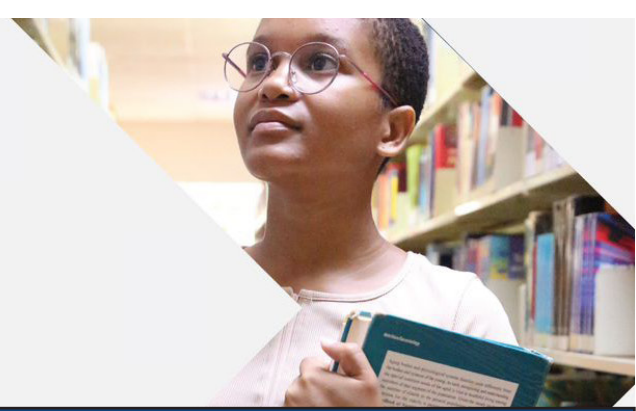




University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

UNIVEN Weekly e-Newsletter



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University of Venda elected as chair of THENSA Entrepreneurship Educators Programme (TEEP) community of practice



Prof Lawrence Diko Makia

The Technological Higher Education Network South Africa (THENSA) held a TEEP Pilot Train-the-Trainer Workshop from 27 to 31 January 2025 at Montecasino, Gauteng. The workshop concluded with establishing the TEEP Community of Practice (CoP), comprising 54 delegates from nine THENSA full-member institutions and the Namibia University of Science and Technology (as an associate member). During a post-workshop evaluation meeting held on 5 March 2025, the TEEP CoP leadership was selected. Professor Lawrence Diko Makia from the University of Venda was elected Chairperson, with Ms Dorinda Borg of the Durban University of Technology as Vice Chair.

In her congratulatory message, the TEEP Project Manager, Dr Norah Clarke, expressed confidence in the newly elected Chairs to provide leadership and guidance to the TEEP CoP. "The entrepreneurship milestones achieved by the University of Venda and Prof Makia's experiences as a member of various Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) CoPs and his related entrepreneurial training will contribute positively towards the TEEP CoP mandate," said Dr Clarke.

The TEEP CoP is established to serve the following purpose:

- Enhance entrepreneurship education by providing a platform for educators to exchange best practices, teaching methodologies, and resources, thereby improving curriculum effectiveness;
- Facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration to foster a dynamic environment for exchanging knowledge on emerging trends; and
- Support educator capacity development by integrating entrepreneurship into the classroom.

In her remarks, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning, Prof Lekalakala-Mokgele, extended heartfelt

congratulations to Prof Makia on his election, acknowledging this as a remarkable achievement that reflects his dedication to entrepreneurship education. “Prof Makia’s leadership and expertise will undoubtedly strengthen the TEEP CoP and further drive the integration of entrepreneurship into higher education.



TEEP Pilot Train-the-Trainer Workshop Participants. (UNIVEN delegates: Prof N Chiliya, Prof Diko Makia, Ms L Sibisi, and Dr V Baloyi join other participants for a group photo)

From Passion to Prosperity: The Journey of Leaf of Faith and the Power of Medicinal Plants

As the founder of Leaf of Faith, Mulisa Ramuhashi is proud to share the inspiring journey of turning a deep passion for herbalism into a thriving business. Leaf of Faith is committed to harnessing the power of medicinal plants to create premium products that promote overall well-being. Ramuhashi has built a brand rooted in nature’s healing properties through her journey and dedication, offering a wide range of products to improve her community’s health and wellness and beyond.



Mulisa Ramuhashi (right), the founder of Leaf of Faith

Mulisa Ramuhashi’s entrepreneurial journey began with a deep academic interest in medicinal plants. After enrolling in the Bachelor of Indigenous Knowledge Systems programme in the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, UNIVEN, she became fascinated by medicinal plants’ cultural and therapeutic significance.

This course was pivotal in shaping her understanding of the long-standing relationship between humans and nature, particularly regarding the use of plants for healing.

Ramuhashi was inspired to turn this newfound knowledge into a business that shared the wisdom of indigenous plants and benefited her community by providing natural alternatives to modern wellness products. Her academic background gave her a strong foundation in traditional healing methods, which became the bedrock of Leaf of Faith.



Mulisa Ramuhashi (right)

One of the key moments in Ramuhashi's journey was when she was introduced to the University of Venda's Centre for Entrepreneurship and Rapid Incubation (UCFERI). This invaluable platform provided essential resources and guidance, helping her navigate the complex business launch process. UCFERI played a crucial role in registering Leaf of Faith and gave Ramuhashi access to a wide range of networking opportunities that connected her with other like-minded entrepreneurs.

