UKZN WELCOMES
First year students

UKZN pulled out all the stops to welcome first year students and their parents to the University this year.

ANXIETY mingled with excitement on the faces of first year students as they lined up at the registration and orientation venues. The Orientation Programme was compulsory for first year students. The Programme, hosted by all UKZN’s Faculties, provided guidance on academic life and also introduced students to the variety of societies and sporting clubs available at the University.

With over 6 500 current students and 1 300 new students under its wing, the Faculty of Management Studies held an extensive Orientation Programme. Dean of the Faculty Professor Lesley Stainbank encouraged students to work hard and not to get left behind. She added that to ensure that this happens, they need to complete all their assignments and to attend all their lectures.

The Faculty of Law’s Orientation Programme this year was shorter than previous years’ Programmes and more informative. Students were provided with information on the registration process, student services and the experience they would encounter as first years. The different student law organisations also encouraged students to join their ranks. These organisations focus on community projects and programmes to help students gain skills they will require when they qualify.

Students enjoyed the fun and games organised by the Student Leadership Development Office in the Quad on the Westville campus. They were also given an opportunity to have their eyes tested for free by the Optometry discipline. Activities included blindfolded students taking part in games to encourage awareness of visual impairment and blindness. Students with disabilities were encouraged to get involved in the University’s sporting activities.

The Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine held its annual Opening Ceremony in February. After an official address by the Dean of the Faculty, Professor Unmesh Laloo, first year students signed the Hippocratic Oath, pledging to abide by the rules and standards of the medical profession.

International students were not forgotten and a special orientation was organised for them on the Pietermaritzburg campus on February 1.

Organised by Ms Marie-Anna Marais and Ms Nombuso Mshali of the International Student Office on the Pietermaritzburg campus, the orientation equipped the international students with survival tips both for their studies and their social life while in South Africa.

Ms Frances Robert-Gregory from Spelman College in Atlanta and Ms Elsie Essien from Hobart and William Smith Colleges in New York who have been in South Africa for just over a week said they found the programme both helpful and informative. Apart from their studies, they are also looking forward to doing some voluntary work and learning about other cultures.

Parents’ Day

Parents play an important role in ensuring student success. Successful Parents’ Days were held on all five UKZN campuses on January 29 and 31.

Due to the increasing intake of students, Parents’ Day 2011 took on a different format to previous years. Parents attended Faculty-specific programmes, designed to familiarise them with all that is expected and available in each Faculty.

The programme included presentations from the University’s Executive Management,
The School of Biological and Conservation Science’s Nile Crocodile Research Project ended the year on a high note when they took possession of a research vehicle sponsored by the Mazda Wildlife Fund. The Mazda vehicle, which has been loaned to the project and is renewable annually, will enable Professor Colleen Downs and her cohort of postgraduate students to continue their research work on Nile Crocodiles in the Zululand area.

The loan vehicle will be fully maintained by a Mazda dealer and all service and maintenance costs will be covered by the Fund. The servicing dealers will also ensure that it operates at peak efficiency.

The Nile Crocodile Research Project is one of 29 non-government and non-profit organisation projects supported by the Mazda Wildlife Fund which is “dedicated to protecting and preserving our rich and irreplaceable heritage.” Over the past 10 years Mazda has invested over R26 million into the Fund and are committed to a future investment of R1.5 million per year.

Led by Professor Downs who was recently named UKZN’s Top Published Women Researcher ka 2008, i-UKZN’s Top Published Women Researcher, the project focuses on the conservation needs of the Nile Crocodile in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park. Initiated in 2009, it involves the collection of a variety of important data related to the ecology, physiology, epidemiology and genetics of the Nile Crocodile. The outputs of this research will benefit the scientific and conservation management communities both nationally and internationally. Among other things, it will generate comprehensive management plans, expand the understanding of crocodile ecology and promote and facilitate its protection.

The UKZN postgraduate students working on the Nile Crocodile Research Project include: Mr Xander Combrink, Mr Pete Calverley, Mr Garreth Champion and Mr Jon Warner.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Health Sciences, Professor Tahir Pillay and Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Professor Sabitha Essack with parents of first year Health Sciences students.

