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Editor's Column

New name, same game – Pearson South Africa rebrands to Maskew Miller Learning

Pearson South Africa, formerly a part of the global education company, Pearson, is proud to announce that it has officially changed its name to Maskew Miller Learning (MML). This move is the result of a 75% sale of its South African courseware publishing business to local print production company, Novus Print (Pty) Ltd.

The company creates and distributes textbooks, course materials and other learning resources used in schools, TVET colleges and universities. These resources are essential for students to learn and understand the material being taught, and for educators to effectively teach it.

This includes trusted local courseware such as Platinum, Spot On, Day-by-Day, Today, Focus, Vuma, Smart-Kids, X-kit Achieve! and Fresh Perspectives, to name a few.

Maskew Miller Learning will continue creating and publishing content in all eleven national languages for learners from Preschool to Grade 12, as well as content for the TVET curriculum and higher education institutions. What's more, this content will continue to be created in partnership with the Department of Education, teachers, learners, students, and parents.

The company will remain committed to growing its digital portfolio and maintaining the print collection. The focus is on eBook sales, digital asset platforms and international partnerships.

Maskew Miller Learning lends its name from the most trusted and recognisable publisher in South African education, Maskew Miller.

MML is a 100% South African-owned organization and a smooth transition from Pearson to Novus will be solidified by building the new Maskew Miller Learning brand identity under the Novus umbrella.

We would like to thank Pearson Education for being a valued advertiser and contributor since the inception of the magazine and look forward to working with Maskew Miller Learning.
(Ed)

Yours in education

Janos Bozsik
Editor

Managing gaming and preteens

With the proliferation of devices and apps and platforms, parents are understandably very concerned about the effects of gaming on their children. Craig Verdal-Austin, Headmaster of Somerset College Preparatory School in Somerset West, believes it is important to educate and empower parents around the pros, cons, and best-practice ground rules.



“The screen time debate has raged since our own parents told us we’d need glasses from sitting too close to the TV. It escalated once video games entered the scene and is a whole new thing in the smartphone era. But is it as bad as all that?” asked a post recently on *The Dad*, a Facebook community. The post went on to reference the recent results of the *Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) Study*, the largest long-term study of brain development and child health in Canada.

The study analysed brain scans from thousands of school-age kids and found that those who gamed for three or more hours per day performed better with impulse control and memory tests.

“That may well be,” says Verdal-Austin, “but the effects were clear - and concerning - when our students returned to school after lockdown, when gaming had been their only way to socialise and many parents, understanding this, possibly relaxed their rules.” Verdal-Austin said the manifestations of increased gaming were clear - children wanted darkened classrooms, they didn’t want to go out to break, devices were open while teaching was happening, and some children were covertly gaming in class...

“It was noticed across all schools, and while manageable, it was concerning,” he says. Parents are also clearly concerned - at a recent online safety webinar, held by Somerset College Preparatory, 50 out of 70 parents in the grade attended.

Here to stay

“We can’t get rid of gaming,” Verdal-Austin acknowledges, “but we need to manage it.”

He highlights the fact that from Grade 5 to Grade 9, children feel an urgency around belonging and identity. “A lot of boys find it through the competition of sport. Girls, too, but for them it’s more through friendship groups. Gaming has become the way many children socialise and how they gain esteem. When it comes to gaming and managing the age-appropriate need for belonging in this context, we can put our device policy in place, we can review and tighten it, but we need to get the parents back in the room too.”

There are social and, the ABCD study seems to show that there are also cognitive, memory and impulse-control benefits to gaming. However, as Claire Peters, Head of the Student Development Unit (SDU) of Somerset College, points out, the new study does not look at wellbeing and numerous, previous studies have linked video gaming to behaviour issues and even mental health problems.

The ABCD researchers do emphasise that their findings are not a reason for parents to allow their children to spend unlimited time on devices. As with so many things, says Verdal-Austin, moderation is key. “There are a lot of positives around gaming, but it’s all about balance. And it’s important to establish the rules around that balance as early as possible - and that means while children are at primary school.”

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Learning for brighter futures

Pearson South Africa is now Maskew Miller Learning.

Maskew Miller Learning lends its name from the most trusted and recognisable publisher in South African learning – Maskew Miller.

Although our name and look may have changed, we still provide the same quality learning products and services that are meaningful to the local industry and make a real difference in the lives of learners.



