

**EDHE  
STUDENT  
PRENEURS** **INDABA 2023**  
STUDENT LEADERSHIP FOR BUSINESS LEADERS OF TOMORROW

# EDHE STUDENTPRENEURS INDABA 2023

STUDENT LEADERSHIP FOR BUSINESS  
LEADERS OF TOMORROW

*Social Innovation for  
Societal Impact*

*Draft 1*





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## 1. Executive summary

The purpose of this report is to summarize the discussions that took place at the Enterprise Development in Higher Education Programme (EDHE) Studentpreneurs Indaba that was held in Cape Town over a period of two days (4 – 5 September 2023). The Studentpreneurs Indaba forms part of the EDHE programme which was initiated in 2016 and formally launched in 2017; the programme was initiated in response to high youth unemployment, particularly graduate unemployment. It houses 26 universities in South Africa and aims to transform these academic institutions into entrepreneurial universities that can equip students with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to be economically active while pursuing their studies and after completing their qualification should they not find employment. The goals of the EDHE programme are summarised as to drive student entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship development in academia and the development of entrepreneurial universities.

As one of the components of the EDHE programme, the Studentpreneurs Indaba explores issues pertaining to student entrepreneurship with a focus on specific topics. The Indaba was primarily targeted at student entrepreneurs with existing start-ups businesses, formal and informal business.

This year's Studentpreneurs Indaba was co-hosted by the University of the Western Cape, the Department of Higher Education and Training, Universities South Africa, and the Cape Higher Education Consortium. The Indaba was hosted through a Hybrid format that allowed for in-person gatherings and seamless online access via the EDHE YouTube channel. The 2023 Studentpreneurs Indaba was sponsored by Standard Bank, Inspiring African Women (IAW) and the British Council.

The Indaba was hosted a total of 327 attendees; the majority (227) of attendees were public in person attendees followed by public university virtual attendees and the private sector in person and virtual attendees both sitting at 16 attendees while only 5 Government department attendees were present. The Studentpreneurs Indaba was also attended by a total of 33 speakers; The majority were public in person speakers (13) followed by private in person speakers (11), government departments in person speakers (4) and private sector virtual speakers (2). The main theme of the Indaba was Social innovation for societal impact. The sessions were designed in a manner that allowed for interactive engagements between the speakers, panellists and attendees, this included open sessions, Think-Tanks, Voices for impact and launchpads, interactive group activities and breakaway activities facilitated by Higher Education Leadership and Management (HELM).

The themes covered in this report are namely; Rethinking the role of higher education institutions, Fostering an entrepreneurial spirit, The benefits of social innovation, The key to building a sustainable business, empowering female entrepreneurs and Realizing impact.

A pledge developed through the EDHE has seen some of the universities that signed the pledge make considerable progress towards transforming the role of universities through

fulfilling the objectives of this pledge. For instance, Mr. Jerome September; Dean of Student Affairs, University of the Witwatersrand spoke on the objectives that Wits has achieved subsequent to signing the pledge and these are Joining Afritech, an African network around tech entrepreneurship and securing funding to host a student tech workshop through the Afritech network, Launching an E-Hub that serves as a walk-in space for student entrepreneurs to engage and get the necessary support and introducing the student entrepreneur of the year award as a component of the student leadership awards programme which is an initiative that acknowledges student leadership and campus involvement are some of the achievements.

Zone learning, the small business clinic in the faculty of economic and business management sciences and the transmedia clinic where aimed at empowering rural youth are some of the means through which the University of the Western Cape fosters an entrepreneurial spirit among students. The Student Entrepreneurship Week (SEW) and the annual EDHE Intervarsity competition among others were also mentioned among these initiatives.

Citing the World economic forum report as a keynote speaker at the 2023 StudentPreneurs Indaba, Deputy Minister Buti Manamela stated that social innovation has grown the capacity to transform the lives of marginalized groups and influence social policy, he further stipulated that social innovation allows for the disruption of traditional and rigid thinking and that it requires agility to lift people out of poverty, unemployment and other social ills.

Student entrepreneurs were provided with guidelines on how they can build sustainable businesses in their pursuit as social innovators and entrepreneurs through a number of engaging and interactive sessions that required them to work with their peers to formulate ideas and come up with solutions tied to Social Development Goals (SDGs). The sessions facilitated by HELM touched on innovative thinking, ethical leadership, coaching, the importance of timing in entrepreneurship, networking and mentorship.

Gender based violence (GBV) was noted as one of the pressing social ills that can be addressed through empowering women entrepreneurship. The Student Women Economic Empowerment Programme (SWEEP) is an initiative that forms part of the EDHE programme, the initiative provides student women entrepreneurs with skills and opportunities to ensure economic participation that lead to independence so that they can be less susceptible to GBV. The speakers expressed that in addition to the initiatives aimed at tackling GBV women should actively pursue knowledge and leverage on technology as a space to engage in dialogues that will not only breed business ideas that impact our society positively but also as a space discuss critical social issues such as GBV.

Based on the feedback provided by the student entrepreneurs at the 2023 StudentPreneurs Indaba particularly the previous winners of the annual EDHE Intervarsity competition, the EDHE programme has made great strides. The student entrepreneurs expressed that the EDHE programme has enabled them to take their businesses to greater heights as they were able to expand their businesses and create job opportunities following winning the



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competition. In addition, the student entrepreneurs have also realized other opportunities extending from EDHE networks; these opportunities have enabled them to build global networks that can be utilized to tap into the global market as their businesses grow.

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## 2. Background and Objectives of the Studentpreneurs Indaba

In South Africa the trend of a growing number of graduates struggling to enter the labour market upon completing their studies remains a concern. The Quarterly Labour Force Survey conducted by Statistics South Africa revealed that in the first quarter of 2023, the unemployment rate among university graduates aged 15-34 stood at a staggering 33.6% ; this indicates that around one in three university graduates in this age group is unable to secure employment (Msuya, 2023).

Msuya (2023) further notes that this can be attributed to a number of factors: a mismatch between the skills acquired through education and those demanded by the labour market, limited work experience and a sluggish economy with insufficient job creation. The constantly evolving nature of the economy demanding highly specialized skills and knowledge that graduates do not yet have at their disposal remains an impeding factor as many employers require candidates to have relevant experience. According to Department of Higher Education and Training the number of students who have gained relevant work experience through internships and other forms of work-integrated learning programmes is around 8% (Msuya, 2023).

As a result of limited formal employment opportunities, graduates are gravitating towards entrepreneurship and self-employment (Msuya, 2023). According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report, South Africa has seen a rise in entrepreneurial activities with the percentage of adults engaged in early-stage entrepreneurship reaching 13.1% in 2021 (Bosma, et al., 2021). Moreover, data from the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) indicates that self-employment among university graduates has increased by approximately 25% over the past five years (SEDA, 2022). The report further notes that SMMEs provided 9.31 million jobs in the second quarter of 2022; This accounted for 59% of total employment in South Africa at the time. Of the 9.31 million jobs, close to 27% was for the SMME owners themselves, and the balance of 73% was for other workers they hired (SEDA, 2022) .

The data from these reports demonstrates the entrepreneurial potential and resilience of graduates in South Africa as they seek alternative means to create their own employment opportunities. In recognition of this potential, higher education institutions are constantly emphasizing entrepreneurship education and support services, empowering graduates to create their own opportunities and contribute to economic growth through innovation and business ventures (Msuya, 2023).

Msuya, (2023) further states that by incorporating entrepreneurship courses into the curriculum, fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, and providing mentorship and incubation support, universities can equip graduates with the skills and knowledge necessary to start their own businesses. Furthermore, collaboration with local entrepreneurial ecosystems, such as incubators, accelerators, and funding organizations, can provide aspiring entrepreneurs with the resources and guidance needed to succeed.

The Enterprise Development in Higher Education Programme (EDHE) has been on this trajectory since its official launch in 2017. Established at the end of 2016, in collaboration the Department of Higher Education and Training, the University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP), Enterprise Development in Higher Education (EDHE) and Universities South Africa the EDHE programme is geared towards achieving the following goals;

- **Student entrepreneurship, i.e.** mobilizing the national student and graduate resource to create successful enterprises that will ultimately lead to both wealth and job creation.
- **Entrepreneurship development in academia, i.e.** support academics in instilling an entrepreneurial mindset within all students and graduates through the offering of relevant knowledge, transferral of practical skills and the application of business principles, not only to a specific discipline, but across disciplines.
- **Developing entrepreneurial universities, i.e.** creating a conducive environment that will enable universities to adapt strategically and embark on projects whereby third-stream income can be generated through innovative business ideas.

