

# Modern gadgets are the future tools of learning

"The world is changing and there are different ways of gaining knowledge. Information is immediately available through the internet that can be accessed through iPads, smartphones and laptops", says Prof Johannes Cronjé, Dean of Informatics and Design at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), who is part of the line-up of speakers at the 7th [African Education Week](#) to be held at the Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa from 20-22 June 2013.

With free learning content increasingly becoming available through open access digital platforms, there is growing pressure on the lecturer at higher education institutions to re-think the way they present learning opportunities. This year's theme at African Education Week and Career Indaba is "Building future leaders in education".

## Teach learners how to find information

Cronjé who is also part of the opening session will also participate in a panel discussion on 'E-learning in action', says "we need to discard the old idea that the professor is the fount of all knowledge. The challenge now is for academics to make an effort to teach learners how to find information and how to design knowledge and learning packages that are relevant to them."

However, although there is an increasing reliance on content that can be accessed online, Adele Botha, principal researcher at CSIR Meraka believes that the classroom of the future will look the same, but it will act differently.

"The fundamentals of teaching will never change. Younger people want to learn from older people and those they identify as role models. But they want to learn differently. The lecturer has to become the person who pulls together the different forms of social media as tools of acquiring knowledge. The lecturer will also increasingly encourage students to create media that is suitable to their needs."

Botha will be a panellist during the session on 'The challenges of change: Is social media disruptive in education?' during African Education Week.

## Lecturers' skills sets need to change

Banning technology in the lecture hall or the classroom is short sighted says Botha who recently attended a conference where cell phones, iPads, PCs and other digital media were not allowed in the rooms.

"These are all tools that can enhance the learning experience. The lecturer can no longer depend on using only one tool like for example a whiteboard."

In an age where knowledge is shared through social media like Facebook and Twitter, banning technology is indeed not the way to win over a new generation of knowledge seekers.

Says Botha "young people are technology experts, but they are not education experts. They do not know what they need in order to gain proficiency in their chosen fields. The lecturer should be like the conductor of an orchestra. He does not necessarily need to know how to play all of the instruments, but he knows how to point towards the experts who play specific instruments to create beautiful music. The different ways of accessing information and knowledge are the instruments. Students have to find their own digital residency - the technology that they are most comfortable with using in the quest for knowledge."

"It does not mean teachers and lecturers have to retrain, but they do need to upscale their technological skills base. If they do not interact with young people in a way that is relevant to them, you will find lecture halls with up to 300 disengaged students. Young people are visual creatures who want to be taught through visual media. They do not want to be spoken down to and they want to be part of an interactive learning process. Social media has made it easy to interact with the professional. But there will always be some people who are more adept at adapting than others and who are more willing to embrace the new challenges."

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