

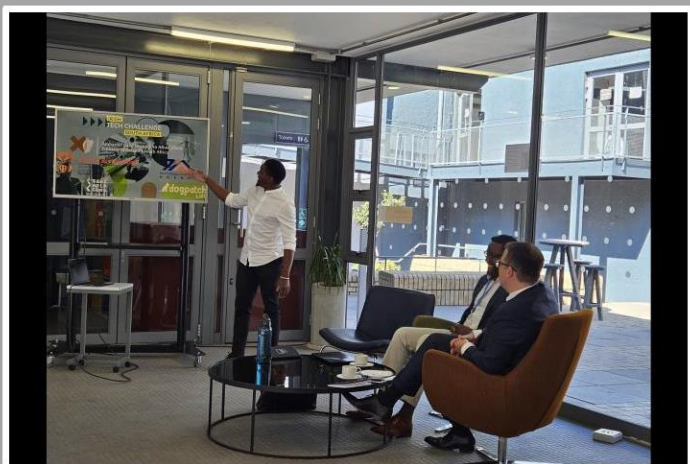


# Magazine EDUCATION

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# Magazine EDUCATION

## Publisher

The Mighty Pen (Pty) Ltd  
The Mighty Pen EDUCATION magazine

## Branding

TheMightyPen.co.za

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## Website

www.themightypen.co.za

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# Editor's Column

## So, will 2024 be any different in education?

Yes – and it will be better - according to a rather rosy article on *Parenting Hub*. Actually, most of the media mouthpieces I researched on this question seem to just highlight the hackneyed trends from the past few years.

The “experts” say this year will be so much better because of the growth of online education in South Africa driving the trend towards personalised learning. This means content can be presented in different styles, learners can track their progress, and teachers can provide individual support.

Another potential panacea is the mastery-based approach we have adopted. This shifts the focus from advancing because of your age or grade level to advancing because you've mastered the concepts. This emphasises not only a deeper understanding of subjects and the abilities to apply learning, but also ensures that no student is left behind.

For teachers, the mastery-based approach means more precise assessments, greater flexibility, and a redefined role in helping students achieve mastery, rather than just teaching to a curriculum.

The big buzz of course is Gamification. With its propensity to deliver dopamine boosts, gamification is making learning more engaging and interactive. Through game elements such as targets, leaderboards, points, and rewards, schools are creating more enjoyable and motivating learning environments. It's claimed that for learners, this trend can encourage problem-solving, collaboration, and creativity as they navigate through challenges and adventures in the pursuit of knowledge.

Most articles on the subject conclude that we can expect gamification in education and AI will be revolutionising forces in the years ahead. It's taken a long time for our education system to evolve, in many ways it is still woefully out of step with the world of work, *(they coyly admit – Ed)* but change is happening; and the pace of change in education is certainly accelerating.

None of the above is necessarily incorrect.

But anything built on a flimsy foundation is doomed to fail. These lofty education ideals need to be supported by the pillars of integrous governance, an expanding economy, and social cohesion.

**Yours in education**

**Janos Bozsik**  
Editor

# Durban to Dublin - Irish Tech Challenge SA 2023 winners to showcase SDG innovations in Ireland

The Irish Tech Challenge South Africa is excited to announce that the 2023 winning cohort is set to travel to Ireland for a 10-day curated immersion and networking programme with access to top industry leaders and potential for further funding.



*Irish Tech Challenge Winners arrive in Dublin*

The Irish Tech Challenge is a prestigious competition that seeks to unearth high-impact South African start-ups that have developed innovative, SDG-aligned solutions.

The winning five start-ups emerged from 266 applications and were unveiled on 21 November 2023. From AgriTech to BioTech to HealthTech, their innovations demonstrate the depth and diversity of talent in the South African tech landscape.

## The five winning start-ups

- Thato Schermer — Founder, Zoie Health (HealthTech)
- Neo Hutiri — Founder, PeleBox (HealthTech)
- Vuyo Pakade — Founder, Foonda Africa (HRTech)
- Dr Benedicta Durcan — Founder, AfroBodies (BioTech) and
- Tumelo Chiloane — Co-founder, Desert Green Africa (AgriTech)

These start-ups, who travel to Dublin on February 9, 2024, are now poised to grow their entities by leveraging Ireland's growing status as a major global tech and innovation hub, drawing from the vast pool of Irish tech expertise as well as industry experts,

investors, and fellow innovators. As an EU-member state, Ireland further serves as a gateway to the European market and beyond for these high-impact South African start-ups.



