 and 2015, while the proportion of learners completing lower secondary school has risen from a mere 5% in 1971 to 40% in 2015. This growth has continued over the past seven years, despite global setbacks in school attendance caused, as well as those setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In terms of Africa's contribution to global knowledge, the world is slowly but surely acknowledging the abundant evidence of scientific innovation contributed by African scholars – not only at present, but since the earliest times. Examples of these historic innovations are the unique numeration systems developed thousands of years ago in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, ancient Tanzanian furnaces used in engineering and toolmaking that far exceeded those of the Romans, and ancient African discoveries concerning stars and planets that form the building blocks of modern-day astronomy. Across our continent, African history, achievements, and discoveries have been absorbed into school curriculums, replacing a Eurocentric focus in education, and fulfilling the vision of Africans owning their own story. Most higher education institutions – and that would also include the University of the Free State – have over the past decade or two also been engaged in a comprehensive, systematic process of decolonising our curriculum – incorporating the knowledge created on our own continent in various study fields. I believe we have a decolonisation strategy at the University of the Free State, I just think we are moving a little bit too slow on that. It is more of a bottom-up approach in how faculties and departments deal with decolonisation, but hopefully this year we will also have a more pertinent institutional focus or institutional stance on where the institution would like to focus when we talk about decolonisation.

But despite the encouraging milestones that education has reached in Africa, it is clear that much remains to be done. At around 35%, the illiteracy rate in sub-Saharan Africa remains the highest in the world. In South Africa alone, around 40% of all our students drop out of school before they actually complete Grade 12. The old African proverb comes to mind, 'If you educate a man, you educate an individual; if you educate a woman, you educate a nation'. The reason why I am quoting this is because of the about 40% [of students] who drop out of school before completing Grade 12, girls make up the majority of that group, and therefore we can't allow that, we have to look to see how we could fix it. It is clear that, as custodians of higher education in Africa, and as part of the larger education sector, we have our work cut out for us.

A recent report by UNICEF and the African Commission, titled *Transforming Education in Africa*, says the following: 'Children are central to Africa's future. By the middle of this century, Africa will be home to a billion children and adolescents under 18 years of age. This will make up almost 40% of all children and adolescents worldwide. With the increasing importance of this young

population, African countries need to ensure that this demographic growth will not be a burden, but a benefit; they have a chance to expand the opportunities available to young people and build on the vital human capital that they represent'. And I think that's the time that Africa has to respond. We can't allow that youth dividend not to work and add value to the continent, to the globe. What a challenge this presents to education on our continent. A challenge I believe we are ready to take on.

Why do I say this? Because I believe the unique point in time that we find ourselves in presents an opportunity to completely reimagine the entire education landscape. Part of the reason for this is the pace and scale of technological advancements that have had a significant impact on all fields of operation in the higher education sector of the past decade or so, and obviously that was advanced and enhanced during COVID. It has enabled exponential increases in the transfer of data through increased globalised communication systems and connecting growing numbers of people through these networks. Collective intelligence and mass participation in previously specialised fields are extending the boundaries of scholarship, while dynamic knowledge creation and social computing tools and processes are becoming more widespread and accepted. The implications for research are immense, as it opens up the opportunity to create, to share, and to access a great diversity of resources. Now more than ever, the size and location of learning institutions are becoming less important. What matters though, is the contribution that they can make to global knowledge, and the level of innovation they apply to harness digital research opportunities to benefit students, academics, and countries. The challenge is on for all sectors of society to join forces – and that is what the acting head of the department has indicated – to bridge the digital divide that is still excluding so many African communities from grabbing hold of these opportunities.

So, allow me to leave you with a final piece of African wisdom. An African proverb that says, 'If you wish to move mountains tomorrow, you must start by lifting stones today'. The University of the Free State is ready for this challenge and invites all of you in your different fields of expertise to join us in finding innovative solutions that will make our country and our continent competitive and will take us forward within the global space. I believe it is our responsibility as students, as staff, and then also those partners that we collaborate and co-create with. I thank you."

African voices in education

Prof Lynette Jacobs
Head of Research Unit in OIA

> ***Education is not supposed to alienate students or children from their traditions but should make students appreciate themselves as Africans.***
>
> - Former President, Julius Nyerere

"Good afternoon, everybody who is here. So, one of my very first students from Lesotho tried to teach me Sesotho, not very successfully, but there's one saying that he taught me that I've been quoting and sharing and that I honestly believe in, and you'll excuse me if my pronunciation is not perfect, but the message that comes with it. *Bohlale ha bo hlahe ntlong e le nngwe*, which I understand is, 'wisdom or knowledge is not found in one house'. Now, you are all students and staff at the University of the Free State where we try to educate and provide education to students and also to staff in a manner where many wisdoms come together. What I am trying to do today, is just share a little bit of the wisdoms that was found, or is found in Africa, honouring some of the former philosophers of education as well as the contemporary education philosophers. As you know, Western education was brought to Africa by European colonial powers, and it remains here. One of the problems was that colonial education did not cultivate African self-esteem. It did not recognise the achievements and contributions of the indigenous populations and their ancestries. Former President Julius Nyerere for instance said: "Education is not supposed to alienate students or children from their traditions but should make students appreciate themselves as Africans." I am asking the question, is this still the case? Have we changed that and if not, should we change it and how do we change it, and therefore I am listening to a few voices. Jomo Kenyatta said: "Nobody is an isolated individual, there are profound cultural unities still alive beneath the deceptive appearance of cultural heterogeneity in Africa, which give rise to indigenous African knowledge systems and should inform the renewal of education on the continent. Ubuntu inspires us to expose ourselves to others and encounter the differences of our humanness, so as to inform and to enrich ourselves." And then I read about President Nkrumah of Ghana who promoted philosophical consciencism, and said, "One has to be sensitive to one's cultural tradition and social milieu and seek emancipation through integrity." Ethics was at the centre of his philosophy. What was really interesting to me, was how he promoted harmony between religions; he promoted harmony between Christianity, Islam, and Africanness, and he said that indeed Africa is able to bring together all these different kinds of philosophies in a way that expresses being African. Something more recently, which Ferdie Potgieter calls ontological or religious hospitality. Being ontologically hospitable to others means reaching out to others, crossing divides.

What is very important is to celebrate multilingualism in Africa; we know that we are all talking to each other in English, which is not an indigenous African language, yet a language that we can all communicate in. But how do we as scholars and you as students really promote multilingualism? How do you recognise your own language and celebrate your language? We heard from one of the previous speakers about the deficit there is in terms of African language literature; not enough of the African stories told through generations being written up in books. How do we validate our different languages? Perhaps drawing from Lesley le Grange, who wrote that we have lost epistemic confidence, in other words, we have lost the pride in ourselves, the confidence to celebrate who we are in our language, in our culture, etc.

Specifically with regard to curriculum, he mentions three kinds of curriculum, and I want the students to think about this. There is the curriculum that you receive in your module guides, the written, the explicit curriculum, the curriculum that is in your face, which refers to content and refers to outcomes. Then we have the hidden curriculum, which very much refers to a culture on a campus, a culture in an institution, the way things are done. But very importantly, we need to ask the question – what is the null curriculum; in other words, what is it that you are *not* taught, what is it that is not present at the university? Those silences we need to consider, and we need to expose it, and we need to talk about it. To say what are you as students missing from your curriculum, what is it that is missing in higher education in Africa, and specifically in South Africa? If we think of the analogy – and again I hope I am pronouncing it correctly – it is one of the symbols that is found in Ghana, that of Sankofaism. It is a bird that stands, and maybe you've seen it. It represents '*Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi*', or 'It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten'. A bird that stands with the egg in its hand or in its beak and turns around to the past, yet feet facing forward. Nkumah (1079) referred to it, saying we need to go back to the past to inform the future to unlock the African genius. So my question to you as students is, do you go back to where you're coming from, do you consider who you are and where you are coming back from in order to inform where you are going, and do you get the opportunity in education to recognise who you are in terms of where you are coming from and use that as a strength to see where you are going. Are you able to recognise yourself in the curriculum that's been presented to you? One of my favourite authors, Nuraan Davids, wrote that it is not just about the students, it is also about the teachers, the lecturers, and the complex narratives and identities that teachers/lecturers bring into the classroom. Do they merely see themselves as the conveyor of what is in the curriculum, or do they embody the values that we want to bring forth in the curriculum that's offered to you? Do we only take what is in the formal curriculum and try to get you to write it down in your exam papers, or do we as lecturers and teachers really engage with you in a manner that shows our values and allows you to bring your values into the classes? And when we look at knowledge – and Prof Petersen has spoken about knowledge, and the research that we do towards creating knowledge, towards generating knowledge – do we keep on doing it in the way that the West is doing it, or do we embrace other ways of doing research? Some of my colleagues will recognise that I have been talking to them about this, challenging them. Do we really allow authenticity to come into research in terms of how we do research, about how we produce knowledge. Because knowledge is not just in written words, there's knowledge in songs, there's knowledge in poetry, there's knowledge in proverbs, in artefacts, there's knowledge in the stories that you were told when you were young. Do we take that knowledge and bring it into the higher education space? It is clear when we think about the richness in Africa, that the world has so much to learn from us. But do we take up space and do we bring and celebrate who we are into the space of knowledge creation – and that is my question to the students sitting here today. You have a long career ahead of you; do you embrace who you are and bring it into the space, and value what you know, and see it as worth so much that you can share it anywhere in the world you are going to. Thank you very much."

Purpose of the week and closing remarks

Prof Colin Chasi
Director: Unit for Institutional Change and Social Justice

To conclude the programme, Prof Chasi gave the purpose of the week and the closing remarks:

"Thank you so much. I must say, we have incredible people here at the University of the Free State – a few things were said about me now that I have forgotten, or I don't know, so, many thanks. I think one of the things that struck me, is that a lot of the things that I thought to say and wanted to say, have already been said. So, I will be quite brief in the things that I do say.

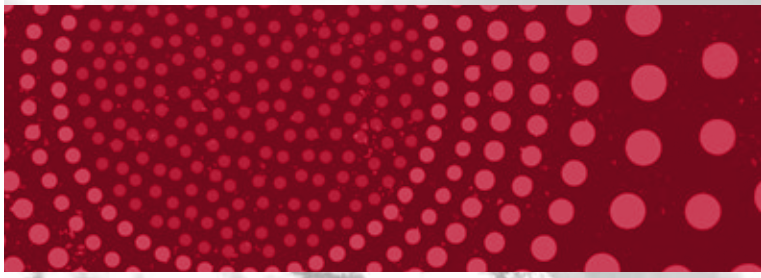
Most importantly, I'd like to note that during the course of the coming week, we will have the opportunity to celebrate Africa and Africanness. We'll have the opportunity to think about what it means to have an African community. I want to note that the Office for International Affairs here at the University of the Free State, led by Cornelius Hagenmeier, started this process of celebrating Africa in the way that we are doing now in 2018. This is now the fourth time that we do this. Last year, the Unit for Institutional Change and Social Justice was asked for the first time to have a small part in the work that has been done so far, and this year we were once again invited to be involved. We have supported where we can, but really, congratulations to the Office for International Affairs for initiating the process and for broadening the tent. So, I think this year, we are working in collaboration with the library, with the Centre for Gender and Africa Studies and so on. We are increasingly beginning to see a joining of hands in the work that is being done as we think about Africa and as we celebrate Africanness.

Of course, this is an important theme that has already been taken up today. This idea that we cannot achieve much as individuals without collaboration, without aspiring for co-creation, as Prof Petersen said. And while I say this, I would like to be a little bit discordant, I'd like to speak a little bit off key, say stuff that is not entirely pleasant. I'd like to reach back into the past in order to hopefully encourage us to step into the future, and I will do so by reminding us that South Africa, of course, is 'big brother' in Africa. South Africa is a nation where we have arguably the biggest economy in Africa, the most advanced economy in Africa, and as I remind us of that, I would like to take us back to the year 1997. President Julius Kambarage Nyerere, who has already been mentioned, delivered a powerful speech to the parliament of South Africa in which he noted the greatness of South Africa, and then he said we should be wary of overestimating what this means. And he said, and I quote: "The power that Germany has is European power, and the Europeans are moving together. The small and the big are working together. It is absurd for Africa to think that we, these little countries of Africa, can do it alone."

I say this while also remembering that in 1986, Hanlon – a correspondent for the BBC – wrote a book titled *Beggar Your Neighbours*, in which he lamented the unfortunate role that apartheid South Africa was playing in the region. To illustrate, he referred to how between 1980 and 1984 alone, the policies and the practices of the apartheid state led to the death of 100 000 people in the region, led to more than a million people being moved away from their homes. He titled the book *Beggar Your Neighbours* after an idea that was developed in 1937 by the British economist, Joan Robinson, who described beggar-thy-neighbour policies as economic policies that work to distraught trade, to enrich one nation, while impoverishing its neighbours. Robinson noted in 1937 that when we do this, the outcome in the long run is that not only are our neighbours poorer but we ourselves become the poorer for it.

Nyerere, who was aware of all this, concluded his 1997 speech to the parliament of South Africa by saying, "We all enhance our capacity to develop if we work together," and of course, this has been a powerful theme in the speeches delivered today. We should embrace this as an idea that comes from our ubuntu, our ideas of, our understanding that a person is a person with others, our understanding that wisdom does not reside in one household, our understanding that learning arises through a deep appreciation of what others have learned and what others can communicate to us. Our hope in the future, our hope as Africans lies in our willingness to look at our neighbours. The neighbour who is sitting right next to you now, the neighbour who is your neighbour because they come from KwaZulu-Natal, the neighbour that is your neighbour because they come from a little bit further away – and realise that if you enrich them, if the ways in which you deal with them enables progress and prosperity, indeed we can all prosper together.

I would like to finish off by saying, one of the awful fruits of colonialism, one of the awful fruits of apartheid is an idea that you can do it alone. Colonialism, if you go to the etymology of the word, speaks of a process by which there is a kind of separation – us and them – a cutting off in a particular way. Similarly, apartheid speaks of that logic of separation. In the long run, may Africa Week, may our thinking about Africa encourage us to reach across, to challenge ourselves with the thought that we need to find ways to work together, because collectively we will succeed, separated we will suffer terrible fates. Many thanks."



BLOEMFONTEIN CAMPUS

Letshego Nthatisi
Host for the Africa Day Dialogue

This year's theme discussed the importance of African education and its impact globally, recognising its milestones, the position institutions are taking on a unified African education system, the ideology of an African higher education system in the future, and the impact of diversity in an African higher education system and its positivity for the continent, not neglecting internationalisation in academic institutions. The interactive session, led by a talented student moderator, Ms Letshego Nthatisi, featured a rich thought-provoking discussion between the panel and the audience.

A UFS perspective on African education and unity

"It is fantastic to have one of our students acting as programme director this afternoon. You look fantastic, and I know that you will do a fantastic job. Thank you, Prof. I must say I, every time I hear our choir, whether it is here on the Bloemfontein Campus – I was on the South Campus on Monday and on Friday I will be on the Qwaqwa Campus – it's just amazing, fantastic, and I think we should give them another round of applause. I don't know where they went but they're fantastic and I hope that they are busy with the fundraising campaign to get ready for their trip to Barcelona, because I think they will definitely give us and the world a sense of what we have here in the Free State and South Africa, and obviously also on the continent.

So, ladies and gentlemen, honoured guests, fellow Africans, I am reminded today of a great speech made by our former president, President Thabo Mbeki. He was the deputy president when he made the speech, and I think it should be familiar to all of you who followed that speech of what and how to be an African, and I want to quote the opening lines from that speech: 'I am an African. I owe my being to the hills and the valleys, the mountains and the glades, the rivers, the deserts, the trees, the flowers, the seas and the ever-changing seasons that define the face of our native land'. That is a quote from former president Thabo Mbeki, and it is a speech that certainly stirs something in the heart of anyone who calls this unique continent home. And here where we are today, more than a quarter of a century later, my hope is that the speeches and the perspectives of the speakers we're about to listen to will similarly stir something within us, inspire us, and cause us to reflect, but more importantly, spur us into action that will take our continent forward. Before we start, allow me to give you some context on this specific corner of Africa which we find ourselves in today. For many of us, it is our academic home, and a place very close to our hearts: the University of the Free State. In just a few words, I want to share with you where we as an institution come from, where we are now, and where we are headed – all within the overarching context of our place and our role in African education and African unity. I think the theme we have decided to take this year is to look at African education as we celebrate Africa Month, Africa Week, and this particular Africa Day.

This building in which we are sitting today was one of the first structures on the campus of the Grey University College – it was then called Grey University College – which was officially opened in 1904 with only six students in the Humanities. Since then, the 'ever-changing seasons that define the face of our native land' that Thabo Mbeki alluded to in his speech have played itself out in our country, our world, and at the University of the Free State – as it later became known. Today we are a thriving, established institution

with seven academic faculties, spread over three diverse campuses, two here in Bloemfontein – I already referred to the South Campus, this is the Bloemfontein Campus – and one in Qwaqwa in the Eastern Free State. We have around 42 000 students, or I can also say that we have close to 5 500 staff and a growing international profile of more international students who are joining the University of the Free State. Our vision is that we want to be a research-led, a student-centred, and a regionally engaged university that contributes to development and social justice, and through the production of that knowledge we produce globally competitive graduates and hopefully also globally competitive knowledge that could benefit not only our region, but also South Africa, the continent, and the globe.

So, student success and student well-being – linking back to our student-centredness – is core to our vision. The various initiatives that we have developed to provide holistic support to our students have earned us international recognition and have enabled us to produce some of the highest success rates in the country. In fact, just a few months ago, the University of the Free State was actually one of the only universities on the continent that was asked to submit a proposal to an international funding foundation to look at student success and also to link student success to employability. This is just another indication of the efforts and the type of expertise that we have at the University of the Free State regarding student success. Our curricula are at an advanced stage of transformation. Our aim is a decolonised curriculum that is locally relevant and globally competitive. This, in fact, is a discussion and a debate that my colleague on my right would probably be better equipped to discuss and challenge us when we talk about decolonisation of our curriculum. We want to continue including voices, developments, and scholarship that have been excluded in the past – with a specific focus on the African continent. We are a highly internationalised institution that attracts more and more students from Africa – and I would also like to indicate researchers and scholars from the continent and the rest of the world – enriching our programme by embracing diversity. My focus is always to indicate that the more diverse we are as a university, as an institution – diverse not only in race and gender, in creed, in culture, but also intellectual diversity – that would make your institution, and hopefully also a country, a continent, and a globe much stronger if we start to focus on diversity from that specific perspective. We have engaged actively with our colonial and our apartheid legacies and recognise our common humanity and the universal nature of the intellectual endeavour. We strive for social justice in all our policies and processes, and

> ***We want to continue including voices, developments, and scholarship that have been excluded in the past – with a specific focus on the African continent.***

our diverse people feel a sense of common purpose, with our symbols and spaces, systems and daily practices all reflecting commitment to openness and engagement. Now, that is a very loaded sentence and statement. It is not only what we want to be, because I wouldn't say we have arrived, but we will continuously be working to get to the point where all our staff, our students, our visitors on our campus feel a sense of belonging, and they should experience that. We shouldn't just pull out a policy, practice or protocol, we should reflect that in our actions.

We approach the future with confidence, drawing strength from the lessons of yesterday and determined to grab hold of the opportunities of tomorrow. We are committed to increased internationalisation, decolonisation, and also digitalisation, and to acknowledging and expanding the Indigenous knowledge of our region and our continent. We support the initiatives of the African Union to harmonise African education systems and subscribe to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

So, Programme Director, in conclusion, and with sincere apology to former president Thabo Mbeki, because I just want to add a little bit to what he said in his speech – we are an African institution – with a global vision. Our roots are planted in African soil, but our seeds are spread throughout the world. We owe our being to a commitment to excellence; a passion for leading, learning, and teaching and for impact-inducing research; alumni who are regarded worldwide; stakeholders who broaden our vision; and the people we serve in our region, our continent, and our globe – inspiring excellence and transforming lives with quality, impact, and, very importantly, care. And our sincere wish is to learn from those who share our vision, to take hands with them and to continue playing a valuable part in advancing African education and African unity. Thank you."

