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REPORT
Showcasing Intercultural Education: ICEDU Colloquium, August, 2012

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The Intercultural Education Unit (ICEDU), affiliated to the education faculty of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, was established in 2010 to promote intercultural sensitivity, development, and education. The ICEDU hosted a colloquium at NMMU in August 2012 to showcase the work of Faculty of Education academics that resonates with intercultural education in a programme that included several presentations by members from other NMMU faculties and from other countries, ranging from Kenya and Sweden to the USA. Professor Denise Zinn, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Education, welcomed all present to the event and Professor Nonnie Botha, head of the ICEDU, provided a brief background to the establishment and development of the Unit.

The programme, which consisted of 10 presentations, covered the following very wide range of topics:

- personal experiences as a visiting academic in a foreign country (Dr Agnes Kibui, University of Nairobi, Kenya)
- the challenge of language issues in education (Dr Lyn Webb, NMMU)
- teaching strategies in diverse university classrooms (Professor Bill Holderness and Dr Shirley Wagner-Welsh, NMMU)
- inclusive education in the international arena (Dr Eileen Raymond, State University of New York, USA)
- an Afrikaner student teacher's experiences in a farm school (Johan Pienaar, NMMU)
- intercultural challenges in effective sexuality education training of Life Orientation teachers (Dr Christina Jordaan, NMMU)
- the inter/trans-cultural encounter as 'radical unknowability' (Professor Dalene Swanson, NMMU)
- participatory visual methodology to enhance Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students' understanding of multicultural education (Dr Logan Athiemoolam, NMMU)
- multiculturalism in Europe (Dr. Kerstin von Brömssen, University of Gothenburg, Sweden)
- closing the skills gap in an interdisciplinary and intercultural context in township high school students (Maria Marciales Arreaza, Michael Mitsumori, Christopher Galbick, Emily Dodge, Martha Welderufael, Lisa Dedmore, and Rachel Ricioli).

The presentations were very well received by the audience and lively debates ensued, during both the sessions and the breaks. Each presenter received a certificate of participation.

The presentations were interspersed with performances relevant to the colloquium's theme – "Showcasing Intercultural Education." The colloquium was opened with a role-play performance by some of the faculty's undergraduate students, and contrasted teaching strategies used in the past in South African school classrooms with those used the contemporary classroom. During the lunch break, Sisanda Myataza and her group entertained colloquium participants in a most heart-warming way with their songs and dance. The cocktail and networking opportunity that closed the proceedings of the day was made very special with a performance of traditional singing and dancing by the Umngqungqo waKwantu group. The organizing committee (Dr Lyn Webb, Dr Logan Athiemoolam, Professor Nonnie Botha, Ms Ndileka Jacobs, and Ms Carol Poisat) did a commendable job and the caterers ensured well-fed participants. The ICEDU thanked the Executive Dean of the Faculty for providing funds for the event, and the NMMU Centre for the Advancement of Non-racialism and Democracy that funded the video-recording of proceedings.

Anonymous evaluation of the colloquium by participants was overwhelmingly positive. Suggestions for improvement echoed each other in that all wanted more: more involvement by students; more presentations from other countries; more about how we work in our South African classrooms now; more time for presentations, discussions and questions; more time for networking – more, MORE, **MORE**!

The intention is to consider making this an annual event, probably over more than one day to accommodate the calls for "more." Through this, the ICEDU aims to prepare students for life in our increasingly complex world, and to help students look beyond themselves. Intercultural education needs to facilitate the creation of new social spaces where interaction and relationships are characterised by negotiation and creativity, thus conceptualising the university through an intercultural lens (Aguado & Malik, 2009). The ICEDU believes that colloquiums such as this provide opportunities for participants to discover differences, and to subsequently rise above such differences, by being exposed to authentic experiences of cross-cultural interaction through actual real tasks and intense participation (De Vita & Case, 2003).

References

Aguado, T., & Malik, B. (2009). Intercultural education in higher education: Challenges and opportunities. Intercultural Education, 20(3), 201–202.

De Vita, G., & Case, P. (2003). Rethinking the internationalisation agenda in UK higher education. Journal of Further and Higher Education, 27, 383–398.