

Special points of interest:

- * African countries need to invest in knowledge creation
- * Ignite growth and move people from precarity to capability
- * Precarity as a concept offers the potential of an analysis and understanding of issues facing South Africa
- * Smart machines with artificial intelligence are a blessing but only if the source code is available

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From Precarity to Capability: Igniting Growth in Africa

The world is changing fast! Based on member surveys, the Society of Industrial/Organizational Psychology in the USA predicted that the following 11 issues (in order of importance) will have the most impact on the workplace in 2020:

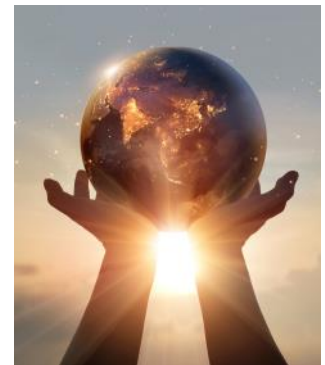
1. The use of artificial intelligence and machine learning in decision-making.
2. Diversity, inclusion, and equity.
3. "Gig economy" - contract work.
4. Working with big data.
5. The changing nature of work (driven by computing power).
6. Automation of jobs and tasks
7. Algorithmic selection - validity, bias, and applicant reactions.
8. Workforce health and well-being.
9. Meaning and purposeful work.
10. Virtual working spaces.
11. Making sense of massive amounts of data through data visualization and communication.

While these issues are vital the African context, we have unique challenges given high unemployment, inequality, and poverty. Young people become disillusioned and loose hope. We see serious divides developing between different generations.

Dr Jakkie Cilliers (2020) concluded as follows in his book 'Africa First: Igniting a Growth Revolution': "Development is about countries empowering citizens and helping them to learn how to help themselves. The absence of a sense of nationhood is a major distraction in many African countries, and it is sad that nations that have done well in recent times (Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Korea and China) did so only after suffering a national trauma ..."

African countries need to invest in knowledge creation. This is done by investing in education, focussing on innovation and entrepreneurship, and on research and development. In line with the mission of Optentia, researchers, policy makers and practitioners could help people move from precarity to capability, good functioning and growth. NWU Optentia researchers recently visited Namibia and found that the country shares many problems with South Africa.

Given the context of unemployment (and unemployability because of poor education), inequality and poverty in the African context, various studies in Optentia is focussing on capabilities of educators in schools and higher education institutions. We also learned from experts at the Afri-



can Union that many interventions in African countries fail because people and institutions work in silos. Many good ideas fail at the implementation phase, while monitoring and evaluation of interventions have serious shortcomings.

Private and public organisations, labour movements, and educational institutions should collaborate to build the capabilities of citizens (and specifically young people in Africa). We should address the fundamental human need to belong by increasing social connectedness and enhancing well-being. African countries need a modern leadership that is able to connect with the aspirations of young people ... a leadership that inspires them for the future and build hope. In this way we ignite growth and support people on their path from precarity to capability!

Performance of Optentia: 2019-2020

In total, 27 researchers with PhDs, 13 researchers without PhDs, and five research support staff are part of Optentia. Furthermore, 40 extraordinary professors and six extraordinary researchers are appointed in the entity. A total of 94 Master's students, 38 PhD students, and three postdoctoral research fellows are affiliated with Optentia. From 1 May 2019 - to 30 April 2020, a total of 40 Master's and seven PhD students have completed their studies. Concerning peer-reviewed outputs for 2019, we have produced 49.06 peer-reviewed articles and 18.19 peer-reviewed chapters.



“We produced 49.06 peer-reviewed articles and 18.19 peer-reviewed chapters during 2019.”

The Optentia Scorecard *by* Prof. Ian Rothmann

Output	2017	2018	2019	2020
Peer-reviewed publications	103	94	154	83
Total peer-reviewed publications	49.81	48.05	67.25	33.27
Peer-reviewed articles*	44.81	41.22	49.06	22.73
Peer-reviewed chapters*	5	6.83	18.19	10.54
Papers: Conferences	38	17	35	
Participating Master's students	37	46	64	94
Completed Master's students	18	26	40	
Participating PhD students	22	16	31	38
Completed PhD students	3	13	7	
Post-doctoral fellows	6	6	3	3
Number of workshops presented	28	25	10	5
Number of workshop participants	393	750	478	

Note: Outputs as on 19 March 2020

* Expressed in terms of equivalents

Learning is Fun at Optentia *by* Dr Mariette Fourie

It is surely an enormous privilege to be part of the Optentia team! During January 2020, the Optentia team has led many enthusiastic postgraduate students and colleagues to become, and mindfully grow, into efficacious researchers towards enabling them to contribute invaluable to the existing body of knowledge. This profusely packed 'Research Methodology' Short Learning Programme has certainly contributed vastly to the knowledge of Science and Research. Topics discussed, amongst others, included positivity and capability, capability and well-being, precarity, ontological assumptions, epistemology as well as whether science can tell us right from wrong? Jaco Hoffman, NWU Professor: Ageing and Generational Dynamics, thoughtfully discussed the differences in epistemological starting points of qualitative and quantitative approaches, connections with ontology, and some links between philosophical debates 'The Scientist versus the Explorer' and research practice. He explained that the relationship between philosophy and research practice is captured in questions as 'What is the nature of reality? What kind of knowledge can we have about reality? How can we investigate reality? What is the picture that we paint of reality?



Participants in Optentia's Short Learning Programme in Research Design

This relationship between philosophy and research practice resonated with me personally, as I am intrigued with the question of what counts as knowledge and what values should underpin the pursuit of truth, especially in higher education? Is knowledge to be pursued 'for its own sake' or must it have 'use value'? This has brought me to look through the lenses of critical realist scholars to overcome the dualism (objectivism or subjectivism) by distinguishing between ontology (what is real) and epistemology (what we know). Critical realist scholars assume the existence of an objective world that has powers and properties that can be more accurately known as a consequence of scientific endeavour

but recognise that knowledge is a subjective, discursively bound and constantly changing social construction.

In conclusion, do universities (and research outputs) have to be responsive to the needs of economy and the world at work? Contradictions are evident between the need for universities to compete globally while at the same time respond to local needs. Higher Education Institutions have a critical role to play in developing solutions to 'real world' problems through research that supports innovation, as well as through sustaining disciplinary knowledge foundations which underpin interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary knowledge production.

"Contradictions are evident between the need for universities to compete globally while at the same time respond to local needs."

Thank You Rachele Paver!

Dr Rachele Paver, who has assisted Optentia with student administration during 2019, has been appointed as a postdoctoral research fellow. From January 2020, she focuses exclusively on her postdoctoral research. She

will not assist with administrative work in Optentia. Thank you Rachele for assisting us with not student administration, as well as with the capturing of research outputs!



Rachele Paver

No, It is Not Just Admin *by* Nadia Jordaan

The unspoken rule of Optentia House is: Always greet guests, visitors, staff (basically anyone) with a smile, an assortment of biscuits, and the famous 'Optentia coffee.'

At the beginning of my studies, I had a vision board (like any overly enthusiastic student has), a five-year plan, and a 10-year plan, which included all the small steps in between. This plan was to obtain a degree, do my honours, master's, internship, and then get my professional registration in psychology. The reality was a bit different (as it always turns out to be). I completed my degree in criminology and psychology (at the University of Pretoria), only to realise that industrial psychology was my passion. This realisation required a bridging course, a re-location, and a new field of study. In late 2019 everything was back on track. I was coming to the end of my coursework for the master's in Industrial Psychology at NWU. What I did not account for in my vision board was the personal development that took place. The master's unlocked a world where growth and optimisation of human potential were central elements. I understood my role as a future industrial psychologist, and I was also excited about the future of industrial psychology.

At the end of 2019 (while everything vision board-related was on track), I felt unsure of my next career move, uncertain, scared, and a bit overwhelmed. During this time, I was asked to fill the position of academic administrator at Optentia. I experienced the unspoken rule of Optentia, which made this decision to join the house rather

exciting. With a cup of coffee in hand, I tackled my new unplanned adventure.

I enjoy talking about my new adventure, and I often tell people that this is not just an administrative job. This job forms part of Optentia's broader goal to ensure quality across all phases of research. Quality starts with enhancing students' skillsets in the Short Learning Programme of one week, selecting worthwhile topics, and producing scientifically sound proposals. Quality is further enhanced by choosing the right examiners and processes and procedures to monitor students' progress and outputs. My role is to assist with planning and implementing effective and efficient processes and procedures and to assist to enhance quality research. This role has taught me valuable lessons and enhanced my skillset.

My experiences at Optentia is not just administrative. I have had the opportunity to meet extraordinary professors from a broad spectrum of disciplines. I further had a chance to discuss different ideologies from an interdisciplinary perspective, which broadened my frame of reference as a future industrial psychologist. At Optentia, there is also a sense of family and teamwork, and being part of a significant purpose. I enjoy the dining room table conversations, the morning coffee conversations, and everything in between. My time at Optentia and interacting with Prof. Ian and the team have further also taught me a lot about the type of industrial psychologist I want to be. To be reputable, accountable, and professional. I have learned to strive to develop and maintain efficient



Nadia Jordaan

and effective processes, and to utilise individual skillsets. Prof. Ian taught me to lead from the heart. All these lessons will be used in my future endeavours.

Optentia has taught me never to underestimate an administrative role, that coffee works wonders, and that a house is not a home without its people ...

Note: Nadia Jordaan has been appointed as an academic administrator in Optentia. Her role is to collaborate with stakeholders (NWU staff, master's and PhD students and examiners) to enhance the quality of postgraduate processes and procedures. Since her appointment, Nadia has been working hard to develop and maintain processes and procedures which affect the quality of master's and PhD studies.

"My role is to assist with planning and implementing effective and efficient processes and procedures and to assist to enhance quality research."

Postdoctoral Fellow from Malaysia Joins Optentia

Dr Jeniboy Kimpah will join Optentia as a postdoctoral research fellow in May 2020. Dr Kimpah completed a PhD degree with the Universiti Sains Malaysia in 2018. His thesis was a cross-disciplinary study within Human Resource Management, Industrial Psychology, and Industrial Relations. Until now, he gained experience in both the private and government sectors in Malaysia. He worked for three years as an Administrator and Diplomatic Officer at the Ministry of Education Malaysia. Currently, he is a relief teacher at a rural school as well as an independent researcher who has had research experience in Human Resource Management and closely related fields such as Organizational Behaviour, Social Psychology, Industrial Psychology, and Industrial Relations. He would like to strengthen his research competence within the South African context.

Jeniboy was born in a village in Malaysia and grew up in a farming family with a dozen siblings.. He finished his primary school, secondary school and university degrees with the support of a special relationship within the family group. This dyadic relationship was ideal, and he adapted this relationship to his PhD thesis, but from a different perspective, namely dyadic management behaviour. The dyadic is a human interaction between a pair of individuals, which can be forged via romantic interests, family relationships, work, or by being a "partner in crime". The dyad can be founded on a relationship based on equality or a hierarchical relationship (master servant).



