

Launch of the Cyberlabs

Keynote Address: MEC Zolile Monakali

Kimberley Technical High School

Wednesday, 9 February 2022

Members of the Executive Council;

Head of Department: Ms Moira Marais;

Senior Managers and Departmental Officials present;

Representatives from the Gamagara Development Trust (Adv Dennis Dituku and Edukite (Mr Vineet Ladia);

Educators and Learners from Kimberley Technical High School;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Distinguished guests;

Program Director

Today is a historical milestone for the Province as we introduce a first of its kind and state of the art technology in the education sector. Let me first express my sincere gratitude to the Department, our service providers, the Gamagara Development Trust and Edukite for realising this dream and making it happen. We have come a long way, and we have finally reached the point to introduce this technology to our schools, educators and learners.

I am sure that you are all aware that there is a tremendous burden on our education system, to prepare learners adequately for their future, given the fact that the labour market increasingly speaks to a technology driven economy in which learners require proficiency in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics (STEAM) and Digital Literacy.

The gravity of our problems was illustrated as early as 2018, in a World Economic Forum Report, which highlights the fact that sub-Saharan Africa only has 6% of highly skilled employable people in comparison to the global average of 24%. The same 2018 report, furthermore predicts that jobs and skills brought about by the Fourth Industrial

Revolution, would be completely different, as 39 % of the core skills required across occupations in South Africa alone, will be completely different in 2020.

The African Development Bank also estimates that 50% of youth in Africa will be unemployed or economically inactive by 2025, if no provision is made to provide them with the necessary opportunities and learning experiences which equip them with the knowledge, skills and competencies required in a technology driven labour market.

You will agree that our situation is dire already, as the country recorded a total of 7,82 million unemployed people in the second quarter of 2021, compared to the 7,24 million unemployed in the previous quarter.

Although the Covid-19 Pandemic and austerity measures are deemed to be contributors to the unemployment numbers, the development of skills and competencies, is key to growth and development. It therefore remains imperative that education provisioning is responsive and relevant, so that we can stem the tide of growing unemployment and hopelessness amongst our youth.

Today, I am inspired and excited to officially open one of the ten (10) Cyberlabs which the Northern Cape Department of Education has delivered to the Province, in our quest of harnessing and sharpening the knowledge, skills and competencies, required by the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

These Cyberlabs are unique as they house four zones which represent the economic drivers of our Province, namely, Mining, Agriculture, Astronomy and Solar Energy.

Learners will be able to navigate various dimensions of each of these zones, via giant multi-touch high resolution screens, watch 3D animations, take virtual tours and engage with interactive content and simulations, giving them continues career guidance and stimulation for innovation and life-long learning.

The Cyberlabs are spaces designed for learners providing them with explorative hardware and software which are exciting and meaningful. The Cyberlabs also houses augmented reality posters, digital tablets and virtual reality headsets which enables learners to create and participate in a learning environment with a sense of presence.

It has the power to turn abstract concepts into visual and experiential learning experiences without learners having to leave the Cyberlab. The software engages the senses and allows experiential learning that would be difficult to duplicate within the confines of a normal classroom. It should be mentioned that the software the Cyberlabs are equipped with, completely functions offline, meaning that educators and learners will have access to all electronic learning material without any data or internet access requirements. All 10 Cyberlabs are operating completely offline at a zero data cost to the Department.

Along with the technology, the labs also provide some carefully designed study material. These are applications which have 3D videos and interactive software specifically designed to demonstrate various aspects of the 4 zones.

The labs also offer Mathematics and Science content specifically developed for the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). The exciting overall learning experiences which these stimulating spaces provide seem immense, as opportunities for reflection and construction of new knowledge, which it provides, undoubtedly contribute to innovation and development and will definitely lead to realising the full potential of our learners.

An added advantage is that these experiences become memorable as learners develop self-directed learning skills, where they learn to identify what they need to learn, apply the information at hand and solve problems. Learners now have access to digital tools and technology, which will undoubtedly sharpen problem solving and critical thinking skills which are the hallmarks of a digitally literate and developed society.

In addition, the curriculum for coding and robotics has been completed and the education system across the country is currently preparing to implement these exciting new subjects.

In our introduce digitisation and technology we construction 10 Cyberlabs at different schools across the Province in all 5 Districts. The construction is completed and educators and learners will take full use of these Cyberlab facilities as from today. The schools are listed as follow:

- ✓ Saul Damon High School – Upington
- ✓ Namaqualand High School - Springbok
- ✓ Kimberley Technical High School – Kimberley
- ✓ Itotleng High School- Bendel
- ✓ Galaletsang High School - Kuruman
- ✓ Kuilville High School - Danielskuil
- ✓ Pitso Jantjie High School - Manyeding
- ✓ Banksdrift High School- Hartswater
- ✓ Noupoot Combined School - Noupoot
- ✓ Port Nolloth High School – Port Nolloth

Our learners and teachers at these 10 schools where the Cyberlabs are housed will be at an advantage as the space also offers resources to kick-start these programmes, so that our learners develop the skills base for automation which are increasingly needed in a world where the labour market focuses on competencies such as efficiency and productivity.

It is also my observation that these rich imaginative Cyberlabs do not only provide a space for academic learning, but also fosters interactive collaborative learning where teachers and children depend and trust one another, whilst finding solutions to problems.

Besides also developing key competencies such as a sense of precision, accuracy and efficiency during these collaborative learning experiences, the labs provide for the promotion of co-operation, teamwork, respect and patience, which you will agree are important life-skills in every aspect of life.

Indeed ladies and gentlemen, our learners will experience the positive feelings of accomplishment when mastering new knowledge and skills using these tools, giving them a sense of confidence as they would want to learn even more, without realising that they are learning.

Indeed, Ladies and gentlemen! The possibilities are endless. The Cyberlabs promises engaging and immersive learning experiences. We will continue to engage with our stakeholders to pursue similar initiatives in order to realise the vision of a modern, growing and successful Province.

I now invite you to partake in this rich, exciting world, as we too will be engaged in growing our own knowledge, skills and competencies.

I thank you!
