Transforming teaching methodology for success in African classrooms

By Brad Pulford   26 Oct 2022

The future success of the African continent lies in its ability to hone the skills, talents, and ambitions of its ever-growing youth population through quality education. Yet teachers face many challenges that hinder successful curriculum implementation - and the Covid-19 pandemic only exacerbated these issues. It is worthwhile to note, however, that the pandemic didn't exactly change the future; it merely accelerated its inevitable arrival.

Brad Pulford, managing director of HP Africa

If recent disruptions have taught us anything, it's that much can be done to improve teaching and learning experiences. But these solutions need to be adaptable, inclusive, and – importantly – swift.

For the teaching profession to keep pace with an evolving workforce, developing teachers' soft skills – in fostering critical thinking and subject understanding – and digitalising the classroom through transformative technologies are immediate priorities for future-proofing African classrooms.

A recent HP-commissioned survey of 800 educators in South Africa and Nigeria shows most teachers believe that acquiring new skills will help them across every dimension of teaching. They believe such skills will help with classroom instruction and management, ICT integration, and lesson and curriculum preparation.

Across the board, teachers identified 10 important skill sets needed to transform how their pupils are taught, the most significant being the fostering of critical and entrepreneurial thinking, as well as the promotion of digital literacy – both of which are a core part of modern-day teaching.

Developing digital literacy

Digital literacy provides teachers the potential to design new, stimulating, collaborative, and creative classroom experiences that connect with pupils and help them to become critical, independent learners.

Teachers should be supported to understand how to apply their expertise to digital technologies in their classrooms in ways that contribute to their students' development and understanding of subject knowledge.

Providing time for teachers to engage with changing practices and to connect with other educators to share ideas and experiences is essential in supporting the uptake of digital literacy in African classrooms.

Encouraging critical and entrepreneurial thinking

Critical and entrepreneurial thinking should be both the aim and the basis for teaching and learning – especially at a primary school level.

It's about developing teaching strategies that deepen the quality of students' capacities for sound reasoning across the curriculum.

There is an increasing need for teachers to have a range of transferable academic and vocational skills to select learning materials that encourage reflection and that provide multiple views. It is also important for teachers to promote constructive criticism in their pupils' written work and foster an environment for peer-to-peer discussion.

Transformative technologies

The HP study found that teachers frequently use ICT to conduct internet searches, prepare lessons and reports, and use computers and their applications in teaching and learning.

But these technologies can also be better leveraged to improve communication (between teachers and parents, or teachers and pupils), monitor and evaluate learner progress, digitise learning material, and distribute homework online.

The multimedia element in ICT has the capability to provide students with personalised instructions, interactive animations, games, and simulations that can make complex subject material more relatable and understandable. Furthermore, using

multimedia technology can bridge the barrier between the teaching medium and a pupil's first language and offers additional levels of interactivity.

Future-proof teaching

The improvement of these critical skills is deemed as intrinsic – by participants in the HP study – to developing educational outcomes in African classrooms. Combined, these skills offer teachers the opportunity to take their students from fact-mastery to flexible knowledge-application in unfamiliar contexts and facilitate learning experiences that deepen subject understanding.

This is imperative to providing quality, future-proof education across the continent.

The onus of transforming the pedagogy does not fall on the shoulders of government alone; the private sector can be meaningful allies in this change. HP's Innovation and Digital Education Academy (HP IDEA) programme – for example – offers educators in 17 countries the opportunity to create digital capabilities based on educational frameworks from leading global universities. The initiative gives teachers the confidence to innovate the ways they deliver classes, both now and in the future.

Teachers perform a pivotal function in our society by shaping the young minds of prospective leaders and preparing students to take on the jobs of the future.

With teaching methodologies undergoing a metamorphosis, educators need to be equipped with the right tools needed for imparting modern education. This requires scalable practices focused on effective teaching and learning in a blended educational environment – the urgent implementation of such being a necessity should Africa not wish to fall behind in ensuring globally competitive educational outcomes for its learners.

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