



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Keynote Address by the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs
Angie Motshekga, MP, at the Seventh Global Campaign for
Education (GCE) held at Birchwood Hotel, Boksburg, South
Africa**

“The Future of Education Re-Imagined”

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Ladies and Gentlemen, Dumelang! Lotshani! Sanibonani!

It is a distinct honour and privilege to address the Seventh Global Campaign for Education (GCE) hosted here in our motherland.

The theme for this 7th World Assembly is “The Future of Education Re-Imagined”.

According to the GCE, the theme derives from the notion that the current education system is clearly not educating learners of the climate and ecological emergency for a world that is more socially just, equitable and embracing diversity in all its forms.

The current pandemic (COVID-19) has exacerbated many social inequalities in society and within schooling – that reform isn’t needed anymore.

What is needed is a complete and radical transformation of schooling and the wider education system, so education can be transformative once again.

According to a recent report from world bodies including the [World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, the UK government Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), USAID, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation] the COVID-19 has induced the worst shock to the education systems worldwide.

As a result of the worst shock to education and learning in recorded history, the multi-agency report says learning poverty has increased by a third in low- and middle-income countries.

This means the report concludes that an estimated 70 per cent of 10-year-olds cannot understand a simple written text.

Without urgent action, this global learning crisis will become a generational catastrophe.

Programme director; in South Africa, we measured COVID-19-related learning losses by comparing how much children learned in 2020 with how much they learned in a normal school year.

These measures indicate that between 50% and 75% of a typical year's worth of learning was lost during 2020 alone.

Our curriculum recovery strategy gained momentum since the cabinet rescinded all COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns.

On the other hand, we have developed and are implementing a comprehensive national strategy to deal head-on with the reading for the meaning conundrum.

We must ensure that all school-going children learn to read for meaning and comprehension by their tenth birthday as per the President's directive.

Programme director, according to the Centre for Development and Enterprise, South Africa has both a chronic shortage of mid-level technical skills and a crisis of youth unemployment.

The not-in-education, employment or training (Neets) phenomenon demonstrates the youth unemployment crisis.

We have 3.4-million Neets in the age group 15-24, compared to a total of about 1.6-million in universities and colleges.

To tackle the growth constraints exemplified by this shocking figure, the country needs an accessible and quality educational alternative to degree or diploma studies.

Programme director, it is our moral obligation not to add the growing number of young people without a basic education level.

In this regard, we have modernised our curriculum for 21st-century learners by developing the Framework for Vocational and Occupational or the Three Stream Model.

The Three Streams Model offers the Technical Vocational and Technical Occupational pathways added to the Academic pathway.

The curriculum shift towards the Three Stream Model owes its birth to the 2011 National Development Plan (NDP) policy's call for differentiated pathways in the basic education sector.

The NDP says the different parts of the education system should allow learners to take different pathways that offer high-quality learning opportunities.

The introduction of the Three Streams Model has led to a plan to incrementally establish Focus Schools (Schools of Specialisation), including Maths-Science and Technology Schools, Engineering, and Art Schools.

The Model is gaining momentum if one looks at learners' various national participation rates since its introduction in multiple subjects, including Civil Technology, Electrical Technology, and Mechanical Technology.

We have since developed a Three Stream Model Master Plan with 10 key points, and these are:

- Research to strengthen conceptualisation and rollout of the Three Stream Model;
- Technical Advisory Support in areas of need;
- Vocationally Oriented Curriculum for the General Education and Training (GET) Phase;
- Vocational, Technical and Occupational Curriculum for the Further Education and Training (FET) Phase;
- General Education Certificate (GEC) Dashboard and Plan;
- Teacher training and development;

- Advocacy, Change Management and Communication;
- Building partnerships;
- HR and Funding Mobilisation;
- Piloting the Three Stream Model (Vocational and Occupational Streams) in Schools.

We have established partnerships with the various Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs).

Other Partnerships include Ford SA, which donated 240 engines, and UNICEF provides technical input into the Coding and Robotics curriculum.

The Sasol Foundation is helping in the Technical Mathematics and Technical Sciences space.

Mobile Network Operators, such as MTN and Vodacom, assist with connectivity issues.

The European Union (EU) supports the development of sector policies and reforms, improving governance and service delivery as part of the Education for Employability (E4E) Project.

The grand idea is to offer school technical subjects that lead to apprenticeship, some competence in a specific area before looking for learnerships, post-school education and the world of work.

One can say the Three Stream Model is a silver bullet to the dearth of skills in our country.

We need more technical support, teacher training to offer our Three Stream Model curriculum and the actual investment in rolling out the Focus Schools and Schools of Specialisation.

We will finalise level 1-4 Curricula for Special Schools and revisit the Mathematics & Science Pedagogic Content requirements in Vocational and Occupational subjects.

Programme director; this year, the sector restarted the curriculum review process, which was delayed by the COVID crisis.

This process intends to build on the work to produce and implement the Recovery Framework 2021-2024.

We are conducting comprehensive curriculum strengthening that will take into cognisance learners' competencies they need to thrive socially and economically in a fast-changing world.

One fundamental approach in bringing this vision to life is to mainstream competencies, which include knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

We seek to deliberately and systematically integrate into the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) to ensure that learners exit the

system with relevant skills, values, attitudes, and mindsets for the future.

In addition to this priority, a range of complementary updates could be pursued under the banner of Curriculum Strengthening.

