

NEWSLETTER

September, 2025



AI literacy as the new academic literacy for students

Universities are facing an urgent AI literacy crisis. While students are “digital natives,” many lack the critical skills to use artificial intelligence tools effectively and responsibly in academic settings. They can follow formatting rules but often fail to detect when AI fabricates information, exposing a gap between technical proficiency and critical understanding.

The article identifies 12 essential AI literacy skills, grouped into four categories.

The authors argue these skills should not be left to optional workshops but embedded throughout higher education curricula. This requires updated academic integrity policies, faculty development, and a shift from banning AI to embracing it as a pedagogical tool.

Embedding AI literacy into higher education will prepare graduates to critically, ethically, and effectively use AI in their studies and future careers. Universities that act now will better equip students for a world where AI fluency is as vital as traditional academic skills.

<https://www.universityworldnews.com/>

Opening remarks by Mr Buti Manamela, MP and Minister of Higher Education and Training to the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education

Placement of three SETAs under administration and the path to SETA reforms

Minister Buti Manamela announced the placement of the Services SETA, Construction SETA, and Local Government SETA under administration, citing severe governance failures, procurement irregularities, wasteful expenditure, and stalled learner programmes.

The intervention, grounded in Section 15 of the Skills Development Act, follows extensive consultations and advice from the National Skills Authority. Administrators have been appointed – Mr Matjie Masoga (Services), Mr Oupa Nkoane (Construction), and Mr Zukile Mvalo (Local Government) – with full authority to stabilise governance, restore compliance, and ensure continuity of skills programmes.

Administrators are required to submit 90-day turnaround reports by November 2025, forming part of a broader reform agenda. The Minister emphasised that this action marks the beginning of structural reforms to strengthen the SETA system, safeguard public funds, and realign skills development with national priorities.

<https://www.gov.za/news/>

Experts explain gains in an 'inefficient' HE system

South Africa's higher education sector is experiencing both growth and strain as it shifts from an elite to a mass system. Speaking at a Council on Higher Education (CHE) colloquium on access, Professor Shireen Motala (University of Johannesburg) highlighted significant progress in diversity, with 70% of university students now black African and women making up 60% of enrolments.

However, challenges persist: dropout rates remain high (over 30%), only 56% of students finish a three-year degree within six years, and completion rates are lower among black students compared to their white peers. Financial barriers, under-preparedness, and limited institutional support continue to hinder success.

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) supports most students, but inefficiencies and corruption allegations strain the system, while student debt has grown to ZAR17 billion. Public universities remain under pressure as demand exceeds capacity, and government subsidies have not kept pace with inflation.

Private higher education, meanwhile, is steadily expanding, now serving over 322,000 students, with institutions demonstrating agility in scaling programmes to meet national skills needs. As Dr Linda Meyer (Rosebank College, IIE) noted, private providers are playing a growing role in widening access. The call from experts is clear: South Africa needs smarter funding models, stronger academic support, and better integration across universities, TVET, and community colleges to ensure mass access translates into successful outcomes.

<https://www.universityworldnews.com/>



The Independent Institute of Education launches the exciting Emeris campus

The Independent Institute of Education (IIE) has unveiled Emeris, a bold new higher education brand bringing together Varsity College, Vega School, and MSA under one name. With a R420 million investment, the state-of-the-art Sandton campus will open in January 2026, catering to over 9,000 students.

At the launch, ADvTECH Group CEO Geoff Whyte described Emeris as "a significant leap forward" in private higher education, designed to deliver future-ready, research-driven learning. The consolidation streamlines IIE's portfolio to two core brands: Emeris for premium education and Rosebank College for broader access.

IIE Managing Director Louise Wiseman highlighted the campus's strong social investment initiative, ensuring accessibility for students from lower-income households, while also equipping graduates with real-world skills for employability. Executive Dean Dr Andrea Abrahams emphasized the transformative teaching model, incorporating AI tools, industry partnerships, and hands-on experiences. From law clinics to business projects, students will gain practical exposure alongside academic excellence.

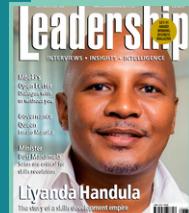
Emeris marks a new era in South African higher education—focused on adaptability, innovation, and preparing graduates to thrive in a changing world.

