

Vol. 2 No. 4 April 2016



Magazine EDUCATION

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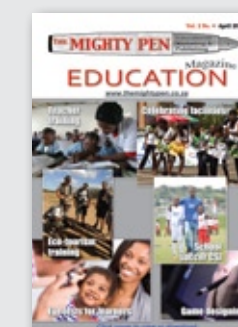
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Our front cover

Snippets of some of our exciting and informative stories for this issue.



Publisher

The Mighty Pen (Pty) Ltd

An SPHS initiative

Branding

TheMightyPen.co.za

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Editor's column

Is social media really the holy grail of magazine networking?

In an article titled *When to Hold, When to Fold: Quitting Social Media* by Conrad Lumm, posted on 10 March 2016 on Publishing Executive, he mentions a scenario where publishers have been sinking hours a week into Pinterest (or LinkedIn, or Facebook, or Twitter, or Vine).

When do you start seeing a return on your time? Do you keep going in hopes of getting 121 000 followers from a viral post, almost overnight? You might have the next 50 000 re-tweet post right around the corner... or you might be wasting your time, but how can you tell the difference?

A lot depends on what you're after in the first place. Consider:

- Who's in your potential audience? Have you done everything you can to cultivate them by liking or sharing their content, or are you just waiting for other people to come to you? Are you using social media to start and sustain conversations, or to blast market your content to an indifferent public?
- Does your product work well with the social medium you've chosen? A trade magazine about insurance could do well on Twitter, but it'll take far more forethought (and expense) to make visually focused social media like Instagram, Pinterest, or Vine work.
- Is your content aligned with your account type — in other words, are you a better face for your content, or is your company? People react differently to personal accounts and corporate ones — have you tried deploying content and engaging through both?
- Are you using all available tools to make social media content marketing less time-consuming, notably Hootsuite or Sprout Social?

Do you find yourself discussing matters well outside your publication's subject matter? Straying too far from what others perceive as your area of expertise may help you get a followership in the short term, but it won't necessarily help you build the credibility so important to maintaining a social footprint that'll last.

The deciding factors

So when should you delete a social media account entirely? Generally, only if you're rebranding under a new name, or if you've made such serious missteps that you need a fresh start (and rarely even then — you're usually better off noting that the intern has been sacked, and reassessing your tone and content).

It costs almost nothing to keep a channel open. Posting a photo or an article every month and interacting with the odd follower won't foster much awareness or burn through anyone's server bandwidth, but it will give people who search for you in social media channels proof that you exist — a kind of what marketers call social proof.

Remember, if someone searches for your publication, nothing is the worst thing they can see.

Editor

Workforce embracing online education

USB Executive Development (USB-ED), the public executive development company of Stellenbosch University, has launched several new online courses for its 2016 academic year to enhance the research skills of postgraduate students. The various online courses range in length from one hour to four months, all offered in a convenient, learner-centric online format. In essence, USB-ED can create a completely customised programme for its students that cater for their specific needs.



Dr Diane Bell

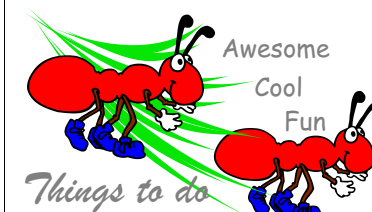
For Dr Diane Bell, Director of Academic Affairs at USB-ED, the traditional face-to-face way of approaching higher education has become prohibitively expensive for many students. It does not cater for the real-time nature of the digital world and does not fulfil the needs/desires of millennials.

"Whilst this is not to say there is not a place for traditional education, alternative methods need to be embraced that compliment current face-to-face offerings — it is all about rethinking our mental models around teaching and learning. Millennials are already driving change in organisations resulting in the emergence of digital companies. Similarly, universities and business schools need to evolve if they are to stay relevant to this new generation of student," she says.

"In a country where access to education is beset by many challenges, online training provides a more flexible, cost-effective, and efficient value proposition as it can be accessed from anywhere and at any time. We are also not limited by the number of seats available at a campus, but can reach an unlimited number of students around the world. Training can be highly customised with programme facilitators having access to real-time tracking of learning activities in order to monitor how students are progressing with coursework, assessments, and group learning."

According to Dr Bell, there will be significant interest in online learning, particularly in the fields of management and leadership development, in South Africa in the months and years ahead.