The EDHE programme is made up of the following components;

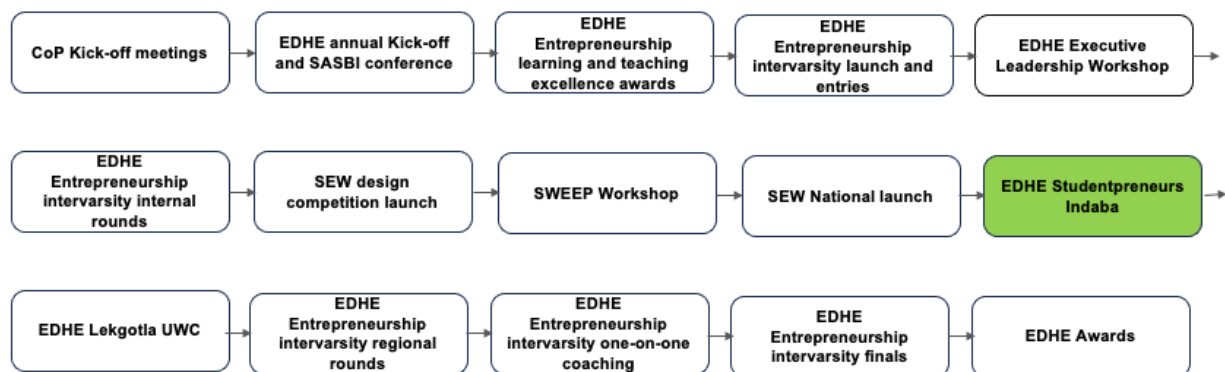


Figure 1: EDHE programme components

The focal point of this report is the Studentspreneur Indaba 2023 that was held at the University of the Western Cape from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> of September 2023.



### 3. Introduction

The Studentpreneurs Indaba is an initiative aimed at supporting student entrepreneurs with existing start-ups or small businesses through sharing knowledge, opportunities, and networks. The workshop is held alongside the EDHE Lekgotla; this two-day Studentpreneurs Indaba was targeted at Studentpreneurs with existing start-ups businesses, formal and informal business.

This year's Studentpreneurs Indaba was co-hosted by the University of the Western Cape, the Department of Higher Education and Training, Universities South Africa, and the Cape Higher Education Consortium. The Indaba was hosted through a Hybrid format that allowed for in-person gatherings and seamless online access via the EDHE YouTube channel. The 2023 Studentpreneurs Indaba was sponsored by Standard Bank, Inspiring African Women (IAW) and the British Council.

The studentpreneurs Indaba was held from 4<sup>th</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> of September, at the University of the Western Cape under the theme "Social Innovation for Societal Impact". The sessions were designed in a manner that allowed for interactive engagements between the speakers, panellists and attendees, this included open sessions, Think-Tanks, Voices for impact and launchpads, interactive group activities and breakaway activities facilitated by Higher Education Leadership and Management (HELM).

The morning and afternoon sessions for each day were carried out under the following themes;

	<b>Morning session</b>	<b>Afternoon session</b>
Day 1	Empowered students for high-impact businesses	Leadership Workshop
Day 2	Leadership Workshop	Empowered students for high-impact businesses

*Table 1: Session themes*

The leadership workshops were aimed at;

- Developing leadership competencies, resilience and grit required the fast-changing world of entrepreneurship and the world of work
- fostering student entrepreneurs as visionary leaders for economic growth, responsible citizenship and societal impact

The empowered students for high-impact businesses sessions were aimed at;

- Encouraging student entrepreneurship: the transformative role of the EDHE entrepreneur intervarsity
- EDHE student women economic empowerment programme (SWEEP): Social justice: Does the economic empowerment of student women play a role in fighting GBV?
- High-impact SWEEP Student Chapters at institutions – a vehicle for social, cultural and creative industries
- Senior student affairs professionals pledge ceremony in support of student

entrepreneurs

- How might we become business leaders who address global issues, such as food security and sustainability
- National launch of the student entrepreneurship week

The key outcomes of the Studentpreneurs Indaba included:

- leadership competencies
- self-mastery
- understanding of diversity and complexity
- entrepreneurship for social innovation and change
- understanding barriers and enablers of entrepreneurship
- tools to navigate the world of entrepreneurial work
- self-development plan
- coaching for leadership

These sessions were presented by speakers, facilitators and panellists who are well versed in entrepreneurship and social innovation for societal impact; each topic was concluded with a Q&A session.

Day 1 Speakers		
<b>Session 1</b>		
Mr Buti Manamela	Deputy Minister, Deputy Minister, Department of Higher Education, Science and Innovation	Speaker
Mr Chief Mabizela	Director: Operations and Sector Support, Universities South Africa (USAf)	Speaker
Ms Mandisa Cakwe	Ms Mandisa Cakwe, Director: Teaching and Learning Development in Universities, Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)	Speaker
Prof Vivienne Lawack	Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic, University of the Western Cape	Speaker
<b>Session 2</b>		
Mr Sandile Shabalala	Senior Student Engagement Officer: EDHE, Universities South Africa (USAf)	Speaker
Ms Karen Snyman	Student Entrepreneurship Specialist: Student Governance & Development, Nelson Mandela University	Facilitator
Mr Mvelo Hlope	Founder, ZAIO	Speaker
Ms Chido Dzinotywei	Co-Founder, Vambo Academy	Speaker
Mr Matimba Mabonda	Founder, Lola Green	Speaker
Mr Denislav Marinov	Founder, Amnova Tech	Speaker
<b>Session 3</b>		
Ms Ellen Fischat	Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Inspiring African Women	Facilitator
Dr Fikile Vilakazi	Director: Gender Equity Unit, University of the Western Cape	Speaker
Ms Mahlodi Letsie	Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Bare Mind	Speaker
Dr Dorothy Ngila	Director: Knowledge Networks and SGCI Strategy, Planning and Partnerships, National Research Foundation	Speaker
<b>Session 4</b>		
Ms Karen Snyman	Specialist: Student Entrepreneurship, deputy Chair: National EDHE COP for SE, NMU	Speaker
Ms Ellen Fischat	Founder and CEO, Inspiring African Women	Facilitator
Ms Joslyn Links	Founder, Inspiring African Women	Facilitator

Table 2: Day 1 speakers



Day 2 Speakers		
<b>Session 1</b>		
<b>Mr Jerome September,</b>	Dean of Student Affairs, University of the Witwatersrand	Speaker
<b>Mr Pura Mgolombane</b>	Executive Director :Department of Student Affairs (DSA) and SAASSAP Secretary-General	Speaker
<b>Mr Themba Khumalo</b>	Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University	Speaker
<b>Mr Sibusiso Mchunu</b>	Vaal University of Technology	Speaker
<b>Mr Njabulo Maphumulo</b>	Cape Peninsula University of Technology	Speaker
<b>Session 2</b>		
<b>Ms Bianca Mkhize-Simelane</b>	Senior Lecturer, Central University of Technology	Speaker
<b>Dr Fazlyn Petersen</b>	Senior Lecturer, University of the Western Cape	Speaker
<b>Prof Julian May</b>	Director of the DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Food Security, University of the Western Cape	Speaker
<b>Dr Elricke Botha</b>	Senior Lecturer, University of South Africa	Speaker
<b>Session 3</b>		
<b>Ms Nadia Waggie</b>	National Chairperson: EDHE CoP for Student Entrepreneurship & Head: Sustainability & Impact (Careers), University of Cape Town	Speaker
<b>Mr Tshepiso Malema</b>	Founder, Gamer's Territory	Speaker
<b>Ms Precious Mamogobo</b>	Founder, Ambassadors of Positivity	Speaker
<b>Mr Sandile Shabalala</b>	Senior Student Engagement Officer: EDHE, Universities South Africa (USAf)	Speaker
<b>Mr Miles Kubeka</b>	Chief Executive Officer, Wakanda Food Accelerator	Speaker
<b>Mr Lindokuhle Zulu</b>	National Deputy Chairperson: EDHE Studentpreneurs CoP, Mangosuthu University of Technology	Speaker

Table 3: Day 2 speakers

In addition to attending the Studentpreneurs Indaba Social Entrepreneurs were also afforded an opportunity to exhibit business at the Student Market. Student Entrepreneurs Social were also invited to the Studentpreneurs social where they could gather and engage while also enjoying live music, dance performances, hilarious comedy acts and a showcase of student entrepreneurial talents.

