

Preparing children for the fourth industrial revolution

If South Africa is to play in the big league of education, it needs to work harder to improve efficiency in key subjects, especially in early schooling, this is according to President Cyril Ramaphosa.



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“We need to do more, work harder and establish greater system efficiencies in the first five years of schooling if we are to rise to the international standards prescribed as minimum benchmarks for reading comprehension, mathematics and science,” said President Ramaphosa.

The President made these remarks at the Basic Education Department’s Lekgotla in Boksburg on Monday.

The lekgotla is a platform for researchers and experts to present their findings on pertinent education issues affecting the country.

Delivering the keynote address, President Ramaphosa called on the basic education sector to focus on a number of critical areas which include:

- early childhood development;

- developing and implementing a comprehensive strategy on improving reading;
- promoting inclusivity, efficiency and quality;
- strengthening care and support for learners; and
- developing capabilities in data analytics, coding, the internet of things and block chain technology.

“It is at the basic level of education where we must inculcate and embed the culture of learning; where we must produce children who are obsessed with consuming existing knowledge and create a burning desire among them to produce new knowledge,” said President Ramaphosa.

The President said by preparing children to excel from an early age, especially in the priority areas of science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics, South Africa will better prepare them for the fourth industrial revolution.

To ensure that South Africa is on the right path, President Ramaphosa emphasised the need for an even distribution of quality teachers across the country.

“Getting quality teacher development to be more equitably distributed across the system is something that will not happen automatically or by accident.

“It needs careful and deliberate planning, and a proper sense of the various incentives – both financial and non-financial – which influence the choices teachers make,” he said.

President Ramaphosa also called on the basic education sector to promote flexible learning pathways that ease the transition between all educational levels.

These include early childhood development, primary and secondary education, technical-vocational and technical-occupational education and training, as well as higher education and training.

The President highlighted a General Education Certificate – or GEC – at a level below Grade 12 as one change which is likely to greatly facilitate the pathways between schools and colleges.

“Apart from facilitating the transition from school to college, a GEC would address the current problem of hundreds of thousands of young people leaving education completely each year, with no national qualification with which to navigate the labour market,” said the President.

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