

DEFYING THE ODDS

2021 CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT | PROF. KENNETH MLUNGISI NGCOZA



Globally, 2021 will be remembered as the 2nd year of the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic. South Africa started the year with a devastating 2nd wave and was then subjected to 3rd and 4th waves as the year unfolded. Apart from the terrible loss of life wrought by the virus, the associated socio-economic hardships continued to take their toll on populations around the world. Specifically, there were further severe disruptions to educational processes in 2021, exacerbating the learning losses of the previous year. Even when South African schools were open, they operated on a rotational basis. Over the past two years, South African children have lost well over a year of learning. This disastrous legacy will live with us well into the future.

Despite these challenges, in 2021 GADRA managed to sustain all its programmes, in amended form, in a bid to mitigate the above-mentioned educational losses. The organisation was surprisingly successful in this regard. For example, the oral reading fluency tests conducted at GADRA's pioneering Whistle Stop School (WSS) indicated that the children's literacy developed at a more than acceptable rate, as a direct result of the intervention. Similarly, the final results achieved by the flagship GADRA Matric School (GMS) were amongst the best ever produced in its proud history. In addition to the 'holding' work performed by the organisation, it managed to register some truly remarkable achievements in 2021.

Some of the most notable highlights include:

- Over 50 GMS alumni graduated from Rhodes in April.
- Rhodes won first prize in the MacJannet Awards for Global Citizenship, for the 9/10ths Mentoring Programme (which GADRA conceptualised in 2015 and now co-manages with the university). The MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship recognizes exemplary university student civic engagement programs around the world.
- This year was a breakthrough year as far as academic publications are concerned, with three articles authored/ co-authored by GADRA staff having been published in 2021.
- The above-mentioned 9/10ths programme played a key role in enabling Makhanda's public schools to achieve record matric results in 2021.

On a personal level, I was honoured to be accorded Full Professor status at Rhodes in 2020. I delivered my Inaugural Professorial Lecture, entitled '*From poverty to university: Journeys, challenges and opportunities*', on 25 November 2021. Fittingly, since GADRA has played a significant formative and supportive role in my life, it featured prominently in my address.

GADRA completed another solid financial year in 2021. The benefits of its income diversification efforts of recent years are clearly reflected in its most recent audited financial statements. Nevertheless, the donor community still plays a crucial role in the organisation's sustainability. I therefore urge all educational donors to rally around this exceptional organisation and its programmes.

CONTACT



FINANCIAL REPORT

For the year ended 31 December 2021

Income and Expenditure Statement

	2021 (ZAR)	2020 (ZAR)
INCOME		
Donations	8 877 354	8 919 888
Interest and Sundry Income	2 933 926	2 877 072
Fees	1 420 600	1 466 630
TOTAL	13 231 880	13 263 590
EXPENDITURE		
GADRA Matric School	3 134 067	3 844 027
Primary Education Programme	3 825 885	3 682 556
Bursaries	195 410	277 900
Advocacy	943 429	707 163
Administration	674 337	265 931
TOTAL	8 773 128	8 777 577
Surplus for the year	4 458 752	4 486 013

Balance Sheet

	2021 (ZAR)	2020 (ZAR)
ASSETS		
Non-current Assets	26 058 905	21 605 107
Current Assets	6 955 758	4 435 710
TOTAL ASSETS	33 014 663	26 040 817
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity	29 093 112	24 534 691
Liabilities	3 921 551	1 506 126
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	33 014 663	26 040 817





THE RE-POSITIONING OF GMS MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

In 2013, the Board of GADRA Education advised the GADRA Matric School (GMS) to reposition itself from being an all-purpose 2nd Chance School to becoming a top-end Bridging School. This directive stemmed from the recognition that a good quality National Senior Certificate is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a young person to have good life prospects in South Africa. Since there is a direct relation between tertiary qualifications and employability, the Board asked GMS to focus its energies on producing good quality Bachelor passes and assisting eligible students with their university applications. Moreover, it took note of the fact that Makhanda is home to Rhodes University, the leading tertiary institution in the Eastern Cape Province.



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

The initial ways in which GMS management responded to the Board's call was to change its admission decision-making process and to introduce a variety of enrichment courses (such as advanced writing skills). These innovations paid almost immediate returns. The first time that GMS produced 100 Bachelors was 2015. This has been replicated every year since then. In 2021 the school produced 156 Bachelors. This was the second time that it exceeded the milestone figure of 150. Moreover, GMS climbed up twenty places in only two years, to emerge as Rhodes University's largest feeder school in 2015. (In 2013, it was Rhodes's twentieth biggest feeder.)

