

TRENDS ARTICLE

THE IMPORTANCE OF TECHNOLOGY IN OUR SCHOOLS

Local businesses have an obligation, as well as the resources, to make a contribution to the communities in which they operate, says Sunil Singh, business unit manager: eLearning at Datacentrix.

Many local schools are at a disadvantage due to a lack of access to technology, a key component of today's increasingly digital society where almost 25 million South Africans have access to the Internet. A generation ago, schools relied on a computer lab or a couple of desktops for computer training. Today, the entire classroom has been transformed into a 1:1 learning environment, where learning takes place at anytime, anywhere from a range of devices.

It is here, explains Sunil Singh, business unit manager: eLearning at Datacentrix, that local businesses have an obligation, as well as the resources, to make a contribution to the communities in which they operate.

"Social cohesion makes for a more orderly society, which in turn, is good for business. This is particularly important for South Africa, given the high levels of educational inequality. What is needed is a shift in the idea of business being merely an observer, but an active corporate citizen working together with the National Department of Basic Education to find ways to support underperforming schools, teachers and learners."

Businesses are profoundly affected by the quality and output of the education system, says Singh, particularly those operating on a global platform. "Organisations operating within South Africa can leverage current expenditure in the area of education more effectively if they align contributions closely to government policy, and pool resources on projects that have the potential to generate a systemic shift."

He maintains that the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) through the concept of "eLearning" in classrooms can enhance both teaching and learning. "Teacher training and professional development are two of the most important factors for the success of this type of approach; eLearning should make teaching and learning easier and more efficient for teachers, not more complex."

The challenges around South Africa's maths and science school education are perhaps among the most frequently discussed and documented, with one of the most pressing issues being a lack of suitably qualified maths and science teachers. "Maths and science form the foundation for many study paths at tertiary level and there is an increasing local awareness of the importance of building leaders within the fields of science and engineering. It is therefore critical that eLearning supports teacher development through use of educational content within these subjects in particular."

With its comprehensive eLearning offering, including tablet carts, cases and lockers, as well as charging and syncing solutions that are suitable for all devices, Datacentrix can assist corporate enterprises to help address the inequalities in the education system by collectively supporting schools in poorer communities.

"We are committed to making ICT teaching simpler, more practical and less of a financial burden on educational institutions, essentially to making modern education available to all learners in Sub-Saharan Africa."

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