

UNIZULU education academic's paper lauded internationally



Dr Zanele Buthelezi, the recipient of the Runner-up prize for the Paper of the Year award, which is awarded annually by the Journal of Vocational Education and Training.

A UNIVERSITY of Zululand (UNIZULU) academic's research into the current experiences of lecturers in South African technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges post-apartheid has recently earned her recognition in a reputable international journal.

Dr Zanele Buthelezi, a lecturer in the Department of African Languages and Culture, was named Runner-up for the Paper of the Year award by the Journal of Vocational Education and Training (JVET). The recognition was based on the relevance of her paper, titled *Lecturer experiences of TVET College challenges in the post-apartheid era: a case of unintended consequences of educational reform in South Africa*, which was published in JVET in 2018. Her award includes a 250-euro prize. The paper will also be made open access, free to download, until the end of 2019.

An ecstatic Buthelezi said: "I feel honoured that my academic work is getting recognition internationally. Most academics struggle to have an article accepted by journals for review. Being published by a renowned journal was on its own a huge achievement. Being nominated for the article of the year award was a bonus and the runner-up position is the cherry on top."

JVET confers the Paper of the Year award annually, with two runner-up commended papers. The award is for work believed to stand out in how it addresses the journal's interests and helps to advance knowledge and understanding in education.

According to Ann-Marie Bathmaker, the JVET Associate Editor, Buthelezi's paper was highly commended. "We are delighted to have published her paper in the journal. The editors and all members of the Editorial Management Committee of the journal offer warm congratulations to Zanele (Buthelezi)," she said.

The article was harvested from Dr Buthelezi's PhD work that she completed in 2015. After the TVET sector had undergone a barrage of major institutional, structural and curricular reforms in 2000, the academic developed an interest to learn about the lived experiences of lecturers working in these colleges.

She believes the revitalisation of the TVET sector was a necessity in South Africa given the mandate for skills development, but it brought about unintended consequences that should serve as a lesson to the education sector, including policymakers and politicians.

Using figuration sociology by Norbert Elias, findings of the study emphasised that no matter how well educational reforms are conceived in principle, they will only be fortuitous if teachers, who are implementers of those reforms, are not a pivotal plank.

Karate champion student aims for international success

KARATEKA Thuthukile Dlamini is gearing up to compete in the 3rd All-Africa So-Kyokushin Karate Championships that will take place in Zimbabwe from July 27 to 28.

Dlamini, a final-year Bachelor of Education student at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU), said she is going to Zimbabwe with one goal in mind – triumphing over all her opponents in her category.

No stranger to victory, she is the reigning karate champion in the 65kg category. Dlamini earned this title at the 2018 University Sports South Africa (USSA) Tournament and recently defended it in the 2019 instalment of the event in Grahamstown. She subsequently qualified to compete in the African championships.

Although it will be her first time competing at this level, Dlamini insists she is not to be taken lightly as she has prepared well for the competition. Her

training schedule involves a lot of stamina exercises and this, coupled with a strong support system and an unyielding mindset, is her secret to success.

"I have a strong desire to succeed and win. I faced opponents who were levels ahead of me during the USSAs and I was able to defeat them. With karate, you learn to face your problems head on, similar to your opponent. In essence, this teaches you self-awareness and self-discipline," Dlamini said.

Her passion for karate was sparked in her childhood through observing her uncle who was an avid karateka. When she enrolled at UNIZULU in 2016, Dlamini eagerly joined the karate club.

She has since grown in leaps and bounds, moving up the levels in her sporting code. Following her victory in the USSAs, the karateka was elevated from blue belt (Level 2) to yellow belt (Level 3). She is also the incumbent chairperson of the UNIZULU karate club.



2019 USSA karate champion Thuthukile Dlamini demonstrating one of her winning moves.

Weaving value systems into research



Community Engagement workshop attendees were recently equipped with the much-needed community engagement skills and principles of community-based research.

THROUGH its Community Engagement office, the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) recently held a three-day workshop aimed at empowering staff with appropriate community engagement skills and principles of community-based research (CBR).

