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## Editor's column

### What eishtags will we have to endure now?

So this is supposed to be a critical look at the mayhem and madness that has beseeched our universities, but I find myself sliding into helpless sadness and unwitting expressions of angered sarcasm.

Is that how our students feel? Helpless, angry, the victims of uncontrolled expressions of defensive indignation over circumstances that have overwhelmed them.

Our 'born frees' (those born after 1994 – and are between the ages of 18 and 25), including our tertiary higher education students; they were our hope and our saving grace in an uncertain future. But looking at the carnage canvassed on our TV screens, the future has become a lot more certain – and a lot more hopeless.

Many "adults" throughout the country, and especially teachers and parents, have for the past 10 to 15 years expressed hope in our youth. In staffrooms, boardrooms and bedrooms we would normally say things along the lines of, "oh, look at our young ones, they are our future." We had expectations of optimism because we believed that *we were the problem*. We believed that our 'born frees' would herald the visionary new South Africa that has been so elusive for the past 20 years.

"Just look at our kids in the schools," we would romanticise, "they are mixing, black and white, no problems and no racism." In pious chastisement we would say, "We are the problem, us adults, but our children in the schools and universities are showing us that a truly non-racial South Africa is possible."

So what happened to our 'born frees'? What has caused our youth to be possessed by such madness and self-hatred? No, this is not the justifiable and sacrificial protests of 1976! And don't let any adult (or 35-year old "youthful politician") make you believe that it is.

This is anarchy and chaos created by an ailing ANC, a mindless EFF, and whatever 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> forces that lurk in the fringes of our society.

And the victims are our youth, our precious young ones who are the hope of our nation.

They (youth) are not the victims of Afrikaans; they are not the victims of Rhodes, colonialism, imperialism, institutionalism, or even apartheid. They are the victims of capitalistic politicians (the *capital* is the power), our youth are the victims of liberation gone wrong.

Our 'born frees' are the fatalities (and the pawns and suckers) of our seasoned politicians playing the race card, and playing with the lives of our children! This sly, insidious and suicidal strategy has been used for decades in most democratic (*what?*) dispensations.

But hey, I'm not defeated and neither should our 'born frees' be. I still do have hope. I hope for an SA Youth Spring, I hope that our next generation will triumph and 'see the light' – be it through social media, honest interaction, a will and wisdom to do what's right, or just *#common sense*.

Our youth are far more liberated than you give them credit for, you Zuptas & mayhemLemas, I believe in our 'born frees' and I believe in their enlightenment.

Editor

## Tech brings a golden age for distance learning

Prospective students are increasingly opting for distance learning as a first choice, with the sector experiencing strong growth as a result of its harnessing of technological advancements.

"Educational technology has taken the distance and isolation out of distance education and, as a result, the sector is benefitting from the fact that it speaks directly to what modern, self-directed young people seek when furthering their education," says Peter Kriel, General Manager at The Independent Institute of Education, SA's largest private higher education provider.

Kriel says in 2017, many people have neither the time nor patience to do things the "traditional" way, and distance learning has sufficiently come of age for it to be viewed as a viable, quality alternative to fulltime, contact study.

He says that distance education has traditionally been the domain of working adults and those who could not afford or gain access to contact institutions.

"However the power of what is possible online has dramatically changed that perception – locally and internationally – and all distance institutions are reporting a massive surge in registrations from school leavers and other non-traditional distance students," he says.

"Historically, distance education had a reputation of isolation and drop out; of failure and stress and of being a very difficult thing for anyone without superhuman self-discipline to tackle, so it was not an attractive option and not suitable for most school leavers. But that is no longer the case, as when done right there is no more distance in distance – just a great deal of flexibility and self-paced learning without any of the isolation."

Kriel says that by paying close attention to how people learn, modern distance learning can in fact be significantly more effective than the old crowded lecture room model. That is because distance students can learn by pacing themselves and checking their own progress on the way while getting help when needed; they can develop critical work skills such as the use of online resources and communication and collaboration tools; they can build networks with other students across the world and graduate with a degree that has given them both knowledge and confidence.

"Back in the day, distance institutions sent learning materials to students by snail mail and received assignments back in the same way. Later, e-mail was used and content was merely dumped in a digital repository for students to access.

"But over the last decade, the convergence of social media tools and interactional technology like blogs, wikis and discussion forums have been used to enrich static presentation of material online, which has turned the modern distance experience into one in which all the interactional possibilities of the web and associated technology are leveraged to engage, support and monitor students and to connect them to each other."



Kriel says that the result of this harnessing of tech in distance learning is that students are increasingly not seeing the option as a last resort but, just as many students are increasingly electing to go the private higher education route instead of enrolling at public universities, so students are actively choosing distance learning because of the associated benefits.

Rebecca Shimmin, Senior Operations Coordinator for distance education at The Independent Institute of Education warns however that prospective students should interrogate the quality of the institution and course on offer just as they would with any contact institution.

"Questions to ask before signing up include the obvious ones about registration and accreditation, but also questions about the support structures in place for students who are struggling or not keeping up. If the answers you get are vague or complicated, this should be a clear signal not to enrol. If the institution isn't able to make a connection with you in the initial stages, they are very unlikely to do so when you need them further down the line." ▲



# Blended learning: great future-fit strategy, bad plan B

By Dr Felicity Coughlan, Director of the Independent Institute of Education

A key buzzword at the moment in the education space is “blended learning”, but very few people would have heard this term before the higher education crisis forced the hand of public universities to introduce this delivery method ahead of this year’s final exams.

