

IACESA AND OTHER TRAINING EVENTS

On the road to holistic education in an innovative thinking vehicle
(School Principals' meeting on 19 October 2015 at University of Johannesburg)



~Dr Celia Booyse~

Flowing from a first seminar on *Developing standards across sectors* on 3 June 2015, the event on the evening of 19 October was a true example of stakeholder collaboration as a systemic initiative. The event took place on the premises of the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture. Ms Maria Thiel, in collaboration with the College of Design (Greenside Design Center), coordinated the logistics and sponsorships for the evening. Umalusi collaborated with IACESA, NWU (Vaal Triangle Campus), Rock City Foundation, the Design Center and Terrestrial towards finding paths to holistic development through innovative, design thinking.

The welcome for the evening came from the renowned Dean of the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, Prof Federico Freschi, who is appreciated as art historian-cum-opera singer besides all his other virtues. With his research deeply rooted in 1930s art, one of his lines will always be remembered: *"The most you can ask of art is for it to alter your perceptions, even if for a nanosecond."*

Ms Liz Burroughs, Senior Manager: Qualifications, Curriculum and Qualifications at Umalusi, responded on the welcome and opened the event with references to the need for systemic change, thinking practices and some of Umalusi's research, which introduces a new kind of stakeholder involvement and response. She also reiterated the intention of the evening's event - to initiate a new drive towards developing holistic education strategies.

Dr Celia Booyse, Manager: Curriculum at Umalusi, set the scene by drawing on Umalusi's research since 2009/10 up to 2015. She mentioned that the research findings in the intended and assessed curriculum investigations pointed to the need for analytic, systemic, innovative thinking and the fostering of abilities for the conceptual age. She also referred to the 2010 self-reference research on qualification level, the 2009 – 2011 exam paper analysis, the gateway and services subject comparative research and international benchmarking, the PAT and ISAT analysis and the results from the Senior Phase Technology and EMS research, which all point to the need for deeper thinking

and understanding, the need for productive thinking in cognitive, affective, psychomotor, reactive and interactive categories and a high level of emotional intelligence. From intensive research over six years, it has become clear that the IB educational model with its extensive writing core and awareness of the environment and the Singapore value-driven, learner-centred model based on emotional intelligence are examples to consider for the South African educational sector.

In her presentation, Ms Sune Stassen unpacked an ecosystem approach as an agent of change and transformation in the development of human capital. This approach and building human capital will also result in enhancing a culture that embraces innovation and entrepreneurship. It was clear that it would require a nuanced understanding of design thinking and how to build social cohesion and a better equipped workforce through capacitating citizens and the world of business to become design literate. Ms Stassen asked the question: *“What qualities and life skills does a successful candidate need to have the confidence to deal with future challenges and add value to our socio-economic landscape in a holistic, competent and efficient manner?”* Her answer included creating a toolkit to secure a collective future which should include amongst others the following: problem-solving, holistic and design thinking, strategic and analytical thinking, empathy, people and communication skills, self-motivation and optimism, risk-taking, strong work ethics, innovation, and the ability to play in a team and collaborate. She also referred to the growing realisation that it is no longer sufficient to rely solely on left-brain thinking, but rather to strive to a more collaborative balance between the left and the right brain. This thinking in is in line with the research of Eric Jensen regarding whole-brain development and the work of Daniel Pink which is also reflected in his book *“A Whole New Mind – Why right-brainers will rule the future”*.

Her presentation reminded those present of the intensive work done by Prof James Heckman (the Nobel prize winner) on the importance of building human capital and the high return on investment if investing in ECD and young children. The true fit lies in the need to invest in whole community development (ecosystem approach), which in turn will impact positively on whole-school development. It is important to have a holistic view of building human capital, starting with the development and integration of innovative, design thinking across all levels of education to optimise the learning experience and the personal and academic development of all children.

