Introducing a ubiquitous learning concept in lower income households of South Africa

By Shemane Masia | 27 August 2018

(Picture by: Ranplett/ Getty Images)

In this exercise, I am attempting to demonstrate the importance of how technology can bring access to education using methods and tools that can afford opportunities to youths in lower income households, targeting particularly a girl child, without exclusion of boys.

The aim of my update is to highlight available, contemporary methods that may address the shortage/lack of necessary future skills amongst majority of urban youth, required by the South Africa businesses.

I am focusing my observations on the following four key areas:
1. Virtual schools
2. Work and community-based learning
3. Social media learning
4. Networked learning

Introduction
South Africa's unemployment rate is high for both youth and adults; however, the unemployment rate among young people aged 15–34 was 38,2%, implying that more than one in every three young people in the labour force did not have a job in the first quarter of 2018.

Some of these young people have become discouraged with the labour market and they are also not building on their skills base through education and training – they are not in employment, education or training (NEET).(Statistics South Africa: 2018).
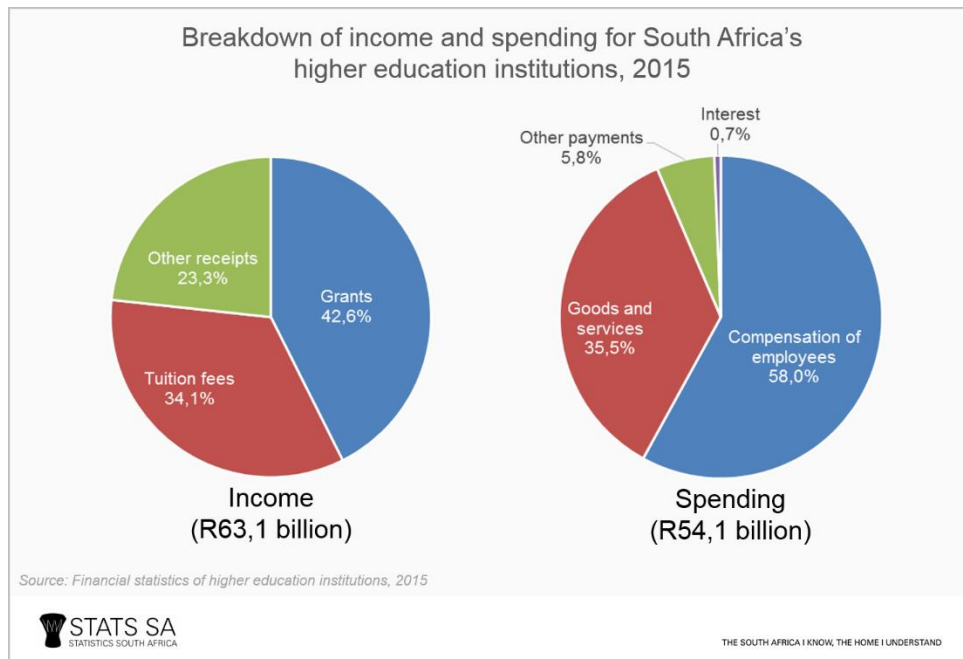
Cost of Education

According to Southern Cross, South Africa spends about R246,8bn ($17.29 bn+) in basic education budget (2017-18). This is equivalent to 15% of the total country budget. Yet, South Africa's quality of education is ranked at 106 out of 137 countries polled in the WEF 2017-18 GC Report.

Backlog

Southern Cross, further states that the backlog in school infrastructure stands at 425 out of the 939 schools originally identified have been provided with basic levels of sanitation. This backlog is due to budget cuts which have impacted subsidies to independent schools. This threatens the low-income independent schools etc.

Tuition fees Trends

The below diagram from Statistics South Africa shows how important tuition fees are in financing South Africa's 20 universities and 6 universities of technology, contributing R21,5 billion of total income.

Ubiquitous Learning Solution

It was only in around 2007 that online learning/education began to take hold of South Africa and only now that we're starting to see its proliferation. Irena Wasserfall, who's been instrumental in getting some of the University of Cape Town's (UCT) law modules on the Web, explains, "The old way still has merit, but there's a whole other market you can reach by doing things online." (Cape Town Magazine: 2018).

My approach
My approaches will include consultation with various stakeholders and creating the framework for ubiquitous learning policies. I will also liaise with community development organisations to identify societal learning goals and match the societies' goals with the overall skills needed in the country by the business. This way, our communities will be able to align with the goals of the country's business communities, as well as with the local social community needs.

I will also use local social media/crowd sourcing tactics to campaign and raise funds to secure the key resources required to implement ubiquitous learning programme for the urban lower income households. I will also use retired teachers with helping to put together learning plans, faculties and departments ready to serve the pool of children who are underserved. Finally, I will work with the youth themselves to build a peer-to-peer social network that will build student support network.

In Conclusion
Tying these two together, can bring down an insurmountable challenge facing the country's unemployed youth and improves the skills development. It will do so by means of creating an opportunity for civil societies and business creating skills/academic programme, volunteerism and investments towards alternative education. If following the Huffington Post (South Africa) article is the way to go, then I think that South Africans have to build intersectoral cooperation which includes the government, civil society and the corporate sector that can address the socio-educational complex challenges facing the country's and promote synchronized approach in resolving them.

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