DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

Research focus areas of the Department

- **History of Education**
  - History of South African education since 1948
  - Oral history research method
  - Missionary education
  - Visual data analysis (physical/social artefacts)
  - Dutch/British colonial education (history of)
  - Concentration camp education (history of)

- **Philosophy of Education**

- African philosophy and education
- Ubuntu in education
- Diversities in education (culture, gender, 'race', language)
- Philosophy for children (P4C)
- Indigenous knowledge traditions and epistemologies
- Critical thinking
- Higher education transformation
- The politics of space and place in education
- Education and technology
- Open distance learning (ODL)
- Postcoloniality
- Critical pedagogy and emancipation
- Posthumanism in education
- Education and the 4th Industrial Revolution
- Ethics in education, ethical leadership and accountability
- Social and epistemic justice in education
- Education and the Anthropocene
- Decoloniality in education
- Education for democratic participation

- **Socio-Education**
  - Family as socialisation agent
  - Family dynamics, social structure and functioning
  - Domestic violence (elder abuse, sibling abuse, child abuse)
  - Gender-based violence
  - School as socialisation agent
  - School group dynamics
  - Social values
  - Social justice
  - Problematic societal phenomena: alcohol and drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, sexual licentiousness, HIV/Aids, youth suicide

- **Comparative Education**
  - Comparison of education systems, curricula and teaching
  - Policy studies
  - Critical issues in education

Research projects that postgraduate students can participate in

Name of project	Brief description of the project	Project leader	No of available positions for MEd students	No of available positions for PhD students
Women in leadership and Management	The has 50 participants who are school principals, deputy principals, heads od departments from schools in Pinetown and Umlazi district. The main of the project aims to understand factors influencing the leadership experiences of women in education and proposed strategies to support them.	Dr N Nkosi	1	1
WISA-Widowhood support Project	Widowhood is a significant social issue in most African countries, with many widows facing economic hardship, social exclusion, and limited opportunities for financial independence. Traditional support systems often fail to equip widows with sustainable skills for economic empowerment. In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative tool for education and skills development. This research explores how AI can enhance vocational training and entrepreneurship education for widows, enabling them to rebuild their lives and contribute to economic growth. Widowhood issues are entangled in traditional culture, patriarchal beliefs, and religious practice (Ngambouk & Mathias, 2016). The study proposed here will be undertaken in marginalized communities in six African countries. The six (6) African countries include: South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. Widows in many African societies experience marginalization and financial instability due to cultural beliefs, legal barriers, and economic barriers. Access to vocational training and entrepreneurship education is often limited, preventing widows from gaining the skills needed for economic independence. The integration of AI in educational initiatives could provide scalable, personalized learning solutions to address the socio-economic challenges faced by widows in Africa.	Dr S Matlabe	5	5

The dynamics of higher education space and place in sub-Saharan Africa	This cross-national and multidisciplinary research focuses on spatial justice and practices in selected higher education institutions in sub-Saharan Africa. The interest is on how space as a dimension of multiplicity and simultaneity is experienced by academics, students, administrators and institutional managers in the institutions.	Dr N Madikizela-Madiya	0	0
The dynamics of space and place in South African schools	This multi-disciplinary project intends to contribute a spatial perspective to the selected schools' performances in various aspects including teachers' and learner performances in various subjects; school management; learner support; inclusion and extra-mural activities.	Dr N Madikizela-Madiya	0	0
PHL Moraka	This is a community project that is run by academic staff members in Unisa's Department of Educational Foundations, Teaching Practice, Adult Education and Youth Development, Leadership Management Accounting. Other departments from the College of Education (CEDU) and other colleges at Unisa also participate in this project, like the Accounting College. The focus of this community project is on looking at the challenges that is faced by a high school in Hammanskraal. The project is aligned to teaching, learning and research. This project plays a major role in investigating challenges that schools are battling with and finding solutions to the problems. Dedicated, self-motivated, and driven students are allowed to send proposals.	Prof MC Dube	2	2

Focused M & D programmes

Name of programme	Qualification code	Curriculum
MEd in Socio-Education	98454	A research proposal module and full research dissertation
MEd in Philosophy of Education	98451	A research proposal module and full research dissertation
MEd in History of Education	98440	A research proposal module and full research dissertation
MEd in Comparative Education	98417	A research proposal module and full research dissertation
PhD in Education (Streams: History of Education – HED; Socio-Education – SED; Philosophy of Education (PED); Comparative Education (CED)	90019	A research proposal and full research thesis

Details of individual supervisors and their research interests or fields of expertise

