

# President Jacob Zuma: Launch of Operation Phakisa: ICT in Education

2 Oct 2015

## **Address by President Jacob Zuma at the launch of Operation Phakisa: ICT in Education, Boksburg, Gauteng**

Premier of Gauteng, Mr David Makhura,  
The Minister of Basic Education, Ms Angie Motshekga,  
The Minister in the Presidency for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Mr Jeff Radebe,  
Minister of Telecommunications and Postal Services, Dr Siyabonga Cwele,  
All Ministers and Deputy Ministers present,  
Deputy Minister of Basic Education Mr Enver Surty,  
MECs,  
Directors-General, CEOs of state entities and all senior officials,  
All representatives of the education sector,  
Lab organisers, facilitators and participants,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning to you all.

In July last year I launched the Operation Phakisa Presidential Programme, a big fast results methodology to help us improve performance in various sectors.

We began the programme with the launch of the Ocean Economy Phakisa segment, with the aim of unlocking the potential of our oceans to boost economic growth and create jobs. The leader of the Ocean Economy Phakisa segment is the Minister of Environmental Affairs, Ms Edna Molewa and it includes a number of departments.

We followed through with Operation Phakisa Health, aimed at developing an ideal clinic, which is led by the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledo who convenes all departments in this segment.

Plans are afoot to launch Operation Phakisa Mining soon, which is led by the Minister of Mineral Resources, Mr Mosebenzi Zwane, convening all departments in this segment.

The Minister for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation in the Presidency, Mr Jeff Radebe and his department are responsible for the overall management of the Phakisa methodology and the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of this innovative programme. We learned this methodology from the Malaysians and were impressed with how it enabled them to fast-track economic growth.

Today I am pleased to launch the plans emanating from the Operation Phakisa Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Education Laboratory today, a programme that is led by the Minister of Basic Education, Ms Angie Motshekga who convenes the partner departments.

Over the past four weeks, 120 participants comprising experts and officials from the national and provincial Departments of Basic Education and other government departments, labour, academia and private sector have engaged in a problem-solving methodology that unravels the challenges in the

system and seeks to develop as well as fast-track the national roll-out of ICTs in the basic education sector.

This Operation Phakisa ICT in Education Lab marks an overdue turning point in our quest to transform teaching and learning through the appropriate use of ICTs as envisioned by the 2004 White Paper on E-education.

The vision of the 2004 White paper was and still is to transform learning and teaching through ICTs and to produce ICT capable learners.

This capability is defined as the ability to use ICTs confidently and creatively to help develop the skills and knowledge needed to achieve personal goals and to be full participants in the global community.

The basic education sector has made strides in leveraging ICTs to strengthen teaching, learning and administration of the education system.

The advancements made, thus far, can be attributed largely to the partnership between government, private sector, social partners and NGO sector, by providing schools with ICT resources coupled with relevant teacher training. It is through such partnerships that we have achieved such milestones.

Firstly, we have provided about 92% of our schools with at least one computer for administrative purposes and with 28% of schools using computers or other devices to enhance teaching and learning;

Forty nine percent of our schools are reported to have access to connectivity;

We have established a dedicated educational television channel which is currently broadcasting lessons benefiting both teachers and learners alike.

To acknowledge and motivate innovative teachers who have taken the leap to incorporate ICTs into their classrooms, the Annual National Teacher Awards now includes an ICT in Education category.

The Thutong Portal, the educational electronic content repository of the Department of Basic Education, has been in existence for more than ten years and we have started the process of using the Cloud Technology by developing our own Department of Basic Education Cloud.

Through the assistance of the Vodacom Foundation, more than 80 teacher centres, including nine state-of-the-art information communication technology resource centres, have been established across all provinces and we are in the process of setting up more of the same.

These are all notable achievements. However, we must admit that we have not taken full advantage and exploited the potential that ICTs can bring in assisting us to attain educational outcomes in this country. ICTs have huge benefits to bring into the teaching and learning spaces.