Dr Jeniboy Kimpah

He has been working under the supervision of Prof. Hazril Izwah Ibrahim to investigate employees' social exchanges, particularly between a leader and his/her subordinates in the context of the manufacturing industry. His PhD thesis was titled "The effect of participative decision-making and empowerment on job performance of engineers in electrical and electronic sectors". The changing and evolving relationship between managers and their engineers are challenging to understand and how their relationship develops has been a critical matter for manufacturing businesses. As a researcher, he is curious and driven to engage in deep industry conversations concerning human capital trends such as leadership styles (participative decision-making), and empowerment (psychological and environmental) that can influence job performance. The objective of his study was to

assist in shaping the future of work. He employed a matched-pair approach when examining the perspective of managers in their engineers' in-role performance and creative performance. He found that his study enhanced in-role performance and creative performance among engineers. The initial and most crucial phase is to encourage employees to participate in decision-making and for managers to empower their employees. For that reason, the findings of his study have highlighted the importance of a manager's perception of his or her engineers' job performance and the most important factors determining how well the relationship with the manager-engineer will develop from time-to-time.

"... he is curious and driven to engage in deep industry conversations concerning human capital trends..."

Precarity, Capability and an Ethic of Care

Prof. Andries Baart, extraordinary professor in Optentia, presented two valuable workshops and a public lecture at the North-West University (NWU) during February 2020.

Prof. Baart presented the first workshop, 'Precarity', on 7 February 2020. 'Precarity' as a concept offers the potential of analysis and an understanding of the issues facing South Africa: the labour market, poverty, inter-generational dynamics, education and issues of gender. 'Precarity' offers an up-to-date, rich and truly basic theory that could explicitly ground our common ambitions. He sketched the relevance of the concept of precarity for Optentia's research programmes. The slides used during the workshop is available [here](#).

The second workshop, 'The Capability Approach' took place on 13 February 2020. This workshop addressed the Capability Approach as follows: a) A systematic unpacking of the concept and a critical assessment of it in terms of other approaches. b) The possibilities and possible challenges for Optentia to draw on this approach. c) The relationship between 'Precarity' and the Capability Approach. The slides used during the workshop is available [here](#).

The public lecture was presented by Optentia and the Faculty of Humanities in collaboration with the office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation. The topic of the public lecture was "An ethic of care: The soft voice in ethics". According to Prof. Baart, an ethic of care fosters local deliberation, explores ethical issues strongly in relational terms, takes contexts into



Prof. Jaco Hoffman, Prof. Linda du Plessis, Prof. Andries Baart, Prof. Pamela Maseko and Prof. Ian Rothmann at the public lecture on an ethic of care



Prof. Andries Baart and participants in the Precarity workshop

account and is focused on whole and complex practices rather than on a single act. In this ethical reasoning, care and caring – and not justice in the first place – are central. Optentia produced a video of the public lecture. Click [here](#) to watch the video. We also interviewed Prof. Baart and NWU staff members NWU about what

an ethic of care entails. Click [here](#) to watch the video. A slideshow about an ethic of care is available [here](#).

“... an ethic of care fosters local deliberation, explores ethical issues strongly in relational terms ... ”

Prof. Jac van der Klink Appointed as an Extraordinary Professor

After a very valuable and instructional period of working in the practice of (occupational) health care, I started my academic career relatively late at the age of 53 when I became a professor of occupational health at the University of Groningen with a research focus on mental health and an educational focus on global health. With regard to the latter focus, I got to know the capability model. I found it a challenge to see whether this model, very applicable to global health situations, could also be applied to health at work. With a consortium of five universities we have developed the work capability model and a corresponding questionnaire to assess work capabilities. In 2014 I moved to the university of Tilburg, where the work capability model became the leading



Prof. Jac van der Klink

model in the academic collaborative centre for work and health and where I was given the opportunity to supervise six PhD students with a focus on this model. Main aspects of the capability approach are its contextuality and its normativity. It is a scientific model that not only wants to

explain the lives of people within their context, but also wants to improve these lives. It is an honour and a privilege for me to be affiliated with Optentia in which institute I recognise this drive.

“Main aspects of the capability approach are its contextuality and its normativity.”

Machines Replace Researchers: Prof. Rens van de Schoot's Inauguration

Prof. Rens van de Schoot presented his inaugural lecture at Utrecht University on 21 January 2020. In his inaugural lecture as a full professor, he looked for the answer to the question of whether scientists can be replaced by machines. Computers are becoming faster; models are becoming more complex and software is making more and more decisions. He mentioned that developments from his research group also contribute to this. For example, he could show you a data machine with which you can always obtain significant results ... or one that can do the screening of thousands of relevant articles within a few minutes. These tasks will take months to do if human beings have to complete them without machines. His main mes-



Prof. Jac van der Klink, Prof. Andries Baart, Prof. Rens van de Schoot and Prof. Ian Rothmann

sage was that smart machines with artificial intelligence are a blessing, but only if the source code is available so that we can

check what is going on and apply sensitivity tests.

Extraordinary Appointments in Optentia

Various national and international experts were appointed in extraordinary positions at Optentia. The following extraordinary professors were appointed for a period of three years:

- Prof. Kristen Betts
- Prof. Marieta du Plessis
- Prof. Ståle Pallesen
- Prof. Jac van der Klink

The following extraordinary professors were reappointed for a period of three years:

- Prof. Isabella Aboderin
- Prof. Hans De Witte
- Prof. Mary Grosser
- Prof. Hans Henrik Knoop
- Prof. Franziska Meinck
- Prof. David Segal
- Prof. Michael Steger
- Prof. Rens van de Schoot
- Prof. Anja van den Broeck
- Prof. Ruut Veenhoven

Dr Laura Weiss was appointed as an extraordinary researcher for a period of three years.

Dr Betts has more than 20 years of experience working in higher education and online learning as a senior administrator, programme director, and clinical professor with private, public, and for-profit institutions. Her research focuses on Mind, Brain, and Education science; assessment; advising; transfer of learning; 0

online human touch/high touch; student engagement; instructional design; and neuropedagogy.

Prof. du Plessis completed a PhD in Industrial Organisational Psychology (University of the Western Cape - UWC). She has been involved in Optentia as an extraordinary researcher for the past three years. Prof. du Plessis has published 17 peer-reviewed manuscripts. She has recently been promoted to the level of Associate Professor at the UWC.

Prof. Pallesen graduated from the Professional School of Psychology, University of Bergen,

Norway, in 1997. He defended his PhD thesis at the same institution in 2002, and since 2007 has worked there as a professor. His main research interests include sleep and addictions wherein he has published extensively.

Prof. van der Klink studied medicine and psychology. He worked as a physician in Ghana and as General Practitioner in the Netherlands. From 2006 till 2014 he was full professor of occupational health at the University Medical Center in Groningen. His research focus is on mental health at work and on sustainable employability and the application of the capability model in these fields.

Dr Weiss completed her PhD at the University of Twente, the Netherlands. She also completed a postdoctoral fellowship on the well-being of postgraduate students in higher education institutions at the NWU.

“My aim is to expand the focus area of Positive Leadership through sustained, high-quality publications...”

My Research Interests *by* Prof. Marieta du Plessis

My interest in the field of Positive Organisational Psychology, and positive leadership in particular, has been evident throughout my research journey. This is manifest in my postgraduate dissertations, publications, conference proceedings and a number of the topics of Master's and PhD students who have completed under my supervision. Through my research endeavours my understanding of the field has grown from a focus on positive forms of leadership, to mediating mechanisms of leadership to ensure positive outcomes in the workplace, and finally, resulted in an

extension of knowledge in the field of Industrial/Organisational Psychology, with the conceptualisation of positive self-leadership. This also includes a capability profile of positive self-leadership. My aim is to expand the focus area of Positive Leadership through sustained, high-quality publications borne from local and international collaboration. The expansion of Positive Leadership include a number of planned research activities. This comprises implementing a positive self-leadership intervention, expanding the interest and understanding of positive (self-)leadership



Prof. Marieta du Plessis

from a cultural point of view, and focussing on positive leadership practices specifically within the Higher Education sector.

International visit to the Netherlands *by* Thembelihle (Thera) Lobi

On 1-7 February 2020, I was invited by the Department of Criminal Law and Criminology at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands to participate in an international panel. I was part of a group of international experts who were invited to discuss and guide their understanding of eyewitness memory, particularly in the South African context. The event was hosted by Prof. Annelies Vredeveldt and Dr Laura Weiss. This project is about eyewitness memory and what factors need to be taken into account when analysing cultural differences in eyewitness memory and cross-cultural communication between the interviewer and the interviewee, specifically in South Africa. The data was collected among eyewitnesses in the Western Cape and includes three races, White, Coloured, and Black (Xhosa).

The project is interdisciplinary, involving experts in Criminal Law, Language and Psychology. The experience was fascinating because I am working in a multi-



Thera Lobi enjoying a bit of sun in Zaandam

disciplinary research entity. After the discussions on the project, the research team showed interest in working with me further on the project.

Among the experts were experienced international scholars on Cross-cultural Psychology Prof. Ype Poortinga and cultural linguist Prof. Kutlay Yagmur. It was a pleasure to meet these distinguished professors. My involvement with the project is on the basis that I understand the different cultures in South Africa and would give considerable guidance to the project.

While I was in the Netherlands, I got a chance to walk around and see Amsterdam. It is such a beautiful city with efficient public transport and very easy to navigate through. It was, however, icy. I also got to visit other cities, such as Utrecht, Harlem, Zandvoort, Zaandam, and I saw the bridge open for the first time. The whole visit connected me with scholars from across the world, and I am grateful for the experience.

“The meetings with our international colleagues were very rewarding.”



The international expert panel in the Netherlands. Two Optentia members, Prof. Werner Nell and Thera Lobi were invited to provide inputs

Prof. Johnny Strijdom: Expert at the African Union

Optentia has extended its footprints widely across the continent over the past months. Prof. Johnny Strijdom, extraordinary professor in Optentia, coordinated the WePROTECT African Union Global Summit to tackle Online Child Sexual Exploitation in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 11-12 December 2019. Ninety-four countries, including 47 from Africa participated in the event. The outputs are available on the WePROTECT Global Alliance website. The 33rd AU Summit of Heads of States and Governments also adopted the Social Agenda 2063, which drafting commenced shortly after Johnny's inaugural lecture in March 2018 with a team including Prof. Marius Olivier (NWU Faculty of Law, Potchefstroom Campus) and Dr Tavengwa Nhongo (African Platform for Social Protection).



Prof. Johnny Strijdom

“Agenda 2063 is Africa’s plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future.”