 Learn more at mml.co.za

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How to establish the ground rules

Verdal-Austin recommends a simple agreement between parents and children. “Social pressure is real. Belonging is massive. I don’t recommend banning all device use at home, as it has become a social currency, and their greatest fear is social exclusion. But as parents we can manage it.”



1. Knowledge is power, and Verdal-Austin recommends parents read all the latest research, without trying to back one position or another, but to inform themselves.
2. Establish a trusting relationship around gaming. “We want open relationships with our children, we want them to come to us with a problem. As parents, having done our research, we should then put ground rules in place, and trust our children,” he says.
3. Draw up a simple contract, agreeing to hours of game time which ensure that your children have a well-balanced life with time for school, homework, family, friends, community, outdoor exercise and gaming.
4. Talk about the dangers of gaming with anyone unknown to your children. Make playing only with their own friends another rule.
5. Discuss age restrictions and confirm stance. Sometimes the recommended age is just that. Agree that in such cases, your child will visit review sites, such as <https://www.commonsemmedia.org/game-reviews>, do research and then motivate why they should be allowed to play the game. (This will teach negotiation skills.)
6. Agree to what the consequences will be if the rules are exceeded, or if marks go down, if homework and chores aren’t completed or if behaviour issues (such as bad language or rudeness) raise their head.

7. Learn about their favourite game so you can discuss it with them. Even better, learn to play it. Previous generations bonded over sport or ballet or art. We still do that, but now there’s gaming. If you think of it as e-sport, don’t you want to be able to applaud your child when they do well, or cheer them on in the activity they love playing? This will also compound the trust you build around the whole issue of gaming. “Consider,” says Verdal-Austin, “who their role models will be without you there to model good digital citizenship.”
8. Remember to emphasise why you’re doing this. “We love you. We accept that devices are part of your world today. Learning to use them responsibly and keeping a balance is part of your education.”

“Parents of children in primary school still have a great deal of control. Implementing boundaries for a teenager is far more difficult. Get the ground rules in place early and life will be so much easier later on,” says Verdal-Austin. “We’re all trying to raise well-balanced, happy children. So, make BALANCE your watch word, in all things.”

Even the pro-gaming post on *The Dad* concludes with the following words: “According to one of the most important parental resources -common freaking sense- excessive screen time is not a good plan either. While [the *ABCD Study*] IS the biggest study to date, and it DOES suggest video games are not the evil some fear-mongers will rant about, there is far more research on the overwhelming benefits of physical exercise. Life is about balance. So make sure you and your kid mix in a few walks in between rounds of duos in Fortnite.”

Education VR headset for STEM subjects



Sangari Education, distributor of the Veative virtual reality (VR) library of STEM-related content, has launched the Veative EduPro headset specifically for educational use.

“While the Veative content can be used on many popular headsets, the EduPro provides a more cost effective and user-friendly headset. Veative has developed a large library of STEM-related content of 543 modules, which have been mapped to the South African Curriculum for Maths and Science grades 7 to 12,” explained Sangari Education MD, Bez Sangari.

“The EduPro headset, being specific to educational applications, introduces enhanced features over competitive products that don’t focus specifically on educational applications.”

“This full content library resides on the all-in-one EduPro headset which does not require a computer or connectivity, making it easy to use.”

“For those schools who would like to give their teachers and students the opportunity to develop their own content, Veative has produced a VRcreate software which makes content development easy and accessible to all,” Mr Sangari added.

He explained that the Veative EduPro is the world’s first XR1 chip-enabled mobile VR device designed specifically for educational use. “The preloaded Veative VR content library within the headset provides convenience and removes the need to load and unload modules manually.”

The VR headset has 128Gb of internal storage, sufficient space for Veative’s entire library and for additional content. “The operating system is built for education, and there are no social media or privacy concerns or distracting applications,” Mr Sangari said.

The headset includes a built-in Mobile Device Management (MDM) feature and has a MicroSD card slot for further expansion, an integrated touchpad, and handheld Bluetooth controller.

From the start, we choose to be device-agnostic, hoping to leave the VR hardware decision to schools and districts. We wanted to make our content for all devices. However, the reality of the market created problems, not just for us, but for everyone. From small storage sizes on devices (meaning the content cannot be used offline), to dropped controller signals in larger classrooms, we lived through it all on the hardware side. We learnt quickly that devices made for gaming and entertainment are NOT education-focused, nor education-ready.