#### 4. Attendance statistics

As depicted in figure and also noted by the Deputy Minister of Higher Education Mr Buti Manamela in his key note address, since its inception the EDHE Studentpreneurs Indaba has continued to grow in attendance and speaker numbers.

The total Attendance of 327 for the Studentpreneurs Indaba exceeded the number of registrations. The majority (227) of attendees were public in person attendees followed by public university virtual attendees and the private sector in person and virtual attendees both sitting at 16 attendees while only 5 Government department attendees were present.

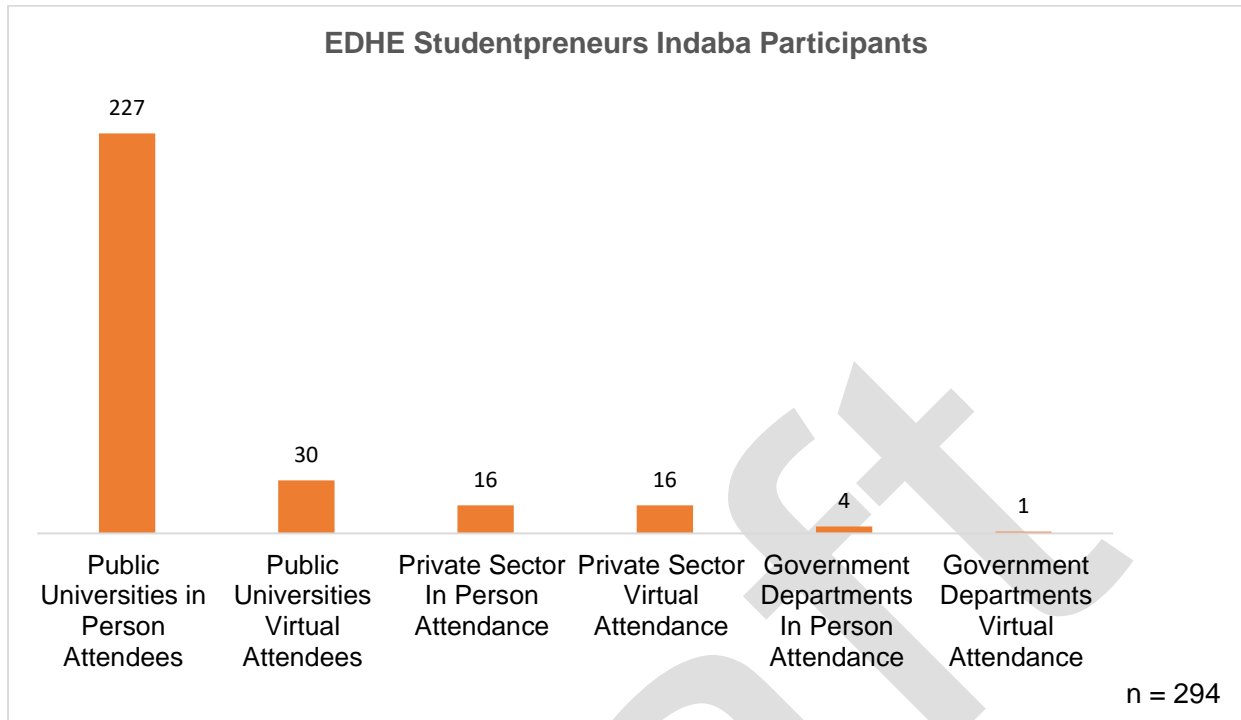


Figure 2: EDHE Studentpreneurs Indaba Registrations

Based on the feedback from the HELM evaluation report, the Studentpreneurs Indaba attendees described their experience of the event as an eye opener that afforded them an opportunity to build networks and learn from fellow entrepreneurs in addition to acquiring leadership skills. The Studentpreneurs Indaba was also described as up to standard as it encouraged student participation as demonstrated in the excerpts below:

*"We experienced connections and team building network among us as future entrepreneurs."*

*"It was a wonderful learning experience, I got to network and create memories with many students from different universities."*

*"I met quite a lot of people who can help take my business go to the next level."*

*"It was better than last year's student Indaba, this year's student Indaba encouraged student participation."*

*"I think the event was up to standard."*

Some areas of improvement that were highlighted were mainly an extension in the number of the Studentpreneurs Indaba event days, additional entertainment for the students and more Studentpreneurs informative programmes.

*"More entertainment for students."*

*“It was very great, I wish time was extended”*

*“They should organize more of such informative programmes.”*

*“A Training for Studentpreneurs would be super helpful.”*



Figure 3: Studentpreneurs Indaba attendees and Speakers

As presented in figure 4 below, a total of 33 speakers were all in attendance and also partook in the proceedings of the 2023 Studentpreneurs Indaba. The majority were public in person speakers (13) followed by private in person speakers (11), government departments in person speakers (4) and private sector virtual speakers (2).

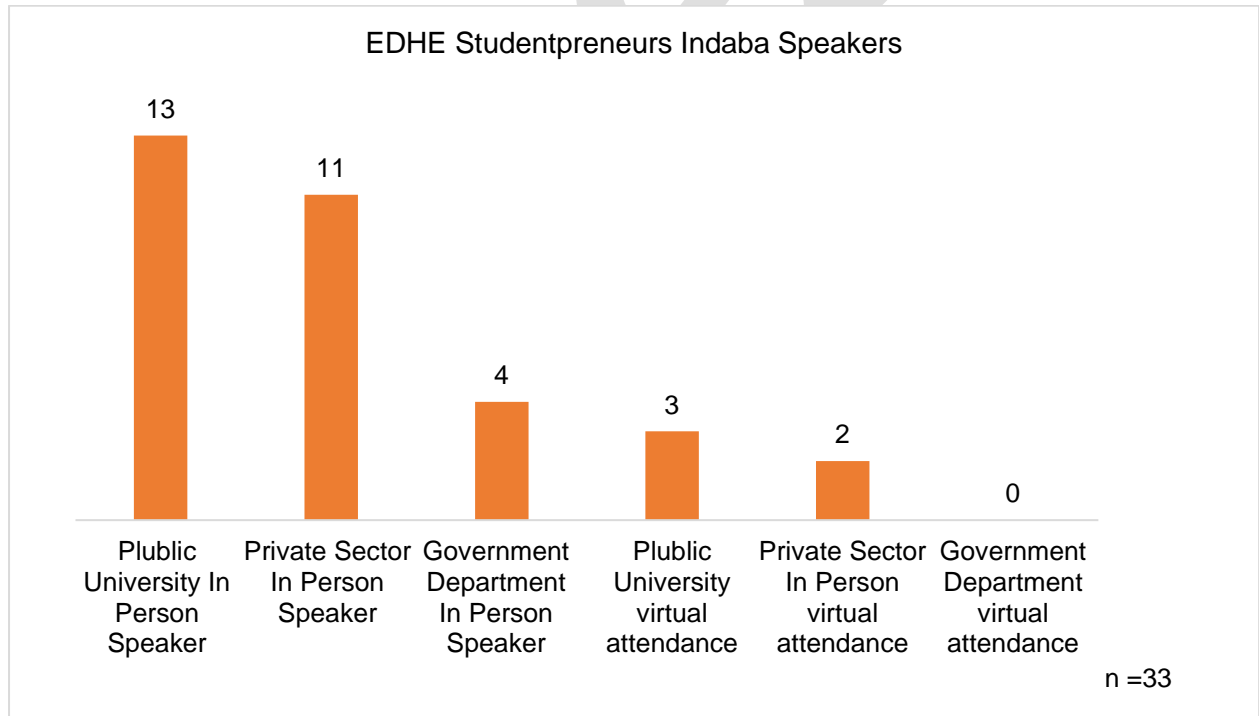


Figure 4: EDHE Studentpreneurs Indaba Speakers

## 5. Themes from the Studentpreneurs Indaba discussions

A number of themes was identified from the various topics discussed under the overarching theme “Social innovation for societal impact and these are namely; Rethinking the role of higher education institutions, Fostering an entrepreneurial spirit, The benefits of social innovation, The key to building a sustainable business, empowering female entrepreneurs and Realizing impact.

### 5.1 Rethinking the role of higher education institutions

One of the key objectives of the EDHE programme has been noted as the need to continue reimagining the role of universities. Since its inception the aim of the EDHE initiative has been to capacitate students with an entrepreneurial spirit, creativity and problem solving skills.