Agenda 2063 is Africa’s plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future. It is a strategic framework that aims to deliver on its goal for inclusive and sustainable development and is a concrete manifestation of the pan-African drive for unity, self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity pursued under Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance. The genesis of Agenda 2063 was the realisation by African leaders that there was a need to refocus and reprioritise Africa’s agenda from the struggle against apartheid and the attainment of political independence for the continent; and instead to prioritise inclusive social and economic development, continental and regional integration, democratic governance and peace and security amongst other issues aimed at repositioning Afri-

ca to becoming a dominant player in the global arena. The flagship projects encompass amongst others infrastructure, education, science, technology, arts and culture as well as initiatives to secure peace on the continent.

- Integrated High-Speed Train Network
- Formulation of an African Commodities Strategy
- Establishment of The African Continental Free Trade Area (Afctfa)
- The African Passport and Free Movement of People
- Silencing the Guns By 2020
- Implementation of the Grand Inga Dam Project
- Establishment of a Single African Air-Transport Market (Saاتم)
- Establishment of an Annual African Economic Forum

- Establishment of The African Financial Institutions
- The Pan-African E-Network
- Africa Outer Space Strategy
- An African Virtual and E-University
- Cyber Security
- Great African Museum
- Encyclopaedia Africana

Another landmark African Union policy document, the AU Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention (2019–2023) with Optentia footprints, has been adopted by the recent February 2020 AU Summit, upon which Member States are expected to align their drug and crime control policies. Namibia was the first country to follow suit.

Click [here](#) to read about Agenda 2063: The Africa we want.

iSupport: Training Programme *by* Prof. Anne Margriet Pot

To scale up the worldwide support for family caregivers, the World Health Organization (WHO) developed iSupport: a generic web-based training and support programme for dementia. I was in charge of this development during my appointment at WHO from 2014 till the end 2018, with the help of an international development team. The programme consists of 23 lessons around five themes: what is dementia, being a caregiver, caring for yourself, an enjoyable day, and managing behavioural changes. An article with more details on the development of the programme has been published in *World Psychiatry* (Pot et al., 2019).

Worldwide, several countries are now translating and adapting iSupport, and (plan to) study its usefulness and effectiveness, including for example Brazil, Portugal, the Netherlands, Japan, and Australia. The first country that adapted iSupport was India. The results of a focus group study on the acceptability of an online training and support programme in India has just been published (Baruah et al., 2020). An article on the results of a pilot randomized controlled trial in India will be published soon.

Click [here](#) for more information on WHO's iSupport: You can ask for a code for 72-hours access. Also available as hard-copy manual.

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Prof. Anne Margriet Pot

mentia family caregivers in India: A focus group study. *Clinical Gerontology*, 21, 1-15. Click [here](#) to access the article.

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online intervention for informal caregivers of people with dementia. *World Psychiatry*, 18(3), 365-366. Click [here](#) to access the article.



“Worldwide, several countries are now translating and adapting iSupport, and (plan to) study its usefulness and effectiveness...”

My Research *by* Dr Japie Greeff - New Optentia Member

“I am definitely more on the applications side of research rather than fundamental research of developing new algorithms and approaches.”

I am a fairly new academic having spent just over 15 years in industry in a variety of positions in engineering and software development. I started my career at the NRF at the Hartebeesthoek radio astronomy observatory where I was for five years and worked on a variety of projects most notably the Square Kilometer Array project where I was part of the team that characterised the radio frequency landscape in the Karoo where the project was proposed to be built. Following from the NRF, I moved into the private sector to a company called Zaptronix for 2 years where I worked on various projects in logistics and energy measurement. After this I spent 4 years in a startup company called Util Labs where we worked on the concept of a virtual power station on top of the smart grid technology we developed. After Util Labs I ran my own company for two years in the manufacturing testing industry where I realised I am a much better engineer than marketer and manager.

After that I joined dimension data where I worked on a variety of software projects and ran a team of up to 24 people. I joined NWU in 2017 just after I started my PhD and decided it would be easier to do a PhD when surrounded by other academics rather than part time like I did all of my other studies.

Concerning my research dream: I am in many ways still finding my feet and trying to work out what I am the most interested in with regards to research. My academic work has been predominantly based in gamification, serious games and engineering education with some AI sprinkled in just to keep things interesting. I would like to expand a lot on my AI knowledge as this is also the subject that I teach at NWU in the third year as well as in Honours/MSc, but the application areas are likely to be either in education or in service delivery as this is where I believe I can add the most value. I am definitely more on the applications side of research rather than fundamental



Dr Japie Greeff

research of developing new algorithms and approaches.

I am passionate about programming and I feel the most competent and happy when I can write code. I like designing and building things and have recently gotten more involved in the curriculum design for coding and robotics as it will be taught in schools through collaboration with the department of basic education here in South Africa. I look forward to spending more time working with teachers in upskilling them so that they can create the learners of the future.

Prof. Emmanuel Mqgwashu Participates in Optentia

Prof. Emmanuel Mqgwashu, Director of Faculty Teaching and Learning Support at the NWU joined Optentia as a researcher. Prof. Mqgwashu holds a rating from the National Research Foundation. His research interests are in the fields of English language teaching, literacy development and literary studies. He published in national and international journals, and presented his work at local and international conferences. Prof. Mqgwashu worked

for Rhodes University and the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In this role, he was line-manager to academic staff who teach, supervise postgraduate students and engage in community projects in such disciplines as Educational Studies, Curriculum Studies, Early Childhood Development/Foundation Phase Studies, Teacher Development Studies and Educational Psychology. He obtained the following qualifications: BPaed, BA Honours (University of

Durban-Westville), MA (Natal University) PhD (University of KwaZulu-Natal).



Prof. Emmanuel Mqgwashu

Three Risk Management Experts Join Optentia

Three researchers in Risk Management, namely Dr Zandri Dickason, Dr Sune Ferreira and Danny Mokoatsanyane joined Optentia from 1 February 2020.

According to Zandri, she fell in love with the teaching world since she was enrolled for my first degree in 2007. She started with a degree in Economics and Informatics, and completed honours degrees in Economics and Risk Management. After completing the honours qualification, she lectured in the School of Economics, Risk Management Programme. She also completed a Master's degree in Risk Management, an MBA and a PhD degree in Risk Management. Zandri says: "At the age of 32, I finally realised where I fit in, the world of research. My field of interest and expertise includes areas such as behavioural finance, risk tolerance, life satisfaction, financial well-being, thus investor behaviour. Optentia grants me the opportunity to expand in this field of interest and also to conduct interdisciplinary research with fellow researchers."

Dr Sune Ferreira has been an employee at the NWU since 2016, after she completed her master's degree in 2015. She has been teaching various undergraduate modules (corporate governance and investment management) and postgraduate modules (bank risk management, financial derivatives, investment management and research methods) in the School of Economic Sciences. A few Master's students completed their studies under her supervision. She is currently supervising and co-supervising more than 10 postgraduate students. She has also published several articles in



Dr Zandri Dickason, Dr Sune Ferreira, Danny Mokoatsanyane and Prof. Ian Rothmann

international accredited journals on the topics of stock market volatility, investor behaviour, reputational risk, bank risk and depositor behaviour. As a researcher in the 4th industrial revolution, Dr Ferreira is passionate to contribute innovative research to the field of risk and investment management. She believes that as researchers we are positioned to provide practitioners with enhanced tools to overcome any challenges currently faced in the industry. Therefore, her research is aimed at providing information to the industry that can be applied practically, by understanding the behaviour of market participants. Previous research projects involve the collaboration with private financial companies to model financial market participants behaviour based on their individual characteristics (demographics, life satisfaction, financial well-being, financial risk tolerance, risk perception and attitude, personalities as well as behavioural finance biases).

Danny Mokoatsanyane is a Lecturer in the School of Risk management at the NWU. He

holds a Master's of Commerce in Risk Management. Danny has been actively involved with the university since from September 2019. Prior to joining the NWU, Danny was a lecturer at Rhodes University. He also worked at PWC. Danny is passionate about the development of humankind through learning and knowledge, Danny wants to add value to the NWU brand and the development of young minds. He is currently busy with his PhD in Risk Management.

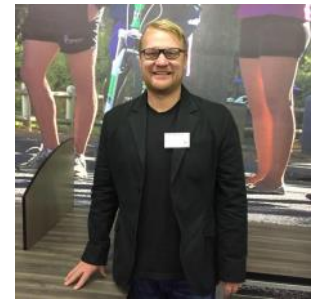
"Optentia grants me the opportunity to expand in this field of interest and also to conduct interdisciplinary research with fellow researchers."

Expert on Sport and Diversity Climate Joins Optentia

Dr Sean McCallaghan, a Sport Manager at the North-West University decided to join Optentia to develop his research competence. career started as a physical education teacher at a private school in 2004. He worked as the Head of Sport in a secondary school until 2008. In July 2008, he joined the NWU as the Sport manager on the Vaal Triangle Campus. His passion is to develop people. Therefore, he found a natural fit in the sports environment.

One of Sean's previous line managers encouraged him to improve his qualifications. Consequently, he enrolled for an MBA at

the NWU Business School in 2013. It was during his MBA studies that the "research bug" got hold of him. He developed a keen interest in diversity management. His research interest also included organisational climate, and more specifically, how individuals function in a diversified and managed environment. Therefore, he enrolled for a PhD in Business Management at the NWU, with a focus on leadership, diversity climate and employee attitudes. He has recently completed his PhD. He will continue with research in the field of diversity climate, specifically the antecedents of conducive diversity cli-



Dr Sean McCallaghan

mates, favourable outputs associated with diverse environments and ways to improve diversity climates.

“... he found a natural fit in the sports environment.”

New Challenge Awaiting Elette (Van den Berg) Horn

From support to academics, a loss for one, a gain for another, students and North-West University (NWU) unaffected as her loyalty remains here at Vaal campus. Elette van den Berg or soon to be referred to as Elette Horn (recently married), started her NWU journey in 2015 as Psychologist in Student Counselling and Development with a dual responsibility as campus liaison officer for the Career Centre. With passion and a sincere heart to help people find their purpose in life, she assisted many in choosing courses and career paths through career counselling and/or psychometric assessments. Clients ranged between prospective and current students, alumni and communities whilst word of mouth referrals presented various unique opportunities to empower people and create hope for the future. This spiked her interest for conduct-



Elette van den Berg

ing research relating to employability and capability, her current topic as second year PhD enrolled student with Optentia. Embracing her love for teaching and helping, she started her academic career in February 2020, as lecturer in the School of Industrial Psychology and Human Resource Management at the NWU.

Elette is currently busy with her PhD study on the capability, flourishing and employability of financial accounting students. She hopes to finish her PhD study by November 2021. We wish her success in her academic career!

Prof. Llewellyn van Zyl at Optentia

Prof. Llewellyn van Zyl visited Optentia during February 2020 in an attempt to further strengthen the collaborative efforts between Optentia and the Technical University of Eindhoven. During his visit he presented two workshops, namely "Approaching collaborative book projects" (for the WorkWell Research Unit) and "Positive psychological intervention design".

