

Why tech in the classroom goes beyond just tablets

By [Dennis Lamberti](#)

25 Oct 2019

Teaching is not what it used to be. Where once teachers almost universally pointed at chalk markings on blackboards, and guided learners as they recited parrot-fashion from the textbooks before them, today virtually every element of this approach is being reconsidered.



Dennis Lamberti

In certain education circles, they are being revised entirely.

In South Africa, the shift away from traditional teaching practices to more innovative and technology-centred approaches has been most visibly seen in recent years through the introduction of tablets at schools. While this process, implemented by the Department of Basic Education, has given invaluable access to learners who might never have had access to this sort of technology before, it hasn't been universally successful.

Some research suggests that tablet learning doesn't necessarily improve understanding, and that it may not be a cost-effective option. There is also the added issue of South Africa's high crime rate and that having this sort of technology at schools poses a security risk. And, of particular importance, is the role of teachers in this space. Introducing tablets doesn't make teachers obsolete – indeed, teachers will never be obsolete – they still need to be able to teach as well as they ever have, and also need to know how to engage with children who are in turn engaging with technology.

Flipping learning on its head

This notion has gained traction internationally and has led to the development of flipped learning. Flipped learning, as the name suggests, flips classroom-based learning around. Learners are given their material electronically before class so that they can study it in their own time and at their own pace. Time in the classroom is then used to complete their homework and gives teachers the opportunity to help learners individually, or engage with them in practical activities.

In this environment, teachers become facilitators rather than dogmatic autocrats, and the learning experience becomes collaborative, rather than rote.

Since January 2019, Curro Foreshore has been adopting a similar approach at its premises in the heart of Cape Town's CBD. "Our philosophy is that teachers are most valuable when they are providing one-on-one tutoring to learners in class," says Jay Paul, Curro Foreshore's business manager. "We want their role to be facilitative, not only in terms of education but in terms of the imparting life skills too. Once teachers are freed from the whiteboard, they are able to play a more constructive role in their learners' lives, and this includes offering emotional and mental support."

The next phase of Curro Foreshore's approach to education is to ensure that the digital platforms created are so seamless that teachers can work with learners remotely. "This would help us to access schools in rural areas that don't have teachers for every subject, for example," explains Paul. "In this way, we could help to level the educational playing field in South Africa."

The future of teaching

This year's World Teachers' Day theme is "Young Teachers: The Future of the Profession". And truly they are. But while South Africa is currently experiencing a very high influx of young people wanting to study to become teachers – which is good for the sector – this is largely due to a lack of work opportunities – which points to the country's complex and systemic economic issues. If young teachers are going to take education into the future, they need to have jobs available to fill, and they also need to be taught how to teach in future-focused ways. Simply handing out tablets to learners is neither an innovative nor an effective approach to teaching. Technology has to be a means – not an end.

The future of the profession therefore involves educating young teachers on teaching methods that ensure both technology and the teachers themselves work to the best of their ability. Teachers need to have the opportunity to embark on continuous development programmes (CDP) – workshops, courses and conferences that explore innovations in teaching and that prevent pedagogical stagnation. These programmes stand to improve the quality of teaching and help it to evolve. Unfortunately CDPs are not available for teachers in South Africa.

Teachers should remain at the heart of our education system, but should have increasing access to resources that help them teach meaningfully. Technology aids understanding; teachers are still the conduits.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dennis Lamberti is the development director at Media Works, one of South Africa's leading providers of education and training. Media Works is part of the Optim Group and is responsible for implementing the learning management system at Curro Foreshore.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>