Background to African education

Prof Witness Mudzi
Director of the Centre for Graduate Support (UFS)

"Thank you, Prof Petersen. It is always a tough act to follow, to speak after the rector, I am not sure why. My task is quite simple, because it is just to give a bit of history as far as education in Africa is concerned. How did we get to be where we are today? How did we get here? Did we always have education before or not? I thought that maybe the best way to start my talk would be to give the definition of education, and I thought the Miriam Webster dictionary would be the best place to go to try and see what it says education is. It says "education is the action or process of educating or of being educated" or you can also call it a stage of such a process where there is knowledge and development resulting from the process of being educated. So, there's need for knowledge, there's need for development for one to say they are educated. There's also a second definition which says it is the field of study that details mainly the methods of teaching and learning in schools and universities. I think we are all in agreement that when we educate people, we create a better society, that's a given. More so, when we include women in the education. Education of women uplifts the whole society. Why? Because education is key to building a safe, free, and equal society. So, if you want to uplift the country, we need to make sure that our people are educated.

What is the state of education in Africa? Well, education in Africa can be considered as fairly poor, and poor performance in education can be linked to history, which is what I want to delve into. Clearly, we've come a long way as a continent, and the history of education in Africa can be divided into three parts – that is the pre-colonial period, the colonial period, and the post-colonial period – for us to clearly understand how we got to where we are today. It is important to note that there was education before colonisation. I think we need to be clear that education did not start with the famous Berlin conference of 1884-1885, when there was partitioning of Africa, that is not when education started in Africa. There was education before that. The current state of education in Africa reflects not only the influence of colonialism, but also the instability that we have endured as a continent from armed conflict, which is still affecting many regions of Africa, the fallout from humanitarian crises such as famine, lack of drinking water, outbreaks of diseases such as malaria, Ebola, and now even COVID, and then of course we cannot rule out mismanagement and corruption, which have plagued our education system as well.

Let me briefly touch on pre-colonial education, that is pre-colonial Africa education. There was a way of passing on knowledge across generations through oral transmission of knowledge. Not only that, but we also had actual schools of education in existence way before Christ in Africa, especially in Egypt where there was the writing of historical knowledge, and many people travelled all the way across the continent to be taught in those schools. Communities back then lived on subsistence farming and what this did, is that it eliminated the need for formal education. Because then, the environment in which they were living required that parents and elders pass on the information of what was important and that centred around, for example, farming skills, knowledge about the environment, socio and cultural traditions, and survival skills. Even before colonisation, as Africans we understood metallurgy, we understood weaving, we understood beer brewing, to just name a few skills that were passed on from generation to generation as a form of education. Because of subsistence farming, there was no need for formal organised education to be done. We knew what was needed for us to have educated, responsible citizens and this knowledge would be passed on from generation to generation.

So, how then was education transformed? It was the form of apprenticeship where you were taught on the job, so that knowledge would be passed on from generation to generation. Storytelling also played a big role in educating our people; so, you would get people sitting around your fire and an elder would then tell stories that would be relevant in terms of teaching youngsters the important values and ethos that would see them being able to look after their own families over generations. There was also festivals and rituals, which were used to teach younger members of a household or a community about the uses of the region or a state. These rituals and festivals were also used to teach young adults about their responsibilities and expectations of adulthood, such as teaching females how to cook, care for the household, and teaching men how to hunt, farm, and even make masks, which were quite important back then.

What we need to note, is that most of this way of teaching was done with when Europeans colonised Africa. Why? Because then we started the Western school system. We used to believe that you didn't need to have the formal education that we have today; but when we were colonised, some of the acts, some of the values were considered barbaric, and they were stopped henceforth. It is resisting this kind of teaching, this kind of colonisation, which would then lead to the nationalism that we are all aware of. It is also the need for us to have our own unique way, African epistemology and teaching method that also led to the various wars that were fought as a way of trying to gain independence within Africa. What then happened during the colonial period? Well, we had military forces, we had missionaries who came to teach about the Bible, but also used it as an opportunity to instil the Western way of learning. The first European missions in Africa were established as Christian schools in the fifteenth century, and it is important to note that it was largely the French educators, the British educators who influenced the most of Africa. Although, they were not the only colonisers; we also had Spain, Portugal, Belgium, but they did not put in place a system of education like the French and the British did. Because the primary focus of colonisation was to reap benefits from colonial economies, such as cash production, extraction of raw materials, and other physically laborious tasks. There was no need for formal education as we know it today.

Furthermore, we also need to note that colonial powers were unwilling to offer education to the colonised unless it benefited them. There were afraid that if they invested in education, it might instigate revolutionaries, which actually happened inadvertently when the various people, if you look at them – people who led the various liberation wars – they were clearly educated in the Western ways of living. So, there was huge debate among colonial powers on whether or not to educate the colonised populations and if so, to what extent that education should be done. They then advocated for Christian education. Why? Because this would take away the critical thinking that is needed in modern-day society; so, they didn't focus on things such as engineering, technology or similar subjects, because they didn't think that we needed that as Africans. It was, however, not all doom and gloom, there were definitely some benefits that came with the colonial way of educating, especially on numeracy. There's a clear linkage between our progression as a people and our ability to deal with numbers as well, and the demand for European-prompted education has been growing ever since. As Africans, there's now a demand for schools, for more literacy curricula, and we are striving to even look at – you heard Prof Petersen talk about decolonisation of the curriculum – to say we need to make sure that the education system is relevant to our context, that we're taught the needs and demands of our society.

So, what happened was, post-independence many states began to rebuild traditional forms of education, but then they realised that there was a need to match the two – the traditional way of teaching and of course the Western way of teaching – so that we have a people that are responsive to the current needs of the world. To just touch briefly on the two main influences of our education system in Africa, which is the French and the British – when the French colonised largely North Africa, what they did was to embark on selective education institutions where they were teaching largely in the French language. What they were trying to do was

to teach people so that they were able to promote their own economic development and political compliance without necessarily assimilating or de-resonating the students or preparing them for political ardency. So, there was a bit of care being taken to make sure that the education that was being provided would not result in uprisings. So, there was a predetermined curriculum that was put in place. As far as the British were concerned, they also followed a similar pattern where they looked at schools and thought the best way to do this, was to make sure that the curriculum addressed the needs of the economy as far as physical labour was concerned, without again instilling the skills needed for critical thinking.

But as time went by, there was a need to increase self-sufficiency of (1:09:28) economies and provide community centres to account for the rights – you know, the flight that was happening to the big cities as modernisation began to take root. This was part of the reason why we saw the rise of Bantu education; for example, in South Africa it was still limited education, but capacitating Africans to a major extent. What then happened in post-colonial Africa post-independence, we have many independent governments now trying to implement universal primary education as a way of trying to create more opportunities for people. They have tried to increase access for secondary education and higher education, with varying success. They also paid more attention to the education of rural children, of women; however, what then happened was the structural adjustment programmes. I am not sure how many of you are familiar with that – which has been implemented in most of Africa. This then resulted in less government revenue being available for social services such as education, so investment in education was curtailed. It is clear that the quality of education and the quantity of education and also the quantity of equipped schools and teachers have steadily increased over time since the colonial period. However, there are still numerous inequalities in those educational systems based on region, economic status, and even gender. We see we have issues relating to teachers, facilities, you have the rural areas, some of the schools are unbearable, teaching and learning materials are still a challenge. Relevance of educational content which against talks to the decolonisation that Prof Petersen was referring to, are still an issue that we are trying to address.

Recently, another Sustainable Development Goal – the focus on educational policies of African countries – have been diversified, with a particular focus on the quantitative and the qualitative improvement of basic education, primarily secondary, tertiary, technical kind of education and training. One of the problems that critics point out, is that regardless of the massive expansion of basic education that we have seen in Africa, learning outcomes of school leavers in Africa have not improved, in spite of the reason why we are still grappling with economic growth that we see in Africa, and also unemployment rates that we endure as a continent. If you remember, in 2000 the United Nations adopted their Millennium Development Goals, which are assertive development goals for the year 2015, more specifically as far as education is concerned. They wanted to ensure that by 2015, they would be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. This has made huge strides as far as education in Africa is concerned. It is part of the reason why we had abolition of school fees in some countries, so that we could get more for our people going to school. We have also seen investments in teaching infrastructure and resources, and even the provision of school meals, which is happening in South Africa, led to a lot more of our school children being able to go to school.

When the millennial development, when the MDGs expired in 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals for the year 2030. Of particular interest here is the fourth goal, which addresses education with the aim of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of life learning opportunities for all. However, we are still going towards 2030 and we are still far away from realising these goals. Why is that? Is it because there are so many challenges that we are still facing in terms of education equity, such as the higher education race of students. Even if you look at the university, I think we have a very limited number – if I remember correctly, we are talking about 40 to 50% of students that start first year – being able to graduate, it is still a big

challenge. Teacher shortages, poor infrastructure and supplies, access to education, especially in the rural areas in Africa and the remote areas, are still a big challenge, and we still have lots or marginal large groups that are not able to access education. So, consequently, what we see is that despite the increase in school enrolments, we have not had a corresponding increase in reduction of poverty or decent employment. If anything, we have increased dependence on aid. So, what we have is a constant demand for higher education, more education among the general public, but at the same time we are increasing the aid that are given to our people, which is unfortunately unsustainable.

So, what then are the common challenges to education? Language is still an issue, I think you will agree with me that if we were to teach our people in our own language, most probably we would have better outcomes. But what we have is other people that say – but then our people won't be able to communicate with the rest of the world, they won't be able to assimilate in the different economies in the world. There's considerable evidence that people schooled in a second language achieve poorer results than those schooled in their mother tongue. Why? Because the lack of proficiency in the second language impairs understanding and encourages ineffective broad learning, which shows when you look at the kind of graduates we produce; they struggle to assimilate into industry. We still have a lack of proper facilities and educators like I have already explained. Many schools across Africa find it hard to employ teachers due to no pay and a lack of suitable people that are qualified to teach. Corruption in education is still a big problem. Emigration – the qualified people are not staying in Africa; they are leaving the African continent for better opportunities elsewhere. Then culture is still an issue. Western models and standards still continue to dominate African education, which is why we are still grappling with the issue of decolonisation of education in Africa, trying to make the education system relevant to the African continent. And like I said at the beginning, military and conflict. What we have is African governments spending a lot of money on the military, more than they do on education. And then you can still see the ethics of conflict as well, affecting our outputs as far as education is concerned.

At the same time, the mechanism of recruiting African white-collar workers through schooling, which was started during the colonial period, planted a strong hope deeply in the mind of African people for social advancement through gaining school certificates. What this has done is create a generation of people that look at education as a way of getting a job instead of using it to create employment. We lack entrepreneur skills. Education in Africa instil the feeling of material wealth being a yardstick for human social merit and worth, and this really was the origin of inequality in Africa. There are many things that are being done, good things that are being done to improve education in Africa. If you look at governments, for example, NEPAD is one such initiative where governments came together and are trying to improve basic education access in Africa. We still have many African countries with very low levels of education if we look at the level of literacy.

Let me talk briefly, before I hang up, on the need for us to educate women. It is true – if you listened to or if you were at the graduation ceremonies, I am quite sure you will agree with me – there were more women graduating than men. We have made strides as far as women's education is concerned, but it is still a big challenge. There is a positive correlation between the enrolment goals in primary school and the gross national product in the increase of life expectancy, so we need to do more to ensure that our women get educated. When we have gender disparity, then we have inequalities that result across the whole sector, including the economy. The foremost factor limiting female education is poverty. What tends to happen is that when you have a family that has limited financial resources, then they choose to educate the boy child and not the girl child and that perpetuates the inequality that we talk about.

To conclude, let me talk about the possible areas of educational improvement or reform that we should be talking about as a continent. I think it is important for governments to review, regulate, and capacitate school and district financial record-keeping systems so that the issues of corruption can be dealt with. We need more training of

head teachers and administrators in economic administration, and of course, we need to pay our teachers a bit better. Governments should invest in child and youth development through proper education and health policies and programmes, and one way of doing this is to increase access to early childhood development programmes, because that is when we will be laying the foundation for education. I always decry the fact that as a country, for example in South Africa, if we look at the Fees must Fall movement, it led to free education at university level, but nobody is talking about primary education. If you were to ask me where we need free education, it is at primary level. Because if we miss that foundation, if we don't build that strong foundation on primary level, then it is only the few fortunate ones that will manage to get through that, that will then get the free education at university level. So, we need to rethink that and ensure that we do have free education at primary level so that the majority of our people get that solid foundation.

We need to improve transport and infrastructure in rural areas, and of course, the diversification of education systems, broadening of skills taught to make education more pertinent to the demands of the economy. One of the challenges we face even at tertiary level, is producing graduates who are a good fit for industry. We need to speak more often to see that there is better coordination of the programmes we offer at tertiary level, and that they are relevant as far as industry is concerned. Of course, I can't end without talking about the specific needs of higher education, because we are at a university. The curriculum reform that we talk about all the time, should also include a deliberate push towards entrepreneur skills and the creation of jobs, especially in the private sector. We need to put more emphasis on locally relevant degrees, diplomas, and certificate programmes. And of course, like I said earlier on, we need better collaboration between higher education institutions and industry so that the graduates we are going to produce are a good fit for purpose as far as industry is concerned. We need to have better work-integrated learning so that our graduates are able to work in industry. With that I conclude my talk, thank you."

Is a harmonised African higher education sector an ideology or a possible future reality?

Dr Samia Chasi
Manager: Strategic Initiatives, Partnership Development and Research at the International Education Association of South Africa (IEASA)

"Thank you, Prof Petersen, for having us in your house today. Colleagues on the panel and in the room, it is an absolute pleasure to be with you today. I was given a question to tackle, to chew on actually, and that question was: Is a harmonised African higher education sector an ideology or a possible future reality? So, before I tackle that, I want to give you a little bit of background of where I come from, so that you understand my perspective a little better. So, as you say, I come and bring the perspective of internationalisation of higher education. I currently work for an organisation that is called the International Education Association of South Africa, of which the University of the Free State is a member. This is a national body that champions and supports higher education internationalisation in South Africa and beyond. In this context, harmonisation as an issue is important, because it concerns international collaboration between universities, and specifically the recognition of qualifications between countries. For more than two decades now, EASA has dedicated its attention, for example, to issues of credential evaluation, which is very important when those international students want to come and study at the UFS and other South African institutions. We have done this in collaboration with SAQA, the South African Qualifications Authority, but more recently also entered into a collaboration with an international organisation, the Academic Credentials Evaluation Institute, which is based in the US. So, this just as a short introduction so that you understand my perspective and how I am going to look at this question.

So, harmonisation for me and for my colleagues in international education is really an important topic, because it speaks directly to the strategies of many of our universities that actually want to internationalise, want to attract international talent, want to create opportunities for South African students to experience the world, to go to Barcelona and other places, and so, this is very important. I would like to, in a way, address the question that I was given by asking three sub-questions in return. The first one is: is harmonisation an ideology, and I think the answer to that – if we understand ideology perhaps as a set of ideas and ideals, as a set of principles that are included in relevant policies – then the answer must be a resounding yes. We are here today celebrating Africa Day, so I am going to look specifically at the African context, and there are several key documents that guide and inform higher education on the continent and that speaks to these issues of standardisation of recognition, etc. The first one of course is Agenda 2063; aspiration two specifically speaks to continental unity and integration, especially of course regarding the exchange of goods and services, but also the free movement of people. Then the continental education strategy for Africa has a strategic objective four, where they specially touch on issues of harmonisation across all levels of education, not only higher education and regional integration; so, they touch on issues of access, quality of education, relevance of education, and the development of national and continental qualification frameworks. Then a little closer to home, we have the SADEC Protocol on Education and Training. There are two articles in particular, four and seven, that touch on cooperation for education and training, and issues such as comparability, equivalence, standardisation of education and training systems, as well as the mutual recognition of qualifications, credit transfer, etc., etc. Then of course we have the Department of Higher Education and Training's first national internationalisation policy, which was formally adopted in 2020, so quite recently. As part of that framework, our government – the Department of Higher Education and Training – refers to the

SADEC protocol, refers to projects such as the tuning project that focused on harmonisation and the importance of a globally competitive higher education space in South Africa, but also enhanced intra-Africa collaboration.

Now my second question: is harmonisation a current reality, and here I am a little bit more cautious, but quite as determinately, I am going to say no, especially if we speak at continental level and that's what we are doing today, isn't it? I want to illustrate this a little bit more and give you some insights into a session that I attended last week at the UNESCO World Higher Education Conference in Barcelona. By the way, if the choir is still around, I've got a couple of tips for you of what you should do and could do when you go there. The session that I specifically want to draw on was titled 'Implementing the UNESCO Africa regional convention on the recognition of qualifications in higher education, challenges and opportunities for academic mobility', and the speakers included a number of high-ranking officials from the African Union Commission, from the Association of African Universities, from the Francophone University Agency, and a couple more. In short, this convention is often referred to as the Addis convention, so when I say Addis convention, you know that the one I am referring to is the one with a very long title. Now what is this? Well, it is an African convention that relates to a global convention that is also a UNESCO convention, which tries to establish a fair and transparent framework for the recognition of higher education qualifications on this continent. So, this also includes concerns about enhanced education and higher education, specifically quality assurance in education, and the transparency and portability of qualifications in higher education. So, this speaks to what you've talked about, Prof, the employability of our graduates for example, and of course it also promotes internationalisation and academic cooperation between universities on the continent. Now what are some of the challenges with this Addis convention? The first one that was mentioned in the room, was that there is a clear lack of awareness and information about it, and I'd like to just – you know – I am very tempted to ask you to raise your hand if you have heard about the Addis convention before. UNESCO has actually now embarked on an awareness campaign to raise awareness on the continent that this convention indeed exists and why it should be relevant to institutions. The second reason that was given is that there is a lack of infrastructure and mechanisms at national levels. Well, in South Africa we can't use that as an excuse, because we have the Council on Higher Education, for example, we have a national qualifications framework, we have SAQA, the South African Qualifications Authority, as an oversight body. So, we have all the relevant bodies and organisations in place to make this happen, but it appears that this is only the case in 24 out of the 54 African countries, so there is a lot of work that needs to be done. The third reason that was given, is that perhaps there is a lack of political will, because the convention has to date – and it was adopted in 2014, took effect in 2019, now we are in 2022 – only been ratified by 13 countries. This tells you that there is a long way to go.

> ***Harmonisation as an issue is important, because it concerns international collaboration between universities, and specifically the recognition of qualifications between countries.***

This leads me to my final and last question or my third sub-question, which is: can harmonisation be a reality in the future, and here I want to respond with a hopeful yes, but I think in order to take this forward, a lot of work has to be done. Prof, you spoke about spurring into action, I think that is exactly what needs to happen here, and I think in order to take this forward, we really need to have a very principled discussion on harmonisation and the benefits that we see at the level of countries and institutions. I think we also need an intra-regional dialogue on this and at the UNESCO session, for example, Prof Olusola Oyewole, who is the Secretary General of the Association of African Universities, suggested that those countries that have ratified and fund the convention, should form a coalition of sorts, you know, to drive the process more visibly and more powerfully on the continent, and hope that others will join and come along. Oh, by the way, South Africa – maybe I should have said that – is one of those signatories, so we can, we can jump right in. I also think that if we agree indeed that harmonisation can help us achieve African unity, and especially an integrated African higher education in research space, then we really have to play an active part in making this happen. The role of universities – I think in this case – is to champion the convention, to popularise it, to use it as an instrument, particularly to talk about intra-Africa collaboration. We often talk about how important it is that we don't only want to internationalise globally in terms of our relationships with the Global North, but that we actually need to strengthen South collaborations, and particularly those on our continent, so as to leverage our partners on the continent. Existing partnerships – and perhaps Dr Hagenmeier will speak a little bit more about that – is something that I think we need to do in this context, and perhaps we need to also find ways to lobby our governments together. So, if we want to achieve the Africa we want, as envisaged in Agenda 2063, then I think we also have something else to do, and that is a critical engagement with harmonisation. I think we have to really ask questions around who benefits from this, we have to look at issues of reciprocity from a South African perspective. We have no difficulty in attracting international students to come here, but it is very hard to find South African students who want to go and spend some time at one of our partner universities on the continent; so, if we really talk about intra-Africa mobility and circulation of talent, then that is something that we have to tackle quite seriously.