In 2009, the National Treasury and the Department of Basic Education commissioned the Feasibility Study for e-Education Initiatives to determine whether to adopt and invest in the implementation of ICTs in the sector.

A comprehensive analysis of educational needs was conducted and the outcome of the analysis strongly argued in favour of investing in the e-Education Initiative to assist the Basic Education sector to deliver its core services and adapt to the changing needs of its primary clients.

It is, however, unfortunate that the pace of providing technology and connectivity and then integrating these into teaching and learning has been slow and inadequate.

The process has been characterised by unsustainable and fragmented ICT initiatives which lacked centralised coordination, focus and measured impact.

This is reflected in the varying levels of ICT implementation among provinces.

The Operation Phakisa ICT in Education lab worked towards finding ways to accelerate ICT provisioning to all schools, but more importantly, the lab worked with the understanding that devices alone cannot improve learning.

It is the manner in which these tools support educational training practices such as collaborative learning and the access and evaluation of information.

We have learnt valuable lessons from large scale provincial and national ICT deployments, such as the Gauteng Online project, the Western Cape Khanya Project, and the current school connectivity project through the Universal Services and Access Obligation (USAO), to name but a few.

These projects provide some insight into the key challenges that have limited the provision of ICT access and ICT integration in schools.

Building on these experiences, we now emerge from the Operation Phakisa lab with concrete ways in which we can leverage the possibilities for ICTs in Education.

For learners, they will be able to access educational resources to successfully meet the requirements of the curriculum.

It is the aspiration of the lab, that our learners leave the schooling system as ethical, discerning, and responsible users of information, as well as being ICT capable so as to make meaningful contributions to society.

In addition, learners with special needs and their teachers will be afforded access to specialised resources and to networks of specialist support.

For teachers, they will be able to access the resources necessary to create effective learning opportunities for all learners.

For teachers' own personal development, they will be able to engage in online programmes to enhance skills and strengthen their content knowledge for the delivery of the curriculum.

An online approach will afford teachers the ability to collaborate with their communities of practice.

The intended outcome is that the ICTs will reduce non-core teaching responsibilities of teachers and renew their passion for their profession.

For school administrators, ICTs will strengthen the collection of school data through rapid, reliable, and transparent flows of information between national, provincial, district and school levels.

Accurate and timely information can facilitate effective management and operation of the education system.

Moreover, the flexible access to human resource and financial information will enable efficient reporting and data-driven decision-making.

Today we are marking and welcoming the good progress made.

We emerge from the Operation Phakisa ICT in Education lab with a national ICT implementation plan for the sector, which speaks to the ICT needs of the different school contexts and is flexible enough to accommodate the ever evolving 21st century classroom models.

The Department of Basic Education will continue to work closely with departments such as Department of Telecommunications and Postal Services, Department of Communications, Department of Higher Education and training and government entities and regulatory bodies in the ICT sector to align the national ICT in Education rollout in a coordinated and accelerated manner.

Additionally, we call on the private sector and NGO partners to support the plans for the lab and to assist the country in ensuring the sustainability of the e-education initiatives.

This programme is a most effective way of implementing the objectives outlined in the National Development Plan.

As said, Operation Phakisa is a Presidential programme which I lead personally. I will meet with the Ministers leading the various Phakisa segments regularly to receive briefings because we need to succeed and see results.

The education teams have done well thus far. I would like to thank all lab participants for the commitment that you have shown.

We know that you have worked long hours and over weekends.

We have already taken a giant leap forward with this process. There is no need to fear the unknown and there is no need to play small.

Let me leave you with these wise words from the late President uTata Nelson Mandela:

"There is no passion to be found playing small - in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living."

As the saying goes - Go big or Go Home! Let us go all the way to make the future of our children brighter.

Let us go all the way to improve our education and training system. The future of our country depends on it.

Together, through our words and deeds we do indeed Take South Africa Forward.

I thank you.