*“The EDHE programme was born the realisation that social innovation is desperately needed for our higher education institutions to make a meaningful contribution in our country towards addressing inequality, eradication of poverty, reduction of the unemployment rate and addressing all the many other social ills in our society.” – Mr Chief Mabizela*

In their efforts to transform the role of academic institutions, some of the universities have signed a pledge that was drafted by the members of the Studentpreneurs Community of Practice (CoP). The South African Association for Senior Student Affairs Professionals (SAASSAP) committed to supporting student entrepreneurship through signing the pledge.

The pledge is aimed at the following;

- Innovating the recognition of student entrepreneurs
- Identifying student entrepreneurs and their persistence
- Listening to understand the needs and realities of student entrepreneurs
- Supporting the mobilization of resources for student entrepreneurs and their businesses
- Promoting female students entrepreneurship in an equitable and safe university environment
- Facilitating business efforts and learning of student entrepreneurs
- Liaising with other universities to support student entrepreneurs in terms of specializing matters such as prototyping, intellectual property, commercialization and procurement
- Celebrating and showcasing the success of student entrepreneurs
- Committing towards building a policy environment that is favorable for students

Universities are making considerable progress towards transforming the role of academic institutions through fulfilling the objectives of the pledge. This is notable from the feedback provided by some of the 26 universities. For instance, Mr. Jerome September; Dean of Student

Affairs, University of the Witwatersrand spoke on the objectives that Wits has achieved subsequent to signing the pledge and these are as follows;

- Wits joined a group called Afritech, an African network around tech entrepreneurship and was able to secure funding through the Afritech network and hosted the student tech workshop which brought together students from the Sol Plaatje University, Wits University and the University of Lagos; the focus of the workshop was on conceptualizing how technology can be leveraged to solve problems faced by society.
- Launched an E-Hub that serves as a walk-in space for student entrepreneurs to engage and get the necessary support.
- Introduced the student entrepreneur of the year award as a component of the student leadership awards programme which is a programme that acknowledges student leadership and campus involvement.
- Ensured that the Student Entrepreneurship Education and Development (SEED) programme is approved as a formal curriculum programme that is reflected on student's academic transcripts.

Professor Vivian Lawack also highlighted the means through which the University of the Western Cape is rethinking the role of universities and fostering an entrepreneurial spirit amongst their students and these are namely;

- Zone learning, which is the entrepreneurial incubation space
- The small business clinic in the faculty of economic and business management sciences, which has been training around financial literacy and linking curriculum to community engagement and within those spaces that is how it's explored.
- The second edition of entrepreneurial law in practice and teach law students how to not only understand entrepreneurial law but how to also practically implement that on how to advise entrepreneurs on the most suitable venture.
- The transmedia clinic aimed at empowering rural youth, we combine transmedia training and entrepreneurship courses and have graduated some students in the Northern Cape.
- Green incubator which combines entrepreneurship and rural development where young people work on farms.
- The center for entrepreneurship and innovation which orchestrates the inspiration and entrepreneurship support across the faculty through pitching days, market day contests and the battle of the faculties.

These efforts present academic institutions as agile entities that are able to adapt and adjust to the needs of society. Deputy Minister Buti Manamela likened them to the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, Doctors without borders and South Africa's Gift of the Givers as other foundations which he cited as an exemplar of social innovations that have embraced and internalized an agile culture of constant innovation.



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*“Traditional or established public institutions find adaptation extremely challenging if not impossible and it is for this reason that one of the key objectives of the EDHE programme is the need for us to constantly reimagine the role of universities.” – Deputy Minister Buti Manamela*

The importance of collaborations among entrepreneurship ecosystems that form part of the universities and Student Affairs was also noted as a crucial aspect that will aid in transforming the role of universities and equipping students with entrepreneurial skills that will enable them to engage in social innovation for societal impact.

*“I think we will look at our Student Affairs entities on campus from a different light from now on because as much as there is an entrepreneurship ecosystem with aspects focused on commercialization of technology situated in the technology transfer offices, centers of entrepreneurship in some universities they are called hubs, peer services they play a big role in entrepreneurship support, our Student Affairs entities also play an important role in providing student entrepreneurship support.” – Dr Norah Clarke*

## 5.2 Fostering an entrepreneurial spirit

The rethinking and transforming of the role of universities through fostering an entrepreneurial spirit in students, has been noted by many speakers as a critical initiative. While traditionally the role of universities was perceived as imparting knowledge and producing graduates who will enter the labourmarket through the qualifications they have obtained, the traditional methods do not align with the status quo as the South African labourmarket lacks employment opportunities for university graduates.

Quoting Morawska, Deputy Minister Manamela spoke on the need for the type of organizations that seek creative ways of combining and integrating principles of knowledge generation and application and thus encouraging diversity and heterogeneity but also encouraging creative and innovative organizational context for research and innovation.

*“Long are the days when students went to university to get a qualification merely as a Conduent towards finding employment, even in the pursuit for employment entrepreneurial skills are critical.” - Deputy Minister Buti Manamela*

According to Stats SA’s recent publication of unemployment statistics for Q1 2023, South Africa’s official unemployment rate grew to 32.9% from 32.7% in Q4 2022. The graduate unemployment rate of 10.6% in Q1 2023 shows that unemployment among graduates has skyrocketed over the last decade as it is far higher than the 5.5% recorded in Q1 2013 marking a 5.1% increase over the past decade (Risenga Maluleke, 2023).

A study conducted by (Fatoki, 2014) points out that many of the successful entrepreneurs started their businesses on the university campus and these entrepreneurs turned their passions into businesses while pursuing their studies. The findings of this study on the reasons



students turned to student entrepreneurship are congruent with those of similar studies as they indicate that entrepreneurship is a survival strategy by students. When asked about their entrepreneurial intention after they have completed their studies, most of the student entrepreneurs indicated that they intend to continue with their present businesses or start a new business venture upon completing their studies. The report further notes that students with entrepreneurial experience, whether self-experience, family experience or previous work experience are more inclined towards entrepreneurial career.

*For any programme to succeed it needs to start at high school level so by the time students get to university they already know about it. E.g., SWEEP in this instance – THASA*

*“When our children see us as entrepreneurs at a young age and learn that it is doable, we would have already planted that seed for generations to come.” – Mr. Miles Kubheka*

The EDHE approach is in line with the findings of the study by (Fatoki, 2014) who found that, through fostering an entrepreneurial spirit among students while also providing them with the necessary support and skills required to run a successful business, universities are most likely to produce Student Entrepreneurs who will continue with their current business or establish new ventures with a high potential of creating job opportunities due to business growth or expansion.

*“We don’t want to change universities and make them become entrepreneurial but we do want to give our students the opportunity and to enable them to have an entrepreneurial spirit and an entrepreneurial mindset because no longer can we wait for government to enable job creation but we should also use the innovation, creativity and problem-solving skills.” – Professor Vivian Lawack*

As noted by Ms Naidia Waggie who is the National Chairperson: EDHE CoP for Student Entrepreneurship & Head: Sustainability & Impact (Careers), University of Cape Town, the Student Entrepreneurship Week (SEW) as one of the components of the EDHE programme has played a crucial role in fostering an entrepreneurial spirit within universities and it has made great strides over the past six years.

- 2018 – the SEW project started gaining momentum and now has 28 universities participating each offering various programmes tailored to the university and the students’ needs
- 2019 – students were challenged to come up with innovative and creative ideas to address Sustainable development goals and turn those ideas into reality.”
- 2020 – The Africa tech had to shift to embracing AI and other technologies
- 2021 – Continued to embrace AI and thrived in a post COVID19 era
- 2022 – Move to market and encouraging studentpreneurs to take their innovations to market, put their learnings to action and show the market what they can do

- 2023 – Social innovation for societal impact

*“As you can see through these timelines, there has been a deliberate continuation of the growth of entrepreneurship within higher education, the purpose is to mobilise national graduate students as a resource to create successful enterprises through equipping them with an entrepreneurial mindset.” – Ms Nadia Waggie*

Another EDHE programme that has played a crucial role in fostering an entrepreneurial spirit among students is the annual EDHE Intersarsity competition which consists of four categories, namely; Innovative Business Ideas, Existing Businesses in Tech, Social Impact and General. This component of the EDHE programme has made a positive impact on the businesses of the student entrepreneurs who participated under various categories and these will be outlined in detail later in this report.