"Online learning is a great way of supporting people-centric development. It becomes less about the challenges of traditional higher education and more on having access to world-leading content and process that aids in creating a new generation of digital citizenry capable of affecting change wherever they are," she concludes. ▲



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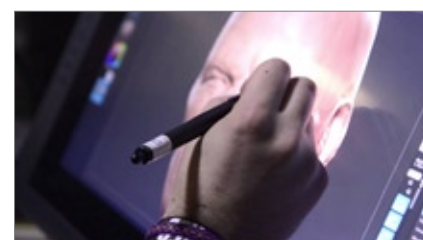
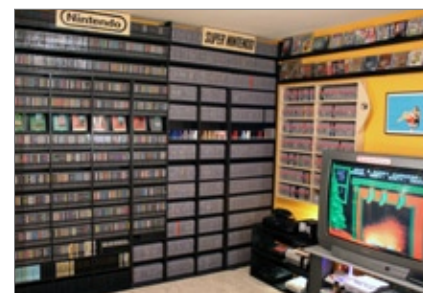


No more limits for game designers

Games like The Mario Brothers and Pac Man were the reason so many fell in love with this hobby. But the industry has grown substantially from being a pastime to people developing an interest to pursue Game Design as a career. The stereotypical gamer is no longer the traditional “geek” but rather an industry professional like Doctors, Pilots and CEOs of large corporations.

A Game Designer is a collective term for artists that develop interactive applications, components and experiences. Writing code, developing storylines and characters, and designing puzzles and quests are some of the game designer’s most important duties. With the explosive growth of the gaming industry in recent years, it has led to a growth of interest in game design as a career option.

The Open Window Institute for Arts and Digital Sciences (OWI) has seen an average of 100 Game Design students across the period of three years and about 25 of those graduate annually with a BA in Film Arts with Game Design as their Major. Additional courses like Interactive Development and 3D Animation



go hand in hand with Game Design qualifications (which are all offered at the OWI Centurion Campus).

“We have not even scraped the surface of what is possible with Game Design, both in SA and internationally. The rapid growth in the field is driven by the falling prices of the technology used to access the medium. With no barriers to entry I can honestly say that I don’t know of any other creative field that offers the same opportunities for professional and personal growth,” said Werner Olivier, Game Design Lecturer at Open Window.

To remain current and competitive, large technology corporations have had to keep up with this trend. Technology aimed specifically at gamers and game designers have become an essential part of remaining competitive in the industry. ▲



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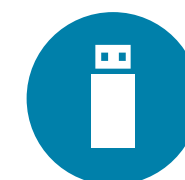
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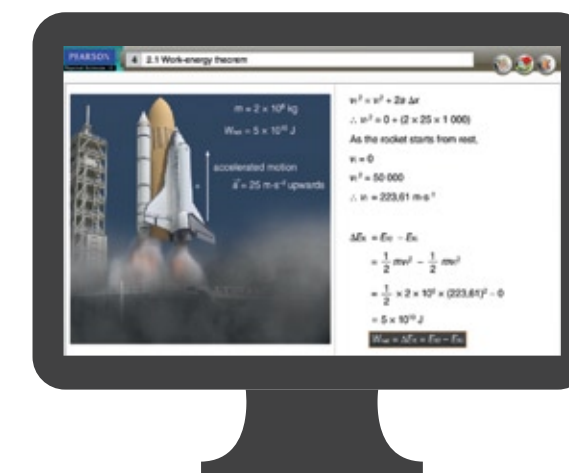
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**"The country is in
desperate need of
skill-based professionals"**

The Importance of STEM Education in South Africa By Stuart Windram, Senior Tutor Department of Industrial Design at the University of Johannesburg

The (Post-)New South Africa will not be built by researchers. I am one myself, and therefore, allowed to say so. It's a crass statement, but I hope to reason through it and appease the offended. The country is in desperate need of skills-based professionals: the tenth annual Talent Shortage Survey in SA found that of the 750 businesses surveyed, almost fifty percent indicated lack of technical competency and hard skills, such as machine operators, technicians, fitters and turners, when finding new employees during 2014 (Steyn 2015).

Humanities' progression of innovation and increasingly complex formation of systems and design has led to positive improvements to human life and wellbeing. While this may not be true for countless people living in under-developed or developing societies, I am taking the position that there is a progression of positive improvement but still much to be done (hard-core critics generally stop complaining about this after you take their cell phone away). This complexity has necessitated specialist careers such as engineers, technicians and designers, who are equipped with the skills and knowledge to operate the 'industrial machine' of society. I am taking the liberty of linking these fields together under the broad umbrella of STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

In 2012, South Africa produced fewer technical graduates than academic ones in higher education institutions. 'Academic' qualifications refer to programs with a focus on theoretical and research outcomes, whereas 'technical' qualifications serve to prepare students for specific vocations and have a practical, skills-based focus. Germany and Japan in contrast to South Africa, produce technical to academic graduates 7:1. I

don't understand the reasons behind the transformation of the Technikons to Universities just over ten years ago, I am sure they are valid. However, I see first-hand the piles of applications which are rejected in my department as a result of the prospective students not meeting the 'academic standard' of the university. This is not the university's fault, the standard is there for a reason. Neither is it necessarily that of the schooling system. An unskilled person may attempt to learn a trade through on-the-job training, but this requires each company to build a training program and go to great expense to bring them to a level of competency. It seems that the main problem is the lack of educational institution provision made for training purely practical STEM-related subjects for industry professions.

