

African Education Week focuses on eLearning and technology at schools

The African Education Week Convention and Learning Expo is the meeting and trading platform for everyone who is passionate about improving the standard of education in Africa. Now in its seventh year, it's reported to be the leading educational resources and training event, attracting more education professionals than any other event, and takes place from 19-22 June 2013 in Johannesburg, South Africa.



"E" will be big!

"E" will be big this year in South African education!" says educational technology expert and head of e-Learning at Mustek, Kobus van Wyk. "Although e-Learning is already happening in isolated schools, it still has to get going at a much broader level. e-Learning can make a huge contribution towards alleviating the bad state of education in South Africa."

He continues: "the National Department of Basic Education (DBE) is putting large emphasis on the use of technology in education, or e-education as they call it. In its document, *Action Plan to 2014*, Chapter 7 is entitled *The importance of e-education*, with some ambitious goals set for 2013 and 2014. This adds impetus to the implementation of e-learning initiatives in the different provinces."

From tablets to phablets

According to van Wyk, who is a regular speaker at African Education Week, it became very apparent during 2012 "that the use of tablets and mobile devices will play an increasingly important role in education in the future." He encourages teachers to embrace technology: "Educators, get your hands on a device - today! Experience it first hand, familiarise yourself with it, and when you get stuck, ask a learner to help you!"

"It's not just tablets that are the way forward, it is the concept of 'bring your own device (BYOD)' says one of this year's keynote speakers at African Education Week, Prof Johannes Cronje, Dean Informatics and Design at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

He explains, "tablets are getting cheaper and cheaper, and more and more versatile. Of course it's not just tablets but the combination of tablets and phones, "Phablets", that are set to revolutionise things. We are progressively finding that our technology has to be portable. We are moving to a multi-screen universe, with the screens being very intelligent, and even

knowing where they are and who is using them. This ability of machines to learn our behaviour and our needs will mean that we have to explore new ways of learning and thinking about technology."

Cronje believes the term E-learning will disappear in favour of an older term, "learning". He says, "since electronic books have started outselling printed books, and since Facebook exchanges are outperforming email, it is very difficult to think of any learning that is not E-enabled."

Today's learners tech-savvy

"Today learners are becoming very tech-savvy and engage with one another through technology as a primary means of communication" says Paulo Ferreira, head of Enterprise Mobility at Samsung South Africa.

"As such", he continues, "ensuring education takes place within this environment means that learners will naturally engage more actively within the education space - learning more and increasing their knowledge around technology at the same time."

"Samsung started off by offering the African continent our Solar Powered Internet Schools (SPIS)," he says, "a world-first; the exclusively solar-powered, mobile and completely independent classroom is geared at increasing accessibility to education and connectivity across Africa. It is designed particularly for use in remote rural areas with limited or no access to electricity. Each Solar Powered Internet School is built in a 12 metre long shipping container, making them easily transportable via truck to remote areas."

Ferreira says "the success of this Samsung solution is evident through the one that has been stationed at Phomolong Secondary School in Tembisa for approximately 9 months. Over this time, the matric pass rate increased from 89% the previous year to 97% at the end of 2012 - an increase of 8%."

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