The achievements of the businesses that participated in the annual EDHE Intersarsity competition show that with an entrepreneurial spirit and mindset students from various disciplines innovate, pursue and successfully implement their innovative ideas with audacity. As noted by Mr. Chief Mabizela (list university or entity that he's from), entrepreneurship and social innovation are not discipline bound.

Citing Mikaila's story Professor Vivian Lawack also stated that the entrepreneurial spirit knows no age and barriers but needs audacity which has been proven through the achievements of the EDHE programme student entrepreneurs.

*“If you want to be successful you need to be audacious, you need to be brave.” – Mr. Miles Kubheka*

*“Entrepreneurship is not about starting a business, it's about embracing a mindset of creativity, resilience and innovation.” – Ms. Precious Mamogobo*

*“Great ideas are everywhere and what an entrepreneurial and change maker mindset teaches you is how to recognize them and once you switch it on it's always working.” – Mr. Miles Kubheka*

As noted from the studentpreneurs Indaba speaker's words entrepreneurship requires creativity, resilience and most importantly a change makers mindset.

### **5.3 The benefits of social innovation**

Sheik, et al.,(2022) define social innovation as new ideas (products, services and models) that concurrently meet social needs and create collaborations that can have a transformative power to change societies for the better through initiatives that challenge exclusion and social entrepreneurship is often seen as a subset of these initiatives. Sheik, et al.,(2022) further asserts that while social innovation is a relatively young concept within the South African

context, it has largely been used to highlight the importance of both developing new products and services to serve the most disadvantaged of society. In addition, social innovation debates have concentrated on inclusive development where impoverished communities actively transform their lives through playing a role in social and economic development.

*“Social innovation is about the empowerment of individuals and communities through harnessing their potential to create a sustainable future.” – Mr Chief Mabizela*

Citing the World economic forum report as a keynote speaker at the 2023 StudentPreneurs Indaba, Deputy Minister Buti Manamela stated that social innovation has grown the capacity to transform the lives of marginalized groups and influence social policy, he further stipulated that social innovation allows for the disruption of traditional and rigid thinking and that it requires agility to lift people out of poverty, unemployment and other social ills.

*“These observations made by both the World Economic Forum and Morawska help us to develop a deeper appreciation for the work that has been done under the auspices of the EDHE more critically those observations enhance our understanding of the potential and possibilities that social innovation offers us as a country but also as humanity.” – Deputy Minister Buti Manamela*

*“Where traditional social institutions have been unable to provide sustainable solutions for humanity social innovators often intervened and closed the gap.” – Deputy Minister Buti Manamela*

Deputy Minister Manamela further reiterated that the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, has improved the lives of 622 million in 190 countries people through the distribution of funds that would be used to improve livelihoods. The funds were utilized to solve social issues such as the reduction of carbon emissions, improving education for children and youth and improving energy access for 100 million people and drive social inclusion for over 25 million people, for people with disabilities and homeless people.

*“Social innovation allows for the disruption of traditional and often rigid thinking.” – Deputy Minister Buti Manamela*

*“In addition to an entrepreneurial mindset we need to adopt a change makers mindset, a change makers mindset helps you to see beyond what you are currently experiencing; it’s great to do stuff that will enrich you but what is more important is doing what will help more people.” - Mr. Miles Kubheka*

*“The new breed of social entrepreneurs who put equity and justice over profit and deployment of resources and creation of value are an increasingly important source of creating solutions for these challenges society is facing.” – Deputy Minister Buti Manamela*

According to Sheik, et al.,(2022), from a policy perspective the process of supporting Social Innovations is still its primitive stages. While recognizing that inclusive SI can only work if designed by Africans for Africa, after 25 years of democracy, the most noticeable problem still remains inequality; not only racial and gender inequality but also economic inequality causing extreme poverty in disadvantaged groups. Manamela also emphasized the need for policy makers to also partake in the transformation of universities into institutions that will propel students to be change makers who can participate in solving societies problems.

*“These observations by the World Economic Forum report compel us as policy makers, entrepreneurs and as social innovators to rethink a number of things and one of those things being the role of higher education institutions and in particular our universities, the role of universities is social innovation.” - DM Buti Manamela*

#### 5.4 The key to building a sustainable business

Student entrepreneurs were provided with guidelines on how they can build sustainable businesses in their pursuit as social innovators and entrepreneurs through a number of engaging and interactive sessions that required them to work with their peers to formulate ideas and come up with solutions.

As depicted in figure 4 below, overall, the HELM programme was well organized with 47% of the student entrepreneurs indicating that the technological environment and technical support were good, over 47% indicating that the materials and documentation provided were good, the overall organization and attention to arrangements and overall communication and over 70% the speakers, delivery, value and relevance exceeded their expectations.

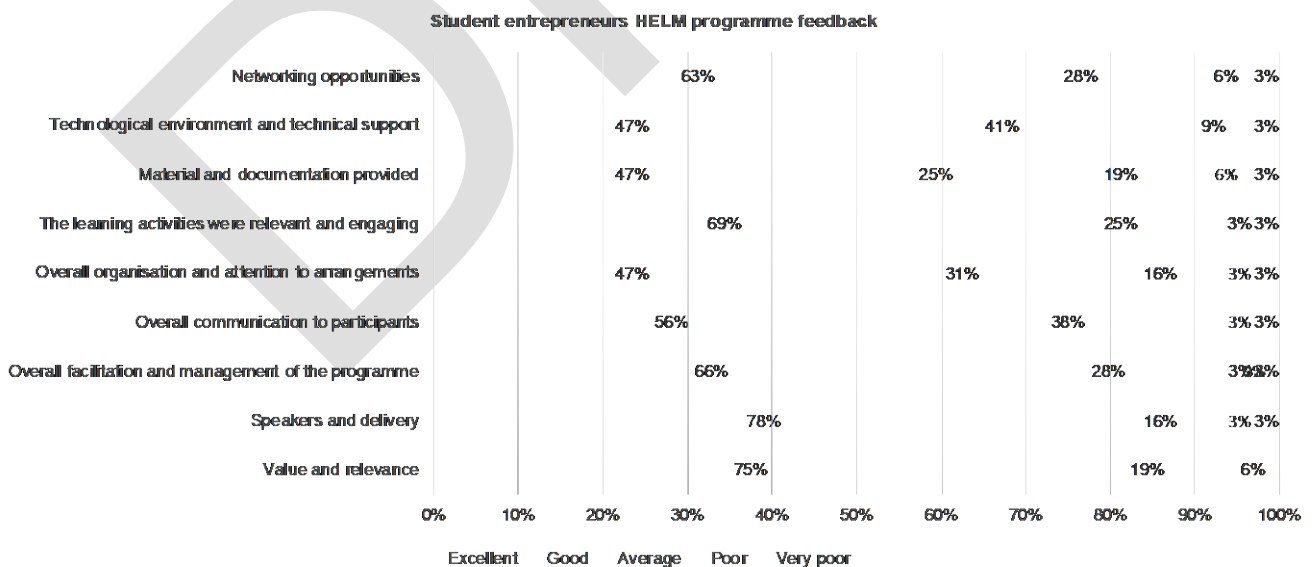


Figure 5: Student entrepreneurs HELM programme feedback

With regards to capacitation and learnings, the student entrepreneurs indicated that the break-away sessions provided them with an improved understanding of the key issues in their entrepreneurship, strengthened their leadership capacity, provided them with a valuable space for self-reflection and learning and also provided them with a valuable opportunity to engage with other student entrepreneurs.