The Irish Tech Challenge South Africa is a partnership between the Embassy of Ireland in South Africa, the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), the Technology Innovation Agency, along with implementing partners Tshimologong Digital Precinct (South Africa) and Dogpatch Labs (Ireland).

It amplifies the commitment of Ireland and South Africa to incentivize mutually beneficial partnerships between Irish tech expertise and South African entrepreneurs, while fostering technological advancements and creating a global network of innovators committed to positive change.

The showcase in Dublin not only highlights the accomplishments of these five entrepreneurs but also serves as an opportunity for collaboration and knowledge exchange between South Africa and Ireland, said Austin Gormley, Ireland's Ambassador to South Africa:



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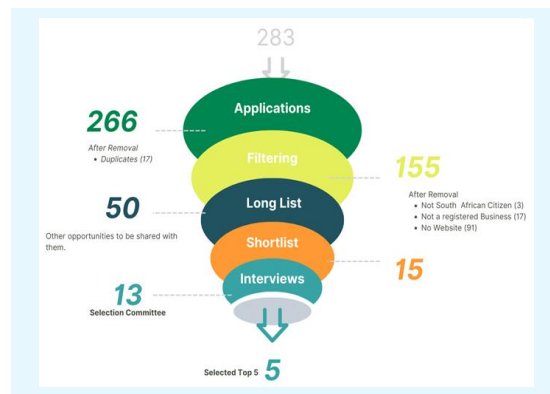
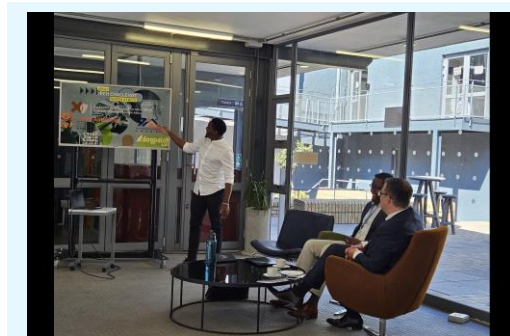
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"This initiative is testament to the power of collaboration and innovation in addressing global challenges through South African-developed solutions combined with Irish expertise. The solutions promoted by these entrepreneurs have the potential to create a positive and lasting impact in South Africa and beyond, supporting the broader goals of sustainable development."



The Dublin experience will not only be an opportunity for the South African start-ups to showcase their innovative solutions and access to the Irish tech sector, but also a chance for Dublin's tech community to witness first-hand the ingenuity emerging from South Africa.

Deputy Director-General for International Cooperation and Resources at the DSI, Daan du Toit, said the Irish-South African partnership has proven to be a remarkable success, creating a dynamic platform for tech start-ups to thrive.

"The Irish Tech Challenge SA stands as a shining example of how bilateral relations can drive progress in the tech industry. It has not only facilitated the exchange of ideas but has also laid the foundation for enduring partnerships that will continue to shape the technological landscape for years to come."

Launched in 2022, the Challenge is fast becoming a catalyst for innovation within the South African tech community, and serves as a model of effective inter-governmental, public, and private partnerships that stimulate the entrepreneurial ecosystem. It builds on the historical ties between Ireland and South Africa and highlights the crucial role of both local and international stakeholders collaborating to support start-ups in their growth journey.

**Benefits of the challenge**

- **Collaborative initiative:** Spearheaded by the Embassy of Ireland in South Africa, in partnership with the Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, the Technology Innovation Agency and Dogpatch Labs Ireland, the programme aims to fuse Irish technology expertise with the innovation of South African tech entrepreneurs.
- **Focus on innovation:** The Irish Tech Challenge is rooted in promoting innovation, fostering technology development, and ensuring effective technology deployment within South Africa.
- **Empowering diversity:** With a special emphasis on encouraging applications from women, young entrepreneurs, persons from historically disadvantaged communities, and startups aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



# 5 Pieces of Advice for Teachers, Tech Coaches, and Principals to Increase Student Engagement

## Honor student and teacher voices

allow students and teachers to share what's working and what's not working

## Bring hope into your school and classroom

emphasize importance of empathy, the importance of optimism as a leader

## Remain positive

the motto during this time is "this too shall pass."