Mazda Wildlife supports UKZN conservation research

WORDS: VICKY CROOKES

Mazda wildlife

Isize ithimba locwangingo eUKZN

UMBHAILI: VICKY CROOKES


abakwa Mazda. Kanti bazobuye babalale fuhi ukuthi inangakwazi kumandla lezithatheni.


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Students urged to be the guardians of the Constitution

As part of their induction process, 260 first year students in the Faculty of Law took part in a pledge swearing ceremony on February 11.

Dean of the Faculty of Law, Professor Managay Reddi and first year story telling workshop

Students urged to be the guardians of the Constitution

WORDS: KITHEMBILE SHABANGU PHOTO: THE DAILY NEWS

Dean of the Faculty of Law, Professor Managay Reddi welcomed the students to the Faculty, and wished them well in their studies. She led the procession through the pledge signing ceremony. The students signed their pledges and all went onto the stage where they each handed a copy of the Constitution.

The pledge states that the students will conduct themselves with decorum; abide by the rules of the University; treat their fellow students and academic staff with respect; use the resources of the University in a proper manner, appreciating that these resources have been made available for this and future generations by the people of South Africa; give of their utmost best as a student; and act with integrity in all their actions both now as a student, and in the future as a professional.

The number of top students enrolled in the Faculty has increased this year compared to the previous years.

Storytelling workshop Empowers learners

A workshop sponsored by UKZN’s Centre for Visual Methodologies for Social Change and the NRF-funded Every Voice Counts project empowered learners on HIV and AIDS.

WORDS & PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

Over three days, a group of 11 grade eight learners from Gobindlovu Secondary School worked tirelessly to create digital stories about what they think and know about youth, HIV and AIDS, and their community. The Youth, HIV and AIDS and My Community project focused on learning how young people both experience and engage with the issue in a context where there are high rates of HIV and AIDS.

The project used digital storytelling – a participatory arts-based method – to explore this topic with the participants. Digital storytelling is both an arts-based method – to explore the so-called ‘justice versus peace’ dilemma, examining the challenges and prospects for promoting both peace and accountability, specifically in African countries affected by conflict and political violence.

Choice is a United States reviewer of academic books. Every year in the January issue, in print and online, Choice publishes a list of Outstanding Academic Titles that were reviewed during the previous calendar year. This prestigious list reflects the best in scholarly titles reviewed by Choice, in keeping with the extraordinary recognition of the academic library community. More than 35 000 academic librarians, faculty, and key decision-makers rely on the reviews in Choice magazine and Choice Reviews Online for collection, development and scholarly research.

Management Studies Dean invited to Millennium Awards in Ghana

Dean of the Faculty of Management Studies, Professor Lesley Stainbank was invited to attend the 2010 Millennium Excellence Awards in Ghana in December.

The University of KwaZulu-Natal’s publishing house, UKZN Press, is proud to announce that one of its publications has won a CHOICE Outstanding Academic Book of the Year award.

UKZN Press publication wins

Academic Book of the Year award

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WORDS: LUNGA MEMELA

Peace versus Justice? The Dilemma of Transitional Justice in Africa edited by Chandha Lehna Sirim and Suren Pillay was co-published with James Currey Publishers, leading academic publishers in the United Kingdom. The book offers fresh insights on the so-called ‘justice versus peace’ dilemma, examining the challenges and prospects for promoting both peace and accountability, specifically in African countries affected by conflict and political violence.

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The event is available on www.eafgh.org.

Stainbank was honoured to meet His Majesty, Otumfuo Osei Tutu ll, Asantehene, the life patron of the awards at the Royal Dinner held at Manhyia Palace, Kumasi.

She also used the opportunity to visit the University of Ghana Business School where she met with Dr Emmanuel Sakyi who is the Head of the Department of Public Administration and Health Services Management. The University’s Business School has similar Schools to that of UKZN’s Faculty of Management Studies and it is hoped to develop a close working relationship at a Faculty level.
Leading Pulmonologist Appointed Dean of the Medical School

A leading pulmonologist, medical scientist and expert in HIV medicine has been appointed as Dean of the Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine.

