



Moses Kotane Research Institute

Research · Innovation · Excellence

MKRI MONTHLY

July 2025 edition



The MKRI's newsletter is a showcase of the Institute's latest research insights, impactful community engagement initiatives, policy dialogues, and strategic partnerships. It highlights key events, expert opinions, and thought leadership that drive socioeconomic development in KwaZulu-Natal and beyond.

July was a purposeful and eventful month for the Moses Kotane Research Institute (MKRI), featuring meaningful community involvement, collaborative initiatives, and continued efforts to drive inclusive development. In this edition, we share highlights of the Institute's key contributions, stakeholder engagements, and programmes aimed at empowering communities and strengthening public-sector partnerships.

Top News

- Business Breakfast Tackles Youth Unemployment
 - Launch of Mkuze Digital Centre
-
- Black Industrialist Seminar Participation
 - Enterprise Support on Nelson Mandela Day



031 2661 777

info@moseskotane.com

www.moseskotaneinstitute.com

190 K.E Masinga Road, Durban, 4001



KZN Research Business Breakfast

MKRI, in partnership with the Durban University of Technology and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA), hosted a high-level Business Breakfast aimed at addressing youth unemployment and the provincial skills gap. The event brought together over 120 leaders from academia, government, business, labour, and civil society to discuss aligning university qualifications with labour market needs, expanding industry-based training, and developing effective policy solutions. Reverend Musa Zondi, KZN MEC for EDTEA, delivered the keynote address, highlighting the importance of education that meets industry demands. MKRI also showcased its research and initiatives focused on skills development, youth employment, and economic transformation.

Launch of the Mkuze Digital Centre



MKRI officially launched the Mkuze Digital Centre in collaboration with key stakeholders to promote digital access and socio-economic empowerment in the uMkhanyakude District. The event featured notable guests, including MEC Rev. Musa Zondi, local government leaders, and MKRI executives. The centre, launched alongside a District One-Stop-Shop, aims to improve community access to economic resources, digital tools, and public services. In her address, MKRI CEO Dr. Thandeka Ellenson highlighted the centre's support for students, entrepreneurs, and job seekers through research assistance, online market access, government portal navigation, and short certified training programmes. She also acknowledged the vital role of uMhlosinga Development Agency in supporting the initiative.

MKRI at the Africa Inspired Foundation & HONOR Device Handover Event

MKRI took part in the launch of the Africa Inspired Foundation and the HONOR Device Handover, an event focused on innovation and youth empowerment through corporate partnerships. During the event, MKRI's Executive Manager for Corporate Services, Adv. Thembelihle Mapipa, reaffirmed the institute's commitment to bridging digital skills gaps. She highlighted MKRI's ongoing efforts to support young entrepreneurs through the development of digital centres offering training, mentorship, and vital business resources.

KZNERA Black Industrialist Seminar

Dr. Simphiwe Buthelezi, Executive Manager of Development Services at MKRI, represented the institute at the KZNERA Black Industrialist Seminar held in Durban. Her presentation focused on MKRI's collaboration with KZNERA and EDTEA to unlock private sector investment and support SMMEs. Key initiatives include enterprise development, rural agricultural support under the RASET programme, and facilitating market access for manufacturing ventures. Reverend Musa Zondi, MEC for EDTEA, delivered the keynote address, highlighting renewed government efforts to revitalize the agricultural and industrial sectors across the province.

9th Annual Leadership Development Conference for Women in Government & SOEs.



MKRI CEO Dr. Thandeka Ellenson delivered a keynote address at the 9th Annual Leadership Development Conference for Women in Government and SOEs, encouraging women leaders to embrace integrity, resilience, and authenticity in their leadership journeys. She also contributed to a panel discussion exploring how defining life moments influence leadership, fostering meaningful conversations on mentorship, growth, and perseverance within the public sector.

2025 Manufacturing Indaba



Dr. Elton Chinyanga and Dr. Mthunzi Khonjelwayo attended the 2025 Manufacturing Indaba at the Sandton Convention Centre. This premier event spotlighted strategies for driving manufacturing growth across Africa, with expert insights into sustainability, transformation, and innovation.

