

SZ Eswatini: Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

Segment Focus

This segment features **Welcome Mhlanga** (President of the Eswatini Principals Association & Africa Representative for the International Confederation of Principals), discussing the potential and constraints facing African learners, the digital divide, and the systemic shift toward Competency-Based Education (CBE).

The Potential and Constraints of African Learners

- **High Potential:** African learners are capable of matching counterparts anywhere in the world, as demonstrated by their confidence and insight at international conventions.
 - **Resource Constraints:** The primary barriers are not ability, but a lack of resources, finances, and capacity.
 - **Infrastructure Gaps:** Geographical constraints mean some rural areas are inaccessible, leading to significant disparities between well-resourced urban schools and disadvantaged rural schools.
-

AI and Technology: A "Dream" vs. Reality

- **Digital Divide:** For many communities, AI and advanced ICTs are "still a dream" or viewed as foreign concepts.
 - **Teacher vs. Student Gap:** While students are increasingly familiar with AI (often using it for assignments), many "traditional" teachers fear technology or lack the training to use it, risking irrelevance.
 - **Policy Vacuum:** There is a notable lack of policies regarding the ethics and usage of AI in education across the region.
 - **Urgent Need for Training:** There is a critical need for in-service training so educators can facilitate learning in a tech-driven world, rather than being left behind by their students.
-

Systemic Reform: From Objectives to Competencies

- **The Shift:** The region is moving from **Objectives-Based Education (OBE)** to **Competency-Based Education (CBE)**, following trends in Kenya, Zambia, and Ghana.
 - **Failure of the Old Model:** The exam-heavy OBE model focused on rote learning and catered only to the "high flyers" (approx. 18%), effectively rejecting the vast majority of students and contributing to high youth unemployment.
 - **Promise of CBE:** The new model emphasizes **skills development, formative assessment, and learner-centered pedagogy**, aiming to equip all students with practical skills for the economy, even if they do not attend university.
-

The Teaching Profession Crisis

- **Loss of Prestige:** Teaching is no longer an attractive profession for youth due to low government prioritization and low salaries compared to other fields.
 - **Market Saturation & Migration:** Unlike the global teacher shortage, Eswatini faces a market saturation of teachers; many are unemployed or working in positions below their qualifications.
 - **Exporting Talent:** Due to the local surplus and global demand, Eswatini is now "exporting" teachers to countries like Taiwan and Ireland.
-

Pathways and Access Challenges

- **University Bottleneck:** Only about 6% to 10% of students ultimately qualify for university entrance.
 - **TVET Challenges:** Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges have strict entry requirements (often requiring secondary school completion), which excludes students who dropped out due to the rigorous exam system.
 - **Future Hope:** The goal of the new curriculum is to ensure students acquire marketable skills from primary school onwards, reducing the "dead-end" nature of dropping out.
-

Vision for Change

- **Economic Driver vs. Social Service:** The biggest needed change is for governments to view education not as a "social service" that drains the budget, but as the **primary driver of the economy and human capital**.
- **Value of Associations:** Professional bodies like the **ICP** and **ACP** are highlighted for their transformative power in networking, benchmarking, and leadership development.