## Reestablish norms

educational instruction will move back to the classroom and students will have to readjust to the new environment.

## Self-care

teachers are unable to fully educate students without taking care of themselves first



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# SA government – must prioritise AI in education



**Artificial intelligence (AI) has been comprehensively embraced in the private sector in South Africa in less than a year, but more must be done to ensure that the public sector (and especially students in public schools and universities) are also empowered and prepared for the future world of work, an education expert says.**

“In a rapidly changing job market, adaptability is paramount. By integrating AI into education, South Africa will ensure that our young people are not only consumers of technology but also creators. We must ensure, as a matter of urgency, greater AI literacy throughout our education system, and that students are equipped with skills that transcend textbooks,” says Dr Alex Asakitikpi, Senior Researcher at IIE Varsity College.

Asakitikpi says resource constraints and well-known challenges throughout the education system cannot be dismissed; however, it is essential to work towards integrating AI into the education system despite these hurdles.

“There is much that can be done, and done urgently if SA’s policymakers, educators, and industry leaders collaborate,” says Dr Asakitikpi.

“Curricula should incorporate AI literacy, demystifying complex topics and emphasizing hands-on learning. Teacher training programmes should equip educators with the skills to navigate this new terrain. And partnerships with tech companies, research institutions, and NGOs can provide resources, mentorship, and exposure,” he says.

In recognition of the importance of incorporating AI into the education system, The Independent Institute of Education’s IIE MSA recently hosted an international conference at its campus in Ruimsig, Johannesburg, called “*Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Education and Work*”, where leading researchers and academics in the field of AI were united in urging the government to speed up the development of policies that facilitate incorporation of AI across all levels of the education system.

“AI is rapidly changing the future of work and it is estimated that 50% of jobs that exist today will disappear as companies adopt and integrate new AI-driven technologies and machines into their production and business processes to perform tasks that were previously done by many people,” says Dr Asakitikpi.

“We all know by now that AI will make humans more efficient and faster when performing tasks, and that tasks that were previously done by many people can now, and will in the future, be done by one person. However, at the same time, AI will create new opportunities for job seekers and entrepreneurs. Preparing our youth in this regard is non-negotiable, and nobody should be left behind.”

AI-driven technologies and tools enable people to learn new skills quickly and to develop new ideas, thereby reducing barriers to market entry and lowering the cost of doing business.

“For instance, there are new AI-related jobs in the fields of data science and robotics, which did not exist before, but pay significantly higher than traditional occupations. We therefore call on the government to establish a Task Force that takes a pro-active approach to developing policies for AI, while the industry collaborates with higher education institutions to fund research into AI-related skills,” advises Dr Asakitikpi.



**Dr Alex Asakitikpi**

# Class of 2023 – top Matrics honoured



*(Centre) Executive Head EBS & New Business Initiatives, Benedict Johnson, with top performing students in the Free State province*

*Executive head of Information Technology, Jacques Van Rooijen (left) with North West province top performing student, Wian Landman*



The Class of 2023 had much to celebrate last month as they gathered at their former schools one last time to get their matric results and share these with their families, friends and teachers. With a record-high pass rate of 82.9% being achieved nationally, and 40.9% of matrics obtaining Bachelors’ passes, top achievers are being celebrated and their individual stories heard at celebratory events being hosted by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), across all provinces.

Fundi has contributed to many of these provincial events, sponsoring various awards to give learners a head-start as they step onto their future paths.

Local matriculants received their final results at schools across the country only a short while ago. “The Class of 2023 achieved extraordinary results, despite facing considerable challenges, including unprecedented levels of rolling blackouts throughout their matric year,” says Mala Suriah, CEO of Fundi. “This specific generation of learners can be expected to continue showing their courage, character and remarkable resilience in future years.”

