



S.E.T. for socio-economic growth

National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF)

media release

International Day of Education - 24 January Advocacy for lasting peace amidst worsening global education crisis; Lifetime Award Winner Prof Jonathan Jansen is an outspoken critic of South Africa's education system

Global education crisis unveiled: A sobering look at dropout trends and disruptions worldwide

Educational disruptions and school dropout trends: A global overview: According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2018 statistical data, over 258 million children globally are not in school. A 2022 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report stated that more than 140 million children across the globe were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and thousands of them did not return to school entirely. The number of out-of-school children in South Africa rose to 750,000 between March 2020 and July 2021. In Uganda, around 1 in 10 school children did not report back to school in January 2022 after schools were closed for two years. The problem seems to affect girls in particular. The dropout rate among secondary school girls increased by 48 percent, from 6.4 per cent to 9.5 percent between 2020 and 2021 in Malawi. In Kenya, 16 percent of girls and 8 per cent of boys did not return when schools reopened.

International Day of Education 24 January: The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared 24 January, the 'International Day of Education' in December 2018. The theme for 2024 is 'Learning for lasting peace'. The aim of this significant day is to celebrate the role of education in fostering peace and development. Education transforms lives and breaks the cycle of poverty that traps so many children. The International Day of Education is a call for action — bringing individuals, civil society, and policymakers to take solid steps towards ensuring that primary and secondary education is given to children, as well as improving youth engagement in education. Learning programmes should be designed for the needs of different demographics, converging to one main goal: equipping children with the education needed for employment and better futures. Education also aids in the redress of societal inequalities and inequities. One of the best ways to gain access to education is through scholarships and bursaries (The National Science and Technology forum (NSTF) has put together a list of available bursaries for undergraduate STEM studies: visit the bursary directory [here](#)).

Lifetime award winner: Prof Jonathan Jansen is a well-known public commentator, columnist and academic, as well as a leader in the scientific community through his chairship of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf). He contends: "As a renowned 'public nuisance', public engagement is incredibly important to me. I do a lot of work on radio and television and print media every single week, as a way of bringing interesting and important research to the public's attention".



Prof Jansen's commitment to education has earned him the 2023 **Lifetime Award**, at the prestigious **NSTF-South32 Awards**. He received the award for a distinguished contribution to the advancement of education scholarship through advanced research and publication, scholarly teaching, innovative university management especially in times of racial disharmony, science leadership, school improvement, educational innovation, capacity development, public engagement, and science advocacy.

Prof Jansen acknowledges that our educational system is facing a severe crisis. "People need to know about levels of corruption, about how to fix our schools, and about the reading crisis in the country. So you'll notice all of my research has been concerned with real issues and real struggles in educational development." On 11 September 2023, while interacting with the students of the 2023 **NSTF Brilliant Programme**, Prof Jansen underscored several challenges encountered by universities in an online session (Read the event media release [here](#)).

He highlighted the prevalence of training-oriented approaches in early tertiary education, leading to students who prioritise memorisation for grades, resulting in a lack of originality and depth of understanding. Prof Jansen encouraged students to embrace a comparative mindset, explore various fields of study, and leverage travel experiences to broaden their perspectives. He concluded: "An educated person will stretch himself or herself intellectually to do more than is required". Prof Jansen is a Distinguished Professor: Education, Stellenbosch University (SU).

- **The National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF)** is the largest national non-profit stakeholder body for all science, engineering and technology (SET) and innovation organisations in South Africa (SA), in both the public and private sectors. The NSTF's functions include:
 - Conceptualising and organising **discussion events and consultative forums**, on topics of relevance to the SET community, including policy consultations.
 - Honouring, celebrating and publicising outstanding contributions to SET and innovation in SA through the **NSTF-South32 Awards**.
 - Youth outreach, including the NSTF **Share 'n Dare Programme**, where **award winners** are profiled to the youth and the public as **role models**.

A compilation of valuable resources for additional reading can be found on the NSTF website:

- NSTF hosted **NSTF-South32 Award winners** to engage with the students of the 2023 **NSTF Brilliants Programme** (11 September 2023). For more on the motivational and inspirational conversations with award winners and their interactions with Brilliants students, visit the **NSTF YouTube channel**.
- **NSTF science based career booklet**
- The STEMulator is an interactive digital landscape that stimulates learner curiosity in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) world. Click [here](#) to explore, discover and learn.

Read about previous NSTF Discussion Forums on related topics: **STEM Education – disruptions and the future** (29-30 August 2022)

STEM education and maths reform #STEMreformSA (6-8 August 2018)

About the NSTF (National Science and Technology Forum): NSTF is an independent non-profit stakeholder body and network – a civil-society forum of organisations involved in science, engineering, technology (SET) and innovation in SA.

Join the NSTF's conversations on social media:

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- YouTube: [National Science and Technology Forum \(NSTF\)](#)
- TikTok: [nstf_sa](#)

References/Sources:

- <https://www.internationaldays.org/january/international-day-of-education>
- <https://www.unicef.org/turkiye/en/press-releases/23-countries-yet-fully-reopen-schools-education-risks-becoming-greatest-divider>
- <https://nationaltoday.com/international-day-of-education/>

About the NSTF

The National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF), established in 1995:

- is a broadly-representative stakeholder body for all science, engineering and technology (SET) and innovation organisations in South Africa
- gathers stakeholders around burning issues of national and global interest, across the public and private sectors, including matters of public policy
- includes a network of professional societies in SET and STEM education (STEM = science, technology, engineering and mathematics) - the NSTF proSET membership sector.
- recognises, awards and profiles the outstanding contributions of individuals and groups to SET and innovation through the prestigious **NSTF Awards**
- runs and supports collaborative projects and youth outreach, including recognition of top performance in mathematics and science, role modelling, bursary and STEM career information
- runs and supports the STEMulator.org which attracts youth and educators to Explore>Discover>Learn the world of STEM including careers. (Established by NSTF proSET)

For more information
www.nstf.org.za
 E-mail: enquiries@nstf.org.za

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