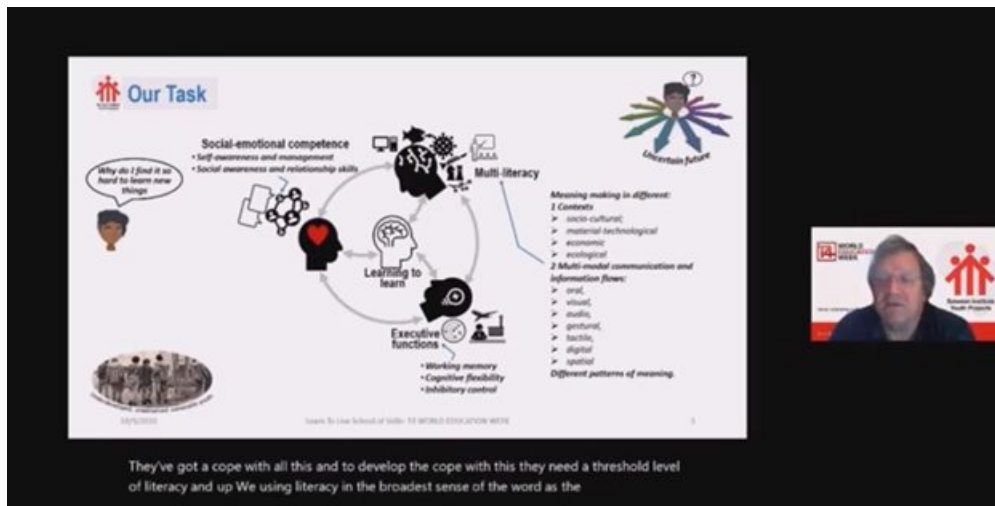


Learn to Live School of Skills shares insights on project-based learning

During the recent virtual World Education Week conference, 100 schools from across the globe addressed different topics related to the 'new normal' and learning in the 21st century. Learn to Live School of Skills was one of only seven schools in South Africa invited to speak at the week-long event where representatives shared their insights on their implementation of project-based learning (PBL).



Institutionalising project-based learning in South Africa

Introducing the concept of project-based learning was Dr Ria de Villiers from the National Department of Basic Education. The department intends to institutionalise PBL in all schools by 2022 to reduce youth unemployment by 90% by the year 2030. Learn to Live School of Skills is one of just a few schools currently participating in the pilot phase of this project.

“The world is changing and the reasons for project-based learning are very clear to us. Something has to happen in South African education. Education at school-level has become critical and we as educators cannot allow one moment of that learner’s school life to be wasted. Every second of the thirteen years has to be used fruitfully,” said de Villiers.

“Project-based learning unlocks 21st century competencies and solution-seeking mindsets so that the youth become employable, engaged and entrepreneurial.”

What is project-based learning and why is it the solution to youth unemployment?

Next up, academic and architect of project-based learning at Learn to Live Professor Tom Ryan walked viewers through "Learning to construct and live a sustainable livelihood", which is the primary purpose behind the creation of the project-based learning methodology. Essentially, project-based learning encourages learners to think interdependently, communicate with clarity, manage impulsivity, take responsible actions and apply past knowledge to new experiences as they explore real-world challenges and apply what they learn in a dynamic classroom environment.

The endgame is the effective creation of better work habits and improved attitudes towards learning, resulting in the long-term retention of skills. Ryan said, “Much of our education problem is a system design problem. Learning is social – much of it is about conversation: doing, thinking, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Project-based learning is a mediated process. It’s not an end in itself, it is a tool used to facilitate the development and learning process of our youth.”

Removing socio-economic stressors for vulnerable youth

The Salesian Institute and its Learn to Live School of Skills are dedicated to improving the lives of South Africa's vulnerable children and at-risk youth with contemporary educational programmes designed to instil a love for lifelong learning and the confidence to be effective leaders.

To achieve this, Learn to Live School of Skills starts by removing socio-economic stressors so that learners can focus on their schoolwork. Learn to Live aims to provide a safe space where learners have three nutritious meals a day and covers transport costs to and from school, as well as the cost of learning materials. It also offers mental health programmes facilitated by social workers and occupational therapists.

Harnessing a technologically-driven future

De Villiers added that the world is changing at an exponential rate and the pending fourth industrial revolution means that we should all be looking to teach new skills and ways of thinking that will be needed for the shifting job opportunities of the future. Technology is changing the way we live and work, so why shouldn't we be changing the way we teach and learn?

Welcoming viewers to the talk, Father Pat Naughton, CEO of Salesian Institute Youth Projects, said of their implementation of project-based learning, "A student-centred approach to education fits in so well with Don Bosco's vision. I was convinced PBL was what we were looking for... and already our learners' lives have been transformed. Discipline and attendance improved: learning is taking place in joyful ethos."

Watch the full Learn to Live School of Skills presentation on the Salesian Institute Youth Projects:

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