If job creation is one of our primary goals as a country, then skills development in STEM, along with entrepreneurship are going to be paramount to reaching it to any effect. While researchers and academics in every discipline are vital for a healthy society, acting as a voice of reason and the forefront of innovation, we need people who are willing to get their hands dirty. Perhaps the first step to take is to catalyse a societal paradigm-shift to break the fallacy

that 'academic' careers are more valuable or important than technical or practical ones. This negative view tends to be immediately forgotten during load-shedding or when the traffic lights are flashing red.

Source:

Stevens, A. 2005. *Technology Teacher Education in South Africa*.

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South Africa joins group of Digital Education Transformation Countries

Published by the Department of Basic Education

How can South Africa learn from the use of ICT in education in other countries? This is the question that informed Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga's interest in accepting an invitation for South Africa to join the World Education Transformation Countries. South Africa, Finland, United Arab Emirates (UAE), India, the USA and Shanghai State in China, rank among the first countries which joined the programme designed to foster shared learning on why and how countries at different levels of education change, and are redefining and transforming their education systems. This programme is supported by the Government of Finland, in collaboration with the Microsoft's Worldwide Education Initiative.



We all share different challenges and risks in the management of change and transformation of our education system. "We have had difficulties with introducing ICTs in our education system, let alone utilising ICTs. We are at a point where ICTs cannot be regarded as a choice nor a luxury. Every child must use

ICTs to learn. By joining this programme, we are not alone and we join hands with others who have had more experience with education transformation", says Minister Motshekga in response to the announcement of the programme at BETT Middle East in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

20 representatives from the DBE, all nine Provincial Education Departments, the five Teacher Unions, as well as representatives of Microsoft, Vodacom and UNICEF. It was through the Microsoft Imagine Academies programme and through an exchange of ideas with delegates from other countries around the world, that the South African delegation further deepened their understanding of ICT in the education space.



The Minister was leading a delegation from the KZN Department of Education, including MEC Neliswa Nkonyeni, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and UNICEF to participate in

a BETT Middle East and a Microsoft Executive Briefing in the UAE in April. BETT Middle East ranks among the world's largest educational technology exhibitions. During her visit, the Minister and her delegation had meetings with leaders of the



UAE's Smart Learning Programme and the Microsoft Worldwide Education Team and toured the various education exhibits at BETT.

The delegation was exposed to the value of predictive learning analytics, digital badging and assessments, game-based learning and introducing coding into the curriculum.

Her visit to the UAE follows a study tour to North Carolina, USA by a delegation of



Learning from the experiences of countries around the world is part of various initiatives to improve the delivery of the Operation Phakisa ICT in Education Lab, a Presidential lead project, designed to fast-track quality and efficiency in basic education enabled by digital technologies. ▲

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GAUTENG ICT EDUCATION COLLABORATION FORUM 2016

“Empowering the 21st Century Educators”

The purpose of the Gauteng ICT Education Collaboration Forum is to effectively provide a collaborative & engaging platform where ICT experts, influencers & thought leaders from education, business and civic society sectors share knowledge, expertise, insights & strategies in the ICT education with school leaders and educators to build 21st century schools. Delegates will share effective strategies, methods & approaches of using ICT equipment's in schools such as newly introduced tablets in schools by the Department of Education.

The main objectives of the Forum are to bridge the digital divide in disadvantaged schools; address educational inequalities, and improve teaching and learning through effective usage of ICT technology in our schools.

The Forum plays an integral role in creating sustaining ICT interventions in school environments that mirror the demographic makeup of this country, and showcasing a collection of the most vital ICT tools, strategies, and best-practices available.

Event strategic objectives

- To offer school leaders and educators the opportunity to learn specific tools and techniques to do their jobs better, in an environment of quality learning and peer networking
- To present how-to, run only by experienced presenters and industry experts
- To bring together school leaders and educators, in the belief that this fusion is conducive to the broadening of the mind and the extension of contacts of the participants
- To provide a forum to update and review best practices in schools
- To enhance the learning environment with an exhibition of the latest products, services and professional solutions that can increase their productivity and improve the quality of their schools and their departments' services.

The ICT Collaboration forum clearly recognises the reality and the challenge that indeed teaching and learning can be improved; that it is truly the venue to accelerate the learning process. It is the networking platform.