Even now, few people understand what blended learning entails, save for the fact that somehow technology and the internet are involved. Although many universities turned to “blended learning” as a way to ensure students are able to complete their academic years, and this strategy indeed went some way toward fulfilling its aim, it is now important that the public understands what blended learning is and isn’t. Particularly as it is expected that higher education institutions will increasingly incorporate this method of delivery into their programmes.

As one public higher education institution noted at the time of the nationwide protests, teaching and learning would be “taking place by means of a variety of different approaches, including blended learning, which relies heavily on digital and online materials. Each faculty and discipline is developing its own approach to teaching and is communicating with its students accordingly”.

While one understands the approach taken, simply taking the materials and instruction that would have been delivered via contact method and then delivering them via electronic methods does not equate to blended learning.

Introducing blended learning components to the curriculum takes time and planning and needs to be part of the course design. It is something that needs to be done right – not added as an afterthought.

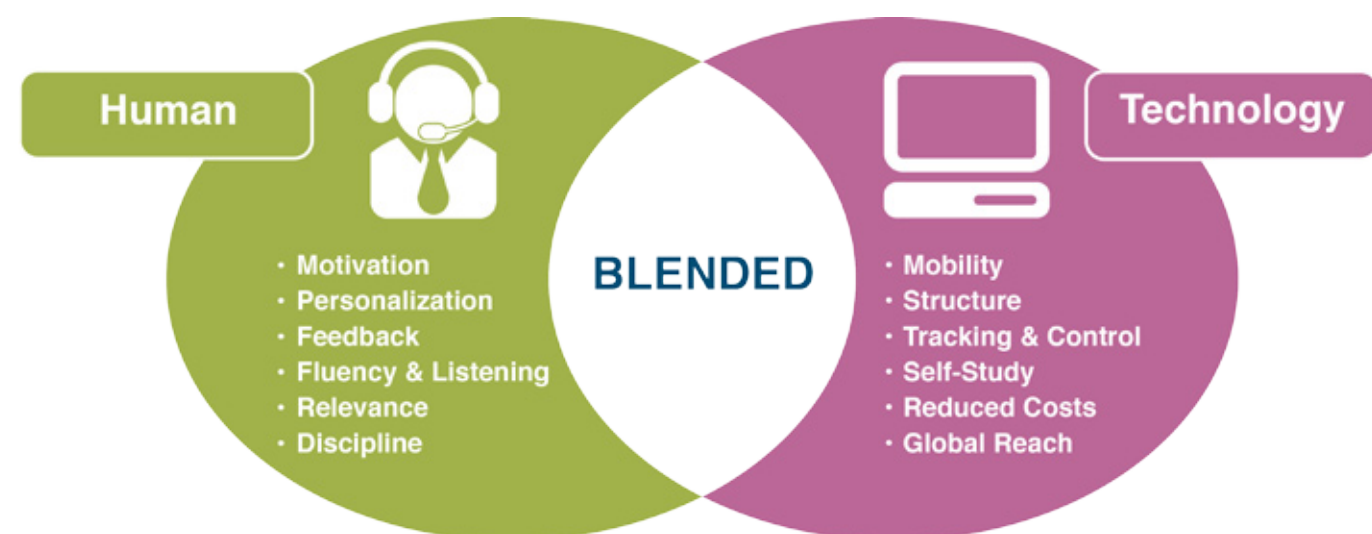
Successful blended learning programmes require careful strategy and crafting over long periods of time, with the input of teams of experts from various fields. Simply posting content on an online platform is not blended learning – it is really just another form of making learning content available.

The advantages of blended learning opportunities – if properly done – are many. But the pitfalls, if blended learning is not introduced as part of a strategic, pro-active programme, are legion.

On the plus side, blended learning allows students greater autonomy over their time and preparation. They can work through concepts and content more than once; they can engage with others who are working through the same content, and they can get individualised input from the lecturers or tutors supporting them online. In addition, these students also get to master a new set of skills related to working online that are invaluable in the modern knowledge economy.

On the other hand, the downsides are pretty much the same as they would be for any other form of self-directed learning, which has not met with huge success in South Africa, and particularly

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## Bring mobile learning into your classroom

With more than 70% of learners in South Africa using smartphones, we recognise that most learners today are immersed in the digital environment, so we have developed a mobile-friendly study tool that meets learners where they are most comfortable... on their cellphones.

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### The pilot results speak for themselves

The results of an independent study at a high school in Gauteng, done by Wits University, showed that:

**Learners are ready for mobile learning**  
**78%** of 15–19 year olds use a smartphone.

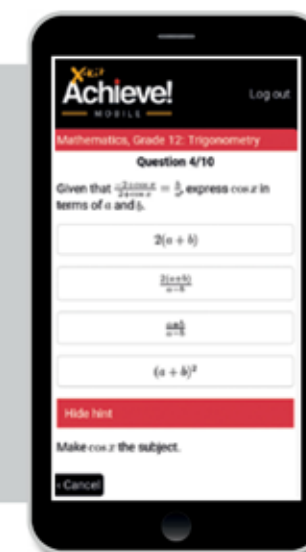
**85%** found X-kit Achieve Mobile useful, helpful, challenging and stimulating.

**60%** found the quizzes helpful to explain new or difficult concepts.

Learners showed a **15% improvement**.

“X-kit Achieve Mobile can really help us to move on to the next grade because it gives us clear explanations. It also helps you with what you need to know for the exams.”

– Learner involved in pilot study



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>> from page 4

where students do not receive the crucially necessary support from their higher education institutions.

Simply put, if students do not have the self-discipline to self-pace their learning, they will be left behind very quickly.

That is why bona fide blended learning programmes, which were structured pro-actively and not reactively in an effort to decentralise delivery, have in place effective student support teams monitoring student engagement to keep students on track.

