

Addressing educational issues and making improvements in 2021

 By [Malcolm Mooi](#)

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In 2020, the education sector came under major scrutiny in what can best be described as 'the most turbulent year yet'.



Resolving the weak points in our education system have long been on the National Agenda, but Covid-19 further accelerated the urgency of this matter and escalated it to the top of the 'to do' list.

Issues around inequality, the health and safety of both learners and pupils, resources, finances, disputes between unions, constant disruptions, and the rapid shift to online learning made news headlines on a regular basis.

However, despite all the challenges and uncertainty, most of our learners were able to complete 2020's curriculum. This impressive feat can be attributed to the efforts of the nation's unsung heroes – our teachers, who put the educational needs of their students above all else. The learnings gained during 2020 will be carried into the New Year to ensure less disruption and smoother running systems to accommodate learners across the country.

After consultations with industry stakeholders, and based on my own knowledge of the sector, I've identified the following key trends in education for 2021:

Inequality and system fragility to be addressed

2020 highlighted the deep inequality that still exists in our fragile education system between schools with extensive resources and those without. A pandemic of this magnitude will naturally affect those who are most disadvantaged.

Beyond limited access to digital platforms for online learning, various other inequalities were highlighted; these included government-sponsored feeding schemes and transportation, which students had limited access to over the lockdown period.

We did however see education activists working together to highlight the importance of this during these troublesome times and this is set to continue in 2021.

Blended learning to be improved

With ongoing restrictions in place, both the public and private sector will be better placed to handle a blended learning model in 2021. Blended learning would involve a mixture of electronic teaching and traditional face-to-face teaching, with the goal of giving students the 'best of both worlds.'

Many weak spots in our existing digital infrastructure came to the fore in 2020, and I believe that these will be addressed through improved resources, enhanced communication, and wider access to online learning in 2021.

Weaponising of social networks as amplifiers of fake news

Digital platforms were used to spread misinformation, causing major upset amongst teachers, learners, and parents. This was most commonly seen by bad actors using the platforms Facebook and WhatsApp to disseminate unsubstantiated rumours about schools reopening and government regulations. Teachers and education officials were forced to waste valuable time trying to address and stamp out these rumours as panic spread among parents and learners.

In 2021, we hope to see stricter measures and more education from reputable sources coming into play to curb the damage caused.

Teaching comes to the fore

News of the Department of Basic Education looking to place 300,000 teaching assistants in 26,000 schools is a sign of promise for the sector. The contract period started on 1 December 2020 and will conclude on 31 March 2021.

This bold move addresses unemployment and the need for more teachers across the country.

Youth employment is a priority once again

Faced with grim career prospects, many matriculants and school leavers have felt despondent as unemployment continues to surge. The news of a job stimulus plan for some 800,000 school leavers before the end of the financial year, and 340,000 of them starting work before the end of 2020, presents signs of hope and positivity. It shows us that the government has understood and is addressing one of the key challenges that our country faces.

ABOUT MALCOLM MOOI

A self-proclaimed practitioner of edtech by day and fintech by night, Malcolm Mooi is also the CEO and founder of Zibuza.net. Malcolm's extensive background in the education sector dates back to 2002 where he first began his career as a trainer. In 2003, he joined the IT industry at a leading software firm and combined these passions in 2009 when Zibuza.net was first established.

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