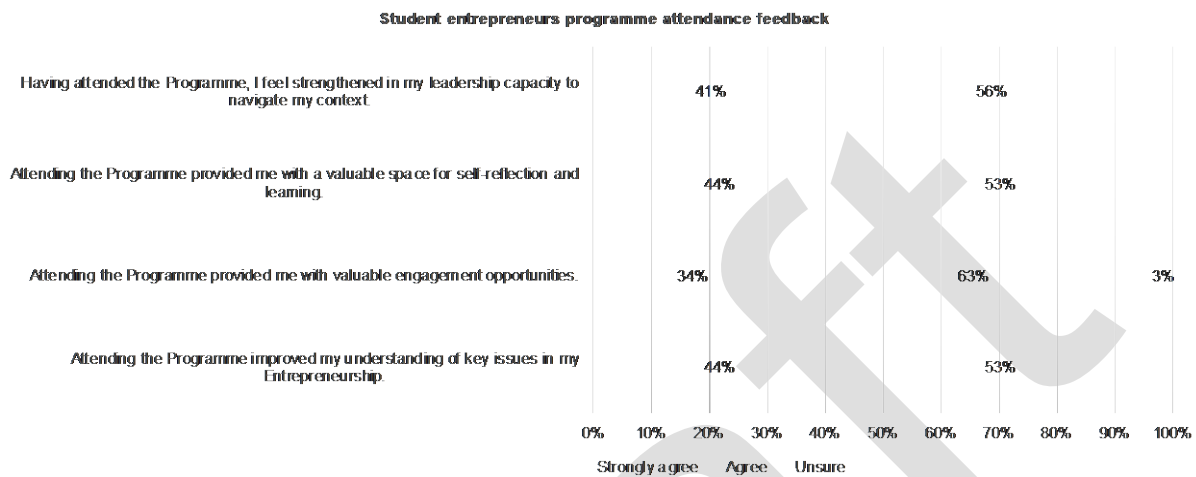


Figure 6: Student entrepreneurs programme attendance feedback

The sessions facilitated by HELM touched on innovative thinking, ethical leadership, coaching, the importance of timing in entrepreneurship, networking and mentorship. The themes that emerged from these sessions were also echoed by other speakers who were part of the 2023 Studentpreneurs Indaba.

#### 5.4.1 Innovation and innovative thinking

Innovative thinking is one of the most important aspects of building a sustainable entrepreneurial business. In a session facilitated by HELM, student entrepreneurs were divided into groups and tasked to a pitching session. Each group had to choose an item on the list. The items list consisted of products that were described as basic as these did not have any branding and brand association, which made the items difficult to sell.

In their feedback session the groups indicated that the items were boring and difficult to sell as they were not essential products, the student entrepreneurs also stated that the items lacked creativity and further expressed that the items would have been easier to sell if they were branded. Some of the groups that seemed to have grasped the concept focused on products that they felt they had a better understanding of while others focused on the customers pain although the products were still perceived as basic products.

*“We chose slippers with the customers pain in mind and put a tag line that says, imagine getting out of the shower and walking barefoot on a cold floor.”*

Through these sessions, the student entrepreneurs were advised that innovation and innovative thinking is about looking for differentiators as opposed to focusing on the common. Thinking outside the box, brainstorming and taking time to reflect were mentioned as some of the core attributes of innovation and innovative thinking.

Student entrepreneurs were also advised that in order for a business to be sustainable the focus should not only be on making money out of the business. The focus should rather be on changing people's lives and impacting them positively i.e. innovation for social change. Some of the pointers student entrepreneurs were given include thinking about how the business will make things more effective for society or the community, finding a value proposition / what differentiates your business from other similar businesses and ensuring that people get value for money through ethical supply.

*"How will your business make things more effective?" - Dr Oliver*

*"What differentiates your business from other similar businesses" - Dr Oliver*

In the Q&A session some of the students had questions regarding the means through which they can ensure that their business is financially sustainable while pursuing innovation for social change. Offering customers what they need which equates to identifying social problems and diversifying within the business were some of the pointers noted in running a sustainable business centred on social innovation for societal impact.

*"Make sure what you offer is what your customers want, keep your sustainability / value high and your risk low in order to experience exponential growth." - Dr Oliver*

*"Diversifying is one of the keys to keeping the business growing." - Dr Oliver*

Student entrepreneurs were urged to identify a gap in society, find a problem and come up with a solution as this is the essence of social innovation for societal impact. A key note speaker Mr Miles Kubheka who is the Chief Executive Officer of Wakanda Food Accelerator echoed the same sentiments.

*"We have a lot of great entrepreneurs in South Africa, we are not short of that but we need more people with creativity who will be able to identify that where there is a challenge there is an opportunity." – Mr Miles Kubheka*

Also speaking under the Studentpreneurs Indaba theme "Social innovation for societal impact" Dr Bianca Mkhize Simelane, Dr May and Dr Petersen focused on researching and thinking differently about food security and exploring other sustainable forms of food security in addition to putting emphasis on the importance of identifying and finding sustainable solutions to challenges faced by society, the panellists and key note speaker also stressed the importance of using what we have at our disposal.



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*“My PHD study focused on educating people on edible insects in terms of their nutritional value and sustainability, the amount of water and land we need in order to is actually less than the amount of land we need to do farming.” – Dr Bianca Mkhize Simelane*

*“In Kenya they were setting up a fish farm using flies as a source of food to feed the fish and then sell the fish and this is a project that took ten years and it was good to see how it translated into creating a livelihood for propel in rural areas.” – Dr May*

*“So What Professor May is talking about is a circular economy; we need to start where we are, use what we have and plug it back into the environment, It’s going to require us to think rapidly about what is it that we have and how we can make it better not only for ourselves but for everybody else.” – Dr Petersen*

*“How do you actually start? The trick about starting anything is to start small even if you have big dreams, start with something you can do today because if you over plan you will plan forever and nothing will ever happen.” – Mr Miles Kubheka*

The importance of positioning innovative ideas in such a way that they fall within a perfect time frame was also notes as crucial in building a sustainable business.

*You might have an idea only to find that it is not suitable at that time but might be in future – e.g. tech related businesses were the most successful during covid but some of those may not be successful now so timing is crucial - Tebogo Tsebe*

Mr. Miles Kubheka also echoed the same sentiments stating that at times innovative ideas fail due to delays in implementation.

*“You don’t have to wait for something to be perfect, the reason people end up not doing anything with their ideas is because they are waiting for them to be perfect.” – Mr. Kubheka*

#### 5.4.2 Solving real life problems

In addition to innovative thinking, solving real life problems was also noted as the key to building a sustainable business. Panelists and keynote speakers acknowledged that the definition of the main purpose of doing business has changed; while in the past the purpose a business was defined as to make profit the status quo compels us to refine this definition and start perceiving the purpose of a business as to impact our communities positively by having sustainable social impact that can be realized through solving the challenges faced by society.

*“Your business must be aligned to addressing SDGs and solving real problems instead of making a quick buck / profit. It’s about being able to make social impact.” – Tebogo Tsebe*

*“I think these entrepreneurs must be entrepreneurs who understand that their role should be playing is that of advancing humanity so that we all flourish because if we go alone, we won’t go far.” – Mr. Mgolombane*

Through an extensive consultation process that included the private sector, civil society, academia and research institutions, women, and youth: the challenges faced by South Africa and the world at large were highlighted and noted as development goals that will be addressed the well-being of the country’s citizens. United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) outlining Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was then released in 2019. The SDGs presented in figure 5 below are a global call to action to end poverty, protect the earth’s environment and climate, and ensure that people everywhere can enjoy peace and prosperity.



Figure 7: SDG goals

Through the HELM break-away sessions the groups engaged in an activity aimed at aiding them in generating entrepreneurial ideas aimed at solving challenges within their communities. The groups were encouraged to link these challenges to sustainable development goals (SDGs) portrayed in figure 6.

The challenges identified by the groups were as follows;

- Ultrasound device for women in rural areas to reduce infant mortality.
- Green fields – agricultural development and food security – skills transfer
- Tip taps delivery – using an app to deliver food medication and alcohol partnering with Pick ‘n Pay and the company is growing
- Maximizing entrepreneurship on campus – the hustler’s app connecting to other students and promoting and maximizing their businesses. the shkwama fund to help



students with their fees

- Electricity crises prototype – portable fridge in pocket cools contents in cupboards and fridges.

The activity was aimed at coaching student entrepreneurs on combining profit with purpose in order to ensure that their entrepreneurial endeavors are in line with addressing SDGs and thus impacting humanity in a positive way through their businesses. Purpose was noted as the key to having a successful business.

*“We need to find out what is wrong in our communities do not just do business for money, make sure that the business you are starting addresses the needs of your community these usually involve a lot of innovative thinking and require an entrepreneurial spirit, we need to make a positive impact in the world.” – Dr Mkhize Simelane*

*“If making money for your business is at the cost of others e.g., children it then has a negative impact on society.” – Dr Botha*

*A business must be an intervention and it needs to be sustainable the next generation must not experience the same challenges the results of the intervention must be long-term and not short-term impact - Tebogo Tsebe*

Panelists and keynote address speakers shared examples of the initiatives they have undertaken with solving societies problems in mind. These initiatives stemmed from thinking about the future for future generations and understanding problems from the perspective of the communities who are facing those challenges in order to ensure that the proposed solutions do not lead to negative unintended results.

