



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Opening Remarks by the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angelina Motshekga, during a virtual high-level dialogue at Africa's Education Leaders held on 24-27 May 2021

Chief Executive Officer of AfricanBrains

Honourable Ministers and Members of Parliament

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the South African Government, I wish to congratulate the organisers, AfricanBrains, for organising this high-level virtual event of Africa's Education Leaders.

We pledge our support in anticipation of a successful online meeting of Africa's Education Leaders.

This generation of leaders must lift Africa's education out of the historical doldrums of the colonial era and recent conundrums occasioned by the global pandemic, namely Covid-19.

The theme, “***Transformation of Education in Africa,***” is timely as we dialogue on lesson learnt in the inaugural year of Covid-19.

As the mandarins of this epoch, we are being called upon to reflect on the most significant risks facing education today and craft viable strategies so that no African learner is left behind.

It should be noted that South African has long recognised that investment in public education is a prerequisite for improving national economic prosperity.

We regard education as the greatest equaliser in a world bedevilled by rising poverty and stubborn inequality.

Our modern problems, including climate change, economic stagnation, and global pandemics such as Covid-19, require a more significant education investment in a new cohort of learners and teachers.

Luckily, our greatest asset in Africa is our youthful population. According to, statistics almost 60% of Africa's population is under the age of 25, making Africa the world's youngest continent.

We must leverage this youthful energy and exuberance to create a brighter future for our motherland.

Chairperson, as we know that the world of education evolves at breakneck speed, our job is to stay ahead of the curve, yet challenges abound.

It is clear that investment in Africa's education has not kept up to speed with changes occasioned by the emergence of the 4th Industrial Revolution.

Despite South Africa being considered the third-largest economy in our continent with modern telecommunications, banking and minerals, we are toddlers in the real world of digital innovation in education.

The successes we have registered in digital learning and roll-out of the ICTs are not in keeping with our stated ambitions and policy imperatives.

Clearly, the enormous investment in education has merely been used to plug the gaps of the apartheid divide, leaving gaping holes in funding new digital education innovation.

However, the lack of resources hasn't stopped us from setting the policy framework for the digital future.

As the country, South Africa, we continue to learn from our peers across the globe, including our motherland, Africa, about the best possible strategies to achieve meaningful roll-out of the ICTs.

As we know today, ICTs are a backbone of learning and teaching the new skills required for our ever changing world.

Put differently, due to globalisation and the development of knowledge society, ICTs are now central in developing 21st-century skills.

Many national governments and multinational organisations have created long-term strategic policies grounded on digital transformation in education.

As a country, the Government of South Africa had developed various policy documents that articulate how the country intended to implement digital transformation before the Covid-19 pandemic.

The critical policy reforms are as follows:

- **The National Development Plan 2012** is a long-term plan for development that provides a broad strategic framework to guide key choices and actions, including inclusive digital transformation.
- **The Public Service Corporate Governance of ICT Policy Framework 2012** promotes ICT governance as an integral part of corporate governance within the public sector in a standardised and coordinated manner.
- **The National Broadband Strategy and Policy 2013** is a policy imperative that outlines how the government will address the issues of digital readiness.

These include (institutional, environmental & regulatory reforms), digital development (infrastructure), digital future (open-access wireless broadband) and digital opportunity (content and entrepreneurship).

- **The Cyber Security Policy Framework 2015** deals with cyber security and calls for building capacity to establish partnerships to strengthen awareness, enforcement, and protect critical information.

- **The Integrated ICT Policy 2016** articulates how the government will deal with digital transformation issues, digital access, and digital inclusion.

The issue of transforming our education in a digital era received a shot in the arm when His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa featured education reforms in his State of the Nation Address delivered in 2019.

President Ramaphosa said: “In line with our Framework for Skills for a Changing World, we are expanding the training of both educators and learners to respond to emerging technologies including the internet of things, robotics and artificial intelligence.

He further announced the introduction of new subjects such as robotics, coding & data analytics to improve the uptake of digital skills required now and into the future.

I am happy to announce that the roll-out of robotics and coding as school subjects is underway.

Today’s learners must be taught skills that prepare them for the careers yet to be invented.

As learners immerse themselves in digital skills, research shows that they still need to master languages, including English, and subjects such as mathematics, science and engineering.

This multiplicity of learning areas provide a framework for successful learning in the classroom, and beyond ensuring that students can thrive in a world where change is constant and learning never stops.

We have repositioned the school curriculum for 21st-century education and skills development as part of South Africa's vision for 2030.

We have built into the school curriculum entrepreneurial skills in various subjects.

A Policy Framework on Entrepreneurship in Education was launched in January 2018.

We have already developed a Teacher Training Programme which upskills our teachers ahead of the entrepreneurship education roll-out.

Some 180 schools are currently used as pilot sites for entrepreneurship education.

In addition, our school curriculum offers what we call, Three Streams Model, with the Technical Vocational and Technical Occupational pathways added to the Academic pathway.

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, Schools of Engineering, and Art Schools.

The grand idea is to offer school subjects that lead to apprenticeship and learnerships in preparing the learners for the world of work.

In conclusion, it should be noted that South Africa invests in education to provide learners with the necessary skills and knowledge that will contribute not only to their personal growth but also to the country's long-term economic well-being.

Indeed, Covid-19 has slowed down the pace of the implementation of education reforms, but we are determined not to let down this generation of learners.

We would do whatever it takes to prepare our learners for the world that evolves at a breakneck speed.

We are ready.

I, thank you.