Held at the Bon Hotel in Empangeni, the workshop was centred around participation in and execution of CBR. The topics for discussion included appreciation of collaboration; sharing of ideas and challenges; forming networks and support groups to promote an inclusive, supportive, productive and satisfying

research and development culture and capacity to sustain this culture.

The workshop was facilitated by Professor Lesley Angelina Wood of North-West University. Differentiating between community service and community engagement, she emphasised that academics should be careful of not confusing the two.

She also noted that great values and principles are major contributing factors of a successful community engagement project.

"There are certain qualities that one needs to possess before starting or when

involved in a community engagement project or community-based research. Among those qualities is respect. You must be mindful of how you speak because communities practise different cultures and have experienced different realities, so you need to be wary of your words and assumptions," Prof Wood advised.

She counted teamwork, trust, good communication and forming relationships as equally significant factors.

Mammusa Lekoa, the UNIZULU Community Engagement Manager, expressed great delight and satisfaction at the participation of and commitment

shown by staff throughout the three days. According to her, the workshop was a success mostly because of the active participation of staff who willingly shared their expertise and experiences during the discussions. She said she is looking forward to seeing informed and impactful community engagement initiatives that are embedded in both teaching and learning as well as research and innovation.

Rachel Mkhlasibe, a lecturer in the Faculty of Education, said the event was an eye-opener. She said that it exceeded all her expectations.

Academic's cryptocurrency research named best paper at accountancy conference

RAPHAEL Jankeeparsad, a senior lecturer in the Department of Accounting and Auditing at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU), is overjoyed after winning the Best Paper award at the Southern African Accounting Association (SAAA) International Conference at the Emperors Palace in Johannesburg recently.

SAAA is a body that strives to promote education and research as well as the interests of educators and researchers in the field of accountancy. It hosts its international conference biennially. The theme for this year's conference was Breaking Barriers and Moving Boundaries.

For him, the award was an unexpected achievement as he considers himself to be at the "junior researcher" stage. "The SAAA International Conference is one of the largest accounting education and research conferences. Winning this award has motivated me to conduct further research into (cryptocurrency) and other topical areas," he said.

The news of Jankeeparsad's achievement has been received with excitement by the Department of Accounting and Auditing. Department Head Siphelile Khomo said they are truly proud of Jankeeparsad's sterling accomplishment.

In his paper, Jankeeparsad unpacked the concept of End-user Adoption of Bitcoin in South Africa. "Over the past three years or so, cryptocurrency, particularly Bitcoin, has taken the world by storm. My research set out to determine what factors influence individuals in South Africa to utilise Bitcoin and to investigate in what manner Bitcoin was being utilised by South Africans," Jankeeparsad said.

He added that, according to his knowledge, this was the first study of this nature to be conducted in South Africa.

The academic has always had a keen interest in technology and latest technological trends. Naturally, he was drawn to cryptocurrency as it was getting a considerable amount of media coverage. "Cryptocurrency began causing regulatory challenges the world over due to its decentralised nature. I discovered



Raphael Jankeeparsad, a senior lecturer in the Department of Accounting and Auditing, is motivated to build his body of research after receiving the Best Paper award at the Southern African Accounting Association (SAAA) International Conference in Johannesburg recently.

that in South Africa, there were many Bitcoin millionaires springing up due to the exponential increase in the value of Bitcoin; this was the catalyst that led to my research in this area," he said.

The findings of the paper indicated that South Africans primarily use Bitcoin as a speculative investment for profit making, as opposed to being used as a traditional currency.

In addition to this, when compared with non-adopters, adopters of Bitcoin find it useful to their investment needs and perceive it to be user-friendly. Also, they trust the integrity of the Bitcoin network, although there have been numerous breaches and millions of rands lost due to cyber theft.

Jankeeparsad hopes that more research into cryptocurrency will be conducted in South Africa, with the country being a developing one. Most of the research into this area has been conducted in developed countries, but based on his observation, South Africans have taken a keen interest in cryptocurrency as well.