

# Jasco addresses SA education issues

 By [Paul Fick](#)

18 Jan 2012

The South African education sector is faced with the significant challenge of increasing the matriculant pass rate with limited resources. Some of these include a high learner-to-teacher ratio and a lack of technology that could enable a better learning experience.

Education is a critical link in the development of any nation and the onus rests on every well-equipped South African organisation to assist the government in solving these challenges.

Adopting and leveraging IT technology in the education process has to be a priority to help larger numbers of students to understand lesson concepts and improve learning performances and results with less-qualified teachers. The Critical Links Education Appliance is the world's first purpose-built education server that delivers an enriching educational experience with one-on-one e-learning, offering the most effective way to develop skills in the 21st century. It is, essentially, a "school in a box".

## Keep our future workforce competitive

The Critical Links Education Appliance provides the technology needed in South Africa to help the education sector to engage students, enhance the learning experience, improve the national pass rate and keep our future workforce competitive and technology competent. This helps to ensure that the future workforce is equipped with the skills that they need to contribute positively to the local economy.

The Critical Links Education Appliance comprises three main components, namely: the learning management system, which enables the creation of teaching aids and content for the students to access at school or remotely via the Internet or wireless environment; the student information system, which enables administrators to manage the entire school - from student/teacher demographics to attendance and report cards and the IT management system for administration, feedback and reporting.

## Centralised administration facility

The solution is cost effective, allowing any classroom or school to become a computer room quickly and easily. The centralised administration facility enables all sites to be managed remotely for ease of maintenance. The rugged Classmate laptops issued to students as part of the solution, form part of the Critical Links Education Appliance and have been designed to be "kid proof" when used in the tough school environment. They are spill-resistant, drop proof and highly robust. Intricate security has also been incorporated into the PCs to ensure that should the devices be stolen they can be rendered useless, making them unable to be sold.

With the Education Application, all of the required infrastructure functionality is integrated into a single appliance, representing the world's first solution to combine vital learning with smart technology to debunk the fear of computers to both teachers and students. Each single server can accommodate up to 3000 students and offers learners convenient 24-hour access to learning resources. This makes for an engaging learning experience through technology and more efficient learning.

## Personalised attention for students

For teachers, the Critical Links Education Appliance helps to streamline education activities, creating a compelling learning experience with personalised attention for students through media-rich lessons that can be delivered without a high-speed

broadband infrastructure. It gives teachers more resources and more flexibility to design lessons and activities. It also allows educators to create and post student records, assignments and grades for real-time performance monitoring through an intuitive, easy-to-use interface.

For communities, the appliance also brings enormous benefits as the children are not only actively engaged while at school, but can also access the school content from home without the need for high-speed broadband. By improving the learning experience and delivering compelling material through a relevant medium, we can help to give children throughout South Africa essential skills for the 21st century and build a brighter future.

## **Pilot project in the Western Cape**

The Critical Links Education Appliance has been successfully implemented globally in Portugal and Argentina, and has seen great success in several African countries, including Senegal, Malawi, Namibia, the Seychelles and Mauritius. To carry the successes from the African market into South Africa, a pilot project, which began in early 2011, is currently running in three schools in the Western Cape. Preliminary results of this project have shown positive uptake by both teachers and students.

Our pilot project has shown that taking advantage of developing technologies in the classroom helps to engage learners, making their learning experience more enjoyable. Now teachers have modern tools to hold the class' attention and ensure that they focus on their work. We are looking forward to measuring the results of this project in the near future, after students have been using the system for a full school year.

The Critical Links Education Appliance provides an enriching education to learners, with simplified operation and a low total cost of ownership through a system that is flexible and scalable. It is perfectly suited to the challenging South African environment, as it operates on battery and does not require a power grid.

## **ABOUT PAUL FICK**

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