Name of supervisor	Research interest/field of expertise	No of positions for new MEd students available	No of positions for new PhD students available
Prof C Dube	- History - History Education - History of Education	4	4
Prof Pietersen	- Philosophy of Education - Policy in Education - Critical pedagogy - Feminism - Paulo Freire - Social Justice - Hermeneutic	2	2
Prof P Maluleka	- Africanisation - Decolonisation - History - History Education - History of Education - Queer theorisations - School history	4	3
Dr C Daniels	- Education for sustainable development - Sustainable development goals - Research capacity building - Postgraduate students - Higher education - Comparative education	4	4
Prof MN Davids	- History of education - Transformation in education - Teacher education (pre and in-service) - Teaching practicum assessment - Assessment - Social theory - Memory work	1	1
Mr P Nyathi	- History - South Africa History - History - Education/History of Education - Environmental History - Rural Education - School History Curriculum	3	0
Prof VG Gasa	- Aggressive behaviour - Peace education	2	2
Dr N Nkosi	- Gender - Space - Leadership	3	2

Dr N Madikizela-Madiya	• Higher education studies • Spatial justice in education • Academic identities • Research in education • Environmental education • Geography education	3	2
Prof M Letseka	• University student retention • ICTs and education • Indigenous epistemologies	1	1
Dr LM Luvalo	• Education and social transformation • International and multi-cultural education • Comparative education	3	1
Ms I Alexander	• Social and epistemic justice in education • Higher education transformation	2	0
Ms N Nkosi	• Curriculum theory and development • Rhizomatic theory and education • Epistemic Justice and Access • Knowledge Democracy	3	0
Mr TV Letsoalo	• Technical vocational education and training (TVET) • Student support (TVET) • Parental involvement (TVET)	2	0
Dr BM Moloto	• African philosophy and education • Educational philosophies and schooling • Teacher accountability • Higher education studies • ODL • Educational Leadership and management	3	3
Dr ST Ngobeni	• Partnerships • Philosophy of education • Educational leadership and management • Self-concept and academic achievement	2	2
Dr ZT Shembe	• Drug abuse by learners • Violence associated with subsistence abuse	0	0
Dr SM Matlabe	• Adult education (philosophical perspective) • Adult education (history of)	4	3

	• Adult education (comparative perspective) • Adult education (socio-education) perspective		
Dr N Ndwandwe	• Various aspects of socio-education • Peace education	3	2
Dr E Khambule	• Comparative and international education • Decolonial theory • Higher education studies	5	1
Ms T. Myende	• Gender education • Socio-education	2	0
Dr TR Mkhize	• Rurality and rural education • Resource mobilisation in Education • Educational leadership and management • Ubuntu leadership philosophy • Digitalization in education	3	3
Dr BS Nhlumayo	• Educational Leadership and Management • Comparative Education • ICT in Education • Rural Education • Education Policy Studies • Teacher Professional Development	3	3
Mr V Letsoalo	• Africanisation • Decolonisation • History • History Education • History of Education • Queer theorisations • School history	2	2

Models of supervision
The individual and co-supervision models are used. Co-supervision is mostly done for mentoring purposes and multi-, inter- and trans-disciplinary (MIT) research. Some supervisors in the College supervise across departments. Students are therefore advised to study the lecturer profiles of other departments in the College when trying to identify a suitable supervisor.

Opportunities regarding external supervision

External supervisors may be considered if a suitable supervisor is not available in the Department. However, this will depend on the financial viability of the Department.

Contact details of the department
Prof D Pietersen: Nkoana Simon Radipere Building, 6-91; tel: 0124841627
University of South Africa, College of Education

; e-mail: epietecd1@unisa.ac.za

Dr S Ngobeni (Acting Chair of the Department): Nkoana Simon Radipere Building, 6-80; tel: 012 429 6779; e-mail: engobest@unisa.ac.za

Admission requirements, documents required, selection criteria and selection information relevant for prospective master's and doctoral students

Master's of Education

An appropriate Honours Degree in Education, or a postgraduate diploma, or a 480 credit Bachelor of Education Degree with a minimum of 96 credits at NQF level 8 is required. The average mark obtained for the degree shall be 60%. All students should have completed a module in research methods and methodologies as part of their previous level 8 qualification. Students who do not meet these requirements may follow an alternative pathway (e.g. RPL, submitting a portfolio of evidence or working through a prescribed reading list – refer to **Possible alternative pathways**). The application should accord with the various research focus areas/areas of specialisation of the Department, the Department's capacity to provide expert supervision and the requisite qualifications listed above.

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education

An appropriate Master's of Education Degree preferably related to the field of study is required. The average mark obtained for the degree shall be 60%. Students who do not meet this requirement may follow an alternative pathway (e.g. RPL or submit a portfolio – refer to **Possible alternative pathways**). The application should accord with the various research focus areas/areas of specialisation of the Department, the Department's capacity to provide expert supervision and the requisite qualification listed above.

Supporting documentation to be submitted with application

For a master's degree:

All relevant documentation as specified by the Department of Master's and Doctoral Administration Support. Students should submit a short research outline of 600 to 750 words which sketches the intended research project, the research approach, problem statement, a short literature review and a working title. In addition, a list of five scholarly articles and two books that have been consulted to compile the research outline should be provided. These sources should be predominantly recent, with the exception of (classical) theories which can only be found in old sources. The Harvard referencing method should be used. Students should provide a declaration that they have consulted the relevant department's website prior to submitting their application and should propose the name of his/her preferred supervisor. Any form of plagiarism in the research outline is unacceptable.