During the first workshop he provided 20 senior academics of the WorkWell Research Unit with practical guidelines on how to construct a good book proposal, how to approach publishers and how to manage the project in an effective manner. He highlighted the criteria used by the DoHET for evaluating manuscripts and shared best practice guidelines on how to optimise the process.

On his last day in South Africa, Llewellyn hosted a workshop on positive psychological intervention design for the NWU IOP master students and members of the Optentia's staff. In this workshop he shared contemporary



Prof. Llewellyn van Zyl presenting a workshop at WorkWell in Potchefstroom

learnings relating to the design, implementation and evaluation of positive psychological interventions and provided participants with a taste of various types of interventions. At the end of the workshop the participants designed their own self-administered positive psychological interventions which ranged from Positive 360 Degree Evaluations through to Positive Self Coaching Initiatives.

Llewellyn's visit to Optentia yield-

ed opportunities for further collaboration and to further enhance the impact of Optentia within the European context.

"Llewellyn hosted a workshop on positive psychological intervention design ..."



NWU Optentia Connects to Institutions in Namibia

In addition to the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, developing countries like Namibia, face the challenges of inequality, poverty and unemployment. Research shows that people in societies with more significant income gaps between rich and poor are more likely to suffer from a wide range of health and social problems compared to those living in more equal societies. Looking at the [statistics](#), the poverty rate in Namibia (33.7%), inequality (Gini index = 57.6), and unemployment are high (34%).

Although the context might be different, alike many SSA countries, the Namibian refrain is the same: poverty, inequalities and unemployment. Against this backdrop, Optentia researchers had the opportunity to visit the Namibian University of Science and Technology, the University of Namibia, the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation, the Ministry of Sport, Youth and National Service, the Ministry of Health, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as well as representatives of business and the labour movement in Namibia in an inclusive way.

Following the theme of a book by [Dr Jakkie Cilliers](#), the theme of our visit was "Connecting to ignite a growth revolution in Southern Africa." Capitalising on multidisciplinary inputs we linked the aim of our visit to our focus on the optimisation of potential through an approach of moving "from precarity to capability".

Optentia to thank Michael Sanni for his support in making the arrangements for the Namibian visit.

“... the Namibian refrain is the same: poverty, inequalities and unemployment.”



Prof. Jaco Hoffman, Prof. Mirna Nel, Dr Rachele Paver, Prof. Ansie Fouché, Prof. Lucius Botes, Anjonet Jordaan, Sibusiso Mnxuma, Prof. Ian Rothmann, Dr Zandri Dickason and Dr Kleinjan Redelinghuys.



The NWU Optentia team meeting Dr Andrew Niikondo (DVC: Academic of NUST) and Prof. Lovemore Matapira (Associate Dean of the Faculty of Management of NUST)



Michael Sanni and Prof. Ian Rothmann

Connecting with Researchers at UNAM and NUST

There are several descriptive words and phrases that I can use to reflect my experience about this academic visit. A few of them include: stimulating, insightful and informative. However, the foremost experience for me was the multidisciplinary interaction within our group, but also with the colleagues that we met from the Namibia University of Technology (NUST), the University of Namibia (UNAM), the Ministry of Youth Development and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In all the formal, as well as informal, conversations we had, it was inspiring to see how many links can be made between disciplines and fields of study to integrate our research and collectively make a real difference in society. Moreover, this was a constructive visit in that a number of collaborative networks and projects were identified.

Then...of course... there was also the social interaction. As the group members comprised a mixture of ages, gender, cultures, disciplines across faculties, experiences, wisdom and youthful insights it made for very inter-



Namoonga Chilwalo, Rachel Freeman, Janet Ananias, Prof. Ansie Fouché and Victor Chikadzi

esting dialogue and banter. All in all a wonderful group of people and a great experience.

Prof. Ansie Fouché had discussions with four social work colleagues at the University of Namibia to investigate the possibility of a joint research project to develop a therapeutic guideline that social workers could use when providing counselling for child victims of sexual abuse. The colleagues in Namibia are very excited about the opportuni-

ty to collaborate. They have confirmed the lack of such therapeutic guidelines for child victims of sexual abuse in Namibia. We look forward to build our relationships with colleagues at the University of Namibia.

“it was inspiring to see how many links can be made between disciplines and fields of study to integrate our research and collectively make a real difference in society...”



The NWU Optentia delegation visited the University of Namibia: Dr Zandri Dickason, Dr Rachele Paver, Prof. Ansie Fouché, Anjonet Jordaan, Prof. Mirna Nel and Sibusiso Mnxuma

Connecting to Individuals and Institutions in Namibia

During the NWU Optentia visit to Namibia, we met representatives of businesses, government, the labour movement and the United Nations Development programme.

To explore the opinions of business people in Namibia, we met Jenine Coetzee of the Ohlthaver & List Group ([O&L](#)). O&L is Namibia's largest privately held group of companies, with revenues contributing roughly 4% to GDP. It has business interests in food production, fishing, beverages, farming, retail trade, information technology, property leasing and development, renewable power generation, marine engineering, steel retailing, advertising and the leisure and hospitality industry.

To understand the perspective of the Namibian Government, we met with Mr Albius Mwiya, Director of the [Directorate of Labour Market Services](#) in the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation. We discussed unemployment, inequality and poverty as well as interventions that can be implemented to tackle these issues.

The Optentia delegation then met with Mr Herbert Jauch (of [Viva Workers](#)) to explore the perspectives of the labour movement on the Namibian context. Herbert Jauch served as executive member of the Namibian National Teachers Union as well as on committees of the National Union of Namibian Workers. Herbert was instrumental in developing a labour diploma course for Namibian trade unions and served as director of the Labour Resource and Research Institute in Katutura.

“We discussed unemployment, inequality and poverty as well as interventions that can be implemented to tackle these issues.”



Jenine Coetzee (Ohlthaver & List Group, Namibia), Prof. Lucius Botes, Prof. Ian Rothmann, Michael Sanni, Prof. Jaco Hoffman and Prof. Johnny Strijdom



The NWU Optentia team meeting Mr Albius Mwiya, Director of the Directorate of Labour Market Services



The NWU Optentia team meeting Mr Herbert Jauch (Viva Workers)

Listening to the Voices in Namibia

The NWU Optentia team visited the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) during their Namibian visit. Dr Yrika Maritz, Head of Experimentation at the UNDP in Windhoek. The UNDP in Namibia supports analytical policy-oriented research and capacity building efforts aimed at enhancing job creation and reducing poverty at national and sub-national levels. It contributes towards improved democratic governance by working with the governance institutions that provide the best potential to improve oversight, human rights, accountability and participation. The UNDP assists the country to better manage environmental risks and enhance capacities needed to advance resilience as outlined in the national development frameworks, with particular emphasis on strengthening national ownership and leadership of institutional mechanisms.

Dr Maritz introduced us to the Accelerator lab. Underlying the idea of the lab is the reality that challenges countries face are growing exponentially. The speed, dynamics and complexity of current social, economic and environmental problems are fundamentally different from previous eras in history. The Accelerator Labs are UNDP's new way of working in development. The UNDP has 60 labs serving 78 countries that work together with national and global partners to find radically new approaches that fit the complexity of current development challenges. The labs transform introduce new services, backed by evidence and practice, and by accelerating the testing and dissemination of solutions within and across countries.



The NWU Optentia team after discussions with representatives of the Ministry of Youth in Namibia

Sense-making, collective intelligence, solutions mapping and experimentation are part of the Accelerator. The labs analyse challenges within local contexts

to identify connections and patterns in search of new avenues of work to act in addressing development challenges. Click [here](#) to read about Accelerator Labs.

“Sense-making, collective intelligence, solutions mapping and experimentation are part of the Accelerator.”



Dr Yrika Maritz explaining the activities of the UNDP in Namibia



Dr Yrika Maritz of the UNDP and NWU Optentia participants

The World is Your Oyster *by* Rachele Paver

...a saying often heard, but I wonder how often applied? However, when you have remarkable people who believe in you, support you, invest in you, and provide you with great opportunities, the world is indeed your oyster.

I recently had the privilege to visit Namibia with a team of inspiring researchers. Still in the starting blocks of a new project, aimed at understanding employers' perspective on inclusive employment, I was overwhelmed by the positive reaction from the Namibian delegates. To my surprise, one of the Mr Michael Sanni had also previously worked with a co-promoter of my PhD, Prof Roland Blank, and another colleague I work closely with on employability, Ms Debbie Msthelwane – a small world after all. We explored collaboration opportunities between the Namibia University of Science and Technology (Mr Michael Sanni), the University of Namibia (Ms Ndeshi Namupala) and the North-West University. The intended project will specifically focus on closing the gap between the labour market, from the employers' side, with a specific focus on the agriculture, tourism and fisheries industries.

Another exciting opportunity occurred when some of the Namibian delegates showed their interest in expanding the JOBS programme (the Qhubekela Phambili programme previously implemented in South Africa) to the Namibian context.

It is with great enthusiasm that I enter our new endeavour, I look forward to see what this collaboration opportunity holds, and can't wait to share our oyster-exploration stories.

“The project will focus on closing the gap between the labour market, from the employers’ side, with a specific focus on the agriculture, tourism and fisheries industries.”



Michael Sanni and Dr Rachele Paver in Windhoek

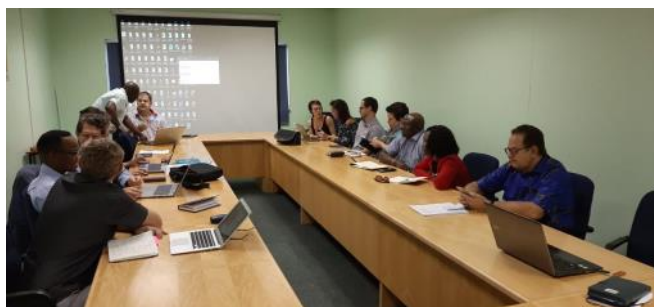


Prof. Jaco Hoffman, Dr Rachele Paver, Mr Michael Sanni and Prof. Rothmann at the United Nations Building in Windhoek. Decent work and economic growth are sustainable development goals

The Namibian Visit: From Messages to Themes

The NWU Optentia team identified the following themes from interviews we conducted:

- Youth employment and capability and skills and opportunities mismatches are serious issues. Statistics showed that 45% of young people in Namibia are unemployed. More than 40% of Namibian people live in shacks. Unemployment, poverty, and inequality are stumbling blocks for people to develop 21st-century capabilities and securing decent work. Click [here](#) to read a report on the Namibian context. Community members experience a lack of resources, support, and collaboration.
- Growth in the economy, not necessarily an increase in employment creation should be targeted. The focus should be on employment-intensive sectors.
- University courses are not relevant to the needs of the country.
- Citizens do not have confidence in the government. Youth uprisings occur as a result of the dissatisfaction with the outcomes of the Supreme court ruling on the recently held elections.
- The youth are angry and disappointed in the establishment and older leaders. One person said: "Every day is the best day in Namibia because tomorrow it will be worse."
- Criminal activities are on the increase due to the rise in unemployment and poverty.
- Weak governance structures cause inequality.
- Intergenerational tensions and ambivalence exist. The



The NWU Optentia Team making sense of messages

generational tension (mainly with political overtones) plays out within the public arena.

