

INAUGURAL GUEST LECTURE

MAZISI KUNENE RESEARCH CHAIR

Topic: Reimagining Education with Mazisi Kunene: Curriculum Inclusion, Research Partnerships, and Preparing Teachers for the 21st Century Classroom – by Professor Nompumelelo Zondi.

DATE

Monday,
21 September 2026

TIME

11h00

PLATFORM

LT10, Ellen Khuzwayo Building,
Edgewood Campus, UKZN

CLICK HERE TO RSVP

Enquiries Only:

Dr Sicelo Ntshangase | ntshangaseS2@ukzn.ac.za

INSPIRING GREATNESS

This inaugural guest lecture opens a dialogue on the vision of the Mazisi Kunene Research Chair and invites the School of Education to co-design courses and resources that centre Mazisi Kunene in teacher preparation. While Mazisi Kunene is widely studied as a poet, the lecture positions him also as a philosopher, historian, and educational thinker whose intellectual legacy offers new frameworks for what we teach and how we prepare teachers for the twenty-first century.

It advances African-centered scholarship in meaningful and contemporary ways while championing indigenous knowledge systems, African languages—especially isiZulu and interdisciplinary research that speaks to both academic excellence and lived community realities.

The lecture proposes three pathways through which the work of Mazisi Kunene can be integrated into teacher education:

First, curriculum inclusion: Ways to integrate Kunene's epic oral traditions, literature, and children's stories into Education modules so that student teachers encounter African knowledge systems before entering basic or higher education classrooms. This builds cultural literacy and provides future teachers with resources rooted in indigenous epistemologies.

Second, decolonial pedagogy: A critical engagement with Eurocentric models that offers tools for critical thinking, ethical leadership, and identity formation for student teachers to carry into schools.

Third, research partnerships: Opportunities for joint postgraduate supervision, curriculum design, and research projects that link the Chair with colleagues in the School of Education.

Ultimately, the lecture invites a collective exploration of the question: What can Mazisi Kunene's intellectual legacy enable us to rethink about what we teach, how we teach it, whose knowledge counts, and the kind of teachers we prepare for an African future?

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Professor Nompumelelo Zondi is a newly appointed Mazisi Kunene Research Chair in the School of Arts, College of Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). She is a Full Professor and a long-standing alumnus of UKZN, having completed all her undergraduate and postgraduate studies at this university and subsequently serving as a staff member from 1995 to 2011, a tenure of 17 years.

Professor Zondi regularly presents research papers and delivers keynote addresses at national and international conferences, showcasing her expertise in literature and gender studies. During her tenure as HOD for African Languages at UP, Professor Zondi was selected for the prestigious Fulbright South African Research Scholar Program for 2022-2023, hosted at The Ohio State University, USA. Beyond her research profile, she is deeply committed to mentoring the next generation of scholars - particularly postgraduate students and emerging researchers. She has served as a Regional Mentor for the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS).

Furthermore, Professor Zondi has served as a staff mentor in the University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP) under the Department of Higher Education and Training. In addition, towards the end of 2025, she was appointed by the Minister of Higher Education to serve on the NIHSS Board. Most importantly, Prof Zondi places strong value on collaborations and partnerships, recognising them as essential to advancing impactful, socially responsive scholarship and strengthening the humanities within and beyond the academy.