



IEF
International
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Forum



International Entrepreneurship Forum
in collaboration with
University of the Western Cape

Conference Report 2025 ↗

21st International Entrepreneurship Forum (IEF) Conference - In partnership with the University of the Western Cape (UWC), South Africa. 18-20 September 2025.

**Education and Entrepreneurship: Ecosystem Value Creation
for People, Organisations, and the Environment**

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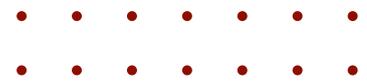


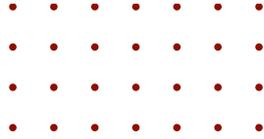
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The IEF investigates, imbibes, inculcates, informs and innovates together with diverse groups of stakeholders in the arena of entrepreneurship, innovation, economic and social development.



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Leaders' Messages

Prof. Chux Gervase Iwu

Professor, University of the Western Cape



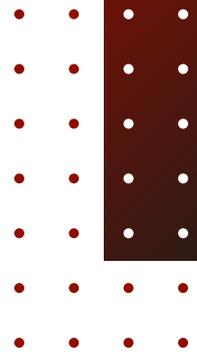
With the conference over, I use this opportunity to reflect on what I believe we shared, learned, and - most importantly - what I believe we should commit to especially as I left the conference with three commitments. First, a commitment to collaboration - to stay connected beyond this event, to share knowledge generously, and to build bridges across sectors and borders. Second, a commitment to reflection and learning - to continuously question our assumptions, evaluate our impact, and adapt our approaches in response to evidence and experience. Third, a commitment to action - to translate ideas into models or prototypes, and subsequently into practice, and practice into systemic change. I thank everyone who made this conference possible: the UWC team, the UK team, speakers, sponsors, and participants. Your energy, curiosity, and willingness to engage deeply shaped a meaningful and memorable experience. I am inspired to do the hard, collaborative work required to strengthen entrepreneurship education and the ecosystems that depend on it. I am also optimistic and as such will commit to advancing entrepreneurship education as a strategic public good, and to shaping entrepreneurial ecosystems that are inclusive, evidence-based, and responsive to the challenges and opportunities of our time. After all, entrepreneurship education cannot be viewed in isolation. Rather, it functions as an integral component of broader entrepreneurial ecosystems, interacting dynamically with policy environments, institutional structures, financial systems, cultural norms, and labour markets. This systems-based perspective has underscored the importance of coherence and alignment across stakeholders if entrepreneurship education is to achieve sustained and measurable impact.



Prof. Jay Mitra

Founder, IEF;
Professor, Leuphana University

Reflecting on what has gone before is sometimes the same as air-brushing the picture from that time. But it's easy not to be carried away with an effusive, good feeling thinking about our 21st IEF Conference in Cape Town in 2025. The IEF's cool, relaxed environment for discourse and debate involving multiple stakeholders of entrepreneurship and innovation was very much in evidence at the University of the Western Cape. More than that was the way in which we could collectively explore new frontiers of education and learning as the product of entrepreneurial minds and the platform for entrepreneurial outcomes. Sincerest thanks to the organising teams, the talented delegates, and inspirational speakers/panellists for days and nights in the warmth of your company. The IEF is richer in spirit now.



Executive Summary ↗

At the 21st IEF Conference, entrepreneurship was treated as an iterative learning process, and the conference itself modelled that stance. Across keynote inputs and themed panels, speakers examined how institutions and ecosystems build human and social capital through formal, informal and technology-enabled learning. Strong messages emerged on:

- local state capability as a pre-condition for business;
- evidence-led decision-making for future-ready ecosystems;
- simplified support and finance for MSMEs, aligned with national strategies.

Keynotes reinforced these points. Panels added depth. Discussions covered policy formation for entrepreneurial learning, transdisciplinarity for complex problem-solving, and education/coaching that attends to identity, resilience and wellbeing (head and heart). Presentation sessions showcased systematic reviews and practice-based studies, with feedback calling for tighter alignment between questions, methods and context.

Overall, the conference converged on a pragmatic path: fix local basics, measure what matters, simplify the path for entrepreneurs, and teach for capability and character. The result is a shared agenda for inclusive, resilient, opportunity-rich entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Introduction ↗

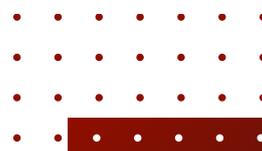
The 21st IEF conference aimed to deepen understanding of entrepreneurship as a complex process of education and learning. It explored how human and social capital are developed and utilised through formal, informal, and technological modes of learning within supportive ecosystems and institutions. Additionally, it sought to assess and promote effective policies and instruments that enhance entrepreneurial learning and education. The IEF conference is the annual event of the *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Economies (JEIEE)*.

**Journal of
Entrepreneurship and Innovation
in Emerging Economies**



In tackling the aims of the conference, the conference themes focused on linking education, innovation, and entrepreneurship to foster value creation and societal wellbeing. They highlighted emerging pedagogies, digital technologies such as AI, and multidisciplinary approaches that enhance entrepreneurial learning and outcomes. Additionally, the themes explored policy development, citizen engagement, and the role of social capital in shaping inclusive and sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems - all this in the context of South Africa with appropriate references to the wider continent and pertinent knowledge and experience from elsewhere.





Introduction (cont.)