*“I have come to realize that charity is not sustainable, it creates new problems; during lockdown we fed 350 people through rescuing food from retailers and giving it to communities but eventually this created an unintended consequence of dependance because people thought we were the solution and this is how we came up with the Gcwalisa campaign which is a business that allows people to buy food at the size and price they can afford for example a teabag for R2 and the positive unintended consequence of this is that there is less liter in the township because people are no longer buying small pack sizes.” – Mr. Miles Kubheka*

*“Through our Gcwalisa store we are also able to supply electricity to the community through our solar panels, they pay R5 per loadshedding hour for lights, in this way our whole community is lit during loadshedding and the community feels safe.” – Mr. Miles Kubheka*

### 5.4.3 Networking

Networking is another factor that was highlighted as crucial for building a sustainable business more especially by the student entrepreneurs who took to the stage to share about their entrepreneurship journey. The student entrepreneurs expressed that they managed to network with other entrepreneurs and accessed coaching and learned valuable lessons from their peers through the EDHE programme.

*“Being able to engage with peers walking the same journey across other provinces gives you a soft landing when entering markets and spaces when you’ve networked.”*  
– Mr. Mvelo Hlophe

*“It’s not about winning it’s about networking and it helps with dynamism you create a robust network that could propel you further.”* - Mr. Matimba

*“The approach to networking is building rapport and nurturing the relationship.”* – Mr. Mvelo Hlophe

In an effort to eliminate working in silos and also encourage collaborations, the Nelson Mandela University established FADEL as a means of bringing the different entrepreneurial societies together and building an ecosystem through a chill and network where all the societies discuss and solve problems collaboratively.

*“As studentpreneurs we tend to work in silos but through hosting and attending remarkable events such as the SEW we able to come together and build relationships.”* – Mr. Tshepiso Malema

Dr Mkhize Simelane also opined that the same can be done for small businesses where they build networks and work together towards achieving the same goal. Based on these views, what came out is that networking has the potential to create new opportunities for businesses.

*“In my study that I conducted in the Limpopo province the small businesses would refer each other; if someone had a tourist in their accommodation when they ask for a place to eat, they wouldn’t recommend a Mc Donalds or KFC or other big companies, they would recommend another small so that at the end of the day another person gets a job.”* – Dr Mkhize Simelane

### 5.4.4 Ethical leadership and coaching

Studentpreneurs were also equipped with leadership and coaching skills through break away groups sessions facilitated by HELM. Student entrepreneurs were tasked with formulating their own definition of ethical leadership within their breakaway groups.

Though a feedback session the student entrepreneurs defined an ethical leader as a leader who has a good reputation and not involved in any form of corruption and is concerned with societies' wellbeing.

An ethical leader was also described as a leader with great communication skills, the ability to listen, delegating and lead by example. In addition, the facilitators highlighted vulnerability as a crucial element of being a great leader as it aids in gaining people's trust and most importantly walking away from things that have the potential to taint ones integrity, reputation and company. The ability to focus on ones strengths instead of deficiencies and ability to embrace change were also noted as some of the traits of being a great leader.

*"Change and complexity will always be with us and will affect our business, we need to embrace change."* – Dr Oliver

In their Q&A session the student entrepreneurs raised questions about handling failure as an ethical leader to which the response was that learning from failure is part of the process of becoming a great leader as leaders are able to learn from failure.

*"Failure is one of the fundamentals of leadership, it gives you time to pause reflect, learn and move on."* – Dr Oliver

The ability to be audacious which was echoed as a pivotal component of having an entrepreneurial spirit and changemaker mindset was also noted as essential for great leadership.

*"In life if you want to do something that is worth doing you have to be comfortable with the possibility that things may not go your way, failure is part of being an entrepreneur."*  
– Mr. Kubheka

Speaking on the challenges he faced as an entrepreneur, Mr. Kubheka also stressed the importance of going back to the drawing board upon experiencing failure as this allows for an opportunity to reflect and reimagine your innovative ideas which could potentially lead to even greater success.

*"After realizing that our restaurant in Braamfontein was not doing that great, we went back to the drawing board and started selling our boerewors rolls from a cart because a store would cost us three and a half million to set up but a cart would cost us twenty-five thousand rands and found unemployed guys from the township; we then pitched to spar and collaborated with them and the business was a great success."* – Mr. Miles Kubheka

*"It's better to fail trying because even in life if you are stuck on the side of the road no one is going to come and help you but if you start pushing your car you would be surprised how many people would come to your rescue."* – Mr. Kubheka

In addition to building networks, student entrepreneurs were also urged to look into mentorship as a catalyst for their businesses whether it is formal or informal mentorship that would be in the form of peer-to-peer mentorship realised through networking and engaging with peers to various entrepreneurship programmes.

*“Although some people have great ideas, they struggle to generate a saleable product so we help them with the business side of things; Dr Tracy is doing amazing things, she developed plant based deserts for people who are lactose intolerant we worked with her for a year until her product was in stores.” – Mr Miles Kubheka*

### 5.5 Empowering female entrepreneurs

As noted by Sheik, et al.,(2022), gender inequality remains one of the pressing challenges in South Africa. According to a study conducted by the Centre for the study of violence and reconciliation (CSVR ) in 2016, South African women experience high levels of GBV and men were the main perpetrators of this violence. The root causes of GBV were identified as imbalances of power in gender inequality and discriminatory patriarchal practices against women, growing up in a home characterised by violence, neighbourhood where violence against women is seen as the norm culturally and religiously. At the economic level, GBV drivers include poverty, unemployment and changing economic statuses among men and women (CSVR, 2016).

In the EDHE Programme session that was dedicated to GBV, Dr Dorothy Ngila indicated that the research around GBV has to centre on sex and gender intersectionality; the dialogue of this session focused on women’s economic empowerment, the benefits of interdisciplinarity, mental health and other social dynamics. Dr Ngila also commended the work of the South African Research Chairs Initiative SARChI and the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) as it is directly linked to policy and also based on engagements with government and leadership aimed at formulating a national plan to deal with GBV.

EDHE, through its Student Women Economic Empowerment Programme (SWEEP) initiative, provides student women entrepreneurs with skills and opportunities to ensure economic participation that lead to independence so that they can be less susceptible to GBV. In addition to SWEEP, universities have other initiatives aimed at ensuring that academic institutions are a GBV-free zone. For example UWC has the Gender Equity Unit which is a supporting structure aimed at ensuring that student women have sufficient resources such as income for personal needs or study bursaries as the lack of these resources often puts them in a vulnerable state that leads them to taking routes that threaten their safety.

Statistics from a census conducted by Stats SA show that, in South Africa women and youth are the ones who are the group that carries the burden of joblessness. While the official unemployment rate in Q2:2023 was 32,6%, a decline of 0,3 of a percentage point from the 32,9% recorded in Q1:2023; unemployment numbers for women remain higher than the

national average, with 35,7% of South African women in the labour force currently without work and actively seeking employment (Risenga Maluleke, 2023). It is for this reason that initiatives aimed at women empowerment are required to curb factors that could make them vulnerable.

Other initiatives aimed at ensuring the safety and well-being of student women is Bare Mind, a health-tech start-up that encompasses medical and spiritual interventions for the mental wellness of users. This initiative was established due to the fact that as a result of the stigma and sensitive nature of mental health-related issues, people are often reluctant to talk about the challenges that are facing.

*“We need to create safe spaces where people feel comfortable sharing their experiences and getting help for this plight that women and men alike experience in our country.” - Ms Mahlodi Letsie*

Ms Letsie indicated that they are open to exploring partnerships at university level with student wellness centres as their mission is to capitalise on using technology to ensure that students can receive the assistance they need without being concerned about financial constraints.

*“We would need to partner with organisations across South Africa to ensure that students, working professionals and youth can access mental health services that support them in their everyday health and wellness journey.” - Ms Mahlodi Letsie*

Dr Vilakazi highlighted the importance of collaborations in tackling GBV as a pandemic, she stated that staff and students must unite and produce collaborative measures to deal with GBV.

*“How can men become a catalyst in women’s empowerment.” – Ms Ellen Fischat*

Ms Mahlodi Letsie also encouraged female students to engage one another and start enterprises that solve problems. She further expressed that they should actively pursue knowledge and leverage on technology as a space to engage in dialogues that will not only breed business ideas that impact our society positively but also as a space discuss critical social issues such as GBV.