She notes that the country’s learners keep delivering top results: engaging possibility and asserting their potential in their individual life-paths. “This year’s record-high pass rate of 82.9% continues the climb from last year’s rate of 80.1%. We’re seeing young leaders emerge, who are destined to build a strong civil society and give back to South Africa. The insights and intentions many top achievers shared at the recent celebrations are uplifting and

reflect a broader spirit of reaching for all that is good in our country.”

Top matric performers were honoured at a range of formal celebrations across the country, with Fundi supporting these national announcements. The organisation rewarded 33 learners for their achievements with mall vouchers to a collective value of almost R50 000.

The Fundi team was also on hand in various provinces to congratulate top performers with laptops, tablets and travel bags: awards specifically geared to help top matriculants take their next steps towards further learning. “Our role is to help as many students as possible to access their full potential – starting now. Experience in the space has taught us that holistic support is critical for long-term success,” notes Suriah.

In her engagements with the Class of 2023, Suriah has recommended that these learners use the next few weeks to consolidate their plans and shape their next chapter.



# SASHOC celebrates – the 2023 hockey season



**Western Province U16 boys' team winning the SASHOC nationals**



**South Africa boys' U17 kit presentation before the Mirnawan Cup in Malaysia**



**WP U18 boys and Southern Gauteng U18 boys at the final of the SASHOC U18 nationals**

Driving the game forward at the base of the sport, SA Schools Hockey (SASHOC) is delighted to be able to look back on another amazing year which saw significant growth and development of youth hockey across the country.

Ensuring significant opportunities were provided in all provinces, the federation hosted 17 regional schools tournaments around South Africa.

In addition, six national tournaments were held, as well as a series of matches between the SA U-18 and SA U-21 teams.

At the SASHOC U-13 Nationals, hosted by Southern Free State Hockey in Bloemfontein, 32 provincial sides participated, while a total of 48 teams competed at the U-16 and U-18 Nationals, also held in Bloemfontein.

### National champions

Western Province were the star performers this season, with the coastal region dominating at national level.

At the six SASHOC Nationals that were held, Western Province were victorious in four of them: U-13 boys, U-16 girls and boys, and U-18 boys.

The KZN Coastal team won gold at the SASHOC Nationals in the U-13 girls division, and hosts Southern Free State emerged triumphant in the U-18 girls tournament.

### International success

Closing out the season, the South African U-17 teams represented the country with pride by delivering impressive performances throughout the Mirnawan Cup tournament in Malaysia.

The national U-17 boys' team were exceptional. In a nail-biting final, they lost in a narrow 4 - 3 defeat to India, finishing second overall.

The SA girls' team also did well to finish fourth. After beating India 2 - 1 in a thrilling contest earlier in the tournament, they were edged

2 - 0 by the same team in another tightly contested battle in the third-fourth place playoff.

### Youth participation

Perhaps most impressive, in terms of statistics, was the numbers of players who participated in official schools hockey matches and tournaments during the 2023 campaign.

A total of 1 948 youth players took part in the SASHOC Nationals across all age groups, while 3 482 individuals turned out at SASHOC regional tournaments.

"It has been another spectacular year for South African schools hockey and we are pleased to have continued building the sport at grassroots level, while offering multiple opportunities at various levels for the nation's talented young players," said SASHOC president Wendell Domingo.

"We are proud to have so many youth hockey players participating in the sport across all levels of the game, and we would like to congratulate all the teams that won national and regional tournaments, as well as all players who represented our country overseas.

"We are also immensely grateful to all our partners and sponsors who made it possible this year for the sport to continue thriving at schools level."

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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)

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*"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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# Gestalt Language Processing – advice for parents and teachers

A growing area of interest in the speech therapy profession is Gestalt language processing. Gestalt language processors are children who learn language in a way that is different from analytical language learners. Rather than learning to make sounds, then words and then sentences like analytical language learners, these children learn whole phrases first.

“For those with a psychology background, the word Gestalt is familiar, but it essentially means learning from the whole to the part. Rather than learning the word done, a Gestalt language processor might say, well done, excellent job every time they complete a task, regardless of whether the job was completed fully or not,” explains Robyn Barlow, Speech Therapist at The Bridge Assisted Learning School.

