

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Dr Ato Kwamena Onoma  
Council for the Development of Social  
Science Research in Africa  
Dakar, SENEGAL

### **Title: On surpassing the specter of impossibility**

**Abstract:** The idea of sustainable rural learning ecologies in Africa apparently constitutes a contradiction in terms. Blighted by material poverty and deprivation and renowned for its provincialism, rural worlds seem to represent the opposite of the ideal setting for sustainable learning ecologies, which cultivate open, questioning and investigative spirits while fostering the acquisition of knowledge and skills. This rural landscape that is often seen as the den of material deprivation and parochialism is the outcome of colonial policies and their postcolonial successors. This contrived nature of what we have come to see as the rural opens space for creating and perpetuating sustainable rural learning ecologies. Pursued as a forward-looking project, the deliberate creation of sustainable rural learning ecologies is warranted by peculiarities that position rural spheres as ideal domains for cutting edge learning on some of the most important questions in an Africa undergoing rapid transformation.



Dr. Laurette S M Bristol  
Assistant Director: Research Institute  
for Professional Practice, Learning and  
Education (RIPPLE)  
Charles Sturt University  
Australia

### **Title: “Bouncy Questions!” Plantation Pedagogy as an interrogation of educational practices**

**Abstract:** This presentation considers the question of: *“How we do and think of educational development when educational development as a social practice and as a social construct has been prefigured by the particularities of histories of interaction, social conditions, political dynamism and economic aspirations.”* When well-executed education has the capacity to transform social, political and economical circumstances of dependency. Teachers in postcolonial educational circumstances are charged with the responsibility of re-employing education to transcend the historical antecedents of teaching practices that simultaneously operate within the educational site as practices of oppression and practices of intellectual subversion. *Plantation pedagogy* constructs teaching as a practice enmeshed in the nexus of historical traditions, social organisations and economic

developments (locally and globally). It is an interrogative form that supports the ways in which teachers' intervene in educational development; particularly when educational systems and educators are often complicit in crafting development as a mode of external gazing.

The arguments presented will invite participants to ask *bouncy questions* that dig at the root of an experienced event, a phenomenon, or a practice. Plantation pedagogy locates *interrogation for educational development* in the arena of *the personal, the personal in community* and the *professional advocacy of the community*.



Professor Mabokang Mapesela  
Central University of Technology,  
Free State  
South Africa

### **Title: Turning the tide of disadvantage into an opportunity for development**

#### **Abstract:**

This paper is a reflection of personal experiences of a black woman from a semi-rural area. Contrary to the fact that many people associate rurality, blackness and womanhood with disadvantage, I view these as opportunities that co-existed in my life to the benefit of each other and to my growth as a black woman academic. Although I regard the place that nurtured me to be semi-rural, the teachings that have molded my life and who I am today are a mix of traditional values and Western education. The strongest armament for my development has always been to turn the tide of what others perceive as disadvantage, deficiency, domination or segregation in my favour.

Our communities, schools and universities are all but ethnographic spaces or sites where rich transformation and emancipatory experiences and memories are printed daily. They are learning spaces regardless of whether social justice, participation and non-discrimination exist. I highlight the richness of these environments which I have inhabited and how I have embraced opportunities that these spaces presented. I reflect on personal and professional experiences and their interaction with environmental and historical contexts. The paper hardly aligns with any particular theoretical frame of reference or typical research methodologies, but is a critical reflection of my life experiences, mindful, however of how the autobiographical dimension of ethnography is discounted and downplayed for fear of lack of scientific objectivity, reliability and integrity.

#### **Key words:**

Emancipation, rurality, semi-rural, values, learning experiences



**Professor John Halsey**

**Rural Education and  
Communities  
School of Education  
Flinders University**

**Title: Progressing the sustainability of rural communities [and therefore all communities] with education: Making the margins centres and the ordinary extra- ordinary.**

**Abstract:** The purpose of this keynote is to consider how the sustainability of rural communities could be progressed by re-locating the metro-centric privileging for most if not all major policy and practice, to rural contexts. In relation to education specifically, at the heart of this relocation is a triptych of questions about rural education's fundamental purpose: is it learning for leaving, learning for staying or learning for choice? Selected mini-case studies drawn from the Australian context are offered as a means to explore how moving what is privileged and valued towards rural might occur. Some implications for radically reframing schools and schooling, leadership and teacher formation, and national and regional policy and operations, are identified and discussed.



**Mr Lebusa Monyooe**

**Director: Grants Management and  
Systems Administration (GMSA)  
National Research Foundation  
South Africa**

**Title: “From Cradle to Grave”: Transforming South Africa’s Rural and Urban Learning Ecologies**

**Abstract:** In his state of the Nation Address to Parliament on May 24, 1994, the former President Nelson Rolihlaha Mandela challenged South Africa (citizenry) to “*Seize the time to define ourselves, what we want to make of our shared destiny*”. This year’s colloquium theme, namely “*Sustainable Rural Learning Ecologies: Border Crossing*” bears similarities to what President Mandela uttered twenty years ago. When President Mandela invited the nation to “*Seize the time to define ourselves...*” South Africa had entered a new political era. It was a vulnerable phase for the nation, as the country had reached a political border. It was a momentous phase to transit to a new political dispensation and chart new governance regimes for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The tumultuous years of political struggle had far-reaching consequences on national imperatives, especially educational provisioning. This keynote interrogates the cardinal principles and or principalities that underpin responsive radical strategies that have the potential to substantially transform educational

provisioning. It specifically underscores the importance of bridging the quality gap between rural and urban educational provisioning and achievements.



**Dr Lis Lange**  
**Vice Rector: Academic**  
**University of the Free State**  
**South Africa**

**Title: Higher education and development: critical reflections.**

Dr Lis Lange is currently Acting Vice-Rector: Academic at the University of the Free State where she holds a substantive position as Senior Director heading the Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning. Before this, she was the Executive Director (2006-2010) of the Higher Education Quality Committee of the Council of Higher Education (CHE), and Acting CEO of the same organisation between August 2007 and April 2008. She has been involved in the development and implementation of science and technology and higher education policy in South Africa for a decade and a half, working in different capacities in the Human Sciences Research Council, the National Research Foundation and the Council on Higher Education. Dr Lange has served as a member of the board of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and has participated in several international initiatives on quality assurance. She is the editor of an academic journal focused on the humanities, *Acta Academica*. She has undertaken research and published in the fields of history, higher education and quality assurance. Her major concern in both research and practice is the role of higher education in the development of democratic societies based on social justice.

Dr Lange studied in Argentina, Mexico and South Africa, where she obtained a PhD in South African history from the University of the Witwatersrand.



**Prof Andre Keet**  
**Director: Institute for**  
**Reconciliation and Social Justice**  
**University of the Free State**  
**South Africa**

**Title: *It is Time: Critical Human Rights Education in an Age of Counter-hegemonic Distrust***

**Abstract:** Propelled by the global dominance of the human rights discourse and the well-established international consensus on its importance, Human Rights Education (HRE) proliferated from the mid-1990s onwards. This, however, did not result in urbane and cutting-edge HRE constructions and practices. Rather, what emerged was a HRE steeped in the rhetoric of ‘emancipation’, participatory pedagogies and ‘transformation’, and thin on the ‘praxis’ of criticality. Because of this, I argue, HRE is both unqualified and unable to critique the conditions that make possible the rights violations it aims to address. It is thus, in a sense, contributing to the budding age of a counter-hegemonic distrust in the general human rights discourse. Routing my reasoning through the historical development of HRE, I suggest that the time for a Critical Human Rights Education (CHRE) has arrived.