Granny earns doctorate at 61 years young

CANAAN MDLETSHE

GRANNY Thembeka Mngomezulu, the deputy director in the department of Health, has proved that age should not be a hindrance to the enhancement of knowledge and skills.

At the age of 61, Mngomezulu will receive her doctoral degree in business administration at the University of KwaZulu-Natal on Thursday.


The study was supervised by Prof Purshottama Reddy of the UKZN School of Management, Information Technology and Governance.

Mngomezulu’s zeal for success is evident in her achievements in various spheres of her life. She grew up in a home of eight siblings at Lourdes Mission in uMzimkhulu, the former Transkei. She was forced to leave school after obtaining a junior certificate to become a nurse in order to assist her single mother to bring up her siblings.

Leaving school early was devastating and it created a void which, she knew, could only be filled by studying further.

She later pursued studies and completed matric in 1976, obtained a BA degree in social science in 1998, obtained an honours degree in gender studies in 2000, and completed studies for a masters degree (nursing research) in 2009.

The negative publicity about service delivery in the provincial department of health around the same time as her appointment as a deputy director in the directorate of monitoring and evaluation prompted her to investigate what could be done to improve the situation working within the area of operation, hence her doctoral study.

Mngomezulu is an inspiration to her six children and 10 grandchildren. She admits that the journey was not always smooth.

“Sometimes it was a nightmare. Having great support system from friends, colleagues, family and focusing on the reward kept me going. It was not easy. Most of all, God gave me enormous strength.”

Mngomezulu’s study was published in the 2013 Journal of the Association of Southern African Schools and Departments of Public Administration and Management.

On her age she said: “First, I have never thought of myself in terms of age so much that even when I say I am 61 years old I feel surprised and very proud that I am that old.”

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