**Education Technology, Equity and Quality in South Africa**

Not unexpectedly, the dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994 ushered in an era of explosive expectations among the country’s majority black population.  The expectations revolved around redressing the inequalities experienced under centuries of apartheid rule, most critically among the black and coloured segments of the population, but equally among the Asian/Indian group.  The national government recognises that the heart of the education challenge in South Africa lies at the nexus of equity, efficiency and quality, i.e. in South Africa, it is not possible to discuss equity and diversity outside of the framework of quality – all are inextricably inter-twined.

More than two decades later, the goal may seem largely met with increased opportunities for those initially marginalized, and South Africa is projected to be the first country to achieve the SDG goals in education by 2030. Yet, there is increasing demand for more equity in education.  Technology is being leveraged to address the demand at different levels, in different ways. The national government has introduced an Integrated ICT in Education Policy that forms the basis of its initiatives to improve quality and equity in education. It has also formed multiple partnerships to help drive this goal.

In this class, we will address the following issues/questions.

1. Policy and implementation gaps in harnessing technology to achieve the goal of equity in South African society, through education
2. What would be the role of national level partnerships in advancing this national objective?
3. Can technology in and of its own solve the twin problems of inequity, quality and diversity in South Africa?
4. What lessons can we draw from some of the emerging initiatives around ICT in education in South Africa?

**South Africa Context:**

1. High income country
2. High budgetary allocation to education, 6% of GDP
3. Highly decentralised, funds to provinces, national responsible for policy and curriculum
4. Achieved Millennium Development Goals (MDG), projected first country to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030
5. But inequities remain: rich/poor, black/white; urban/rural
6. Role of technology in addressing inequity in education sector and society generally

**Readings:**

1. Read the following materials presented as the required readings. Feel free to review the Optional Readings as well.

* Profile Summary
* National Integrated ICT Policy
* Low Quality Education as a Poverty Trap

1. Select and read one of these cases that interests you the most. As part of the class activity, we will divide up into groups based on these cases.

* Mobile Technology
* Role of ICT for Equity
* Teaching and Digital Technologies
* ukuFUNda Virtual School

**Class Activity:**

1. Meet in your group to brainstorm and discuss the selected case. Specifically:
   * Identify the challenges on deploying ICT as an effective mechanism to address challenges in education in South Africa, paying specific attention to equity.
   * As a Technical Specialist hired by UNICEF, identify options to support the government’s efforts in improving education for marginalized children in the context of the National Integrated ICT Policy position that “*E-learning and innovative use of ICTs in the education sector can assist in addressing inequalities in education in schools across South Africa, and facilitate ongoing improvement of educator skills*”. How would you go about achieving this goal? What would you do?
2. Identify someone from your group to present the group proposal to the class. Share the recommendations, goals, assumptions, risks, potential mitigations, etc.