Additionally, a successful blended learning programme needs to be cognisant of logistical challenges, and should be structured to take these into account. Many poorly designed systems are data heavy, becoming expensive and frustrating to access, particularly when they include too much video content, and where bandwidth and connectivity are concerns.

The Independent Institute of Education, particularly at its Rosebank College digital campuses, has been at the forefront of introducing and developing blended learning programmes for the past four years, in recognition of the fact that this method offers an opportunity for those students who require greater flexibility at a lower cost.

Equally, we have found that it is an exciting and rewarding approach for digitally interested – if not yet skilled – students who want to pace their own learning to get the best of contact learning (which is the relationship with lecturers and students), while also being able to access all the benefits the online platform provides.

But with blended learning, the design of the learning is everything. Therein lies its success or its downfall.

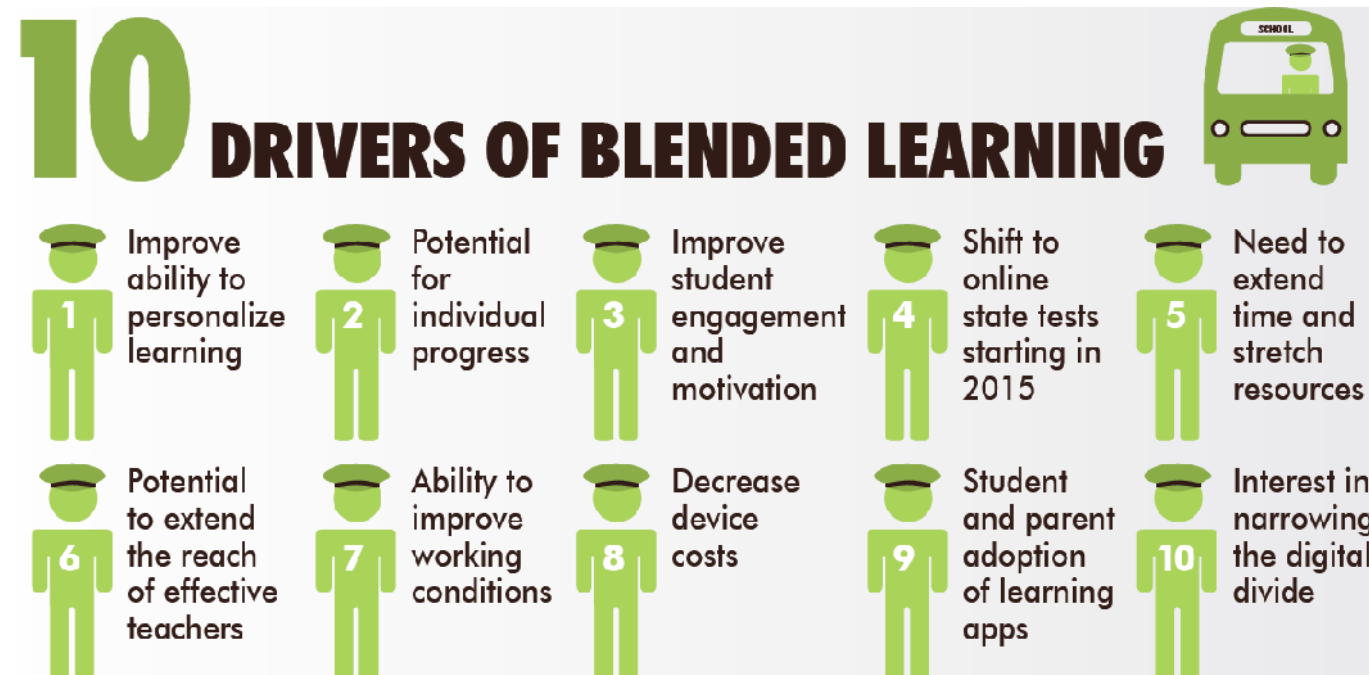
In the first session of a learning unit, the student and lecturer engage in framing the learning and the key concepts. Students then work on their own and with



other students and with an online tutor on the online platform. The lecturer engages and monitors and a final contact session is used to book-end the learning unit. In this session, the lecturer uses the evidence of learning (or confusion) from student online activity to structure the contact session, which then is able to focus on what students need to know rather than trying to cover everything.

This is true blended learning, and higher education providers, whether public or private, would do well to investigate and invest in this method in years to come.

But it would be of some concern if institutions increasingly started adding “blended learning” programmes haphazardly, either as a knee-jerk reaction to external pressures, or as an attempt to jump on the bandwagon of this “new” idea, in an effort to entice prospective students attracted to the idea of being master of their own time and ‘studying online’. ▲



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# Reimagining education

By Yandiswa Xhakaza, Head of School at Arrow Academy

*Quality education is the pathway to future opportunities and success. However, with the world around us changing rapidly, the education practices of the past – those that focused mainly on passing tests, teaching discipline and forcing children to learn like robots – are no longer relevant. In fact, the demands of the 21st century require a whole new approach to education to fully prepare our nation's youth for the future.*



Yandiswa Xhakaza

It is our responsibility, as educators of the next generation, to develop and prepare learners for the challenges of the future by identifying and addressing their needs today. We need to equip young learners with the skills they'll need to be successful in tomorrow's world.

In order to achieve this, we need a fresh approach to education. We need to focus on:

- **Enabling and encouraging dynamic learning**

A dynamic learning environment is characterised by change, activity and progress. It is purposely designed to meet the needs of all learners and aims to challenge them to not only enhance existing skills and interests, but also to meaningfully build new ones. What's more, it incorporates inclusion, takes into account learning styles, embraces technology, and encourages real world experiences and applications.

