

National Education Summit Declaration- 20 April 2026

1. INTRODUCTION.

We, the participants of the National Education Summit convened by the Inside Education Foundation on 20 April 2026, under the theme: “Fixing the Education and Skills Pipeline: From Early Childhood to Transformative Livelihoods,” bring together stakeholders from government, industry, academia, and civil society to reflect on the state of South Africa’s education and skills development system and to identify practical actions required to strengthen it.

The Summit recognises the significant progress made in expanding access to education, while acknowledging the urgent need to improve quality, relevance, and alignment with economic opportunities.

The discussions were structured around three key pillars:

1. *Early Childhood Development (ECD)*
2. *Entrepreneurship Education*
3. *Vocational and Technical Pathways*

These deliberations were underpinned by a shared commitment to strengthening the link between education, skills development, and sustainable livelihoods.

2. KEY THEMATIC DECLARATIONS

2.1 Early Childhood Development:

The Summit affirms that Early Childhood Development is foundational to lifelong learning and improved educational outcomes. The Summit calls for:

- The progressive expansion of access to quality ECD services, particularly in underserved communities
- Strengthened investment in the ECD workforce, infrastructure, and leadership development
- Enhanced focus on foundational literacy and numeracy outcomes- Greater parental and community involvement in early learning, supported through accessible resources and awareness initiatives
- Improved monitoring and support during the first 1,000 days of a child's development
- A review of funding models to include targeted support for quality improvement, mentorship, and practitioner development.

2.2 Entrepreneurship Education

The Summit recognises the importance of entrepreneurship education in developing the cognitive, practical, and innovative capabilities required for economic participation. The Summit calls for:- Integration of entrepreneurial competencies across all levels of education, beginning from early learning- A shift towards more practical and experiential approaches to entrepreneurship learning- Strengthened partnerships between education institutions, the private sector, and SMMEs to provide early exposure to enterprise development- Expanded access to mentorship, financial literacy, and enterprise support programmes- Increased involvement of higher education institutions in developing entrepreneurial capabilities

2.3 Vocational and Technical Pathways

The Summit affirms the critical role of vocational and technical education in driving inclusive economic growth and addressing skills shortages.

The Summit calls for:

- Repositioning TVET colleges as institutions of choice, including curriculum reform, infrastructure development, and lecturer and leadership capacity building
- Strengthened partnerships between TVET colleges, industry, and SETAs to improve curriculum relevance and employability outcomes
- Expanded work-integrated learning opportunities to bridge the gap between education and the workplace- Improved articulation pathways between TVET colleges and universities
- A review of funding and governance models to enhance efficiency, responsiveness, and institutional performance.

3. CROSS-CUTTING RESOLUTIONS

The Summit emphasises the need for:

- Stronger alignment across the education and skills development pipeline, ensuring coherence from early learning through to employment and entrepreneurship
- A renewed focus on implementation and execution of existing policies and strategies, supported by measurable outcomes and monitoring mechanisms
- Shared accountability among government, the private sector, and civil society in delivering on education and skills development priorities
- Strengthened public-private partnerships to support innovation, resource mobilisation, and skills development initiatives
- Targeted interventions to improve youth employability, particularly for young people not in employment, education, or training (NEETs)
- Integration of digital and technological competencies across all levels of education, including the effective use of digital tools for teaching and learning.

4. CONCLUSION

The Summit recognises that improvements in education and skills development must be complemented by broader economic growth and job creation to effectively address inequality, poverty, and unemployment. Participants commit to advancing the outcomes of this Summit through continued engagement, partnership, and the development of practical implementation mechanisms.

Adopted on 20 April 2026

National Education Summit