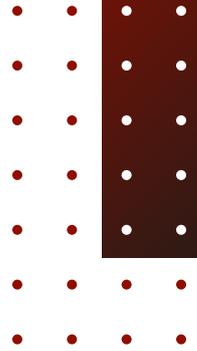
The Deputy Vice Chancellor, Prof. Monwabisi Ralarala, standing in for the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Robert Balfour opened the conference. He emphasized the significance of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education in developing countries while at the same time urging participants to uncover ways of advancing business education.

Three keynotes were delivered. On the first day, Dr. Ruben Richards gave a keynote. He indicated that functional municipalities are essential for thriving businesses. The second keynote delivered by, Prof. Zoltan Acs explored “Ecosystems of Learning: The Urban Dividend”, highlighting how education, cities, and policy converge to create entrepreneurial opportunities. The third keynote was from the South Africa’s Minister for Small Business Development, Ms. Stella Ndabeni, who was even more challenging in her address. She advised the need for a reform of the financing sector that allows for accessible interventions for small enterprises. The difficulty with expansion or growth of entrepreneurs and business she said is also located within the geopolitical – as a government, working with everyone in the ecosystem including higher education institutions, the target should be to close the gaps.

Several “panel” sessions involving a range of local and international academic researchers, policy makers, practitioners and community representatives, deliberated on matters pertaining to entrepreneurial ecosystems sustainability ranging from education (appropriate curriculum and pedagogy), effective support structures (innovation hubs, mentors and coaches) to meaningful government policies (that permit profitable transactions and scalable initiatives among entrepreneurs including the confidence for local and global markets). A host of parallel “presentation sessions” accommodated up to date research findings and an array of insights into the practice of entrepreneurship, policy development and community endeavour.

Together - the keynotes, panel sessions and the presentations, not forgetting the stalls in the foyer of the conference venue displaying a variety of organizational achievements, products and services - highlighted the numerous, meaningful ways in which education and learning for entrepreneurship can regenerate people’s lives, community development and the building of societies.

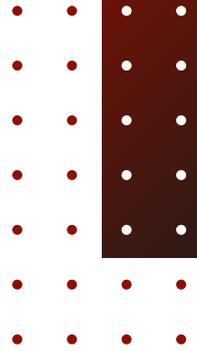
The Keynotes ↗



Three keynote addresses were delivered. Dr. Ruben Richards delivered the first keynote address. He stated that effective municipalities are critical for successful enterprises. He posited quite strongly that no business can succeed in a failing municipal environment—entrepreneurs must care about local governance. Thus, local stability, infrastructure, and services are foundational for economic growth. Entrepreneurial leadership he argued, must be grounded in action and collaboration, and can rescue failing institutions and build inclusive, functional societies—if we are brave enough to step inside the system and govern. He concluded his keynote by asking everyone to see dysfunction in local government as not just a crisis but also as an opportunity that can open doors for entrepreneurial intervention: the bigger the problem, the bigger the opportunity to innovate.

Prof. Zoltan Acs's second keynote, “Ecosystems of Learning: The Urban Dividend,” focused on how education, cities, and policy intersect to create entrepreneurial opportunities. Firstly, he challenged everyone to try procuring the right data that can be used to gauge the future. He added: without such, projections are baseless and if we can at least project, we are able to ‘nearly’ see the future. He also shared an exclusive preview of the upcoming VIGS-Digital Entrepreneurship Ecosystems Index, with a special focus on Africa. This ground-breaking tool will help measure, understand, and strengthen the continent’s digital entrepreneurship ecosystems, opening new pathways for innovation, inclusion, and sustainable growth. His insights sparked lively discussion among academics, policymakers, and entrepreneurship networks, and reinforced the importance of collaboration across education, government, and civil society.





The Keynotes (cont.)



Almost taking a cue from Dr. Ruben Richards, South Africa's Minister for Small Business Development, Ms. Stella Ndabeni was much more demanding in her speech. The minister criticized funding agencies, such as banks. She blamed the low level of entrepreneurial interest in the financier whose conditions for loans are unrealistic. Therefore, she advised the need for a reform of the sector that allows for accessible interventions for small enterprises. The difficulty with expansion or

growth of entrepreneurs and business is also located within the geopolitical – as a government, working with everyone in the ecosystem including higher education institutions, the target should be to close the gaps. She asked: “how do we look at the new opportunities into the new industries, the new markets that our entrepreneurs must look for? This again, challenges higher education institutions to come up with ways that entrepreneurial uptake is made easier for people. The time has come for us to stop talking and act for the good of both established and upcoming entrepreneurs.

Her keynote address set an inspiring tone for the conference, offering sharp insights and practical strategies for building a vibrant and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem. Minister Ndabeni shared South Africa's leadership role in the G20 Startup20 platform, focusing on bridging the digital divide for MSMEs, unlocking access to capital, and positioning start-ups at the forefront of green industrialisation and inclusive trade.

She also highlighted the Department of Small Business Development's newly completed National Entrepreneurship Strategy, which aims to create an enabling ecosystem for entrepreneurs by reforming policy, improving access to finance and markets, simplifying regulations, and expanding entrepreneurship education nationwide.



The Keynotes (cont.)