Paper and print in the modern world



**Jane Molony,
executive director
of the Paper
Manufacturers
Association of
South Africa
(PAMSA)
discusses the
vital role that
paper and print
play in society, as
well as their role
in environmental
sustainability**

Since the invention of the movable mass printing press by German goldsmith Johannes Gutenberg in 1436, the world has seen a relentless and exponential growth in knowledge, literacy, scientific exploration, and countless benefits to human society. Overnight, reading and writing went from the exclusive domain of monks and the elite, to opening up a new world of enlightenment for all.

Millions of books have been published since Gutenberg's printing press, and today printers are ubiquitous in homes and offices around the world. But paper consumption has changed over the years, as consumers have turned to digital and electronic means to consume news or communicate with others.

With this change has come the belief that the paper industry contributes to deforestation and increased carbon emissions, along with mounting calls for business and society to go paperless.

From the promotion of e-book readers to "go green" messages at the bottom of emails urging recipients not to print, the average consumer may be excused for taking these notions on board. However, there is no evidence to support this premise.

Forests replenished

In fact, not only do forestry and forest products (like wood and paper) continue to play a crucial role in modern society, but they are also a crucial part of the economy and natural eco-systems,

creating millions of jobs while capturing carbon and cleaning our air.

Also, using pulp, paper, paper packaging and tissue from sustainably managed plantations does not cause deforestation. Species of trees are sustainably grown, harvested, and replenished, capturing and storing carbon from the atmosphere while they are growing and once converted into paper or wooden products.

Only 10% of farmed trees are harvested annually and these are fully replenished with new trees being planted within the same year. This leaves 90% to continue sequestering carbon from the air, and the increasingly efficient paper recycling system means the carbon is locked up for longer.

The industry also creates direct and indirect jobs for thousands of people in South Africa's rural areas and cities, from the forest to the factory.

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Trees capture carbon

In South Africa, wood for paper is sourced from 850 million trees planted over 676 000 hectares. These forests are managed carefully by teams of professional foresters, environmentalists, researchers, engineers, and a host of other people.

Mostly the industry captures more carbon than it emits, supporting a circular economy that benefits businesses, society, and the environment. In Europe, for example, the paper, pulp, and print sector are one of the lowest industrial emitters of greenhouse gases, accounting for just 0.8% of all emissions.

Also, the industry's raw material is renewable, natural, and sustainable, with paper being easily collected and recycled. So, the valuable fibres can be used again and again.

Digital and the future of paper

The role of paper and printing, even with the growing uptake of screens, is just as important as ever, if not more so.

Digital media comes with its own set of issues. Often ignored are the energy and financial costs of running and powering devices, infrastructure, and online systems – more than half the world still uses fossil fuels to generate electricity. And unlike paper, there is no carbon sequestration that takes place naturally.

Furthermore, after an initial spike in the uptake of book readers and tablets in the classroom, parents and educators are becoming increasingly aware of the crucial role of paper and print in education.

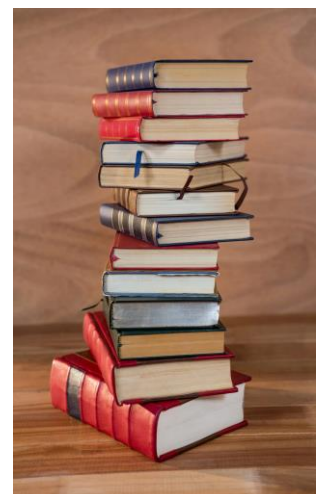
As useful as they are, screens cannot replicate the powerful tactile and occupational development that takes place when growing children use pen and paper to read and write, not to mention the addictive nature of digital devices.

While digital clearly makes sense in a host of applications, such as the delivery of statements via email, word processing and scanning, paper is just as much a part of the digital journey.

You still need printed paper to display bar codes, QR codes and other media that makes use of emerging technologies, like augmented reality.

3D printers are not only using plastics, or resins, but recycled paper as well, creating a variety of objects in a more sustainable way.

Some may say that print is dead. We believe it is not dead, just different, and paper in its myriad of formats to support print, is here to stay.



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LEARNERS WHO BENEFITED FROM THE ALATEEN PROGRAMME

Below are some comments from school children in the Alateen programme

(Names are changed to protect members' anonymity)

My daughter has changed so much in the past year since attending Alateen. There's a new confidence, a renewed happiness, and more openness. She has the courage to share in AA meetings, and to engage with people outside of them. She's growing into an amazing person, and I couldn't be prouder of her.

