

A "big noise" on rural education

RYAN HOFFMANN - Nov 05 2010 12:11

In a first for South Africa, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) has established a chair of rural education.

To be launched on Monday at a public lecture on UKZN's Edgewood campus, the John Langalibalele (JL) Dube Chair in Rural Education will facilitate an exclusive focus on rural teaching and teacher training, Professor Relebohile Moletsane, the first holder of the chair, told *M&G Online*.

JL Dube was the founding president of the South African Native National Congress, and was renowned as a philosopher, novelist and educator.

"We noticed that even though we are in a rural setting, many of our programmes are aimed towards the urban environment. So we want to infuse the rural context into our work in an explicit way. We have the first chair of this kind in South Africa," Moletsane said.

The chair is in UKZN's school of education and development and its "main area of focus will be teaching and teacher training in the rural context", Moletsane said.

One of the chair's aims will be to create a substantial body of knowledge around rural education, said Moletsane. "There are people in our faculty, and elsewhere, working on education in rural areas but without coordination," she said.

"So what we are envisaging is inter-disciplinary and inter-institutional projects to bring everyone together so we can make a big noise about rural education."

Moletsane said she was herself educated at a rural school. "While things were not perfect there, due to Bantu Education, those schools were among the best," she told the *M&G*.

"It's the sadness of seeing what we have lost at these schools that is driving me to try and find a way I can help fix it," Moletsane added.

The district of Vulindlela, outside Pietermaritzburg, has been identified as the first community that will reap the benefits of the chair's focus, and Moletsane is hopeful this will spread to other areas.

"We are hoping to get an inter-disciplinary project running in this area, addressing teaching first and foremost but also how the wellbeing of the community impacts on teaching and learning," she said.

"Rural communities are traditionally very tight-knit so all these factors contribute to effective teaching."

The chair came into being in September, so "we are still searching for funding, from both the regular sources of research funding and from corporate sponsors", Moletsane said.

Moletsane holds a PhD in curriculum development and a master's degree in secondary education from Indiana University in the United States; and a University Education Diploma (UED) and BEd degrees from Fort Hare University in the Eastern Cape.

In addition to her academic positions, Moletsane has worked at the Human Sciences Research Council's Gender and Development Unit and as a curriculum development specialist with the Free State department of education. She started her career as a teacher at Mehlomakulu High School in Herschel, Eastern Cape.

Moletsane has published and co-published several peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and books in the field of education and development broadly, and specifically in curriculum studies, gender and education, sexuality, HIV, poverty, and participatory visual methodologies.

In addition she has also contributed to several books, including *Getting Practical About Outcomes-Based Teaching: Learning Guide* and *Getting Practical About classroom-based teaching for the National Curriculum Statement*.

She also sits on the advisory board of the Wits Education Policy Unit and the Agenda Feminist Media Project; and she is a member of the Umalusi Council.

The seminar to launch the John Langalibalele (JL) Dube Chair in Rural Education will take place on UKZN's Edgewood Campus on Monday November 8 at 3pm.

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