The other thing that I think is important, is that we look at harmonisation and see how it relates to and interfaces with other pertinent issues that affect higher education. From a South African perspective, you've mentioned them all – transformation, decolonisation, Africanisation – and in that context, I think it is also important that we don't just go and do a copy and paste exercise from other models that exist. Especially in the European context, many of you would have heard about the Bologna process, which was a big harmonisation exercise that is still continuing for Europe. I think it is important that we look at that, that we learn from it, but that we don't just copy it uncritically into our own context. And finally – and I think this is something that links to what you have said Prof – we need to look at who is funding harmonisation initiatives. If we look at some of the key projects, tuning Africa and harmonisation quality assurance and accreditation in Africa, which is currently still underway and is coordinated by SARUA, the Southern African Regional Universities Association, we find that these kinds of projects are often funded by the European Union, and they are coordinated by European or with European partners. So, I think what we need to do, is look at that very critically in the context of another aspiration of Agenda 2063, which sees Africa as the united and influential global partner, one that is independent and responsible for financing its own development. And I think that speaks to what you said about us needing to move away from the dependence on development cooperation and development aid kind of funding. That is where I am going to leave it, and hopefully we can take some of these issues up in the discussion later. Thank you."

Can African higher education partnerships and student exchanges contribute to achieving African unity?

Dr Cornelius Hagenmeier
Director of the Office for International Affairs (UFS)

"Thank you so much, Programme Director, for the introduction. Prof Petersen, fellow panellists, distinguished guests, and fellow Africans. I was challenged with a question about whether higher education partnerships and student exchanges actually can contribute to achieving African unity. It has been a journey to think through the question, and I will come up with an answer that I did not expect when I embarked on looking into this. But at the outset, I want to start by reflecting on some historical aspects of the present state of African higher education, collaboration, and student exchanges. Thereafter, I will develop an argument whereby I will say that if higher education internationalisation in our context is decolonised and Africanised, yes, then it can indeed contribute to achieving African unity in a major way.

Let me start by looking at the research collaboration landscape, because it is quite indicative of how our partnerships work globally. I came across two studies, one conducted in 2018 by Mouton and Blanckenberg, which focused on the bibliometrics of co-authorship relating to South African authors. It revealed that 50% of papers published in the period between – I think it was 2012 and 2016 – were co-authored with collaborators outside the African continent; only 5% of papers were co-published with authors within the African continent. So, we have very, very strong collaboration beyond the continent, which is of course excellent, but what is worrisome is that it is still relatively small in relation to what we are doing in terms of intra-African research collaboration. Colleagues, students, guests, it is not all bleak here; there is a strong upwards trajectory, but there remains a lot of work to be done, and if I reflect on it, it is actually a little bit unsurprising – and this is where the history about which Prof Mudzi has been speaking earlier, really plays a critical role. If we look at the history of African higher education, much of it was modelled on the educational systems of colonial powers, and the structure of many African universities historically meant that it really fostered collaboration with the former colonial power over the country, but it also meant that the outlook was more towards Europe than towards Africa. So, this is a dynamic that I think we need to bear in mind when we ask – can higher education internationalisation contribute to African unity? If we look at student mobility, the picture is also not a very exciting one at this stage. In the past there has been significant intra-regional degree mobility, in other words, we had relatively high numbers at some universities – up to 7% of international students hailing from the SADEC region coming here. Unfortunately, COVID immigration challenges have resulted in an overall decline in this degree mobility. When we look at exchanges – that is the exchange of undergraduate or postgraduate students for a period of their study, not to get a degree, but to go for a few months, for a semester or year – the picture shows that there is very little happening in terms of physical mobility; the mobility that is happening is mostly again to the Northern Hemisphere. Intra-African mobility is unfortunately still an exception, and it is exciting that at our university we are part of a programme for intra-African student mobility financed by the European Union; but we need a lot more of this. Besides this, when looking at the number of mobile students within Africa, there's another positive trend to observe which is also reflected at our university, and that is that the number of postgraduate, and particularly doctoral international students mobile across the African continent, is growing; that is actually really also – when we talk about South Africa – a transformation. We used to be a strong host country for regional undergraduate students; we still are, but not to the same extent. At the same time, we have become a hub for postgraduate, and particularly doctoral international education.

At the same time as those developments taking place, virtual collaboration is opening new avenues for international collaboration and internationalisation. Virtual exchange pedagogies such as collaborative online international learning allow many students to obtain international experience, which is in stark contrast to physical mobility in Africa which, pursuant to financial challenges, remains limited to a select few. First, it is a critical building block towards a more inclusive and equal internationalisation process. At the moment, however, many of the newly emerging virtual exchange projects are still centred on Europe, on North America, on Japan – which again is good, but we need to consider that we also need to capacitate ourselves so that the growth can be happening within Africa. We need staff capacity, we need resources, so that we can make this happen even if the other partner does not have many resources. Fortunately, many South African and African universities are now focusing on intentionally strengthening their African collaborations and partnerships. We are no exception in this, we have strong growth in our African partnerships. Fortunately, this is a trend not only in our context, but of wider relevance. Looking in summary at this short reflection, it shows that we have some very good academic collaboration within Africa, but it is not where we would want it to be, and it is really an area where we need to grow.

My core argument will be, if we want to grow this, and if we want to ensure that internationalisation can be a conduit to achieve African unity, we need to Africanise the internationalisation process in our context without, of course, neglecting the connection to the rest of the world. What does that mean? To me, it means that we should strive for an Africa-focused and -imbued internationalisation process, at least as one of the strong focus areas where we intentionally invest. So, why is this so important when we want to contribute to unity? The quest for African unity, in my view, requires that the future leaders who will shape the continent's future have deep insight into the continent's knowledge, wisdom, and culture. Exposure to deep understanding of African cultures, knowledge, and education systems, may assist in shaping a generation of leaders who are sensitised to the value of African togetherness and unity. An Africanised internationalisation process may assist future leaders of the continent in developing a sense of African connectedness, which may assist them in becoming a generation of leaders that will fulfil the dream of African unity. But what would this entail practically speaking, beyond just intentionally fostering the growth of university collaboration on the continent? First, I think internationalisation in Africa should be catalysed to reflect the unique identity of the continent and its universities, based on the rich indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage. It should consider our developing context and be specifically relevant to the developmental needs of the continent. Prof Petersen, I noted, and I must say that I really agree with your argument from the conversation we had on Monday, where if I understood you correctly, you highlighted that Africanisation, and the knowledge of Africa could be infused and put on the same pedestal as what we would call knowledge from the Global North. Indeed, Africa makes enormous contributions to scientific knowledge, and has much more to offer that should rightfully enrich curricula and higher education globally. But even in research we need to rethink. All too often, not in our context immediately, but in Africa we still find the situation – the African researcher is the one carrying out the fieldwork, and much of the credit goes to the collaborators in the Global North.

The quest for African unity, in my view, requires that the future leaders who will shape the continent's future have deep insight into the continent's knowledge, wisdom, and culture.

Third, we should be ourselves in our South African context, be prepared to listen and learn from other African countries and universities in our engagements with Africa. We should be open to learning from indigenous knowledge and wisdom from other parts of the continent, and we should be receptive to learning also from our African partner universities, including some of the smaller partner universities that nevertheless have beacons of excellence. A very important dimension – again, we touched on it on Monday – is that, as we Africanise internationalisation, we also need to think on a broader basis about decolonising the process. What could this entail? To me, first – when we talk about internationalisation at the theoretical level, I think we need to make sure that non-Western philosophy and knowledge are infused in the discourse. Second, I think we need to really ensure – and this is beyond Africa – that internationalisation evolves to become a process which connects a diversity of knowledge paradigms, rather than just connecting other parts of the world first and foremost to the Western knowledge paradigm. This, of course, needs to be linked to the broader endeavour to decolonise the university as a whole – I spoke about the colonial legacy earlier – and to specifically decolonise the curricula at universities. Context-specific models for curriculum internationalisation should be developed, including a specific focus on bringing the African dimension from outside South Africa, from other African countries, into the curriculum. Critical, in my view, is developing locally relevant, globally competitive, decolonised curricula that strongly focus on Africa and empower students to proudly engage with the world as Africans. Then – and you challenged me, Samia – partnership processes; they really should be rethought. It is not only about with whom we partner, but also how we partner. There – to me, it would be very helpful if we could work towards more ethical and equal partnerships; and to me, a central element of this is that we should consider embracing a substantive conception of equality. Prerequisite to this is, of course, that we ensure that all collaborations have a very strong value foundation, and there I want to link to Monday's conversation on ubuntu in the university context. I think we can gain a lot if we can infuse ubuntu into the way we collaborate between universities; it is something we could also share with the world. I think ubuntu is a context that could help many countries outside the African continent to also develop its higher education partnerships. I am not saying much about harmonisation, because Samia canvassed it in an excellent way, but to say – and I am encouraged to hear that we have 24 ratifications now, we are making progress –13 – I misheard, sorry; at least a little bit more than my last figure, but still very challenging. But colleagues, as Samia said, if we want to succeed with Africanising the internationalisation process, we need harmonisation. Many things, such as student exchange, simply don't work or are very difficult to implement in the absence of harmonisation.

Virtual collaboration and virtual exchange are a critical trend, and as I said earlier, we need to invest in this at our African universities. We need to develop capacity, not only in the narrow sense, but for the entire spectrum of digitalisation of international engagements, and then we need to actively foster and support the implementation of virtual exchange and other forms of virtual collaboration between African partner universities. Nevertheless, bidirectional student mobility within the African continent should be prioritised. Why do I say bidirectional? All too often it is a circle – students from other parts of Africa move to South Africa, whereas students from South Africa move to the Global North; so, we need to find ways to focus more on the exchanges. We need to find ways to use the very limited funding we have available to focus on the postgraduate and the PhD, because that is where I think the impact is the highest. This should of course be accompanied by African joint and other collaborative degree programmes – it speaks to Samia's point – without harmonisation we will not easily win this battle. Another point to me is that we should leverage common cultural and linguistic roots and use them as a catalyst to highlight that the shared heritage of the continent is stronger than the often-artificial colonial boundaries. One example came to me – and I must say, I was living in that region for ten years, serving at the university in the north of the country – there I noticed that there was a colonial boundary, the boundary between South Africa and Mozambique. The colonial boundary was particularly stark, because the languages, the modern languages spoken and practised in the higher education system are different – Portuguese and English – but I also noted that the indigenous language is actually the same on both sides of the border – Shangaan. So, why don't we start thinking out of the box? Why don't we start thinking – can't we use an indigenous African language that is spoken as the first language of the students as a conduit to have at least a student exchange to pilot on a smaller scale, to see and highlight this togetherness. The same actually goes for the boundary between Zimbabwe and South Africa, where the Bavenda people are also settling in one area that is artificially divided by a colonial boundary.

Last, and probably it is a critical point, universities should empower students to engage with the world with a sense of agency and pride in their own culture and heritage. They should be encouraged to respect and celebrate the cultural heritage not only of their own African country, but of the continent. This is interlinked with an argument that Lynette highlighted on Monday, where she reminded us of the colonial education system that was really made in such a way that non-white people could only get mid-level administrative technical jobs, and to avoid that they could get self-esteem to change the unjust dynamics of the time. This legacy – when we want to decolonise – this lack of self-esteem that we often observe, I think this is a core thing that we need to tackle. And I think we need to tackle it by thinking how we can actually give the sense of pride – you can't give it; we can only encourage, we can enable – and I don't have the answers, but I think it is a critical thing, a critical aspect that can help us to arrive at different power dynamics in higher education collaboration and beyond. Those are only a few aspects of how an Africanised internationalisation process, which would assist in achieving African unity, could be shaped. Difficult and challenging conversations are needed if we want to deepen the discourse on this idea, but I think this, and our creativity, is necessary if we really want to have an impact with internationalisation in achieving the common shared dream of a united Africa. But I am convinced that if we take the small steps that we can in our sphere of influence on all levels, we can make a contribution to get to this point where African higher education can become a strong contributor to achieving the quest for African unity – however, never neglecting that we also have good friends all over the globe, and that we should not achieve this by cutting any ties, or not fostering new friendships in other world regions. We should achieve this by investing intentionally in our African engagements. Thank you very much."

How can the UFS as a research-led university become a catalyst for harmonising African higher education, achieving African unity, and securing global African influence?

Prof Francis Petersen
Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Free State

"My fellow speakers on the platform brought different dimensions to the conversation, and I want to emphasise just three or four points in a very concise manner. There's an African proverb that says, 'If you want to move a mountain tomorrow, you should start lifting the stones today'. What we need to effectively ask ourselves is, What are those stones that we should be lifting in the context of African harmonisation and African unity? I think there are probably about five that are sort of coming up in my head. The one that we have already spoken about quite a bit is internationalisation, and I want to come back and just make a few points to add to what my fellow speakers have indicated. The second one is collaboration, and that was also talked about quite extensively in the discussion. The third one is what I would call co-creation, and COVID-19 has probably really put that word much more pertinently on the agenda of conversations globally. The fourth one is about digitisation and how COVID-19 has also excelled that part through technology and technological advances. The fifth one is a word that I think one can probably also debate in different contexts, and that is the word excellence. I don't want to open up a debate in terms of how we define excellence and how we see excellence, but I want to talk about or just mention the word excellence as a means of bringing equality in terms of what we offer as an institution, as researchers, as scholars in the Global South, on the continent, in the context of what the Global North would perceive excellence to be.

Those are the five things that I want to look at. There's obviously more, but in our context, in what I believe the University of the Free State could contribute to harmonisation on the continent and unity on the continent. Internationalisation, COVID-19 (or the pandemic) has forced us not only [to focus on] internationalisation, but in general it also provided us [with] a moment to reflect. It provided us [with] a moment to pause, and it provided us [with] a moment to reimagine things differently. What it did indicate to us was that the world is actually interconnected. If a virus [exists] here in one part of the globe, it impacts the [entire] world or another part of the world, and I think that interconnectedness was quite important. And we should leverage that interconnectedness in internationalisation the way that Cornelius has indicated, and to ensure that the African output, the African voice, the African research is finding a place, an equal place in that global knowledge. And I think co-teaching, trying to bring international [curricula] – in fact, Africa is part of that international curricula where, if we talk about the Global North – and I want to use that terminology, Global North, and the Global South or Africa in the Global South – how we can incorporate our curricula in the way in which we engage through internationalisation, where our scholars could be part of delivering that. Part of co-creation programmes between ourselves on the continent – and we often forget that in many ways South Africa is part of the continent – and our colleagues in the north, and how can we enrich that. And I think reimagining internationalisation is quite important from that context. But there's a second point in internationalisation, and I think it was also discussed or flagged a bit earlier. If you look at the programmes that are funded to grow collaboration or to grow internationalisation to a certain extent, or grow harmonisation, it is often funded by entities in the Global North, and it is funded in a way that sometimes, or in most instances, doesn't necessarily build the effective capacity that we need to have in the Global South or on the African continent. So, I think we also need to challenge those funding models, and we need to

speak out in the same way that we've spoken out about asymmetry in terms of mobility of students between the Global South and the Global North. We also need to speak out from where we are on the African continent to the funding models that fund those programmes. Because if we don't, it will just perpetuate what we have today, and the increases in terms of building a stronger Africa and a stronger unity will be very incremental, we won't be able to make that greater strides. And to a certain extent we need that funding, but I think we need to be able to indicate that those models also need to be reimagined in order to speak to what we want. So, on the internationalisation one, coupled with what was said earlier, I think these are the important points that I want to make.

A lot has been said about collaboration, I am not going to elaborate more. But what I want to say is [that] to take collaboration forward to co-creation we need to understand that the university or higher education is not the only knowledge producers, there are various other knowledge systems outside of higher education. And when we start to co-create, we need to bring those knowledge systems to the fore, and if we start to do that, to what extent can it enhance unity on the continent? So, for me co-creation is quite important. I am very passionate about innovation, but innovation that talks about the ecosystem that brings different knowledge systems onto the platform. I want to mention an example – we have a centre here at the University of the Free State that not many of you probably know, because we just sort of started the centre in the last year and a half. It is called the Interdisciplinary Centre for Digital Futures (ICDF), and what it actually relies on is blurring the boundaries between faculties. I want the Faculty of the Humanities and the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences and the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (NAS) to start working closer together to develop programmes at undergraduate level that are interdisciplinary. This was emphasised again when I attended the Mining Indaba a few weeks ago, where a CEO of one of the mining companies said to me, Francis, one of the challenges that we have in our mining sector is that we don't have social scientists who can engage with technical people and vice versa, and this creates a massive trust deficit between mining companies and communities. Can you help us? And we are working on that at the moment, but that's one area, the blurring between the faculties. The second one is that we want the outside sectors, outside of higher education, to come and be part of the university and vice versa. We have created more than 40 advisory boards in our academic departments, where we have representatives from the private sector, industry, commerce, non-governmental organisations, government, and foundations. Our Department of Hebrew in the Faculty of the Humanities also has an advisory board. It is just to lift the complacency necessary, and that's a negative word, because you lift yourself out to be challenged in a way by people you don't often engage with on a daily basis. I said to all the deans – because they often chair those advisory boards – that if somebody asks a question or gives advice and you don't take it, you don't need to take it, because an academic often owns the curriculum, but you need to go back to the next meeting and tell the adviser why you didn't take that advice, because I want our academics to reflect, to think, and to understand."

I am very passionate about innovation, but innovation that talks about the ecosystem that brings different knowledge systems onto the platform.

Our external guests:

We were honoured to have one of our partner universities from the USA visiting us during the week, and they attended the dialogue. Prof Petersen graced them with a heartfelt welcome in his own words: "We're talking about internationalisation as a key component of our engagement this afternoon, but we also have students and colleagues from Texas in the audience, and I would just like to welcome them. They are on the study abroad programme and, in fact, you are sort of demonstrating the actions that I was talking about. So welcome, a hearty welcome, I hope you have enjoyed it so far. I would like to catch up with you later on; but let me also just say that we are thinking of you and our thoughts are with the families of the shooting that happened in Texas. It is always bad to lose people from the community, so your thoughts and the family's thoughts, the family that has suffered, are also in our thoughts. So, also just take that message back from the University of the Free State, but hearty welcome. Thank you."

> ***We may have different religions, different coloured skin, but we all belong to one human race.***
>
> -Kofi Annan

QWAQWA CAMPUS

The Qwaqwa Campus programme served as a closing ceremony for the Africa Week that recapped the activities of the week, which took place institution-wide. The closing ceremony included student views on African education and beautifully curated performances from the Qwaqwa Choir and Gospel Choir. The panel, hosted by Ms Reabestwe Mabine, took a stand and shared their views on the importance of African education at higher education level, driving the conversation on all levels – from students, to staff, institutional and continental.

Ms Reabetswe Mabine
Host for the Africa Week Qwaqwa Closing Function

The importance of student engagement in African education at a higher education institution

Chrisellda Zoleka Dotwana
Director of Kovsie Support on the UFS Qwaqwa Campus

"Thank you. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to acknowledge our Vice-Chancellor, and the Vice-Rector: Research and Internationalisation, and all the other panel members. It is indeed an honour to be talking to you this afternoon about a topic that is quite close to my heart. I also happened to be in Durban on the day the African Union was launched on 25 May, so when I got the invitation, I felt quite honoured and said wow, history has a way of repeating itself somehow. My topic is about the importance of student engagement in African higher education.

In many countries in Africa, most families live below the poverty line. Nelson Mandela believed that education is the most powerful weapon that can be used to change the world. This statement followed a declaration encapsulated in the freedom charter promoting education by declaring that the doors of learning shall be open to all. The sentiments provide a clear indication that for Africa to advance in development, education is the key to her success. One of the most precious human rights is the right to knowledge, which is the basis for growth both academically and personally; however, students will have a greater experience during their studies if they spend time and effort on both inside and outside classroom activities at their disposal. Student engagement itself is an internationally recognised construct and provides an integrated understanding of student and institutional behaviours associated with student success. It refers to how much time and effort students spend on academic and other personal development activities and includes the way in which institutions allocate resources and organise learning opportunities and services to help students participate in and benefit from such activities. Understanding student experiences and performance has become increasingly important to restore public confidence in higher education.

