

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION TALKS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE RESEARCH AND POSTGRADUATE SUPPORT DIRECTORATE

DIRECTORATE FOR RESEARCH AND POSTGRADUATE SUPPORT

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the 2nd issue of this biannual newsletter. This is our first edition for the academic year 2021.

The research and innovation activities of the DUT have been proactive towards societal challenges and concerns. In the past few years, we have identified and developed measures to transform research and innovation in the whole institution. There are no doubts that the last academic year was challenging due to corona virus pandemic which slowed down the academic pace of many of our students and staff.

As an institution we are gradually overcoming and ensuring effective mechanisms to achieve great academic goals as we combat the pandemic.

Our institution has skyrocketed in areas of research, community engagement and technological innovations and this has given rise to the numbers of research-minded academics and fostered numerous international collaborations and partnerships. With this newsletter, we celebrate remarkable achievements of our academic researchers and non-academic collaborators as a university and we discuss the

efforts we have been making to ensure a conducive/progressive research and innovation environment.

Dr L.Z Linganiso
Director



NEWS

DUT LAUNCHES FIRST DHET ACCREDITED JOURNAL

The Research and Postgraduate support (RPS) announced the successful accreditation of the African Journal of Inter/Multidisciplinary Studies (AJIMS). As part of the value of ENVISION2030, the successful accreditation of DUT's pioneer journal has gladdened the hearts of the research directorate. The idea to launch an in-house journal started a few years back and it was initiated by Ms Vaneshree Govender and Dr Kunle Oparinde. This idea was embraced by the DVC: Research, Innovation, and Engagement (RIE), Professor Sibusiso Moyo. The concept of the African Journal of Inter/multidisciplinary Studies was derived from the introspection that Africa is a foundation of knowledge and one of the engagement agenda is to disseminate scientific outputs that is worth sharing with a wider range of scholars both in Africa and beyond. Since the inaugural issue of AJIMS, it has crossed a major milestone and has received attention from both local and

international academics as evident in the geographical variations of existing publications in AJIMS.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: RIE – Professor Sibusiso Moyo commended the effort of the RPS, stating that the accreditation of AJIMS is worthy of celebration. However, she urged for balance and good academic structure for the journal. She further adds that DUT's research and innovation must be pursued with the highest level of integrity and excellence as this is an integral part of the vision and mission of the institution as well as one of the strategies for ENVISION2030. She also acknowledged the enabling environment for the RPS which has been created by the Director of research and postgraduate support, Dr Linda Linganiso who oversaw the directorate and excellently pursued the mission of ENVISION2030.

DUT HOST RESEARCH INTEGRITY WEBINAR

The Research, Innovation and Engagement (RIE) office hosted a virtual research webinar in line with ENVISION 2030. One of the tenets of ENVISION 2030 is to encourage stewardship. With this vision in mind, it is imperative that the upcoming generation of professors and academics are equipped with proper research and ethical tips to produce accurate research engagement. The webinar started with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: RIE - Professor Sibusiso Moyo welcoming guests and participants of the webinar, she enjoined staffs of DUT to engage with the importance of integrity on the supervision of students, as well as students maintaining ethical balance while conducting research that will potentially benefit the society.

The guest speaker, Professor Lex Bouter teaches research integrity foundation across the globe. Presenting his content at the Webinar, Professor Bouter discussed the importance of research integrity, the challenges faced by researchers, expectations of research institutes and journal proceedings. Professor Bouter expressed his concerns that it is quite common among

researchers to tamper with the validity, truth and authentication of data collected, he expressed that it happens across different fields of research-social sciences, applied sciences, engineering, medical sciences, and others. He mentioned that in an ongoing study conducted among European students and researchers, it was a common thing for them to tamper with results from their studies to suit the narrative. Professor Bouter claimed that research ethics have been eroded in many institutions and this is not peculiar to Africa, it happens across many universities across the globe.

In his concluding note, he advised that research should adopt the Responsible Research Innovation (RRI) as this concerns the benefits of research integrity for society and the environment. He admonished researchers at DUT to continue to maintain honesty in all aspect of research, accountability in the conduct of research, professionalism and fairness when engaging with others for international collaboration. See more- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FHg17aQ7usdSdGj42zmdfDhHhTKMvOsF/view>

DUT HOSTS VIRTUAL POSTGRADUATE INDUCTION

The Office of the DVC Research, Innovation and Engagement (RIE) together with Research and Post-graduate Directorate (RPS) hosted its first-ever virtual Annual Postgraduate Induction and Welcome Day, on Thursday 08 April 2021. The induction was a way of welcoming all postgraduate students into the institution. The aim of the induction is to expose all current and prospective postgraduate students to the wide range of academic development and support programs offered by the Durban University of Technology. The focal point of the induction program centered on skills acquisition, as well as resources needed for every postgraduate student to be an effective researcher, such as: funding opportunities, capacity building, collaborations with other students and how students can access support provided by the university and its stakeholders.

