



Workshop held on coloniality of knowledge

PRECIOUS SHAMASE

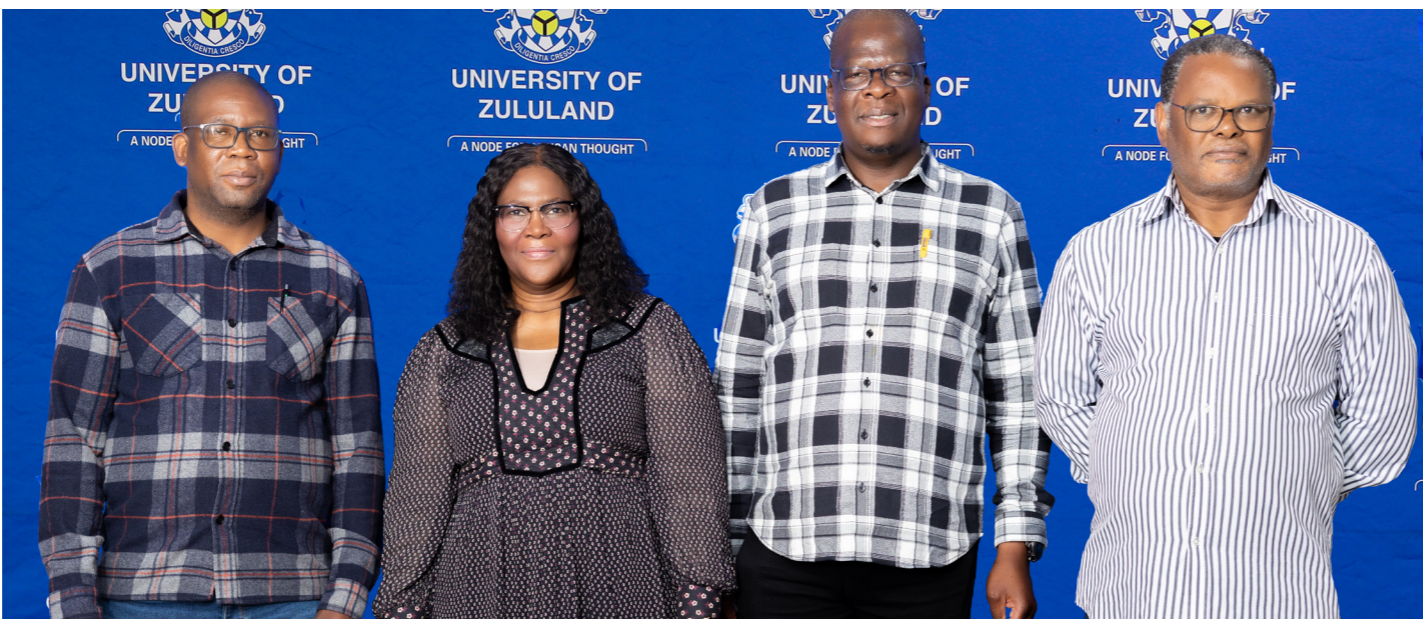
THE University of Zululand (UNIZULU) recently hosted an electrifying four-day workshop on the coloniality of knowledge.

The four days of deliberation were in response to the call by UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Xoliswa Mtose to transform the institution into a node for African thought – a stance clearly detailed in the university’s strategic vision for the period 2022 to 2027.

Attendees were welcomed by the chairperson of the workshop, Professor Sipho Seepe. Delegates attended the workshop because they all shared a common objective: to gain insight into the coloniality of knowledge while also debating their respective interpretations of the topic.

When opening the deliberations, Prof Mtose elaborated on how her participation in previous webinars organised by the university had left her nourished intellectually. She added that those deliberations did not fail to ignite new imaginations and mental models on how taking the route of a node for African thought is a key means of contributing towards the creation of a more equitable world order.

“The discussions in the last two sessions at the launch of the node for African thought touched on a few colonialities that entangled us. In this workshop, I would like to welcome you by abstracting from silent features that cut across different colonialities covered in the previous session. I would like to reveal as a welcome to you, that I cannot resist to implore all of us during the four days of deliberations to immerse ourselves deeply into the progressive discourses and the decolonial journey that we are



From left: Professor Morgan Ndlovu, UNIZULU lecturer; Prof Xoliswa Mtose, UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor and Principal; Prof Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, facilitator; and Prof Sipho Seepe, chairperson. Picture: James Thwala

on. Using the beacon of the African node for African thought as a platform to cultivate forms of decolonial thinking, this workshop should be seen as one of the significant milestones in our march to optimistic freedom for UNIZULU to sustain the momentum. However, we must endeavour to translate our engagement into curriculum and pedagogical practices,” said Prof Mtose.

The guest speaker and facilitator for the workshop was Prof Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni of the University of Bayreuth in Germany. He opened the first session with the contemporary politics of knowledge. “We need to start with an understanding of the contemporary politics of knowledge. What coloniality introduces, it naturalises. It makes it as

though there was nothing before and there will be nothing after. What we are trying to do is to denaturalise what was naturalised by some human beings and not by gods,” he explained.