The guidance and support from UCFERI allowed Ramuhashi to expand her reach, connect with fellow business owners, and access new markets. Through these connections, she was able to increase sales, grow her customer base, and establish a brand that people trusted for natural, high-quality products.



In March 2025, Ramuhashi was invited to participate in the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) and Makhado Crossing Partnership Pop-Up Market, a highly anticipated event that presented Leaf of Faith with a unique opportunity to showcase its products to a wider audience. The event proved to be a huge success, largely due to the comprehensive support provided by the organisers. From transport to food and infrastructure, everything was arranged to ensure that entrepreneurs like Ramuhashi could focus on presenting their businesses in the best light possible.

Participating in this market allowed Leaf of Faith to connect with potential customers and expand its presence in the local community. It also provided a platform to network with other entrepreneurs and learn valuable insights on how to grow and scale a business. Ramuhashi's experience at the Pop-Up Market showcased her products and emphasised the importance of community support and collaboration in fostering entrepreneurial success.

At the heart of Leaf of Faith are its premium products, each designed to promote wellness and natural healing. Ramuhashi is committed to creating high-quality items rooted in indigenous knowledge's healing traditions. Some of the standout products from Leaf of Faith include:

- **Premium Teabags:** Carefully crafted to address specific health concerns such as detoxification, blood purification, and mindfulness. These teabags are designed to support overall well-being through the natural healing properties of medicinal plants.
- **Medicinal Bath Salts:** A soothing blend of Himalayan, Epsom, and sea salts, combined with bicarbonate of soda, essential oils, and herbs. These bath salts help promote relaxation, reduce inflammation, and soften the skin.
- **Aromatherapy Scented Candles:** Infused with essential oils, these candles not only provide a calming atmosphere but also offer therapeutic benefits for mental and emotional health.
- **Organic Soap Bars:** Made with a melt-and-pour soap base enriched with turmeric, aloe, grapeseed oil, bergamot oil, and tea tree oil. These soap bars are crafted to nourish the skin with natural ingredients that provide a deep cleanse while promoting health.
- **Yoni Steaming Herbs:** Carefully selected herbs designed to support feminine intimate health, promoting balance and wellness.

These products reflect Ramuhashi's dedication to crafting effective and nourishing solutions that naturally help people lead healthier lives. By blending modern wellness needs with the wisdom of indigenous knowledge, Leaf of Faith creates effective and sustainable products.

Reflecting on her journey, Mulisa Ramuhashi expresses profound gratitude for the opportunities UCFERI, SEDA, and Makhado Crossing Partnership provides. These platforms have helped her grow her business, fostered valuable connections with other entrepreneurs,

and opened doors to new markets. With the support of these organisations, Ramuhashi has been able to share her passion for herbalism with a wider audience, increasing her reach and making a meaningful impact on the wellness community.

Looking to the future, Ramuhashi is excited about the potential for Leaf of Faith to continue growing, offering even more products that promote natural healing and wellness. Through her dedication to quality, sustainability, and community, she is determined to help others experience the power of medicinal plants and improve their well-being.

UNIVEN Setting the Pace for Rural-based Entrepreneurial University Trajectory

The University of Venda (UNIVEN), established as a comprehensive rural-based institution of higher learning in South Africa, is uniquely positioned to address the educational and socio-economic needs of its community and the broader region. Its mandate prioritises inclusive education, research, and community engagement, embodying a commitment to fostering sustainable development in rural areas. This foundational purpose has culminated in the formulation of Strategic Thrust 2 of the 2021–2025 plan, which aspires to position the university as an entrepreneurial institution at the forefront of innovation and socio-economic transformation. This trajectory aligns closely with the discourse from Universities South Africa (USAf), which advocates for reimagining academia's role within the country.

The university's long-standing vision, adopted in 2007, is to provide quality and innovative tertiary education supporting rural and regional development across Southern Africa. By reducing dependency on government subsidies for financial sustainability, driving local innovation, producing skilled graduates, and enhancing employability, UNIVEN seeks to make a more substantial contribution to combating poverty, inequality, and socio-economic exclusion and promoting development in rural areas.

In this context, the development of an entrepreneurial university is paramount, setting the standard for other rural-based institutions in the country and across Africa.