So, student engagement is about understanding the holistic student experience in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning on the one hand and the student experience on the other. It requires more than just participation, but also the ability to make sense of and respond to the educational context. This implies that a multifaceted approach to understanding student engagement is necessary. Research indicates that there is a relationship between student engagement and success. According to Koo (2009) and Strydom (2014 and 2015), institutional high-impact practices, which are educational experiences that make a significant difference to student persistence, learning outcomes, and student success, are the key propellers of student engagement. The research, therefore, implies that if Africa is to make any significant progress in joining the developed countries, the issue of student engagement must

be taken seriously. According to Codes (2005), the following are the key comprehensive engagement issues – active and collaborative learning, participation in challenging academic activities, communication with academic staff, involvement in enriching educational experiences, feeling legitimate and supported by the university learning communities.

Now, what kinds of challenges do institutions of higher learning experience in engaging students in a manner that will ensure that student success is realised? Firstly, we look at equity and participation. Higher education across African states is constrained by the participation rates that are dictated by funding. As the countries grapple with a range of issues, it becomes difficult to provide resources for higher education at the level that is required by the system. This is a phenomenon that also happens globally, not just on the continent. For the minority that makes it, institutions still struggle to provide an environment that promotes persistence; for example, in the South African schooling system, the schooling system produces more than 200 000 qualifying students to compete for plus-minus 60 000 spaces at the universities. Although the freedom charter espouse that the floodgates will be open to all, the availability of resources continues to dictate the number of students that can absorbed, for instance, how many students apply for NSFAS funding, but not all of them get it, even though they qualify. One of the most precious human rights is the right to knowledge, which is basic for growth both academically and personally. Through education we can strive to make a positive impact on the society and its development. Educated people mainly drive meaningful progress, therefore access to education on a massive scale in Africa remains the only hope for her to rise and promote the marginal development that was envisaged by our forebearers who initiated the Organisation of African Unity in 1963.

The second issue that is a challenge for institutions is the student experience. Students do not only have the right to education, but the right to education that will make them succeed. Both the individual and institution should work together to make the process successful. The student experience encompasses all aspects of student living, from academic studies to social interactions and campus life. Student experience is important in ensuring successful outcomes and well-being. Universities across the globe are striving to provide a positive student experience through uncertain times. Higher education has its own beliefs, assumptions, and values. These sometimes differ from the individual student needs; for example, in higher education students are encouraged to argue their issues, whereas at home, if they argue with elders it is viewed as a sign of disrespect. In promoting student engagement, such cultural clashes must be addressed to capacitate students who may be from such backgrounds, to know that it is OK to do so within this space. For them to succeed, they must engage meaningfully. Although universities do provide orientation programmes, including mentorship programmes, adjustment may take a little while. It is critical that higher education institutions develop programmes that are focused on adjustment in order to create a conducive environment for students to engage in both the academic and the social sphere. Another compounding factor in student experiences is the fact that due to the massification in higher education, the numbers of commuter students increased as universities could not offer beds for all their students. The result is that a significant number of those students struggle to participate in on-campus activities. They are unable to interact with academics and other students, they struggle to have a sense of belonging to the institution, and they are alienated socially. The social alienation results in commuter students engaging academically at the expense of social engagement. The behaviour defeats the purpose of producing well-rounded citizens, and they miss out on creating social networks that can assist them beyond their university life. How often do we get a situation – if a student wants to get employment post their studies, they will have to have networks; it is standard, you get told you must know someone who will know someone who will be able to connect you to get something. So, to mitigate the situation, universities have introduced the concept of learning communities as a mechanism to promote participation and engagement. Research by Dreiden and Goldstein (2013), Jacoby (2015), Jacoby and

Garland (2004), Koo and others has alighted the following studies that could be used to mitigate the issue of commuter students. Universities must make living space available for students, they must supply laundry facilities, they must provide access to computer labs, they must create spaces where educational activities can promote conversations among students, they must provide transport, and they also have to let students feel that they matter, and that the university is taking an interest in their development.

Sadly, for some universities funding remains a challenge in providing the needed resources. Although the African continent was at the forefront of ensuring social justice during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education had to quickly find mitigating solutions to ensure that there was continuity under challenging circumstances. Campus life was severely affected, and students had to adjust to studying at home for some time. This posed serious challenges, as students had to learn through technology without the usual support that they received through various activities inside and outside the classroom. This might be a paradox; however, the pandemic brought a sense of parity in terms of student experiences, as students were all in the same situation whether they were commuter or residential students. The challenge that institutions are facing, is the provision of an equitable learning experience for all students, whether they reside on or off campus.

Improving student success is one of the key challenges facing higher education institutions around the world today.

Student success is also one of the challenges that beset higher education. Improving student success is one of the key challenges facing higher education institutions around the world today. Universities in particular are seen as engine rooms of the human expertise needed to drive the knowledge economy and the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The following model of academic success represents the key aspects of student academic success. This model was actually proposed by York, Gibson and Rankin in 2015; they said student success happens in an environment where there is academic achievement, satisfaction, acquisition of skills, persistence, attainment of learning outcomes, and career success. The categories indicated can be used by academic advisers and student counsellors to guide discussions in the event that students present with academic concerns. Students' social success is the last one. Social success is propelled by a variety of issues. Students who are socially aware and responsible contribute to the well-being of their social and physical environment. The following are some of the facets of social success – personal awareness and responsibility, building relationships, recognising and appreciating different perspectives, critical and creative thinking, contributing to their community and caring for the environment, resolving problems, and valuing diversity. If we can promote an environment where students can grow and practise all of these, we can be on a path to a better nation and a better continent.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, student engagement is a critical aspect of the continent as a building block towards ensuring that, through education, we can make a positive impact on the nations and their development. Although students are engaged across a diverse spectrum, much more can be achieved when students are enticed to leave homogeneous groups and reach across diversity. The continent can benefit a lot from promoting exchange programmes for students, because engagement with and across diversity not only contributes towards student success but develops the psychosocial fabric of the nations. It is therefore important that universities across the continent focus their efforts on providing students with a meaningful student experience for them to engage in both the academic and the social sphere. I thank you."

The potential of the African knowledge systems in perpetuating a harmonised African higher education system

Mr Teboho Khiba
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Since colonialism and apartheid set foot in Africa – and until today – all systems of knowledge production, distribution, and consumption reflect Western hegemony. Africa's universities have since their foundation embraced Western models of academic teaching and learning. However, these models destroyed and excluded the native and colonised people; hence, the call for change was made in the modern era. This involves redressing structures embedded during the colonial era, which have not been fully rectified during the post-colonial era in any productive way; years into the so-called democracy, African unity is still the exception rather than the rule. This paper briefly discusses the possible use(s) of indigenous knowledge practices in contributing to the transformation of our education systems; because indigenous African scholarship and practices can enhance our education systems, which further contributes to the course of African unity by inserting African integral perspectives, experiences, language, and custom within the curricula, instructional materials, and textbooks. This change in knowledge systems will give students confidence, especially marginalised ones, to become globalised citizens through education that intellectually empowers and liberates them. This will further harmonise African scholarship, giving students the necessary skills to compete regionally and nationally and make a global impact.

The call for the decolonisation of our education systems and the institutional transformation of African universities is entrenched in the struggle for equality, social justice, and African unity (Battiste, 2013). The circumstances of inequality and the lack of transformation have pushed another generation of African youth into struggle and activism for harmony and social equality (Albertus 2019). However, the lack of decolonisation, transformation, and feeling ignored, undermined, and marginalised, led South African students in 2016 to a national shutdown of higher education institutions. In practical terms, student protesters have pronounced decolonisation over several demands, including making higher education more inclusive; changing the curriculum to give centre stage to African knowledge, histories, and languages. Furthermore, eradicating colonial symbolism and addressing anti-black racism in the institutional culture of formerly white universities were at the top of the African unity agenda (Ramugondo, 2015). However, although student demographics have changed significantly at most historically disadvantaged universities, academic staff demographics have not changed, and neither have curriculum makers (Albertus, 2019). This lack of transformation has necessitated the need to interrogate and redress the history, culture, and symbolism of higher education institutions in our motherland, since all of this has further delayed the African unity agenda.

Even with these encounters, many initiatives have been created to address these issues; for instance, transforming higher education systems in Africa should dismantle Western-centred teaching standards, systems, associations, and representation (Ramugondo, 2015). Moreover, indigenous African epistemic practices can play a crucial role in the quest for African unity in higher education institutions or their core curriculum, because it has been recognised that African indigenous knowledge is a requisite for decolonisation to take place through the advancement of African concepts with their origins in Africa, and the inclusion of African philosophy in African educational systems through their respective university curriculums. As Tabensky puts it, "the increase of concepts rooted in Africa has the prospect of working towards the decolonisation of the African intellectual landscape and so ultimately the African mind" (2008:136).

Additionally, initiatives in the current transformation programmes of African education systems should focus on indigenous African knowledge systems, non-racialisation practices, and the dispersing and dismantling of historical apartheid or colonialism categories (Albertus, 2019). Our response should include working towards a hybridisation of identity, in which values and concepts from indigenous African concepts are incorporated into our scholarship and teaching curriculum (Battiste 2013). According to Heleta (2018), learning an African language should be a priority for other tribes of academics in this drive for African unity. The African educational system should be one that advocates for better representation in the faculty and student body towards improving the cultivation of intellectual diversity, especially in providing a platform for African voices who have been side-lined in academia (Battiste, 2013). Their use must push for practices for students to have critical knowledge and understanding of Africa's history and the experiences of its people; this emanates from the African proverb that says, "you cannot know where you are going if you do not know where you are from" (Battiste, 2013:54). For example, most South African students graduate without fundamentally knowing what apartheid was or what it did to black people. Students need to be able to connect to the knowledge of their studies and future scholarships to unite. Implementation of policies that ensure the acknowledgement and provision of space for indigenous African knowledge systems in the existing political, economic, cultural, and pedagogical spheres is needed (Ramugondo, 2015). These policies and practices must constantly elevate indigenous cultures and African-driven belief and knowledge systems (Kendall, 2008).

For African unity in the academic space to materialise, there must be a deliberate programme on advancing African-centred discourses, paradigms, publications, and academic practices; in the same way that there was a programme to deliberately write off any indigenous African knowledge systems. With further emphasis, programmes, principles, and ideas associated with blackness must be prioritised and taken into the mainstream in African universities. The use of the indigenous knowledge system in the university or its curriculum should be concentrated on African realities, and the lived experiences of most black Africans (Agbiboa and Okem, 2011). Also, these African epistemic practices should make higher education 'relevant' to the material, historical, and social realities of the societies in which universities operate (Albertus, 2019).

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African education: modernity and idealism of Africa

Mr Pule Mmula
Law student

The African landscape has for far too long been deemed archaic, ancient in history, and lost in the 20th century, especially when it came to the development of education in struggling African communities. Although this may be seen as true to Eurocentric thought, a development existed in social, cultural, and legal frameworks – i.e., the regional economic communities – recognised, among others, by the AU (such as the EAC, Arab Maghreb Union, Economic Community of Central African States), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), namely the diversification of markets, growth of knowledge systems such as higher education institutions, trade, and diplomacy. Although these are but mere stones on a hill, they have foundationally created an avenue of development in higher education throughout the continent – one I think is worthy of grandstanding celebration.

The starting point for evaluating and appreciating the efforts and chains of development, is by looking at academics and philosophers who have dedicated years of research at the crux of what makes for the ideal frame of learning. The likes of Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, who shaped unique features of philosophy, a counternarrative to the archaic nature of Africa being old in thinking, sociology, and linguistics in his book *The Invention of Africa*, or even Sophie Oluwole, who spent half a century researching the intellectual society that Africa has to offer – these are but a few beacons in African education that we look at, as well as the role they have played in our aspiration to construct a unique yet impactful view of higher education in a Pan-African setting. It would be wishful thinking to commend our past achievements while not realising the impact those voices have had on our daily lives.

Beyond the academic thoughts, we can also turn our eyes to the Centre for Collaboration in Africa established by Stellenbosch University, the African Economic Research Consortium under the sub-theme **Research Collaborations – domestic and international**, the African Research Universities Alliance, the University of the Free State Centre for Gender and Africa Studies in partnerships with the University of Ghana and others, the collaboration of Botho University in Botswana, and many more by the UFS. These are some of the continuous relationships formed and built upon the premise of holding and maintaining relations with other African institutions in the coming together of higher education and Africa. According to Dr Cornelius Hagenmeier, Director of the UFS Office for International Affairs, these partnerships and collaborative efforts are critical for the University of the Free State – the UFS wants to grow its partnerships, and therefore requested the Kenyan Education Attaché to connect the UFS with Kenyan partners – these are sentiments shared across the African terrain with directors, students, deans, rectors, staff, and those who live around the university, to have a melting pot of Pan-African-centred higher education.

Notably, the road to a brighter tomorrow need not end there. Jenipher Owuor from the University of British Columbia suggests – more in the Kenyan context, but we can learn from this analysis – that the best approximation to dealing with sustainable development in school curricula is to realise our local capacities under indigenous ideas and integrating this with formal education. What we can already realise, is that there is a place for community and cultural knowledge in spheres of higher education – valiant attempts that we can see today. Realistically speaking, how the Kovsie Faculty of Law requires an overview of historic and value-centred knowledge with every module. The emancipation of thought and idealism has been

growing steadily, with unimaginable results. My valuation is on the need to celebrate the steps that have been taken and the roads paved by those who realise the need to celebrate our African education, that is, 1 225 institutions across the African plane.

A once eminent tool to colonise the African child is one best represented by schools of critical thought, the valuation of intrinsic capacities, and well-sought-out capabilities. African education, especially in higher learning institutions, has enjoyed great glory outside the confines of pre- and present unionisation Africa. For the most part, higher education was fragmented among nations, with the disparity being stark – a relationship of 'states with more capital boast more robust institutions and research' while those who are incapacitated suffer, and so the education provided is seen as subpar.

As we are constantly prompted to realise our positions in academic spaces, the privilege that the lotter of birth has given us, our realisation of what we aspire to have and what to be, the role we play in the grander feature of the society and community of higher education – one cannot wander too far from the crevices that we all share but overlook, the reality of our education system being set on the African continent, the intermingling benefits and drawbacks that we can realise, often impacted by management, critical thought, resources, and those who are part of these institutions. It is almost intuitively true that the appreciation of the advancement and robust form of education we receive has had many curves and, as we are aware, potholes. The sufficient response to create and enhance an African-centred harmony in ideology and in higher education is not too far from our grasp.

Let us not wallow in the feats we have created and neglect the shortcomings. It is wise to be awake to the fact that resource shortages, capital flight in less affluent states, saturated markets, and mismanaged institutions are tainting the dream of adequately celebrating how far African higher education has come.

I implore you, me, states, leaders, and activists to create strategies that will not only rival those of larger economies and states, but strategies that the African child can best relate to and that can best protect them, hone them, and equip them with enough capacities to make them successful, while embodying the reality, namely that African higher education ought to live within us for a long time. We are the generation that is comfortable with creating platforms of conversation – let us use those to further develop and see ourselves beyond the physical lens of colour, borders, language, and ethnicity.

Every day, as you walk, as you learn, as you engage various individuals and their realities, be cognisant of Africa Day not being a day on which we rock our traditional attire and ululate the coming together of all Africans – but as a step to reflect, rejoice, and remember that we are the sum of our efforts, that being African goes beyond what we can see, but rather what we embody.

> ***What we can already realise, is that there is a place for community and cultural knowledge in spheres of higher education.***

Developing young academics through African university collaboration

Prof Corli Witthuhn
Vice-Rector: Research and Internationalisation

"Thank you for this opportunity. I acknowledge all of the panel members; it is good to share the stage with you this afternoon. Before we walked in, we were laughing and saying – can you believe that on Africa Day celebrations here in Qwaqwa we are working with an African partner to see how we can do staff exchange, student exchange – so I would like to extend a special word of welcome to Prof Alain Souza, who is the Vice-Rector of the Masuku University of Science and Technology in Gabon, and his colleague Mr Abbas Aoussi, who is the External Relations Manager at the same university. Colleagues, it is fantastic to have you here. They have been visiting our campus for the past week; we're looking at collaboration and we will hopefully join them in Gabon at the end of July to see how we can cement the collaboration from our side.

I was asked to talk about the development of young academics, and you'll excuse me if I speak from the heart, because it's really something that I have been involved with for a long time – developing young people and making sure that they are successful in this complex world that we call academic life, is something that is very close to my heart. If we want to address academic capacity development on our beloved continent, we have to develop young academics who are able to become world-leading professors. The world-leading professors of tomorrow is what we should aim for. Those who have doctoral degrees at the age of around 30 – it takes a long time to build an academic career – who have the potential to become the professors and the thought leaders of the future, should be guided through this complex world. The UFS has more than a decade of experience in developing young academics. We started out with the Prestige Scholars Programme, which is now called the Future Professors Programme, and this programme has been very successful in making sure that we support young academics to reach their academic goals. So, one of the first things that we do in this programme, is to make sure that academics have a sustained intellectual project; so, what we are working on makes sense now, and also in five years' time, and in ten years' time. We also want to make sure that the intellectual project has gravitas in terms of the interest that it attracts. We want to make sure that young academics work on projects that are relevant not just regionally – regionally is important – but also internationally. I always use the analogy of saying we want to play the research game in a local stadium, but we want international people to be in the audience and in the crowd, supporting the game.

Building international networks is another important thing that we work on with young academics. The questions we ask here are: who are the leaders in your field, who are the champions in your field, where are they publishing, what are they working on, and what methods are they using. So, it is important that we know the field that we are interested in, but also the academics who play in that field, and that is the first step in really building international networks. For those international networks, we don't always want to look to the Global North, we don't always want to look to Europe and America. Here we have some colleagues from our own continent who are playing leadership roles right here in our midst. We want to make sure that there is collaboration between us and these world leaders, and I can give you many examples.

We also try to encourage young academics to focus on producing research outputs of a high quality; so, those books, chapters in books, publications in internationally recognised journals and distributed by international book producers and those outputs must be acknowledged in your field. People must notice what you write, because there is so much in this field; quality is an important focus. Many universities on our continent are developing a

teaching and learning focus, but we've seen in many universities – although there are areas of research excellence, there's still a lot to be done in terms of staff development and ensuring that these academic staff members attain their PhDs. Unfortunately, quite a large proportion of academics in African universities don't have PhDs – an average of around 40% in many of the universities on our continent – and we really need to work on that; and I think that's part of the collaboration that we are trying to establish with Gabon in the coming months. The importance of doctoral degrees is because – without a doctoral degree – it has an impact on the research output; so, with a PhD one can of course produce a greater number of research outputs and you can also supervise doctoral students, which is really important for universities.

Intra-African university collaboration can assist in developing young academics, and specifically provide support or supervision for these staff members to obtain their PhDs. We could possibly explore developing tailor-made doctoral programmes – and this is one of the things that we're also talking about with our Gabon friends, where we could take a blended approach. Supervision doesn't always have to be face to face, there are many opportunities that COVID has shown us, namely that supervision can be done remotely via email, Zoom, Teams; we've all got to know these platforms quite well. I'd like to use the example of Prof Maryke Labuschagne, who is the SARChI chair in Disease Resistance and Quality in Field Crops on the Bloemfontein Campus. She collaborates with many, many researchers on the continent, and the arrangement is that they do the fieldwork in their countries of origin and then come and spend time with her in writing up the thesis and managing and working through the data. So, that seems to be a really good approach and a good way of doing a blended PhD.

In closing, colleagues, I am not going to keep you busy for long. I think the prospect of collaboration in academic staff development within our continent could be beneficial to the UFS and to our partners on the continent. We have to work in collaboration across the continent, and this is how higher education institutions will accelerate their development and their global impact. Thank you."

Leveraging African collaboration for internationalisation branches of rural-based university branch campuses

Dr Cias Tsotetsi
Lecturer on the UFS Qwaqwa Campus

"To the Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Prof Corli – I don't know why I must be speaking after you, maybe we will correct that in future – as well as Dr Cornelius, because I am in his space in what I am going to present, it is basically from his space, the issue of internationalisation. My colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, I have been requested to give a presentation on leveraging African collaborations for the internationalisation of rural-based university campuses.