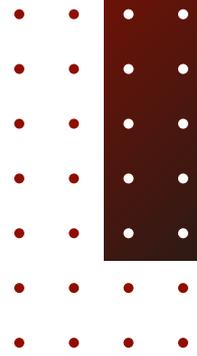
Key interventions include expanding incubation centres (with a target of 270 by 2030), strengthening partnerships with higher education institutions, and advancing early-stage entrepreneurship through initiatives like the Step Up to a Start-Up programme, which has already reached over 88,000 learners.

Minister Ndabeni’s message reinforced the view that entrepreneurship is not only about starting businesses, but also about equipping people with the mindset, skills, and resources to thrive in a changing world.

The minister said that merging SEDA, SEFA, and the development bank was “to have all these important interventions in one place...for the sake of access”. As she ended her speech, she said that we should try to stay close to our local councilors because the decisions and or bylaws adopted by the council automatically becomes law. And often they may not be supportive of the ecosystem we desire.

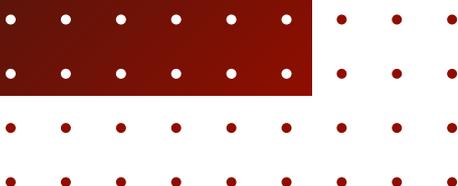


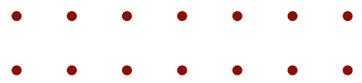
An Overview of the Panel Sessions



Panel and presentation sessions aimed address the conference themes.

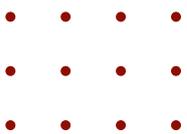
- Panel 1 - Education, Entrepreneurship, Economic and Social Development
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- Special Panel - Book on Entrepreneurship Education

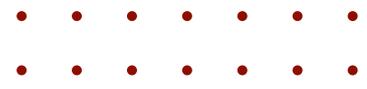




Panel 1 Education, Entrepreneurship, Economic and Social Development ↗

Chaired by Prof. Chux Gervase Iwu, speakers included Mr. Lance Greyling – Director of Economic Development and Investment Department, Economic Growth Directorate, Cape Town, Mr. John Edward Peters – Chief Director at Department of Economic Development and Tourism (Western Cape), Cape Town, SA, Mr. Bongumusa Biyela – Regional Manager of Western Cape at National Empowerment Fund, Cape Town, SA and Dr. Thobekani Lose – Director and Senior Researcher at the Mandela University Africa HUB, Nelson Mandela University, SA.





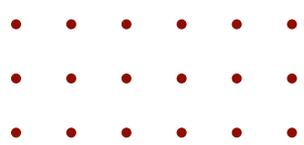
Panel 1 (cont.)

This panel concluded that education is the foundation for both economic competitiveness and social cohesion. As a broad concept therefore, education can serve local economic development if targeted properly. The idea of proper targeting is crucial to human capital whereby education equips people with skills, knowledge, and critical thinking necessary for productive work. Productivity and innovation are therefore enhanced through a more educated workforce that drives technological adoption and problem-solving. Technological adoption and problem-solving then become the key to social Mobility and inclusion as the opportunity for lifelong learning enhanced by education reduces inequality by opening opportunities, especially for marginalized groups.

Through entrepreneurship education, jobs are created. Startups introduce new products, services, and processes that stimulate markets and improve efficiency. The combined impact of education and entrepreneurship furthers local economic growth because of the commonly understood premise that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) stimulate local economies by circulating income within communities.

In this panel, references were made to East Asian Economies (e.g., South Korea) where education systems are aligned with industrial needs that have helped transform economies through innovation-driven entrepreneurship; Silicon Valley (USA) where universities play the important role of stimulating an entrepreneurial culture that has supported hubs of innovation and wealth creation.

Education and entrepreneurship together create a virtuous cycle—education builds human capital and entrepreneurial capacity, while entrepreneurship channels that knowledge into economic growth, job creation, innovation, and social problem-solving. The synergy between the two is one of the most effective pathways to sustainable economic and social development.



Panel 2

Policy Formation for Entrepreneurial Learning ➤

This panel was made up of Dr. Edwell Gumbo – Director of Entrepreneurship (EDHE) at Universities South Africa (USAf), SA, Prof. Vivienne Lawack – Professor of Fintech Law and Regulation, Department of Mercantile & Labour Law, Faculty of Law, University of the Western Cape, SA, Prof. George Saridakis – Professor of Small Business and Entrepreneurship and Head of the Department of Marketing, Entrepreneurship and International Business at Kent University, UK, Dr. Bridget Irene – Senior Lecturer in Business Management School of Leadership, Management & Marketing, Leicester Castle Business School, UK, and Dr. Simon Michael Taylor – Senior Lecturer, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Durban, SA.



Panel 2 **(cont.)**

Policy formation for entrepreneurial learning is about designing, implementing, and evaluating policies that foster the knowledge, skills, and mindsets necessary for entrepreneurship to thrive. It involves linking education systems, entrepreneurship ecosystems, and broader socio-economic development goals. The panel argued that policy formation for entrepreneurial learning should begin with understanding entrepreneurial learning within the context of policy. This means that entrepreneurial learning goes beyond business skills; it includes creativity, problem-solving, opportunity recognition, resilience, and innovation. Policies must therefore embed entrepreneurship education into schools, universities, vocational training, and lifelong learning systems. It should engage the discourse of recognizing the need for entrepreneurial learning (e.g., to reduce youth unemployment, foster innovation, or stimulate SMEs), drawing evidence from global best practices and local challenges. Integrating entrepreneurship into formal education (primary, secondary, higher, vocational) will bode well for the promotion of partnerships between government, private sector, NGOs, and academia. The mix of several partners enables the provision of resources such as training opportunities, digital platforms, seed funding, and infrastructure. In essence, it is about aligning education and entrepreneurship policies to national economic and social development objectives.

