

Adult Non-Formal Learning: A South African University Model

Dr Medeé Rall

Honorary Research Associate, University of Cape
Town



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI



Centre for
Extra-Mural Studies
Open Learning for all

Focus

- The focus of my talk is on non-formal learning at the University of Cape Town in one department – The Centre for Extra-Mural Studies.
- There are a myriad of short courses and continuing professional development courses available in the different faculties at the university – too many to mention in a short talk.
- The talk will trace the development of non-formal learning over a period of over one hundred years.

- Short courses, in contrast, are attended by both younger and retired participants.
- Short courses are offered either for enrichment – such as writing courses – or for continuing professional development – such as the Editing (five different courses including academic editing), Heritage Law and Applied Complexity Science courses.
- The continuing professional development courses carry a University of Cape Town short course certificate and university transcript as do the study tours on completion of an assessment at the end.
- Short courses are all offered online and on a specialised learning app except the writing courses that are offered in person at the annual Summer School programme.
- The Applied Complexity Science course that is offered on the specialised app, a cognitive engine, and is based on androgogy and heutagogy, is the most advanced technically course the department offers as well as the broadest in content.

The university of Cape Town was founded in 1829 and is South Africa's oldest university. It was formally established as a university in 1918.



The first public lectures were offered under the aegis of the Extension Lectures Committee of the University of Cape Town Senate in 1924, just six years after the university was formally established. This tradition has continued ever since, expanding its offerings over time as will be seen in this talk. This article is from a Cape Town newspaper in 1949.

complete with or supersede t

The Department of Extramural Studies replaces the Extension Lectures Committee of the University Senate, established in 1924, which organized the fortnightly public lectures given by members of the staff and other prominent authorities.

The decision was made after a recommendation by the Extension Lectures Committee to the University Senate that its extramural work should either be expanded considerably or relinquished altogether.

The old system was uneconomic, the memorandum stated, because it entailed much organization and overhead cost which could be extended to carry a more ambitious programme and serve a larger public.

MEMBERS OF BOARD

Professor Edward Paterson of

In 1950 The Centre for Extra-Mural Studies became a University of Cape Town Department, replacing the Extension Lectures Committee of Senate. Public lectures were now offered through the Centre for Extra-Mural Studies and no longer under the aegis of the Senate. It is important to note that these courses were to be offered at a university level, which remains a criterion to this day.

**U.C.T. COURSES
FOR PUBLIC**

**AMBITIOUS PLAN FOR
ADULT EDUCATION**

**FIRST VENTURE OF
KIND IN UNION**

Cape Times University Correspondent

THE most ambitious scheme for fostering adult education yet attempted in the Western Province has been initiated by the Cape Town University, with the creation of a Board of Extra-mural Studies to provide courses of lectures to the public at a university level.

Courses and series of lectures will be run on any subject for which there is sufficient demand. Lecturers will be drawn from the University staff and from visiting authorities. This is the first time that a South African university has placed its extra-mural work on a permanent basis.

Dr. T. B. Davie, Principal of U.C.T., in an interview yesterday, said he considered the scheme a major contribution to adult educational facilities in this country for that section of the population which could benefit from it at a university level. No attempt was being made to compete with or supersede technical colleges.

The Department of Extra-mural Studies replaces the Extension Lectures Committee

NO DEGREES
The Board will not concern itself with assisting to obtain

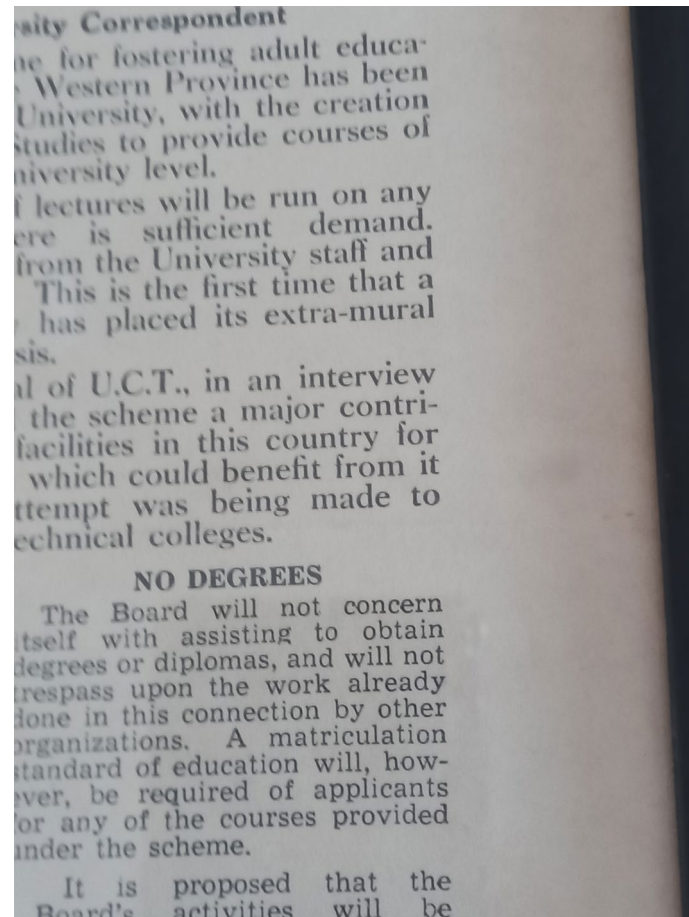
There are two lines of influence behind the university's extra-mural work.