Training objectives

- Provide general information about ICT within various classes
- Define ICT usage and benefits in education
- Provide teachers with practical ideas for how they can incorporate technology into their existing lessons
- Familiarise teachers with current internet trends and how they can be applied in the creation of an e-lesson
- Pinpoint possible downsides of ICT in education as well as in real life and how to avoid it
- Provide teachers with resources and various tools with which they can augment their e-learning content
- Explain usage and give users tips concerning various ICT tools within as well as outside of classes
- Introduce and explain ways of enhanced communication within the teaching and learning process through ICT

Topic of interest

1. Learners in the 21st Century
2. Teachers in the 21st Century
3. Schools in the 21st Century
4. Understanding the theory behind eLearning and how to put it to practice (Blended Learning, Multimedia, TPACK, SAMR, RAT)

The registration fee is R595.00 per person, which includes

- General attendance
- Refreshments and lunch
- Conference bag with handouts
- Name tag
- Certificate of attendance

The Gauteng ICT Education Collaboration Forum is managed and co-ordinated by SIGNAL SECURE TECHNOLOGIES, a company dedicated to the development and promotion of ICT in education and community development. The company also organises the Annual ICT Education Summit, a seminal event that showcases ICT products and services to the education sector.

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Soccer programme reaches more than 30 000 children

The Spur Soccer Masidlale Programme, a tool for instilling essential life skills into young lives, has already reached more than 30 000 children within historically disadvantaged areas since its inception in 2005.

What started out as 12 one-day soccer clinics involving 10 to 12 year olds has grown into a fully-fledged annual soccer league in the main metropolitan areas of Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Port Elizabeth.

It culminates in inter-regional finals where teams battle it out for top honours and a charity prize of R10 000.

One of Spur's corporate social investment aims is to use sport to uplift communities. The central venues are selected in historically disadvantaged areas where school sport participation is low. The Masidlale Programme fills this gap.



Welcoming and declaring the Spur Soccer Masidlale 2016 programme open



Zandile, Emthetweni, Inkonkoni, Zwelesithembiso, Thamela, Isipingo, Lindelani, Mzwilili, Fundakakhle and Phila Primary Schools attended the Kwa-Zulu Natal Durban Launch



A Spur Masidlale Player from Fundakakhle Primary Girls (White and Maroon Kit) clearing the ball while player from Lindelani Primary (Yellow and Black Kit) attempting to tackle

Each one of the cities has 200 players (100 girls and 100 boys) taking part who come from 10 local schools. The teams are given Spur-branded soccer kits which they can keep.

According to Khakhi Diala, marketing manager of the Spur Group, sport teaches us more than just physical skills; sport is a metaphor for life. That is why Spur has included a life skills programme to run alongside the soccer league.

Fifty mentors per league meet with their groups every two weeks to explore essential skills needed to excel in life. The mentors teach self-esteem, positive behaviour changes and wise decision making. They equip the children beyond the sports field into home and school life. 20 girls and 20 boys are then chosen for further mentoring.

To ensure the lessons go further into the schools, Spur has a Masidlale Coaching Programme for the school coaches. These are run by accredited coaching facilitators who train 30 coaches from four provinces.

Interactive Sport is involved with the mentoring programme which extends

to the coaches and one teacher per school.

Masidlale means "let's play" in Xhosa. So the programme's aim is to change lives through play. ▲



Spur Soccer Masidlale Ambassador for Kwa-Zulu Natal in 2016, Ayanda Dlamini from Amazulu with two players from Mzwilili Primary Boys (White and Blue Kit) and Zwelesithembiso Primary Boys (White and Red Kit)



Teams from Durban, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and Johannesburg will battle it out for top honours and a charity prize of R10 000. (Player from Zandile Primary Girls (Black and White Kit) attempting to head the ball playing against Zwelesithembiso Primary (White and Red Kit)

Improved facilities for Carletonville schools

Schools in the Carletonville area are looking forward to upgrading their school grounds and facilities by using their winnings from the Cashbuild Art-at-Heart competition. Rooipoort, Nayaboswa and Khutsong South Primary Schools were just three of the eight schools that each received Cashbuild building material vouchers to the value of R15 000 earlier this year.



Children celebrate the Awards

Rooipoort Primary School's Principal R Mapapanyane said his learners would like to paint as well as build a security shelter for their six school security guards.

Nayaboswa Primary School's Principal M Leotlela said because they have so much dust at their school, they would like to start with paving around the school hall area.

J G Bezuidenhout, the Principal of Khutsong South Primary School added that their school is in need of paving upgrades. "It was windy as we spoke and the dust was all over the place, when it rains, the whole school is filled with mud."

The Cashbuild Art-at-Heart competition entails learners from each school submitting their best artwork to Cashbuild. This artwork is displayed at the ceremony, and then remains on display in the Cashbuild store for the next five years.

Artwork was judged and three winners from each school were named. Winners received Cashbuild Art-at-Heart gold, silver and bronze certificates for first, second and third place respectively. The Manager's Choice award was also presented to the overall winner, Junior Maseko from Westfields Primary School. This award was announced on the day and the winner received a stationery pack and a glass trophy.