The workshop was an immersive experience designed to unpack how the decolonial school is not easily accepted. It investigated the ways in which UNIZULU can harness this potential.

The workshop included interactive activities, group discussions and reflective practice, as well as round table discussions. Attendees learnt how to leverage their strengths in contexts; enriching the experiences.

Summarising the outcomes of the workshop, Prof Seepe thanked Prof Ndlovu-Gatsheni for his valiant effort.

He also mentioned that the university would take on board some of the elements that the facilitator had talked about when it comes to the notion of decolonial scholarship. “I must thank you for your successful efforts in trying to persuade us [to put on our thinking caps]. Like Mandela said: ‘I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb.’ You will find that in this journey, there will be those challenges; but what we have here, in the decolonial scholarship, is the means by which men and women participate in the transformation of the world,” Prof Seepe said.

UNIZULU staff member granted highest international research recognition

PRECIOUS SHAMASE

SIYANDA Manqele, a University of Zululand (UNIZULU) staff member, has been awarded Research Management Professional (RMP) status by the International Professional Recognition Council (IPRC).

This is the superior level of proficient acknowledgement available through the IPRC, an independent global society that awards professional recognition to research leaders and managers, mainly in Africa.

The IPRC was established in 2017 as an autonomous body that awards professional recognition to staff working in research management and administration roles. Staff members are recognised through peer review of a portfolio based on evidence of the applicant’s prior learning and experience.

Manqele, who occupies the Manager: Research Ethics & Postgraduate Studies role within the university’s Research and Innovation Office, eagerly heeded the open call for applications. “I started working on this application in 2021 as it is a very demanding process that requires evidence on all the submissions made. Professional recognition is granted to research managers and administrators for their professional knowledge based on prior learning, experience, functional and transferable expertise – regardless of whether such competencies were achieved formally. It constitutes an award or endowment that acknowledges the expertise and accomplishment of the research manager,” explains Manqele.

“Professional recognition is awarded through the review of a portfolio of evidence by peers on the IPRC. Once submitted, it takes a three-month intensive review process and outcomes are shared thereafter.

“Much appreciation goes to the Research Office management, Professors Kunene and Brown, for their support during the process with recommendation letters and the application fee. The status is added next to your name and valid for a five-year period with a re-application process.”

Having worked in research management since 2011 when he was an intern (research assistant) at UNIZULU after receiving his undergraduate degree, this



Siyanda Manqele. Picture: Samkele Sokhela

recognition forms part of Manqele’s significant career highlights. These include the opportunity to present at national and international conferences, and mentoring five early-career administrators in research management who are now doing very well in institutions of higher education.

He was involved in the establishment of, and currently chairs the Community of Practice (CoP) on research ethics management eastern region, which covers KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Free State universities. The CoP was formally launched in July 2020 through the Southern African Research & Innovation Management Association (SARIMA).

During the 2021 SARIMA virtual conference, Manqele received the Research Management Professional award through DSI and SARIMA. In 2023, he was appointed editor for the Journal of Research Management & Administration (JoRMA). This is an open access, internationally refereed journal published by Coventry University, England, that publishes articles, essays and papers covering all aspects of research management and administration.

This news came at the right time when Manqele had shifted his focus to being actively involved in a mentorship programme for early-career, new-entry research administrators, which was presented as a poster at the 2023 INORMS conference held in Durban, South Africa, through SARIMA. The programme will be launched in the upcoming one-day “3 C” event scheduled for October 2023. In this exciting project, Manqele collaborated with esteemed colleagues who are specialists in the field of research management and form part of the SADC COP steering committee through SARIMA.

Sharing words of advice to his research management peers, Manqele said: “This process takes time, so it must not be rushed through; and also, get a mentor who will help read your application. Working in silos makes the journey longer than collaborating with your peers within the field of RM. One is required to remain calm, be visible, always go the extra mile, be patient and be kind to yourself.”

Scholars have huge role to play in developing Africa

NALEDI HLEFANE

DISCUSSIONS during the recent Management, Business, Administration and Legal Initiatives (MBALI) Conference – organised by the University of Zululand’s (UNIZULU) Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law (FCAL – flagged Africa’s economic and intellectual underdevelopment, while also bringing to the fore practical solutions for these and other problems facing the continent.

MBALI is the brainchild of FCAL. It brings together scholars with government, business and legal sector experts from various parts of Africa and the world to deliberate on topical issues, while also providing a platform for research presentations and discussions. The conference is described by the faculty as a flagship project that has become synonymous with academic excellence and scholarship.

This year, the three-day conference took place at the Bon Hotel Waterfront in Richards Bay under the theme “Africa Rising: Possibilities, Priorities and Partnerships”.

FCAL Dean, Professor Lorraine Greyling explained that the theme was inspired by the UNIZULU strategic vision, which aims to position the institution as a node for African thought. For Dr Tholaine Matadi, a lecturer in FCAL’s Department of Law, the theme was indicative of the fact that African intellectual consciousness had finally become a reality. “It is evidenced by trends such as decolonisation, indigenisation, Africanisation, African identity, you name it,” she said.