<https://www.citizen.co.za/sandton/>

A Double Triumph: APPETD Vice-Chairperson Mr Liyanda Handula's 2025 Milestones



APPETD Vice-Chairperson, Mr Liyanda Handula, has been prominently featured in the July 2025 edition of Leadership Magazine. The article, titled "From corporate comfort to community impact: Masithuthuke Holdings story", highlights his inspiring journey of building Masithuthuke Holdings into a purpose-driven enterprise that has transformed thousands of lives through education, training, and skills development.



Mr Handula's story reflects resilience, innovation, and a strong commitment to empowering communities. His journey is a testament to the role that visionary leadership can play in shaping both business success and social transformation. The feature runs from page 12 to page 19 in Leadership Magazine. Readers can access the full edition online at: www.leadershiponline.co.za

In addition to this recognition, Mr Handula has also been honoured with the Business Beyond Awards (BBA) 2025, a prestigious accolade that celebrates excellence, innovation, and transformation in business leadership.

On behalf of the APPETD team, we extend our warmest congratulations to Mr Handula. His dedication to advancing education and creating opportunities through skills development continues to inspire us all.



APPETD Engagement with QCTO CEO Mr Vijayen Naidoo



APPETD Board Members Ms Kim Courtois, Prof Wynand Goosen, Dr Shirley Lloyd (Chairperson) and Mr Liyanda Handula (Vice-Chairperson), were pleased to engage with Mr Vijayen Naidoo, CEO of QCTO.

On 5 September, the APPETD Board Members met with the QCTO CEO, Mr Vijayen Naidoo, to address and raise critical concerns impacting the private higher education sector.

Concerns were raised regarding the current structures of the QCTO, including its delegated bodies and committees, which significantly influence the delivery of education, training, and skills development. It was stressed that these structures often overlook the essential role of private providers within the sector.

In response, APPETD, together with its partners, will be drafting a joint letter to the QCTO Board to formally raise these concerns and request urgent action. The letter will provide the QCTO Board with one week to respond, ensuring that the matter is treated with the seriousness and urgency it requires.

"Let's Meet Over Coffee"

APPETD recently hosted a "Let's Meet Over Coffee" session at Edutel in Roodepoort. This initiative created a relaxed and engaging platform for discussion, networking, and collaboration.

The session was well-received, and APPETD looks forward to hosting many more. These gatherings are open to both members and non-members, providing opportunities to share insights, build connections, and strengthen partnerships across.



Ria Walsha - APPETD CEO, Veronica Pepping - VB Consulting Services (Pty) Ltd, Jacques de Villiers - The Growth Group, Karen Kleynhans - VB Consulting Services (Pty) Ltd, Uleen January - VB Consulting Services (Pty) Ltd, Karl Tischhauser - Infomage Rims Groups, Joy-Lynn De Kock - APPETD Operations Manager

Keep an eye on the APPETD Calendar on our website (www.appetd.org.za) for upcoming dates.

If you are interested in joining the next session, please engage with us at membership@appetd.org.za

OCTOBER EVENTS AT A GLANCE!!!

The APPETD Gold Standard: More Than Compliance—A Commitment to Excellence, Relevance, and Impact Setting a New Benchmark for Skills Development

The APPETD Gold Standard is designed as a powerful enabler for private training providers, equipping them with the tools, recognition, and credibility needed to thrive in a competitive and fast-evolving skills development landscape. By adopting the Gold Standard, providers will gain strategic advantages that enhance their operations, reputation, and impact. The Gold Standard will set a nationally recognised benchmark that distinguishes participating providers as leaders in quality training. This recognition will build confidence among employers, learners, and policymakers—enhancing providers' reputations and helping them attract more partnerships, contracts, and opportunities.

In a crowded training market, demonstrating adherence to a rigorous quality framework gives providers a clear competitive edge. The Gold Standard highlights training providers commitment to excellence and continuous improvement, positioning them as preferred partners for businesses and government initiatives. By embedding robust governance and the Gold Standard supports providers in strengthening internal systems and processes. This reduces administrative burdens, improves compliance with national regulations, and allows providers to focus on innovation and learner success.

Providers that meet the Gold Standard are more likely to be trusted by industry bodies, employers, and funding agencies. This recognition can open doors to collaborative projects, investment, and other opportunities that support business growth and long-term sustainability. By adopting a shared quality benchmark, private providers can collectively demonstrate their role as key contributors to South Africa's skills development agenda. This strengthens their collective voice in policy discussions and enhances their ability to shape the future of training in the country.