As you can see, this topic is really a complex one, because it is basically looking at a rural-based university campus rather than rural-based universities. However, it should be a travesty of these proceedings if we are to pitch this presentation at this micro level. Rather, reference to African universities would be more appropriate – whether urban or its rural main or branch campuses. Internationalisation of higher education in Africa is not wholly different, it is the same regardless of the space. There are a lot of characteristics that are uniquely African, especially in as far as leveraging African collaborations is concerned. Then I will, first of all, just recap on internationalisation as Prof Corli has already indicated. Then I'll actually borrow from De Wet and Hunter (2015), where the definition goes as follows: it is actually 'the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society'.

> ***There are a lot of characteristics that are uniquely African, especially in as far as leveraging African collaborations is concerned.***

Now, with that in mind, the question now becomes – what has been the role of African universities, was it intentional or was it something that were based on what the literature currently offers. Now, the reality from the literature's point of view – internationalisation of African universities has undergone various stages of metamorphosis. Predominantly, it has begun from a mere service point of view, where the demand for higher education by students from neighbouring countries have actually led to them crossing over to South Africa to look for higher education opportunities. So, if even universities that are based in urban areas are struggling, then there is a need or an intentional move to have rural-based universities also attracting students in a more intentional way rather than just a mere service. Now, if we speak of integrating this intentional intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, function, and delivery of post-secondary education, what role has Africa played in this regard? As Teferra said in 2019, the weakest global higher education system has been that Africa really relies heavily on the discourses, on the paradigms and parameters set by others. In that way, it actually renders Africa vulnerable to global whims and habits, hence its contribution towards constituents internationally may just be last minute or at worst non-existent, except for the recent initiatives that are actually taking place, including what the UFS is doing.

In the end, the intentional or international in the African context may just be seen as more colonial subject matters assimilated or adapted to Africa, therefore more still needs to be done in this regard. In Africa, international partnerships still reflect old colonial ties whereby former French colonies have partnerships with universities in France, and to a lesser extent, the same can be said about former British colonies. Continentally, the European Union is a major facilitator of African-European university partnerships. The US has also made significant strides or headway in its partnership with African universities. Therefore, partnerships between African universities are very few; to be honest, at this stage more needs to be done in this regard. In most cases, there is a lack of substance where there are such partnerships, beyond the signing of MOUs, meaning that more needs to be done. There is also commitment as well as a need to increase the African partnership footprints by many universities in Africa. This stems from the understanding of the benefits or virtue that are likely to arise out of such partnerships; however, for African partnerships to flourish, it may require a huge dedication of not readily available resources – more resources need to be put into that.

Therefore, for rural-based universities or campuses, the following benefits can be achieved if this can actually be a targeted initiative. Number one, the geographical proximity – most of the students that are actually approaching the rural-based campuses, which may also include Univen and the Qwaqwa Campus, you'll find that they are actually from the countries that are near those campuses. Secondly, the other benefit that we may have, is actually a diversity pool whereby we have a diverse population of students, a diverse group of academics as well. And then lastly, with the collaborations that we may have, they may also bring other collaborations. By so saying, I am saying let's all celebrate Africa Month. Programme director, thank you very much, dankie."

Recap and overview of the African education dialogue

Prof Francis Petersen
Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Free State

"Thank you very much, Programme Director, it is really a great pleasure for me to be here. I would have liked to be on the Qwaqwa Campus to recognise our guests from the Masuku University in Gabon – Vice-Rector, Prof Souza, and also Mr Aoussi, who is the External Relations Manager – great to have you in the audience and I hope that, if you have already spent the last week here, I hope it has been a fantastic week and that you had some beautiful collaborations and engagements that we could take forward in some of the future engagements. I also would like to – at the beginning – pay tribute to Dr Cornelius Hagenmeier and his staff across all the different campuses for putting such a beautiful, fantastic, well-designed, well-thought-through programme together to celebrate Africa Month and Africa Week. It was fantastic to see what played out at the different campuses, so I think we should give him a round of applause.

As the Programme Director indicated, my task is really just to summarise what has played out this week on our three campuses, and it is important that although the focus was on education and education in Africa – and this is education at different levels, basic education, secondary education, higher education – it also focused on the levers that we need to pull to ensure that the 54 countries on the continent are working more in unison – the African unity that we're talking about. I believe the activities we have engaged on over the past couple of days during this week have been to celebrate what Africa has to offer, to critically engage on some of the issues, some of the challenges, and to be able to debate on specific issues, which is always fantastic, because I do think that after debate we generate new thinking, new thoughts that we can take forward. Also, through either poetry, through readings, through performances, artistic performances, we celebrate what Africa is all about, what role each of us could play in relation to Africa, but also what Africa can offer to the world – and that is what I have seen play out over the past couple of days on our three campuses.

So, my task is, in fact, to bring them together, and the way that I want to bring them together is to focus on how it actually played out chronologically. It started off on our South Campus in Bloemfontein where we had the South Campus Principal – Dr Madiope could not be there – but a speech was presented by Ms Poloka Maswelele. She, and Dr Madiope, talked about the whole issue of nutrition, to what extent nutrition impacts education on the continent, and that we must never forget that it often impacts basic education, but it can be pulled through to other stages of education. She referred to the fact that we should develop policies but also actions that could speak to the whole issue of feeding, healing, and teaching our people; that was the message that she brought across. Then we also had a representative from our Free State Department of Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation, Ms Zola Thamae, and she actually emphasised three things. She emphasised the whole issue of collaboration – and you've picked up collaboration as part of internationalisation, as part of institutions that should talk to one another as a collective to be able to make a greater impact. She said the university should be working more with government to see to what extent we can do things that impact society. She, in fact, also said that we mustn't forget that government is also a good and excellent provider of employment for our outgoing graduates, specifically in the context of South Africa; in other African countries where unemployment is quite high, we also need to make sure that those collaborations yield positive outcomes. She also made a final point, and that was in relation to mother tongue education. She said if we write and if we want to add to literature, you should try to add to literature in your mother tongue. She made

the statement that English literature is already saturated and that there are a lot of opportunities for mother tongue expression in terms of literature. I also made a few points on the South Campus; I emphasised the aspects of what the colonial history has done to the continent in terms of oppression, in terms of slavery even before that, inequality that resulted in division, and what impact that actually had on education.

Later on, I will refer to it not on the South Campus but something that came out Wednesday when we discussed it on the Bloemfontein Campus – to what extent those deeds of oppression, so to speak, or influences, have an impact on the confidence level of children and people that graduated from the continent. But in a debate such as this, in a discussion such as this, we should refer to that, but we mustn't stay there. The challenges that we had, such as COVID-19, which has created the opportunity for us to pause and to reflect, also provides an opportunity for us to reimagine, to be creative, to be innovative. I think it is important for us to be creative, innovative, reimagining what we need to do, things that we could then convert into actions, so that we don't always say this is what we have gone through, but – through that time of pause – how we could actually move forward. There was also a presentation by Prof Lynette Jacobs on the South Campus, where she pointed out that the decades of colonisation and colonial education did little to build the self-esteem of African scholars, and I already mentioned that point, but she also stressed the importance of decolonising the curriculum. Teboho, I appreciated the comments that you made in terms of the work that we are doing on decolonisation of the curriculum, but I also agree with you that there's much more that we need to do, and it is that journey that we should embark on collectively, because decolonisation is an opportunity to bring the voices that were on the periphery into the curriculum and say, to what extent can it, and should it, add more value. Then we had Prof Colin Chasi, the Director of the Unit for Institutional Change and Social Justice, and he talked about the whole concept of Ubuntu. I think we're all familiar with that concept, but he reminded us that whatever we do in our actions, we shouldn't do it alone; that as African nations we can only succeed as a collective, and I think what comes through there again, is the whole issue of collaboration, of engagement and of partnerships that is quite important.

On Wednesday, those discussions were taken forward on the Bloemfontein platform. The Director for the Centre of Graduate Support, Prof Witness Mudzi, gave us a fantastic historical representation of the African education system before the colonial days. He, in fact, also made the same point that, in a postcolonial Africa, we should merge aspects of both traditional and Western education in order to properly respond to the needs of society. So, it is not one or the other, it is not throwing out one and replacing the other one, it is in fact how we can work together in a complementary way to deal with the issues of society. Then we had one of our research fellows, Dr Samia Chasi, who is now with the International Education Association of South Africa. She argued for a more harmonised system of education within the African continent, and we all know that it is not that easy. We all know that if you talk about mobility, if you talk about credit sharing and credit recognition, you have to harmonise that system more. There are various studies that she pointed out that are currently happening on the continent to be able to do this. I think it is important that we look at it. It is probably going to be much slower, I think a lot of the collaboration is much easier to do at a postgraduate level, at research level, but we also need to put a lot of effort into that. It might have been Cornelius who indicated in that debate on Wednesday that although we have increased our number of collaborations, not only as the University of the Free State but as the 26 South African universities as a collective, the percentage of collaborations is still very, very low compared to our collaborations with the Global North, and I think this is something that we need to work on. In fact, this brings me to Cornelius, because he was part of the panel. He emphasised the whole issue of African higher education partnership and student exchanges and how that could help us to contribute to African unity. He also elucidated on the use of Indigenous knowledge systems and how we could use that more to learn from one another. I will make a point towards the end in terms of different knowledge system[s] and how we should use it more actively, and the whole emphasis of equal focus on how we partner with our partners on the continent, that our aim should be to force the ethical and equal partnerships underscored by a strong value foundation, infused with the principles of Ubuntu. I would advise you – these conversations are recorded – to go and listen to what Cornelius said, because I am just sort of summarising it now, but there was a very deep reflection of what that very strong value foundation really means when we talk about partnering with other universities and specifically universities on the continent. I sort of made a point by referring to an old African proverb that says if you want to move mountains tomorrow, you should start gathering the stones or moving the stones today. I was trying to understand or unpack a little bit what those stones are, and I referred to internationalisation, I referred to collaboration, and we heard about this. I also added to collaboration, the whole issue of co-creation, because co-creation takes collaboration to the next level. Prof Corli referred to that earlier, how we can design curricula together, how we can offer curricula together; this is also a mechanism to bring the Global North and the Global South or the African continent much closer together, where scholars on the African continent and scholars in the Global North could work and present curricula together to students both on the African continent and to students in the Global North. I also talked about digitalisation. We know how technology has been enhanced through COVID-19, and how to do it in a responsible manner; because if you don't have the appropriate connectivity, the devices, the bandwidth, your digitalisation and technology enhancement can actually be used to broaden the divide, and we need to be careful how we do that. I also said that whatever we do, we should always do it to the best of our ability. I used the word excellence, and I don't know whether it was Teboho or Pule who talked about how we define excellence, how we define what we do in terms of excellence on the continent or in the country compared to the global understanding of excellence. I don't want to open up that debate and discussion, we could have a big discussion, a last discussion on that, but for me it is how you contribute to the best of your ability, and as Prof Corli indicated, how you can play the game to the best of your ability knowing that the spectators are an international audience, and we need to reflect on that.

So, Programme Director, for me those were the things that came out on the South Campus and on the Bloemfontein Campus, and obviously what we heard today in terms of the debates, specifically the discussion about student success, and I can just say that because there are obviously also students and academic staff, we are probably one of the leaders in the country in understanding student success. We were invited by an international foundation to submit a very large proposal to link student success and employability, and we were the only university in South Africa that was invited to participate. So, student success is crucial, but student success from our university's perspective is often seen – and we, in fact, drive that narrative –as being about social justice. It is a social justice imperative; we can't have students coming to our campuses and not succeed. That success is a partnership between the institution and the student, so in the partnership both people and entities bring their support, so that's fantastic. Corli talked about how we develop excellent academics, how we develop the next generation of academics, not only at the University of the Free State but in South Africa and on the continent. I think the partnerships are about that, and that we should keep academics on the continent; we do lose a lot of academics to other parts of the globe. We need to have programmes anticipating this – there is always going to be a certain amount of erosion in those programmes, so we must continuously work on that, and it becomes quite important to start the partnerships. I think Cias, when we were talking about a university where parts of the university are in a rural setting and how we recognise that and learn from that recognition to build not only a better graduate but also that other parts of the university bring in the fundamental values. We talked about the challenges of the rural component of a university; it should be able to strengthen programmes across the whole university. Ultimately for me – and I am looking at Cornelius and the programme director – we will have an opportunity this week to reflect again on what came out, but for me it is a realisation of what we have in the institution, what we have as an institution, what we have through our partnerships, and what we need to do to not only to play our role in building a better, a stronger, a more sustainable education system on the continent and what our role is in that, but also to see to what extent we can project through the unity as a collective what Africa can offer to the world. This is the action that I extracted from our debates and our discussions, and it provides us with renewed energy to go forward. So, I encourage you to listen or relisten to the conversations, you can follow the links on the University of the Free State website and use this opportunity to reflect. We are often – and this is my last remark, Programme Director – in such a rush to complete things, just trying to solve issues, that we often don't have the time to just pause and to reflect. Because you may already have most of the effective solutions, but you are in such a rush that you miss that. I think the opportunity this week just reminded us again to pause, to reflect, to see what we can do better, but also to listen to what we can do more. So, thank you very much."

Reflection on the week and closing remarks

"Thank you very much. I will be very brief today, because Prof Petersen has already done a brilliant reflection on our week. I want to reflect not so much on the dialogue that took place, but on the process that made it possible. It was firstly through leadership – Prof Petersen, Prof Corli, without your leadership, without prioritising internationalisation, and without your bringing about this enabling environment, we could never have succeeded in this. Also, as the Office for International Affairs, we could have never done it alone. It was through interdivisional collaboration that it was possible to bring this programme together, and I really want to thank our internal co-creators; this is first and foremost the Unit for Institutional Change and Social Justice and Prof Colin Chasi for partnering with us in creating this Africa Week and the Africa Month website. I want to thank the Centre for Graduate Support and the Centre for Gender and Africa Studies – to just mention a few. It took many more stakeholders – Communication – all of them were on board, and actually what I experienced as we did it, was a spirit of Ubuntu. What Colin said on Monday, that Ubuntu must really bring us together – we must all see where we fit in and contribute where we are and through others, I think that is what we were able to live this week. Let me just acknowledge, and I call them now – Mrs and Mr Africa Day, Africa Week, and Africa Month – Bulelwa and Bheki, could you just get up if you are in the room. It was their leadership and hard work that brought the whole team together to make it all happen – it could not have been done without the work of those two fantastic colleagues in our office. Last, I just want to alert you that we also have an Africa Month website; this was a hybrid celebration, and there you will not only find links to our Africa Day memorial lecture, you will not only find recordings of our dialogue, but you will find many thought pieces, many pieces of poetry written by students and colleagues specifically for the Africa Month celebration, and you will find recordings of performing art specifically put together for this hybrid celebration of Africa Month. So, I just want to close by saying thank you to all of us, because had we not done it together, it could never have happened, thank you."

ICDF Intercultural Skills Exchange in HEIs – ICDF WEEK 2022

The University of the Free State Office for International Affairs hosted its annual International Cultural Diversity Festival, themed Intercultural Skills Exchange in HEIs, which aimed to bring recognition, appreciation, and celebration of the diverse cultures at the university. This was achieved through an interactive space that promoted the sharing of information and an intellectual dialogue on intercultural competences. The programme ran as the ICDF Intercultural Skills Exchange in HEIs, which took place across two campuses, starting with the Qwaqwa Campus for Part 1 of the dialogue on cultural diversity, and the Bloemfontein Campus for Part 2 of the dialogue.

All activities were enthusiastically embraced, with artistic expressions ranging from music, poetry, and choreographed dance acts by residence SingOff winners, and meaningful dialogue that provided an element for teaching and learning. The Qwaqwa Campus programme focused on the principles, a student perspective, both local and international perspectives, and broke down institutional understanding and the importance of intercultural skills/competencies in HEI.

QWAQWA CAMPUS

Opening and welcoming remarks to the ICDF Week – Dr Martin Mandew

Dr Martin Mandew
Principal of the UFS Qwaqwa Campus

"Good morning, everybody, sanibonani, dumelang, goeiemore. Mr Programme Director, it is my pleasure to stand here this morning, I am most honoured and proud to welcome all of you. I have the easiest task on the programme. It is to welcome each and every one of you. But you know, not all animals are equal, right, so if I don't mention your name, it is just because of the animal farm reality that we live in. So, I am going to mention a few people, not because they are more important, but because they represent the leadership of the university and our speakers this morning. So, allow me therefore, Programme Director, to observe the protocol and welcome our Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Prof Francis Petersen. For those of you who don't know Prof Petersen, he comes from the Western Cape. So, part of his cultural heritage is the Y heritage. For those of you who still don't know Prof Petersen well, he is a chemical engineer by profession. For those of you who come from KwaZulu-Natal, you may remember the Thor chemical factory/ Bartlett disaster in KwaZulu-Natal. Prof Petersen was part of the team that went to look into that and investigate that. I think the factory has closed since then, Prof? Yes, due to pollution and so forth. Prof Petersen has worked in the private sector as well, so he is a highly experienced person and we are very lucky to have a leader of his calibre, not only as a strong academic leader, but as someone who brings a wealth of experience, connections, and networks from the private sector. The second person I'd like to welcome this morning, is our keynote speaker, Dr Makhasane. Then I'd also like to welcome Mr Mashamba who will speak on the side

of the international students, and then Mr Kunene will speak on behalf of the local situation. Both Mr Mashamba and Mr Kunene are on the campus Student Representative Council, so they are leading by example.

I welcome Dr Cornelius Hagenmeier, who is our Director for Internationalisation, and his very able team. Ms Bulelwa Moikwatlhai, who with the other colleagues in the International Office – colleagues, can you please stand up so that we can see all the colleagues from the International Office? Thank you. And then I'd like to welcome the campus coordinator for internationalisation, Dr Bekithemba Dube. And then of course I'd like to also welcome our local organising committee; I was part of that committee, but not too hands on, from a distance – our own MC as well, Mr Shabangu. There are others, we had our own local organising committee as well to put this thing together. So, we welcome all of those people, and the most important part is that we welcome each and every one of you. Of course, I almost forgot to welcome our other member of the team, Ms Nonsindiso Qwabe, she is our communications officer and yes, I'd like to welcome everybody this morning.

I have a question. How do you know what your culture is? No, don't just say because I am Sotho, therefore my culture is Sotho, or I am Zulu, therefore my culture is Zulu. How do you really, really know what your culture is? Your culture is the language you dream in, because it means your subconscious and your not subconscious and everything expresses your being and your existence So if uma uphupha ngesingisi ha o lora ka Sekgoa, as jy in Sesotho droom, when you dream in Shangaan, that is your culture, right. It is a wonderful day to celebrate our culture and cultural exchange. You know, having started in an international setup, we will always treasure these kinds of days, because we would really go back to our roots, focus on exchanging who we are with others, talk about our culture. But more than anything, that international setup – Africans putting together an item, you know – that will be so difficult, because if there's only two of you from South Africa it is difficult to put something together So, we would go together as groups and meet people from other parts of the continent and put something together that speaks to all of us; that was always an interesting and a very nice exercise to do. The best was when we teamed up with Indian students, and then we confused the Indian and the African cultures, with the African cultures being a little bit more on the harder side of expressing. You have to teach the Indian students to do it and so forth, and then you have to learn to do those soft Indian types of dance movements and try to fuse that. So, it was an interesting exercise to try and do that, but guess which one was our most favourite cultural exchange? Dr Hagenmeier, I am sure you can guess?

I tell you, it was the Octoberfest. The Octoberfest – beer flows like it's nobody's business. The beer companies are never, never short of beer and of plying students with beer and *wurst* – these sausages – and all sorts of sausages. That was the most favourite part. If there are no German students, then go and get them from another university, they must come and sponsor an Octoberfest component for the intercultural exchange. I am looking forward to the deliveries of the various perspectives in our intercultural exchange, especially when it comes to higher education. I am very happy, Chairperson, to hand back to you and I wish everybody a very, very pleasant morning, and we're supposed to have fun. I was very happy, Malikizela, which meant you caught the spirit. So, participate as much as you can in this festival. You are not there just to sit; you know, in our culture you never sit, you have to participate and exchange. Thank you very much, Programme Director. Thank you."

We would really go back to our roots, focus on exchanging who we are with others, talk about our culture.

What are the principles of intercultural education in HEI – Dr Sekitla D Makhasane

Dr Sekitla D Makhasane

Senior Lecturer and Academic Head of the Department Education Management, Policy, and Comparative Education.