## 5.6 Realizing impact

Since its inception, the EDHE has produced great results to date and this has been noted by the Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training of the Republic of South Africa, Buti Manamela and the student entrepreneurs who are the beneficiaries of the EDHE programme.

*“Since inception in 2017 the EDHE Lekgotla has experienced phenomenal growth both in terms of participants, attendance and speakers which also speaks to the growing interest in the work that is being done under the auspices of the EDHE programme.” - Deputy Minister Buti Manamela*

The feedback provided by the student entrepreneurs at the 2023 Studentpreneurs Indaba are an indication that the EDHE programme is making great strides in achieving its objectives and that the results produced by the programme are sustainable. One of the student entrepreneurs shared that the many of the student entrepreneurs businesses that showcased at the 2022 student entrepreneurship week (SEW) which was under the theme “move to market” are still active businesses to date.

The winners of the previous annual EDHE Intervarsity competition finals from 2019 to 2022 also indicated that their businesses are still in existence post winning the competition. They also shared on how taking part in the EDHE intervarsity competition and winning the competition has impacted their businesses positively. Most of these businesses were able to expand and also accessed broader networks as a result of the entrepreneurial skills and valuable lessons they learned through the EDHE programme.

What can be noted about these businesses is that they were established with the aim of solving societies problems which is in line with innovation for societal impact and they have by virtue of this contributed to addressing some of the SDGs.

Zaio a business founded by Mr. Mvelo Hlophe won in the 2019 Social Impact business category and also won Studentpreneur of the Year award. Mr. Hlophe shared that the aim of their venture was to equip young people with skills that will help them to be employable while also ensuring that this is achieved through placing them in part-time jobs.

*“We are in the training industry and what we did is that we equipped young people with skills for the future and are now training people to place them into part time positions, and since we’ve actually pivoted training is focused more on digital and technical skills and helping people get full-time jobs.” - Mr. Mvelo Hlope*

Amnova Tech is a business that develops and manufactures products using 3-D technologies founded by Mr. Denislav Marinov. Amnova Tech won in the Existing Business-Tech category in 2019. The business serves clients in agriculture, the automotive and medical industries as well as the Internet of Things.

*“Our aim is to industrialize manufacturing and to bring it back into the continent because we have the resources but we ship all that abroad and buy it back at ten times the cost, the goal is to use what we have and manufacture what we can while pushing to make a global mark.” Mr. Denislav Marinov*

Vambo Academy is a platform that offers access to learning resources and teaches indigenous languages including ChiShona, IsiNdebele and IsiZulu. The business won in the category of Existing Business-Tech in 2021.



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*“We started Vambo academy because we identified a huge gap in the space of indigenous languages, these languages are not only used to communicate but also to educate people and to empower them to participate in the economy.” - Ms. Chido Dzinotywei*

*“It is so encouraging to see an idea came from a passion project and now creating employment for students.” - Ms. Chido Dzinotywei*

Lola Green is a manufacturer of durable construction products made from recycled material founded by Mr. Matimba Mabonda who is the current holder of the Studentpreneur of the Year title.

The student entrepreneurs shared the successes their businesses have achieved following winning the EDHE programme intervarsity competition, essentially showcasing the growth their businesses and also the positive impact the programme has made in their businesses. For some of the businesses, the growth was followed by expansions and job creation.

*“Since we won the competition, we added more languages and ensuring that we represent all the languages in the country and we’ve started expanding to East Africa and also partnering with education institutions” – Vambo Academy*

*“Currently we are providing organizations with training for their employees, we’ve also done also work with incubators and non-profit organizations within and outside South Africa.” - Zaio*

*“We are currently introducing a variety of manufacturing technologies that will enable Africa to be a leading manufacturer.” - Amnova Tech*

*“What we’ve done following EDHE, we have onboarded more people and we are in the process of setting up operations space here in Cape Town and we are also setting up some operations space in Johannesburg.” - Amnova Tech*

*“We are currently piloting the production of pavers and building blocks.” - Lola Green*

The student entrepreneurs expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the EDHE programme as the winnings enable them to invest in their businesses which has enabled growth, expansion and job creation.

Vambo Academy reported that they utilized their winnings to add the Swahili language to their offerings, hence their ability now to tap into the East African market. Similarly, Zaio indicated that the winnings enabled them to capacitate their business through acquiring interns. Amnova Tech on the other hand used it to purchase more manufacturing equipment for their business expansion and Lola Green to refine their products and plan to use the remainder of their winnings for the in lab-testing their prototypes.



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In addition to helping the student entrepreneurs to realize their business goals and enabling them to expand, student entrepreneurs have also realized other opportunities extending from EDHE networks. For instance, following their participation in the EDHE programme intervarsity competition, Dzinotyiwai the co-founder of Vambo Academy and Mabonda founder of Lola Green earned an opportunity to compete with other African student entrepreneurs in a ten day residency programme in Switzerland, which was a reward for presenting a winning business idea at the Academia-Industry Training workshop of the Swiss and African Science and Business Innovators (AIT-SASBI) programme in the two consecutive years. SASBI is an initiative that focuses on science-based student start-ups, particularly those related to clean-tech and ed-tech.

The programme links students with fitting industries and partners to assist them in positioning their business ideas for the marketplace. It is through this initiative that Switzerland and the selected African countries; namely, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Africa stimulate and advance entrepreneurship within higher education while also raising awareness of cross-border opportunities.

Swiss and African Science and Business Innovators (AIT-SASBI) programme further opened other doors for the student entrepreneurs. For Vambo Academy the addition of Swahili to the language followed after the Switzerland residency while for Lola Green it has opened engagements on moving the business forward with Swiss-based organizations.

Mabonda emphasized the importance of networking coaching and mentorship through expressing the extent to which exposure to EDHE programme has enabled him to connect to a community with a plethora of networking and coaching opportunities. He further expressed that engaging in such spaces is mainly about creating a business network, which he believes will build him into a dynamic entrepreneur.

## 6. Key take aways

- The improvements in attendance and speaker numbers as noted by the Deputy Minister of higher education are an indication that the EDHE programme has made substantial progress in achieving its objectives;
- collaborations between university ecosystem initiatives and university student affairs departments have aided in fast-tracking the role of universities as an enabler and support system for student entrepreneurs;
- through fostering an entrepreneurial spirit and instilling a changemakers mindset while also providing student entrepreneurs with the necessary skills and opportunities to innovate and grow their businesses, universities are producing entrepreneurs who will be job creators and social change makers in the future;
- social innovation can be used as a tool to transform the lives of marginalized groups and influence social policy as it allows for the disruption of traditional and rigid thinking its agility can be used as a vehicle for lifting people out of poverty,



unemployment and other social ills;

- sustainable businesses can be built through combining business with purpose and this can be achieved through identifying a gap in society in order to address societies needs as opposed to starting a business solely for the purpose of making profit;
- building a sustainable business also requires innovative thinking aimed at solving real life problems, ethical leadership and the ability to build networks that will enable the business to grow while also creating social impact;
- as a marginalized group that is experiencing GBV in addition to other social ills women should be empowered and encouraged to venture into entrepreneurship in order to reduce the burden of joblessness they are currently carrying and also curb factors that could make them Susceptible to GBV;
- since its inception, the EDHE programme has benefited a large number of student entrepreneurs with the majority of the businesses that participated in the 2022 SEW still in operation to date;
- some of the Student entrepreneurs who won the EDHE intervarsity competition between 2019 and 2022 were able to expand their businesses, create employment for other young people and some have also been able to showcase their businesses abroad through extended EDHE programme networks;

## 7. Action points

- Increase the number of private sector and government department attendees to further cultivate collaborations between academic institutions, the private and public sector.
- Provide more similar informative programmes for student entrepreneurs throughout the course of year.
- Strengthen collaborations between other student entrepreneurs support ecosystems within the university and Student Affairs Departments.
- Develop and action policies that encourage student entrepreneurship within universities.
- Work towards ensuring that the pledge is applicable and compulsory across all the 26 universities as it has shown potential as a vehicle through which some of the objectives of the EDHE programme can be realized.
- Consider conducting a mid-term evaluation as a proactive measure that will aid in ensuring the EDHE programme's success by enabling adjustments, improving accountability, enhancing learning, and adapting to changing circumstances; an impact evaluation should also be considered in the long-run as these evaluations are an essential tool for effective programme management and ultimately contribute to achieving desired programme outcomes and impacts.

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