"Proud Mother".

It's amazing how much honesty there can be in Alateen when alcohol is full of lies. *"Maria" age 11.*



Alateen has relieved me of the stress in my life. I have more focus on my schoolwork and I have stopped overthinking everything. I have serenity in my life for the first time as I have stopped worrying about my Dad's drinking and am more confident.

"Jabulani", age 11.

I have been told by my friends & family I am much more relaxed, calmer and more mature. I have been going to Alateen for nearly three years and I don't worry so much about my Mom and am not so negative. *"Lucy" now age 13.*



Alateen has helped me stop worrying about what might happen at home if my parents are drinking and fighting. *"Ray" age 12.*

Alateen has helped me deal with the stress at home and my school marks have improved. I didn't want to go to meetings at first, but now I look forward to the weekend meeting and seeing my friends there.

"Rebecca", age 15.

Before Alateen I found it very difficult to talk to other people at school. Now I feel freer, am much more confident, and understand it's not only my family that has this problem. *"Mark" age 14.*

I used to bottle up my feelings about everything, until my anger would explode. At Alateen I learned a better, calmer way to share discuss any problems with my group. *"Jay" age 16.*



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Choose your subjects according to your passions

Hundreds of thousands (if not millions) of parents today have children who require additional assistance academically, emotionally, or both. For these parents, concerns are never far away that their child will battle in the world of the future, and that they might not ultimately achieve personal and career success. But an educational psychologist says parents need to change the paradigm through which they view success, as many are still focused on ideas about what constituted becoming a successful adult in the past, rather than embracing a world of new opportunities that are constantly emerging.

“In the past, and unfortunately among some people to this day, there was this perception that if your child is not studying to be a medical doctor or a lawyer, then they haven’t made it,” says Dr Greg Pienaar, renowned Educational Psychologist and Principal of The Bridge Assisted Learning School.

“Everyone has a future in terms of a passion or career, so if your child is not specifically focused on academic matters and isn’t necessarily wanting to study anything related to Core Mathematics or Physical Science or Life Sciences (Biology), then there are literally thousands of other career paths to follow. And these career paths are not inferior, they are just different,” he says.

Dr Pienaar notes that there is also still a perception that students can only advance to tertiary studies if they attend a traditional high school and follow the traditional academic journey in terms of subject selection. That is simply not the case, he says, because schools that provide additional support on the neurodiversity front, emotionally or academically, also write Matric exams. In the case of The Bridge, for instance, students sit for IEB exams. Additionally, future success isn’t reliant on choosing only those subjects that provide access to traditional ‘high-end’ careers.

“So, what if your child is interested in something to do with food or cooking or hospitality? What if your child loves everything to do with computers or technology? What if your child is interested in travelling the world and discovering its wonders? What if your child has strong verbal ability and can charm and convince people easily? What if your child has the skill or ability to run a business or be an entrepreneur?”

“It makes no sense to force them to follow a career path which is not natural for them, while there are avenues available which will support their future career success in a field that interests them or which they are passionate about.”

Dr Pienaar says it is legitimate for parents to be concerned if their child battles to focus and concentrate, struggles with words and reading, blanks out when numbers are involved, or is bright but not interested in academics.

However, realising a child needs additional support is the start of the road - not the end of it.

“Often children battle to focus on a career early in life, but they do know what they like and don’t like, sometimes as early as primary school. Our role as parents is to help nurture these interests and provide the space for a child to develop without pressure, and harness additional support if needed to assist them on their academic pathway, even if that is not the standard pathway related to past perceptions of success.

The old cliché still holds, that you can’t force a square peg into a round hole. This is never more true than with our children, because we spend many hours of our lives in our work environment or in something related to work.

“Academic and career success is not merely a case of doing well, but of doing well and being happy and fulfilled while doing so. It is important that our focus falls equally on the other half of the equation, not simply the surface considerations of success.”

Dr Pienaar says parents can help their children make a start on this road by allowing them – with the help of education experts at their school – to choose subjects appropriate to their desired careers wisely.

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Choosing your child's first school

Choosing the right learning environment for one's young child is essential as it has the potential to play a large role in the success of the child's learning experience throughout the rest of their life, an education expert says.

"A child's first encounter with learning in a formal environment sets in motion the way in which they will view learning, how they foresee their role in society and the contributions they will make locally and globally later in life," says Lynda Eagle, Academic Advisor: Early Years at ADvTECH.