WORDS: MARYANN FRANCIS PHOTO: RAJESH JANTILAL

Professor Umesh Laloo, who is Professor and Chief Specialist at the medical school succeeded Professor Willem Sturm as head of the prestigious Faculty. His illustrious career spans over three decades. An expert in respiratory diseases and the former President of the South African Thoracic Society, Laloo is Head of the Respiratory and Critical Care Unit at the medical school.

As the Executive Director of the KwaZulu-Natal Enhancing Care Initiative (ECI) and the Principal Investigator of the International Clinical Trials Unit of the US Division of AIDS he is passionate in his research to stem the suffering of those affected by HIV/AIDS. His passion transcends medical research to train and empower health professionals, especially in the rural areas, in the clinical knowledge and understanding of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. Through the Medical Education Partnership Initiative (MEPI) of which he is the programme Director, Laloo is at the helm of spearheading initiatives that would benefit commune. The MEPI is designed to support the United States President’s Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)’s goals to train and retain 140,000 new health care workers and improve the capacity of partner countries to deliver primary health care.

Laloo was instrumental in securing over 15 million US dollars for both the MEPI and the ECI last year. The ECI will over the next five years utilise the funds for medical training of health professionals in the management of HIV and TB.

In 2002 Laloo was at the helm of the successful 72 million US dollar grant from the Global Fund – a significant resource to fund HIV and TB care in KwaZulu-Natal. He heads one of the largest HIV care programmes in the world.

Recognised both nationally and internationally as an expert in the field of Respiratory and HIV Medicine he has played an integral role in the training of health care workers and the general public in HIV and TB management over many years. His appointment to the Board of Directors of the Medical Research Council of South Africa by the national Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, is testament to his outstanding leadership skills. He is currently the International Regent of the American College of Chest Physicians and was re-elected for a second three year term in 2010.

Laloo’s remarkable career began as a student in the MBChB programme in 1979 and in 1993 he graduated with a MD (PhD equivalent). He has received honorary degrees from the American College of Chest Physicians and the Royal College of Physicians in the UK, respectively. In 1986, Laloo was appointed as specialist lecturer in the Department of Medicine at the former University of Natal and King Edward VIII Hospital. In 1989, he was appointed as Head of the Respiratory Unit at the Medical School. From 1993-1995, Laloo was a visiting clinical scientist at the Royal Brompton National Heart and Lung Institute in the University of London, UK. From 1997-2003, Laloo served as Professor and Chief Specialist and headed up both the Department of Medicine and the Respiratory Unit at the Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine.

He serves on the editorial board of the prestigious international journal, Clinical Infectious Diseases and is section editor for the International Journal of TB and Lung Diseases. He has been invited to deliver lectures at several international congresses such as the American Thoracic Society, the American College of Chest Physicians and the Indian Chest Society.

During his career, he has received many awards including the SA Pulmonology Society Best Publication Award in 1997 for best publication in an international peer-reviewed journal; the Golden Peak Award of the South African Indian Academy for Service to the Community; the SA Pulmonology Society/Pharmaceutical Visiting Lecturer Award 1999 – for outstanding service to the development of a respiratory medicine in South Africa; the International Governors Award by the American College of Chest Physicians for Community Service for HIV/AIDS Training Programs in 2003; and the American Association of Physicians of Indian (AAPI) Origin 2002 in recognition of his contribution to the advancement of Health Care in Durban and to AAPI’s Medical Education Program.

He was listed amongst the top 10 percent of reviewers for the journal Chest. He was elected the Arthur Landau Lecturer of the College of Physicians of South Africa in 2007. He also served as President of the SA Thoracic Society for two terms and is the chairperson of the Credentials Committee of the SA Thoracic Society. He is also Vice-President of the Society of Pulmonologists of the Indian Ocean Islands. Laloo was the founding Co-President of the Pan African Thoracic Society.

Given its unique place in the history of medical education in South Africa, the rainbow nation of staff and students, the challenges of health care, and the number of elite research units within its precipits, the NRMSM can be the premier medical school in country, if not in the world, said Laloo. He added that academic excellence must be the beacon.

