

UNIZULU TERTIARY TIMES

UNIZULU webinar discusses essence of decolonising the curriculum

SBAHLE DUMAKEYE

PROFESSOR Xoliswa Mtose, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Zululand (UNIZULU), this month hosted a thought-provoking webinar during which the issue of decolonising the curriculum was unpacked at length.

The webinar was the first of a series scheduled to take place in 2025 focusing on UNIZULU's decoloniality journey. This annual series is now in its fifth year. According to Prof Mtose, this particular webinar offered a unique opportunity for the institution to critically reflect on progress made thus far in its decoloniality agenda.

The topic was broken down through three presentations that offered varied perspectives. The session was opened by Prof Mtose, who was followed by Prof Elelwani Ramugondo, the guest speaker. Prof Bryon Brown, UNIZULU's newly appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Engagements and Transformation, was the respondent.

Reflecting on some of the issues, Prof Mtose first touched on the impera-

tive of decolonisation as an instrument designed to deliver epistemic freedom that facilitates curriculum decolonisation. She then explored how, despite such decolonisation efforts, coloniality has been shown to survive and mutate. She further posed the question of whether curriculum decolonisation can be achieved in isolation of broader contextual conditions. Lastly, she invited the attendees to embark on a continued search for effective strategies and practices.

"These years on our decoloniality trajectory have not only imbued a critical mass of our faculties with growing decolonial perspectives about how to interact and to enact the call to decolonise the curriculum pedagogy, but they have also revealed complexities, tensions and possibilities. These revolve around the conundrum of translating decolonial theory into curricular and pedagogical praxis," Prof Mtose said.

She proceeded to stress that as academics who are products of a Eurocentric education system that alienated them and promoted coloniality, it was now a necessity to confront and overcome

this system. Referring to readings from Ngugi wa Thiong'o's book *Decolonising the Mind*, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal spoke of how the colonial education system inculcated a consciousness in the African mind that had the proverbial effect of emptying the hard disks of the natives – the colonised – of previous memory and downloading into them European memory; thereby inflicting what some scholars call epistemic erasure.

She highlighted that UNIZULU has been transformed into an African university, serving as a hub for African thought.

Prof Ramugondo, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Transformation, Student Affairs and Social Responsiveness at the University of Cape Town (UCT), tackled the topic in three questions: What is knowledge ultimately about? Why is it the case that we seem to have forgotten what knowledge is ultimately for? How do we remember what knowledge is ultimately for?

In Prof Ramugondo's opinion, knowledge creation is essentially about "understanding life and living". She takes this from the origin of philosophy.

She cited Grosfoguel, who once said: "Racism is a global hierarchy of superiority and inferiority along the line of the human that have been politically, culturally and economically produced and reproduced for centuries by the institutions of the capitalist, patriarchal, western-centric, Christian-centric and modern world-system."

She elaborated that understanding what racism really means is critical to decolonise the curriculum and academia.

Prof Brown responded to the two speakers by first highlighting that the central message in the Vice-Chancellor's presentation was a call to action for UNIZULU academics to become agents of intellectual decolonisation – beginning with self-reflection. He also noted that the curriculum emphasised by the Vice-Chancellor included the knowledge that Prof Ramugondo advocated for in her presentation; establishing a clear connection between the two.

"I agree that the decolonial project requires emphasis on Afrocentric cosmology. African knowledge is inseparable from African cosmology," concluded Prof Brown.



UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Xoliswa Mtose (right) with webinar guest speaker, Prof Elelwani Ramugondo, UCT Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Transformation, Student Affairs and Social Responsiveness. Picture: Xolani Ncube

Mathematics, Physical Science and Accounting educators impacted through seminar

SBAHLE DUMAKEYE

THE third annual Mathematics, Physical Science and Accounting Educators Seminar was hosted recently at the UNIZULU Science Centre in Richards Bay by the institution's Communications and Marketing Division (CMD), in association with the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (Saica).

The event was graced by distinguished visitors from the Department of Basic Education; UNIZULU's departments of Engineering, Accounting and Auditing, as well as Mathematical Science; and Saica.

The workshop aimed to provide teachers with the opportunity to come together as a community of educators and subject experts in order to share innovative teaching methods, research and effective strategies that will enhance both teaching and learning experiences. CMD Director, Siyanda Mntambo, welcomed the attendees and highlighted that the event not only represented a significant milestone in the continuous efforts to enrich and innovate education, but also reflected a shared vision of empowering educators and promoting academic excellence universally.

"At the University of Zululand, we are deeply committed to the belief that education is key to shaping the future. We understand the indispensable role that subjects such as Accounting, Mathematics and Physical Science play in developing critical thinking, analytical skills and problem-solving abilities in our students," said Mntambo.