I"The good thing about presenting after your seniors is that your path is set for you, and you just start by saying 'all protocol observed', as the campus principal has done. I was asked to talk about the principles of intercultural education in higher education. I want to make this presentation more practical, not just academic. Let me provide a brief background, if the programme director will allow me. A few years back as a new lecturer, I presented a lecture on Education Management and teaching BEd honours students – a very interesting group. In the lecture that I was giving, the students were very active, contributing to the lecture and bringing their own experience. In-service teachers predominantly attend the BEd programme. Some in-service teachers also participate in the BEd honours programme. And I thought to myself, this was one of my best lectures and I was very happy. However, after the lecture, two pre-service students followed me to the office, and one student said – 'I like Education Management, but what was discussed in that class confused me; all the in-service students who contributed to the discussion talked about their work issues? I have just graduated, and I don't know what is happening in schools, but they talked about what's happening in their schools.' I made these particular students aware that, with the content and theory discussed in the lectures, experience is also essential. They understood but made me aware that they were unfamiliar with what those other students were talking about. When the second student said, 'I like Education Management, but I think I am in the wrong university', I asked why? He said, 'I am not from South Africa, but all the students were bringing examples from the South African context, and I am not familiar with that; lots of abbreviations – SMT, SGB and so on and so forth.' After engaging with these students, I realised that this is a call to me to say that the university space is a space where you have people from different backgrounds, cultures, racial groups, languages, and perspectives, with different worldviews. If you are giving a lecture and have them in one space, the challenge with the kind of dialogue we have with them is how to make sure that all of them are accommodated. I am not saying that you should not be aware of the differences – differences are there – but how do you embrace those differences?

> ***intercultural education provides all students – with emphasis on the word all – with the cultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to achieve active and full participation in society or in the community***

Having outlined that background to discuss the principles of intercultural education, I will draw from the guidelines suggested by UNESCO 2006, which are widely cited in the literature. UNESCO states three main principles that can guide intercultural education. The first is that "intercultural education respects the cultural identity of the students by providing culturally appropriate and responsive quality education for all". Thus, in the education or university space – whether in the classroom or outside the classroom – what should happen, is that the cultural identity of the different communities in the given space should be respected. The second principle is that "intercultural education provides all students – with emphasis on the word all – with the cultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to achieve active and full participation in society or in the community". Within the community or the society, let us understand that you can have the local society or the local community; we also have the international community. So, the students, or whoever is in the space of higher education, should therefore have cultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills that will enable him or her to actively participate in society. The third principle is that intercultural education provides all the students with "the cultural knowledge, the skills, the attitudes to enable them to contribute to respect, to understanding, and solidarity among individuals, regardless of differences in terms of ethnic group, social, cultural, religious, and so on and so forth".

Drawing from these three principles, what stood out is the whole idea of dialogue, empathy, education solidarity, education for intercultural respect, and education against the national way of thinking.

If you want to discuss the implication of this, if you talk about curricula – those who plan the curricula have their own culture, worldview, understanding, and beliefs, which influence them in what should go into curricula. But the most important thing is for all of us to be aware of intercultural education. When planning for curricula or university activities, we should be aware of diversity and cultural differences. We need to be aware that our students come from different cultures and from different countries with that cultural knowledge, and we must find a way of embracing that culture. If we have to take an example from that introductory part, it translates into the 'how' in the classrooms – what is taught, how it is taught? which methods are used? and whether such methods can embrace the differences. So, if you draw from that example where the local students are the majority, the international students – but also local students who have no teaching experience – when you teach them within that space, it indicates that all those groups should be given a chance to relate the content or discussion to their own context, to their own experience, to their own cultural identity. Having said that, Mr Programme Director, the university community, thank you."

A student's perspective on intercultural education in HEI: Local Student Perspective – Kunene Simphiwe

Kunene Simphiwe
Universal Access and Social Justice and former Policy and Transformation Councillor

"Greetings …
There is an African proverb that says a stranger sees only what he knows. This is particularly important for our conversation today, because as long as we maintain preconceived ideas about people's cultures, we will only see what we think we know.

Perhaps the significance of intercultural education is its interconnectedness with the skills that will enhance our ability to understand, accept, and adapt to various cultures and cultural perspectives. This is achieved by reaching beyond just coexistence, to rather achieve the creation of multicultural societies through education, dialogue, and engagement.

Nationally, our universities have a long way to go in terms of achieving intercultural education, and perhaps one of the ways to do this would be to reform the education system. I say this because little attention is afforded to indigenous knowledge systems, and little – if any – indigenous knowledge is included in academic work and research. Even in post-apartheid and post-colonial South Africa and Africa as a whole, there is little evidence to suggest that we are moving positively towards intercultural education locally and abroad.

Higher education institutions have a big role to play, especially because our spaces are a microcosm of the outside world and are most likely to be affected by societal trends as well. Therefore, it is important to broaden and advance the reach of intercultural education through programmes, engagements, and interactions using dialogue between different cultures, religions, and beliefs – this being the context of our students. Our education can be the necessary catalyst for a university community that not just coexists but is also tolerant and imparts meaningful contribution to our micro-communities and the rest of the world.

However, intercultural education should always be accompanied by the understanding that what is acceptable in one culture may not necessarily be acceptable in another and must therefore always consider the universality of human rights. Avoiding cultural singularity is also a necessary discourse, so that all cultures are afforded space without one being projected to be above or subservient to another.

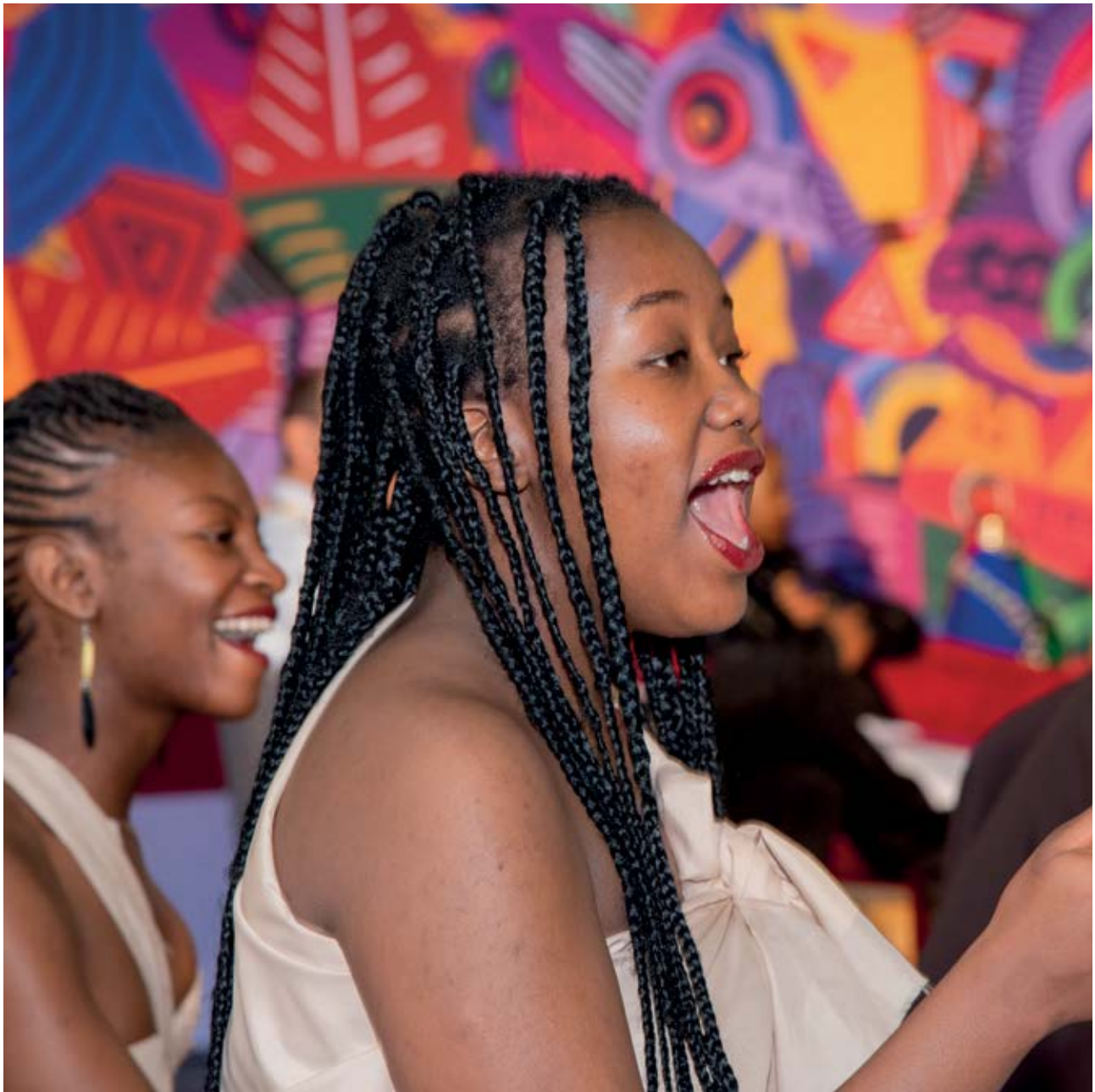
We therefore cannot separate culture from education either, because in the context of South Africa, education should be informed by cultural and intercultural experience. We can achieve this by affording all languages an equal and consistent script in the theatre of education, because language is perhaps the first expression of our human culture. Such that linguistic diversity can be synonymous with cultural diversity – a university that fosters and nurtures African languages will be a university that imparts cultural diversity and ultimately be a beacon of intercultural education.

Intercultural education is perhaps one of the most effective methods of creating intercultural relationships and provides the necessary stage for dialogue and discussion. When people understand each other and find joy in diversity, they are able to come together and become a formidable society that not only recognises each other's differences, but complements, fosters, and enhances them. This is because these differences are not viewed as undesirable, but rather as a necessary element in the space.

All of this does not, however, overshadow the paramount need for universities and aligned spaces of higher education to advance intercultural education. The local community has a lot to learn and must be exposed to the intricacies of different cultures and concerned spaces. As a result, the need to decolonialise and integrate culture into education remains at an all-time high. This will allow the local student to be exposed to a variety of languages, experiences, and processes that will allow them to grow holistically as individuals and as students who will, in turn, effect change in their own communities.

Thank you."

> ***Intercultural education should always be accompanied by the understanding that what is acceptable in one culture may not necessarily be acceptable in another and must therefore always consider the universality of human rights.***



A student's perspective on intercultural education in HEI: International Student Perspective – Mashamba Tapiwanashe

Mashamba Tapiwanashe
International Student Council Chairperson: UFS Qwaqwa| Msc student

A student's perspective on intercultural education in HEI: International Student Perspective

"Good morning to you all …

I hope I find you well and healthy. In my language we would say *Mamukasei*. To which you would respond with '*Tamuka zvakanaka*'. Language is a very fascinating medium of communication and a vital cornerstone for greater understanding of basic concepts. In Zimbabwe we say, '*Chitsva chirimurutsoka*', which loosely translates to 'what is new is in the foot' or rather 'new things come to those who travel'. This is particularly true in my case as an international student. My views on this conversation today may vary just because of my cultural background.

The question then arises – is intercultural education important? Is there a need to adopt cultural perspectives in the academic realm? The answer to both of these is a resounding 'Yes'. I have earlier referred to language as a significant cultural element that enhances our ability to understand and adapt concepts. Intercultural education would cater for various cultures and cultural perspectives. This might be the best response to allow diversity or to nurture it in those spaces that are already vastly diverse. This deliberate move will allow everyone to engage in the academic space despite their background and without having to shy away from that background.

So, what can we do? First, let us help students to develop an understanding and appreciation for other cultures. This is important, because it can help to break down barriers and prejudices that can lead to misunderstanding and conflict. Second, because of intercultural education, students can develop the skills they need to be successful in an increasingly globalised world. These skills include the ability to communicate effectively with people from different cultures, the ability to adapt to new situations, and the ability to work collaboratively with people from different backgrounds.

In the coming years, I would like to see the number of international students studying here on the Qwaqwa Campus increase exponentially. Along with this increase comes the need for intercultural education in higher education. This will help UFS students to understand and respect the differences between all African cultures, but of course this can be extended to other international cultures. It will also teach students how to communicate effectively with people from other cultures. Without intercultural education, students would not be able to fully benefit from a diverse educational experience – especially in the co-curricular department. Diversity is an asset to any community, and intercultural education can help create a more diverse and inclusive community.

In our increasingly interconnected and globalised world, it is more important than ever for students to have intercultural educational experiences. In today's world, having intercultural competence is essential for success in many fields, including business, diplomacy, and international relations.

Everything I have said is what is best according to research – so, purely from an academic perspective. From my personal experience, I can testify that being culturally different is hard. The culture shock in the first year alone almost crippled my academic performance. So, having people who acknowledge our differences and embrace them rather than pretend that they do not exist (which is ironic, as it is done not to make you feel out of place) would make this academic space a bit more like the homes we left behind.

Thank you!!!"

Our institutional understanding of diverse cultural disciplines on rural-based campuses (with reference to the Qwaqwa Campus) – Prof Francis Petersen

Prof Francis Petersen
Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Free State

"Thank you very much Master of Ceremonies. Let me also take this opportunity to welcome our colleagues, students, staff members, invited guests in the audience, and also show my appreciation for the speakers on the stage, and also Chevonne. Chevonne has already disconnected, but if she's online, also for her wonderful presentation. I want to thank you for the invitation to join you today in celebrating the international cultural diversity of our university, and obviously today we are on the Qwaqwa Campus. On Wednesday we will have a similar event, but I want to emphasise to my colleagues that we don't call the Bloemfontein Campus the Main Campus anymore, because we're one university with three campuses, and I think that's a narrative that we would like to convey on a continuous basis. So, we will have that on Wednesday, and it is part of this whole international cultural diversity. I think at a time when sentiments against people hailing from other nations are plaguing our country, we must remind ourselves of the value that the presence of the colleagues, students, and community members from diverse backgrounds adds to our university and obviously to the Qwaqwa community. I often say that anything you discuss, anything you develop, either as a solution or as a product, is going to be much stronger if you have diverse input into that product or process or debate, because that is critical to me. Therefore, at the heart of this international cultural diversity is the strength that it contributes to any scenario at our university, to society as Chevonne has indicated, and to where there are challenges that we need to resolve. You would all agree with me that many social challenges that we have – you have a fantastic research unit here on the Qwaqwa Campus – our research unit from the University of the Free State and the ARU that works on diverse areas from public health to biodiversity to community engagement, to resource management. The strength of that unit is the fact that it is multidisciplinary in nature, that you have a lot of input coming from different disciplines. To me, when our graduates leave the University of the Free State to enter the world of work, that multidisciplinary engagement, the teamwork, the exposure to internationalisation is going to be so crucial to take with them, because that is what will be expected in the workplace, so I just wanted to emphasise that point.

So, in my presentation, I will discuss the benefit of – as the programme director indicated – the international cultural diversity for a rural-based university campus and campuses, because we are not only talking about Qwaqwa, and reflect on how it has contributed to the growth and transformation in this particular context on the Qwaqwa Campus. So, I want to emphasise that the University of the Free State is committed to internationalisation, which connects us to global knowledge and drives research and innovation at our university, and we aim to ensure that every student has an international experience. Now, once again as Chevonne indicated, before COVID, your international experience probably was always physical mobility – get on a plane and we go to another university. That in itself is good, because I think it is also good to interact with other students in a more physical way to see what the environment looks like. But COVID and the advancement of technology have really put us in a different space where we can actually get lecturers co-teaching in your class – a lecturer from a university in China or in Ghana or in the States or in Europe or in the UK – and then it brings a different dimension in the teaching of content, because content is universal. I think it is important that the global perspective comes in, but again, we also need to contextualise it in our environment, and the word that Chevonne

used was 'glocal', which means global and local combined, but that's the one dimension. The other dimension is obviously to engage with other students in the class. A few weeks ago, I was asked to speak at a PWC conference in Cape Town about higher education and how higher education is changing post-COVID, and the one thing that actually became clear is that a lot of our universities have gone into a blended format of teaching and learning. In fact, at the University of the Free State, we have a blended teaching and learning model. That means we have a spectrum of how we engage with our students, a spectrum from face-to-face, to online, and in certain modules we will have emergency teaching and learning in between, we will have open and distance learning, we could have flipped classrooms, virtual reality, robotics, and online. But the one challenge that we have, not only in South Africa – the African continent and globally – is the fact that the online experience is not an interactive experience, so you can't see your student. So, Chevonne can't see and interact with you, and that's the challenge with online, but not for long, because there's a new dimension and technological development happening where we're taking the internet in a 3D space, and that is called the metaverse. So, the metaverse allows you to walk on a campus in France as if you were physically there, to talk to students in class at a university in France as if that student were sitting next to you. So, this is the development that is starting to happen, and as a university we need to participate. So, internationalisation needs to be for everyone. Physical mobility will not be available for everyone, because if we have 42 000 students, you can't send 42 000 students to go and visit another university, doesn't matter over how many years you phase that while they are at the university. So, we are motivated to strengthen our internationalisation endeavours, because we recognise that our graduates will become more employable – I did speak to that earlier – and also contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals if they are interculturally competent. That was the topic that Chevonne talked about – the intercultural competence of students, but also staff members – I think that is quite important for us. So, we have committed to strengthening the internationalisation process in our strategy 2018 to 2022; internationalisation is a key part of that. As you heard, the strategy will be completed at the end of 2022 – the end of this year. We are embarking on a new strategy called Vision 130; it is a strategy that will effectively span 12 years, from 2023 to 2034. By 2034, the University of the Free State will be 130 years old, and this is the reason why we are coining the phrase Vision 130, and internationalisation is a key component. In fact, when we talk about the visibility of our university and our three campuses, we need to make sure that we display in a very innovative and creative way in the international space, and internationalisation is a key part of that.

Now, based on the university's strategy, the Qwaqwa Campus has recently adopted its own internationalisation strategy, which defines its specific priorities for internationalisation and is developing an enabling structure for the internationalisation process; it also includes an internationalisation committee. I want to applaud the leadership of Dr Martin Mandew and also Prof Pearl Sithole and the management team in moving to that part where we now have an internationalisation strategy. We are committed in Qwaqwa to driving that, but we also have an internationalisation committee to make sure that we deliver what we committed to. Based on our strategy, we are renewing all administrative processes in relation to international students to further improve the international student experience. We also want to grow our international student numbers – from the continent, we attract a lot of international students from Lesotho. I was in Lesotho about two weeks ago, and I said to our guests there in Maseru – we visited the National University of Lesotho in Roma – I don't know whether Lesotho should have been part of the Free State, or if the Free State should have been part of Lesotho. But the boundaries actually meant that Lesotho is a different country and therefore the students coming from Lesotho to our university are international students. So, we want to grow that from Zimbabwe, Namibia, Ghana, Nigeria, and other parts of the African continent, but also other parts of the globe, because that richness that we talked about is quite important to us. Another focus of our internationalisation strategy is to celebrate our

cultural diversity – this includes events like today – we have our International Cultural Diversity Festival implemented through our International Office programmes, which integrates our international and local students, and that is quite important. So, for me and hopefully for you too, the Qwaqwa Campus is a shining example of the contribution that internationalisation and international cultural diversity can make to the transformation and growth of rural-based campuses.

So, please allow me to briefly go back to the origins of the Qwaqwa Campus, which was conceived as a consequence of a misguided doctrine of the grand apartheid as one of the racially exclusive universities for Black South Africans. That is actually when it started, it wasn't called Qwaqwa at that stage, I think it was the University of the North, and this was one of its campuses. Since its incorporation into the University of the Free State in 2003, the campus has undergone phenomenal development. Now, most of you would not have been here in 2003; I certainly wasn't here, but I have seen the development over many years, and I want to applaud the different leaderships that, to me, were future-looking to be able to develop a campus of this calibre. You know, this building wasn't here probably until a year ago, or a year and a half ago, but there was a developing infrastructure, the beauty of the campus, the sustainability component. We are currently experiencing load shedding in different ways, either Eskom or the municipality. We are developing our own grid on campus, we have sustainable water on campus, it is a beautiful campus for me, so it is an oasis in this specific region. That came over many years, and for me, that development is something that we should hold close to our hearts. I often say to our staff and to our students, and specifically to our staff leadership and to our student leadership, that we are only the custodians of the university. While we are here, we own the university and when you own something, you want to build it. Because when you leave and you hand it over to the next generation, you want to leave it as a better institution. We must always remember that our role in building – in fact, Chevonne talked about contribution through internationalisation to build a better society – our role here is in fact also to learn to build a better institution, physically in bricks

and mortar, digitally, but also in what we leave as a vibrant institution, student life, staff life. That is our role, and if it doesn't happen, we have to ask ourselves why it isn't, and what is our role to make sure that we correct it.

