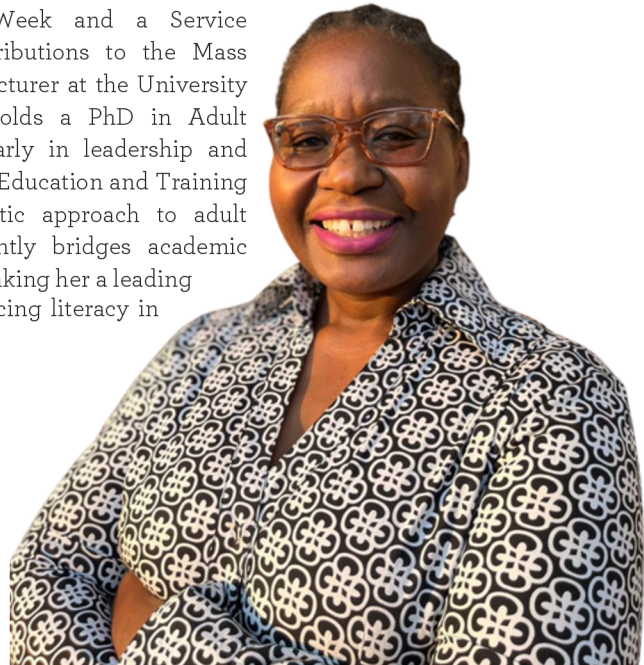


DR LULAMA MBATHA

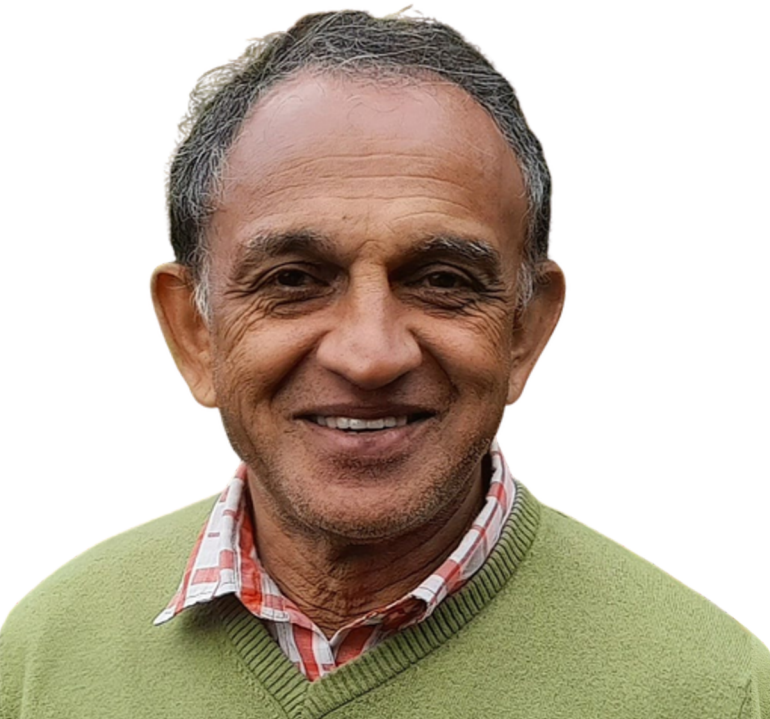
Keynote speaker Dr Lulama Mbatha is an educator with 25 years of profound experience dedicated to advancing adult literacy and education within various spheres, including Adult Basic Education, Community Education, and Technical Vocational Education. Her career is marked by a deep commitment to fostering learning environments that empower adults.

Dr. Mbatha's practical involvement in literacy campaigns is extensive, having served as an ABET Coordinator for Msunduzi Municipality, where she coordinated and facilitated Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programmes across KwaZulu-Natal. She further contributed as an ABET Consultant for the Basic Education Supporting Agency (BESA), developing and implementing skills development strategies and training facilitators. Notably, Lulama was a Provincial Monitor for the Department of Basic Education's Kha-Ri Gude Literacy Project from 2008 to 2014, playing a crucial role in the national mass literacy campaign. Her dedication has been recognised with awards such as the Outstanding Adult Educator for Adult Learners' Week and a Service Recognition Award for her contributions to the Mass Literacy Campaign. Currently a Lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Dr. Mbatha holds a PhD in Adult Education. Her research, particularly in leadership and governance within the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) sector, informs her holistic approach to adult learning. Lulama's work consistently bridges academic rigour with practical application, making her a leading voice in understanding and advancing literacy in real-world contexts.



PROF ASHWIN DESAI

Our second keynote speaker Prof Ashwin Desai is Professor of Sociology at the University of Johannesburg. His book *Wentworth: The Beautiful Game and Making of Place* won the 2021 National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) award for Best Non-Fiction monograph. In 2024 he was given the Top Researcher Award, Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg and in the same year Durban's *Casbah: Bunny Chows, Bolsheviks and Bioscopes* (co-authored with Goolam Vahed) won the NIHSS Award for Best Non-Fiction Monograph.



DR NALEDI MBUDE-MEHANA

Our third keynote speaker, Dr Naledi Mbude-Mehana, the Deputy Director-General for Transformation Programmes at the Department of Basic Education.

Dr Mbude-Mehana is a passionate advocate for equity and inclusion in education. In her role as DDG, she has been at the forefront of national initiatives that are reshaping the South African education landscape. She is particularly recognised for her leadership in advancing mother tongue-based bilingual education and multilingualism, ensuring that African languages are not only preserved but also positioned as powerful tools for teaching, learning, and assessment.

Her vision of linguistic justice has been instrumental in guiding policy shifts that bring our education system closer to serving every learner in a language they understand best. She has led the rollout of groundbreaking programmes that strengthen literacy, develop inclusive curricula, and empower teachers to deliver quality education that reflects the diversity of South Africa's learners.

Dr Mbude-Mehana's work speaks to the heart of transformation – bridging policy and practice to build an education system that is both equitable and responsive to the needs of our communities.

