

We need to mirror the pace of technological change by sharpening our tech skills

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With only a few weeks left in 2023, South Africans have endured another challenging year. It is anticipated that 2024 will be equally challenging; however, technological advances provide some hope for new opportunities.

"In South Africa, one of the biggest challenges that needs to be addressed is the education landscape. The value proposition of higher education needs to be redefined as future students will demand more customised learning experiences. What role will technology play in the future of South Africa and are higher education institutions embracing this change?" asks Mohamed Goga, MD of Mancosa.

Embracing holistic education

One of the biggest challenges highlighted by Mancosa this year was that schools and higher education providers are dealing with students who are becoming increasingly frustrated with how they are being taught and forced to learn. This frustration is then carried over into higher education institutions, as some adopt a cautious approach to tech-based learning instead of embracing it.

"The problem facing teachers is that the pace of change in teaching methodology and the traditional classroom environment has not kept pace with technological advancements. We need to be aware that learners process information differently. The problem arises when they are still being taught using traditional methods. This is causing significant frustration and needs to be addressed," says Goga.



Mohamed Goga, MD at Mancosa

While the democratisation of information has changed the world as we know it, not all available information is accurate or safe for human consumption. Critical thinking is a skill that educators have always encouraged. This is becoming even more important as educators need to encourage students and learners to interrogate the validity of the information they can access.

However, some institutions are less willing to leverage technology's benefits fully.

Technology has the potential to fundamentally change the way we educate our youth. The biggest concern that educators are currently facing surrounds generative artificial intelligence (AI) and the influence that it will have on the current education model. Historically, education has been presented in a way that teachers and lecturers were custodians of information and were seen as a significant source of truth and critical thinking as students and learners graduated from one phase of their education journey to another.

This trust has now shifted towards technology. As a result, teachers and lecturers are increasingly guiding learners and students through a world where a myriad of information is available at the click of a button. "There has been plenty of fear that technology will replace human jobs. However, as Steven Hawking once pointed out, there will always be a demand for human-based services. Humanity is not in a space where we will replace teachers and lecturers in favour of AI-based learning.

However, there is a demand for teachers and lecturers to modernise their approach to presenting education. Educators

must step out of their comfort zone and embrace this demand," says Goga, who adds that digital skills form a critical component of the course offering of the Mancosa School of Education.

A South African first

Mancosa's stance regarding technology is influenced not only by the frustration it sees among students but also by the future world of work and the fact that the jobs that will exist in 30 years play an equally influential role in this debate.

In line with this, and the fact that a SAP report (Africa's Tech Skills Scarcity Revealed) points out that there has been no improvement in South Africa's chronic shortage of all types of ICT skills across almost all sectors, Mancosa developed Estrella, the first postgraduate diploma in AI offered by a South African higher education provider.

"It is clear that digitisation will play a major role in the future value proposition of higher education institutions. Mancosa feels that it needs to lead the charge to embrace this. Further, in a digitally driven environment, online education serves the important purpose of equipping the South African workforce with the knowledge and skills required to progress in a future world of work," says Goga, who adds that transferable skills such as independent work and workload management, as well as the ability to collaborate with team members to achieve an objective, are highly sought after by global employers.

Embracing technology across the board

Goga points out that there is a digital component to all Mancosa qualifications, as it will provide graduates with the digital dexterity that will make them successful in the global workplace.

"South African employees are highly sought after by global employers because of our work ethic and dedication to perfection in all that we do. However, there is a need for us to sharpen our tech skills in line with the influence that technology has globally. This starts at primary school and should be embraced across the education spectrum. As a leading private higher education institute, we embrace technology as it will shape the future of South Africa," says Goga.

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