As educators, we must create such dynamic learning environments for our learners, and we must teach in ways that will ignite their desire to learn.

- **Whole child development**

While literacy and numeracy are undoubtedly the foundations of learning, we must recognise that the education experience is not just about academic achievement, but about the holistic wellbeing of the learner. Aside from their test scores, there are personal traits every young learner needs to develop so they can understand and contribute to the world around them. These include mindfulness, curiosity, courage, resilience, creativity, critical thinking, ethics and leadership.

As educators, we must create a roadmap to provide a positive and uplifting learning environment that will enable every learner to develop these traits, and to ultimately succeed, and thrive.

- **Flexibility and convenience**

There's no question that our modern pace of life demands that we find flexible and convenient solutions in almost every aspect of our lives – and education is no different.

As educators, we must make an effort to be open and responsive to the needs of modern families – whether that means offering extended hours to support working parents, providing nutritious meals on site or doing away with homework to enable families to spend more quality time together.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century presents a new frontier in education, and it is our responsibility as educators to create an environment where learners' talents and preferences are respected and valued, and where they are provided with opportunities to thrive. It is our responsibility – especially in our rapidly changing world – to develop learners who are knowledgeable, emotionally and physically healthy, civically active, artistically engaged, economically self-sufficient, and ready for the future.

#### About Arrow Academy

Arrow Academy is a newly established private school in Centurion, Gauteng. The school, headed by dynamic young educator Yandiswa Xhakaza, is at the forefront of a new era in education and promises to provide a forward-thinking solution for the individual learner of the 21st Century. Arrow Academy is owned by FutureLearn, an education company that is reimagining education in South Africa in order to provide innovate and accessible education solutions. FutureLearn is a member of the PSG Group of companies.



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- Standardised assessment elements
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#### Learner

- CAPS aligned curriculum with study guides, books, DVDs and CDs

#### School

- Examination board selection (SACAI or DBE)
- Single school account
- Administration and support

## Helping you focus on what really matters – learners.



# Fast Kids Maths App winner is awarded with bursary and desks for her school

OMO, a Unilever purpose-driven brand, awarded a R10 000 bursary to grade 5 learner Mapula Caroline Ramohlola, 10 years old, from Mikateka Primary School in Ivory Park, Midrand.

**M**apula won the bursary as she had made the most significant progress using the OMO Fast Kids App which was tracked since the beginning of 2016. The Fast Kids community continues to grow, with an average of between 100 and 150 new sign-ups every day. So far, over 184 000 learners have used the App to enhance their maths skills.

Attending the handover at Mikateka Primary School were representatives from the Gauteng Department of Education (Senior Education Specialist, Mr Innocent Ngwane), Extrupet, Wildlands, Rural Waste Poverty Alleviation (RWPA) and Unilever. Unilever's OMO team used the occasion to reiterate the importance of mathematics in building a strong, skilled academic nation.

"South Africa may have one of the lowest maths literacy rates in the word, but we're extremely tech savvy. Our market boasts an impressive 37% to 45% mobile penetration, so OMO made a decision to develop an educational, yet engaging, Application for today's tech savvy learners," says Aderly Reddy, Assistant Brand Manager, OMO. "Technology has proven a successful way to increase maths literacy in South Africa. The OMO Fast Kids Maths App is an interactive, gamified learning experience that caters for learners aged six to 18 and offers them real world rewards like product vouchers and coupons."

In addition to the bursary, OMO also handed over 40 upcycled green desks to Mapula's school. The desks are a result of Unilever's ongoing partnership with Wildlands that also includes the upcycling of previously un-recyclable plastic and multi-layer waste into much-needed school desks and chairs.

Known as the Wildlands Green Desk scheme, this is further proof that Unilever is well on the journey towards meeting their 2020 commitment to reduce the waste associated with the disposal of their products.

"There is a shortage of more than 300 000 school desks in the country" says Louise Duys, Director Partnerships at Wildlands. "In addition, thousands of tons of unrecyclable mixed plastics and multi-layer materials end up in landfill. The Green Desk, developed through a partnership with Rural Waste Poverty Alleviation



**Ntombizanele Margaret Ramohlola (mother of the winner), Mapula Caroline Ramohlola (winner) and Mikateka Primary School Principal Mr Mandla Sibanyoni**

(RWPA) and supported by OMO and Unilever, is an innovative ground-breaking solution to both of these problems – closing the loop of cleaning communities and in turn helping to educate children."

Mikateka Primary School Principal Mr Mandla Sibanyoni is honoured that one of the school's learners has won the bursary and desks. "Initiatives like this afford learners the opportunity to learn maths so that they become better thinkers, who can solve our problems. Let's not forget the teachers who play a big role in ensuring that our learners actively participate in maths. We are blessed to have this new furniture that will go a long way to enhance the culture of learning at our school," he said.

"Unilever is committed to improving the lives of South African children through the BrightFuture Schools Programme, of which OMO Fast Kids forms a part of. We aim to further complement the efforts of teachers in order to address the critical skills gap in our country in terms of producing future generations of individuals that are proficient in maths," concludes Reddy. ▲



**Grade 7 pupils sitting at their new desks in the school library**

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Written by an experienced team of educators, each product is scaffolded to ensure content mastery and is designed to foster analytical and critical thinking.



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**Educator and Teacher**  
Professional Development.



# Mobile innovation reduces the cost of training

By **Dennis Lamberti**, Development Director of Media Works

From improving productivity and upping staff morale, to attracting top talent and retaining employees for longer, the benefits of employee education are endless. The costs involved, however, can be prohibitive.

