

Prof Karl Maton's visit to Wits

The Director of the LCT Centre for Knowledge-Building, Prof Karl Maton is a Visiting Professor at the Wits School of Education. The PhD Programme team invited him to be the keynote speaker at the Research Weekend held on 13 – 14 March 2020. Over the two days, Prof Maton contributed his time and expertise to the professional development of student teachers, and he introduced aspects of LCT to post-graduate students and academic staff. During his visit, he also met with members of the LCT@Wits Knowledge-Building Research Team. Here are some highlights:

Prof Maton lectures to 620 student teachers: Learning to teach, the LCT way



Prof. Karl Maton joined a lecture with 620 student teachers who are using LCT to learn about teaching. His visit coincided with a scheduled lecture on semantic waves. Prof. Maton drew on major research projects to explain 'semantic waves' and how they characterise successful teaching. Semantic waves, he explained, are created when teaching repeatedly shifts between more contextually-bound and simpler meanings (SG+, SD-) and less contextually-bound and more complex (SG-, SD+). He demonstrated the semantic profiles that students could use to create semantic waves in lessons they teach. Students enjoyed his clear explanations, memorable examples and witty quips.

Q & A with Prof Karl Maton: "There's no such thing as a stupid question"



In an informal session, members of the LCT@Wits team were invited to ask Prof. Maton questions about LCT and its use in research. These ranged from the importance of the word 'legitimation' in LCT to synergies with systemic functional linguistics. Prof Maton clarified that although LCT can be used as a conceptual framework and analytic methodology in its own right, it is often used together with other approaches. He also gave advice about developing a translation device that is tailored to one's empirical dataset. With typical wry humour, Prof Maton joked about the interpersonal negotiation needed when working in a team of disparate academics. Members of LCT@Wits thoroughly enjoyed the collegial nature of the session and the valuable insights into LCT it afforded.

Prof. Maton's keynote address: Integrating different kinds of knowledge: How 'autonomy tours' from LCT show the way

Prof. Karl Maton opened the Wits Education PhD Research Weekend with a keynote address. He introduced the Autonomy dimension of LCT, and explained why its concepts are useful when bringing together different forms of knowledge in education. He used examples from real-world classroom practice to demonstrate how teachers often draw together both 'target' and 'non-target' knowledge to achieve their lesson's target purpose. He showed that the success of integrating different kinds of knowledge depends on how clearly teachers set up 'autonomy tours' that enable different kinds of knowledge to be successfully integrated.



The PhD programme coordinator, Dr. Sipiwe Mthiyane thanked Prof. Maton for the eye-opening address. He added what a privilege it is for the Wits School of Education to count him as a colleague.



Touring like a champion: Using concepts of 'autonomy codes' from LCT in research



Prof Karl Maton followed up his keynote lecture with a workshop that elaborated and extended the ideas to discuss teaching of different subject areas and how the concepts can be used to analyse student assessments. The large venue was packed to capacity, with participants feeling empowered by seeing for themselves how Autonomy concepts can be enacted to make sense of authentic classroom data.

The Wits School of Education thanks Prof Maton for his valuable contribution to supporting LCT scholars in South Africa. We look forward to continued collaboration with him and the LCT Centre for Knowledge-Building.