The induction program was chaired by Ms Vaneshree Govender who welcomed the Director of Postgraduate School at the University of Free state. Professor Witness Mudzi, who was the guest speaker. Professor Mudzi shared his expertise and wealth of experience as a head of Postgraduate school. He discussed the transition

from undergraduate studies to postgraduate studies. Without doubt, Professor Mudzi inspired the postgraduate student on their journey and highlighted the challenges peculiar with postgraduate studies which is not unique to DUT but cuts across other South African academic institutions. He discussed issues pertaining to funding opportunities and the type of research that attract collaborators and funders both locally and internationally. He finally urged all postgraduate students to believe in their strengths, engage in team works for proper research engagement, attention details and importantly, postgraduate students should be able to work with people from various backgrounds.

DUT's Deputy Registrar, Dr Karen Lazenby presented the general rules, regulation process, fees for both local and international postgraduate student (fee remissions and instalment dates). She equally covered the examination process for masters and doctoral students highlighting that the procedure begins at the faculty level from start to finish. One of the major highlights of the induction program was the presentation from the DUT library service which was rendered by Mr David Thomas. He congratulated the new

postgraduate students and engaged with them on the importance of the library towards achieving a reputable academic standard. Professor Fulufhelo Netswera, the Dean of the Faculty of Management Sciences briefly welcomed postgraduate students and discussed the support available for students at the faculty level and the developmental programs that can assist students in the writing of their proposals and thesis. In the same vein, the postgraduate support team discussed their roles and responsibilities in supporting postgraduate students with their research while also creating an enabling environment through capacity building, publications, ethical issues, and research integrity as well as application for research funds.

Finally, the President of Postgraduate association (PGA) Mr Themba Zitha shared some experiences and highlighted what the association offers in terms of Support.

The RPS Director - Dr Linda Linganiso ends with a quote for all the students stating that: As you embark on postgraduate journey, *"Believe in yourself and all that you are. Know that there is something inside you that is greater than any obstacle"* Christian D. Larson.

RPS CALLS FOR CONFERENCE CONTRIBUTORS - CONVERSATIONS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

The Research and Postgraduate Support (RPS) Directorate calls for contribution to the Sustainability Development conference developed with the aim of locating sustainable development in higher education. Our title this year recognizes that we face a future that is uncertain, as the world is challenged by various factors. One such factor is the idea that within the human society, individuals must live and meet their needs without compromising the ability of the future generation. The institution's ENVISION2030 seeks to create a safe, open, and honest exchange of diverse experiences on the necessity of sustainable development (SD). The integrated approach adopted by the conference bodes well to discuss key issues relating to the critical achievement of African goals and aspirations.

The conference is a three-day event. It is an open interactive discussion of papers, that will be presented and grouped thematically: sustainable development in the era of COVID-19; higher education priorities for sustainable development in Africa; the centrality of African research to sustainable development; and locating sustainable development in teaching and learning activities among others. The conference will produce a journal special issue for best articles.

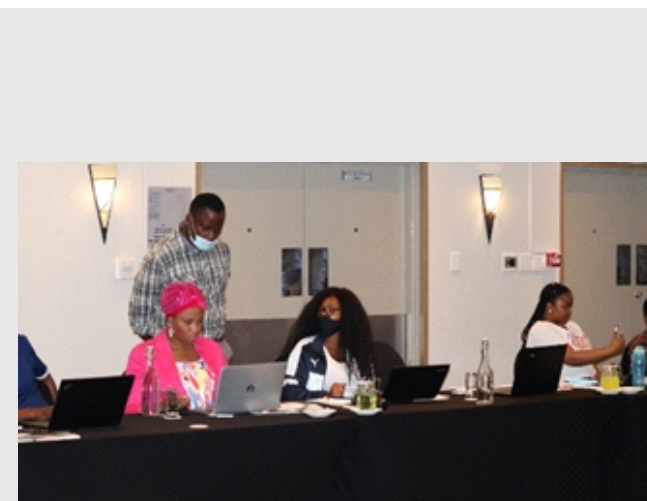
We invite authors to submit their abstracts before the deadline 31 August 2021. For submission and enquiries click here <https://www.dut.ac.za/sustainabledevconf/>

POSTGRADUATE WRITING RETREAT

A writing and publishing retreat was conducted by the Postgraduate and Research Division on the 30th of November 2020. The primary aim of this retreat was to provide researchers with an enabling environment to complete their research articles while receiving professional assistance from writing experts. A total of 71 manuscript was expected to be completed by the end of the retreat. The RPS continues to support the writing retreat participants with programmes and workshops that will aid in the completion and submission of the manuscript to DHET accredited journals. These programmes/workshops aim to