Since the Art-at-Heart campaign was launched 14 years ago, Cashbuild has helped more than 2 200 schools in Southern Africa with over R26 million worth of building materials. Cashbuild is BEE compliant and every time a store is opened, relocated or refurbished, Cashbuild not only makes donations to local schools, but also creates jobs for community members.

The Art-at-Heart competition is a southern African Cashbuild initiative whereby donations are made to some of the region's most needy schools. ▲



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Innovative study programme creates collaborative playing ground across the globe

Independent education group Curro Holdings and publishers Via Afrika are partnering to pioneer an initiative with USA-based PenPal Schools to link learners online in an innovative global study programme.

Head of Curro Centre for Educational Excellence Alta Greeff said the offering would allow learners from diverse backgrounds to participate in a collaborative learning environment, using content from the Via Afrika Social Sciences and History textbooks.

The first six-week study session, entitled 'Walking to Freedom', will enable learners in South Africa and the USA to share their perspectives on the historical struggle for equality, as well as research prominent civil rights leaders from around the world.

'The programme involves collaboration, with a real 21st-century learning style operating in a safe environment between learners from different continents,' said Greeff, adding that each learner who completes the course will receive a 'Certificate of Completion'.

Curro's chief executive officer, Dr Chris van der Merwe, said that almost 1 000 learners from 10 Curro schools around the country will be participating in the first stage of the project.

Van der Merwe explained that equality, freedom, diversity and discrimination are issues that concern us all. Educationalists have a duty to promote the principles of equality and freedom to their learners, and we have a responsibility to help them recognise diversity and counteract discrimination.

With each module, a teacher provides the learners with a 'class code' through which they join the online classroom. PenPal Schools matches each learner with a 'pen pal' (in the same age group). The learners are then free to interact with each other during the study session, exploring their differences, and exposing examples of discrimination. Greeff stressed that teachers have full access to all the pen-pal exchanges and are able to intervene immediately should they detect any inappropriate behaviour or comments.

It is often too easy to think that dealing with discrimination is someone else's problem. But imagine the world represented as just 100 people (as illustrated by the popular infographic by Jack Hagley that has been doing the rounds on social media). In this world, 85 people would be able to read and write, and 15 would not; 77 would have a shelter over their heads, and 23 would not; and seven would attend college, and 93 would not.

Also, in such a world, there would be important differences: 15 people would be African, 14 would be American; 11 would be European; and 60 would be Asian. There would be 31 Christians, 23 Muslims, 15 Hindus, seven Buddhists; and 16 'unaffiliated'. Among them, 30 would speak either Mandarin, Spanish, English, Hindi, or Arabic. The remaining 70 would



Classroom photos supplied by Curro Holdings

speak a total of 6 500 different languages.

The course aims to inspire learners to strive for a similar world, but one in which 100 people can read and write; 100 people have shelter; and 100 people attend college. It teaches them that this is what equality looks like, and that equality does not mean we must all be Europeans or Americans or Asians, nor that we must all have the same belief system or that we should all speak the same language.

Equality means we have the freedom to be different without the fear of being discriminated against. One of the places to begin learning this lesson is in a global classroom.

For more information on the project, contact: www.viaafrika.com

How teachers can put children's vision and academic development first

Approximately 80% of what children see affects their learning. Therefore, vision plays an integral part in their education. Children can spend up to 200 days in school and 55% of their time per year is spent being supported and educated by teachers. During the day, teachers can keep a close watch on children and often take a caretaker role to provide supportive leadership and identify signs of illness and learning problems.

Reading is one of the most common visual learning processes children experience and requires different visual skills that may change throughout a child's school career. Various problems can be associated with reading difficulty in children and vision problems can sometimes be overlooked. "In most cases, children will not complain of vision problems simply because they don't know what is 'normal'," says Andre Horn, senior optometrist and MD of Mellins i-Style. "If a child is performing poorly at school, an eye examination could rule out an underlying visual cause".

Teachers who generally spend more time with schoolchildren during the day can help identify if low vision is the cause of a child struggling at school. Children with vision impairment experience more pressure and will usually:

- Avoid reading and other near visual work.
- Attempt to complete their schoolwork, but with reduced efficiency.
- Appear uncomfortable, tire quickly and are easily distracted.

It is important for teachers to acknowledge and remind parents that the visual skills required for reading are tested in a comprehensive eye examination. Screening tests done at schools are not a substitute for an eye examination by an optometrist and do not provide a thorough diagnosis. Because a child's visual learning capacity may change throughout their school years, Horn advises teachers to encourage parents to take their children for an eye examination at least once a year and more frequently if they are already wearing glasses or have diabetes.

Teachers can play an active role in the development of schoolchildren's visual skills and at the same time incorporate a fun and educational dynamic in the classroom. There are different visual games and exercises to help children (mostly younger primary school children) understand how their eyes work.