A
fter qualifying as a doctor, Dr Gaede joined the Health Systems Trust (HST) as a facilitator in 1996 in the initiative for Sub-District Support in Bergville, in the Drakensberg. Thereafter, he stayed on in the Bergville area, working at Emmaus Hospital from the year 2000 as Hospital Manager, Medical Manager as well as Medical Officer at different stages.

He has been extensively involved with rural health advocacy through the rural Doctors Association of Southern Africa (RuDASA) as well as the Rural Health Advocacy Project.

The CRH works to improve the health of rural communities through research, capacity building and advocacy. The Centre works closely with the public health system, community networks and the University to improve the health care offered to underserved communities in rural areas.

“It is an intensive learning experience working out in the rural areas. It opens your eyes to how much change you can make working away from urban medical centres,” Gaede said.

Happy to have been received warmly by the Centre and colleagues at UKZN’s Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine, Gaede looked forward to working closely with medical students and encouraging ‘rural friendliness’ during their years of study and practice. His appointment is the first step in setting up the new Department of Rural Health at UKZN – the first academic department of its nature in the country.

Gaede admitted that it is tough working at a health practitioner in rural areas, which, while home to 45 percent of the country’s population, have few medical facilities and a shortage of medication. “It’s really a human rights issue for me,” said Gaede. He considers it unfair that the area in which one is born in South Africa determines how much access one has to health care.
Study on seafaring labour
A First for South Africa

It’s a first for UKZN and South Africa. Whilst many researchers have examined economic issues in the maritime industry, there has not been much focus in South African scholarship on understanding the sociology of labour markets for sailors in the global labour market at doctoral level.

WORDS & PHOTO: SITHEMBILE SHABANGU

For his PhD work on understanding the way labour markets and human resources practices impact on seafarers’ occupational lives, Dr Shaun Ruggunan, a senior lecturer at the discipline of Human Resources (HR) Management at the School of Management recently received a Y-rating from the National Research Foundation (NRF). The Y-rating recognises a researcher, under the age of 40, who is recognised by all or the overwhelming majority of reviewers as having the potential to establish him/herself as a researcher as demonstrated by recent research products.

Ruggunan’s work focused specifically at how employment trends have changed in the shipping industry in South Africa (SA), the Philippines and the United Kingdom (UK) for the past 30 years. He spent about three months in each country and in South Africa conducted most of his field work in Durban and Cape Town.

He said that his work has the potential to contribute to maritime studies which is one of UKZN’s research focus areas for 2011. He added that his thesis is interdisciplinary since it involves studies looking at economics, human resources development and industrial sociology which makes it an interdisciplinary study.

Another importance of this study is that it will help contribute to job creation strategies for South Africa. Values and Society found that South Africa has the least number of sailors in commercial shipping and the Philippines although it is second to SA has as many sailors in the UK have declined rapidly - this is caused by the fact that SA and SA are regarded as ‘expensive’. The study also compared the strategies used in the Philippines to those in the other two countries. He said that the wages paid to the sailors are tax free, paid in dollars and the rates are set globally.

Ruggunan was also commissioned by the Transport Education and Training Authority to research and investigate strategies that can be used to create employment opportunities for South African seafarers. He said government has recently invested money to examine a national training scheme to ensure that sailors obtain the requisite skills to complete their qualifications.

New director of Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer

UKZN’s new Director for the Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer Office, a division of the Research Office, Dr Mkhetwa Maluleke brings a wealth of experience to the University.

WORDS & PHOTO: SITHEMBILE SHABANGU

One of the main challenges Maluleke faces in his new role is assisting UKZN researchers to understand what the new Intellectual Property Rights Act for Publicly Funded Institutions entails and how it affects the way they have been used to conducting research and publication of their findings. Another main challenge is to assist in turning their research into applicable products that have commercial potential and positive societal impact.

Maluleke previously worked at the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) in Pretoria and has extensive Higher Education experience, with a PhD in Chemistry from the University of the Western Cape and an MBA from Stellenbosch University.