GADRA's drive to establish itself as a strategic gateway to the local university was given a significant fillip with the 2014 appointment of Dr Sizwe Mabizela as the Vice-Chancellor. Shortly after his inauguration, he invited GADRA to conceptualise a Bridging Programme that would see select students register simultaneously at GMS and Rhodes University (as Occasional Students). In 2017, GADRA piloted the programme, with 10 GMS students registering for Psychology 1. Since then, the programme has both diversified and expanded. It now caters for over forty students across four of the university's faculties (Humanities, Education, Science and Commerce). Importantly, the programme is most certainly meeting its objective of facilitating the access of deserving local students to Rhodes University.

All the while since 2015, GADRA's student throughput to Rhodes increased. If one includes the Occasional students in the tally of GMS students accepted for full-time study at Rhodes, the annual total is now close to 100.

Just over ten years ago, Wally Morrow drew our attention to the crucial distinction between epistemological and physical access to institutions of higher learning. It is thus particularly pleasing to note that the number of GMS alumni graduating from Rhodes has been steadily climbing in recent years. A very significant milestone was reached in 2021, with over 50 GMS alumni graduating during the April graduation ceremony.

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GADRA MATRIC SCHOOL (GMS) AND THE WHISTLE STOP SCHOOL (WSS) **HOLDING UP A MIRROR TO THE PREVAILING EDUCATION SYSTEM**

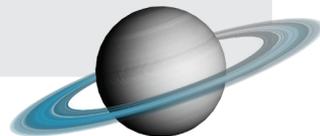
The fundamental reason that GADRA Education offers educational services directly to a limited number of children and youth in Makhanda is that it seeks to hold up a mirror to the prevailing education system in the country. It rejects TINA ('There Is No Alternative') defeatism not only by insisting that there are alternatives to the entrenched reality, but also by demonstrating practically that these can be highly impactful.

GADRA delivers the aforementioned educational services through its two schools. The Whistle Stop School (WSS) is an early years literacy acceleration school (located in two local no-fee schools) that seeks to break new ground in the field of literacy development. The GADRA Matric School (GMS) is a top-end bridging school that aims to assist over 200 students (in 2022 almost 250 students have been registered!) upgrade their results adequately to secure tertiary study. There are obvious differences between the two schools. For example, WSS works mainly with foundation phase children whereas GMS assists post-school youth. The two schools do not share a common pedagogical approach since they are working with different age groups and seeking to realise different objectives.

Despite these and other differences between WSS and GMS, they share telling similarities, which reflect the reality that both are programmes of GADRA Education. First and foremost, both schools are learner-centred. WSS and GMS exist for the sake of their respective learners. All the teachers and support staff who work at the schools understand that the WSS children and GMS youth come first, before curriculum coverage, before administrative compliance, before school

rules and codes of conduct. Second, both schools are infused with the values of GADRA Education – most notably, love, care and responsibility. The WSS children and GMS learners are loved and cared for by their GADRA teachers and they are taught to take as much responsibility as possible, for themselves and their learning processes. The latter is particularly pertinent for the GMS learners. Third, WSS and GMS uphold the highest standards of professionalism. All the employed teachers are not only fully qualified, they always go the extra mile for the children and youth entrusted to their care. By contrast, the prevailing public sector education system is characterised by curriculum dominance, bureaucratic compliance and union domination. These characteristics derive from and are sustained by the current political configurations of the country. Until there is a shift in power relations at a national level, the only improvements that can possibly be made in the public sector are those of a technical nature, which are necessarily both limited and temporary.

For as long as the current realities of general dysfunction and widening inequalities prevail, GADRA will endeavour to hold up a mirror to the public education system. The sensational results produced by WSS and GMS in recent years show what is possible when schools put learners first, embrace progressive values and uphold the highest standards of professionalism.



CONTACT

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EDUCATION



GADRA'S PARTNERSHIP WITH RHODES UNIVERSITY **THE TIES THAT BIND**

The 2014 appointment of Dr Mabizela as the 6th Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University ushered in a new era of bilateral relations between the university and GADRA Education. The context in which these relations were forged was Dr Mabizela's commitment to taking on institutional responsibility for the upliftment of basic education in the city of Makhanda. In 2015, he asked GADRA to manage the implementation of a university initiative (abbreviated as 'VCI', standing for the Vice-Chancellor's Initiative) to revitalise local public schools.

The GADRA Board saw significant value in this arrangement because it nodded towards the appealing prospect that the organisation might be able to harness student agency and tap into the considerable intellectual capacities of the university's academic community. One of the first indications that this thinking was correct was provided in 2016 with the roll-out of the '9/10ths' Mentoring Programme.

