

An Online MBA Helps Turns a Copy Cat Entrepreneur into an Educational Leader

Ms. Nengarivo Teveli was born in Tanzania and quickly developed a love of learning. Initially, she focused her attention on the exciting world of electronics and telecommunications engineering and earned degrees in those fields from Dar-Es-Salaam Technical College. She first qualified as a technician and later as an engineer from the college. Because of her excellent preparation, Tanzania's Directorate of Civil Aviation was happy to employ her talents in providing navigational support for aircraft.

Navigational systems were increasingly operated by digital and computerized systems. Ms. Teveli took unpaid time off from work to learn computer technology through courses she paid for herself. This investment in gaining knowledge paid off in three years when she gained a position as a technical engineer with a local computer company. Within a year, she had tripled her salary and was learning new aspects of computing.

This computer-related training and experience qualified her to gain a position as an information technology assistant for World Vision Tanzania, the local chapter of the global development organization.

During this career progress Ms. Teveli became fascinated by the possibility of becoming a business entrepreneur. She launched ELLANS Tanzania Limited, a company that sold books and educational materials to primary and secondary school students. She had also tried a number of other entrepreneurial ventures including small scale vegetable gardening, poultry keeping, and owning a milling machine. These businesses failed to prosper because she mostly copied what others did locally and didn't know how to plan and create a more substantial enterprise.

With a full-time job and two active sons, how could she hope to accomplish more? Once again, Ms. Teveli turned to education as her answer. She decided that an MBA degree could make a difference and sought out the various online universities to see which one would best fit her needs. She discovered Rushmore University and enrolled there. With the patient support of her husband while she studied, Ms. Teveli engaged in her distance learning courses in the evenings and on weekends.

With time at a premium, she was glad to find that Rushmore allowed her flexibility in when she took her courses. She also found that the courses were tough and required her improve her writing.

But she had a dream, a dream that inspired her to take on this challenge and to persevere: She wanted to found a private school for high school students that would teach them about business by taking advantage of technology.

By the time she entered Rushmore, Ms. Teveli had already acquired 20 acres for this purpose and had begun improving the site with trees. Ultimately, she hoped to have 300 boarding students at the school she wanted to build.

Ms. Teveli used her MBA training to add skills that allowed her to understand the full extent of what an entrepreneur should be thinking about and working on. In several courses, Ms. Teveli wrote papers helping her flesh out the strategy for her school. By the time she graduated, she knew what needed to be done, and the school was soon operating on a shoestring basis while she continued to raise funds to finish building and staffing the school.

In the planning process, her concept for the school expanded. The school would start as a high school but would eventually expand into a private college as well for the graduates of its high school. Today, Lazeli Schools is multi-cultural, equal opportunity, private school for girls aged 14 and older. Later, the institution will be expanded to include boys.

Here is a statement of what Lazeli Schools aim to accomplish:

“We are committed to graduating well-rounded individuals, using an exceptional teaching approach on the national curriculum while ensuring our students are offered a rich extra-curricular program. We hope to strengthen the integration of information technology across the curriculum to place our students at the forefront of education. Indeed, we are committed to a safe school with a strong academic focus, providing a wide variety of challenging academic, artistic and athletic programs. Lazeli is also committed to providing not only a strong academic foundation but also a social forum which will help students to develop into mature, responsible, self confident youth ready to embrace any leadership role with poise.”

In the same way that education and a love of technology have transformed Ms. Teveli's life, she now wants to do the same for young people in Tanzania. Public education is very limited, and there are few excellent private schools.

Having built some initial classrooms, Lazeli Schools' planned expansion project is building a 100 student dormitory.

How did the MBA degree help develop and turn her dream into a reality?

Ms. Teveli says:

“All management knowledge gained from Rushmore University has been very instrumental in the entire school establishment and the courage to move ahead. This means that the strategic thinking in all planning, staffing, control and leadership of the schools has been ensured throughout the start-up stage and it will still be instrumental in any move that we want to take.”

Ms. Teveli continues to work with World Vision Tanzania as a Design Monitoring and Evaluation person, a position that was offered to her just two months after the completion of her Rushmore University studies. She has been able to bring many new perspectives to her work with that fine organization as well, especially when working on short- and long-term planning for development programs.

I was left wondering what Ms. Teveli will next decide to learn and how her new knowledge will help improve life for her family and those who want to build a better world in Tanzania.

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Donald W. Mitchell is a professor at Rushmore University. For more information about ways to engage in fruitful lifelong learning at Rushmore to increase your effectiveness, visit

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