“It is a type of language development that usually presents with echolalia. Echolalia is a term for sentences or phrases that are repeated, which can either be delayed or immediate. These are the children that repeat your questions back to you or repeat a line from a TV show in a sing-song manner,” she says.

“It can be frustrating when your questions are constantly said back to you by a small person. And for many it may appear that the child is unaware of what is being asked, but research has shown that is not true. As communicative partners of these children it is important to encourage communication in any form.”

## Some tips for parents communicating with Gestalt language processors

- Acknowledge the communication. This can be through a smile or a nod, but the attempt to communicate must be acknowledged.
- Model language. they have made associations to these phrases that may be tricky to decipher. For example, the child may say, “that’s a big truck” every time they see a truck. As a caregiver, modelling various sentence structures, intonation patterns and modifying the sentence is a good way to stimulate language. For example, “Is that a big truck?” or “yes, a big RED truck.”
- But sometimes, the phrase can be attached to an emotion. Determining if an emotional response is attached to a phrase can help you and the child identify big feelings and better ways to manage them.

“While we do not know what causes children to be analytic or Gestalt processors, we do know that Gestalt language processing using echolalia is a valid form of communication. Many children

who are Gestalt language processors are neurodivergent and it is important to learn how you can support them through neuro-diverse affirming approaches,” Barlow says.



Renie Sutherland, Principal at The Bridge Assisted Learning School Morningside campus (sister school of The Bridge Lonehill), says as is the case with all neurodiverse children, parents should seek additional assistance if they feel unsure or concerned about their child’s development.

“Sometimes neurodiverse students can’t thrive in mainstream schools, but they may also not be suited for special needs schools. Nevertheless, children with average to above average ability, whose learning is impacted by challenges such as ADHD, dyslexia, mild autism, and anxiety, or children who have been through illness or trauma which has affected their scholastic progress, as well as children who display signs of Gestalt language processing, may find the necessary support from therapy or schools that cater to neurodiverse children.”

“Gestalt language processing is not a disorder, but a different way of learning using language which can be nurtured and enhanced with the right guidance and strategies.”

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If parents notice any signs that suggest Gestalt language processing, they may want to consult a speech-language pathologist or therapist who can assess the child’s language skills and provide appropriate intervention, support, and guidance.

Gestalt language processing is not a problem, but a potential, she says.

“Parents should therefore not be concerned or alarmed if they notice what could be Gestalt language processing in their children, as it is a natural and valid way of learning and using language. However, parents can play a vital role in supporting their child’s language and holistic development, by being responsive, supportive, and collaborative with the child, their educators and other support structures.”

**Gestalt Language Processing for schools**

Ideally, we would see all gestalt language processors (that need support) in an individual setting but, for school speech-language pathologists, teachers, and other support staff, that’s not always possible. We can still support gestalt language processors in schools by focusing on the environment, our interactions, and our relationship with the student.

**Tips for teachers and support staff in the classroom**

1. Don’t try to eliminate or extinguish their scripting/gestalts. Echolalia communicates!
2. Acknowledge their scripts and accept it as communication. You can acknowledge them by smiling, nodding your head, repeating it back to them, or saying “yea” or “ok”. Do this even if you can’t understand the script or it’s been labelled as jargon.
3. Try to eliminate questioning as much as possible as a form of connection and interaction. Try using declarative language instead. Comment, narrate, and pause. Most gestalt language processors aren't ready to answer questions reliably until they’re self-generating language (Stages 3 to 4+).
4. Don’t take scripts literally. Most aren’t literal. Try to find the meaning behind them. Most are linked to a dramatic or emotional experience for the student which made it stick. Talk to those that are close to the child to help you investigate and understand the meaning such as caregivers, their school or private speech-language pathologist, other members of the child’s team, etc.
5. Work with the child’s speech-language pathologist in order to understand how to individualise and what your gestalt language processor needs in the classroom.



**What not to do in the classroom**

1. Do not ignore their attempts to communicate.
2. Consider their scripted phrases and echolalia as speech.
3. Avoid saying “say..” “Tell me..”
4. Reduce or avoid asking questions.
5. Additionally, do not use long and complex utterances. In other words, use simple easy functional phrases.
6. Do not take their echolalia as literal meaning.
7. Don’t force them to use only verbal mode to communicate. If they use gestures or AAC acknowledge their attempts.
8. Do not focus on teaching grammar or expect perfect grammar from your child.
9. Do not rush them to respond to your comments.
10. Avoid focusing on their faults.







