

## **Greetings from the Rainbow Nation of South Africa**

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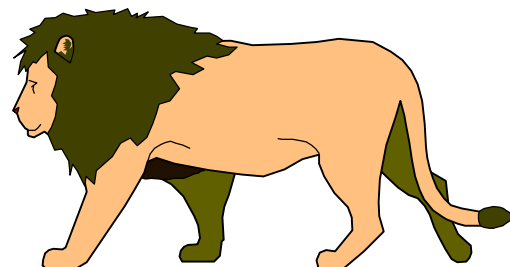
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<http://www-icdl.open.ac.uk/icdl/export/africa/southafr/technica/inst/index.htm>

### **South Africa!**



South Africa has made world newspaper headlines since 1990, and for all the right reasons!

- We had Nelson Mandela freed from prison.
- We have held democratic, peaceful elections twice.
- Our economy and our standard of living is showing signs of improvement.

Why do we call ourselves the “Rainbow Nation?”

- South Africa has approximately 33 ethnic groups, each as varied as the flowers of the fields.
- Each wanting to protect their own customs and traditions while accommodating the western / Southern African developments as well.
- This of course has a serious impact on their education, where all traditions, beliefs, religions etc are affected.
- Obviously we could never dream of offering education to all in their mother tongue, and English has become the accepted language for most forms of education.

A few facts influencing the education systems

- South Africa’s population figures stand at 46 million.
- The country is vast, people live in rural areas in very large numbers.

- The economy has forced urbanization on people, often separating families.
- Different and unfamiliar education now comes to the forefront.
- There are only 5 million registered taxpayers to carry the burden of the economy.
- The majority of the population are from previously disadvantaged societies in desperate need of education leading to meaningful employment of self-employment.
- Basic resources such as water and electricity are often lacking in rural areas.
- There is an almost 30% unemployment rate due to lack of education and therefore employment.
- Crime follows as a result of the unemployment and lack of education.
- There could almost be a generation of learners lost to education, society and employment if we don't address the problem right now.

But-having said all that, let us remember the following positive elements:

- We came through a period of unprecedented changes since 1990 with the minimum of civil upheaval.
- Our people have shown what they are willing to do for peace and prosperity.
- The country is rich in natural resources and the economy is strengthening.
- Once we have an efficient, modern education system working we will be able to cope with conditions as they arise.
- The government is stable.
- We are at a stage where we can learn from other countries and perhaps avoid the pitfalls by implementing the proven, most efficient systems, such as the **electronic delivery of education to the masses.**

And this is where the **Technical College of South Africa (TECHNISA)** comes in!

- We are the **only** state-aided technical college in the country dedicated solely to the delivering of distance education.
- We deliver from the Adult Basic Education and Training level (ABET) for the very basic educational needs, to the South African National N6 Diplomas, in engineering, business, general study directions. This is the equivalent of an engineer's diploma.
- We are developed courses specific to the Southern African situation, such as the Travel and Tourism course, which extends from the ABET level right to the N6 level, our educare course which enables women to obtain a qualification for the caring and supervision of young children (self-employment) and a very unusual but necessary course-funeral directing!
- Our courses are accredited nationally and offer a career path for our learners.

- We work in close co-operation with other colleges offering face-to-face classes, as well as with commerce and industry, to stay in line with trends in the workplace.
- We believe in and implement an approach of life-long learning for all.
- With the government's commitment to getting education to all and with the strain that placed on finances, we have found ourselves in a position where we have had to look for financing.
- Our present library is situated in Randburg, Johannesburg and is open to all students who are able to get there.
- But this is where a problem lies: the majority of our learners, by the sheer fact of being distance education learners, are not able to get to the facilities.
- These facilities have played second fiddle to other, more pressing, issues in need of money and developments.
- Presently, our learners are able to
  - Become acquainted with a library
  - study in the library,
  - work on assignments
  - get advice and guidance from lecturers
  - do research with the available material
  - start preliminary workings with a computer
- We are open 5 days a week, with a small range of flexi-hours.
- This is not a cost for the learners at all.
- Why all the preceding information? Because if you don't know the facts of a country, you cannot appreciate the present situation or move into the future.

### **What does the future hold?**

- At Technisa, our dedicated and loyal staff are working towards the best possible service to our learners
- Our budget is very carefully controlled, and our PRIORITY FOR 2000 IS:

### **Getting electronic delivery of study material to the masses!**

- We need to put centres in place where learners will be able to access their study material.
- These centres should be well equipped.
- Learners should then be able to work on assignments etc. with electronic facilities.
- Interaction with the lectures is made possible.
- The best, most efficient methods can be implemented.

- No matter how distant the learners are, or what their levels of education are, they should be able to get the nearest and access their studies there.
- Everyone should have reasonable access to education at all levels.
- This is one of the most important solutions to getting education to people, it is absolutely cost effective and efficient.
- In turn this will raise education levels, therefore employment prospects are enhanced, a standard of living is created, a new life in fact is the result.
- We sit here today, as the privileged, educated and select few, who could do so much for those less fortunate, could we work at a solution?

In the Worlds of the late Dr. Martin Luther King,

“I have a dream” and that dream is:

Education,

Employment,

Peace and prosperity for all!

In South Africa at the moment this is a cry for help, let us help to make that dream become reality. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.