Panel 3

Ecosystem Value Creation through Education and Entrepreneurship ↗

Chaired by Prof. Isioma Ile, this panel consisted of Prof. Marcus Dejardin (joined online) – Professor (Professeur Ordinaire) of Economics at the Université Catholique de Louvain and the Université de Namur, Belgium, Ms. Lisle Svenson – Coordinator of Small Business Clinic, University of the Western Cape, SA, Prof. Beatrice Opeolu – Founder & Director, BEE Solutions and Consultancy Services, Cape Town, SA, and Dr. Phumlani Nkontwana – Director of the Allan Gray Centre for Africa Entrepreneurship, Stellenbosch University, SA.

The panel focused on understanding how the interconnected set of actors, institutions, resources, and cultural elements that collectively support individuals in developing entrepreneurial skills, mindsets, and opportunities. Their discussion should tap into the value of education, policy, networks, finance, and culture in nurturing entrepreneurs. Overall, the panel deliberated how access to knowledge and skills are transmitted via training schools – universities, colleges including their training programs – drive entrepreneurial uptake. Mention was also made of role models through coaching and mentoring. It was emphasised that exposure to successful entrepreneurs in the ecosystem provide guidance, credibility, and confidence that encourage others to take the leap.

Often burgeoning entrepreneurs tend to feel isolated and lost. In this regard, the panel was insistent that partnering with relevant stakeholders in the ecosystem reduce isolation and allow for collaboration, partnerships, and knowledge exchange. Ecosystems of entrepreneurial learning drive entrepreneurial uptake by creating an environment where individuals can gain skills, build networks, access resources, and feel socially supported in starting ventures. The synergy between education, mentorship, culture, and institutions lowers barriers and motivates more people to pursue entrepreneurship.

Panel 3 (cont.)

However, given the global south's challenges, parts of the ecosystem are weak, fragmented and or misaligned. To manage these weaknesses entails the intentional assessment of structural and institutional barriers – access to quality education, finance – and the elimination of red tape and unnecessary bottlenecks. Basically, a weak, siloed, and culturally unsupportive ecosystem prevents learning from translating into entrepreneurial action.



Panel 4

Transdisciplinary Learning and Entrepreneurship ↗

This panel was chaired by Prof. Sarika Pruthi, – Professor of Entrepreneurship, San Jose State University, California, USA. The panel consisted of Prof. Patient Rambe – Director of Centre for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Studies, Central University of Technology, Free State, SA, Mr. Luvuyo Rani – Co-Founder of Silulo Ulutho Technologies, Cape Town, SA, Prof. Roderick J. Lawrence – Honorary Professor in the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, University of Geneva, Switzerland, Prof. Jay Mitra – Founder, International Entrepreneurship Forum, UK and Professor and Research Fellow at the Research Centre for Entrepreneurship, Luneburg University, Germany, Prof. Piero Formica – Thought Leader and a Senior Research Fellow of the Innovation Value Institute at Maynooth University, Ireland and Professor of Knowledge Economics at the MOIM, Open Innovation Management, University of Padua, Italy.



Panel 4 (cont.)

Panel members agreed that entrepreneurship plays a key role in driving economic growth, social progress, and innovation. Yet, entrepreneurs today face complex and interconnected challenges, such as rapid technological change, climate issues, and ongoing inequality. Tackling these problems requires more than expertise in a single field. It requires transdisciplinarity, which involves bringing together knowledge and ideas from diverse areas, including those outside academia. When entrepreneurs use this approach, they can find new ways to innovate, adapt, and support sustainable development.

Transdisciplinarity is distinguished from multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary by its depth and integrative approach. Multidisciplinary involves disciplines working in parallel, while interdisciplinary encourages collaboration across fields. In contrast, transdisciplinarity integrates diverse knowledge systems, including academic, professional, and community-based perspectives, into a unified framework. This comprehensive integration is especially pertinent to entrepreneurship, which operates at the intersection of multiple domains. Entrepreneurs are required to navigate markets, technologies, finance, policy, culture, and social dynamics concurrently. Adopting a transdisciplinary mindset enables the synthesis of insights from these areas, resulting in more holistic and effective decision-making.

By advocating for systems thinking, transdisciplinarity revitalizes entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs that adopt this strategy are able to detect hidden patterns, unravel intricate interdependencies, and predict ripple effects in difficult situations. Consider creating a sustainable energy start-up: success depends not only on technological competence, but also on knowing legislation, deciphering consumer behaviors, comprehending environmental science, and recognizing the socioeconomic fabric of local communities. Entrepreneurs use transdisciplinary knowledge to create solutions that are not only inventive, but also practical, socially acceptable, and environmentally friendly.

Panel 4 **(cont.)**

Transdisciplinarity sparks creativity and fuels innovation by inspiring entrepreneurs to leap across boundaries. Breakthroughs often ignite when ideas from one discipline spark new possibilities in another. The fintech revolution, for example, blossomed as entrepreneurs wove together threads from finance, computer science, behavioral economics, and design thinking to reinvent banking. These bold advances flourish when people eagerly bridge disciplines and celebrate the power of diverse perspectives.