**D**ennis Lamberti, Development Director of Media Works, explores how mobile learning can reduce the cost of training substantially, making workforce education far more accessible to businesses in Africa.

Traditionally, workplace training has taken the form of lecture-style group learning in a classroom environment. In this scenario, a group of employees are led through the training material by a facilitator, and books and other printed materials are given to each learner to refer to and study from.

With this model, the cost of facilitation and course material are your biggest hard costs, and can be incredibly prohibitive depending on the length of training and how many people need to do the course.

However, what is even more costly to your business, is the amount of work hours that are lost during the training. The classroom-style approach means regulated group training and a loss of productivity during office work hours, which can slow down operations at inopportune times.

This is where e-learning comes in; it takes employee education beyond the classroom and onto the mobile device, where learners can tap into their training anytime, anywhere and then apply their learnings to the work environment.

## Beyond the classroom

When you think about online learning and mobile education, you might be a bit sceptical about whether this way of learning can take the place of teacher-classroom training and truly be effective to your staff. However, the facts prove otherwise.

Online learning has developed in such a way that rich, diverse and multi-faceted media components can be created to deliver the curriculum content in well-structured, logical ways that enhances learning.



Dennis Lamberti

It has, in fact, been proven to be far more effective than the traditional approach.

## Why digital?

Through digital learning, particularly on a mobile device, you can learn in your own space, anytime and anywhere. Learning can happen when it is convenient to the learner, and the content can be digested at their own pace.

When training is delivered like this, there are no work distractions, which is a common experience by employees, whose work priorities and deadlines often trump the training that is offered.

The information can also be conveyed in bit-sized chunks – a style called single-concept-learning – that allows the learner to snack on nuggets of relevant information, rather than grappling with reams of text and ideas at one time. This approach improves information retention.

Without being in a group, learners also have the opportunity to digest the content – whether it's course notes, videos or infographics – at their own time, and can repeat modules, in order to improve understanding; something that classroom based learning does not cater for.

As valuable as e-learning is to the individual, it is also hugely beneficial to the employer, as it cuts down the cost of training and saves time, while providing a more worthwhile and effective teaching model.

## Mobilising education

Mobile phone penetration is now at 67% of Africa's population, which means that there are about 1.13 billion people on the continent with mobile phones.

Adding to this, the majority of people in Africa accessing the Internet, are doing so via their mobile phones, so the situation is ripe for mobile education to flourish.

The cost of devices, such as a 10-inch tablet, is under R2 000 and data access costs are reducing across Africa, making mobile connectivity even more accessible.

Through mobile technology, we are presented with an opportunity to 'leapfrog' traditional structures by cutting out the learning centres, or office-based training, and delivering training to the learner anywhere at any time.

A well-developed learning programme will be able to run on any device, including mobile devices.

By downloading the course material onto smartphones or tablets, employees can access their notes and assignments at a quiet time during the workday, or even on a train, taxi, flight, or while waiting for an appointment.

If the learner feels more comfortable taking their time with the material and engaging with it at home, there is the scope for this too. The mobile device becomes the facilitator. Once purchased, the device can be used to access any number of learning interventions.

## Offline ability

While millions of Africans have access to smart phones and tablets, they are often only connected to the Internet when connected to a WiFi hotspot, as opposed to utilising paid-for data.

To overcome this, mobile learning has offline capabilities, meaning that learners can download the material when they are online to access it when they are offline. This makes the learning material accessible, whether the learner is connected to the Internet or not.

As tech hubs, which were initiated in Kenya and South Africa, continue to pop up across Africa, even those living in remote geographic areas can make use of access to the internet via these WiFi zones.

Here, people can download the material onto their device, and engage with the information at home, or on the go, even if they are not connected to the internet.

## Self marking for success

The biggest cost of any training intervention is the cost of the facilitator/teacher, and one of the crucial roles that a facilitator performs is the marking of assignments and providing feedback.

Self marking is an essential part of online training, and it needs to be done in the right way to reinforce the learning process and to enhance long-term memory by answering questions and working through the outcomes.



The way that this works, is that questions and assignments will be given to the learner as part of their course material. In their own time, they will complete the answers in their worksheets (these can be downloaded and printed).

The learners will mark their worksheet exercises against a model answer sheet. For this to work, the answer sheet needs to be comprehensive; providing the answer, as well as the thought process behind how the answer was derived.

This style of learning puts the control in the learners' hands. They could cheat and take shortcuts when writing down their answers, but this is of no benefit to them, as they will not be gaining the relevant knowledge and skills necessary to complete the course.

Through this approach, learners are also less restricted in their answers and can express themselves better. By using descriptive answer sheets, the learner can see exactly where they went wrong, which allows for greater reflection and retention of information.

Self marking, when done properly, will prepare learners for an independent summative assessment. The more effort an employee puts into understanding the course material and completing the self-marking exercise, the more they will get out of their studies and the better they will do in their assessments.

Mobile learning is beneficial to both employee and employer. It is far less of a sacrifice, of time and money than the traditional approach, and it is far more engaging, relevant and effective. ▲



# Design Thinking: The antidote to “Thinking Inside of the Box”

You’d be hard-pressed to sit through any meeting nowadays without hearing a rallying cry to “think outside of the box” or “push the envelope”. There’s constant encouragement to bring creative and innovative ideas to the table.



Jacki McEwen

“However,” says Jacki McEwen, Co-owner of Eclipse Public Relations, an agency credited with bringing high levels of creativity to the table, “this is starkly contrasted by the fact that our minds have been wired from a young age to approach tasks with logic and with specific pre-defined formulas. Most schools follow a learn-memorise-test approach to education, with little room for innovation and creativity.”