However, the process of choosing the learning environment that will best suit a child's personality and needs is complicated by the numerous options available to parents and guardians, who may feel overwhelmed and even confused about how to determine what is and isn't right for their child's journey ahead.

To make this important call, Eagle says there are a number of factors to take into consideration, which provide a helpful guide for this important decision.

"The first step is identifying the things that you value as a family, your hopes, and expectations and what you are wanting to get out of an education system for your child. While we know and celebrate the importance of academic achievements, we often forget that the child is both capable and competent and comes with unique qualities and talents," she says.

"It must also be taken into account that young children are often in charge of their own learning – meaning that as much as we try to mold and drive them, ultimately, they will follow their own interests and curiosities. By meeting these unique needs, interests and talents and recognising that success comes in many forms, we have a better chance of helping the child reach their full potential and ensure that they in their own unique way contribute positively to their community in the future."

Eagle points out that it is generally accepted that the aim of a school is the development of **academic excellence** for the students in their care.

"However, academic excellence requires academic confidence if a student is going to reach their full potential. This requires that the school not only provide a **safe and enriched learning environment**, but that the student's wellbeing is nurtured and protected from the very beginning. Where the child feels safe, they will be open to learning."



Eagle advises parents and guardians to visit schools in person so that they can gain information firsthand, make comparisons, investigate, interrogate, and explore the integrity of the learning environment, the approaches to teaching and learning, the schools' views on discipline and assessment, as well as how they view the child.

An **ergonomically designed learning environment** is not something that parents may be aware of or focus on – but ensuring that the furnishings are the right size and flexible, that the learning spaces are accessible and encourage and support play, that equipment is easily accessible, and that there is sufficient natural light and air flow, all influence the quality of the learning experience for the child, says Eagle.

It is therefore non-negotiable that the **teachers are fully qualified**, that the **ratio** of competent and responsible adults to students is in place, that the integrity of the **curriculum** is not compromised but rather enhanced, that the focus is placed on **future-focused** teaching and learning techniques and strategies, and that all this takes place in a nurturing and responsive setting.



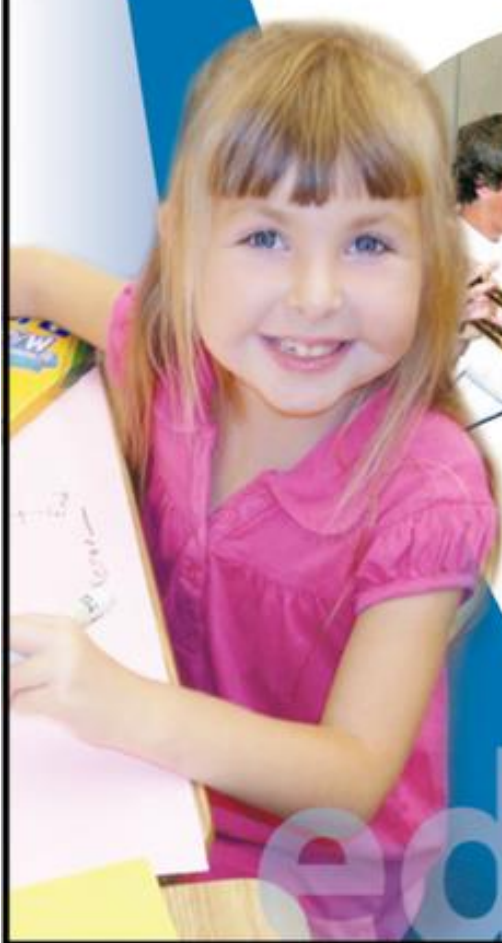
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Holistic bursaries - an expert Q & A

According to Stats SA, attendance of educational institutions among youth aged 18 to 24 in 2021 was relatively high, although a clear lag in completion was linked to socio-economic status. Bursaries are crucial to closing this socio-economic divide.

Paramount to bursary initiatives is the addressing of youth unemployment. Idle youth is a dangerous youth, and we owe it to our youth to provide these critical elements in the form of effective bursary initiatives to assist them to integrate into the economy.



Educational Specialist at Tshikululu Social Investments, Shamiso Chideme, unpacks the importance of effective bursary management. In a Q&A, she identifies key focus areas in bursary initiatives that broaden the opportunity for our youth and assists them to become gainfully employed.

What is South Africa's university dropout rate?

