The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR): Overview and Policy Implications

Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Technology

Colloquium on the Fourth Industrial Revolution

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Structural transformation: industrialisation, technology and skills

• Structural transformation and catch-up: shift of people from low to higher-value adding activities → industrialisation.

• Industrialisation has become more challenging over the last few decades ...

• ... but no country has caught up by “leapfrogging” the industrialisation stage:
  – Main site of technological and skills acquisition; and
  – Linkages to and multipliers with to rest of economy.

• No case of successful industrialisation without industrial and related policies: technology and skills acquisition.
Manufacturing drives growth ...

Compound annual Manufacturing growth vs GDP per capita growth, 1994-2016

Source: World Bank Development Indicators
… and formal employment creation

Compound annual Manufacturing growth vs formal employment growth, 1994-2016

Source: SA Reserve Bank Quarterly Bulletin
The 4IR and increasing digitalisation

- Data: the new “primary resource”.
- Increasing digitalisation of production and distribution.
- Securing policy space and formulating appropriate policy responses.
The 4IR and increasing digitalisation

- **Digitalisation and integration of supply chains.** Digitalisation of production and supply chains is the minimum requirement for participating in the new digital economy: co-ordination efficiencies, condition monitoring and process optimisation.

- **Design, rapid prototyping and customisation.** Artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted design software, additive manufacturing and material science is significantly reducing the time to develop prototypes and produce tooling.

- **Advanced manufacturing and automation.** Integrated, collaborative manufacturing systems that respond in real time to meet changing demands in the factory and the supply network.

- **E-commerce, online search and social media platforms.** Online platforms can open-up routes to consumers for small, medium enterprises. But “super” platforms dominate with accompanying power to determine rules for participation.
The 4IR and digitalisation: policy principles

• Digital industrialisation: involves both incremental changes and disruptive technological innovations.
• Digital industrialisation must create conditions for more domestic value creation and distribution.
• Systemic changes call for systemic and integrated policy frameworks: trade, regulation, competition, taxation, industrial, technology, skills and infrastructure policies.
The 4IR and digitalisation: policy considerations

• Policy space and digital sovereignty:
  – Global, regional and bi-lateral negotiations;
  – Plurilateral process on e-commerce rules;
  – Need for global rules that are developmental and enable digital sovereignty; and
  – Developing countries need to preserve policy space to respond to current and future technological change.
The 4IR and digitalisation: policy considerations

• Taxation:
  – Taxation of physical and digital goods and services;
  – Fiscal integrity; and
  – Measures to address base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS).
The 4IR and digitalisation: policy considerations

- Competition and Regulation:
  - Global “super platforms” and “winner takes most” market outcomes; and
  - Emerging responses in various domains including EU, India, Indonesia, Rwanda.
The 4IR and digitalisation: policy considerations

- Digital Infrastructure:
  - Ensure 5G network rollout is competitive and delivers affordable data.
  - Potential improvements digitalisation can bring to “traditional” infrastructure and public services, e.g.:
    - Smart grid enablement of renewable energy at scale;
    - E-government / public services; and
    - Climate change mitigation, water efficiency and agricultural modernisation.
The 4IR and digitalisation: policy considerations

• Digital Industrial Capabilities:
  – Firms increasingly need to acquire digital capabilities as part of industrial upgrading.
  – Financing instruments for acquiring digital industrial capabilities -
    • Expansion and adaptation of financing instruments;
    • Acquisition of digital supply chain tools;
    • Innovation and commercialisation; and
    • R&D.
The 4IR and digitalisation: policy considerations

• Digital Industrial Capabilities Skills Sets:
  – Software engineering, data science and related ICT skills.
  – Computer-aided design (CAD), computer-aided manufacturing (CAM), Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Materials Requirements Planning (MRP) and Manufacturing Execution Planning (MES).
  – Sector-specific digital skills in partnership with industry associations and Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs).
  – Curriculum adaptation and financing for Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions.
  – Big data analysis.
The 4IR and digitalisation: policy considerations

• Digital Policy Skills Sets:
  – Regulation and competition;
  – Trade negotiations;
  – Industrial, technology, innovation and skills policy;
  – Big data analysis for public policy; and
  – E-government.
Further resources

**Industrial Development Think Tank (IDTT)**
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Digital Industrial Policy Issues Paper and Policy Briefs