A highlight of this process is the partnership with the Appalachian State University in the United States, which was recently funded by an R8 million grant from the US Embassy in South Africa. Activities arising from this cooperation include the collaborative development of a multidisciplinary Master's Degree in Mountain Studies and a Master's Degree in Community Development. Besides this, we have joint mountain-to-mountain research projects, which are conducted in the Appalachian Mountains in the United States and the Maloti-Drakensberg Mountains here in South Africa. The Qwaqwa Campus benefits from five meteorological stations in the Maloti-Drakensberg Mountains that monitor the climate of the highly fragile environment using a wireless sensor network. Of all the projects related to the ARU are here on the Qwaqwa Campus. An international mountain research conference was held earlier this year where the ARU was quite key. On my Lesotho trip with my colleagues, there was a whole group from the ARU who talked to the Lesotho colleagues to strengthen the relationship and the collaboration. For me, this is probably the most active and largest and strongest group in mountain research on the African continent, with a whole series of international linkages. We are all proud, not only proud of Qwaqwa – we're obviously proud of Qwaqwa for that – but for me, we're proud because this is part of the University of the Free State. So, when I talked about that, I talked about the University of the Free State's contribution, but it actually starts here. Thank you, Martin. And then we also have a doctoral University Staff Development Project with the Appalachian State University and the University of Venda that was funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training to the value of about R4.5 million. The project focuses on the doctoral training of 10 selected PhD candidates who are staff members at the two South African partner universities, and they are predominantly from our designated groups. They are co-supervised by subject specialists from three US universities. The United States partner universities, which are also located in mountainous areas, predominantly support the programme in kind. So, it is co-supervision, it is discussions, it is debates, it is colloquia in which they participate. Among the University of the Free State graduates of the programme is Dr Grey Magaiza, who most of you should know. He is a resident academic here on the Qwaqwa Campus and the coordinator of the mountain-to-mountain project, and he also serves as Head of the Community Development Programme. We are implementing a similar Department of Higher Education and Training-funded doctoral Staff Development Project with the University of Highlands and Islands in Scotland, and again this is part of the whole international connection. The South African Water Research Commission awarded a R1,8 million grant for an international collaborative project, *Threats of Extreme Weather Events: Improving the Resilience of Qwaqwa to the Multiple Risks of Climate Change.* We know what impact climate change has, and it was quite important for me as I engaged with one of your professors in the Qwaqwa ARU, he is working on bats and what impact climate change has on bats and where they claim their locations. Obviously, the effect of climate change is so crucial, and it impacts everyone. This particular project, which is led by the Centre for Environmental Management with involvement of colleagues from our Qwaqwa Campus, includes the Dresden University of Technology in Germany and the UFS Disaster Management Training and Education Centre for Africa. Dr Patricks Otomo is the ARU champion on this particular project, which also dovetails with the work of the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Risk and Vulnerability Science Centre, also a new development on the Qwaqwa Campus. The important driver for internationalisation on the Qwaqwa Campus is the Afromontane Research Unit, which I already talked about. The ARU is globally and regionally engaged and a critical driver for our growing collaboration with the National University of Lesotho, and I did indicate that we visited the University of Lesotho about a week ago. Colleagues from the Qwaqwa Campus are continuously strengthening international connectedness. Recent developments include the establishment of a strong collaboration with the University of Applied Sciences Ludwigsburg, which includes a virtual exchange programme, and increased activities in partnership with Lupane State University in Zimbabwe.

However, this topic would not be complete without me mentioning the diverse student body on the Qwaqwa Campus. Now, I don't know whether you are all aware – we have one of our students from Zimbabwe who talked about this – but this year, there are 45 registered international students hailing from our SADC countries, namely Cameroon, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Nigeria, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe. They are fellow students on our Qwaqwa Campus, and you need to find out who they are, and we need to engage with them. Because, as my fellow speaker said, it is the value of where you come from that you would like to share – different perspectives, different experiences. If we have an open mind to learn from one another, this is an opportunity that we actually should not miss. Not many universities have that opportunity, where we have international students that we could learn from. The international students will stimulate a culturally diverse campus environment that offers students authentic opportunities to learn about themselves and the world they live in. They help to enrich the learning environment with a cultural perspective. I visited Ghana earlier this year and talked to postgraduate students enrolled at our university who are currently in Ghana, and it was just an eye-opener for me to engage with the students. They obviously see themselves as University of the Free State students in Ghana, and I'm still getting messages from them asking when we are coming back to Ghana. The one thing that I picked up from the Ghanaians is their humility, their humbleness to engage. Obviously, they have some of the best fruit. I had a pineapple there with Martin that was so sweet, I've never tasted a pineapple that was so nice – fresh fruit. This is the richness that we have on the continent, and I think we should learn more from them. They contribute to infusing international perspectives into the delivery of our curriculum and enrich our university culture through their diverse cultures. Tomorrow morning, I will have a debate with a group of vice-chancellors from Sweden and other vice-chancellors in South Africa on the whole issue of academic freedom and how it impacts the autonomy of universities. I am pretty sure that there will be rich perspectives from my colleagues from other universities in South Africa, and more so from our presidents or vice-chancellors from Sweden. But it is also a topic that is important to us as a university, because

The international students will stimulate a culturally diverse campus environment that offers students authentic opportunities to learn about themselves and the world they live in.

the whole issue of anti-intellectualism is coming to the fore in the international environment. What this actually means is that more societies and politicians around the globe are questioning the knowledge that universities produce; they don't believe in that knowledge. Therefore, the question that universities should ask is, how do we regain the trust of the different societies that we serve? And you can't necessarily answer that question if you don't look at the global aspect and you don't look at the local aspect, and you don't engage with your societies. For me, this is quite important; therefore, you will have a different perspective, and we need to learn from one another. So, the rich international collaboration on the campus – I am talking about the Qwaqwa Campus – the pressures of international students that I talked about, and its internationalisation at home activities contribute to creating an atmosphere that is conducive to excellence in teaching and learning on the campus.

So, therefore, colleagues, students, staff members, my colleagues on the platform, in conclusion, let us take time to appreciate the journey of this campus for what it has been, what it is, and what it is yet to bring. Our role is to look at what it is now, and to say – where can a campus such as Qwaqwa still progress and be built towards, internationalising the space while navigating new frontiers through shared connections across all our cultures. So, let us continue to work together with our international partners to inspire excellence and ultimately transform lives. Thank you."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BLOEMFONTEIN CAMPUS

The Bloemfontein Campus programme, a continuation of the Qwaqwa Campus programme and moderated by Mosa Moerane, focused on key drivers of cultural awareness; how intercultural skills are key enablers to growth and success; the contribution of international cultural diversity to internationalisation at the UFS; and enriching university education through intercultural exchange. This closed off the programme for the week, bringing an end to the two-part dialogue series.

Recap and overview of the intercultural skills exchange in higher education institutions – Bulelwa Moikwatlhai

19 September 2022; UFS QWAQWA CAMPUS

Bulelwa Moikwatlhai

Manager: Internationalisation at Home and Incoming Exchange Students

Introduction

"Thank you, Mosa. Like Mosa said, my name is Bulelwa Moikwatlhai. NdinguMajola, uMampondomise, uJoliNkomo, uMphaNkomo, Qengeba, MaNgwanya, Thole lomthwakazi.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. As the Rector said, welcome to the 2022 International Cultural Diversity Festival, themed 'International Skills Exchange in Higher Education Institutions'.

I have been tasked today to share with you a recap of our first-ever ICDF on the Qwaqwa Campus. This was certainly an enriching programme, celebrating the diverse student and staff community on the UFS Qwaqwa Campus.

The event was led by Mr Siphamandla Shabangu, who is the Assistant Officer Student Affairs: Governance and Development. The festival started with a musical item from the Qwaqwa Campus Gospel and Diversity choir. These talented students captured our hearts with their rendition of *Besibiza,* with an added flair of the Kovsie swag.

In his official opening remarks, Dr **Mandew,** who is the Qwaqwa Campus Principal, probed the audience about what culture is and what it means to them. He further shared how one's culture is embedded in the language in which you dream. "Your subconscious expresses your being and your existence".

He alluded to the importance of celebrations such as the ICDF, and how he would look forward to such celebrations as an exchange student himself. Dr Mandew remarked that he "treasured these kinds of days because they allowed one to go back to their roots and focus on exchanging information with others about their culture and learning about cultures other than your own."

In closing, he encouraged our students to participate in the programme and to continue ululating, which spoke to his spirit.

Our first speaker was **Dr Makhasane**, Senior Lecturer and Academic Head of the Department of Education Management, Policy, and Comparative Education. In his talk on the principles of intercultural education in HEIs, he spoke of the importance of university spaces accommodating and embracing people from different cultures, perspectives, world views, and languages.

Dr Makhasane gave us three principles on how we could create such a university space, as guided by UNESCO 2006:

Intercultural education –

- respects the cultural identity of the students by providing culturally appropriate and responsive quality education for all, meaning that the cultural identity of students should be respected;
- provides all students with cultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills to actively participate in society; and
- provides students with cultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes to harness respect, understanding, and solidarity among individuals, regardless of differences in religion, culture, language, etc.

The takeaway from this message is that intercultural education helps us to create dialogue around our similarities and differences, it helps us create solidarity despite our differences, and it helps us to be respectful of these differences and change our way of thinking.

Then **Councillor Kunene**, SRC Universal Access and Social Justice and former Policy and Transformation Councillor, remarked that in spaces of higher learning, we are not doing enough to ensure that there is understanding, acceptance, and tolerance – reminding us that what is acceptable in my culture might not be in yours.

He elucidated that understanding brings acceptance. Culture is an ever-changing concept. Universities therefore have a pivotal role to play in bridging this gap.

Councillor Mashamba, International Student Council Chairperson, shared with us an international student's perspective on international skills exchange in HEIs. He started by stating "New things come to those who travel."

He said that it was important that by the time one leaves the institution, they must at least have been able to have a conversation with a Sesotho-speaking person.

Mrs Slambee from the Office for International Affairs then focused on the importance of driving the understanding and teaching of intercultural skills/ competencies in HEIs.

She said that intercultural competence is seen as a necessary skill in the workplace.

She further took us through different definitions of intercultural competencies such as: It is

i. an ability to effectively interact in any cultural setting;
ii. an individual's ability to achieve their communication goals while using appropriate communication behaviours to negotiate between different identities within a culturally diverse environment; and
iii. creating awareness of the interconnectedness of global issues to consider different perspectives and understand the dynamics of multicultural settings, to work and communicate more effectively in a globalised world, and in general to function as responsible professionals in a changing global environment.

She further emphasised that attitude is a precondition for successful intercultural interaction. Your attitude should be more than just positive, it should include openness and curiosity and a readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and beliefs about your own culture, and the ability to analyse from another person's perspective.

She encouraged all present to be critically and culturally aware. She stated that this is not an inborn trait but is acquired over time through exposure and conscious effort. It is cultivated for life, and it is an intentional developmental process.

concluded by saying that our graduates at the UFS need to be globally competent and locally relevant. As a university, we need to look at ways of including more virtual exchanges and COIL programmes in the curriculum, because these are interventions that cultivate our students' intercultural skills over time.

The Rector and Vice-Chancellor, **Prof Petersen**, then concluded the session by highlighting the benefits of international cultural diversity on rural campuses: The case study of Qwaqwa Campus.

He shared with us that the Qwaqwa Campus has adopted its own internationalisation strategy, and our role is to learn and build a better institution.

He encouraged us to engage with students on different perspectives. To stimulate culturally diverse conversations and create authentic opportunities for them to learn about themselves.

He stated that international students help to enrich the learning environment with a cultural perspective.

He concluded by saying that more and more societies are questioning the knowledge that the university produces, they don't believe in that knowledge, therefore universities should ask themselves, 'how do we regain the trust of the different societies that we serve.'

In conclusion

Borrowing from the words of the Rector, let us take time to appreciate the journey of our campuses for what it has been, what it is, and what it is yet to bring – internationalising the space while navigating new frontiers through shared connections across cultures. Let us continue to work together with our international partners to inspire excellence and transform lives.

Ladies and gentlemen, I sincerely hope the Intercultural Cultural Diversity Festival has given us an opportunity to learn and engage in an intentional way to make long-lasting connections across cultures.

Thank you."

Key drivers of cultural awareness at HEI level – Bonolo Mahlatsi

Bonolo Mahlatsi
Snr Student Experience Officer, CTL

Culture is a complex concept to define. Many aspects of culture can be termed as 'things that go without saying', making it all the more difficult to think about what culture is. In essence, everything that humans know, think, perceive, value, and feel, makes us human, and this is observed through a sociocultural system. Culture is basic in human society, and what makes it complex is that we cannot imagine human life without it.

Culture, for the purpose of the discussion, can be defined as differences among human societies, which include learned behaviour, knowledge, and symbols. Therefore, we can say that culture is a continuous learning process. We learn culture the day we are born, and we are still learning it even at the end. Some cultures are adaptive, subjecting themselves to change as societies evolve. In essence, culture is a window through which we can see human groups, and this brings us to education and its role in society.

Modern societies are multifaceted, and the responsibility of education is to affect societal change. Now, culture has become an increasingly important component of language teaching over the past three decades, but the controversy concerning language acquisition in conjunction with culture is still very much present today. Generally, every country has its own unique culture, which is nurtured and shared by its members within communities and manifested in terms of linguistic and non-verbal forms. Different forms of language are a reflection of the cultural values of societies

and communities in which the languages are spoken, although culture was not integrated into language teaching programmes globally until the 1950s. Interestingly, linguistics recognised that the different forms and uses of languages reflect the cultural values of the society in which the language is spoken. Having conceptualised culture and understanding the role of education and languages, we can then pivot to unpacking cultural awareness and its dimensions.

Cultural awareness is pivotal when people have to interact with people from other cultures. People see, interpret, and evaluate things differently according to their worldviews. In turn, this results in biases arising, as what is considered appropriate behaviour in one culture may be greatly inappropriate in another. This consequently leads to misunderstandings when people use their understanding to make sense of other people's meanings. Conversely, cultural misunderstandings and misinterpretations occur because people are not aware that they are projecting their own behavioural rules onto others. As such, when better knowledge is absent, people tend to make assumptions and become presumptions in their thinking.

At the heart of cultural awareness lies the need to know and receive foreign information. As a result, developing cultural awareness is essential for developing communicative skills. In this instance, historical books contain cultural information showing famous places and symbols, but they do not illustrate social visible artefacts. As such, we are greatly in need of materials that respond to cultural awareness.

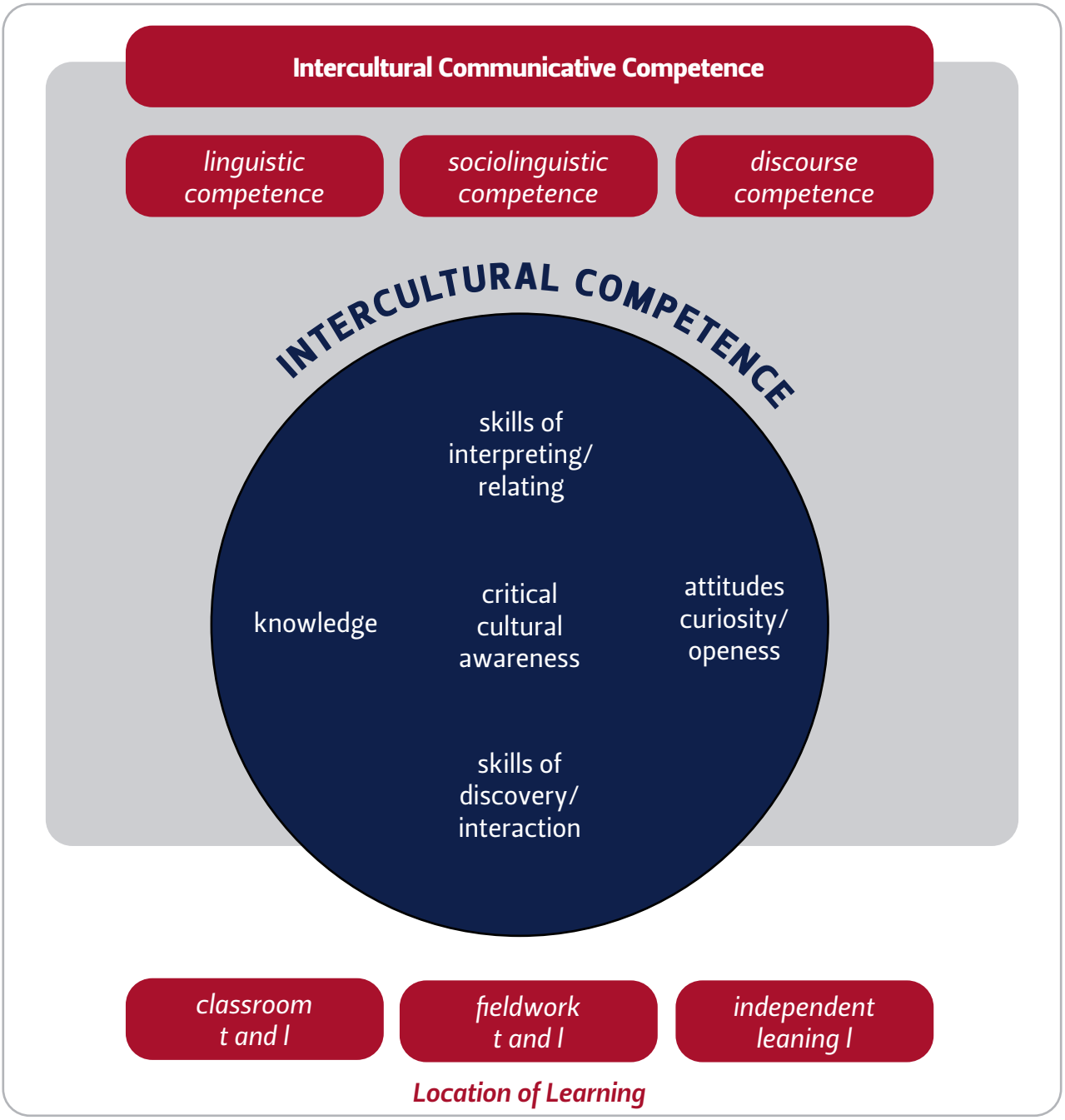
We need to acknowledge that globally, we are living in a multicultural and multilingual society with a large number of languages spoken among people, resulting in an enormous cultural diversity within our immediate context. Therefore, the following can be explored:

Key drivers of cultural awareness:

- It is important to create activities that develop cultural awareness in the educational process. This will foster future leaders and teachers in an intercultural stance.
- Understanding the multicultural context, learning, and the relationship between culture, language, and language policies.
- Understanding what intercultural learning and intercultural speaking mean.
- Understanding the definition of cultural awareness and the dimensions of knowledge.
- Understanding other people – (Byram's theory 1997).
- Exploring enculturation and applying cognitive anthropology.
- Adaptation within institutions of higher learning; cultural adaptation through learned behaviours.
- Conceptualising transculturation in higher education according to institutional cultures.
- Enhancing multiculturalism.
- Acknowledging cultural differences (that portray sociocultural backgrounds) to display our knowledge – connected through our habitus. Our habitus will in turn enhance our cultural capital.
- Exploring cultural hybridisation.
- Multilingualism can be tied with cultural hybridisation, eventually leading to transculturalisation. But before that, we need to understand the concept of culture and acknowledge different kinds of human behaviour for cultural awareness to become a reality.
- Becoming multicultural through pedagogical practices. Institutions of higher learning can have intercultural communicative competence (ICC) assessments (which can first be piloted among students to determine the teaching and learning (T&L) pedagogies). The premise of the ICC assessments can be determined by the curriculum reviewing panel of the UFS.
- The ICC assessments will require knowledge from various standpoints – practical application of learning. Such assessments can be pinned to the development of individual educational goals.
- Looking at culture from a linguistic dimension (affects semantic, pragmatic, and discourse levels of languages).
- Language cannot be separated from culture (we will need a systematic reflection on culture).