REMEMBER TO SAVE THE DATE OF 28 OCTOBER 2025 !

Venue to Be Communicated (In Gauteng)

Join us for the GOLD STANDARD launch as we engage stakeholders and celebrate this milestone in advancing quality education and training.

REGISTER HERE



In-Person Attendance: Members: R895.00 | Non-Members: R925.00

Virtual Attendance: Members: R695.00 | Non-Members: R725.00

Heritage Month Message

Our heritage is not only preserved in culture and history, but also in the knowledge we pass on to future generations.

Education is the bridge that carries our rich past into a brighter tomorrow.

Masterclass

Topic: Navigating Post-EISA Monitoring Visits: Practical Insights and Tools for SDPs

Date: 21 October 2025

Presenters: Mrs Jeanine Wishart and Thanya Reddy

CLICK HERE



Funding the Future of Skills in South Africa

By: Dr Alex Malapane

Funding innovation in the skills and training sector is now a defining factor for South Africa's economic future. As global markets evolve and industries adapt under technological disruption, private training providers are expected to deliver more than qualifications, they must equip learners with skills that drive employability, entrepreneurship, and productivity. Yet, access to sustainable, growth-oriented funding remains the most significant barrier. Traditional financing models, dependent on student fees, sporadic grants, or donor contributions, cannot meet the demand for agile, industry-relevant programmes. The solution lies in a fundamental shift in financing strategy, and impact investment offers one of the most powerful yet underutilised tools for transformation.

Impact investment refers to capital directed deliberately into ventures that generate measurable social or environmental outcomes alongside financial returns. Globally, this approach has moved from the periphery to mainstream finance. Investors now seek not just profit, but measurable social impact, particularly in areas like skills development, job creation, and inclusive growth. This trend aligns perfectly with the private training sector, positioned at the intersection of education and economic transformation. Yet the sector has not fully leveraged this potential, often perceived primarily as a social service rather than an investable, high-impact opportunity.

The first step is reframing the value proposition. Investors are drawn to evidence of measurable outcomes, not generic programmes. Providers must build robust data capabilities to track learner progression, employment outcomes, enterprise creation, and local economic impact. This data is the currency of trust in the impact investment market. Demonstrating, for instance, that 70% of graduates secure employment within six months or that programmes have enabled the creation of hundreds of micro-enterprises transforms providers from funding recipients into investable ventures.

Strategic partnerships are critical. Providers should engage corporate entities, development finance institutions, and philanthropic investors seeking measurable impact in youth employment, digital transformation, and entrepreneurship. Many corporations hold underutilised impact funds or ESG mandates. By aligning programme outcomes with corporate priorities, such as inclusive workforce development or community upliftment, providers position themselves as credible delivery partners, turning social impact into shared economic value.

Blended finance models further enhance feasibility. Layering grants, concessional loans, equity, and results-based financing reduces risk for investors while ensuring sustainability for providers. A provider could, for example, secure a grant to develop a digital skills curriculum, attract concessional capital to scale it nationally, and enter a results-based contract linking investor returns to graduate employment outcomes. Such models, proven in emerging markets, incentivise innovation and measurable results while de-risking investment.

Government and regulatory engagement is equally important. Clear policies on skills accreditation, recognition of non-traditional learning pathways, and incentives for impact investors, including tax benefits or co-funding mechanisms, can strengthen investor confidence. Providers must actively participate in policy dialogues and industry coalitions to shape a more enabling investment environment rather than wait passively for reforms.

Finally, a culture shift within the private training sector is essential. Too often, funding is viewed as transactional rather than strategic. The future belongs to those who see themselves as engines of economic development, agile, data-driven, and embedded in industry ecosystems. Success must be measured not just in certificates issued, but in livelihoods transformed and measurable impact achieved.

South Africa's skills development sector is at a pivotal point. Economic, social, and technological forces demand a financing model that matches ambition with scale. Impact investment, strategically harnessed, provides precisely that. The opportunity is not to fund what has always been done, but to finance what the future requires, innovative, outcome-driven skills solutions that drive inclusive growth. For private training providers ready to embrace this mindset, the potential to redefine both their societal role and revenue models has never been greater.

End.