Delivering a message of support, Dr Emmanuel Onuh, Acting Head of the Department of Engineering, stressed the critical role of a strong foundation in all aspects of life, particularly in engineering. He recognised educators as pioneers in laying the groundwork for education. Moreover, he praised their bravery in confronting and overcoming daily challenges such as low literacy rates, poverty and inadequate infrastructure. In addition, Dr Onuh acknowledged their dedication to embracing new teaching and learning methods, including the promotion of e-learning.

"We as the university invested in you (educators) as our strategic partner in this quest. We have what it takes to implement the programmes of the government, and



Workshop breakaway sessions provided educators with innovative strategies and practical tools to enhance teaching and learning. | Xolani Ncube

also to implement the desires and wishes of ourselves and the students. We believe this forum will continue from year-to-year as it has been, and the communication from this forum will continue to enhance your ability to deliver your mission within your field," he said.

He concluded his presentation by praising the university for its investment in engineering – and encouraged educators to spread the word about the Engineering Department at UNIZULU's Richards Bay Campus.

Lwando Bantom, Saica Project Director, added significant value to the meeting and expressed his excitement about attending the educational event. He explained that Saica governs the chartered accountancy (CA) profession in South Africa, and emphasised that Mathematics is a compulsory subject for students pursuing an accounting degree. He added that UNIZULU is one of Saica's strategic partners and proudly stated: "We are happy to partner with this university; we accredited their junior degree." He stressed the importance of these workshops in enhancing educators' teaching skills in these subjects, and urged attendees to inform students interested in pursuing an accounting degree

about the Saica bursary, which is open for applications until August 1, 2025.

Sphelele Khomo, HOD of Accounting and Auditing, then shared her excitement about reuniting with educators. She commended them for their hard work and the excellent marks achieved in the previous academic year; noting the improvement in accounting scores and the district's overall performance. "We need to be doing more of these sessions – and we need to support each other more. I am excited that we are improving," Khomo said.

The seminar concluded with breakaway sessions tailored for Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Accounting educators. Each subject had a dedicated facilitator, who guided the educators through various activities aligned with their respective fields. Mathematics educators explored innovative teaching strategies, Physical Sciences educators engaged in hands-on experiments to enhance their practical understanding, while Accounting educators delved into advanced techniques to improve their instructional methods. These sessions provided valuable insights and practical tools – enriching the educators' expertise and fostering a collaborative learning environment.

IRC-WST Collaboration Workshop 2025: strengthening research partnerships in water science and technology

NOMVELO XULU

"WATER is more than a resource; it is a lifeguard for all ecosystems, agriculture, economics and daily lives across the world. Yet in many regions, particularly Africa and the Global South, access to clean water and reliable water remains a challenge. As we confront the escalating impacts of climate change and industrial demand, our responsibility as scientists becomes ever more urgent."

These were the words of Professor Khoboso Lehloeny, Dean of the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering (FSAE) at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU). She was speaking at the International Research Centre for Water, Science and Technology (IRC-WST) at UNIZULU, where the IRC-WST Collaboration Workshop 2025 was recently hosted.

This significant event marked an important milestone in fostering collaboration and advancing research in water science and technology across South African institutions. Its aim was to bring together researchers from South African universities to explore

future research partnerships with newly added IRC-WST members.

A series of formal addresses kicked off the event and set the tone for the day's proceedings. Professor Lehloeny delivered the inaugural address. Opening her address, she said: "Today marks a pivotal moment in our journey to forge new partnerships and strengthen existing ones, and build a robust foundation for collaboration in research, innovation, water, science and technology."

She said that the most pivotal department in IRC-WST is the Department of Hydrology – one of the 15 departments in the FSAE. She explained that FSAE is involved in many initiatives and that some of the faculty's most crucial research is conducted in the area of water. About six departments under FSAE are currently conducting water-related research; hence the importance of the IRC-WST.

The welcome address was delivered by Professor Nokuthula Kunene, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation. She outlined the university's strategic vision for establishing the IRC-WST as a leading hub for water

research in Africa. "We have positioned our university so that it will solve African issues, and I know that with this kind of collaboration we are also trying to fulfil that initiative," Kunene said.

A key highlight of the workshop was the formal introduction and planning session for the third International Conference on Earth and Environmental Sciences (ICEES) 2025, which is hosted by UNIZULU and Chang'an University in China. It was decided that the event will be held in August at the Durban ICC.

The workshop also featured several interactive sessions designed to foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing. These included panel discussions on emerging research trends in water science and technology, breakout sessions focusing on specific research challenges, and networking opportunities that allowed participants to identify potential collaborators.

By bringing together diverse expertise and perspectives, the IRC-WST has taken an important step towards establishing itself as a hub for water research excellence.



The International Research Centre for Water, Science and Technology (IRC-WST) at UNIZULU successfully hosted the IRC-WST Collaboration Workshop 2025. | Xolani Ncube

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