- Although the context might be different from other sub-Saharan countries, the Namibian refrain is the same: poverty, inequalities and unemployment. Namibia experience similar problems as to South Africa.

The following research projects are vital:

- Research youth employment and ways to deal with youth unemployment based on the capability approach should be done. Specific research projects include a) Implementing and evaluating of the JOBS intervention in the Namibian context. b) Integration of skilled retired persons in the workplace as mentors or coaches. c) Entrepreneurship, unemployment challenges, inequalities, leadership ineffectiveness, skills mismatches and hopelessness.
- Investigate the anger of young unemployed people and interventions to channel this anger in constructive ways. Study ways in which hope can be instilled among the youth in Namibia.
- Research graduate fit for

employment in Namibia. Focus on the employability of graduates of UNAM and NUST. Universities and training centres need to step up and be flexible to address the real needs of the country and specifically the youth.

- Collaborate with the UNDP accelerator Lab, which is currently focusing on Informal settlements, as the most precariate communities and employment. A multidisciplinary approach is needed to address problems.
- Investigate possible interventions to improve implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The "silo mentality", primarily at ministries, should be addressed. Economic impact studies are needed.
- Leadership interventions should be investigated.

Universities and training centres in Namibia have to step up and be flexible to address the needs of the country. Academics and researchers expressed a strong need to become involved in collaborative multidisciplinary research projects. As Southern African neighbours, it makes sense for us to pull resources, put heads together and make our sub-continent work.

"Youth employment and capability and skills and opportunities mismatches are serious issues."

Connecting Generations in Namibia

The Optentia researchers who visited institutions in Namibia included different generations of researchers. According to Prof. Lucius Bates, the group of people visiting Namibia was interesting because of the diverse academic backgrounds and scholarly expertise. It was good for the group and built their own social capital in traveling together.

Dr Kleinjan Redelinghuys, postdoctoral fellow expressed gratitude towards the Optentia family for making the trip a fun and memorable experience. Kleinjan says: "Optentia creates a research- enabling environment character- rised by knowledge sharing, competence building, inclusivity, mentoring, and an empowering leadership; an environment where collaboration triumphs individual competition. "This trip made me realise how fortunate I am to be part of the NWU Optentia, especially after speaking to some of the Namibian colleagues about the challenges they face regarding resources, incentives, and individualism. In many research aspects, we are not on an even playing field. Because we are more fortunate than others, we need to build a longer table and not a taller

"... we need to build a longer table and not a taller fence. We need to do more to assist under-resourced institutions and researchers in Africa.."



Emerging researchers of the NWU Optentia in Namibia



Established researchers of the NWU Optentia in Namibia

fence. We need to do more to assist under-resourced institutions and researchers in Africa."

Dr Zandri Dickason says that she feels privileged that she could join the Optentia visit to Namibia. "It was an honour to represent this powerhouse of an entity. We participated in various meetings in order to obtain/

expand collaborative research projects. Optentia managed to expand its interdisciplinary focus even further when other disciplines of Namibia indicated interest in joint research projects. I can't wait to get working on the projects with the Namibians!



The NWU Optentia team relaxes at Okapuka Lodge in Namibia

My Experiences of the Namibian Connection *by* Sibusiso Mnxuma

I had made it clear to a few of the colleagues we were travelling with, that I had no expectations of how it would be like once we landed in Namibia as I had no real point of reference, at least not that I could remember, not even from a TV show. As we approached Hosea Kutako International Airport in Windhoek, I began to see the most beautiful mountain ranges, dotted with lush greens. If anything, this was going to be a beautiful experience as far as the natural environment was concerned.

Our programme for the next three days was packed, with one meeting after the other, leaving just enough room for quick reflection, food and drink. We met with different stakeholders, some academics from University of Namibia (UNAM) and Namibian University of Science and Technology (NUST), others policy makers, management consultants, industry leaders and even government representatives, all with a common interest in academic research and its practical implications in addressing real life challenges.

It was really interesting for me how much Namibia and South Africa share, not only in terms of a historic heritage, but also in their current challenges of a diminishing economy, substance/drug abuse, youth/graduate unemployment and unemployment in general as well as the resulting poverty. It is these common challenges that have made this visit so important, and to explore potential collaboration between, academia, industry and government across the two borders in conducting research that focuses on understanding and generating



Prof. Lucius Botes, Sibusiso Mnxuma and Prof. Jaco Hoffman

solutions (small scale and incremental) for these challenges as highlighted above. We leave Namibia even more convinced than what we were when we initiated this visit, of the importance of research collaborations between Optentia, UNAM, NUST, Namibian

government institutions and industry leaders as well as SA government together with industry leaders.

“It was really interesting for me how much Namibia and South Africa share...”



The United Nations Building in Windhoek

Work Design: A Source of Motivation *by* Prof. Anja van den Broeck

Many within the Optentia network will know what I'm studying people's motivation from the perspective of Self-Determination Theory. However, a parallel research stream that caught my interest deals with the importance of work design as an important source of motivation for employees.

Research shows that the way jobs are designed highly impacts how employees feel and perform at work. It, for example, determines how much they feel engaged and not burned out and – hence – how creative and innovative they can be.

From a psychological perspective, when work is well-designed, employees have interesting and meaningful tasks, autonomy over those tasks, social contact with others, and a tolerable level of task demands.

Jobs can become intolerable and demotivating when the tasks are repetitive and tightly controlled, or when the demand are overwhelming. Then, people are prone to stress and burnout and companies miss out on making optimal use of their talents and creativity. Despite the benefits of well-designed work, poor work design abounds in organizations. Why?

Our research shows there are many large-scale variables influencing work design (Parker, Van den Broeck, & Holman, 2017). Consider for example the job of elderly care workers. At the global level, market liberalization allows care workers from other countries to fill in these positions in Belgium. This may decrease social support due to language barriers. Parts of jobs can be automated through the use of care robots, but laws may prevent care workers from taking on more challenging tasks such as taking blood pressure. Within a team, younger workers may be asked to do more heavy lifting to spare older workers, but this makes their jobs more demanding.

But higher level variables don't explain the whole story. In another study, we found that also managers play an important role (Parker, Andrei, & Van den Broeck, 2019)! Unfortunately, our research shows about half of the managers tend to make jobs even more boring than they need to be. To achieve the results they want, they thus need to think more out of the box!

If you like to read more about how people tend to naturally de-



Prof. Anja van den Broeck

sign work and you'd like to learn how we can make them to design higher quality work, click [here](#).

References

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“... half of the managers tend to make jobs even more boring than they need to be.”

Prof. Llewellyn van Zyl in Russia

Prof. Llewellyn van Zyl was recently invited to present a keynote address at the International Labour Forum (27-28 February 2020) and the International Youth Labour Forum (26 February 2020) in St. Petersburg, Russia.

In his first address, Llewellyn spoke about the skills and competencies required to successfully navigate the future world of work.

He reflected upon the strategies the new generation could employ in order to not only cope with the challenges of the digital revolution, but also how to explore the opportunities which digitization may bring. In his second address, Llewellyn addressed the need for leaders to actively invest in the development of their people and discussed the importance of a

focus on developing psychological strengths. He concluded by taking participants through each of the phases of the Positive Psychological Coaching Model that he, Prof. Marius Stander, Dr. Lara Roll and Stefanie Richter recently developed.

People Practices, Tourism Growth and Entrepreneurship

Tourism is increasingly becoming relevant in the global economy. Especially at the nation's individual level. In the case of Namibia, the contributions of tourism toward economic development, job creation, poverty eradication, equality, education, and empowerment cannot be overrated. Meanwhile, small business significantly dominates the sector in which customer service is key thus the crucial need for people commitment.

Small business around the globe is recognized as the conduit for financial and socio-economic development. Tying the importance of both small businesses and tourism may be a two-edged sword for rapid economic redemption. Small businesses can be regarded as an accelerator in the United Nations' sustainable development goals towards "a better and more sustainable future for all". But, how can poverty, hunger, inequality and lack of education be eradicated without reliable mutually benefiting employment? It is doubtful if there can exist true equality, peace, justice and a decent job where no value perception between the parties in employment! Value perception cannot be enhanced if skills and knowledge are not acquired by the people

providing labour by means of investments from the business owners. Where mutual gain perspective does not flourish, performers and performance cannot be realized, resulting in a perpetual decline in business growth.

The expected entrepreneurial development, financial and socio-economic roles of tourism may be possible. But the sector is confronted with enormous people issues that tend to hinder its performance. Unpleasantly, employment is described to be unattractive and the use of unskilled labour pervades the sector. Meanwhile, unskilled and unattractive employment depict a gloom service, the later which is strikingly devastating in tourism prospects.

As a consequence there is need to urgently engage in research that: a) examines the people challenges that confront the small business in the tourism sector in Namibia; b) understand the people practices that exist in the sector; c) compare such practices with others in the tourism across the developing countries, and d) develop a model that showcase people's practices that best-fit people's needs within the sector in Namibia.

Effectively, the above steps will contribute towards deriving



Michael Adekoya-Sanni

the role behaviour and pleasant employment that enhance appropriate services that lead to small business performance, while satisfying all the parties, i.e., employees, customers, small business owners, community, and the nation at large.

In conclusion, this piece serves as a wakeup call for colleagues in the academics, practitioners, and agencies to take up research studies, projects, and investigations. Such actions relating to people's challenges would help to increase entrepreneurship, decent employment creating, reduce poverty, ensure equity, peace, and justice for all.

Michael Adekoya-Sanni is a PhD candidate at Tilburg University, the Netherlands. He is a lecturer in Human Resource Management at NUST.

"The expected entrepreneurial development, financial and socio-economic roles of tourism may be possible..."

Tilburg University: Where Dreams Meet *by* Prof. Ian Rothmann

During my visit to the Netherlands in January 2020, I met Michael Sanni, a lecturer at Namibian University of Science and Technology. Michael had a dream, he wants to establish an entity like Optentia in Namibia. This entity could be connected to Optentia. Being a Namibian myself and hav-

ing supervised students from African countries, it did not take much to convince me that we share dreams. After this meeting, 11 NWU Optentia members visited Namibia. It is clear that both Namibia and South Africa will benefit from collaboration. We have a dream to realise!



Ian Rothmann and Michael Sanni

News: Human Flourishing in Institutions *by* Prof. Ian Rothmann

Prof. Ian Rothmann visited Tilburg University in the Netherlands during January 2020. He discussed research about the capability approach with Prof. Jac van der Klink. He also met Prof. Roland Blom to explore possibilities regarding a research project on inclusive entrepreneurship. During his visit, he also discussed research collaboration with researchers at Tilburg University.