Entrepreneurs are better able to fulfill their social obligation when they practice transdisciplinarity. In an era where businesses are expected to contribute to sustainable development and ethical practices, entrepreneurs cannot afford to operate in disciplinary silos. Transdisciplinary approaches encourage them to consider not only economic returns but also societal well-being and ecological sustainability. Social enterprises, for example, often embody transdisciplinary principles by combining business acumen with insights from sociology, environmental studies, and public policy to address pressing community needs.

A transdisciplinary approach can also benefit entrepreneurship education significantly. Standard business courses in management, marketing, and finance do not adequately prepare students for the complex difficulties that will arise. When programs incorporate lessons from engineering, the arts, psychology, and environmental science, students become more adaptive, critical, and creative thinkers. These graduates are prepared not only to create jobs, but also to effect positive change and flourish in the face of uncertainty.

Finally, transdisciplinarity adds value to entrepreneurship by giving tools and frameworks for dealing with complexity, encouraging innovation, and pursuing long-term effect. It enables entrepreneurs to move beyond narrow problem solving to more holistic approaches that use various types of information. As societies face global challenges, the convergence of transdisciplinary thinking and entrepreneurial action will be critical to fostering resilient economies, inclusive communities, and a sustainable future.

Panel 5

Education, Coaching and Learning for Entrepreneurship ↗

This panel was chaired by Dr. Elona Nobukhosi Ndlovu. Panellists included Dr. Lindiwe (Malindi) Kunene – Senior Lecturer, Management and Entrepreneurship, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, Prof. Thea Van der Westhuizen – Academic Leader for High Impact Community Engagement and Internationalisation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, and Mr. Nick Hixson (online) – Director, Hixsons Chartered Certified Accountants, Bournemouth, United Kingdom.

This panel explored the evolving intersections between coaching, education, and learning in entrepreneurship. Drawing from academic, community-based, and practitioner perspectives, the panellists addressed how coaching, contextual responsiveness, and affective engagement can elevate entrepreneurship education beyond traditional cognitive models.



Panel 5 (cont.)

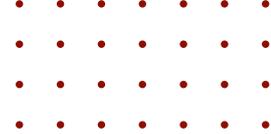
The discussion was grounded in the growing recognition that entrepreneurial development is as much about who the learner is becoming as it is about what they are learning. The panel challenged assumptions about entrepreneurship education and proposed alternative, more holistic models for impactful learning.

Regarding culture and language in learning, Dr Kunene emphasised the critical importance of culture and language in both teaching and coaching. She highlighted how these elements influence the development of entrepreneurial identity, the reception of content, and the learner's capacity to meaningfully engage. Without cultural alignment and linguistic accessibility, entrepreneurship education risks alienating rather than empowering its learners.

Prof. Van der Westhuizen introduced a model from her community-based programme that engages not only the learner's intellect but also their emotions, values, and personal purpose. Her approach demonstrated how high-impact learning occurs when students are invited to connect emotionally and ethically with what they are building and why. This she aptly coined as engaging the heart, not just the head.

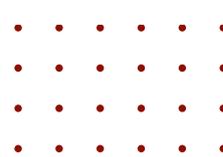
Mr. Hixson, speaking from his role as a business advisor and accountant, offered a valuable practitioner perspective from the UK. He highlighted the need for values-led entrepreneurship, drawing on coaching tools and emotional intelligence practices that he has used with clients. His input reinforced the point that entrepreneurship support must extend beyond financial literacy to include the emotional and human dimensions of entrepreneurial resilience.

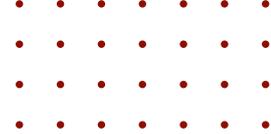
A key insight was the panellists' agreement that entrepreneurship education alone is insufficient without the integration of complementary interventions such as coaching, emotional development, and culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy. The discussion reinforced that these elements are not peripheral—they are essential. Culture and language were especially highlighted as key enablers of learner engagement and ownership. When teaching and coaching are attuned to a learner's lived reality, they foster deeper transformation and sustained entrepreneurial outcomes. This aligns directly with the conference's core theme of ecosystem value creation.



Special Panel Book on Entrepreneurship Education ↗

This panel was chaired by Prof. Michelle Esau flanked by some of her co-contributors. The panel focused on their recently published book titled “Entrepreneurship Education: A South African Perspective on Supporting Small-Business Development.” The problem of graduate employability compels universities all over the world to think more strategically about how they prepare students for the labour market. Generally, universities need to consider whether they are adequately preparing students with the requisite competencies and skills needed by professions or sectors in the market. Specifically, given its impact on emerging economies, the challenge of high youth unemployment requires serious reflection on the demand for and supply of jobs and related economic opportunities available to students upon graduation. In this regard, scholarly work elucidates the challenges facing universities of the twenty-first century, where pandemics, economic recessions, climate change and huge inequalities prevail. Not only have these challenges contributed to a dire economy where jobs are in short supply but they have also brought to the fore the need for different skills and changed perspectives on employability. In other words, universities should be preparing their graduates not only to seek employment but also to create employment by becoming employers.





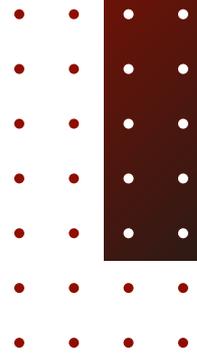
Special Panel (cont.)