The following classroom eye exercise can be helpful for children to understand how their eyes react and adjust to light

What do you need? A mirror and flashlight.

How does it work? Close the curtains and switch off all lights in the classroom, but allow enough light for the children to see their eyes in a mirror. Place a mirror in front of them so they can have a good look at the size of their pupils.

Ask them whether they noticed if their pupils had enlarged and what they think the reason is.

Answer that in low light the muscles of the iris, the flat ring-shaped membrane behind the eye, makes the pupils bigger to allow more light into the eye.

Next, ask the children to point the flashlight towards their eyes from a distance, while they watch their pupils in the mirror.

Result. The pupils become smaller to allow less light into the eye.

Teachers can make the exercise more relevant to the individual child by asking him or her about the situations in which the pupil size would change, for instance watching a movie at the cinema, walking into bright sunlight, travelling through a tunnel and looking at a light at night. ▲



Teachers can play an active role in the development of schoolchildren's visual skills



Annual eye tests are important

The importance of teaching teachers

By Johan Human, CEO of the Embury Institute for Teacher Education

Every year, reports come in about the comparatively poor state of South Africa's educational offering. Accompanying this negativity is a general criticism of the curriculum, which has been changed numerous times since the advent of democracy, to specific attacks on how subjects are assessed, as well as a condemnation of today's youth being idle and ill disciplined.

Most of this – if not all – misses the main point by a long way. The real challenge resides with the standard of our teaching. Unfortunately, many teachers are poorly prepared and not adequately equipped to tackle the educational demands and needs of today's learners. Thus, their knowledge and skills need to be continually upgraded.

Of course, we can all point to the many hardworking, talented, and innovative teachers that can be found in almost any school in the country. They do exist, and they do make a difference. It is also true to say that the low achievement of our learners is not wholly the fault of our teachers, but improving the knowledge and skills of our teachers is the one area where we can make the most improvement and progress. The learners' accomplishments will reflect that.

A research report commissioned by the Centre of Development and Enterprise (CDE) which provided an overview of the quality of South African education found that our teachers' level of skills is poor. The report reviewed a wide range of data and found that many teachers lacked subject knowledge needed to teach their material, and often found that they themselves were unable to answer the questions set for their learners in the exams. Thus, we need to look at the skills level of our teachers – and improve them.

We are not alone in this. Eric Hanushek, a Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University, USA, and a leader in the development of economic analysis of educational issues, writing about the USA's educational offering said: "The initiatives we have emphasized in policy discussions – class-size reduction, curriculum revamping, reorganization of school schedule, investment in technology – all fall far short of the impact that good teachers can have in the classroom."



Technology training for teachers



Hanushek has confirmed that lower achievement by learners means slower growth in the economy. This is not only true in the USA but also in South Africa.

The CDE report states that in 1995, 30% of 18 to 24-year-olds were not in education, employment, or training (NEET). By 2011, this had increased to 45%. In the same period, the unemployment rate for youth increased from 36% in 1995 to 50% in 2011.

The closure of teacher training colleges in 2000 – criticised then and now – was based on the perception that the majority of these colleges were malfunctioning and did not produce high-calibre teachers. The decision to close down these training colleges was an attempt – albeit a somewhat blunt one at that – to address the skills level of the country's teachers.

The ongoing challenges surrounding teacher development resulted in the establishment of the National Policy Framework on Teacher Education and Development (NPFTED) in 2007. Seven years later, the Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) system was officially launched.

The Basic Education Laws Amendment Act (2011) mandated the South African Council for Educators (SACE), the



Continuing teacher education

regulatory body of the teaching profession, to set up, manage, and implement the CPTD Management system.

One of the principles of the system recognises that "teachers have a responsibility to engage in lifelong learning, supported by a qualitative and varied offer of professional development". In order for our children to have the best possible opportunities for success, our teachers and the profession as a whole need to take the responsibility to ensure that our teachers are trained on an on-going basis. They need to remain informed of developments in their respective fields of expertise, and apply these where possible in the classroom.

The CPTD system requires that teachers participate in professional development practices, such as attending workshops and further studies, in order to achieve at least 150 points in a three-year cycle. The system was implemented in 2015 for school management, in 2016 for high school teachers, and will be implemented in 2017 for primary school teachers.

Today, apart from offering full-time qualifications to prepare high-performance teachers to work in South African schools, Embury provides a variety of SACE approved Continuing Professional Teacher Development short courses via contact learning as well as distance learning.

To be realistic, we can't simply throw out all the underperforming teachers and start all over. For starters there are not enough graduates entering the profession. What we should do, however, is to support and improve the quality of underperforming teachers.

Continuing teacher education, focusing on relevant knowledge and skills development, will improve the quality of our teachers, and this will be reflected in a marked improvement on the achievements of their learners. The vision, of course, is eventually to produce, train, and appoint excellent teachers throughout the country, producing top quality graduates. ▲



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Building Namibia's eco-tourism skills

A skills training initiative designed to boost eco-tourism in Southern Africa and combat unemployment has so far exposed a total of 116 students to the demands of field guiding as a career.