His other achievements include being registered as a South African patent for “Electrochemical membrane containing proton conductors of Inorganic origin” (1999), receiving the James Moir Award of the South African Chemical Institute for Best Chemistry Student (2000), the NRF Prestigious Scholarship for Master of Science degree (2001), SAIIA Scholarship second prize for best Analytical Chemistry proposal (2001), the NRF Prestigious Scholarship for PhD studies (2002) / He has developed electromembrane prototypes for the purification of industrial effluents polluted with organic compounds (PhD studies)

Maluleke hopes to use the commercialisation experience gained from working with experts at the TIA to take products from UKZN research into the market.

Intellectual property (IP) rights are valuable assets for South Africa because today’s global economy depends on IP. Most of the country’s IP is developed through hard work on the part of researchers and it is the duty of the Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer Office to assist researchers in ensuring that their work is protected and commercialised through various commercialisation models e.g. licensing.

Maluleke sais that he is hoping to encourage researchers not to conduct basic research but be actively involved with research that addresses real problems in South Africa and globally - for example, energy storage or acid mine drainage etc. “Our research should be geared at creating products of high value, and new economies as well as new jobs for our graduates and the unemployed people of our society,” he said.

He encouraged the University community to use Office, which is there to make the lives of researchers easier. He added that one of his duties is to establish a Regional Office of Technology Transfer between all the universities in KwaZulu-Natal. A memorandum of understanding between some of these universities has been signed and the Regional Office will ensure more collaboration among the institutions.

Exchange student enjoys Education Programme in Canada

Ms Sindisiwe Msimango is among the few students selected annually by the University’s International Office and relevant Faculty to participate in an exchange programme overseas.

On her departure on December 30, 2010, Msimango could not believe her dream was coming true. She was encouraged to apply by another student from her Faculty who had gone on a similar programme to Drake University in the United States of America the previous year.

“Im here in Canada and Im so excited about this opportunity,” said Msimango. “It is my wish to see more students at the University participating in this programme in future. Being in other institutions around the world is one experience that all students should desire in their tertiary life. It’s a good time to explore and learn the different cultures as well as being exposed to other pedagogical approaches that are far different from those applicable in our home University,” she said.

Msimango is enrolled for a programme in the Arts, taking four modules: Philosophy of Mind; Geomorphology and Soils; Values and Society; and Women Studies. “Im enjoying the classes and I have already adapted to their style of teaching saying that we are far different from that in our University,” she said.

She will be returning to South Africa on May 4.

Ms Sindisiwe Msimango is having the time of her life in Canada.

Dr Shaun Ruggunan.

Dr Mkhetwa Maluleke.

Exchange student enjoys Education Programme in Canada

Ms Sindisiwe Msimango, a student at UKZN’s Faculty of Education is treasuring every moment away from her homeland in a student exchange programme at the Wilfrid Laurier University in Canada.

Words: Lunga Memela
Photo: Supplied

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Words: & Photo: Sithembile Shabangu

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Mr Jonathan Dockney.

Mr Sjoerd Van Groothest.

The glass is half full

Students reflect on the role of journalism in Africa

Journalism is not about branding. This might seem a contentious statement in South Africa's current atmosphere of reporting good news. But, a journalist's job does not concern branding the news for country or continent.

The glass is half full in independent functioning is balanced and objective reporting. The journalist's job does not concern branding the news for country or continent. Journalism is not about branding. This might seem a contentious statement in South Africa's current atmosphere of reporting good news.

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Graduate Opinion Survey
Provides valuable feedback from students

The Graduate Opinion Survey 2010 conducted by UKZN’s Quality Promotion and Assurance (QPA) is the sixth such survey since the merger of the former Universities of Durban-Westville and Natal.

W OR D S & P H O T O S: L U N G A M E M E L A

The objective of the Survey is to gain a broad range of graduate opinion by asking graduates to assess the quality of their University education. The Survey seeks to discover not only how satisfied graduates are with their educational experience at UKZN, but to ascertain what proportion of graduates are employed and how many are involved in further study. It also aims to give graduates a voice on issues that are important to them.

