

Project-based learning can make a world of difference

Innovations such as DBE-E³, the Department of Basic Education's flagship programme, is an attempt to change South Africa's education crisis. While most academic curriculums focus on the core academic subjects, which still remain important, many learners aren't gaining the skill sets required to seamlessly integrate into the business environment.



Photo by RODNAE Productions: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/a-woman-and-boy-doing-school-project-7605901/> www.pexels.com]]

To achieve success in today's fast-paced, technology-driven and global economy a number of core skills are required to prepare learners for their future workplace.

"A matric that has experienced true project-based learning, even if that is not the term they or their teachers used, will benefit because they are developing the skills to turn their problems into projects. And they have developed the mind-set that failure is itself learning, and experienced the success that comes from persistence and finding support. Even a matric who failed their exams, or did not get the results they wanted, can shake off that failure and use opportunities like the second chance programme if they have had at least some experience to know that through iteration and support, they can try again. They are less likely to give up, or feel like they have to do it all on their own", says James Donald, executive director of DBE-E³.

Authentic learning

DBE-E³, the Department of Basic Education's flagship programme in South Africa, seeks to equip educators to prepare learner to be solution-seeking active participants in the world after school. We live in a project-based world. Think about it. Whether you're planning a virtual field trip or creating the perfect work-from-home space, you're working on a project.

In fact, many of us organise our tasks by projects and work collaboratively with other teams and colleagues to solve problems. DBE-E³ aims to bring authentic learning into the classroom so that learning has real-life applications and thus real meaning to learners.



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Education has to be far more about the entrepreneurial mindset; it has to develop not just skills but also the attitudes that enable young people to enjoy a challenge and to seek solutions to every problem.

Project-based learning is not the only change to the curriculum that DBE is looking at. Over the last three years, they have been working in a very dedicated and strategic way to support learners in career pathing, based on the individual's abilities and interests. A one-approach-fits-all, where everyone follows an academic path, is simply not working. People are wired differently, and flourish in different settings.

DBE-E³ was originally a small research group piloting and testing new pedagogies or methodologies for activating 21st century competencies in learners. Their mandate now is to deliver a blueprint for a tested pedagogy that the Department of Basic Education can roll out at scale. By 2024, they want to have reached 24,000 schools.

The end game is the effective creation of better work habits and improved attitudes towards learning, resulting in the long-term retention of skills.

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