These include subject modernisation, content modernisation, adaptations to timetabling and infusing cross-cutting themes across the curriculum.

Programme director, it is true that there are challenges in basic education here and abroad.

However, it is not true that public education has failed to live up to its billing.

This isn't even a case of the glass half empty or half full.

Basic education in South Africa is a system on the rise.

For instance, a recent study has revealed the differences and similarities between South Africa's National Senior Certificate (NSC) and other countries.

Mafu Rakometsi, the chief executive officer of Umalusi – a council that sets and monitors standards for education in South Africa – said the new report aimed to research the standing of the NSC about similar qualifications from five other jurisdictions.

Addressing the portfolio committee on basic education on 13 September 2022, he said that the study compared South Africa's National Senior Certificate (NSC) to the following five other certificates:

1. The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB DP)
2. Kenyan Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE)
3. New South Wales (NSW) Higher School Certificate (HSC)
4. Zimbabwean Forms 5-6 advanced level (ZIMSEC)
5. Cambridge Assessment International Education (CIE)

Its primary findings were that South Africa's National Senior Certificate (NSC) has a longer duration and more compulsory subjects when compared to others – the NSC is a three-year certificate (Grade 10 – 12).

On top of that, according to Rakometsi, South Africa's National Senior Certificate (NSC) is the strictest in prescribing what is taught, in what sequence and within exactly what timeframe.

The SA's NSC's approach of giving guidance on the content and time allocated for each thing appears to be more prescriptive than all other comparator qualifications.

This approach appears to be motivated by the need to provide consistent student experiences rather than enabling teacher flexibility, according to Umalusi.

The report noted that South Africa's National Senior Certificate (NSC) had some indication of greater depth and complexity in terms of subject content.

However, when it came to mathematics – the report found less emphasis on the topics of mechanics and the use of technology.

The report found that SA's NSC is helicoidal in approach; this makes it unique in that each year the same topic is revisited but in greater depth and complexity, said Malusi.

The SA's NSC aligns most closely with teaching practices at a standard level; higher-level concepts are less emphasised compared to other programmes.

The SA's NSC does, however, have a higher studies standard when compared to the Kenyan certificate, the report found.

Rakometsi said that in terms of breadth – i.e., the number of knowledge elements in each subject – and depth – the level of deep investigation into concepts – the SA's NSC is appropriate for school-leaving qualifications.

Here's a breakdown of each subject's performance under the NSC:

English – is similar to other curricula and is comparable with international standards;

Geography – is effectively structured and designed;

Mathematics – shows less emphasis on mechanics topics and the use of technology and more emphasis on spatial skills such as interpreting graphs;

Life Sciences – South Africa is the only curriculum to cover the history of life on earth as one of its topics. The certificate focuses less on mathematical skills in life science compared to other jurisdictions;

Physical Science – is unique in that it combines physics and chemistry.

In mathematics, the international programmes demonstrated a greater emphasis on developing ICT skills as a learning outcome of mathematics.

As a country, Malusi urges us to adjust to acknowledge the use of technology in the field.

Programme director; according to pundits, the matric certificate or the National Senior Certificate, our only exit qualification from the basic education system, after 12 years of teaching and learning, has intrinsic value for both individuals and society.

For instance, research indicates that the labour market values the National Senior Certificate, and this positive attitude has remained the same in the post-apartheid era.

Researchers say that the premium to matriculation (National Senior Certificate) in earnings and the probability of finding a job has also remained positive.

There are economic returns to passing matric or grade 12, mainly because doing so provides access to further education and training, drastically improving one's labour market prospects.

Researchers insist the worsening labour market outcomes of matriculants (Grade 120 graduands) should not be confused with a negative valuation of the National Senior Certificate relative to fewer years of education.

According to Analytico, a data and earnings consultancy, people with a National Senior Certificate can expect to be paid almost double the salary of someone who has not completed high school.

The research showed that a tertiary qualification will significantly increase a person's earning potential.

According to the report: Someone in 2017 with a Grade 12 can expect to earn R4, 977 in their first job.

Someone with a bachelor's degree increases their starting salary to R8, 270 according to the 2017 figures.

Local research suggests that 38% of those with matric or National Senior Certificate as their highest qualification are employed, while 54% of those with an education level less than matric are unemployed.

Thus the higher your qualification, the less likely you are to be unemployed.

As education mandarins, let's work without ceasing to ensure that the larger numbers of children from low-income groups access quality public education to address inequality, poverty and unemployment.

As a last-ditch effort to disable patriarchy, we must focus on the girl child.

We know that girls who receive an education are less likely to marry young and more likely to lead healthy, productive lives.

They (girls) earn higher incomes, participate in the decisions that most affect them, and build better futures for themselves and their families.

According to a UNESCO report, girls' education strengthens economies and reduces inequality.

Similarly, education can also lead to more accurate health beliefs and knowledge, thus better lifestyle choices and skills and greater self-advocacy.

For instance, educated people are less likely to refuse life-saving medications such as vaccines.

In SA, the most vaccinated professional class are teachers.

The work we do in basic education has a multiplier effect.

A country's economy becomes more productive as the proportion of educated workers increases since educated workers can carry out tasks more efficiently that require literacy and critical thinking.

I hope this Seventh Global Campaign for Education (GCE) will map a future to achieve inclusivity in basic education while ensuring no one is left behind.

I thank you.