



UNIZULU TERTIARY TIMES

UNIZULU VC dissects concepts of truth, revolution and decolonisation

NALEDI HLEFANE

IN a recent webinar held by the University of Zululand (UNIZULU), university Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Xoliswa Mtose shared her views on the interlinked nature of truth, revolution and decolonisation – and their role in the decolonial project.

Titled “No Shortcuts, No Subtitles, No Substitutes: Truth-telling As Revolutionary Activity”, the event was organised by the Office of the Vice-Chancellor as part of its ongoing dialogues held against the decoloniality backdrop. These periodic conversations also strategically align with UNIZULU’s current journey towards fully establishing itself as a node for African thought.

“This webinar seeks to centre truth-telling as a revolutionary practice. It is important to critically reflect on our thinking and world views if we are to avoid losing our way,” Prof Mtose said. This cautionary note, she elaborated, was prompted by a trilogy of “incredible controversies” which she listed as the contested notion of truth, unresolved questions about what constitutes a social revolution, and uncertainties regarding how revolution and decolonisation are to be understood in relation to each other.

Prof Mtose first delved into the universal understanding of truth – highlighting that there were diverse scholarly perspectives of this concept. She shared that according to some scholars, what is considered truth is highly influenced by one’s values, customs and views, among other factors. She also discussed Michel Foucault’s view that truth cannot be separated from power. This is a sentiment also shared by Johannes Angermüller, who describes truth as a weapon that the powerful can use discursively.

“The Western claims of universal objective truth are an example of this,” Prof Mtose underscored.

Her exploration of the concept of truth propelled her to think of truth-telling, revolution and decolonisation as a nexus. She illustrated how these three notions intersect by referencing the #FeesMust-Fall campaigns. Dissatisfied by the higher education system at the time, students revolted against the “unaffordability of higher education and the coloniality of education that seems to continue to define the cultural make-up of the university space in South Africa”. By raising their concerns and exposing the colonial



Professor Xoliswa Mtose – UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor and Principal.

Picture: Xolani Ncube

entanglements of the South African higher education system, students contributed to reform in terms of tuition fees – thus emphasising the essence of truth-telling as a revolutionary activity.

On the decolonisation front, Prof Mtose noted: “The students campaigned to decolonise education, citing the alienating epistemological hegemony of white Western thought in the university curriculum. Since the students’ campaigns, there has been a growing body of scholars who have deepened our understanding on the politics of education as manifested Eurocentric curriculum. Ndlovu-Gatseni (2021) deploys the concept of cognitive empire as a discursive tool with which to unravel dynamics and complexities of decolonisation of education.”

Considering the latter, Prof Mtose stressed the need to expose the epistemologies that govern our being, adding that there was an urgency to rebuild authentic consciousness. Such revolutionary practice, the Vice-Chancellor said, requires mobilisation of scholars.

“I remain yearning for truths on how the nexus can be utilised to discover and confront the dominant grand narratives that have been proven to drag Africans towards the mutilation of their humanity. UNIZULU has resolved to tackle this conundrum through the vision of building an African university which is a node for African thought that can be turned to use its own truths in waging the twin problematics of revolution and decolonisation.”

DR ALLAN BOESAK ON TRUTH-TELLING

Prof Mtose’s presentation was followed by a guest lecture by Dutch Reformed Church cleric and anti-apartheid activist, Dr Allan Boesak. He saluted Prof Mtose for pioneering “opportunities for thinking and engagements which will be followed by action that will benefit not only the university but all other places of learning in our country”.

Dr Boesak’s lecture reflected what he had learnt about black consciousness over the years – uncovering huge gaps in the country’s democracy and underlining the need for political authorities to once again prioritise justice, equity and human dignity.

UNIZULU workshop reveals solutions to support students with special sensory needs



The workshop’s objective was to capacitate UNIZULU academics to better accommodate students with visual and hearing impairments during lectures, assessments and exams.

Picture: James Thwala

NALEDI HLEFANE

THE inaugural Workshop on Supporting Students with Sensory Needs, held recently by the University of Zululand (UNIZULU), shed light on the common challenges faced by students with sensory impairments in higher education institutions and showcased the various solutions that can support these students.