EcoTraining instructor Gerhard van Niekerk heads up an on-foot elephant approach



Out in the field



The eight students, including (from left to right) Francois du Plessis, Stephen Croucamp, Frederik Witbooi, Reginal Koper, Rector Tetuka, Johannes Kapenda, Sheldin Naruseb and Karitjangua Day Kasupi, learn how to inspect dung during a training session

The project, funded by the not-for-profit Amarula Trust, saw eight students undergo a month-long training course at the Erindi Private Game Reserve and Wilderness Safaris Damaraland Adventure Camp in Namibia. This is the fourth time Namibian candidates have benefitted from the programme that extends field guide training provided by EcoTraining in association with the Field Guide Association of South Africa (FGASA).

The initiative comes at a time when Namibia's travel and tourism industry is set to significantly increase its contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP). According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, travel and tourism accounted for 14,9% of GDP in 2014, a contribution that is expected to rise to 21,6% by 2025. The growth of the sector will also result in more jobs. The council anticipates that the 102 500 jobs it currently generates directly and indirectly, will rise to 186 000 by 2025 to represent 25% of the country's total employment.

Candidates with the potential to develop their careers who are currently working in entry-level positions at game lodges and private reserves are chosen by their employers for the project, he explained. When they are promoted after undergoing the course, and they vacate their positions, they also create employment opportunities for others.

The latest Namibian course involved eight candidates from six game lodges and private reserves. Students were taught about the natural, physical environment and ecology, with the accent on climate, biomes and diversity. Some of the areas they covered included arthropods, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, geology and soils. They also learned about astronomy, tracking, how to drive a 4x4 and even hosting of guests.

"Some of the students come to the course with a basic understanding of their natural environment. The course builds on that and then formalises their knowledge and skills. It also teaches effective communication: how to transfer knowledge to tourists in a fun, interactive and informative manner," said EcoTraining instructor Gerhard van Niekerk.



Sheldin Naruseb, a student from the Erindi Private Game Reserve, explains to his fellow students how to analyse elephant dung

Hardie Basson, who is marketing manager for Amarula's parent company Distell, in Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, said the building of rural skills to support eco-tourism was critical. "The growth in tourism means there is an increasing demand for qualified field guides to host mostly foreign guests. By facilitating the provision of skills, the Amarula Trust is also helping to tackle unemployment.

"The Amarula Field Guide Scholarship programme is a very important part of the work of the trust that focuses on promoting social sustainability and conservation. Begun in 2010 in Botswana, the programme was extended in 2011 to South Africa and, in 2012, to Namibia."



A celebratory mood after the prize-giving ceremony at the Erindi Private Game Reserve. From left to right: Frederik Witbooi from the Gondwana Fish River Canyon Lodge, Gerhard Beyleveld of Distell (Amarula), Sheldin Naruseb, from the Erindi Private Game Reserve, Stephen Croucamp from the Erindi Private Game Reserve, Karitjangua Day Kasupi from the Wilderness Safaris Hoanib Skeleton Coast Camp, Malcolm Moore of Distell (Amarula), Gerhard van Niekerk from EcoTraining, Francois du Plessis from the Erindi Private Game Reserve, Reginal Koper from the Wilderness Safaris Doro Nawas Camp, Johannes Kapenda from the Wilderness Safaris Serra Cafema Camp and Rector Tetuka from the Gondwana Namushasha River Lodge

At the prize-giving ceremony, Van Niekerk said many of those who benefited from previous training courses run in South Africa, Botswana and Namibia, now worked as field guides in reserves and at private lodges. Some were in reserve or lodge management, while others had continued their studies to become academic researchers.

He stressed the importance of the ongoing development and training of the candidates in order for them to become fully-fledged field guides.

For many of this year's Namibian students, elephant tracking was their highlight.

"We encountered an elephant cow with her calf at the Wilderness Safaris Damaraland Adventure Camp," said Rector Tetuka, a student from the Gondwana Namushasha River Lodge in the north of Namibia. "This was the first time for many of us to come across elephants on foot. We were instructed to stand very still in a non-threatening way, and then to go down on our knees while the elephant cow and her calf passed by literally a few metres from where we were.

"It was exhilarating, but very scary. Experiences like this teach us to truly respect animals in their natural environments. Here they set the rules, not the humans."