Prof. Ian Rothmann and Prof. Jac van der Klink



Prof. Ian Rothmann and Prof. Roland Blom

“Annelisa wants to investigate the capabilities and functioning of teachers working in inclusive education in Namibia.”

News: PhD Students *by* Prof. Ian Rothmann

Two PhD students, Vasti Marais Opperman and Elna Rossouw completed their PhD studies successfully in February 2020. Vasti studied stress, coping strategies, perceived personal control and well-being at work of secondary school teachers. Elna’s study focused on the flourishing of judges in South Africa. Congratulations Vasti and Elna!

Three PhD students are making good progress with their studies of secondary school teachers and

learners. The empirical work for the three studies will start in April 2020, depending on restrictions we experience because of the Coronavirus. Another PhD student, Kalashni Narainsamy is also making good progress with the first study and article of her PhD.



Tessa de Wet



Thera Lobi



Christiaan Bekker

Namibian PhD Candidate Meets NWU Optentia Promoters

During a recent visit to Namibia, Prof. Mirna Nel and Prof. Ian Rothmann met with Annelisa Murangi, their PhD candidate. Annelisa wants to investigate the capabilities and functioning of teachers working in inclusive education in Namibia. The study presents a unique opportunity to combine the expertise of Prof. Mirna Nel (inclusive education and diversity) with the expertise of Prof. Ian Rothmann (capabilities and functioning of teachers from an industrial psychological perspective). All three of us are looking forward to collaborate in this PhD. We wish Annelisa success!



Prof. Mirna Nel, Annelisa Murangi and Prof. Ian Rothmann

Authentic Leadership: Effects on Individuals and Organisations

Leaders of organisations that are undergoing downscaling as a result of economic realities find themselves in the unenviable position to provide positive direction to employees who are acutely aware of their own precarious situation. Deon Kleynhans, a PhD student at Optentia, was fascinated by the question whether authentic leadership could make a positive contribution towards optimal organisational and individual level functioning under exactly such circumstances.

It is hoped that this study can provide insights that can make a meaningful contribution to the existing literature base on leadership during precarious times. It further aims to provide

indicators for how to promote dynamic organisational capabilities and the well-being of employees in an organisation that is undergoing a restructuring process.

Deon's personal motto is "If you keep on doing today what you did yesterday, you will be foolish to expect a different outcome tomorrow". He started his career in a maintenance environment and has subsequently (for the past 25 years) occupied various human resource related roles.

Deon is currently functioning in the AMSA head office human resource department as manager, organisational management, compliance and HR business analytics.



Deon Kleynhans

Deon has been married to his wife Yolanda for 26 years. He is the father of three children - a girl and two boys - and a proud grandfather of two grandkids.

"... this study can provide insights that can make a meaningful contribution to the existing literature base on leadership during precarious times."

Capabilities and Functioning of Leaders in the Namibian Context

Coen Welsh, a PhD candidate from Namibia, want to investigate leadership through the lens of the capability approach in his research. While the importance of leadership is prevalent in academic literature, the failings of leadership are widely publicised. Continuous corporate scandals, the globalisation of talent, and the ageing workforce further highlight the inadequacy of leadership. Leadership failure and scandal also ring true for Namibia, where corruption has increased every year since 2014.

The core argument of the Capability Approach (CA) is that leader functioning should be understood in terms of what opportunities are available to the individual and substantive freedom of choice, taking account of external factors and personal characteristics, rather than

solely focusing on what they do and the outcomes which they achieve. The CA recognises the values of people, as well as contextual factors, have an impact on their ability to work.

The main problems that have to be addressed in terms of the capability and functioning of leaders in Namibia are, firstly, that information is required about the capabilities of Namibian leaders. Secondly, there are measures available to identify capabilities, and flourishing. However, it is necessary to investigate the reliability, validity, and invariance of these measures as perceived by leaders in Namibia who are leading in different work contexts such as the public versus private sectors and for demographic groups such as, age, gender, and qualifications. Thirdly, information has

to be obtained about the capabilities of leaders in various contexts and demographics in Namibia. Fourthly, information is needed about the precariousness experienced by leaders as well as their orientation towards others. Lastly, it is necessary to gain scientific information to evaluate whether the capabilities of leaders predict their flourishing and intention to leave in different contexts and demographic groups.



Coen Welsh

Creating Solutions to Tackle Africa's Youth Unemployment

Poverty reduction and the elimination of inequality are two key objectives in South Africa. Growth in employment and income, enabled by small to medium enterprises (SMEs), play an important role in this regard. Hence, the effectiveness of these enterprises remains a priority. Employee performance and well-being are key drivers of enterprise effectiveness. Following the self-determination theory (SDT), it is theorised that performance and well-being are preceded by psychological experiences (like interpersonal need support) but little is known about these psychological experiences (or the processes through which it exerts its influences) in the context of SMEs in South Africa.

"it aims to understand the motivational processes underlying employees' performance and well-being and how interpersonal need support can be nurtured."

The current project aims to understand the role of psychological experiences and psychological processes at play. More specifically, it aims to understand the motivational processes underlying employees' performance and well-being and how interpersonal need support can be nurtured using both quantitative (diary studies) and qualitative (systematic review and grounded theory) methods.

Dr Leoni van der Vaart (together with Profs. Anja Van den Broeck and Ian Rothmann) recently received funding from the National Research Foundation (NRF) for this project. One PhD student (Miss Lynelle Coxen) and two master's students (Mr Simeau van Niewenhuizen and Miss Nadia Jordaan) are currently working on the project. At the moment, Lynelle is busy with the literature search phase for the conceptual (systematic) review of diary studies focusing on basic psychological needs in the work context. Simeau and Nadia are in the process of data collection for the validation studies preceding the diary studies focusing on determinants, conse-

quences, mediators and moderators in the dynamic motivational process. Dr Leoni will soon embark on a qualitative study to explore the factors that may play a role in nurturing interpersonal need supportive behaviours.

In achieving its aims, the project hopes to contribute to the limited organisational psychology literature on SMEs in South Africa. SDT literature in the work context and allows for the design of interventions to improve SME's effectiveness. Apart from its theoretical contributions, the project also aims to contribute to practice by means of education and training, scientific awareness and communication, and community engagement projects.

The grant holders wish to thank the NRF* for their contribution to this project and we want to encourage others (academics and practitioners) to keep an eye out for interesting opportunities that will arise from this project.

* "The financial assistance of the NRF towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily attributed to the NRF."



A Group Treatment Programme for Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse

The sexual abuse of males is not uncommon with estimated prevalence rates indicating that as many as 8% - 14% of males experience sexual abuse. Male survivors of sexual abuse have unique gender related treatment needs indicating that treatment for male survivors needs to be gender specific. In particular, cultural constructions of masculinity and males' internalised masculine norms (e.g., males are strong) add to the adverse effects of sexual abuse for males and need to be directly targeted in treatment. There is a recognised gap, both within the research literature and clinical settings, in regard to provision of gender specific sexual abuse treatment for male survivors.

In December, 2019, Dr Tess Patterson (University of Otago, New Zealand and the Optentia Research Focus Area, North-



Prof. Hayley Walker-Williams, Prof. Ansie Fouché and Prof. Tess Patterson

West University, South Africa), Prof. Fouché and Prof. Walker-Williams (Optentia Research Focus Area, North-West University, South Africa) were successful in obtaining a University of Otago, Dunedin School of Medicine Deans Bequest that will allow them to modify and trial a gender specific, strengths-based group based treatment programme for male survivors of sexual abuse. The project will use the Survivor to Thrivor (S2T) pro-

gramme developed by Fouché and Walker-Williams (2016, 2017) for female survivors of sexual abuse and modify it so that it is suitable for use with males, as well as piloting and evaluating the modified group treatment programme with male survivors in New Zealand.

A Warm and Positive Response from Child Protection Social Workers

The soft launch of the Cave was a great success and a major goal was achieved: child protection social workers on ground level value this resource. Our own practice experience and research findings prompted and informed this idea which started getting a life in 2017. It took a lot of work, time and energy, but between the two of us and a few family members with their expert input (graphic designer and attorney), we managed to produce a product which is, based on feedback from our target audience, a spot-on success story, which we hope will go from strength to strength! We aspire for continued success solely to acknowledge and salute child

protection social workers in South Africa and to be part of a practical solution to a situation with so many adversities.

We would like to share some feedback with you from our ground level child protection social workers: "Only started to join the CAVE now but you already have my attention" from 'Jenny' with 20 years' experience as a child protection social worker. 'Sarah' tells us what she thinks and suggests: "I think it is an absolutely incredible idea and initiative that is going to reach a magnitude of social workers and child protection service providers. If I could perhaps make a small suggestion? Would it not perhaps be a good idea to share this Amazing resource with SAPS

CFS units across the country? 'Bongi', with three years' experience in child protection social work made us laugh with her feedback to what we can do to improve the Cave "Not yet, but I can see how I will spend more time on the website than on Facebook". 'Kate' with 37 years' experience as a child protection social worker kept her response short and simple: "Keep on". Thandi said: "As social workers we need constant learning and information gathering. A suggestion would be that trainings also be considered in future, with the information provided."

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"There is a gap, both within the research literature and clinical settings, in regard to provision of gender specific sexual abuse treatment for male survivors."

Measuring Impact *by* Dr Mariette Fourie

Precarious employment, balancing teaching, research and publishing demands, and demonstrating impact, are extant pressures in higher education today (Tinkler, 2016).

The word 'impact' is defined according to the Oxford English dictionary as 'the action of one object coming forcibly into contact with another' and 'a marked effect or influence'. Hearn (2016) explains the counterfactual definition of impact from a statistical view point as the measured difference of a predefined indicator with the intervention and without the intervention. Morten Pejrup, associate dean for research in the Faculty of Science at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark explains that quantitative indicators usually count as scientific impact, but should always be presented with context and be part of a narrative about the scientific influence (Tachibana, 2017).

In many instances, when reporting on impact, the importance of understanding and achieving impact, is lacking. The challenge lies in proper planning for impact evaluation by determining what exactly is measured and why, following a preliminary evaluability assessment. Another aspect in measuring impact relates to who will benefit from the impact study and how they will benefit. Cathy Sarli, a librarian at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis specializing in research impact assessment, emphasises that an interviewee's ability to describe research goals and impact in conversation is what really counts. Sarli states that "no single metric is sufficient for measuring perfor-



mance, quality, or impact. Researchers have to go beyond numbers to tell their story, and in essence, which research methodology will be most relevant?

