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Opportunities and Challenges for Statistics Education in the Data Era – a Personal Account

Prof Delia North (University of KwaZulu-Natal)

DATE: Monday, 4 November 2024 | 16h00–17h00 SAST

VENUES:

- Neelsie Cinema, Stellenbosch University
- Online

--- A recording of the talk will be published on the NITheCS YouTube channel afterwards ---

ABSTRACT

Statistics education is challenged to chart a way into the uncertain future of the fast-changing, ever-evolving data-world. The surge in data-availability offers a unique opportunity for statistics departments around the globe to enhance data skills and proficiency at all levels, from basic statistical literacy essential for citizenship, to data skills critical for decision-making and innovation at all levels of government, workplace, etc.

However, challenges such as limited access to resources, outdated curricula and above all, shortage of up-skilled resources and teaching staff, have placed serious challenges to Statistics departments around the world, but in developing countries in particular.

This talk will focus on general aims and directions the author has been involved in, which aim to overcome mentioned challenges, then give particular examples of Statistics training initiatives introduced, which aim to increase uptake of studies in the discipline, build core discipline knowledge and boost much needed knowledge production for the data-infused workplace.

BIOGRAPHY

Prof North holds a PhD in Mathematical Statistics (UND) and served in the Statistics of the School of Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), for over 3 decades, during which she led the discipline of Statistics, and served as Dean. She has over 30 years' experience in teaching Statistics, over 15 years' experience in leadership at UKZN and has become a leading figure in Statistics Education circles, nationally and internationally. She has served as Chair of the South African Statistical Association Education committee for 17 years, is a former Vice President of the International Association for Statistics Education and is currently a member of the International Programming Committee of the World Statistics Congress (The Hague, Netherlands, 2025).

She has received various national and international awards and recognition for excellence in capacity building projects in Statistics, where the focus is on providing much needed knowledge production and research, through Statistics capacity building projects at grassroots level (focus on learners and teachers), as well as designing undergraduate and post graduate programs, which aim to effectively prepare students for the research needs of government, business and industry.

She retired at the end of 2023 and is an Honorary Professor of Statistics in the School of Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science at UKZN.



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