This sentiment was shared by Prof

Nokuthula Kunene, UNIZULU’s Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Innovation, during her keynote address. She noted that there was “a new level of consciousness for Pan-Africanism rising among our youth in Africa”, which was a key part of the solutions she would later emphasise in her address. She also said that future historians would easily define this century as one of black consciousness emanating from a past littered with many struggles such as colonialism, neo-colonialism and slavery.

While there was an awakening in terms of Africa’s potential, opportunities, and the need to rise; Prof Kunene acknowledged that the continent still needed to toil to reach its desired destination. It would first need to address some of its pressing challenges: economic inequality, infrastructure deficit, poor governance, discrepancies between qualifications offered at universities and the required skills to solve problems affecting the continent, poor health systems, and food insecurity.

For scientist Professor Sipho Seepe, who was another keynote speaker during MBALI, the continent’s problems stem from the deep-seated, long standing issue of coloniality. Bearing this in mind, he said it was not surprising that the continent’s problems remained unsolved, despite it being home to multiple brilliant minds. According to the professor, the mistake was in “thinking that the end of colonialism as an administration meant the end of coloniality”.

“Einstein put it well in saying that we want to solve the problems we have by using the same logic that created them.



FCAL Dean, Professor Lorraine Greyling (left) and Siphelele Khomo, Head of the Accounting and Auditing Department (right), present Prof Sipho Seepe (centre) with a token of appreciation for his thought-provoking keynote presentation at the 2023 MBALI Conference. Picture: Samkele Sokhela.

The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house,” he emphasised. The never-ending cycle of coloniality is part of the reason why there is intellectual and economic underdevelopment, Prof Seepe said. Reiterating what philosopher Paulin J Hountondji once said, the professor said that Africa is a consumer of “almost finished products” that come from minerals sourced in the continent.

“Our integration into the world economy is as a place of extraction of natural resources; and those natural resources then go out there to produce goods for other people – not for us.

“The same applies to knowledge. Africa becomes a field where people come to extract data, and that data gets processed outside and theory is built ... until Africa builds industries, it will continue to be poor.”

African scholars therefore have a great task at hand in trying to steer the conti-

nent on a growth trajectory, Prof Seepe stressed.

Prof Kunene emphasised the essence of universities in helping Africa rise. “Africa’s rise going forward is hinged on its human capital. Recent studies have shown that the richest untapped resource in the African region, especially within the present century, is the power of the human mind.

“Scholars have admitted that Africa needs high-skilled human resource inputs if it is to sustain its rise. This is where universities’ role comes in as a basic resource with their human assets and research institutions, capable of producing knowledge, creativity and innovation – as represented in researchers, research centres, and scientific departments,” Prof Kunene shared.

The three-day conference culminated in fruitful engagements and interesting research presentations.

Entrepreneurship through the lens of the youth

NALEDI HLEFANE

ENTREPRENEURSHIP is an essential practice, the necessity of which has been amplified by the volatile job market since the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This was the consensus during the inter-university student panel discussion which took place at the recent Appalachian, Zululand Entrepreneurship Development (AZED) Conference. The panel comprised four students from the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) and five from Appalachian State University (ASU) in the United States. The group, diverse in their entrepreneurial interests, views and experiences, was asked various entrepreneurship related questions to understand their sentiments, lived experiences and aspirations pertaining to entrepreneurship.

UNIZULU student Andiswa Khathi observed that the high unemployment rate and increase in population and competition in South Africa were issues that motivated most of the youth to become entrepreneurs. Coupled with this was the desire to improve their livelihoods and contribute to the betterment of the financial circumstances of unemployed citizens.

Christy Parker from ASU was of the view that entrepreneurship was more encouraged in the United States of America following the devastation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. “I think that the youth is definitely encouraged to go a different route, not to just work a nine-to-five job and I think that has been encouraged a lot more since Covid happened,” Parker said.

Having said this, the student noted

that the success of such businesses relies on the entrepreneur’s intent to establish their business. “There’s a lot of corrupt businesses that just want to make money but I think that the ones that are most sustainable are the ones that really care about their customers,” Parker reckoned.

In terms of the older generation’s views on youth entrepreneurs, the sentiments varied. One of the ASU panelists who runs a jewellery business said her capabilities are often doubted by her much older clientele because of her age and minimal years of experience in the industry. Khathi on the other hand, shared that in her community, young entrepreneurs are supported as the belief is that the youth represent the future of the country.

When it came to securing capital or investments, most of the panelists agreed that the while funding was difficult to secure, opportunities were there for young entrepreneurs to thrive.

ABOUT AZED

AZED is the culmination of a three-year US Embassy grant which UNIZULU attained in 2021 to be channelled into various projects set to fulfil the university’s entrepreneurship education plan. The grant further augmented the relationship between UNIZULU and ASU with regard to entrepreneurship development. The conference has the ambit of bringing together academics and students from both institutions in one geographical location to debate, conjecture, profess and interrogate the implementation of entrepreneurship activities on both continents.

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