Participation at the Indaba strengthens MKRI's efforts to enhance its product development pipeline and long-term advisory services within the manufacturing sector.

Nelson Mandela Day Enterprise Development Session



The Moses Kotane Research Institute hosted an impactful Enterprise Development Session themed "Launch, Market, Digitize & Thrive," empowering 67 emerging entrepreneurs.

Adv. Thembelihle Mapipa (MKRI Executive Manager: Corporate Services) guided entrepreneurs on business registration and legal entities for long-term sustainability.

Mr. Kamvalethu Xhelithole (MKRI Digital Communications Specialist) shared insights on building market-ready businesses through digital tools, covering marketing, e-commerce, CRM, and cybersecurity.

Ms. Sue Singh (MKRI Development Specialist) facilitated a coaching session on growing sustainable businesses through mentorship and support.

The session reaffirmed MKRI's commitment to enterprise development and regional economic growth.

Unisa 2nd Catalytic Niche Area Research Symposium

Advocate Thembelihle Mapipa, Executive Manager of Corporate Services and Strategic Partnerships at the Moses Kotane Research Institute (MKRI), delivered the keynote address at UNISA's 2nd Catalytic Niche Area Research Symposium on 30 July 2025 under the theme "Skills for the Future – Future-proofing the Maritime Industry."

She highlighted MKRI's role in driving economic growth through research, policy support, skills development, and innovation, with a focus on KwaZulu-Natal. Addressing challenges facing the maritime sector, she noted outdated curricula, lack of hybrid skills, limited participation of women and youth, and inadequate compliance training.

To tackle these issues, Advocate Mapipa proposed modernized curricula, workplace-based learning, stronger partnerships, international benchmarking, upskilling of...



educators, innovation hubs with simulation training, and scholarships for women and youth.

KZN Annual Fintech conference launch



Dr. Mthunzi Khonjelwayo, Research and Publications Manager at the Moses Kotane Research Institute (MKRI), represented the Institute at the KwaZulu-Natal Annual FinTech Conference Launch at the Durban ICC.

In his address, themed "Digitising Tourism: Unlocking KZN's Potential for the Tech-Savvy Traveller and Investor," he stressed the urgent need to integrate FinTech into the province's tourism strategy to position KZN as Africa's leading digital tourism hub.

He proposed innovations such as digital heritage routes, a province-wide tourism app with AR and multilingual guides, Smart Tourism Villages in rural areas, and a Provincial Digital Tourist Card. He also highlighted MKRI's plan to host a FinTech and cultural SMME incubator to empower entrepreneurs and promote inclusive growth.

Dr. Khonjelwayo emphasised that tourists now demand immersive, tech-driven experiences, while investors seek data-backed ecosystems. His key message: technology adoption is essential for KZN to compete globally, uplift communities, and transform the intersection of culture, tourism, and investment.

OSS & DDM Community Engagement

MKRI took part in a community engagement event hosted by KwaZulu-Natal Premier Thamsanqa Ntuli as part of the Operation Sukuma Sakhe programme and the District Development Model. The event focused on strengthening communication between government and communities to improve service delivery and quality of life.

MKRI showcased its research, development programmes, and consultation services at an exhibition booth, sharing materials and exploring collaboration opportunities with stakeholders.

Premier Ntuli, in his keynote, stressed the importance of outreach, accountability, and unity in addressing issues like crime, gender-based violence, and teenage pregnancy. The event highlighted MKRI's dedication to public engagement and supporting local development through knowledge-sharing and collaboration.

UPCOMING

- **Women in Investment - 29 August**
- **Mpofana Innovation Hub & Digital Centre - September**
- **Eita Radio Launch - September**



ARTICLE

Womens month

The Orchestra of Our Grandmothers



*Ms. Sue Singh
Development Specialist
Moses Kotane Research Institute*

“My grandmother never raised her voice, but her presence filled the room.” In the quiet corners of our memories, we find the women who shaped us, not with grand gestures, but with everyday grace. Our grandmothers, aunts, and mothers led lives steeped in values that were never written down, yet deeply understood: respect, humility, care, and unwavering strength.