Mixed method approaches is more likely to improve the credibility of the findings of an impact study (Peersman, 2014). Data collection and analysis methods for any impact study should be chosen to match the particular evaluation expressed as key evaluation questions (KEQs) in terms of what changes (positive or negative) were brought about, and were these changes intended or unintended. These KEQs might be descriptive, causal, and evaluative in nature. The selection of appropriate impact indicators should be based on proper need analysis of the desired intervention, where data on the process and implementation should also be gathered throughout the intervention. Researchers inarguably have to make the most out of data by probing appropriate KEQs which would describe the nature of the impact with reference to aspects such as attribution, apportioning, contribution, explanation, and generalisability or transportability. These different types of impact evaluation questions will subsequently determine the relevant methodology. Stern

et al. (2012) suggest some appropriate methods for the types of impact evaluation questions identified.

The most prevalent impact measurement tools refer to the logic model, mission alignment, and quasi-experimental methods. The logic model is used to map a theory of change by outlining the linkage from input (the activity), to output and outcomes, and ultimately to impact. The mission alignment tool measures the execution of strategy against the mission and end goals over time using key performance metrics, and lastly the after-the fact evaluations which determine the impact of the intervention (So & Staskevicius, 2015).

In conducting an impact study, it is important for investigators and researchers to be up to date with the latest information and skills on measuring impact. Getting your story heard through an efficacious approach is what distinguish proper impact analysis from a mere ordinary research study. I trust that this brief introduction and summary towards my journey in measuring impact has inspired many other researchers.

"In many instances, when reporting on impact, the importance of understanding and achieving impact, is lacking."

Talking about the Story behind our Data *by* Dr Mariette Fourie

My contribution to the research community in this first 2020 Optentia newsletter, is to inspire researchers to expound their voice, entwining data findings, to write their stories displayed as vivacious academic art works. Heading towards the 22nd century, we have to metacognitively engage in a manner in which we represent and report data and research findings in state-of-the-art ways. In our endeavour to add to the existing body of knowledge, we have a novel story to tell – to a specific audience - don't we? A familiar quote by Voltaire "Writing is the painting of the voice" should inspire researchers to rethink how they engage in academic writing, especially when reporting on data. People in general remember stories told, not data per se. Data refers to only the collection of numbers until researchers can turn it into a story (Martin, 2018).

In fact, we inarguably agree that our academic art should testify of validity and reliability when we want our audience to accept the verisimilitude thereof, and to reference it when making decisions and informing praxis. Our stories indeed have to be rich and true! DiFranza (2019) explains how the influence of data ranges from "DNA and ancestry tracking in crime investigations, to the use of artificial intelligence in warehousing and medical fields, to the analysis of customer and audience trends in business".

Novel stories emanate from the advancements of research and functionality of our findings due to data analytics. Pictures displayed in the researcher's academic voice are truly hidden



in data relationships, not only in the data itself. The exertion for data-driven decisions are becoming more and more prevalent moving towards the playing field of Artificial Intelligence (AI), and specifically Machine Learning (ML) and Natural Language Processing (NLP) as methods in leveraging AI. If we want better stories, we have to engage more efficaciously in erudite data analytics and data storytelling in producing those beautiful academic paintings!

DiFranza, A. (2019). How to tell stories with data: 5 Tips for presenting data more effectively. Available [here](#).

Martin, N. (2018). Data Visualization: How to tell a Story with Data. Available [here](#).

"... we have a novel story to tell – to a specific audience - don't we?"

Conference: Inclusive Education – An International Perspective

On January 9th, 2020 Prof. Susanne Schwab hosted this year's conference „Inclusive Education – An International Perspective“. To give the audience, including colleagues and students, an overview about different perspectives in different countries, Prof. Schwab invited four experts in inclusive education, namely Dr. Akie Yada (University of Jyväskylä, Finland), Prof. Carmen Zurbriggen (University of Bielefeld, Germany), Prof. Tim Loreman (Concordia University of Edmonton, Canada) and Prof. Ghaleb Alnahdi (Prince sattam bin Abdulaziz University), to report on their projects. Also, the scientific team of Prof. Schwab prepared some posters for the audience, to read about current research results regarding inclusive schooling in Austria.

In Dr. Akie Yada's presentation the audience was given the opportunity to hear about the differences of inclusive schooling between Finland and Japan. While the Japanese inclusive educational system is mainly focused on including children with disabilities and based on a medical model, special educational support in Finland is based on a social model. Akie Yada's latest research about different attitudes and self-efficacy-levels of teachers regarding inclusive schooling showed that Japanese teachers' attitudes appear too close to the neutral midpoint, while their self-efficacy is relatively low compared to other countries. Furthermore, the studies revealed that inclusive education training in Finland has positive effects on the teachers' efficacy and attitudes. Nevertheless, the findings showed that Finnish teachers with more teaching experience have negative attitudes towards inclusive education, whereas teachers with longer career in Japan have higher self-efficacy levels.

Prof. Carmen Zurbriggen presented the findings of her studies regarding the well-being of students as an indicator of inclusive schooling



Susanne Schwab, Tim Loreman, Ghaleb Alnahdi, Akie Yada, Carmen Zurbriggen

in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. The results showed that the correspondence between the self-report on inclusion of students and the external assessment of teachers and parents is low to moderate. Also, Prof. Crmen Zurbriggen's research revealed that peer-learning and the opportunity to choose a task go hand in hand with a positive emotional experience. Furthermore, the outcome of the exploration showed that there is no difference between the emotional experience of students with or without special educational needs.

In his presentation, Prof. Tim Loreman talked about Canada's special education history and that inclusive practice varies across the country. In his studies, Prof. Loreman was able to show that Canadian Elementary teachers indicate more inclusive beliefs and more efficacy in the area of collaboration. Also, his findings revealed that having a friend with a disability is related to more inclusive beliefs and higher self-efficacy. Based on the results of his studies, Prof. Loreman suggests that Canadian teacher education programmes should be a minimum of 2 years in length and also foster meaningful interactions between preservice teachers and people with disabilities.

Prof. Ghaleb Alnahdi's lecture regarded the students' and teachers' perspectives towards inclusive education in Saudi Arabia. In his findings, he showed that inclusive education in Saudi Arabia has improved since 2000. Before, all students with disabilities were excluded from schools and were sent to special institutions, but after 2008, 80% of all students with disabilities were able to attend regular classes. In conclusion, there are still challenges related to attitudes in society, training teachers in-service, recruitment practices and school resources, that should be addressed in future projects.

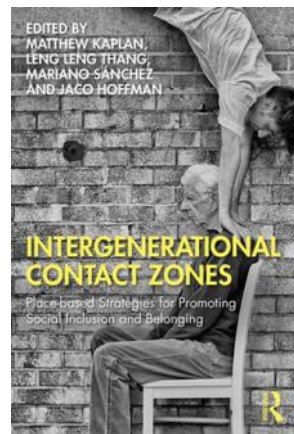
“... special educational support in Finland is based on a social model...”

News from the AGenDA Programme *by* Prof. Jaco Hoffman

As always the AGenDA programme is grateful for many opportunities for and initiatives by its members and associates:

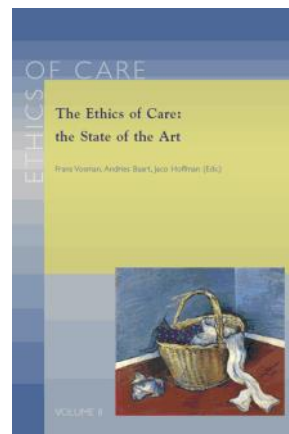
Prof. Jaco Hoffman was invited to Ege University, Izmir, Turkey to contribute to the First International Symposium on Arts and Humanities (EGE-ISAH) with the theme International Migration and Migrant Experience throughout History, 12-14 December 2019. The event was co-organized by UNHCR, Ege University, Izmir Provincial Directorate of Migration Management, Izmir Governorate and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The conference aimed to discuss the phenomenon of international migration from a multi-disciplinary perspective. Given the humanitarian crises due to the conflict in Syria, with almost 4 million refugees in Turkey, this was a timely and most relevant discussion as pointed out by the speakers in the opening session. Jaco's presentation focused on a generational perspective of the migration experience and how both locations (country of origin and migration) shapes a sense of belonging. The argument developed here was that new insights can be gained into experiences of settlement and belonging by taking an intergenerational approach to understanding these processes as a negotiated family-based/inter-generational project.

Two books with contributions of Optentia members to look forward to in the first quarter of 2020. The title of the first book is "Intergenerational Contact Zones: Place-based Strategies for Promoting Social Inclusion and Belonging." The book is edited by Matthew Kaplan (Pennsylvania State University, USA), Leng Leng Thang (National University of Singapore, Singapore), Mariano Sánchez (University of Granada, Spain) and Jaco Hoffman (North-West University/University of Oxford, South Africa) To be available this March, this is the first book to explore the foundations and applica-



tions of intergenerational contact zones (ICZs) from an international perspective. The book is filled with poignant examples of how ICZs breathe new life into communities and social practices. It focuses on practical descriptions and developments around ICZ to nurture practitioners' and researchers' capacity to translate and infuse the notion of ICZ into their work. Containing over 25 short chapters that showcase a wide range of possibilities with ICZs across the globe, this book is a how-to tool kit to guide various professionals and user groups as they begin to consider ways to develop and nurture engaging intergenerational spaces. It furthermore is essential reading for academics and researchers interested in human development, ageing and society in relation to intergenerational gathering places from an international perspective.

The title of the second book is "The Ethics of Care: the State of the Art. The book is edited by Frans Vosman, Andries Baart, and Jaco Hoffman. Care and caring are essential to the core of life. As an everyday activity it guarantees the continuity of a humane society. In an era of cold-blooded neo-liberalism, relationality, attentiveness, compassion, solidarity and care are even more relevant traits to sustain a life worth living not only for the precarious ones among us but for all of us. To this end the Ethics of Care as a political



ethical theory is the most prominent champion of the relevance of care and caring on all different levels of the research-policy-practice continuum and across all domains of our lived realities. Drawing on feminism as a critique on neo-Kantian ethics, the Ethics of Care developed into an acknowledged sub-field since the early 1980s. This edited volume by renowned scholars from across the globe presents this trajectory with a critical engagement on a range of key issues, its gradual development, and its subsequent scholarly and societal contribution. These insights pertain to issues related to the more intimate forms of care from person to person as well as issues of care at an institutional level and questions of global impact. More specifically, an up-to-date refinement of the concepts 'vulnerability' and 'relationality' are some examples of these insights. Similarly, lessons of caring practices ranging from social welfare to palliative care are shared. This volume offers a critical overview of the current debates and the future challenges of an Ethics of Care as a landmark branch of contemporary ethics.

"... lessons of caring practices ranging from social welfare to palliative care are shared."