Given this background, the main idea behind the book was to contribute to existing scholarly work on Entrepreneurship Education, but for a diverse, yet related audience, which included academia, students of entrepreneurship, policy makers, and business owners. To achieve this objective, two interrelated volumes were published, with the first focusing on issues related to the teaching of entrepreneurship. In this regard, experiential learning was highlighted as key to teaching about entrepreneurship, through entrepreneurship. Unlike other teaching approaches where students start their own businesses, theirs focus on students learning through their interaction with owners of small businesses and stakeholders supporting these businesses. This supports the aim of the Small Business Clinic of the Economic and Management Sciences faculty, which was established to enhance experiential learning approaches for Entrepreneurship.

The second volume is more practical in its focus through addressing issues and/or challenges confronting small businesses. Aspects such as business type and tax implications, business plans, etc. were but some of the areas of focus in the second volume.

Reflecting on the process, there main challenges were disclosed. The first pertained to the timing of the book project. According to Prof. Esau, the first meeting of her team took place during the national lockdown in 2021. The contributors were only able to interact in-person from 2022 onwards. The second challenge referred to the time to completion. She said it took them approximately four years from time of inception to publication. Initially, they planned a single book outcome, comprising 15 chapters. However, this was not possible because, through the peer review process, not all chapters were considered research-based. The compromise (a good one at that), was a book with two volumes. The final challenge related to the interdisciplinary nature of the book. Bringing together colleagues from across six disciplines in the faculty to focus on the topic of Entrepreneurship Education, according to Prof. Esau, was not an easy task. The benefit of time spent working together contributed to a published book, with coherent chapters addressing the context, challenges, and practical solutions related to the small business sector. It was the first of its kind for the faculty of economic and management sciences at the University of the Western Cape.





The Presentation Sessions ↗

These sessions focused on psychology and sociology of entrepreneurial learning including contexts, processes and situations that support entrepreneurship education and learning. They reflected diverse methodological approaches and provided valuable insights into entrepreneurial learning from psychological and sociological perspectives.

Using the psychological lens assists with focusing on the individual entrepreneur's cognition, personality, and behavior in learning. Mention was made of cognitive approaches as they relate to entrepreneurs learning by processing information, making sense of uncertainty, and using heuristics. Some cognitive theories (e.g., experiential learning, Kolb's learning cycle) were posited by discussants to show how entrepreneurs acquire and apply knowledge through reflection and action. With respect to personality traits, references were made to risk-taking, resilience, proactiveness, and self-efficacy influence how individuals learn and adapt. Further reflections on the psychology of entrepreneurial learning noted the benefit of motivation and intentionality especially as they relate to the need for achievement, autonomy, or problem-solving. Learning can also happen through the motivation to learn from failure. In this regard, some of the discussants indicated that the motivation to learn shapes persistence in acquiring entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. Essentially, psychological perspectives see entrepreneurial learning as an internal process of individual development, shaped by cognition, personality, motivation, and resilience.

The Presentation Sessions (cont.)

With regard to sociological perspectives of entrepreneurial learning, it was apparent drawing from the presenters that the sociological lens focuses on social contexts, interactions, and structures that shape how entrepreneurs learn. Some of the ways learning is achieved include through social capital and networks whereby entrepreneurs learn from mentors, peers, customers, and communities. Basically, entrepreneurs and or those wishing to take up entrepreneurship should identify role models that, through their various networks provide access to knowledge, and other useful resources. This sort of linkage may tie well with the views of Hofstede (2011), who argue that institutional and cultural contexts permit a fairer appreciation of how norms, values, and institutional environments influence what is considered legitimate knowledge of communities. That said, entrepreneurial learning is often group-based.

Overall, entrepreneurs learn informally through participation in entrepreneurial ecosystems, accelerators, incubators, and industry associations. Thus, knowledge is co-created through shared practices and storytelling. Sociological perspectives emphasize learning as a social and relational process, embedded in networks, institutions, and culture.

In the presentation sessions, presenters were offered some constructive methodological and conceptual feedback. Regarding methodological concerns, particularly in the PRISMA-based presentations by Salu Yekela and Gloriam Molefe, it was noted that while systematic reviews are valuable for mapping existing literature, their use in studies with evaluative or impact-oriented research objectives revealed a methodological disconnect. These presentations lacked critical articulation of the research problem and struggled to move beyond surface-level description. The choice of method did not adequately support claims of impact, thereby limiting the analytical depth and contextual richness that such evaluative studies require. This raised a broader concern around methodological alignment in entrepreneurship research, specifically, the importance of selecting research designs that match the complexity and nuance of real-world entrepreneurial ecosystems.

The Presentation Sessions (cont.)

The presentation sessions offered significant and up to date research and practice-oriented contributions, while simultaneously emphasising the necessity for enhanced methodological rigour and clearer articulation of research objectives. The discussion reaffirmed that entrepreneurship education must progress, becoming more inclusive, interdisciplinary, and human-centred. It further underscored the importance of a more deliberate alignment between research questions and selected methodologies, especially in the context of impact or transformation.