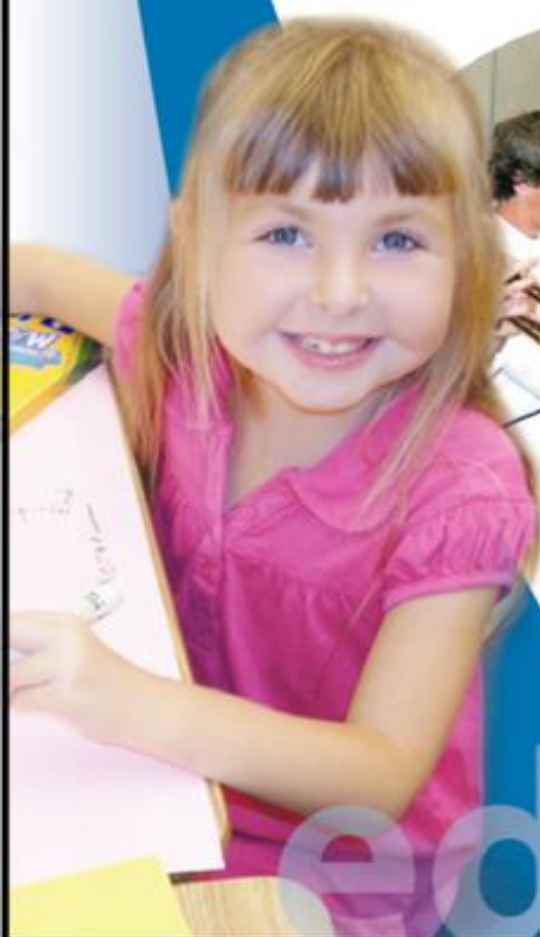
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## Occupational Certificates – boost your career

For the hundreds of thousands of South Africans who want to fast track their career and get a qualification that is in demand by employers, but who do not have matric or do not meet the entry requirements for other types of qualifications, an occupational certificate presents the best opportunity for realising their career dreams.

“An occupational certificate is a qualification that is awarded to individuals who have demonstrated competence in a specific occupation or trade. It is a nationally recognised qualification that is based on industry standards and is designed to equip learners with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in a particular occupation,” explains Siyavuya Makubalo, Marketing Manager at Oxbridge Academy.

In South Africa, occupational certificates are developed and managed by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), which is a public entity responsible for quality assurance and the oversight of the design, accreditation, implementation, assessment and certification of occupational qualifications, part-qualifications and skills programmes.

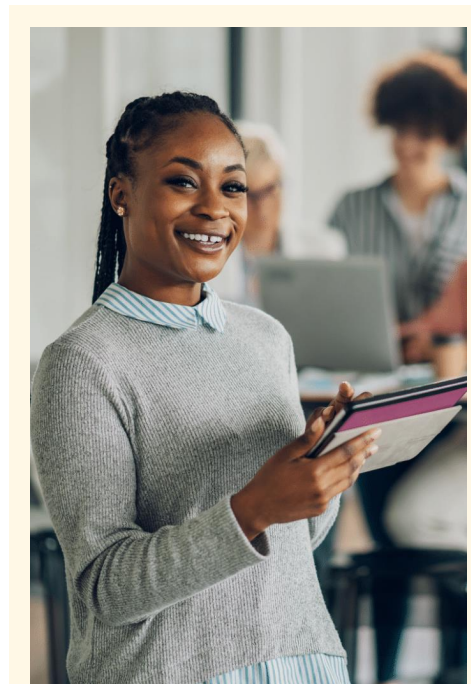
“One of the advantages of occupational certificates is that they provide an alternative pathway to education and training for students who have not completed their matric or who do not meet the entry requirements for other types of qualifications. Occupational certificates are divided into three components: theory, practical and work-based, which allow the learner to gain relevant knowledge, practical skills and work experience,” Makubalo says.