The Graduate Opinion Survey was first designed in 1999 by the Quality Promotion Unit and Division of Management Information. The Survey instrument has undergone a number of changes since its inception. The 2003 Graduate Opinion Survey serves as the baseline data for the newly merged Institution.

The questionnaire, which is administered during Graduation Ceremonies, comprises of five main sections, covering:

• A number of demographic questions;
• A section that assesses graduates’ satisfaction with their degree/diploma as a whole. This section is further sub-divided in terms of qualities for effective education: quality of teaching, clarity of goals and standards, nature of assessment, level of workload and enhancement of generic skills;
• Graduates’ current employment status;
• Graduates’ plans for further study;
• Comments on the questionnaire.

A total number of 4,463 graduates participated in the 2010 Survey. There has been an increase in the number of graduates completing the questionnaire over the years. In 2010, the highest number of respondents came from the Faculties of Education, Law and Management Studies.

Sixty five percent of the respondents were female and 35 percent were male. English was the first language of 48 percent of the respondents, and 93 percent were South African citizens. Although not all respondents chose to indicate their race group, the demographics reflected that of KwaZulu-Natal, with 47 percent African and 37 percent Indian. 2010 saw a slight increase in the number of international students completing the questionnaire over the 2009 to 2010 data. The researchers found the workload manageable. Seven percent of respondents believed the learning environment at UKZN had helped them to study effectively.

Employment Status

Sixty eight percent of graduates at the April 2010 Graduation Ceremonies had just completed their first degree or diploma. Forty-six percent said they were employed, while 17 percent indicated they were employed while studying further. Twenty two percent of graduates said that they were not employed, but were studying further; one percent was self-employed; 13 percent were unemployed and another one percent said they were involved in other activities. In total, 78 percent said they were satisfied with their current activity (see pie chart).

At a Faculty level, 2010 appears to have been a positive year for graduates from the Faculties of Education, Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, Management Studies, Health Sciences and the Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine.

One of the University’s strategic goals is to promote teaching and learning through creative and innovative curriculum design and development, pedagogical strategies, and assessment practices in accordance with the highest quality management principals. The results of the Survey make significant input into this commitment.

"The value of the report of this kind is to stimulate discussion among all stakeholders of the University," said the researchers. "At a Faculty level, 2010 appears to have been a positive year for graduates from the Faculties of Education, Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, Management Studies, Health Sciences and the Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine." One of the University’s strategic goals is to promote teaching and learning through creative and innovative curriculum design and development, pedagogical strategies, and assessment practices in accordance with the highest quality management principals. The results of the Survey make significant input into this commitment.

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An area of concern across all Colleges in terms of skills development for students was computer skills. The vast majority of graduates believe that their studies led to the sharpening of their analytical skills much lower than the other listed skills. "Most skills have shown a slight increase in levels of graduate satisfaction from 2009 to 2010 with computer skills showing the largest decrease by 1.1 percent," said the researchers. To aid with curriculum planning, graduates were asked to assess their workload and the standard of work they were expected to produce at UKZN. Seventy nine percent said they understood the standard of work that was expected from them throughout their studies but fewer (69 percent) found the workload manageable.

A major strategic thrust for UKZN is to establish the University as an institution of choice for students - an institution that values students in all their diversity and has a student-centred ethos, providing students with curricula, teachers, infrastructure and support services designed around their needs and producing well-educated, competent and sought-after graduates. The Graduate Opinion Survey is a positive tool towards the realisation of this goal.

An electronic copy of the report is available from Ms Tarryn Zank at QPA. zankt@ukzn.ac.za

Graphs courtesy of Quality Promotion and Assurance, UKZN.
The UKZN Griot
Of Teaching and Research

When I was at school we were called “pupils”, but more often just “school children”. Now these youngsters are called “learners”.

Words: Keyan Tomaseelli

This semantic engineering does not of course conceal the fact that only quarter or so of any undergraduate class actually learns anything substantive, or learning how to learn in the process. The majority simply learn how to write exams and how to manoeuvre through their degree without learning very much at all.