They lived in harmony, like an orchestra, each woman playing her part, not for applause, but for the rhythm of life. In communal homes, they nurtured not only their own children but each other's, weaving

a tapestry of love, discipline, and shared responsibility. Their leadership was not loud, it was lived.

Today, in the rush of deadlines, digital noise, and individual pursuits, we risk forgetting the essence of that quiet power. But it is precisely this essence: empathy, resilience, and vision, that we must reclaim as women navigating modern workspaces and entrepreneurial paths.

- Empathy allows us to lead with understanding, to listen deeply, and to build trust.

- Resilience reminds us that strength is not in never falling, but in rising again with grace.

- Vision is the ability to see beyond the immediate, to imagine futures rooted in care and possibility.

These are ancestral gifts. And they are still within us.

This Women's Month, may we pause long enough to remember the quiet power that shaped us, the kind that lived in the way our grandmothers listened, nurtured, and held space. Leadership, in its truest form, is about how we show up for ourselves and for one another, with presence and purpose.

In boardrooms and strategy sessions, these ancestral values guide us still. Empathy fosters inclusive cultures, resilience drives innovation through adversity, and vision enables long-term thinking rooted in purpose. These qualities are not soft, they are strategic.

As we navigate leadership, there often comes a quiet and subtle moment when a woman feels the stirrings of something deeper, a longing for clarity, for connection, for courage. In these moments, the presence of a coach becomes a gentle companion on the journey, not to direct, but to reflect and to honour.

When embraced with intention, coaching becomes more than a conversation, it becomes a sacred space. A space where women are seen in their fullness, where their stories are held with care, and where their growth is nurtured with wisdom. It is a return to rhythm, to values, to voice.

And when this space is shared among women who are walking similar paths, it becomes a quiet revolution. A movement of healing, of building, of rising TOGETHER.



OPINION *piece*

Addressing youth unemployment: Reflections on EDTEA MEC keynote address at Moses Kotane Research Institute.



*Dr. Nonkululeko Zondo (PhD)
Research Specialist
Moses Kotane Research Institute*

The Moses Kotane Research Institute (MKRI), in partnership with the Durban University of Technology (DUT), recently hosted a Researchers' Breakfast under the theme "Solutions for Skills Mismatch and Youth Unemployment in KwaZulu-Natal." The dialogue brought together provincial leadership, government representatives, industry players, scholars, policymakers and practitioners to engage in dialogue addressing the issue of unemployment and factors that impede on the effective strategies for youth development in KZN.

Hon. Rev. M. Zondi, MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA), raised concern about the persistent gap between the skills young people have and what the labour market demands. He emphasised that development cannot be said to succeed if it does not include young people and that addressing youth unemployment must be a top priority on the provincial agenda. The issue of skills mismatch, while paramount, it must be dissected alongside broader structural barriers including the economy's inability to create enough jobs, stagnant economic growth and industrial decline, all of which have collectively weakened the economy's capacity to absorb the growing youth population. The MEC cautioned against reactive curriculum changes. He argued that these constant changes might cause more confusion than progress. Instead, suggested reviewing the current curriculum carefully to understand why some past efforts did not work.

He further cautioned against limiting success to university degrees, calling for more recognition of practical skills and alternative pathways. While academic credentials remain important, there should be equal recognition of other meaningful forms of work and contribution that do not require university degrees.

In closing, Rev. Zondi called for stronger collaboration between stakeholders. He urged all sectors to move beyond isolated efforts and work together on more joined-up, long-term solutions that can help create sustainable and inclusive employment for the youth across the province. He further emphasised the need to develop curricula that effectively integrate theory and practice and align with industry needs, in order to address the current challenges facing young people in KwaZulu-Natal.