(i) The British tradition of university extension which had its roots in the 19th century, with the guiding idea that universities, as public institutions, had a responsibility to disseminate their accumulated knowledge to the wider public beyond the walls of the academy. Following this tradition the University of Cape Town provided its first public lectures from 1924.

(ii) The second influence lay in the ideals of post-war reconstruction for democracy. The Army Education Corps played a large role in broadening the minds of the troops after demobilisation. The Centre for Extra-Mural Studies was seen as the right vehicle for this work.

The Centre for Extra-Mural Studies still does not award degrees or diplomas but does now offer university accredited short course certificates and university transcripts.

Access remains open to all with a matriculation certificate, except in the instance of special programmes for school learners.



The founding principal of drawing lecturers from as wide a field and not only from the university holds to this day. Lecturers today include university lecturers, scholars from across the world, public intellectuals and thought leaders.

Authority for this appointment has still to be obtained from the Department of Education. The duties of the Director will include the publicising of the work of the Board in Cape Town and its environs, investigating the demand for lecture courses at University level and establishing sub-committees in town and country. He will also consider the sources of teaching available. Lecturers will be drawn from as wide a field as possible, and not only from the University staff, a U.C.T. official explained. "If an eminent authority visits this country the University will attempt to gain his services for this purpose, as in the past", he said.

GOOD RESPONSE

Judging by the response from various groups and organiza-

The Flagship programme offered by the Centre for Extra-Mural Studies is the annual Summer School programme which runs for two weeks in January each year and has done so since 1952.

The current staff component at the Centre for Extra-Mural Studies is three, one of whom is responsible for the administration and two for the development of the Summer School programme and all other courses and initiatives such as short courses, excursions.



At the Summer School in the region of 120 courses, lectures, lecture-recitals and excursions are offered over a two-week period in a range of categories. Over 200 people attend each year. The categories in which courses are offered are as follows:

- Literature, art and music
- Current affairs, history, philosophy, politics and economics
- Medicine
- Science
- Conservation and nature
- Information technology
- Practical courses (writing and art)

Between 1952 when the Centre for Extra-Mural Studies was established and 2000 additional initiatives and programmes were initiated.

The Centre offered the following initiatives and programmes:

- The annual Summer School
- Winter Schools
- Weekly programmes
- Inaugural lectures
- Colloquia
- Community and cultural programmes.

From 2000 to the present the offerings have broadened to include the following besides the annual Summer School:

- Summer School extension lectures that are held throughout the year
- Book launches
- Non-certificated short courses
- Certificated short courses: the Applied Complexity Science course, Editing courses, the Heritage Law Course
- Excursions: geology, palaeontology, archaeology/rock art, astronomy
- Study tours: palaeontology, archaeology/rock art, astronomy.
- Social responsiveness programmes. The social responsiveness programmes are aimed at school pupils

Images from programmes

As you will see from the images that I am now going to show you:

- The Summer School audience are mostly elderly and retired.
- There are adjunct offerings at Summer School such as a commercial and charity second-hand bookshops.
- Meeting with fellow lifelong learners the social aspect of the programme is an important part of the experience.
- Participants come from across the world and across South Africa and neighbouring countries

Summer School







Excursions

- As noted before, the department offers excursions in three disciplines: archaeology, palaeontology and astronomy.
- Next I will show you images of a palaeontology trip to find fossils that are 252-million years old and an archaeology trip to look at rock art that are several thousands of years old.
- The excursions are led by world-renowned experts in their respective fields.

Palaeontology excursion: evening lecture



Fossil find





Archaeology/rock art excursion - note the rock art on the rock shelter





Walking to rock art sites



In May 2025 the University of Cape Town hosted a study tour for the Hong Kong Metropolitan University students to look at astronomy, geology and cultural aspects of Cape Town. Below is the world-famous observatory in Sutherland, which includes SALT and MeerKat. You may have read of continued discoveries





Sunrise walk at Sutherland



Students looking at the geology at Cape Point



Social responsiveness initiatives

100UP Saturday Summer School: a lens on possibilities for disadvantaged learners



Masiphumelele township: astronomy lecture for school pupils in programmes that prepare them for university study. One of the purposes of these Saturday Summer School programmes is to expose learners to different areas of study at university



Learners at the Masiphumele Saturday Summer School during their lunch break.



Thank you