A Message of Prof. Doris Bohman

Firstly, I want to thank Prof. Ian Rothmann and the staff at Optentia for giving me the possibility to visit the institute during February 2020. The atmosphere at Optentia is very accommodating and the seminars and lectures I have had the opportunity to attend have been inspiring and gave me new insights. The multi-disciplinary approach is something I particularly appreciate as my research focus on older people and technology from the perspectives of various disciplines. From my work at Blekinge Institute of Technology, BTH, in Sweden, I know it is essential with multidisciplinary in developing new research areas. The BTH's Research and Education Clinic has a similar approach serving as a platform for multidisciplinary research collaboration in the field of Health and Technology. The aim is to facilitate research projects both within the university but also with partners from technology industry and the broader society. It is also an arena where students from different disciplines get the opportunity to work together in existing research projects. My visit to North West University and Optentia is linked to my long-term collaboration with Prof. Jaco Hoffman and Prof Vera Roos. We initiated the IGNITe (Inter-Generational Networks through Information Technology) project, with the overall aim to explore older



Prof. Doris Bohman

“The multi-disciplinary approach is something I particularly appreciate as my research focus on older people and technology...”

people's (60 +) user patterns of mobile technology (cell phones) and how and why this technology facilitates intergenerational relationships. This visit is a continuation of our collaboration and also a possibility

for a continuing partnership between Optentia and BTH in the field of Health and Technology.

AGenDA in Namibia

Prof. Jaco Hoffman, Prof. Johnny Strydom and Prof. Isabella Abo-derin attended a session at the National Department of Social Development in Namibia during their recent visit to Namibia. Although still a long way to go regarding legislation for older persons, Namibia already offers a dignified universal package to its older citizens which include a pension of around N\$1200 per

month (a double fold increase from N\$600 in 2014); a funeral benefit of around N\$5000 as well as free health care for each and every one of its citizens, whether they are wealthy or poor. With the Department we hope to address the issue of some evidence based research projects towards the development of a new and comprehensive Older Persons' Act for the 21st century where

older people's contributions to Namibia will be cherished and their needs/ rights will be carefully addressed.

Workshops Presented by the AGenDA Research Programme

Dr Lizanlé van Biljon, extraordinary researcher in the AGenDA programme visited Optentia from 4–6 February 2020. During this visit, she co-facilitated with Prof. Jaco Hoffman, Prof. Marita Heyns, Prof. Vera Roos, and Dr Matthews Katjene research topic discussions with prospective PhD students. (Watch this space for existing new developments!)

On 6 February 2020, Lizanlé and Vera co-presented a CPD accredited workshop, titled, The Mmogo-method: A visual data-collection method to understanding experiences in a culture-

sensitive and ethical manner. Eight people participated in the experiential learning workshop on the topic of hope. Informal learnings about hope include: it is a multidimensional, internalised construct, informing how people relate and interact. Hope serves as protection of what is valued and complements vulnerability in society at large. Apart from learning how to apply the method rigorously, relevant ethical considerations in all four phases of application, as well as in the analysis and reporting of findings, were highlighted. Participants

confirmed that the method facilitated learning on a professional but also personal level and the manner in which the workshop was facilitated, ensured “that no one was left behind”.



Participants in the workshop about the Mmogo method

“Informal learnings about hope include: it is a multi-dimensional, internalised construct, informing how people relate and interact...”

Springer Book on the we-DELIVER Community Based Project

In 2020, we are completing full circle when the we-DELIVER community based project results in the anticipated book publication by Springer Nature, *Age-Inclusive ICT innovation for service delivery: A developing country perspective*, edited by Prof. Vera Roos and Prof. Jaco Hoffman. The book presents the first systematic, co-created process to develop and implement an information and communication technology (ICT) solution to provide people of all ages access to information relevant to their tangible and intangible care needs in the context of South Africa, a developing country. Worldwide, it is anticipated that the care needs of older-growing populations will outstrip available resources. Sub-Saharan Africa lacks long-term care systems, and technology could play a crucial role in supporting families, communities and government in care management. Much is known about ways in which older generations in developed countries use and benefit from ICT, but the topic has been under-explored in developing countries. As a starting point, a baseline dataset was compiled of older South Africans' mobile phone use across rural, semi-urban and urban settings. Yabelana ("sharing information") was designed as a reusable open-source application ecosystem comprising a website, a mobile app, and a USSD code. Focusing on the needs of a range of older end users, the Yabelana eDirectory captures age-inclusive and context-specific service information for these and other users. The system allows and fosters feedback and provides a means of keeping service providers accountable. This book details a workable transdisciplinary and relational approach to 21st-century ICT innovation that helps to create applications tailored to purpose. It presents principles, methods, and useful templates to assist with future designs of age-inclusive ICT solutions in developing countries.

The book comprises three parts. Part 1, Context and Project Background, situates the book in the literature relating to the delivery of services to older persons in a developing country, and focuses on the case of South Africa in three chapters. It presents the legislative background and the case of the we-DELIVER community-based project. Chapter 1 contextualises the study within the phenomenon of population ageing and the pressing need to develop information and communication systems (ICT) appropriate for developing countries. Chapter 2 focuses on constitutional rights and legislative frameworks, indicating what ought to be in place to deliver basic and municipal services to older persons; it highlights the gap between that and what actually transpires, drawing on the perspectives of local government officials and older service recipients. Chapter 3 presents the we-DELIVER project as an example of the process of developing age-inclusive ICT (Yabelana) to promote holistic service delivery to older persons in developing-world conditions. Part 2 deals with Principles, Processes, and Applications. In five chapters, we discuss the principles and methods followed and the applications of ICT together with their outcomes. Chapter 4 critically engages with proposed individualised and Euro-centric ethical protocols and their (ir)relevance or even at times harmful application when context is not considered. Chapter 5 presents the processes of developing appropriate age-inclusive quantitative and qualitative data collection tools and data collection application. Chapter 6 presents the findings of a baseline assessment of older South Africans' mobile phone use across rural, semi-urban and urban settings. Chapter 7 elaborates on the experiences of older persons engaging with younger people for assistance with their use of mobile phones. The findings of Chapter 6 and 7 were used to guide



Alida Veldsman, Prof. Vera Roos and Prof. Darelle van Greunen

the development of appropriate ICT (Yabelana), discussed in Chapter 8. Part 3, discusses Impact and Sustainability and consists of two chapters. Chapter 9 theoretically grounds and proposes measures to determine impact and sustainability of community-based projects. Drawing on the theory and practice relating to impact and sustainability of such projects, this chapter highlights implications that could mitigate or limit the impact and sustainability of community-based projects centred on the use of ICT and considers the impact and sustainability of the Yabelana ICT solution. Chapter 10 reaches into the future of the sustainability and impact of ICT as tools to assist older persons in accessing the information and services they need. Contributors to the book chapters include authors from all three sites of delivery of the North-West University (Mahikeng, Potchefstroom, and Vanderbijlpark), but also of UNISA and Nelson Mandela University (NMU). Vera visits authors individually to discuss chapter contributions, such as the visit to Prof. Darelle van Greunen and Ms Alida Veldsman, from the NMU Center for Community Technologies.

“... this book details a workable transdisciplinary and relational approach to 21st century ICT innovation...”

News from the Risk Management Master's Programme

The Centre for Applied Risk Management (UARM) has news on three groups of M.Com Applied Risk Management (MARM) students:

Firstly, all 13 students in the 2019 second year group have passed the part-time two-year six-module and mini-dissertation programme and will graduate in May 2020! Five of these students obtained a distinction for the programme. We are extremely proud of yet another successful group of students: Ronica Batohi, Nancy Gangaram, Patrick Makgato, Zamo Makhatini (distinction), Thobile Mngomezulu, Sapula Moshugi, Itumeleng Mthogoane, Zanele Mthiyane (distinction), Sam Nduku (distinction), Fhulu Nemukula, Gloria Nyama, Renisha Rajpaul (distinction), and Melanie Steyn (distinction).

Since the inception of the programme in 2014, we have now delivered five student cohorts, and MARM is well established and highly regarded in the South African private and public sectors as a unique interdisciplinary programme for a diverse group of senior working students. Our increasingly strict student selection, and dedicated teaching and



Prof. Neels Erasmus, Prof. Herman van der Merwe, Prof. Hermien Zaaïman and Prof. Lucius Botes with the 2020 Master's in Risk Management students

student support, approach have led to a 74% student throughput rate over the five intakes, with 39 successful students so far delivered from 53 registered students, with average course completion rate of 2.2 years. Our students come from diverse population, academic and work backgrounds, thereby allowing for interesting learning opportunities for all of us throughout the programme.

Secondly, we selected nine students from 34 qualifying applicants to commence their MARM studies this year: Cecilia Cameron, Siva Chetty, Vusi Fakudze, Katlego Majola, Pat

Mlanduli, Khumo Mokgatle, Thabiso Sekwati, Marie Smit, and Zanel Steyn. They have completed the first MARM module contact session and are working on their first research-based assignment.

Thirdly, seven students have started working on their mini-dissertation study proposals: Lesego Aphane, Sino Kolweni, Malesela George Lamola, Pila Magwentshu, Shai Makgoba, Lebo Modisigae, and Renju Nair. They completed the Optentia Research SLP in January, and we look forward to supporting them to successfully deliver their mini-dissertations this year.

"Since the inception of the programme in 2014, we have now delivered five student cohorts..."

Vacancy: Contract Position for a Professor in Optentia

The NWU Optentia has advertised a four-year contract appointment of a Professor to lead the Research Programme on Inclusion, Capability and Optimal Functioning in the research focus area. The programme aims to increase individuals' repertoire of strategies for working with differences among individuals. The purpose of the position is to

create and produce research outputs (peer-reviewed articles, master's dissertations and PhD theses, conference papers and peer-reviewed handbooks) through own research efforts and through the efforts of master's and PhD students by using the best available research methods and techniques in an ethical way to contribute to a

well-functioning research entity and competent students and staff members. The closing date for applications is 31 March 2020. Click [here](#) to see the advertisement.

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Books

- Bloom, P. (2016). *Against empathy: The case for rational compassion*. London: Penguin Books.
- Cilliers, J. (2020). *Africa first: Igniting a growth revolution*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers.
- Oswald, F.L., Behrend, T.S., & Foster, L.L. (2019). *Workforce readiness and the future of work*. New York: Routledge.
- Tierney, J., & Baumeister, R.F. (2019). *The power of bad: How the negativity effect rules us and how we can rule it*. London: Penguin Books.

Useful Resources

Oberski, D. L. (Author). (2009). Jrule for Mplus. Software <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10657>
Hayes, A. F., & Coutts, J. J. (2020). Use omega rather than Cronbach's alpha for estimating reliability. *But...* *Communication Methods and Measures*, 14, 1-24.

Upcoming Events (Click [here](#) to go to the Optentia Research Calendar)



- ◇ 8 April 2020 - Meeting: Optentia Scientific Committee
- ◇ 15 April 2020 - R & I Committee—Health Sciences
- ◇ 20 April 2020 - HSSREC meeting
- ◇ 22 April 2020 - R & I Committee—Humanities
- ◇ 24 April 2020 - EMSREC meeting

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