

How is business innovation shaping skills demand in South Africa?

Presentation and discussion of preliminary findings from an evidence review, 1994 – 2024



30 September 2025 | 10h00 – 12h00 (SAST)

RSVP required. Please RSVP at

https://zoom.us/meeting/register/_59HTvD7Rs-PhWee7ZkhEw



Digitalisation, the 4IR and the Just Energy Transition (JET) are among the key policy drivers shaping innovation in the South African business sector. Scholars have long characterised the relationship between innovation and skills demand in terms of skills-biased technological change, where the introduction of new technologies requires and, indeed, favours more advanced skilled workers. Conversely, some technological alarmism has emerged in response to the effects of digitalisation, the 4IR and JET, which reflects a legitimate concern about the displacement of skilled and unskilled labour by firms adopting advanced and emerging technologies. In the South African context, characterised by high

unemployment and large inequalities in skills levels and attainment despite several interventions, there is not only a skills mismatch in the labour market, but a significant risk of labour market polarisation undermining the achievement of national goals. In this context, reliable evidence is vital.

In this seminar results from an evidence review spanning the thirty-year period 1994 – 2024, are presented. Discussants from government, education and industry will critically engage the findings, to provide insights and ignite discussion with role-players within innovation and skills systems.

10h00 | Welcome remarks

- **Moderator: Prof. Sharlene Swartz**, Human Sciences Research Council
- **Kgomotso Matjila**, Department of Science, Technology and Innovation

10h15 | Presentation of evidence review preliminary findings

- **Dr Amy Kahn**, HSRC Centre for Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators

10h45 | Discussant reflections (~10 mins per discussant)

- **Dr Sibusiso Manzini**, Chief Director: Human Capital and Science Engagement, Department of Science, Technology and Innovation
- **Dr Jeanne Gamble**, Honorary Research Associate, School of Education, University of Cape Town and Visiting Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Researching Education and Labour (REAL), School of Education, Wits University
- **Prof. Arnesh Telukdarie**, Professor of Digital Business & Research Chair, Johannesburg Business School, University of Johannesburg

11h30 | Moderated Q&A

12h00 | End

This seminar is funded by the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI). The views and opinions expressed therein as well as findings and statements of the seminar series do not necessarily represent the views of the DSTI. Please also note that this seminar may be recorded and published on the HSRC podcast channel.