For a doctorate degree:

All relevant documentation as specified by the Department of Master's and Doctoral Administration Support.

Students should submit a short research outline of 800 to 900 words which sketches the intended research project, problem statement, the research approach, a short literature review and a working title for the project. In addition, a list of ten scholarly articles and four books that have been consulted to compile the research outline should be provided. These sources should be predominantly recent, with the exception of (classical) theories which can only be found in old sources. The Harvard referencing method should be used. Students should provide a declaration that they have consulted the relevant department's website prior to submitting their application and should propose the name of his/her preferred supervisor. Please note that any form of plagiarism in the research outline is unacceptable.

PLEASE NOTE: Students need to clearly indicate in their research outline whether they would like to focus in their PhD studies on History of Education, Comparative Education, Socio Education or Philosophy of Education. It is therefore imperative that the first heading of the research outline should indicate the focus area, for example, *PhD in Education, focusing on the History of Education.*

Selection procedures followed in the selection of candidates for postgraduate studies
University of South Africa, College of Education
Research focus areas for 2026   7

All applications will be considered simultaneously by the Departmental Higher Degrees Committee, the chair of the Department, the director of the School and the head of the Office of Graduate Studies and Research for purposes of fairness and transparency. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

The Department's internal supervision capacity and availability of external supervisors will be the first and most important selection criterion. No applicant will be admitted without a supervisor being allocated to the student. If a student requests to be supervised by a particular supervisor, but the supervisor is not available because of his/her existing supervision load, it is the Department's prerogative to allocate an alternative supervisor (internal or external). Further selection will be done based on the following selection criteria (the weight attached to each criteria is indicated between brackets as a percentage of the overall evaluation): the student's academic record and experience in research (30%); understanding of research methods as displayed in the research outline (30%); academic writing skills (30%); and addressing of past inequalities by taking race, gender and disability status into consideration (10%).

The Department will keep record of all the applications and reasons will be provided for unsuccessful applications.

Possible alternative pathways

The following alternative pathways exist for applicants who do not meet the admission requirements:

- Applicants with degrees that have different structures from normal South African honours or master's degrees, applicants whose degrees do not clearly correspond to the Department's admission requirements (e.g. no mark awarded for previous dissertations, no clear evidence of having completed a research-related module as part of the previous qualification, etc) but who possess applicable experience in research or working experience relevant to the field of interest, that may qualify them for admission to a master's or doctoral degree will be required to apply for recognition of prior learning (RPL). Prior academic and research activities by the applicant will be evaluated in accordance with formal Unisa RPL procedures and the outcome of the RPL process will be submitted to and approved by the chair of the Department. If the approved outcome of the RPL process is positive, the applicant will be allowed to proceed with an application for admission, subject to all terms and conditions governing the admission process.
- Applicants who apply for a master's degree on the strength of a postgraduate diploma or a 480 credit bachelor's degree with a minimum of 96 credits at level 8 and who have not completed a module in research methodology, will be required to obtain knowledge about research methods and methodology by working through a prescribed reading list which will be forwarded to them by the chair of the Departmental Higher Degrees Committee upon request from the student. The student will have to complete and pass a number of assignments related to research methodology. The student may reapply in subsequent years.
- Applicants who do not meet the minimum requirement of 60%, may apply for an alternative pathway by submitting a portfolio containing a motivation letter indicating reasons for wanting to do the qualification and for selecting the specific area he/she is applying for, a CV highlighting experience relevant to the field of interest and evidence of engagement with research which could include one or more of the following: a written report of a scholarly nature, a literature survey, a paper presented at a conference, a published article.

The following alternative pathways exist for applicants whose applications were unsuccessful:

- Students who have been refused admission because of limited capacity within the Department or because their topic was not viable may reapply in subsequent years. It should be clearly indicated that it is a reapplication. The normal selection process will apply in case of reapplications.
- Students who were unsuccessful because of an inadequate research outline, may revise their research outline and may reapply in subsequent years.

- A student whose application was unsuccessful because of inadequate academic writing skills, may reapply in subsequent years provided that he/she can provide proof of measures put in place to improve his/her academic writing skills (e.g. enrolled for and passed a course in academic writing skills).

The Department of Education Foundations will not make use of differentiated registration dates. Applications for admission and registration will take place in accordance with the dates set by the College of Graduate Studies for bulk applications and registrations.

Application procedures and when to apply

Students should
- apply for a student number – following the steps outlined in https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Apply-for-admission/Master%27s-&-doctoral-degrees/Apply-for-a-student-number-and-apply-for-admission
- apply for a space in one of the focus areas using the online application process

Once acceptance in the research focus area and the allocation of a supervisor have been confirmed, they may register for the research proposal module.