



**science & innovation**

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Department:  
Science and Innovation  
**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**



**SAASTA**

South African Agency for Science  
and Technology Advancement

# North West University

**Project Leader:** Prof Lesley Wood

**Academic Disciplines:** Education, with collaboration with other faculties as determined by needs as they arise (e.g. Computer Sciences, Health Sciences, Law, Natural and Agricultural Sciences etc.)

# Project Description

There are two major interrelated issues currently facing education in South Africa. The first is the poor quality of education for most learners, and the other is that learners exiting the system find it increasingly hard to compete against their more privileged peers to access higher education and/or employment. This situation was further exacerbated at the height of COVID-19, which highlighted the educational fault line between privileged and underprivileged sections of society, as school closure deprived children in township and rural contexts of education. The participatory research approach by the NWU addresses both issues by mobilizing unemployed township youth and unemployed university graduates to lead community action to provide alternative educational opportunities to complement and enhance formal education, not only in this time of crisis, but on a sustainable basis.

# Project Description Continued

The project will generate knowledge about how to enable relevant learning to continue, whenever formal education is failing to equip learners to learn and develop to a level required for them to improve their life opportunities. Furthermore, the project addresses another pressing issue, that of young people who have completed formal education but are unable to access further training or employment (commonly referred to as NEET). By developing these young people as community-based researchers and providers of support, these untapped community assets generate knowledge to disrupt educational inequality and devise pathways to enable learning to continue when formal education is interrupted and/or when learners need additional support.

# Project Description Continued

Through its existing research partnership with a youth skills development agency (a non-profit organisation) in Khuma, an impoverished township in the North West province, researchers will seek to take a unique approach of taking the science shop facility to the community. The key and distinguishing approach for the NWU science shop is the trans- and multi-disciplinary nature of the team that would partner to assist our community to find collective solutions to “wicked problems” such as poverty, unemployment, health and education and development.

# Research questions

1. What are the issues challenging the health and well-being of children and families in the Isibindi villages?
2. How can spaces in the Isibindi villages be reconstructed to promote the wellbeing of children and families?
3. How can these villages use the cultural/spiritual wisdom of elders to strengthen the wellbeing of children, youth and their caregivers.
4. How can the spiritual and cultural wisdom of the community be used to reconstruct the physical and psychological spaces of these rural contexts?
5. How can the intellectual expertise of the child and youth care Department and final year child care students be used to train rural men and women in addressing the needs of vulnerable families and in co-constructing the physical and psychological spaces of the Isibindi villages?

# Project Team Roles and Responsibilities

Prof Macalane  
Malindi  
Co-investigator

Dr Rachel  
Mayimele  
Co-investigator

Dr Pateka Jama  
Co-investigator

Dr Samantha  
Kahts-Kramer  
Post doc  
researcher

# Project Team Roles and Responsibilities

Prof Hendri Coetzee  
Co-investigator

Mr Michael Matlapeng  
Gatelepele Youth Skills  
Development  
Consultancy

Dr Karen Puren  
Co-investigator