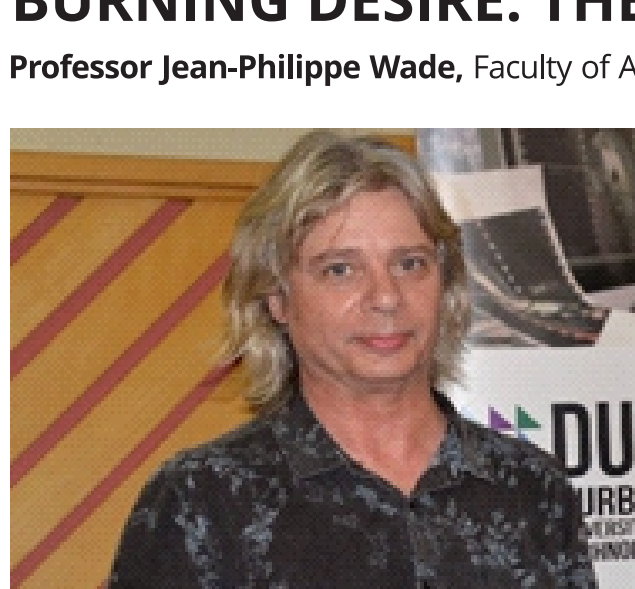
support and guide researchers in their academic writing journeys. As such, the purpose of the retreat was not only to publish papers, but also to equip postgraduate students and researchers with writing



skills with the aim of increasing DUT research outputs and developing adaptive graduates as per the university's ENVISION 2030.

INAUGURAL LECTURE: BURNING DESIRE: THE STRANGE STORY OF IZIKHOTHANE

Professor Jean-Philippe Wade, Faculty of Arts and Design: Durban University of Technology



My Cultural Studies analysis focused on Izikhothane, an African youth post-apartheid subculture mostly found in the poor townships around Johannesburg. The members of the subculture were obsessed with expensive brands, from designer clothes to alcohol, and 'crews' would do each other in their public, trying to out-do each other in flaunting their expensive commodities. What caught the outraged attention of the media was that they would sometimes publicly set fire to their designer clothes and real money, and splashed cartons of Ultra-Mel custard about.

Most of the recent academic research into Izikhothane argues that the story they are telling us is a conformist one, of youths lingering in the crucible of capitalist Johannesburg, and entranced by a dazzling post-apartheid globalized consumer culture to which they uncritically aspire in an orgy of 'conspicuous consumption'. My article challenged this dominant moral outrage by arguing that Izikhothane does indeed contain a critical aspect that exposes the 'waste' at the heart of consumer capitalism, but it is a peculiarly postmodern kind of critique that operates both within and against the hegemonic order.

The talk drew on a number of sources: anthropological studies of the potlatch feasts among the Kwakiutl people of Vancouver Island on the Pacific north-west where luxury goods were destroyed in the competition for status amongst nobles; Jean Baudrillard's theory of consumer culture 'sign value', where goods do not merely have cultural meanings, but are instead thrust with cultural meanings such as social status; Thorstein Veblen's argument that the surplus remaining after the basic necessities of life are met can be spent in either of two ways: either it can be spent on conspicuous consumption for reasons of social status, in which case it is 'wasteful expenditure', or it can be used for improving the quality of life, where it is the opposite of wasteful; Vance Packard's theory of the "obsolescence of desirability...a product that is still sound in terms of quality or performance becomes 'worn out' in our minds because a styling or other change makes it seem less desirable", which is the inevitable consequence of a 'hyperthyroid economy' that needs the careless wastefulness of constantly replacing industrial goods through extreme consumerism; and Schouten and McAlexander's theory of a 'subculture of consumption', where a life-style is built around a commodity (such as the Harley Davidson motorbike).

Drawing on Veblen, Baudrillard argued that in the contemporary arena of consumer capitalism the use-value or 'functionality' of an object is no more than an 'alibi' for its actual identity as 'sign-value' to denote social status and rank. The purported functionality of an object is therefore ideological, obscuring its real social role as a 'signification of prestige'. What Izikhothane does in its rituals of prestige commodity destruction is bring to visibility Baudrillard's insight. Since the clothes are physically destroyed, there is no pretence that they serve any functional 'use-value'. The Veblenian notion of

capitalism's wastefulness is here seen in its most pure form: the clothes and other goods exist entirely as 'sign-value', as markers of competitive status, their ideological 'alibi' completely discarded. It is the sign-value without even the product, which has been destroyed.

Packard's focus is on the wastefulness of an industrial consumer-centred society, where consumers must prodigally replace goods and discard others, and to that end he drew our attention to the 'obsolescence of desirability' based on the logic of clothing fashion, where superficial stylistic alterations suddenly make goods unfashionable and therefore destined to be replaced. Izikhothane's destruction of brand clothes is therefore a symbolic performance of this 'throw away' society, revealing a wasteful destructiveness at the very heart of contemporary consumption. The whole point of consumer capitalism, Izikhothane reveals, is constantly to destroy commodities in order for the system to function profitably.

Izikhothane is not openly rebellious, trying to define a way of life outside of capitalism, as hippies or punks did. But what they are doing powerfully is parodying consumer culture from within, pushing the notion of conspicuous consumption and status seeking to the point where it reveals its dark secret of an obsessive and prodigally destructive wastefulness.

What Izikhothane does through parody – which is a distancing device – is articulate an autonomy from the dominant system, which opens up a space for self-fashioning, which presumes a heightened capacity for controlling one's self-construction. This is a postmodern cultural politics of the self, an internal distancing from 'mainstream' culture, that is both inside and critical of it.