



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Opening Remarks by the Deputy Minister of Basic Education, Dr Reginah Mhaule, MP, at the 10th Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Education held at Skukuza Safari Lodge, Mpumalanga Province

13 July 2023

Programme Director,

Fellow Ministers and Deputy Ministers,

Senior Officials,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Distinguished guests,

Delivering the opening remarks at the 10th Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Education held here in South Africa is a rare honour and privilege.

We extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to all participants as we gather in our beloved country, the land of Nelson Mandela.

With its rich history and diverse culture, South Africa is honoured to host the 10th Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Education.

Today, we gather to address critical issues and collaborate on solutions.

One pressing challenge we face is the issue of out-of-school youth.

Despite progress made, approximately 263 million children worldwide lack access to education, and BRICS countries are not exempt, mainly due to the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In South Africa alone, the Quarterly Labour Force Survey reveals that 3.4 million young people aged 15-24 are not in employment, education, or training (NEET).

The majority of NEET youth are unemployed, discouraged job seekers, or inactive, with higher rates among young women, black youth, and those in rural areas.

These individuals have fallen through the cracks in our education and training systems.

We, as Education Ministries, must develop second-chance programmes that enhance completion rates and provide opportunities for those who didn't meet the requirements of secondary education.

The 10th Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Education offers a valuable platform to exchange experiences and insights on effective interventions for out-of-school youth.

Ladies and gentlemen, in our ever-changing world, labour markets undergo globalisation and intense competition for skills.

Governments face the challenge of managing these markets and addressing skill mismatches and shortages.

Employers struggle to find skilled workers, while school leavers and graduates struggle to find suitable job opportunities.

In our primary and secondary schooling systems, we must adapt to equip learners with the necessary skills.

The VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) world presents unprecedented challenges, requiring a broad range of competencies for success.

Education is crucial in enabling young individuals to fulfil their potential, think critically, and participate in society.

Let us share our experiences, successes, and challenges in equipping learners for the changing world.

South Africa has undergone a paradigm shift to ensure a seamless continuum of early learning from birth to school, viewing ECD not merely as a care function but as an integrated approach encompassing early learning, development, and care.

As of 2022, the responsibility for implementing ECD in South Africa has been entrusted to the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

Since assuming this responsibility, the DBE has diligently established systems to better resource and support ECD.

This entails developing a new service delivery model to provide all children in South Africa with access to a comprehensive range of services to support their growth and development.

Our vision involves a publicly planned and coordinated mixed provisioning model that empowers families and caregivers to access age and developmentally-appropriate services tailored to their children's needs.

For the success of this model, sufficient funding, robust inter-governmental collaboration, and a capable workforce are imperative.

We recognise that the challenges faced in ECD in South Africa are not unique, as they are shared by many developing countries worldwide.

In this regard, the opportunity to learn from our esteemed colleagues' best practices and experiences within the BRICS network is invaluable to us.

Ladies and gentlemen, the challenges ahead are immense, but our collective determination and shared knowledge will lead us to transformative solutions.

Let us embrace this opportunity to collaborate, learn, and work towards a future where no child is left behind, but all have access to quality education and the skills to thrive in an ever-changing world.

I thank you.