

Rhodes to host global conf on journ education

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The School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, will host a three-day global conference on journalism education starting from 5 July 2010, head of school Prof Guy Berger told Bizcommunity.com. So far, 330 delegates - half of them from Africa - have already registered to attend the conference.

The theme of the conference is 'Journalism education in an age of radical change', according to Prof Berger.

"Time of great change"

Asked to shed some light on this, he said: "It is a time of great change in mass communications due to changing technology and business models. It is also a time of intense globalisation as indicated by the global financial crisis, environmental issues and the [2010 FIFA] World Cup.

"All this change means that journalism teachers have to examine what they are teaching and how they are teaching it, else they will become outdated very quickly."

As many communities around the globe become worried about what they describe as the 'excesses' of the press, some observers believe the gathering will be a vital platform whereby educators will perhaps have to redefine the media's role as 'society's watchdog'.

The congress's keynote speakers include Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, and Pansy Tlakula, of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and the Freedom of Expression for the African Union. Delegates from 42 countries are expected to attend the world congress, the organisers said, adding that the event will have French and Chinese simultaneous translation.

The conference's sponsors include Telkom, Absa, South African Tourism, the International Marketing Council (IMC) of South Africa, Media24, UNESCO, and four Open Society Institute foundations around the world.

Model syllabus

A model syllabus of ideas for teaching about African media compiled by UNESCO will be launched at the event.

Prof Berger said: "In 2009, we won a tough bid battle to host the second edition of this congress. The first congress was in Singapore three years ago, and we worked hard to ensure that it comes to Africa next.

"The thinking was that July 2010 would be a focused time to bring people to South Africa, and let them hold up journalism education in the light of the media mega-event of the cup.

He added: "The participants will be able to take part in 130 research paper presentations, 16 task teams, and six expert panel discussions. Proceedings will be live-cast at <http://wjec.ru.ac.za>, and up to 11 parallel research sessions will be streamed simultaneously at various times."

Delegates are expected to share experiences with each other, and with anyone who follows the proceedings on the web.

The main focus will be on how training can help prepare journalists to deal with challenges of the recession and the Internet, the organisers said, adding that the topics at the event range from teaching "entrepreneurial journalism" and cellphone journalism through to building media literacy and training reporters in reporting violence.

For more information, email Prof Berger at g.berger@ru.ac.za.

ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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