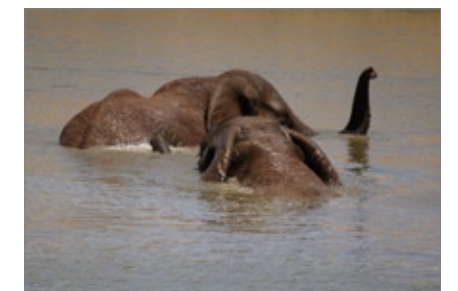
Students also learned to analyse elephant dung. Sheldin Naruseb, a student from the Erindi Private Game Reserve, explained: "Generally speaking, if the tree bark and leaves in the dung are finely chewed, the elephant is considered young to middle-aged. This is because during their lifetime, elephants go through six

sets of large teeth. When the elephant's final set of teeth falls out, the animal slowly dies of malnutrition or starvation as it can no longer chew its food to release the essential nutrients."

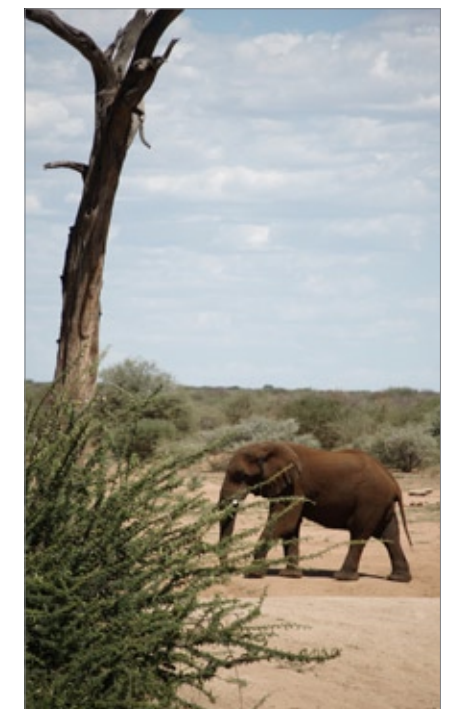
Photography by Vera Botha



The 8 students at the Wilderness Safaris Damaraland Adventure Camp where the first part of the course was offered



Elephants cooling down in the watering hole at Erindi Private Game Reserve in central Namibia



Elephant from a distance

Distance learning: effective strategy needed to combat unique challenges

In today's competitive job market, many people consider distance learning as an obvious way to upskill without having to leave their employment and lose their paycheque in the process. Additionally, it is viewed as an option that provides more flexibility and control over time and pace than full-time study.

But while these perceptions are relatively accurate, going the distance study route should only be tackled in partnership with an effective strategy, since there are many challenges associated with this mode of study, an expert warns.

"Distance study provides the ideal opportunity in certain circumstances; however students should know what they are letting themselves in for and how to handle any issues that might arise, if they do not want to join the ranks of those who threw in the towel after discovering it is not the walk in the park some perceive it to be," says Dr Felicity Coughlan, Director of The Independent Institute of Education, SA's largest and most accredited private higher education institution.

"Regrettably, many people who register for a full qualification in the distance mode do not succeed, chiefly because these students do not have access to the critical success factors enjoyed by contact students," she says, adding that to be successful, both institutions and students must remove the 'distance'-elements from distance study by leveraging all the tools available.

Coughlan says the most important thing distance students have to do to ensure success, is to structure their time and be clear about the workload they are taking on.

"In most cases, students underestimate the work they have to get through, and as a consequence they don't make adequate provision to accommodate these demands in their normal routine.

"Higher education institutions should therefore provide detailed information about the time required, as well as proposals on how to pace the learning to achieve best outcomes. Students should make extensive use of electronic diaries and alerts and ensure that they set up reminders for the various milestones on the way to deadlines."

Successful distance students should also ensure that they are connected to other students doing the same work, says Coughlan.

"Many institutions have learning management systems with virtual classrooms enabling students to collaborate. Students who take that further, by collaborating beyond the required activities, also do not feel as isolated, while receiving the support that contact students take for granted."

Coughlan says a third indicator for successful distance study is when the student is not just a number, but has an identity.

"These students fully engage with the available support systems, including tutors and lecturers, and make sure that they are known for being active and involved. As a result, they get the attention of those who are available to

support them. Interestingly, distance educators often experience the same frustration over the lack of feedback that their students feel, so they instinctively gravitate towards engaged students."

And finally, when the going gets tough, successful distance students don't just give up and disappear.

"You have to ask for help as soon as things start to go wrong. Because at any reputable distance institution, help should be available to support you through the challenging times to get you back on the road again," Coughlan says.

She says institutions can greatly improve their distance learning success rates if they:

- Have early warning systems such as monitoring online activity, and reach out to students as soon as a student seems to have gone quiet;
- Make full use of the functionality of learning management systems and include activities that elicit responses and collaboration;
- Recognise that access to bandwidth is not a given, and thus have mechanisms other than the learning management system to enable students to engage;
- Have used appropriate learning theory in setting up the coursework in recognition of the challenges of independent learning by adults;
- Give feedback efficiently and at a level of detail that enables students to implement required remedial action, and
- Allocate sufficient resources to student support. ▲

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