Last year, Minister of Higher Education, Blade Nzimande, expressed that the Post School Education sector is in crisis, with between 50 to 60% of first year students dropping out.

What are some of the reasons for this high university dropout rate?

According to a report by Stats SA titled, '*Increase in number of out-of-school youth in SA*', in 2021, the most prominent reasons for non-attendance included illness and disability (22,7%), poor academic performance (21,2%) and lack of money for fees (19,6%).

Why is South Africa's very successful National Student Financial Aid Scheme not enough?

Although this scheme supports about 120 000 of 735 000 university students, these loans and bursaries do not cover the full costs of study, leaving poor students struggling to meet living and other expenses, thereby contributing to dropout.

What is meant by a 'holistic' approach to bursary initiatives?

Bursaries are not just about tuition fees. They are also about accommodation, meals, utilities, transport, learning tools such as books and laptops, and critically – and often overlooked – psychosocial support.

It also means broadening the bursary offering by going beyond the formal university education and expanding into other essential avenues of education – opening pathways into TVET colleges and the arts. This approach is crucial to expanding on the pool of candidates, providing a lot more opportunity, and reducing the incidence of idle youth.

Why is psychosocial support so important?

These students need one-on-one engagement. They need mentorship, support and for some, even clinical psychologist support. Psychosocial support means regular engagement with students – 'checking in' with them and tracking and monitoring their academic performance.



Psychosocial support makes them feel engaged like they are part of a broader community and that they're not alone within the higher education institutions. They feel supported and this enhances their performance.

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Are there examples of initiatives that focus on this holistic approach?

Yes. I can provide two examples: The first is Netflix’s commitment to supporting black representation in the Film & TV industry in South Africa; and another example is Anglo American Platinum’s drive to align bursary management with the Group’s Sustainable Mining Plan.

Both these offerings open avenues for youth who don’t necessarily qualify for the formal university setting.

What is meant by “don’t necessarily qualify for the formal university setting?”

Qualifying bursars don’t have to be top of the class. Holistic bursaries fill a gap by focusing on those students who have worked hard and passed well enough to qualify to go to a higher education institution. This broadens the opportunity and ensures that these students are able to integrate into higher education institutions.

What makes the Netflix initiative unique?

In the context of South Africa, the creative arts space is a very under-resourced sector – Netflix prioritises this space, which is most often overlooked.

A major benefit of the Netflix initiative is that they have expanded on the age restriction in the application process to include 18 to 35-year-olds (usually 25 is the cut-off), thereby increasing opportunity for candidates.

What is unique about the Anglo American Platinum offer?

Anglo American Platinum bursaries are targeted at 18 to 25-year-olds and are aligned with the Group’s Sustainable Mining Plan. The bursaries cover tuition fees, textbook allowance, personal allowance, allowance for private accommodation or university accommodation and meals.

The stand-out here is that most bursaries want students that are performance-based. The selection process with Anglo Platinum fills a gap by focusing on those students who haven’t necessarily been top of their class but have worked hard and passed well enough to qualify to go to a higher education institution. This broadens the opportunity, and, in aligning the bursary offer with their Sustainable Mining Plan, Anglo Platinum can contribute to a potential future workforce.



Are bursaries just about getting into universities?

No. Bursaries are about looking at the broad spectrum of TVETs too. These students are also in need of financial assistance, to be able to study as a boilermaker, a welder, a plumber and even the arts. There are excellent programmes that offer work readiness within the scope of these ‘trade’ skills, and within the psychosocial support element, thereby providing opportunities to these learners and preparing them to be economically active.

What should be top of mind for corporates who offer bursaries?

When we look at the broader issue of South African youth who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET), we need to acknowledge that our youth are at a loss and struggling to find opportunities. Bursary initiatives are essential. If our youth don’t receive support, like financial systems within a *holistic* approach to pursue their tertiary education, it leaves them idle.

Corporate bursary offerings should look to supporting holistic bursary programmes to assist in eradicating youth unemployment.



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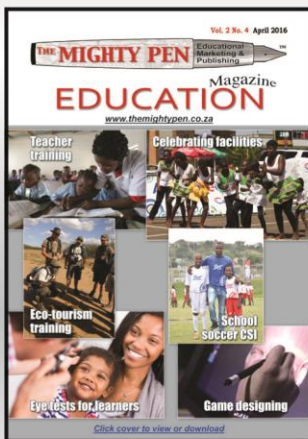
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