



South Africa

Naledi Pandor
Minister of Education



Ms Naledi Pandor, newly-appointed Minister of Education is a qualified educator with first hand experience of the education sector. Ms Pandor was born in Durban and matriculated at Gabarone Secondary School in Botswana. She spend her formative years exiled in Maseru, Lesotho and the United Kingdom (London). Ms Pandor received her tertiary education from the University of Botswana and Swaziland where she graduated in English and History and obtained a Certificate in Education. She obtained a Diploma in Education and a Masters Degree in General Linguistics from the University of Stellenbosch. During the apartheid years she taught in Botswana and the UK and was later a Senior Lecturer at the University of Cape Town. She also taught at the former University of Bophuthatswana. She was the first executive director of the Desmond Tutu Education Trust. She was elected to Parliament in 1994 and became whip and deputy chief whip of the African National Congress. She served on several committees, including the Portfolio Committee on Education and as a convener of a subcommittee on higher education. In 2002 she became the first women Chancellor of the Cape Technikon. She is also a member and trustee of various gender and educational organisations. Prior to her appointment as Minister of Education, Ms Pandor was Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP).

Inclusive Education and the Building of a Socially Just Society

Democratic South Africa emerged from a long history of segregation, exclusion and oppression, we have fully embraced the ideals of Inclusive Education as a means of removing the barriers that prevent learners from accessing quality education.

Our Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) asserts the values of human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms. In establishing an education and training system for the 21st Century, we have tried to implement these values by ensuring that all learners, with and without disabilities, pursue their learning potential to the fullest.

The South African Education system is still facing many challenges in terms of delivering quality education in an equitable manner to all its communities. We still have many backlogs in terms of classroom spaces, standards of teacher education, class sizes, availability of support staff and efficient district support services to mentor and guide schools in improving their standards. These systemic challenges pose serious barriers to improving literacy rates and ensuring that all learners complete a full cycle of basic education.

Our policy of Inclusive Education endeavours to broaden the understanding of theory and practice of inclusion through the introduction of systemic measures and implementation strategies which offer opportunities for life-long learning, building accessible and healthy school environments, making available, adequate and appropriate teaching and learning materials, providing access to e-learning and assistive technologies, introducing a flexible, inclusive and relevant national curriculum as well as introducing funding measures that address poverty and increase equitable access to quality education and support for all. In our national teacher education policy framework, the goal of equipping teachers with skills to meet the diverse expectations and needs of all learners is seen as paramount.

South Africa welcomes this Conference and the opportunity that it offers to grapple with the many challenges faced by education systems in an era of rapid and complex social change.