

KEYNOTE ADDRESS PRESENTED BY DR CLETUS BAKO SHURKUK THE HONOURABLE COMMISSIONER FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION, PLATEAU STATE ON THE 6TH AUGUST, 2026.

Building a Future-Ready Education System for National Growth and Development

Protocols

Good morning,

It is a profound honor and privilege to join you today at this important **two-day National Summit** dedicated to equipping educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in the education sector with the knowledge and tools required to build a future-ready education system under the theme:

"Building a Future-Ready Education System for National Growth and Development."

Education: The Foundation of National Development

The growth and development of every nation is determined by the quality of its education system. Roads may connect our cities, industries may generate wealth, and technology may transform our economies, but it is education that produces the engineers who build the roads, the entrepreneurs who create industries, the scientists who develop new technologies, and the leaders who shape our national destiny.

History offers compelling evidence that no nation has achieved sustained economic transformation without making strategic investments in education. Countries that have emerged as global leaders in innovation and economic competitiveness did not arrive there by chance. They invested deliberately in developing their human capital, recognizing that the greatest resource any nation possesses is not oil, minerals, or fertile land, but educated, skilled, innovative, and responsible people.

This philosophy continues to guide our efforts in Plateau State. Under the visionary leadership of **His Excellency, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang**, human capital development remains a top priority of His Excellency development agenda. The administration has expanded educational opportunities by sponsoring Plateau students on undergraduate and postgraduate scholarship programmes in India and other countries while consistently increasing scholarship support to ensure that deserving young people can access quality education and develop the skills needed to contribute meaningfully to national development. NUC and NBTE has respectively increase the number of accredited courses in PLASU and Plateau Polytechnic.

The Changing Global Landscape

Today, however, the world is changing at an unprecedented pace. Artificial Intelligence is redefining work. Automation is transforming industries. Climate change is creating new economic realities, while digital technologies are reshaping how we learn, communicate, produce, and govern. Entire professions are disappearing, even as new ones emerge at remarkable speed.

In such a rapidly evolving world, the education systems that served previous generations may no longer be sufficient to prepare today's learners for tomorrow's opportunities.

The fundamental question before us is therefore not whether education should change. The real question is whether our education systems are changing fast enough.

Today, I would like to examine three broad issues based on the theme:

1. **Why future-ready education is essential for national development.**
2. **The defining characteristics of a future-ready educational system.**
3. **The reforms and collective actions required to build and sustain such a system.**

Why Future-Ready Education Matters

Education is far more than the transmission of knowledge; it is the foundation of economic growth, social progress, and national transformation. The world's most successful nations have demonstrated that sustainable development depends not on natural resources alone but on the quality of human capital.

A strong education system improves productivity, reduces poverty, stimulates innovation, strengthens institutions, promotes entrepreneurship, and enhances global competitiveness. In the twenty-first century, the true wealth of nations lies in the knowledge, creativity, and capabilities of their people.

What Defines a Future-Ready Educational System?

A future-ready educational system prepares learners not only for examinations or employment but for life in a rapidly changing, technology-driven world. It develops critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, digital literacy, problem-solving, entrepreneurship, adaptability, ethical leadership, emotional intelligence, and lifelong learning.

As emerging technologies continue to reshape industries and create entirely new careers, education must shift from memorisation to innovation, from passive instruction to active learning, and from teaching students what to think to teaching them how to think.

The urgency of this transformation is evident. Artificial intelligence, automation, robotics, biotechnology, cybersecurity, climate change, and digital technologies are redefining economies and labour markets. *The future will belong not simply to those with the highest qualifications but to those with the greatest capacity to learn, adapt, and innovate continuously.*

Challenges Facing Our Education System

Despite considerable progress, many educational systems continue to face significant challenges which include:

- i. Curricula often remain examination-driven rather than competency-based.
- ii. Digital infrastructure is inadequate in many communities.
- iii. Teacher development frequently lags behind changing realities, while research funding and innovation ecosystems remain insufficient.
- iv. Graduate unemployment also highlights the disconnect between educational outcomes and labour market needs.

These challenges are substantial, but they are not insurmountable. They require bold reforms, strategic investment, and sustained commitment.

Building a Future-Ready Education System

A future-ready education system rests on several interconnected pillars.

- **Curriculum Reform:** Modern curricula should integrate digital literacy, artificial intelligence, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, climate education, civic responsibility, innovation, and critical thinking, while assessments should reward creativity and practical problem-solving.
- **Empowering Teachers:** Teachers remain the most important drivers of learning. They require continuous professional development, improved welfare, digital competence, leadership training, and opportunities for career advancement.

- **Digital Transformation:** Reliable internet connectivity, digital learning platforms, smart classrooms, virtual laboratories, and equitable access to technology must become integral components of educational delivery.
- **Technical and Vocational Education:** Skills development should receive equal recognition alongside university education. Strong partnerships between educational institutions and industry will produce graduates equipped with practical, market-relevant competencies.
- **Research and Innovation:** Universities should become centres of innovation, addressing national priorities through research that improves lives, drives industrial growth, and strengthens economic competitiveness.
- **Inclusion and Equity:** Every child, regardless of gender, disability, geographical location, or socio-economic background, deserves access to quality education.
- **Sustainable Financing:** Governments, the private sector, development partners, and philanthropic organisations must work together to ensure sustained investment in education.
- **Values and Character Formation:** Alongside technical competence, education must continue to nurture integrity, accountability, discipline, empathy, patriotism, and responsible citizenship.

A Shared Responsibility

Achieving these goals requires collective action. Governments must provide visionary leadership and policy consistency. Educators must embrace innovation and lifelong learning. Parents must actively support their children's education. Industry must collaborate with educational institutions through curriculum development, internships, apprenticeships, and research partnerships. Civil society and development partners must continue supporting evidence-based reforms.

Education must become a national project that transcends political cycles.

Measuring Success

The success of our educational system should not be measured solely by examination results. Instead, we should ask:

- Are our graduates employable?
- Are they innovative and entrepreneurial?
- Can they solve real-world problems?

- Are they responsible citizens?
- Are they contributing to national development?

These are the true indicators of a future-ready education system.

A Vision for the Future

Imagine a nation where every child has access to quality education, schools are digitally connected, teachers receive world-class professional development, universities collaborate seamlessly with industry, research drives economic growth, and graduates become job creators rather than job seekers.

This vision is entirely achievable through visionary leadership, sustained investment, strategic partnerships, and collective commitment.

Conclusion:

The decisions we make today will determine whether our young people become passive observers of global change or active architects of national development. Education remains our most powerful instrument for reducing inequality, driving innovation, strengthening institutions, and achieving sustainable economic growth.

Let us therefore commit ourselves to building an educational system that is inclusive, innovative, technology-enabled, research-driven, skills-oriented, values-based, and responsive to the demands of the twenty-first century.

If we transform education, we transform our nation.

The future is not something we wait for, it is something we prepare for. That preparation begins in our classrooms, colleges, universities, laboratories, and every institution dedicated to learning.

Together, let us build an educational system that empowers every learner not only to succeed in the future but to shape it.

Thank you, and God bless.