

Digital learning is required now, not in the future - Motshekga

The Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated that digital learning is required now, not in the future, says Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga.



Image source: Getty Images

Delivering closing remarks at the end of the three-day Basic Education Sector Lekgotla held at Emperors Palace in Kempton Park, Motshekga said there is a need to provide all learners with the necessary assistive devices, increased human resources and ICTs for learning, teaching, and school management.

“Commission three on ICT, Digitisation, e-Education Management, Distance Learning, and Online Schools has developed a SMART Action Plan, which I fully support. As a department, we must spare neither courage nor expense in leading the finalisation of the ICT in Education Strategy,” Motshekga said on Friday.

The Minister emphasised that before this term of office comes to an end, every teacher must be in possession of a laptop provided by the department.

As mandated by the President, every child must have learning materials on a digital device.

“In the meantime, we must speed up the digitalisation of the Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM) in all subjects and grades. As part of the architecture, the design of online programmes must be available in sign language,” Motshekga said.

She added that there must be wall-to-wall connectivity and data availability as recommended by the commission in all basic education offices throughout the country.

Advocating for children with disabilities

The Minister has called on the education sector to not tire in advocating throughout society for learners with disabilities not to be stigmatised and harassed.

“All mainstream schools must be revamped to be friendly to learners with disabilities. I hope our communications team takes up this advocacy campaign to end the stigma and mainstream all our learners,” Motshekga said.

In addition, the sector must ensure that there is early intervention to support learners with learning disabilities as soon as they start Grade R.

“As part of fighting to end the stigma, we must all drive the message that young people with disabilities who drop out must return to schools or those who are not yet enrolled to do so.”

Strengthening the curriculum

As suggested, Motshekga said the sector must embark on a curriculum strengthening process to equip learners with 21st-century skills and facilitate a more efficient transition from school to work.

The strengthened curriculum must explicitly state the knowledge, skills, and competencies to be achieved.

“The curriculum must be inclusive to all, and schools must be appropriately resourced to teach 21st-century skills.

“Thus the commission is correct on the need for a curriculum redesign to highlight the skills and competencies to be achieved.

Motshekga said that a task team to look at how knowledge, skills and competencies can be explicitly infused or re-packaged in Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) to equip learners' transition from school to work is urgently required.

She said they must reconsider the assessment regime in all grades to align with competency and skills assessment instead of content and knowledge assessment.

“In the meantime, we must steam ahead with a slick national advocacy campaign to explain and entice young people to engage and choose correctly from our Three Stream Model,” the minister said.

Rotational learning

Motshekga said that apart from the existing Covid-19 recovery plans, including the trimmed curriculum grades, “it is time to take the bulls by its horns.”

Referencing Prof Martin Gustafsson's presentation, Motshekga said: “We must urgently end rotational learning because some schools' 22% learning losses were primarily driven by rotational learning.”

She said there is a need to tighten up the system, as there are years of investment that go into these systems, such as the South African Administration and Management System (SA-SAMS) and the Learner Unit Record Information and Tracking System (LURITS).

“We must also, as he said, align the enrolment and attendance data. Finally, we must increase learning time by providing extra classes, attending school every day and giving learners more homework,” she said.

The Minister extended her gratitude to all stakeholders, speakers, commissions and her office for the work done so far.

The annual national event brought together provincial education departments, teacher unions, school governing body organisations, learner organisations, non-governmental organisations, academics, international guest speakers and other stakeholders.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>