McEwen, a businesswoman with a background in design, and mother of a high school learner, continues, “The introduction of design thinking in schools is an encouraging trend, showing great results.” According to an article published on *Designorate*, the benefits of integrating design thinking into the school curriculum is that it will assist learners with their creativity and improve their thinking/innovation skills in a variety of disciplines.

“Design thinking promotes an empathetic approach to solving problems by truly understanding the requirements of the target audience and developing human-centric solutions,” explains McEwen.

One example of how design thinking has been successfully implemented at school level is at the Nueva School in California, where learners were required to design an LED lamp for a family member. However, instead of jumping directly into the design process, the students had to select a specific family member and collect information about how they would use the lamps in order to create one that fitted that person’s specific needs.

“While there is still quite a bit of debate around whether design thinking should be included within the school curriculum, two models have already been explored in the UK – the Frog’s Collective Action Toolkit and the IDEO’s Design Thinking for Educators. Both models explore different approaches in order to seek a better understanding of problems requiring design solutions,” shares McEwen.



The Frog’s Collective Action Toolkit aims to assist learners when it comes to identifying and solving problems with which they are faced using a variety of imaginative and team-building skills to find a solution.

Conversely, The IDEO’s Design Thinking for Educators model focuses more on the teacher and how each individual implements the design thinking process.

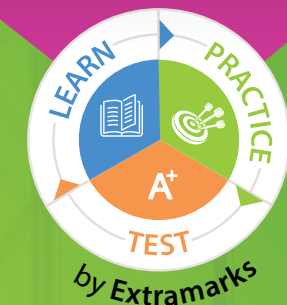
Design Thinking & Innovation Thought Leader, Iain Bryant who is a Director at Future by Design – Innovation, HCD, says, “Design thinking as a tool is equally effective in solving challenges in an educational setting as it is in banking, medicine, business or any other discipline.”

“In a business world that requires employees to be more than just logical thinkers, it strikes me that introducing the design thinking method into the foundation phase of a child’s schooling years could result in learners gaining the emotional and creative tools needed to become all-rounders in the business world – something which has become so critical in this day and age,” concludes McEwen. ▲



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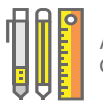
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# A holistic approach to addressing curriculum management and delivery

Curriculum delivery is a significant feature of any credible educational system globally. Its successful implementation relies heavily on the teaching force that is well-trained. A teaching force that not only understands the content but also knows which delivery techniques to deploy in the classroom to bring the best out of the learners. In South Africa it has been very difficult to adequately train teachers because the curriculum has, since 1994, undergone several reforms in rapid succession.

The first change took the form of the outcomes-based education popularly known as OBE and this was followed by the national curriculum statement which was also subsequently revised in 2005. This was also replaced by the existing curriculum assessment and policy statements, also known as CAPS. But education critics argue that although the intention of the changes was to address issues of access, equity and redress and equip learners with requisite skills to cope with the demands and challenges of the real outside world, the speed with which the changes were introduced provided very little time for teachers to master and grasp the new content. In fact, it has been widely reported that at the time, majority of teachers left the profession in droves because they felt under-prepared to keep up with the requirements of the new curriculum.

It is in this context that Kagiso Shanduka Trust (KST), an organisation focused on education, devised a holistic educational intervention model to help address some of the historical barriers to education particularly in township based schools. Called the Whole School Evaluation, the programme is based on the notion that assistance to schools should be preceded by a thorough needs analysis. It is believed that once the needs have been properly identified it would be easy to determine the extent and the kind of intervention measures to be implemented. Typically the measures cover basic needs such as infrastructure, curriculum development and teacher training, and governance, and leadership, classroom resourcing and learner support.



Group work is important

To date the programme has been successfully implemented in 428 schools in the Motheo and Fezile Dabi districts in the Free State. Motheo district manager, Themba Mavuso said KST's intervention strategy is aligned with department of basic education (DBE)'s curriculum. He said KST constantly attempts to respond to the needs of the individual schools at all time. "We deploy knowledgeable and well-focused experts in curriculum matters to ensure they do a good job in the improvement of in the schools' results," he said. Mavuso said the other key consideration of the KST programme is the use of sustainable educator intervention approaches. These are training and development as well as subsequent utilisation of the subject master teachers.

Related to this, he added, is what they call 'Professional Learning Committee' where trained subject master teachers lead a cluster on a particular topic or matter. Regular monitoring and evaluation of both teachers and learners is also at the centre of the KST intervention programme, according to



Effective curriculum delivery does not require technology

Mavuso. "Our monitoring relies on the department's assessment tools such as the Annual National Assessment (ANAs) in primary schools and grade 12 pass rate as benchmarks for excellence. We also depend on feedback given by schools on the impact of the teacher development intervention programme," he said.

Fezile Dabi district manager, Rodney Makube, echoed Mavuso's sentiments. To him the administration of baseline assessments at the beginning of the programme is very crucial for the success of the programme. He said this is complemented by 'summative' evaluations to assess progress while the ANAs assist to track learner improvement. Makube said their on-going support to schools in literacy and numeracy has contributed immensely to the overall education improvement in the province since the adoption of the KST's intervention programme.

Makube said under pressing situations, we resort to 'teach to the test' approach, in order to assist learners to pass. In this instance, teachers focus only on aspects that will be examinable to increase the learners' chances of performance improvement. Mavuso said 'teach to the test' as an approach has its own limitations and in some quarters it may be interpreted as "spoon-feeding campaign by schools". However, he said, the approach is necessary to achieve certain goals in certain instances such as where evidence that teaching has taken place is verified. Mavuso added that it works better for teachers and learners to collectively commit to the syllabus coverage and subsequent mastery.