OPINION *piece*

Deconstruction for Reconstruction: A Provincial Imperative for Public Sector Leadership



*Ms. Londeka Nxumalo
PhD Candidate.
Moses Kotane Research Institute.*

This opinion piece builds on the discussions and reflections shared by policymakers, the private sector, and academia at the Moses Kotane Research Institute (MKRI) Researchers Business Breakfast, held on July 3, 2025, in partnership with the Durban University of Technology (DUT). It explores how KwaZulu-Natal provincial government can address the persistent mismatch between curriculum and labour market demands through a deconstruction for reconstruction policy lens driven by forward-thinking, adaptiveness, and systemically grounded in change.

Public policy is reactionary, responding to intersectoral factors rather than addressing root causes. In the case of youth employment, government creates internships, learnerships and entrepreneurial opportunities in response to the 46.1% youth unemployment rate in the province. This addresses the symptom and not the root cause: lack of correlation between the curriculum and labour market demands. Dr Khonjelwayo, researcher, metaphorically argued for a profound, disruptive, and uncomfortable approach: deconstruction for reconstruction.

Deconstructing public policy is not to dismantle it recklessly but to critically examine the assumptions and structures underlying it, which were designed during a different era for different issues and no longer serve the increasingly diverse, structurally fragmented, digitally connected demands of intellectual societies. Deconstruction challenges the province to review the limitations of the existing system, while...

reconstruction demands rebuilding with evidence-based solutions. Provincial government departments and entities, Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Office of the Premier and Economic Regulatory Authority, adopt evidence-based research recommendations from MKRI to formulate and revise policy directives and programmes. These examples are the exception.

Public sector leaders' pursuit of youth employment requires a cultural shift from policy management to co-creation, advocacy coalition, and proactive and transformative approaches. Deconstruction for reconstruction is not about disruption for its own sake. It is about taking responsibility for systems that no longer serve the next generation and being brave enough to rebuild them. If strategic role players want to prepare youth for the labour market as either employers or employees, they must first fix the present system that is failing.



OPINION *piece*

Does collaboration matter?

Reflections from the MKRI-DUT Business Breakfast



*Ms. Siphosihle Mzileni (MSc)
Maritime Specialist
Moses Kotane Research Institute*

On the 3rd of July 2025, the Moses Kotane Research Institute (MKRI) and the Durban University of Technology (DUT) collaborated to host a high-impact business breakfast at MKRI's new premises in Durban. This strategic engagement was not an ordinary event; rather, it was a deliberate intervention to address two of South Africa's most pressing socio-economic issues: the persistent scourge of youth unemployment and the widening skills mismatch. The reflection in this opinion piece is centered around the transformative potential of multi-institutional partnerships.

From the early stages of planning to the final handshake, the collaboration between MKRI and DUT proved that siloed approaches are no longer fit for purpose in today's rapidly evolving economy.

The voice to answer the critical question is yes, collaboration not only matters, but is the government's institutional plan to advance the government of provincial unity's key drivers. A point when the MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Hon. Rev. Musa Zondi, stated: "We cannot allow a generation of bright minds to be wasted due to a lack of access or opportunity." The key question was who is responsible for the strategies to circumvent such a conundrum. I realised at that point that there is no single institution that can effectively address this challenge that is caused by skills mismatch, except if institutional collaboration is the order of the day, as the MEC outlined, "collaboration between academia and industry is therefore not optional; it is paramount".

The partnership between MKRI and DUT is a case study in strategic alignment. The intriguing part was not just the content of the discussions, but the intention behind the collaboration. The institutions shared a common vision and understood their complementary strengths. As someone involved in the coordination of the event, I observed firsthand how shared leadership and mutual respect create room for collective achievement. It is true that when you plan together, you win together.

In conclusion, collaboration is not merely a trendy term; it is the engine of systemic change. The MKRI-DUT business breakfast was more than a once-off event; it was a call to action, a blueprint for integrated problem-solving. If South Africa is to reverse youth unemployment trends and produce a globally competitive workforce, institutions must co-create solutions, not compete for the spotlight.