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University of Venda Accelerates Its 2030 Digital Vision Through Strategic Partnership with Microsoft South Africa



UNIVEN ICT staff with MICROSOFT South Africa staff

The University of Venda (UNIVEN) has taken a bold and decisive step towards realising its 2030 Strategic Vision by hosting a high-impact, two-day ICT strategy workshop in collaboration with Microsoft South Africa from 10–11 February 2026. Held at the University of Venda, the workshop marked a significant milestone in UNIVEN's journey towards becoming a fully digital, future-ready university. The engagement demonstrated the University's strong commitment to digital transformation, innovation, and the strategic use of emerging technologies to enhance teaching and learning, research, administration, and service delivery. Led by the University's ICT Director, Mr Sam Khoza, the workshop brought together UNIVEN

ICT staff and Microsoft experts to co-create a shared vision for UNIVEN's digital future.

At the heart of the discussions was an ambitious and forward-looking question: Is the University of Venda ready to become a fully digital university by 2030? Through robust dialogue, strategic planning, and expert insight, the workshop explored what this transformation means for the University community and how technology can be leveraged as a powerful enabler of institutional excellence.

The sessions were firmly anchored in the UNIVEN ICT Strategy and Master Plan, which clearly articulates the University's

digital roadmap and outlines a structured approach to adopting emerging technologies. Key focus areas included cloud transformation, artificial intelligence, data-driven decision-making, cybersecurity, modern digital platforms, and the development of digital skills across the institution. Microsoft South Africa shared global best practices and real-world success stories from higher education institutions, showcasing how strategic technology adoption can drive agility, resilience, and innovation. The partnership underscored the importance of aligning ICT initiatives with institutional goals to ensure sustainable impact and measurable value.

The workshop also reinforced the evolving role of the ICT Department as a strategic business partner, positioning technology

not merely as a support function but as a catalyst for transformation and growth. By embracing innovation and strengthening strategic partnerships, UNIVEN is laying a strong foundation for a digitally empowered academic ecosystem. As the University of Venda continues to implement its ICT Strategy and Master Plan, the outcomes of this workshop will directly inform the next phase of digital initiatives and investments. The engagement with Microsoft South Africa reflects a shared commitment to excellence, collaboration, and innovation. With clear strategic direction, strong leadership, and world-class technology partnerships, the University of Venda is confidently charting its path towards becoming a fully digital University by 2030, ready to serve its students, staff, and communities in a rapidly evolving digital world.

UNIVEN Engages in SAQA-Led Co-Creation Policy Dialogue with Industry and Global Partners



In the picture: Prof Vhonani Netshandama and Mr Vhulenda Mudau during the workshop.

Professor Vhonani Netshandama, Director of Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Innovation and Commercialisation (DCEEIIC), and Mr Vhulenda Mudau, Technology Transfer Assistant (also serving as an Industry-Co-Creation secretary), participated in the University–Industry Co-Creation Policy Design Workshop held at the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) offices in Pretoria. The workshop brought together ecosystem partners from across the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region to strengthen collaboration, enhance the relevance of entrepreneurship and innovation curricula, and promote collaborative qualifications. Discussion focused on deepening participants' understanding of the entrepreneurship policy landscape and the higher education contribution in the Southern African Development Community. An overview of the broader policy and regulatory environment shaping entrepreneurship was discussed in depth. Participants engaged with regional and national frameworks, including qualifications systems, education and training protocols, and internationalisation policies. An environmental analysis of selected Southern African Development Community countries highlighted both common challenges and opportunities for joint programme development, encouraging critical reflection on institutional readiness and policy coherence. Emphasis shifted to programming that should enable curriculum transformation, responding effectively to regional development priorities.

Deliberations on the state of entrepreneurship education in Africa revealed ongoing challenges, particularly the limited integration of practical, experiential learning. However, participants also recognised growing policy support for entrepreneurship, increased appetite for cross-border collaboration, and opportunities for shared modules and joint offerings. Through interactive group exercises, innovative models for collaborative entrepreneurship programmes were proposed and assessed for feasibility,

scalability, and policy alignment. Participants were also equipped with practical skills to develop high-impact policy briefs. A central component of the workshop was collaborative policy prototyping. Participants developed actionable policy proposals addressing priority challenges in entrepreneurship education and university–industry collaboration. These prototypes were designed to be supported through regional cooperation, institutional partnerships, and enabling policy frameworks. The workshop further explored best practices from higher education institutions that have successfully strengthened their innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems. Case studies showcased effective innovation governance models, shared infrastructure arrangements, intellectual property management strategies, and approaches to ecosystem collaboration. Participants analysed these examples to identify transferable lessons suitable for adaptation within the Southern African Development Community context.



In the picture: Participants of the THENSA Co-creation

Key outcomes of the workshop included clearer identification of stakeholders and the collaboration pathways necessary for successful implementation; enhanced capacity to design and communicate effective policy briefs; a deeper understanding of regional and national policy frameworks; and the development of practical policy prototypes to address entrepreneurship and innovation challenges. Importantly, the workshop strengthened regional dialogue and reinforced a shared commitment to advancing entrepreneurship and innovation through coordinated policy action.

NEW VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

VISION AND MISSION

"Vision is the art of seeing the invisible"
~ Jonathan Swift

Our vision defines what we want to become by 2040. It is an aspirational description of what we would like to achieve in the long term.



VISION

A University leading in engaged scholarship



MISSION

The University of Venda produces graduates who are locally relevant and globally competitive

INSTITUTIONAL VALUES

The University of Venda is guided by a set of core institutional values that shape its culture, inform decision-making, and underpin the university's strategic priorities. These values include:



EXCELLENCE

Striving for the highest standards in teaching, research, and service



INTEGRITY

Acting with honesty, ethics, and transparency in all we do



ACCOUNTABILITY

Taking responsibility for our actions and delivering on our commitments



DIVERSITY

Embracing and promoting inclusivity, equity, and different perspectives



RESPECT

Valuing the dignity and contributions of every individual

POSITIONING STATEMENT

Positioning the University of Venda for Relevance, Excellence and Impact

PROJECT BRIEF & AIM
iTravels4Growth is an international Erasmus+ initiative aimed at strengthening higher education and tourism and pilgrimage studies. The project promotes inclusive, technology-enabled, and sustainable approaches to tourism education, workforce development, and regional heritage protection.

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University (India); Ion Creanga
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Africa); University of Santiago
Compostela (Spain); University of
Malta (Malta); University of Piraeus
Research Center (Greece); ZRC SAZU
(Slovenia); Azur Agency (Albania);
Municipality of Vlore (Albania)

MAJOR 2026 ACTIVITY

UNIVEN will host a training workshop and seminar from 30 November to 6 December 2026. The training will enhance students' academics, and industry professionals' competences in sacred travel and religious tourism development.

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Did you know that the UNIVEN Strategic Plan 2026-2030 has four Strategic Thrusts listed below?

STRATEGIC THRUST
Research, Innovation and
Entrepreneurship

01

STRATEGIC THRUST
Student-Centeredness

02

03

STRATEGIC THRUST
People, Health and
Environment

STRATEGIC THRUST
Internationalisation and
Partnerships

04