

# Education needs a sustainable funding model

By [Professor Owen Skae](#)

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SA should prioritise education right now and give it all the commitment, input, expertise and finances it needs. It includes all education - early childhood development, primary, secondary school and higher education.



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The many issues we are focusing on are diverting attention and energy from the educational crisis we are facing.

If our ministers of education reported to Parliament on the real progress made at all levels of education, we would have something important to celebrate. We would know we are doing something to change the future of all young people in SA.

Why, 22 years after 1994, is education still where it is? Why are so many pupils, students, teachers, principals, lecturers and researchers dissatisfied, frightened and apprehensive about education when it is the single most sacrosanct institutional cornerstone? Why are there delays in resolving issues as critical as fees for higher education or in developing or recruiting maths and science teachers?

We cannot tackle the economy, unemployment and inequality without first attending to education.

Nobel-prize winning economist and professor at Columbia University Joseph Stiglitz says we keep looking to standard economics for the answers when it has already failed us.

It has led to increased unemployment and inequality, and these two factors kill economies.

He refers to the "rising tide" economic theory that if you give the appropriate resources to the wealthy or ruling echelons, the benefits will trickle down to everyone. But it has not happened, as he explains: "The rising tide has only lifted the large yachts, while many of the smaller boats have been dashed on the rocks."

He says: "This is partly because the extraordinary growth in top incomes has coincided with an economic slowdown, and, most strikingly, executive compensation has displayed substantial positive growth even during periods when stock market values decreased."

All the while, the inequality and unemployment gaps are widening, and, instead of tackling them head on with intellectual honesty and a sense of urgency, those in positions of power and authority in our country are watching on as inequality, unemployment and educational crises cause increasingly violent sociopolitical and economic instability.

We have seen this playing out in universities and schools amid a lack of government leadership, and an apparent amnesia about where education in this country came from and where it needs to be.

All this and more was raised during the second Archbishop Thabo Makgoba Development Trust annual lecture on valuesbased leadership at Rhodes University earlier in September. Former president Kgalema Motlanthe quoted poet Keorapetse Kgositse: "In a situation of oppression, you are either a tool of oppression or an instrument of liberation."

Motlanthe said Kgositse wrote "pastpresentfuture" as one word because the past continues to cast a shadow on the present unless we create a better future for all.

The barometer of our current commitment to creating a better future for all, as described in our Constitution, is measured by the lived experience of communities.

Motlanthe questioned what it says about our society when education in many black and coloured communities is degenerating. He questioned how anyone in the government, presumably including himself, could let this happen when it is well-known what so-called Bantu Education did to most South Africans after the Nationalists introduced it in 1954.

National Party prime minister Hendrik Verwoerd had decreed that teachers at black schools had to be trained to produce children who would not aspire to any station in life above specific levels of labour. The system ensured teachers in black schools were very poor at mathematics and science.

Motlanthe added of all the vices and excesses of the apartheid system, Bantu education was the worst. He calls it "the most serious crime of apartheid".

It is why pastpresentfuture still prevails. We must, with conviction and action, split these words.

It can be done. Imagine the lived reality of scholars and students studying in a conducive, inspiring environment.

With all the modern technology and means of communication available, it is possible to fast-track the teaching and learning environment in all schools. Creative partnerships, logistics and funding models can be found.

Motlanthe warns: "For as long as basic education is weak, the economy of this country will forever remain weak."

And as long as higher education is facing an unsustainable funding model, the economic growth and social stability we desire will be a pipe dream.

Education is the investment that will drive new energy solutions, deliver services, educate future generations, and give us a safe and prosperous country.

*Source: Business Day*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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