Why practical learning is paramount

BY JOAN SALMON

From cramming mathematics formulas to memorising the results of Chemistry reactions, studying was a rollercoaster during my school days. You either had that 'big' brain or things just did not work out.

In some instances, my brain was big enough to memorise and retain information, but in other instances, mhhh, drama ensued. Imagine naming a leaf and failing to remember the midrib, because the picture in the book and the real leaf do not look alike, in your mind? Tough, right?

To say the least, theoretical learning was akin to a 50kg person carrying a buffalo.

It was very difficult, leaving even the bright students grappling sometimes. So yes, I am a proponent for practical learning because you get to touch, feel, see, smell and even sometimes taste what you are dealing with.

Even if the issue at hand is how the community deals with, say, flooding instances, interacting with the people to hear their experiences and seeing the solutions implemented, gives you a better appreciation of community participation in solving issues.

For the science subjects, practical learning cannot be overemphasised. Mixing those chemicals and seeing the reactions happen, dissecting that frog, all as early as S1, makes all the difference. Why should we memorise formulas only to mess them up on the exam paper, yet we can apply the experience?

It will also help children with learning impairments to immerse themselves in learning.



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That means taking learning outside the classroom walls, and schools are looking for creative ways to ensure the necessary supplies are available. It also means that teachers must be willing to think of creative ways to facilitate learning.

That is why projects are a crucial aspect of learning, as students immerse themselves in learning how things are done and share experiences, which pique other learners' interests but also facilitate discovery.

This is not easily achieved with theoretical learning.

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