

UNIVEN partners with Umlambo Foundation to teach foundation phase learners how to read and write

The University of Venda (UNIVEN), through the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education led by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni agreed to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with Umlambo Foundation led by the founder, former Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka to support the teaching and learning of Accounting, Tshivenda (Home Language), Mathematics and Science, English (First Additional Language) (FAL) through debates, Learning, Reading and Numeracy at Foundation Phase and supporting principals in Leadership and Management of schools in Vhembe District East and West schools.



In this five-year agreement, UNIVEN will assist the Umlambo Foundation by evaluating some of the projects and providing teachers with skills in various areas that the Foundation is conducting.

This unique partnership was cemented on Thursday, 08 June 2023 at UNIVEN Sport Hall.



In his opening and welcome remarks, UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni said this day marks the beginning of a partnership between UNIVEN and the Umlambo Foundation, under the leadership of Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the former Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa. Dr Nthambeleni indicated that under the direction of the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education, UNIVEN will collaborate with the Umlambo Foundation in the chosen education circuits, and this includes 68 principals and 350 teachers.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal pointed out that this partnership is in line with the key objectives of the UNIVEN's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan which seeks to strengthen the University's local, regional and international profile and visibility, through engaged scholarship and building of linkages, partnerships and internationalisation. Dr Nthambeleni further mentioned that UNIVEN subscribes to the belief articulated by the late former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, that *"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."*

Dr Nthambeleni outlined some of the key programmes that this partnership will focus on such as School Leadership and Management, Curriculum Support, Debate Series for learners, Digital Literacy, and Coding and Robotics. He said the benefits to be derived from these programmes will include Capacity Building for Principals, Capacitating Principals as Curriculum Managers, Confidence Building Through Public speaking, Capacity Building of Teachers in Lesson Presentations, Critical Thinking and Analytical Skills, and most importantly, Empowering Both the Girl Child and the Boy Child. In his conclusion, Dr Nthambeleni said UNIVEN has already demonstrated its commitment to the partnership by establishing a team of 18 committed members who will participate in the implementation of this initiative.



The Founder of Umlambo Foundation, Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka in her response mentioned that her Foundation through the institutions of Higher Learning such as UNIVEN is responsible for supporting teachers to transform the education system. She said the Foundation is intervening in the Vhembe District East and West in bringing school programmes that are meant to assist schools to perform better and those already performing better to continue performing better.

She indicated that the country is faced with a challenge wherein 81% of children in grade four are unable to read in any language, hence this is a concern to everyone.

Dr Mlambo-Ncuka highlighted that Umlambo Foundation through the support of UNIVEN, has the capacity to support teachers to upskill them so that they could deliver this task of assisting learners to know how to read and write.

She also talked about one programme which she mentioned to be dear to her and she is looking forward to seeing how everyone will execute it, and that is to assist children to speak the languages in their debate sessions, and to articulate, comprehend and express themselves. Dr Mlambo-Ngcuka said this is another intervention which will be undertaken at primary schools where they will be encouraging learners to debate in Tshivenda, while at high schools will be encouraging and assist them to debate in English. Through this initiative, teachers will be teaching learners a lot of concepts from current affairs to climate change, science and technology and social affairs.

"I'm looking forward to a day where we will all come together to celebrate the debate finals of top learners from this district and I hope in our country, tomorrow will be better than yesterday," That was Dr Mlambo-Ngcuka as she concludes.



Director Legal Services, Adv Eric Nemukula presided over the big moment of the signing ceremony by UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni and Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.



University Registrar, Adv Edward Lambani appreciated and thanked the presence of Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka for bringing development to UNIVEN and its communities. He said, 'This occasion will always remain cemented in our hearts.' Adv

Lamabani echoed the sentiments of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal that UNIVEN is an anchor institution not to some, not to all but to any initiative that may ever be established within this region be it pedagogical, be it anthropological, whatever it leads to, as long as it leads to the epistemological development of the people of this region, the University will always be the anchor.

The University Registrar thanked the role played by the Department of Education Vhembe Region, Mr Makakavhule in particular who ensured that indeed education has no age of involvement.

He finally appreciated the Faculty led by Prof Bongani Bantwini who together with his team, grabbed this opportunity and rally behind this initiative.



Issued by:
Department of Marketing, Branding and Communication
University of Venda
Tel: (015) 962 8525 / 8710
Date: 12 June 2023

