

Technology can change the face of learning for SA's youth

South Africa needs to undergo a learning revolution to keep up with the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and improve the way young South Africans learn.



Michael Wolf, CEO of Formula D

This according to Michael Wolf, CEO of Formula D – an interactive experience design firm that seeks to make learning accessible and fun using interactive technologies and game design. Wolf was speaking at the SA Innovation Summit 2018, which kicked off in Cape Town this week. He was one of several delegates delivering commentary on the ed-tech that works, building pragmatic innovations for SA's wicked problems panel.

“To tackle this systemic, multi-layered, wicked problem of education in South Africa, we need to generate societal consent around the value of education. If we manage to nurture a culture of learning in South Africa, we might be able to create enough momentum to shift our focus toward a better education system. A revised system supported by teachers, parents and policymakers,” Wolf says.

Education is one of the country's top three national priorities and government has allocated R1 trillion towards it for the next three years. Basic education will earn the bulk of the spend.



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Wolf explains that a learning revolution involves using innovation to effectively change the way kids learn, and ultimately better understand complex subjects like maths and science in particular.

South Africa is ranked as one of the poorest performing nations in the world when it comes to maths and science. According to a report released by the Institute for Race Relations (IRR) earlier this year, only 33% of matrics passed maths with a grade of 40% or higher and only 18.3% of government schools have science laboratories.

A learning revolution is needed

To improve these figures, Wolf says making use of informal learning space outside the schools framework is essential, and will provide a platform that helps to coach kids on how to best understand these complex subjects. Alternative learning spaces include community libraries, science centres and museums, which can easily substitute deficiencies in the formal education sector.

“We need to make learning more appealing by unlocking those opportunities to learn in unique ways. Since our schools are under-resourced, we need to think of out-of-the-box ways to get this right. Imagine kids could tap into unused teaching resources like unemployed teachers or academics outside of school? Or have access to school facilities during the holidays, as well as the learning technology tools that will help them develop into individuals who understand these subjects completely,” Wolf says.

Formula D has developed learning innovations for Two Oceans Aquarium in Cape Town; Constitution Hill in Johannesburg; the Rockefeller Foundation; Frost Science Museum in Miami, as well as a host of other educational centres locally and internationally.

“The time has come for a learning revolution to transform the face of education in South Africa and with tech and innovation we can get it right,” Wolf says.

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