The year before, in 2015 that is, GADRA had piloted the programme using its own senior staff as mentors. The programme had been carefully crafted, with priority attention being accorded to the crucial issues of personal planning, summarising, examination techniques and tertiary applications. The pilot year was a success, but GADRA recognised that a major constraint to upscaling and even sustaining the intervention was human resource capacity. The organisation realised that the VCI offered a solution to this problem, in the form of untapped student power.

Over the past few years, the 9/10ths programme has grown in leaps and bounds, and its impact has grown accordingly. Elsewhere in this report, we outline the meteoric rise of Makhanda's Matric results. There is no doubt whatsoever that one of the most significant underlying reasons for the improvement in top-end performance is the mentoring programme. It explicitly and

deliberately focuses on attempting to increase the number and percentage of Bachelor passes. Therefore it is particularly pleasing that the local class of 2021 smashed all previous records in this regard. The Bachelor pass rate in Makhanda was 47%. This is higher than that of the top performing province in the country, the Western Cape, which achieved a rate of 45%.

Based on the phenomenal track record of '9/10ths', in 2021 Rhodes University was awarded first place in the MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship. The MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship, launched in 2009, recognizes exemplary university student civic engagement programs around the world. The prize is sponsored jointly by the MacJannet Foundation and the Talloires Network. The Network is the global authority on university engagement. In other words, being awarded the MacJannet Prize is like winning the Oscars of Community Engagement.

The GADRA-Rhodes partnership continues to produce expressions of innovation and ingenuity. In recent years for example, collaboration with the university's Mathematics Department and Science faculty has seen the emergence of the highly impactful 'Masilungise' (let us solve) programme, and 2021 saw the piloting of the first ever isiXhosa Spelling Bee competition by the Department of Education.

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EVIDENCE OF LOCAL PUBLIC-SECTOR TRANSFORMATION

MAKHANDA'S METEORIC MATRIC RISE

During the current Strategic Planning Cycle (2016 – 2022) one of GADRA Education's most important targeted outcomes is the transformation and equalisation of public schooling, so that every child in the city is afforded the right to quality basic education.

GADRA's investment in public sector schools over the past few years has been considerable. For example, the organisation has lead a Vestas-funded consortium of service providers in a bid to boost literacy and numeracy in foundation and intermediate phase classrooms, it has implemented several initiatives aimed at promoting Mathematics and Science in the senior phase, and it has offered various forms of support to FET phase teaching and learning processes.

GADRA's objective to transform public schools is an ambitious target and one that is notoriously difficult to measure. The primary reason for the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) struggle is the absence of reliable school-based assessment, especially in primary schools. The only truly reliable system-wide data is the matric results. It is thus very pleasing that the city produced its best-ever Matric results in 2021. Moreover, it should be noted that the 2021 results are by no means a 'flash in the pan'. That is to say, the most recent results represent the high-point of a recent trend of performance improvement. This improvement is both quantitative and qualitative. The most important quantitative indicators are the cohort size and the percentage pass rate. The former reflects the learner retention rate (the flip-side of the drop-out rate). The higher the cohort size, the lower the drop-out rate! The most important qualitative indicators are the

number of Bachelor passes and the percentage Bachelor pass rate.

In 2021, the size of the local cohort of matriculants increased significantly, the percentage pass rate reached record highs, and the number and percentage of Bachelor passes also both improved. The basic statistics in this regard are presented longitudinally in the table below.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Cohort Size	504	558	540	540	663
% Pass Rate	75%	78%	76%	80%	83%
Number of Bachelors	197	238	187	230	313
% Bachelor Pass Rate	39%	43%	35%	43%	47%

The excellent Bachelor performance of both local public schools and the GADRA Matric School in 2021 means that the number of disadvantaged students from Makhanda who have been accepted to study full-time at Rhodes will reach a record high in 2022, around 135. When it is recalled that only approximately 10 disadvantaged local students gained access to the university in 2012, one realises just how much local transformation has been engineered in the past decade.

Makhanda is well on its way to establishing itself as a centre of educational excellence. There is certainly no doubt that it is the leading educational city in the Eastern Cape. The challenge ahead is to benchmark itself against the best education sites in the country. What the past few years have reminded us is that broad-based transformation is both conceivable and achievable.

CONTACT





2022
135 LOCALS BEAMED UP
 to Rhodes

2021
 47% Bachelor Pass Rate
 82% Pass Rate

MAKHANDA'S METEORIC MATRIC RISE

continues

2015
 26% Bachelor Pass Rate
 62% Pass Rate

2012
10 LOCALS
 Get to Rhodes



MAKHANDA EASTERN CAPE SOUTH AFRICA



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