

Why SA education needs to evolve to survive the digital era

The fourth industrial revolution presents many career opportunities, but South Africa's education system will need to be transformed if we are to meet them and remain relevant in the digital world, believes Sipho Pityana, President of Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) and Chairman of AngloGold Ashanti.



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“Approximately 41% of all of our job activity in South Africa is acceptable to automation so we have to shift the focus from seeing technology not as a threat but as opportunities. We are not having sufficient conversations amongst ourselves about the social dynamics of the digital revolution.” Pityana was speaking at a Leadership Summit hosted at the University of Stellenbosch Business School (USB), in partnership with the MICS Foundation recently.

“We have to look at the disruptions that will take place as a result of the fourth industrial, and change our education system so that we train suitably skilled workers,” he says.

The summit focused on leadership in the new age and the other speakers were Stafford Masie, tech entrepreneur and former CEO of Google sub-Saharan Africa, Brand Pretorius, former CEO of McCarthy Holdings, Thabile Wonci, managing director of Black Management Forum, and Francois van Niekerk, founder of Mergon Group and co-founder of the Atterbury Property Group.

Pityana says digital technology is transforming politics, businesses, economies and society, as well as our day-to-day lives: “We are being called upon to demonstrate digital leadership and contribute to the transition toward a knowledge society.

“We are currently battling with low levels of numerous and technology literacy. Shortcomings that make many of our people unemployable in a growing economy. In order to move forward we need to accelerate the acquisition of science, technology, mathematics and information and communication skills to match the way we collaborate and work in the fourth industrial revolution.”

Masie also highlighted the importance of adapting to technology and that businesses should be a business of ‘right now’.

“We need to reimagine the way we do business. People want streams of information in real time. There is no such thing as tech companies anymore – everyone is working in tech companies these days,” he says.

He added that artificial intelligence (AI) allows organisations to give people on the outside of the organisations super powers “by being able to do things that previously wasn’t possible”. “Our job is not to do more with less, but to do more with more,” he says.

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