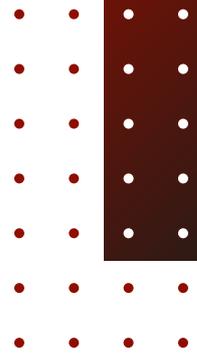
A key strength was the variety of lenses applied to entrepreneurship, from wellbeing pedagogy and policy critique to developmental support frameworks. Silindile Mkize's work, in particular, demonstrated strong conceptual grounding and a clear contribution to new knowledge. Her integration of Human Capital Theory, the Resource-Based View, and Ubuntu provided a well-considered, contextually grounded model for advancing Enterprise and Supplier Development (ESD) beyond compliance. The framework she proposed holds significant relevance for both academic and practitioner audiences.

Dr. Ndlovu further elevated the discourse by situating coaching within the PERMA wellbeing model, advocating for a shift in entrepreneurship education toward human-centred, psychologically attuned pedagogies. This added a vital layer of relevance to discussions about student resilience, identity, and sustainability in entrepreneurial journeys.

The session ended with the invitation to understand entrepreneurial learning as a dual process that is shaped by individual psychological traits and cognition and by sociological contexts and interactions. Effective entrepreneurial education/training should therefore combine both building personal resilience, self-efficacy, and cognitive skills while also fostering networks, mentorship, and supportive ecosystems. Overall, the session enriched the broader conference discourse and served as a reminder that how we research entrepreneurship is just as critical as what we teach.

** Find names of presenters at this session in Appendix 1, page 32*

Concluding Observations ↗



The 21st IEF conference offered the opportunity to co-create a new pathway to making education entrepreneurial, and entrepreneurship education to mean more than nuanced learning about starting or growing a venture. By allowing vast spaces for nurturing valuable skills and learning needed to navigate the complexities of the modern local economy, a generation of innovators and changemakers contribute to their communities making socioeconomic development possible. Thus, creativity, critical thinking and necessary problem-solving skills are fostered to address complex societal challenges in today's increasingly complex world.

We value entrepreneurs for the products, services, and organisations they create, and through these outputs the impact they have on the economy. Policy makers yearn for job creation and the improvement of the stock of assets in an economy, businesses look for fertile economic conditions, consumers seek efficient and economically satisfying goods and services. Yet, the association with exploitation, misappropriation and sleaze still hangs loosely with entrepreneurial behaviour and action. That journey down the slippery road from unproductive to destructive entrepreneurship is equally dependent on the same institutions and opportunities as productive entrepreneurship.

As with culture we can extract or derive arguments and strategies about entrepreneurship for the good of society. In fact, citizens seek a fair, clean and nurturing environment, and increasingly an engagement with the values that drive the places they live in. Considering the speed with which the global economy is evolving, citizen engagement therefore becomes an important route to shaping new forms of entrepreneurship and learning (Mitra et al. 2020). This engagement can take various forms including digital means. Education and learning for entrepreneurship can no longer rely on formal institutions. Digital technology, decentralized platforms extend self-directed, lifelong learning opportunities without traditional constraints (Janthapass, Chanthapassa, & Kenaphoom, 2024). These technologies appear to almost shift the way we live and work. In short, we

Concluding Observations (cont.)

must start to question how we can live and ambidextrously in the ‘real’ and the ‘virtual’ world, how we make and use goods and services in both worlds, how we manage or mitigate the problems associated with climate change or even world order. We must not forget that our hands and brains carry more technological power than any AI platform, and the power of entrepreneurship is in that human capacity for imagining our future. At the same time, we must understand that AI is empowered by certain physical infrastructure which are grossly absent in our ‘real world’.

We end this report with an excerpt from the editorial of the January 2026 issue of the Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Economies (Mitra, 2026).

“For the third time in its successful history, the International Entrepreneurship Forum (IEF) returned to Cape Town, South Africa, for its annual conference. Almost by intellectual osmosis, we found ourselves once again drawn to this fount of extraordinary beauty – a city that haunts, surprises, and charms – as we have across the last three decades. It has become a place where we gather to reflect on the international canvas of entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic and social development. Yet perhaps for the first time, we made a conscious effort to engage deeply with the country itself: its people, its assets, its challenges, and the lived realities that shape entrepreneurial endeavour. Through keynotes, discursive panels, and probing presentations, we left with a profound sense of how entrepreneurship derives its essence from the place and space in which it operates.

Suffice it to say that the 18–20 September gathering offered some of the most open, critical, and honest explorations of an entrepreneurial ecosystem that I have encountered. While the conference theme – education and learning *for, with, and about* entrepreneurship – undoubtedly shaped the direction of our discussions, what captured my imagination was the

Concluding Observations (cont.)

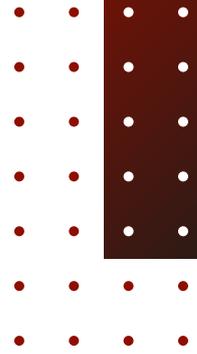
delegates' collective desire to interrogate the purpose and value of entrepreneurship in the Rainbow Nation.”

For those of us visiting, learning about South Africa's efforts in this regard was among the most rewarding outcomes. This was complemented by the vibrant camaraderie of the hundred or so highly motivated delegates from across Africa; the gracious hospitality of our institutional partners at the University of the Western Cape; and the steadfast support of ... the real architects of the event – Nomonde (UWC), Holly Bui, and Ashley Nguyen (IEF) – whose dedication ensured its success.

