

RETHINKING EDUCATION FOR A DYNAMIC WORLD

Education systems have long been positioned to provide individuals with the skills, knowledge and competencies society needs. However, as society in the 21st century is characterised by sweeping change happening every day, there is a need to rethink (1) the type of knowledge and competencies learners are leaving school with and (2) whether the schooling system is preparing learners with the tools they need to thrive in an ever-changing world.

In the South African context, this means crystallising 21st-century skills like problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication (amongst others) in the education system. While many of these skills are already present in the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy statement, they need to be translated equitably into every classroom to better prepare learners for their future.

The concept of breadth of skills is not new - societies throughout history have relied on a range of skills to navigate challenges and foster progress,

“critical thinking and problem-solving have been components of human progress throughout history, from the development of early tools to agricultural advancements, to the invention of vaccines, to land and sea exploration”².

While conversations around the importance of breadth of skills have long been unfolding, the rapid change that has characterized this century calls for increased urgency in equipping learners with these skills so that they can thrive in an ever-changing world.

It should be said that implementing 21st-century skills certainly does not take attention or importance away from building core skills such as literacy and numeracy. Rather, these can all be seen as part and parcel of the same toolkit of essential skills that learners need to develop holistically.

Equipping learners with a broad range of skills will better prepare them to meet the challenges and opportunities they face at home, school, and in the world at large, enabling them to thrive and navigate the increasingly complex and volatile world we live in.



“How can we prepare students for jobs that have not yet been created, to tackle societal challenges that we cannot yet imagine, and to use technologies that have not yet been invented? How can we equip them to thrive in an interconnected world where they need to understand and appreciate different perspectives and worldviews, interact respectfully with others, and take responsible action toward sustainability and collective well-being?”¹

1 OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030

2 Rotherham & Willingham (2010, p.17)