A Swedish lecturer who addressed our students last year about “the experience economy” linked this concept to what he called “learned helplessness”. Those who have learned to be helpless are all around us. Schools, universities, and educational institutions of all kinds seem to teach this passive, dependent and debilitating condition. Entertaining the masses is now the job of lecturers where students enrolled at taxpayer expense think that they are clients paying for a product. This instrumental attitude is the kiss of death as far as critical thinking is concerned.

Last year SUNexx published an article by Gail Robin-son entitled, Academics: Researchers or Teachers? She was debating an article published in UKZN-TODAY where terms like “up-skill” and “teachers bridging gaps” were invoked. This language sits uneasily with the research discourse that emanates from other sectors of the University. In between are found artists and performers who claim to be doing both teaching and research. It’s not clear what they are doing though the NRF rating committee on the Performing and Visual Arts seems to think it knows what its constituency is doing. But that’s another argument that goes to definitions of research and how it is reported, in print, clay, song or dance.

The polarisation of the argument between ‘teaching’ on the one hand and ‘research’ on the other often forgets that the best researchers are also often the best teachers. This is because researchers are located at their respective disciplinary coalfaces: they educate from practices in the field, from direct experience, from the empirical and theoretical fronts, so to speak. They are not relying on a textbook that someone else wrote, based in a different context, far removed from the daily experience of UKZN students. Researchers/educators critique the textbooks – a positively unsettling experience for students. Theory and method come alive in the actual practice of the discipline – made possible by research-led education.

Researchers (and indeed activists, anyone who is socially involved), engage students via methods designed to break dependency, passivity and promote agency. Regrettably, the word ‘teaching’, suggests that it is the lecturer who does the work while students respond like ‘clients’ – waiting for the ‘service’.

Students learn best when they are educating themselves. The ‘teacher’ is actually the facilitator/educator. The educator should be asking questions, not delivering answers, uploading notes and power points on Moodle, creating a day-care environment. In the US I learned the Socratic method: ask questions in class and encourage students to debate answers that they themselves offer. This method can be a really daunting experience for the best of educators. Trying to elicit productive debate from often sullen and under-prepared students (even from the minority who actually come to class) takes a lawyer-like doggedness.

Teachers may need to be trained and held accountable to regulating bodies, but educators and researchers take responsibility for their own practices. Regulation encourages instrumentalisation where students imagine that ‘doing time’ is the equivalent of learning. Learning is a dynamic negotiation in the thick of things. Evaluation delivers numbers for the auditor, while education facilitates learning for the students. This is known as critical pedagogy a la Paulo Freire.

Just when one thought that instrumentalist rationality had reached its zenith, then I opened an email and read about the way that Texas A&M University is attempting to calculate a profit-and-loss statement for each faculty member, weighing annual salary against numbers of students taught, tuition generated, and research grants obtained. The 265 page document includes balance sheets of which lecturers earned profits for the institution and those who are operating in the red.

This kind of productivity spreadsheet imposes a symbolic violence that reduces everything to that which can be measurable, instead of measuring that which is symbolically valuable. (I do agree however that staff who are under-performing do need to be made accountable.) Not everything can be measured, and neither should it. How would one measure immeasurable individual and institutional contributions to the NRF, CSIR, Academy of Science, National Heritage Council, etc.?

Algebra, after all, is about relationships, propositions and possibilities. Knowledge, especially indigenous knowledges, exist in the collective rather than the individual mind, they resist the tour-niquet of monetisation. DNA sequencing may never have been discovered had its inventors been told to earn their keep through the spreadsheet economy. Brutal instrumentalisation heralds the death for humankind. As Lenin once observed, the capitalist will happily sell the rope to his executioner. Similarly, the educational bureaucrat now auditing the US tertiary sector via profit and loss statements will claim fiscal accountability at the very moment that there is nothing left to be accounted for.

Forget climate change, productivity audits of the kind envisaged by Texas A&M will reduce the academy to a state of entropy already assumed by students – nothing more than a service (even as we head towards extinction of the species).

Keyan G Tomaselli is Director of The Centre for Communication, Media and Society. He used to be a science fiction buff, now he knows it is not fiction.