The two-day workshop was organised by the Disability Unit under the Student Services Department, as endorsed by the Human Resources Department and the offices of the deputy vice-chancellors for teaching and learning as well as institutional support.

According to Disability Co-ordinator, Phiwaiyinkosi Mjadu, the objective was to capacitate UNIZULU academics to better accommodate students with visual and hearing impairments during lectures, class assessments and examinations.

Mjadu explained that interventions for students with sensory impairments require a targeted approach. Their challenges vary from illegible font sizes of notes, test or exam papers to hearing problems that necessitate specialised teaching arrangements and requests for extra time during tests and exams.

“Our lecturers are always prepared and always positive in terms of going the extra mile in accommodating students. When you tell them that there is a student with a disability in their class, they will ask you how best they can accommodate them,” Mjadu acknowledged.

While he commended the lecturers’ commitment to supporting students with disabilities, Mjadu was resolute about organising the workshop to further impart relevant knowledge.

The workshop programme was drafted in consultation with the Higher and Further Education Disability Services Association (HEDSA), which also identified suitable facilitators for the two days.

The first day was dedicated to the topic of visual impairment. Dr Ashley

Subbiah from the Disability Support Unit at the University of KwaZulu-Natal facilitated the session – focusing on, among other areas, common challenges faced by students with visual impairments in higher education, creating inclusive classroom atmospheres, and effective communication techniques.

Dr Subbiah also delved into the application of Universal Design for Learning principles (representation, engagement and expression). He encouraged academics to provide content in alternative formats accessible to students with visual impairments such as audio, tactile graphics, and braille materials. He also highlighted the importance of offering choices in how students interact with materials and participate in activities; and allowing them to select methods that best suit their preferences and abilities. Finally, he spoke about providing alternative methods for students to demonstrate their understanding and express themselves, such as through verbal responses, audio recordings, tactile models or multimedia presentations.

“The goal is for every student to be able to engage with the material effectively,” he stressed.

On the second day, Gugu Sacolo, Disability Officer in the Department of Student Governance and Development at the Durban University of Technology, facilitated the discussions around hearing impairments. Together with her colleagues, she spoke about the legal obligations and accommodations concerning students with hearing impairments, effective communication techniques for interacting with deaf students and colleagues, and implementing assistive technologies and resources, among other areas.

In addition to being highly educational, the two-day workshop also offered academics a platform to share and learn from each other’s experiences of supporting students with disabilities in their lectures.

After the workshop, HEDSA issued certificates of attendance to the trained academics.

Promising UNIZULU-ICGEB partnership on the horizon

THE University of Zululand (UNIZULU) was recently visited by a delegation from the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) based in Cape Town.

The ICGEB primarily capacitates research and related activities in several African countries. It partnered with the South African Department of Science and

Innovation in a special programme to develop and support capacity development in South African historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs), which includes UNIZULU.

The discussions held were premised on the need to capacitate research-related activities that align to and are funded by the ICGEB. The meeting highlighted the

current ICGEB programmes, which are classified into three categories:

- ◆ Collaborative Research Grant Programme;
- ◆ Meetings and courses; and
- ◆ Fellowship Scheme.

Eligible South African citizens and/or South African permanent residence holders from eligible HDIs can apply for the programme activities in question.

The ICGEB encouraged students and academics from UNIZULU’s Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering (FSAE) to take advantage of these programmes to strengthen scientific research that can help address pressing community needs and beyond.

The ICGEB hosts laboratories for sample analysis or for providing access to academic staff and students from various universities. FSAE will take the opportunities provided to enhance exposure and collaborations by students and staff that contribute to the quality and quantity of research.

An MOU is currently being prepared for the relationship between UNIZULU and ICGEB.

* Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Innovation



UNIZULU Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering members with the ICGEB delegation. Picture: Samkele Sokhela

Creative Arts Department stages play at National Arts Festival



The 22 cast and crew members behind the edutainment play, The Naive Sealed Qongqothwane.