Makube also highlighted the intervention programme's "unique features that equip learners with skills for the job market". He said the key component of this is 'Youth Leadership', which seeks to instil values that would empower learners as leaders. "Learners are empowered to lead their own learning and development at school, community and beyond school years.

## The programme has six distinct core values and these are

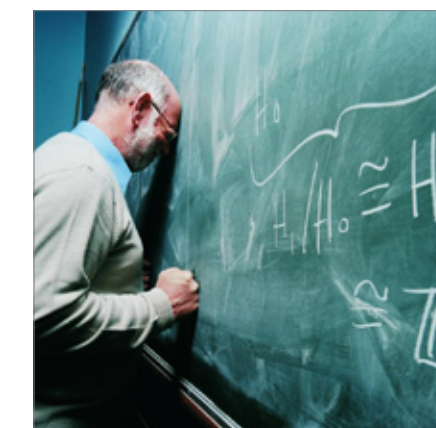
- Awareness: participants become aware of themselves and their goals for the week
- Focus: here participants will have become aware of the importance of focus in achieving one's goals
- Creativity: participants will recognise the creativity in them

- Integrity: Participants will be able to reflect on the importance of integrity to leaders and themselves as people
- Perseverance: Participants will have had an experience of themselves persevering through a challenging and frustrating experience as individuals and as a team
- Service: participants understand the importance of serving and valuing others.

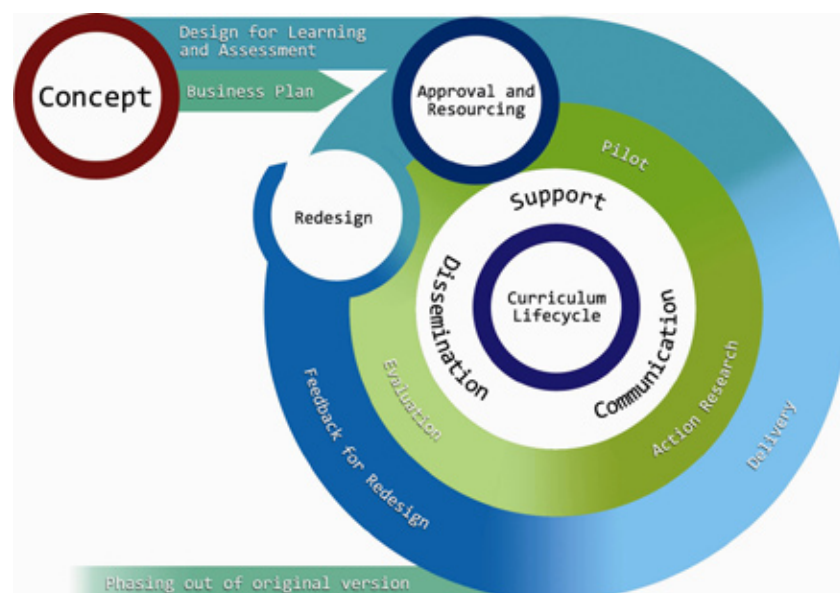
Both Mavuso and Makube are confident the current quality of the curriculum has potential to empower both learners and teachers with critical skills. They said the success of the KST model can contribute significantly to the country's education system if replicated nationally. Schools that are part of the programme have shown remarkable academic improvements at both foundation and senior phases. Last year, DBE's curriculum delivery report revealed that the Free State province demonstrated improvement from lower grades, with gradual movement towards the national senior certificate. ▲



Practical delivery



Some teachers did not accept OBE





# How to empower children against underage drinking



Parents and teachers are encouraged to use open communication to empower their children against underage drinking. This initiative offers sober advice to not only parents in general, but the same knowledge is useful for teachers – who often fill the parental role at school and are sometimes more ‘in tune’ with the teenagers than the parents are.

There is a high chance that teenagers have or will have an encounter with alcohol either through experimenting or through someone else’s drinking. “As a parent it is your responsibility to keep them safe from underage drinking by teaching them that alcohol is for adult consumption only and to equip them with the right tools and knowledge to say no to alcohol when they are away from your supervision,” said Rowan Dunne, Alcohol Policy Manager at SAB.

Teens have less physical tolerance to the effects of alcohol, and their brains which are still developing, are more susceptible to alcohol related harm.

The U.S. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism stated in a 2010 publication that most studies show the benefits from allowing children to drink in the home or controlled environment are non-existent. “This means that as a parent, keeping them safe includes saying no to them using alcohol at home,” said Dunne.

The South African Breweries (SAB) runs *You Decide*, an interactive underage drinking roadshow, which aims to help educate teenagers about the dangers of consuming alcohol and equip them with various techniques on how to avoid peer pressure and to make the right choices in life.

According to SADAG, it is an adult’s responsibility to keep communication open with teenagers in order for them to understand the consequences and dangers of underage drinking. Open communication also allows guidance to be given to teenagers with how to say no to peer pressure.



The campaign also speaks to parents and adults about the active role they play in their teenagers’ lives.

## Listen to your children

The more open your relationship with your children is, the more likely they will feel comfortable with talking to you about any issues, including alcohol. Listen to them, don’t judge and let them know they can come to you and trust you.

## Teach them to deal with peer pressure

Give them some examples of how to say ‘no’ without losing face. If your child is offered alcohol, here are some examples of what he or she can say, which includes using white lies that involve you or the other parent:

- “No thanks.”
- “Not today, thanks.”
- “I don’t like the way it (beer, wine, cider) tastes.”
- “I’ll be grounded for life if my dad finds out I’ve been drinking.”
- “My mom will not teach me how to drive if she finds out I have been drinking.”
- “I need all my brain cells for rugby practice (math test, homework) tomorrow.”