Professor Mary Grosser, Associate Professor: Cognitive Development and Critical Thinking Development, Optentia Research Focus Area at the NWU, Vaal Triangle Campus, is also the president of IACESA and Vice-president of IACEP Africa. She focussed in her presentation on developing "thought-full" students who can build a "thought-full" community and world through the Schools as Thinking Communities Project. She answered questions about the need to think differently about how teaching should be done in South Africa and how far we are from holistic thought and the requirements brought about by the conceptual age. She used the art of Auguste Rodin as a whole-brain development metaphor in logic and feeling, reason and intuition, intellect and insight. Professor Grosser made it clear that critical, creative thinking will become the competitive difference in the need for effective communication, behaviour management and problem solving. The latter calls for the intentional development of a symphony between the left and right brain competencies. Much is already done in this regard through the initiatives of the Cognitive Education Research Group (in association with IACESA), Opentia and the NWU, Vaal Triangle Campus and the empirical research carried out during the in-service training initiatives of teachers (three schools in Districts 7 and 8 of the Gauteng Department of Education and one

school in the Free State). The initiative will be extended to the Montsosi, Kitso and Rust–Ter Vaal Primary Schools. It was a heart-warming experience to listen to what huge impact this whole school approach and the training pertaining to the teaching and assessment of thinking have on the attitude, aptitude and the performance of learners in the project schools. It was clear that the project enables enquiry-based, cooperative teaching and learning and the development of thinking competencies. Initiatives like these can be saluted!

The evening came to a close with practical examples how innovative, design thinking skills are used in a higher education environment, business and in industry to the benefit of the whole community but also as adherence to the outcomes of the National Development Plan. Mr Jason Wiggen, the Head of Department for Interior Design (Greenside Design Centre) provided feedback on the success of community projects in which the Centre invests 10% of its teaching and learning time and of project work to capacitate communities in the Johannesburg- area. He also referred to the successful development of entrepreneurs through the development of thinking skills.

True to their company name, Terrestrial provided astonishing detail about why this company has such success as a business which is built on design thinking. The whole environment, community, economy and industry benefit from the practical application of a design process underpinned by design thinking. Terrestrial illustrated how insights from design can be applied to practical business situations to create or influence the revenue stream.

Though this event was another first, the strong collaborative relationship between the stakeholders holds promise for intense systemic development, in-service teacher support and enhanced teaching and learning practices.

BA Ed (cum laude) at UP; BA Hons at UP; B Ed (Hons) (cum laude) at Unisa, M. Ed (cum laude) at PU for CHE; D Ed (Didactics) at Unisa.

Current: Manager: Curriculum at Umalusi (Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training) responsible for a variety of cross-cutting tasks to ensure standards; development processes of the education and training sectors under the guardianship of Umalusi; the conceptual framing of research initiatives; development of curriculum guidelines in theoretical frameworks; management of comparative research initiatives and international benchmarking, the analysis of assessment items, provision of guidance in curriculum development and evaluation and development of research tools/instruments. External moderator Unisa: Hons courses.

Previous: Lecturer at University of the Witwatersrand (Wits): Curriculum Division; ACE Academic co-ordinator, materials developer for teacher training; curriculum development team; inter-institutional work for Unisa.

Publications: co-writer of three books on learning programme development and curriculum studies. Articles and conference papers are on instructional design and assessment practices, research findings from curriculum analysis, the application of typologies as teaching strategy and the impact of feedback as a feedforward process.

Interests: biofeedback technology, holistic and integrated health practices, growing bonsai and orchids and involvement in NGO (community development) initiatives.

I embrace a holistic, neuroscientific view of deepening learning and metacognition in order for a child to make meaning and strong connections. I embrace scaffolded, discovery learning and assessment based on conducive cognitive-motivational-relational configurations and directed to innovation and critical, constructive thinking. A learning environment filled with compassion, motivation and mediation lies close to my heart. (Hand in hand with Carl Rogers, Jerome Bruner, Loris Malaguzzi, Reuven Feuerstein, Lev Vygotsky, Eric Jensen, Daniel Pink and Richard Lazarus).