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Educational Research for Social Change (ERSC)

Conference Report

Emperors Palace Hotel Casino Convention Resort in Gauteng, South Africa

3rd International Conference on Technical and Vocational Education and Training
ICTVET 2026
24–27 March 2026

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The 3rd International Conference on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (ICTVET 2026) was held from 24–27 March 2026 at the Emperors Palace Hotel Casino Convention Resort in Gauteng, South Africa. The conference chair was Professor Sello P. Mokoena, who provided strategic leadership in convening this important global and continental platform for advancing TVET systems. The conference was hosted by the University of South Africa (UNISA) in partnership with the UNEVOC International Centre, alongside key stakeholders including TVET Colleges, South African Public Colleges Organisation, the Association of Technical Universities and Polytechnics in Africa (ATUPA), the Education, Training Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority, and the Department of Higher Education and Training.

The theme of ICTVET 2026 was *Innovative Pathways and Best Practices for the Promotion of TVET for Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment.*

The conference aimed to:

- Integrate entrepreneurship into TVET curricula.
- Equip youth with digital and future-ready skills.
- Strengthen industry partnerships.
- Promote inclusive and equitable TVET systems.
- Advance TVET research and knowledge sharing.

These conference objectives align with global priorities such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 and SDG 8), which focus on quality education and decent work.

UNESCO-UNEVOC Centre Inauguration

On the first day of the conference, a major highlight of ICTVET 2026 was the inauguration of the UNISA UNESCO-UNEVOC Centre, in the Florida Campus, marking the university's formal inclusion in the global UNEVOC network. The event was graced by Olivier Pieume, Chief of Technical Cooperation and head of the UNEVOC Network Secretariat at the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for TVET in Bonn, Germany, as one of the keynote speakers. The inauguration showed UNISA's expanding role in promoting excellence and innovation in TVET in South Africa and globally.

Keynote Addresses and Leadership

The opening speech and welcome address by Professor Puleng LenkaBula, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, highlighted that this was the third conference, following the previous two, which had attracted high attendance from different sectors and across Africa. The conference featured prominent keynote speakers, including representatives from academia, government, industry partners, and international organisations. Discussions focused on TVET reforms and policy alignment, employability and industry-driven curricula, the importance of public–private partnerships, and the role of entrepreneurship in economic growth. The academic and panel sessions consisted of scholarly paper presentations in separate plenary sessions, panel discussions in the main conference room, workshop and academic writing sessions led by the retired Professor Michael van Wyk.

The conference offered hybrid participation (in-person and virtual), allowing participants across the globe to engage in the discussions on entrepreneurship and youth empowerment, digital transformation and the impact of AI, inclusive and equitable TVET, and research and innovation in skills development. Dr T. Mudondo, Secretary for Zimbabwe Tertiary Education Service and ATUPA Executive Board Chairperson, had his speech read by Tobias Shumba, ATUPA Editorial Chairperson, who addressed the innovative pathways and best practices for the promotion of TVET for entrepreneurship and youth employment. Deputy Minister of the Department of Higher Education and Training, Dr Nomusa Dube-Ncube, reinforced the role of the department in developing relevant skills, hence the shift to occupational skills

Cultural and Networking Activities

Beyond academic engagements, ICTVET 2026 incorporated experiential and networking opportunities, where delegates participated in an educational tour to Soweto museums, providing cultural and historical insights into South Africa. Delegates were able to get a glimpse of the South African historical journey, the Soweto uprising, which led to the massacre of many school learners and political figures, and led eventually to independence. A gala dinner was hosted, creating a platform for informal networking, collaboration, and strengthening professional relationships. Different dancing styles were performed by guests from diverse backgrounds according to the variety of music melodies provided by the director of music. The conference attracted a diverse range of international and regional stakeholders. Notably, ATUPA was strongly represented by its executive members from Kenya, Malawi, and Zimbabwe, who played an active role in discussions and knowledge exchange. This broad participation reinforced the conference's continental importance in shaping TVET discourse in Africa.

Entrepreneurship in TVET

Participants emphasised the need to embed entrepreneurial skills into training programmes to prepare graduates for self-employment and innovation-driven economies so that graduates become entrepreneurs and employers rather than jobseekers. Addressing youth unemployment was central, with a focus on aligning skills development with labour market demands. The conference highlighted the urgency of incorporating digital technologies and AI into TVET systems to respond to the Fourth

Industrial Revolution. Further, the need for inclusive TVET systems that cater to marginalised groups was strongly emphasised throughout the discussions. Strong partnerships between TVET institutions and industry were also viewed as essential to ensuring curriculum relevance and improving graduate employability.

ICTVET 2026 showed significance in several respects. It strengthened global and African collaboration in TVET, marked the institutional recognition of UNISA as a UNESCO-UNEVOC Centre, fostered dialogue on future-proof skills and innovation, and promoted entrepreneurship as a key driver of youth employment. Thus, the conference successfully brought together policymakers, politicians, academics, and practitioners to deliberate on the transformation of TVET in response to global and local challenges. It emphasised innovation, entrepreneurship, and collaboration as central pillars for the future of skills development in Africa. The inclusion of cultural activities, such as the Soweto museum tour, and networking platforms like the gala dinner enriched the conference experience, while strong continental participation from ATUPA reinforced its African relevance. Overall, ICTVET 2026 reaffirmed the critical role of TVET in addressing unemployment, promoting inclusive growth, and supporting sustainable development.