If your child is offered alcohol, here are some examples of what he or she can do:

- Leave the scene
- Change the subject
- Laugh it off

## Teach them to say no to adults

They should learn to say no to adults who send them to the tavern or the shop to buy alcohol; or adults who offer them a taste or sip of an alcoholic drink and promise not to tell.

## Invest in recreational activities and in spending quality time with your children

Encourage your teens to take part in activities that develop interests and skills that will help them feel good about themselves without the use of alcohol. Hobbies, school events, sports, healthy relationships, and volunteer work are examples of such activities.

## Talk about substance abuse

If you don’t tell them the facts, someone else will – and the ‘facts’ they get from friends are seldom true. Instead of waiting until a problem arises, talk to your teen about your concerns and the messages they may be getting from the media and their peers.

## Know the facts and then teach them

Know the facts about alcohol. You can’t expect your child to know the effects of alcohol on the body and the risks of alcohol misuse if you don’t have all the information yourself. Be informed and ensure your teenager knows the effects of alcohol and the dangers it presents.

Research from the 2012 University of South Africa (UNISA) Youth Research Unit Substance Abuse Survey, shows:

- Teenagers who begin drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to become alcohol dependent than those who have their first drink at age 20 or older.
- Teens that use alcohol are three times more likely to be involved in violent crimes.
- 67% of teens who drink before the age of 15 will go on to use illegal drugs.

## Background

The You Decide underage drinking programme encompasses a series of activities designed to demonstrate to teens that the choice they make now, can impact on their future prospects positively or negatively.

The programme includes a series of school visits, which incorporate an interactive industrial theatre performance based on recognisable social settings for teenagers, on the consequences of underage drinking. It is left to teens now armed with knowledge on the negative consequences of underage drinking, as well as techniques to resist undue peer pressure, to decide for themselves.

The roadshow has visited over 750 000 teenagers in over 1 700 schools since its launch in 2012.

It also provides free educational material, including teacher guides (aligned to the curriculum), parent guides and teen guides, all with useful information and tips.

More than 60 000 adults have been reached in community workshops and alternative reach engagements, which are conducted to help empower adults with the tools to speak to the youth about the dangers of alcohol.

Results of similar campaigns in Europe and America conducted by ICAP, the International Centre for Alcohol Policies, suggest that strategies focused on any one of the factors that might prove useful in curbing underage drinking are not nearly as effective as a combination strategy. Their analysis concludes that multiple interventions provide meaningful additional benefit over single ones.

## Facts & figures

- You Decide has helped generate an 8,3% (in relative terms) drop in teen drinking in communities touched
- 1 709 schools have been visited in five provinces by You Decide
- 776 840 learners have received the You Decide message face-to-face
- In some provinces (like Gauteng) 86% of teens as young as 14 are drinking.

**The campaign has a toll-free line for youth to call, should they need any help (0800 33 33 77) ▲**



# From Sparrow Schools to SAPS

We were delighted to catch up with a past student, Boitumelo Motaung who had an incredible and unique journey with us at Sparrow Schools. This lovely, bright young man started his studies at Sparrow Schools in 1996 and has come so far to overcome many challenges in his early life...

**B**oitumelo was raised by his grandmother in the township, Thokoza and experienced challenges with his education because English was not his first language. Despite the challenges Boitumelo faced due to his learning difficulties and his unsettled home life, the school and Sparrow's Learner Support Unit were able to support his remedial, emotional and psychological needs.

The school not only equipped Boitumelo with an immense amount of knowledge and skills but he also had opportunities that were not possible for most young people from his township. Boitumelo's talent in the school's choir meant he was selected to travel to the United Kingdom in 2002 and 2004 as part of the Sparrow Choir Tour.

In 2007, Boitumelo was employed by Sparrow Schools as a drama teacher and gained a great reputation at the school after he organised many successful drama productions at the Sparrow. Boitumelo is now working in Pretoria, for SAPS (South African Police Service) in the logistics department, which he finds both exciting and challenging, however he is passionate about supporting children with learning difficulties, especially wanting to help those who come from townships and has expressed willingness to become an ambassador for Sparrow Schools in order to promote [Educate-a-Child](#).

This vital programme finds sponsors who will give financial support to disadvantaged children at Sparrow who cannot afford basic educational resources and remedial education they desperately require.

*"I believe that parents and guardians need to be more aware of their children's learning difficulties so their children can get specialised remedial assistance like the support I received at Sparrow... I am very thankful for the opportunities provided by Sparrow Schools."*

## The following international schools have supported Sparrow and welcomed them on sport, music or drama tours

- Alleyn's School
- Ashcroft Technology Academy
- Bonneville Primary School
- Brambletye School
- Broomwood Hall
- Burdett Coutts Primary School
- Charterhouse School
- City of London School for Boys
- Clifton College
- Cranleigh School
- Dulwich College
- Dulwich College Junior School
- Dulwich Prep London
- Eaton House The Manor



**Boitumelo Motaung**

- Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' Prep School
- Hailebury School
- Hornsby House
- James Allen's Girls' School
- John Cabot Academy
- King's College Junior School, Wimbledon
- Macaulay Church of England Primary School
- Morpeth School
- Peckham Rye Primary School
- St Edward's College, Liverpool
- St John's School Leatherhead
- St Michael's, Kent
- The Dragon School
- Tonbridge School
- Tudor Hall School
- Watford Girls Grammar School
- Wellington College
- Westminster School
- Westminster Under School

If you would like to support a child's education, please email Carol, [carolmckn@gmail.com](mailto:carolmckn@gmail.com) for further information. ▲

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