Dr. Ishmael Iwara, a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute for Rural Development

In this ambitious endeavour, Dr. Ishmael Iwara, a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute for Rural Development, a rated researcher by the South African National Research Foundation (NRF) and a product of UNIVEN, has made pioneering contributions.

With a UCDP topping-up grant for rated researchers, he has developed a scientifically rigorous index that serves as a strategic blueprint for transforming traditional higher education institutions into dynamic entrepreneurial entities, particularly within rural contexts.

His key scholarly works, including “Fundamental Tenets of a Rural-Based Entrepreneurial University: A South African Perspective” (2023) and “Towards a Conceptual Understanding of an Effective Rural-Based Entrepreneurial University” (2022) —the latter co-authored with Dr. Beata Kilonzo— are foundational to the discourse surrounding this emergent paradigm. These groundbreaking studies provide an extensive analysis of the entrepreneurial university model in rural settings, with the potential to significantly inform and influence national educational policies and academic frameworks in Africa and beyond. Central to the narrative of rural-based entrepreneurial universities are five critical constructs: the alignment of curricula with practical skill development, the commercialisation of innovations in the areas of competitive advantages, the integration of Indigenous knowledge systems, the embedding of diverse stakeholders in the educational process, and the promotion of engaged scholarship.

Curriculum Alignment with Practical Skills

A rural-based entrepreneurial university must prioritise knowledge-building that integrates theoretical frameworks with practical applications. This involves designing curricula that equip students with entrepreneurial competencies, problem-solving skills, and adaptability to rural economic conditions. Practical engagement through business simulations, startup incubation, and experiential learning enhances students’ ability to transition from academic environments to real-world entrepreneurial activities. Aligning course content with industry demands and rural economic opportunities ensures that graduates are employable and capable of creating employment through innovative ventures.

Innovation Commercialisation

The commercialisation of ideas and the formation of enterprises in its core areas of competitive advantage are crucial for translating academic research into tangible economic contributions. Rural-based entrepreneurial higher learning institutions should establish business incubators, technology transfer offices, and venture acceleration programmes that support student- and faculty-led startups. Fostering innovation that addresses rural challenges—such as sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism, renewable energy and Indigenous crafts as in the case of UNIVEN—these institutions can enhance societal impact. Access to seed funding, mentorship, and market linkages further strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem, ensuring that innovations are not confined to academic discourse but actively contribute to economic transformation.

Integration of Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous knowledge systems hold valuable insights into sustainable rural entrepreneurship, and integrating these practices into academic frameworks enhances the relevance of entrepreneurial education. Traditional agricultural techniques, local craft industries, and communal trade systems provide a foundation for developing context-specific business models. A rural-based entrepreneurial higher learning institution should promote a learning culture and research that documents, preserves, and enhances Indigenous business knowledge, ensuring that rural entrepreneurship is not solely dependent on external economic paradigms but also leverages locally developed expertise. This, in essence, builds globally competitive talents and, at the same time, produces graduates with competence that conforms to grassroots realities.

Stakeholder Embedding

A successful entrepreneurial university does not operate in isolation but actively engages with key stakeholders, including local businesses, policymakers, grassroots community leaders, and industry experts.

Establishing partnerships that align learning curricula and academic research with community needs and industry value chains ensures that entrepreneurial initiatives are relevant and sustainable. Collaborative projects, public-private partnerships, and participatory governance structures facilitate knowledge exchange, resource mobilisation, and long-term economic resilience within rural economies. Embedding multiple stakeholders in entrepreneurial development, these universities create inclusive growth models that benefit entire communities.

Engaged Scholarship

Engaged scholarship bridges academia with community-driven development.

This emphasises the role of universities as agents of societal transformation, where research and academic activities directly contribute to rural development. Through participatory action research, rural-based entrepreneurial universities can co-create solutions with local communities, ensuring that knowledge production is not detached from lived realities. Service-learning programmes, extension services, and social entrepreneurship initiatives further strengthen this engagement, positioning universities as catalysts for sustainable rural development. This model fosters mutual learning, where academia benefits from real-world insights while communities gain access to innovative solutions and capacity-building opportunities.

The research primarily focuses on rural areas in Africa; however, its principles and methodologies have global applicability.

If you spot anything out of the ordinary on campus - contact the University Hotline by calling toll free number 0800 212 755 or email: univenhotline@tip-offs.com

Improper conduct includes the following...

- 1. Financial misconduct,**
- 2. Misuse or misappropriation of University assets,**
- 3. Health and safety risks,**
- 4. Plagiarism,**
- 5. Fraud and corruption.**