



who's 'inadequate and unsuccessful' because theirs doesn't." This limits the potential for creative thinking and engaging teaching styles that reward individualism and "out-of-the-box" thinking. "To provide adequate preparation for the working world, knowledge acquisition needs to extend much further. A culture of knowledge-seeking behaviour needs to be fostered," adds Whittaker.

So how must the South African curriculum be modified to improve learning outcomes? "The syllabus may be a starting framework, but – to optimise a culture of learning – it needs to be extensively supplemented," says Whittaker. "In well-functioning schools, this is recognised and teaching methodologies don't remain limited to curriculum requirements. In poorly functioning schools, classroom numbers, chaotic environments and the inability of teachers to meet their own basic needs for growth mean that lessons are often taught to minimum curricular requirements, if even that.

"South African education still has a long way to go to embrace the best-practice educational policies that have been developed worldwide. As a nation, we're not alone in this lag – the majority of educationalists around the world are in a race to upgrade traditional teaching methodologies to ones which will meet the needs of children and allow them to be 'future-ready'." ●

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

We look at some initiatives aimed at addressing SA's unique educational challenges and at bringing local teaching and learning into line with evolving global paradigms

PARTNERS FOR POSSIBILITY (PfP)

PfP operates through non-profit and public benefit organisation Symphonia for South Africa, which is built on the premise that business has a role to play in improving school leadership and equipping learners for life.

"Business and society expect children to have the skills to succeed in the 21st century. However, schools which are disconnected from the industry will never achieve that," argues PfP founder Louise van Rhyn. "The only way we can ensure that students are ready for the world is by breaking down the boundaries. Everyone, including businesses, government and citizens, must take greater collective responsibility for education."

PfP has been supporting and developing school principals of under-resourced schools since 2010 by partnering them with business leaders who have the skills to drive change.

THINKING SCHOOLS

NPO Thinking Schools SA (TSSA) is committed to upskilling South African pupils with the thinking competencies to succeed at school and in life. It helps schools transform the way they teach and the way pupils learn and work with school management and teachers.

Through strategic workshops and teacher upskilling programmes, a common language for

discussing and teaching thinking is developed.

"The pupils are thereby empowered to take ownership of this thinking language as part of the way learning takes place," explains TSSA.

The Kyalami Schools Group, which incorporates Kyalami Preparatory, Beaulieu Preparatory and Beaulieu College, is one such "thinking school", aiming to foster creative and critical thinking skills in its pupils. This includes developing the ability to approach problems from different angles, challenge accepted wisdom and evaluate information.

WALDORF SCHOOLING SYSTEM

Underpinned by the educational philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, Waldorf Education develops the competencies required for individuals to thrive in a changing world. A worldwide educational movement, it emphasises the role of imagination in learning, striving to holistically integrate the intellectual, practical and artistic development of children. It moves away from merely imparting theoretical knowledge and, instead, equips pupils to learn by "doing" and "making". While Waldorf Education isn't new, its principles echo some of the shifts identified in modern education. The Federation of Waldorf Schools currently operates 17 independent schools in SA.