

# Call for school to teach coding and robotics

Former FirstRand CEO Sizwe Nxasana has issued a warning on SA's basic education: "Disrupt or be disrupted."



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Coding and robotics must become part of the basic education curriculum if SA wanted to contribute to the fourth industrial revolution, said Nxasana, who is chairman of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme.

Lack of infrastructure and expensive data remained barriers, he said at the two-day Singularity University SA summit in Johannesburg hosted with Standard Bank, global partner Deloitte and strategic partners MTN and SAP.

"We need to think about how we train people to acquire skills and become active in the fourth industrial revolution."

Education was hampered by a lack of universal access to the internet, Nxasana said.

The government has initiated a second inquiry into cellphone data costs after a campaign drew attention to the manner in which consumers are charged.

Valter Ado, chief digital and innovation officer at Deloitte Africa, agreed with Nxasana.

"If we get our kids to start understanding embracing this [coding and programming], they will ... pick it up," Ado said.

The basics of work in the future were going to be about data and the ability to develop smart algorithms, which children in some private schools were already learning to do.

Internet access in schools had been universally achieved in the majority of European and other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, a report by the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development and the International Telecommunication Union showed.

Connectivity remained an issue in most developing countries and was still below 10% in countries from all developing regions including Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and Africa, it said.

Nicholas Haan, director of global grand challenges and team project leader at Singularity University, also said price and connectivity continued to be limiting factors in providing access to connectivity. The democratisation of technology meant that anyone, anywhere could gain access and anyone could be an innovator.

However, unless Africa dealt with corruption "it would always swim upstream" with development and exponential technology, he said.

SA's relative rule of law, financial capital, education institutions and a vibrant banking sector incentivised investment into technology, Haan said.

Intellectual property regulation was a hindrance and government policy could at times deter entrepreneurial development that would potentially benefit education and health.

"The answer lies in open source. Elon Musk opensourced Tesla and allowed entrepreneurs to access his information to replicate that product," he said.

**Source:** *Business Day*

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