Understanding other people – (Byram's theory 1997)

To elaborate on understanding other people, I borrow from Byram's theory, mainly the intercultural communicative competence diagram, which explains my standpoint of exploring culture, education, and understanding cultural awareness at HEI level.



The model presented above can drive institutions in the direction of exploring a change in the philosophy of teaching and learning relating to cultural awareness in the curriculum.

Understanding the Other

It is fallacious to think that we will ever be able to completely understand 'the other'. The notion of habitus may define our disposition; however, the truth is that we do not even fully understand ourselves and our very own cultures to a certain extent. Be that as it may, we need to reflect on our social and individual encounters. In turn, this will result in reflection on the multiplicity of cultures that exist.

As such, culture in its simplest form needs to be understood as learned behaviours, knowledge, and symbols. By unpacking the different dimensions of culture and how education can assist with the process, cultural awareness can be achieved at a global, societal, and institutional level. Cultural awareness should be part of the UFS teaching and learning philosophy. However, cultural awareness will require critical thinking to foster intercultural learning and to create social cohesion.

Are intercultural competencies key enablers for growth and success in society? – Zukiswa Majali

Zukiswa Majali

Literacy Assistant in CTL, MSc in Social Sciences with specialisation in Sociology

Changes in modern-day job markets as well as the structural organisation of societies pose challenges and demands in the restructuring of traditional education models at higher education institutions. This is in addition to the types of skills that education institutions offer to graduates to maximise their opportunities for employment in the world of work. Because of this change in perspectives, there has been an evident shift away from just an emphasis on technical skills in higher education institutions towards a harmonisation of both technical and transversal skills aimed at equipping students with a diverse knowledge base of skills needed to thrive in modern workplaces and societies. Furthermore, increasing their chances of employment across multiple sectors locally and internationally. As a result, the acquisition of generic skills in the workplace is perceived as imperative for job efficiency and success. With that said, the redesign of traditional education models within higher education institutions to accommodate the integration of soft skills in teaching curriculums can be understood as an attempt to bridge the gap that often arises between employers and university graduates in the job market. Overall, the extension of the knowledge base of higher education courses beyond just theory and technical skills to the inclusion of intercultural skills promotes the acquisition of the following essential skills among students:

1. Problem-solving skills
2. Communication and understanding of cultural differences and sensitivity
3. Teamwork
4. Conflict management skills

From the above discussions, it can be argued that ignorance, as well as lack of perceived importance by higher education institutions to teach intercultural skills to students, renders the objective of producing quality graduates capable of meeting society's needs for success and development futile.

> ***Changes in modern-day job markets as well as the structural organisation of societies pose challenges and demands in the restructuring of traditional education models at higher education institutions.***

The contribution of international cultural diversity to internationalisation at the UFS – Prof Francis Petersen

Prof Francis Petersen
Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Free State

"So, good afternoon again to the audience. When I opened today's celebratory event, I indicated the significant contribution of international cultural diversity to our internationalisation process. Now I want to unpack why international cultural diversity at the university is a prerequisite for an inclusive internationalisation process and share how we work towards achieving this diversity at our university, as well as demonstrate its impact at the University of the Free State. At the outset, we must understand what internationalisation is and why it is important. In the same way that my colleague on my right talked about culture, we actually first need to understand what culture is before you can use it later on. So, internationalisation is the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of postsecondary education to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society. If I have to articulate it in simple layman terms, it refers to the infusion of international dimensions into the DNA of the university. So, it is not an add-on, it is an integration, infusion. It is part of what we are as a university, and it is part of what we offer as a university. Internationalisation is a high strategic priority for our university, which will feature prominently in our Vision 130. Now, most of you have probably heard about Vision 130. The framework of the vision was approved by our Council last Friday, and on Friday and Saturday the executive, together with the deans, will unpack how Vision 130 could be transformed [and] transferred into a strategy. It will be a five- or six-year strategy, and that is the strategy that we will consult and engage with you between the coming Saturday and the end of November to get your input for you to understand what Vision 130 is. In that vision, internationalisation is key. Coming back to what internationalisation actually means, I am talking about being infused and being part of the DNA.

Yesterday, I participated with a group of vice-chancellors from Sweden – they are coming in March next year to engage with our vice-chancellors in South Africa – and the discussion was about internationalisation and international collaboration. The term that we use is how to put together a community of global scholars, because knowledge from our region, from our context – we often define just knowledge from the Global South and knowledge in the Global North – will be so 'poor' if they don't connect with one another, if you don't make that a full circle. And that is what internationalisation is about; it is actually to say that there is knowledge, that if we don't learn, don't understand them – and the knowledge could also come in the form of culture – then we would be so much poorer as a university, and you as students will be so much poorer when you graduate from a university either in the Global South or in the Global North. So, the higher education process is seminally important, because it enhances the employability of our graduates. In the wake of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the 4IR, the ability to participate in a global employment market and to work in international teams are critically important and will require both high digital and intercultural skills. When we talk about graduate attributes among our students, we talk often about digital skills, we talk about creativity, about literacy and writing skills, but intercultural skills and being exposed to teams where there are other cultures and other nationalities just makes you much more employable, because that is what the world of tomorrow will require. In a global environment characterised by the resurgence of nationalism, populism, and imperialism, we must equip our students to contribute to a peaceful and harmonious international world through a global citizen

approach. The University of the Free State started about a year and a half ago with a series called the Global Citizen where I, as Vice-Chancellor, engage with top leaders in different sectors around the globe. One of the people I had a conversation with was Jeffrey Sachs – if there are students that do economy – he is one of the global economists at Columbia University in the States but also advises for different governments, and we had a conversation about what the global citizen should look like and what they should be exposed to. We had a conversation with the billionaire, Patrick Soon-Shiong, who is sponsoring or making contributions to the development of different vaccines in South Africa and on the African continent. He is a South African based in the States, and the conversation was around global citizenship and what we should try to do as a university to infuse certain aspects of global citizenship among our students. Knowledge production relies increasingly on international collaboration. Our university is committed to contributing specifically to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, which require that it be embedded in global knowledge generation.

Please allow me to briefly reflect on one aspect of internationalisation that is particularly important to me. Our engagement with the world needs to ensure that the knowledge emanating from our university, our country, and our continent is shared globally and put on the same pedestal as what we would call knowledge from the Global North. Thus, it is important that we structure our internationalisation process in such a way that we interact with the world as equals, claiming our rightful place in the global knowledge society. A common misunderstanding is that internationalisation is only taking place through physical mobility. I referred to this earlier in my opening remarks – face-to-face staff and student exchanges, conference attendance by academics and postgraduate students, and project-related travel remain important aspects of internationalisation. We should pursue that, because it is often a function of how much funds you have available to be able to implement and execute that; however, they are no longer the only features of the process. Limited resources mean that only a few students from the Southern African region can participate in these activities, hence we have to look at other alternatives. Meanwhile, the relevance of the internationalisation of our campuses is growing. We achieve this by infusing international and intercultural dimensions into our curriculum as attributes and graduate attributes and also co-curricular activities. This particular event is a co-curricular activity that feeds into the curriculum. The presence of international students and academics on our campus is a prerequisite to internationalising our campus. They create the international cultural diversity necessary to develop our curricular and co-curricular internationalisation at home activities. Allow me to briefly explain to you the relevance of their presence to strengthen our internationalisation process. Firstly, to successfully internationalise our curriculum, it is highly beneficial to leverage classroom diversity and insights from international campus community members. We are advancing this process through our curriculum internationalisation project. Academics are encouraged to integrate the diverse perspectives of international students to bring it into the classroom, into our learning, and into our teaching. Besides this, colleagues from other countries are encouraged to leverage their backgrounds to enrich the curriculum delivery. In that context, I would like to see – through our virtual platforms – that we have lecturers from other parts of the continent or other parts of the globe co-teaching with our lecturers, because you can virtually link up with them and you can get a perspective from a different country or from a different culture and from a different region. Another aspect of the internationalisation of our curricula is the integration of virtual exchanges into modules. Connecting students over a limited period with peers in the lecture theatres of international partners in pedagogic interventions coordinated by the lecturers and international partners. On Monday in Qwaqwa, I indicated that we have a blended teaching and learning model at the University of the Free State; we have face to face, and we have online, and in between face to face and online we have emergency teaching and learning, open and distance learning, we have virtual reality, flip classroom, and then you have online. But the challenge with online is that you don't get that level of interaction. Because if you are in a classroom setup, you can engage with one

another, you can look at who asked a question. In an online environment you can't necessarily do that; but not for long, because there is a new development that I would really like you to look at. It is called the metaverse, which allows the internet to be reflected in a three-dimensional plane. So, you could enrol as a student at the University of Paris, and you could actually walk on that campus as if you were there in the metaverse, and you could sit next to a student, and you would be able to engage with this student in the metaverse. It is probably still sort of science fiction if you think about it that way, but it is moving at a rapid pace. There are two programmes that you could follow on the internet and actually start playing with the metaverse. In fact, to our lecturers in the room and our staff here on the stage, our students of tomorrow – that means they are now growing up, aged four, five, six, – are going to play with the metaverse and they will come to our campuses, and our lecturers need to be able to respond to that, and that is how technology is advancing.

I did talk about the internationalisation of the curriculum and virtual exchanges, and that work is linked to what we call the iKudu project, which our university coordinates with a consortium of about 10 South African and European universities funded by the European Union. Secondly, our co-curricular internationalisation-at-home activities promote intercultural skills exchange on our campus, with the Umoja Buddy Programme being the key driver of this exchange. Every year, I sort of participate by welcoming international students to our campus and talking about the Umoja Buddy Programme, which pairs newly admitted international students with current students at the University of the Free State. That is actually what needs to happen; you could have a university with students from South Africa and there are students from other parts of the globe, but if you don't interact with one another, you are not going to learn from one another, and I think that's the important thing. As part of promoting international skills exchange on our campus, we facilitate community-engaged activities under the umbrella of internationalisation of the community. Our highlight is the Meal in a Jar initiative, a community engagement initiative driven by international students, focusing on social responsibility, knowledge, and skills exchange. There are activities facilitated through internationalisation at home that focus on commemorating and celebrating one's mother tongue – you talked about language and culture – getting our students involved in intellectual dialogues on African and global issues, as well as providing space for students to showcase their talents expressed in their languages, and workshops to share knowledge on culture, traditions, and customs. These are some of the cultural programmes that lend substantial strength to internationalisation at home and help to comprehensively internationalise our university. In recent years, we have invested in attracting more international students to our university, and this is a number that I would like to grow. I did say to Dr Hagenmeier, who is the Director of our International Office, that I would like to see that we move to about 5% or 6% international students at the University of the Free State. This is very, very important to me. We have renewed the undergraduate international student admission process and are working on improving the international postgraduate student admission process. Simultaneously, we have developed new strategies for international student recruitment and are intensifying our endeavours to recruit international students – this is a target setting that we will sort of firm up during the course of next year.

So, Madam Programme Director and my audience, let us work together to grow the international diversity at our university and leverage the opportunities it brings to the university, which makes an important contribution to internationalising our university – and this is a challenge that I've put to our executive and I think we would all be able to leverage the value that internationalisation would bring to the University of the Free State. Thank you."

Enriching university education through intercultural exchange – Dr CCA Hagenmeier

Dr CCA Hagenmeier
Director of the Office for International Affairs

"Members of the university community in attendance, esteemed guests. During our two-day event, we learned a lot about the importance of international competence acquisition by our students. Also, we learned why internationalisation is extremely important for higher education and for our university. In my contribution, I am going to reflect on how we can enrich our internationalisation process through intercultural exchange, which is a major contributor to intercultural competence acquisition. We heard in the last few days when we were on the Qwaqwa Campus, that exposure is a critical element towards our students acquiring intercultural competence. For that exposure, the best of course is interaction with students and members of cultures from outside South Africa. Besides this, I will also reflect on how we should support our students when they are engaging in intercultural engagements.

First of all, it is very important for us that we work on creating opportunities for cultures. To intentionally foster intercultural exchange in co-curricular and curricular programmes through the diverse programmes that we are running at the university, but again it also depends also on our own attitudes, it depends on our own readiness to learn. We have opportunities to engage and learn inside and outside the classroom, but it is up to us whether we take them up. It is your choice as a local South African student to decide to look for friends from other parts of the world. It is international students' choice to engage or to predominantly socialise with members of the whole country – so it is not only the programmes we create. Through the programmes, and particularly the co-curricular programmes, we intentionally create opportunities for intercultural exchange on campus, but it is for every student and colleague to decide to accept this invitation and to participate. Moreover, what happens in our classrooms is of critical importance, and it is wonderful to see that our colleagues are now intentionally infusing the international dimensions into the curriculum through the curriculum internationalisation project. Colleagues, let me just mention that curriculum internationalisation is part of the university transformation process, it is no longer a nice to have in the South African higher education environment. Our national policy framework for internationalisation clearly states that internationalisation of the curriculum needs to become mandatory. It should not be seen in isolation, but as part of a holistic curriculum renewal that also considers the other curriculum transformation imperatives, such as decolonisation, such as Africanisation, so this is where it is rightly located. This is what we are doing inside the classroom; as has already become clear during our dialogue in Qwaqwa and earlier today, we need to do more outside the classroom at the university and through international travel engagements. We will not achieve the goal of exposing every student internationally during studies at the UFS if we are not leveraging the opportunities afforded by the digitalisation of internationalisation, and of course this can happen in manifold ways. Central are the virtual exchanges, and we have already heard that we have started the process of realising the strategic priority of exposing our students through virtual exchanges with the iKudu project. But colleagues and everyone present here, guests, students, we cannot leave it at a project approach. Through the iKudu project we have already managed to expose some 200 students internationally, we have implemented six successful co-collaborative online virtual exchange projects at our university, but this can only be the beginning. Part of iKudu was to capacitate colleagues to structure new COIL exchanges, and as we are now moving forward, it will be seminally important that we start creating the right support

structures. This conversation has started, and it is brought together by the local project team of the iKudu project, but it will take hard work, it will take commitment of resources to develop support structures in order to roll out collaborative online international learning and other forms of virtual exchange at a larger scale at our university. Critical is multi-stakeholder involvement. With the iKudu project – in the conversations beyond – we are working very closely with the Centre for Teaching and Learning as well as other stakeholders. We are now at the stage where we are thinking what kind of support will be required to successfully roll out on a larger scale. First of all, to support partnering, we need to strengthen the administrative support; in other words, helping our academics to find the right virtual exchange partners at our partner universities, creating new partnerships that will open the doors for virtual exchange. Second, we need to work on pedagogical support. COIL is not a technology, virtual exchange is not a technology; it is a pedagogy, and it requires skill, it also requires attentiveness, because as we heard earlier, cultural misunderstanding can happen if we expose our students, so we need to be equipped to assist when such situations arise. It goes without saying that we need to have the right technical support, software platforms, equipment – even for partnering, IT structures and platforms are required. We need to engage and define quality standards for virtual exchange, and we need to look at how to anchor it in our policies. Lastly, we need to start strengthening the internationalisation reporting system. We need to work more on integrating this reporting in the university reporting, and we also need to work on how we share what we do with everyone, so that we have real cross-campus awareness of all the work that is happening. But of course, COIL is not the only way. Virtually – through guest lectures as you have indicated – and in many other ways and through many other pedagogies, we can have intercultural skills exchange. This can include short learning programmes, and I want to quickly talk about one programme that particularly fascinates me and which we are driving from the International Office. This programme is coordinated by Prof Lynette Jacobs, who is heading our research portfolio. It started on the South Campus some two or three years ago and it is very exciting. In fact, it brings together partners from Novgorod State University in Russia, the Appalachian State University in the United States, and from our university. This programme focuses on learning how to communicate interculturally; if we reflect on this, the stakeholders probably didn't even know three years ago how relevant it would become in the environment we are facing today – to be able to maintain good intercultural

communication. I must say we have some delays in the present political situation, but if we can see it through it will meaningfully show how higher education can also contribute to sustaining intercultural communication in times of crisis. It is also very interesting to see how this programme – which has the intention of overcoming prejudice and building understanding while developing intercultural competence in this process – has different functions at the three partner universities. In Russia, the programme at Novgorod State University features as part of a business course. In the United States, it is a module in an accredited PhD programme. As we know, PhD in the States is often through coursework, so it features as part of the Appalachian State University's PhD programmes, whereas here at the UFS, we are in the process of developing it as a short learning programme. But it brings together students from three fundamentally different cultural and university contexts in one programme to learn intercultural communication.

Another dimension that intercultural exchange can take remains to be fully developed, but we have embarked on first initiatives – that is the intercultural exchange in co-curricular programmes. Now, in the past a lot of that has happened through travel; for example, we had a fantastic Global Leadership Summit, I think it last took place in 2018. But we all know how expensive that is, and we also know that such co-curricular programmes will be limited to very few. So, the challenge we now have, is to move those co-curricular programmes into the virtual space; in other words, to open co-curricular learning spaces – interaction spaces where our students are engaging in their extramural activities with students from universities in other countries. I know Bulelwa has started working with Columbia, we are in the early stages, but of course this will only be a beginning; this is an aspect that we can intentionally develop in the years to come.

Last, I just want to remind us – in the wider sense – of the responsibility we have as international educators to those we are exposing to intercultural exchange. Because, like all good things, intercultural exchange also comes with risks that need to be mitigated. So, it is very important that we offer support to all students, colleagues who want to engage in intercultural activities, particularly our exchange students; that we have predeparture briefings, that we mitigate the effect of cultural misunderstandings when we implement COIL virtual exchanges – and they can be manifold. They can be happening very easy; things such as religion, I am referring to religion that can be offensive in secular countries. It can also be more intense, it can be that the same expression has different meanings in different cultural contexts, and that is what we need to pick up; when we see it, we need to mitigate it. The last point regarding equipping our students and colleagues for intercultural engagement relates to making sure that our knowledge from the Global South is valued as equal and shared across cultures. This, of course, requires the agency of all who are engaging interculturally; in the wider sense, this requires that we as intercultural educators imbue in our students the sense of the worth of their own culture, that we help everyone to be aware of the richness of their own culture, and the importance to go proudly abroad – virtually or physically – and share with the world what one has to offer. Colleagues, students, Prof Petersen, thank you very much and thank you for participating in the International Cultural Diversity Festival. I hope we can continue working together to build rich spaces for intercultural exchange. Thank you very much."

With the iKudu project – in the conversations beyond – we are working very closely with the Centre for Teaching and Learning as well as other stakeholders.

Closing remarks for the ICDF week – Bhekumusa Zikhali

Bhekumusa Zikhali
Research Assistant in OIA

"As we come to the end of our dialogue series, I would like to take some time to reflect upon this year's chosen topic, namely 'Intercultural Skills Exchange in Higher Education Institutions'. Driving the conversation to realise intercultural skills needs in our community is an important component in growing a culturally cognisant environment. It is through these kinds of series that we aim to improve the unshared meaning of cultural awareness, understanding, and respect for local as well as global cultures, the unshared meaning of international experience, and transdisciplinary approaches to research and education. By so doing, not only will we equip our students and staff for global thinking, but also enable teaching, research, and dialogue methods to permeate institutions of higher learning, therefore preparing them for the global community and the working environment. The end goal in realising this vision in the long run is, of course, through a formalised curriculum.

To our student community – today's closing remarks are a bit unprecedented, as I am not going to thank you for your attendance but rather express my gratitude on behalf of our office, and the institution, for being the inspiration behind the work that we do, and the reason why we eagerly wake up to be here every day. You are truly the heart and culture of this institution.

To our panel, thank you for the insightful conversation and your time.

Prof Petersen and Dr Hagenmeier, thank you for providing us with an enabling environment to apply progressive approaches to enriching students' lives while achieving institutional goals.

Here's to producing outstanding global citizens."

Culture is the widening of the mind and of the spirit.

- Jawaharlal Nehru