

City Press

18 July

Renowned author, healer and cultural adviser honoured by University of KwaZulu-Natal

Sandile Ngidi



Victor Velaphi Otty Mkhize (68) is ecstatic after the University of KwaZulu-Natal appointed him as an honorary professor in the school of religion, philosophy and classics

Renowned South African healer and cultural adviser Dr Victor Otty Velaphi Mkhize (67) is ecstatic after the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) appointed him as an honorary professor in the school of religion, philosophy and classics.

On Wednesday, during his regular conversation with Ukhozi FM's Dudu Khoza, Mkhize broke the news that UKZN's Pietermaritzburg campus has appointed him for three years, beginning in July and ending on 30 June 2027. During this period, he will be reporting to the dean and head of school, Prof Simangaliso Kumalo, and taking part in some key activities of the institution.

Kumalo said UKZN was grateful that Mkhize had accepted the position to do “research in the name of UKZN, teach and supervise our postgraduate students when requested”, adding that this position was “not remunerated”.

Popularly known as “VVO” and recently as “Bhedlindaba”, for over ten years he has practised as an African spiritualist at Albert Falls and regularly writes and advises on Africa-centred healing, rituals and cultures. His commitment is backed by close to 15 Umsamo Zulu book series, podcasts and TV shows on subjects such as initiation rites and the institution of ubunyanga.

“This is certainly a special moment for me. I am grateful for the recognition by my learned colleagues and friends at UKZN. In my journey as a teacher, broadcaster and senior executive in the corporate world, I never imagined that I was being prepared for the world of African spirituality and African wisdom. It is also ironic that what I am being recognised for today is not knowledge acquired through my formal education, but largely through my lived experience in the rural KwaZulu-Natal midlands.”

READ: [VVO Mkhize: From DJ to academic and his staying power](#)

Born in Glebelands, Mkhize grew up in Impendle where he looked after livestock and did the better part of his schooling. In 1981, the year he joined Radio Zulu (now Ukhozi FM), he obtained a BA honours degree, majoring in Afrikaans and Nederlands with distinction at the University of Zululand.

At university, Mkhize fell in love with philosophy and the writings of dissident 1960s Afrikaans writers, the Sestigers, a movement that included Ingrid Jonker, Andre Brink and Breyten Breytenbach. As a Zulu poet who has published two collections, his major influences include JC “Bulima Ngiyeke” Dlamini and BB Ndelu, famous for the Zulu drama,

Mageba Lazihlonza. Since the 1980s, some of his dramas have been broadcast on Ukhozi FM.

Associate professor in the school, Herbert Moyo, said: “Prof VVO Mkhize thinks, lives and imparts indigenous knowledge produced from indigenous Nguni knowledge systems of African spiritualities, dreams, visions, Nguni philosophies and orality, coupled with his academic achievements that saw him graduate with a PhD. His knowledge from Western knowledge systems did not divorce him from our African Nguni isintuism. We look forward to him mingling with students and academics in some classes and mainly in workshops, seminars, research and publications to further the development of African scholarship.”