“Provided students have the necessary foundational learning competence (FLC) or recognition of prior learning (RPL) for the specific occupation or trade, they are able to enrol for an occupational certificate programme without having to complete their matric first, and still get a nationally recognised qualification that is relevant to a specific occupation or trade.”

**Some examples of occupational certificates that do not require matric are**

- Early Childhood Development
- Health Promotion Officer
- Cash Office Clerk
- Home-based personal care assistant
- Home-based personal care worker

Makubalo says in South Africa, occupational certificates cover most sectors including agriculture, business, construction, education, health, hospitality, manufacturing, mining & transport.



Interested students can find more information about the different occupational certificates on the QCTO website or on the SAQA website.

“By getting an occupational certificate without matric, you can fast track your career and gain access to the labour market by gaining a qualification that is in demand by employers and which prepares you to fill a specific role,” says Makubalo.

“You can also improve your chances of finding employment or starting your own business in a specific occupation or trade. Additionally, you can progress to higher levels of learning within the same or related occupational fields, as some occupational certificates are articulated with other qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).”

So if you are a student who wants to fast track your career without matric, an occupational certificate could be the answer to making your dream career a reality.





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# Bespoke training – in the engineering sector

*By David Sullivan, Divisional CEO at LH Marthinusen*

Staying at the forefront of technology is crucial for businesses wanting to maintain their competitive edge in today's rapidly evolving industrial landscape. To achieve this, investing in talent development and equipping the next generation of engineers with hands-on experience is an invaluable strategy.

For example, there are several key benefits to investing in bespoke motor, fan, and transformer maintenance training programmes for both young engineers and industrial companies. On the one hand, investing in young engineers empowers them to find employment, while on the other, it helps to create the next generation of engineers, providing industries with a sustained skilled workforce.

Addressing South Africa's acute skills shortage is crucial, particularly considering the ongoing loss of qualified personnel through emigration. Therefore, it is imperative that industrial companies empower and train young engineers to fill these gaps. At the same time, it is also important to avoid a situation where businesses invariably compete for a small number of skilled engineers, which would not only drive up the cost of these skills but also potentially impact the sustainability of industries.

## Valuable hands-on experience

Through apprenticeship, learners gain valuable skills that enhance their employability, even if they do not transition to permanent roles within the training company. Meanwhile, companies build a pipeline of talent equipped with both technical expertise and familiarity with their organisational culture. At the end of the training period, the company can select the best talent and incorporate them into positions where they can add value.

Experiential learning is also key to overcoming the challenges faced by most graduates who have the theoretical knowledge but lack the practical experience that employers look for in job applicants. Unfortunately, the industry can be hesitant to give individuals with no experience an opportunity as it is perceived as a greater risk.

However, this perception could be changed if the industry would offer young engineers the opportunity to gain a year or two of practical exposure, especially given that the cost of these programmes is not excessive, and funding is available through the various Sector Education Training Authorities (SETAs). The benefits of experiential programmes to both businesses and graduates far outweigh the costs.



## Understand the funding landscape

The first step for industrial businesses that want to effectively incorporate these training opportunities into their talent development strategies is to understand the landscape around what funding is available, particularly for artisans and technologists and understand the processes that need to be followed and plan for funding upfront.

Another suggestion is for companies to find a mechanism to potentially incentivise mentors on the shop floor – older and more experienced artisans – to take the youngsters under their wing and train them because very often companies hire apprentices merely as cheap labour. At the end of the programme, these apprentices struggle to find jobs as they have gained little concrete knowledge.

Companies need to nurture young engineering talent. A community of skilled individuals can add value to the industrial businesses they work for while nurturing the future of engineering and the industry. Thus, developing young engineers should not be seen as just an act of goodwill or an effort to increase a BBBEE score, but also as a strategic move that will build a bridge to the future.



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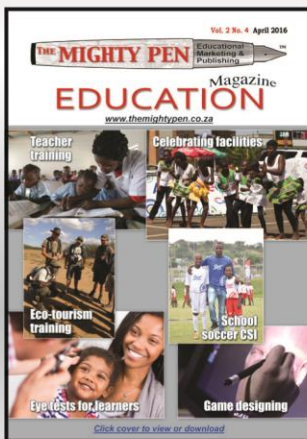
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