

# UNLOCKING THE POWER OF DATA

A review of the state of readiness of the Post-School Education and Training sector in South Africa for enhanced data interoperability

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What if we could better utilise the new technologies that have become so pervasive in the modern era to improve our education and skills systems in South Africa? Imagine having the potential to link the unemployed to job vacancies or even to start to develop new, just-in-time training programmes for jobs that do not yet exist.

The COVID-19 pandemic has starkly illustrated the increasing need for data for smarter decision making and for South Africa to make a transition to more data orientated and interoperable information platforms. We now have the technology to develop self-sustaining electronic platforms for collaboration and the creation and support of lifelong learning opportunities which are dependent on the utilisation of quality data. Perhaps we find ourselves in a situation of a “datademic”, a pandemic of sorts, with data in too many places, uncoordinated and generally just not appropriately structured to be used to its fullest potential. The high levels of unemployment are accelerating due to COVID-19, and the opportunities that technological solutions present are even more important than before.

For the post-school education and training (PSET) sector in South Africa, lifelong learning is not an end but part of the journey to enabling lifelong career advancement and the realisation of citizens’ social and economic aspirations within the South African economy. New digital ecosystems have the potential to provide us with limitless opportunities in a new world based on the principles of interoperability.

Is South Africa ready for data ecosystems in the PSET sector to become interoperable?

The Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority (merSETA), in collaboration with JET Education Services (JET), started to explore the notion that an integrated and interoperable digital ecosystem for the PSET sector could be realised.

The release of this review of the State of Readiness (SoR) of the PSET sector for data interoperability comes at an opportune time when the National Planning Commission (NPC) has released a draft review of the National Development Plan (NDP) in terms of South Africa’s readiness for the ‘Fourth Industrial Revolution’ (4IR).

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