

4IR/ 5IR IN SOUTH AFRICA

The global landscape is rapidly changing because of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR). 4IR includes advanced technologies such as AI, Big Data, and Cybersecurity, changing everything. At the same time, Cumming (2024) mentioned that 5IR is more on human-centric approaches, its human intelligence working together with these advanced technologies to push sustainability.

South Africa (SA) is also experiencing this rapid change, but the main question is how SA adapts to 4IR? and whether it is ready for 5IR.

32.9%

THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE WENT FROM 330 000 TO 8.2 MILLION DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2024.



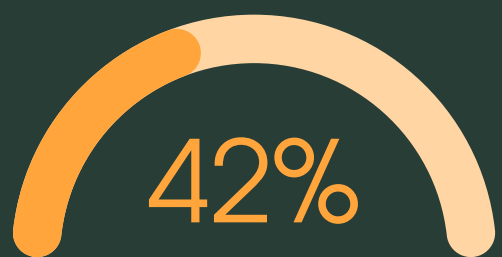
SA has embraced the 4IR and is currently embracing the 5IR, though it needs to reform education to ensure the workforce has the required skills. According to Kana (2024), TVET institutions are now vital in preparing students for the new, demanding, digitized economy.



Not only TVET but also universities will promote education reform. They will have skills in programming, business, and data analysis, and the booming cybersecurity market (Kana, 2024).



ACTIVE INTERNET USERS



SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

Statista (2024) mentioned that the country's population has 45.34 million active internet users. This tells you that SA is on the right track in embracing technology, as we saw in the FinTech, AgriTech, and HealthTech industries.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Mlangeni (2024) mentioned that there are challenges, such as infrastructure and resource deficits, in the disadvantaged areas, which affect the execution of reforming education in those areas.

The country's leadership landscape is adapting positively to the changes that the 4IR brings. Mayer (2024) emphasized that business leaders are confident in embracing these changes, contrasting with earlier sentiments of insecurity regarding technological advancements. The business's view is pushing for a more innovative and adoptive country in the current 4IR.

4IR and 5IR transition has propelled the country to face socio-economic problems, such as high unemployment and more on the SA youth as they struggle to adapt to new technologies, as mentioned by Phungula (2024). There is a need for a more inclusive development of the economy to bridge the digital divide and ensure that every area, regardless of location, has access to equal resources and opportunities to participate and contribute to this digital age.

Overcoming these challenges is crucial for the country's economy and for embracing the 5IR with fewer digital divide issues. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education needs to be prioritized, proper infrastructures in disadvantaged areas should be invested in, and technology business startups should be fostered to encourage innovation. Dagada (2024) stated that the government should streamline regulatory processes to facilitate quicker adaptation to technological advancements and create a more supportive environment for startups and tech companies.

SA has many opportunities with the 4IR and the next 5IR, but to fully utilize these opportunities, the country needs to address some burning problems of regulation, education, and socio-economic integration. Special measures in the form of stakeholder engagement to promote significant shifts in SA's economy will ensure that it becomes one of the leading players in the digital economy with an assurance of everyone's future in the country.