We were privileged to host leading international scholars including Zoltan Acs, Roderick Lawrence, Piero Formica, Marcus Dejardin, George Saridakis, and Sarika Pruthi, alongside distinguished South African contributors such as the Honourable Stella Tembisa Ndabeni, Minister of Small Business Development, and a host of local academic, policy, and entrepreneurial luminaries. If one line from the conference could linger in your mind and redirect your attention to what truly matters, it is the powerful reminder from Dr. Ruben Richards, Executive Mayor of Cederberg Local Municipality and our keynote speaker:

“Prescription without diagnosis is malpractice.”

His words speak directly to the catastrophe that too often defines uninformed, vacuous public policy. Perhaps it is time we all paused to reflect on how we educate ourselves – and how we learn to foster value creation within our entrepreneurial ecosystems.”



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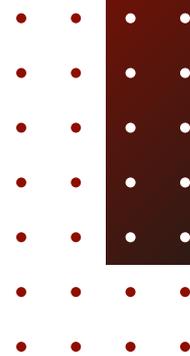
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Appendix 1

Full list of presenters and presentations.



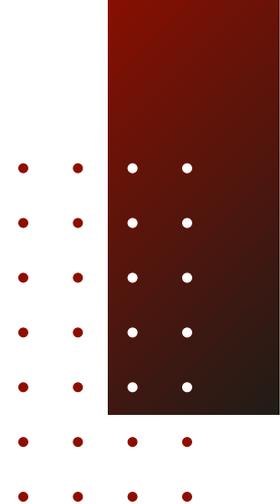
Presentation Session	Presenter	Paper Title	Affiliation
Presentation Session 1 - Entrepreneurial Education and Learning	Prof. Isioma Ile	Re-examination of Entrepreneurial Training in Africa: Selected Insights from the Igbo Society's 'Igba Mboi' Indigenous Apprenticeship Model	University of the Western Cape
	Dr. Jeremiah Machingambi	Beyond the Founder: Exploring the Role of Entrepreneurship Education in Overcoming Continuity Barriers in Family Businesses	University of the Western Cape
	Thembinkosi Maphosa	Cross-Disciplinary Faculty Collaboration and Awareness in Technology Transfer: A Mixed-Methods Study at a South African University	University of the Western Cape
Presentation Session 2 - Contexts, Processes, and Situations	Dr. Elona Nobukhosi Ndlovu	Coaching for Wellbeing: A PERMA-Informed Framework for Entrepreneurial Education in Higher Institutions	BizPreneur, Pretoria
	Silindile Mkize	Developing a Multidisciplinary Framework to Enhance ESD Programmes Supporting Sustainable Growth and Job Creation Among Black-Owned SMMEs in South Africa	University of KwaZulu-Natal
	Salu Yekela	Evaluating the Effect of Entrepreneurial Learning on Women Owned Businesses: A Study of SMEs in South Africa	Central University of Technology, Free State
	Gloriah Molefe	Exploring the Role of University Entrepreneurship Education in Value Creation Across South Africa: A Systematic Review Using PRISMA	Central University of Technology, Free State

Appendix 1 (cont.)

Presentation Session	Presenter	Paper Title	Affiliation
Presentation Session 3 - Ecosystems of Entrepreneurial Learning	Gina Nomcebo	Over-Mentored, Underfunded: Rethinking Entrepreneurial Ecosystems Through Digital Transformation in African Townships	GIBS University of Pretoria
	Dr. Chuene Alfred Semono	Township Entrepreneurship Ecosystem: A Formalised Small Business Failure	Nelson Mandela University
	Dr. Christiana Kappo-Abidemi	Educational Institution Contributions to the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem: Corporate Social Responsibility Perspectives	University of Mpumalanga
	Dr. Lindiwe Nqobile Kunene	Testing the Usability and Adoption Readiness of the SMME Hub: A Digital Diagnostic Tool for Entrepreneurial Development in South Africa	University of KwaZulu-Natal
	Dr. Ayansola Olatunji Ayandibu	Infusing Entrepreneurship Education into the Curriculum at the University of Zululand	University of Zululand
Presentation Session 4 - Psychology and Sociology of Entrepreneurial Learning	Dr. Emmanuel Zhanda Dr. Relebohile Makara	Effect of Storytelling of Entrepreneurship on Students' Intention and Self-Efficacy in Entrepreneurship: Evidence from Selected Tertiary Institutions in Lesotho	Botho University
	Ndileka Bala	Antecedents of Entrepreneurial Graduate Attributes: The Perspective of Hospitality Management Students	Cape Peninsula University
	Rucresia Venacio	An Investigation of the Interconnection between Human Capital and Entrepreneurial Capabilities of Small Businesses: Evidence from Kanyamazane, Mpumalanga Province	University of Mpumalanga
	Prof. Ulrich Schmitt	Digital Start-ups' Entrepreneurial 'Altitudes': Mastering Complexity for Value Creation	Stellenbosch University
	Prof. Simon Michael Taylor	The Field of Social Change: How Social Entrepreneurs Accumulate and Deploy Capital in Unequal Settings	University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

Appendix 2 ↗

Full list of sponsors, partners, and organisers.



DVC Research	Prof. Jose Frantz
DVC Academic	Prof. Monwabisi Ralarala
Dean EMS	Prof. Michelle Esau
BIWA	Dr. Thobekani Lose
Executive Director Finance, UWC	Mr. Manie Regal

Thank You! ↗

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