Picture: Samkele Sokhela

MASEDI MANENYE

THE Naive Sealed Qongqothwane, an edutainment play by the University of Zululand’s (UNIZULU) Department of Creative Arts, was recently staged at the 2024 National Arts Festival in Makhanda, Eastern Cape.

Inspired by the resilience of the dung beetle (*qongqothwane*), it explored themes of self-acceptance, determination and the pursuit of goals. An

unconventional experience, this beautifully-crafted play offered no grand narrative – but rather a raw exploration of meaning.

The production featured 20 cast members on stage and a technical team of two. All 22 participants are final-year students in the Department of Creative Arts, which specialises in drama, theatre and performance arts.

The Department was returning for its fourth season since rejoining the

renowned festival in 2019.

The internationally-recognised National Arts Festival, which celebrated its 50th anniversary this year, offers significant benefits to young students and enables them to interact with and learn from inspiring artists.

UNIZULU is proud to send its talented students; making them aware of the transformative impact the festival can have on their artistic development.

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Gaudeamus
 Ipsos
 Quoniam dum sumus
 Fides
 Nos habebit hunc

Saica and Standard Bank launch Thuthuka initiative at UNIZULU

NALEDI HLEFANE

FOURTH-YEAR BCom Accounting Science students at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) have been awarded Thuthuka bursaries – an initiative specifically designed to enable deserving aspiring chartered accountants to realise their dreams, devoid of financial limitations.

The funding comes as a result of a partnership between the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (Saica) and Standard Bank to sponsor youth who lack the financial means to study towards the chartered accountancy qualification. At its core is the intention to level the playing field through empowering underprivileged youth, while also reinforcing the essence of collaboration for meaningful societal impact.

The fund will not only cover tuition fees, it will also make provision for study materials and other essential needs. Additionally, recipients will receive ongoing mentorship and career guidance from experienced professionals within the accounting field to adequately equip them with the necessary skills and support to thrive in their future careers.

UNIZULU is among three historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) that have been earmarked for this key initiative in 2024. The launch of the project took place recently at the institu-

tion's KwaDlangezwa Campus, and was received with exuberance and optimism by attendees.

The stakeholders were welcomed by UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor and Principal Professor Xoliswa Mtsoe, who thanked them for their act of benevolence. She expressed that the importance of this initiative could not be overemphasised, as it was geared towards transforming the demographics of the accountancy profession.

"The social economic development of any country is intertwined with the level of investment that the country makes in education. It is precisely for this reason that the University of Zululand is pleased that Saica, in its wisdom, has chosen to put shoulder to the wheel in the advancement of education, the accounting profession and societal development.

"We are pleased to note that Saica has identified the National Development Plan Vision 2030 as key to its strategic objectives; and knows that the NDP calls for the private and public sectors as well as civil society to run behind a united vision. Today's gathering gives practical expression to that vision," Prof Mtsoe said.

Saica CEO Patricia Stock shared that the institute believed in supporting students and high school learners "from cradle to career" through its various initiatives. This approach entailed Saica

"walking the journey" alongside students and learners to ensure maximum support.

"We don't walk alone; we get the right partners who share our vision. Standard Bank's vision and purpose is to make sure that Africa grows through its people. That's why Standard Bank is here today – to ensure that they walk the journey with you to grow as an African child, so that you can also be part of those who are helping our economy to grow," Stock said.

She added that initiatives such as Thuthuka were not only key for Saica, but also for broader society. Specifically addressing the students, Stock said that Thuthuka existed to empower them, fuel their ambitions and propel them towards achieving their dreams in the "incredible world of accounting". She encouraged students to persevere in their journeys to becoming the country's future chartered accountants, as they had the potential to become leaders and innovators.

Like Stock, Thembeke Maseko, Standard Bank Chief Financial Officer, spoke about the essence of dreaming big. "The grander the dream, the tougher the task to achieve it. But with the right amount of motivation, any dream is possible," she noted.

Maseko urged the bursary recipients to utilise the opportunity they have been afforded to the full.



UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Xoliswa Mtsoe (centre) with Standard Bank CFO, Thembeke Maseko (left) and Saica CEO, Patricia Stock. Picture: Xolani Ncube

2024 MBALI Conference promises to be bigger and better

NALEDI HLEFANE

THE 2024 International Management, Business, Administration and Legal Initiatives (MBALI) Conference, which will be held from August 5 to 8, promises to be an even grander experience – with a plethora of speakers and scholars set to unpack issues of growth, synergy and prospects in Africa.

The annual conference is the brain-child of the Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law (FCAL) within the University of Zululand (UNIZULU). It is research-focused and aims to inspire academics and delegates from business and government to use research to achieve developmental goals. Equally central to the flagship event is providing novice researchers and postgraduate students with an opportunity to develop and sharpen their skills through interacting with experienced researchers.

Since its inception in 2016, the MBALI brand has blossomed in an unprecedented manner. Shalen Heeralal, a member of the organising committee, attested to this, saying the conference had "grown from strength to strength into one of the most revered events on the national conferencing calendar".

"MBALI has taken on the mantle of being a 'Node for African Thought'; the event is now the genesis for all intellectual discourse ensconced within the African academic space," he added.

The increased success of the conference over the years can be attributed to the invaluable and consistent support of the Absa Group, which has become an associate of the MBALI brand.

Tholani Ncalane, Absa regional marketing manager, shared that Absa was very proud to be associated with the MBALI Conference and thrilled to wit-



UNIZULU received a generous donation towards the 2024 MBALI Conference from Absa Group. Picture: James Thwala

ness it growing and successfully forging relationships with both local and international universities.

She added that Absa had recently contributed funds towards the conference. "This sponsorship is a strategic partnership aimed at advancing knowledge and creating opportunities for learning and collaboration."

The event will be held at the Bon-

Hotel Waterfront in Richards Bay. It will also include an online component to accommodate scholars who are not able to physically attend the conference.

The proceedings will take place under the theme "African Resilience Reshaping the Global Stage: Growth, Synergy and Prospects". Conference papers were accepted in an array of sub-themes, including finance and accounting, busi-

ness and 4IR/artificial intelligence, retail, marketing and supply chain, public management, law, operations management, human resources, economics, management information systems, ethics in the business and legal space, entrepreneurship, and climate change.

Plenary sessions will be nothing short of enthralling, with addresses by various keynote speakers.

Law student represents SA in volleyball at CUCSA Student Games

NALEDI HLEFANE

"I WANT to be in the national senior volleyball team, and I want to be known as the best volleyball player in South Africa."

These are the words of Siphukuthula Shelembe, a third-year law student at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU). Judging by his recent achievements, Shelembe is well on his way to reaching his ultimate goal. The young volleyball devotee represented South Africa at the recent Confederation of University and Colleges Sports Associations (CUCSA) Student Games, which took place in Pretoria. This followed his outstanding performance during the 2024 University Sports South Africa tournament.

The South African volleyball team competed against their Zambian, Zimbabwean, Botswana and Malawian counterparts in six gruelling games. Amid the challenges, Shelembe and his teammates kept the team spirit alive and gave their all game after game. Their resilience and unity were what eventually led them to taking the number one spot.

Reflecting on the victory, Shelembe said: "It felt so good to represent my institution and make it proud. The games were quite intense because some of the teams had tall players, which meant they could jump high and hit the ball to the highest point. Despite these difficulties, we were able to perform very well and win."

The champions won a trophy and gold medals for each team member. Owing to this achievement, the team will now compete in the world games in 2025.



Siphukuthula Shelembe with his CUCSA Student Games gold medal and USSA silver medal. Picture: James Thwala

Shelembe attributes his recent accomplishments to an insatiable hunger for success in the sport and a strong support system, which includes his family, the UNIZULU volleyball team coach and fellow team members. He also sang the praises of Lucas Ledwaba, the sports co-ordinator in the UNIZULU Sports Department, for seamlessly handling all the logistics for his CUCSA trip.

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