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Editor

Janos Bozsik

Contributors

- **Monette Govender – IT teacher & business owner**
- **Desiree Hugo – Academic Head: Schools Division of ADvTECH**
- **Warren Daniel – IT manager: Gordan High School**
- **Lubabalo Magwentshu – Mayoral Committee: Community Development, JHB**
- **Makhosazana Mavimbela – Executive Director: Forest Sector Chartered Council**
- **Dr. Greg Pienaar – Educational Psychologist**
- **Peter Kriel – GM at the IIE**

Correspondence and enquiries

themightypen@vodamail.co.za
082 940 3771

Advertising and publicity

marketing@themightypen.co.za

Production, design and layout

VLC WorX

Website

www.themightypen.co.za

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Editor's Column

Was it any different before COVID-19?

I came across a report from February 2020 by Shenilla Mohamed, Executive Director of Amnesty International South Africa, titled: *Broken and Unequal: The State of Education in South Africa*.

So, it simply prompted me to ask the question in the headline.

The report calls on the government to urgently address several endemic failings in the South African education system in order to guarantee the rights of our learners.

The report particularly highlights poor infrastructure in public schools, including sanitation, which has tragically resulted in the death of some children over the past years.

The report details how the education system continues to be dogged by stark inequalities and chronic underperformance that have deep roots in the legacy of apartheid, but which are also not being effectively dealt with by our current government and its various structures.

While the report acknowledges that there has been progress made since the end of apartheid on widening access to education as well as other aspects, it has identified weaknesses by the Department of Basic Education, such as repeatedly failing to reach its own targets with respect to infrastructure and facilities.

A recent international survey found that more than three quarters of children aged nine cannot read for meaning. In some provinces this is as high as 91% in Limpopo and 85% in the Eastern Cape.

And of 100 learners that start school, 50 to 60 will make it to matric, 40 to 50 will pass matric, and only 14 will go to university.

South Africa has one of the most unequal school systems in the world. Children in the top 200 schools achieve more distinctions in mathematics than children in the next 6 600 schools combined.

And we are told that COVID-19 created more “challenges” in our education system.

So, I guess the question in the headline is rhetorical.

Yours in education

Janos Bozsik
Editor

From schoolteacher to business owner - using knowledge gained at school

By Monette Govender: Completing BEd, Unisa, TEFL. Co-owner of Beachals

I consider myself one of the lucky ones. My school partnered with a technology company to upskill learners in using a computer as a tool. When asked if I had time to attend training events and put in extra hours learning new things, I said yes. That decision has proven its worth many times over.

What I learned, and researched, taught, and assessed I used to open and grow my own business.

Beachals is steadily growing. It is now a registered brand in the clothing industry, we have an online shop. We have been approved by Takealot.

The business which started out as 'just for the locals who love to walk barefoot on the beach and love their beautiful feet' has reached the international market. It seems people the world over are like us. They also love to walk barefoot on the beach and look feminine and elegant.

The Beachal brand is instantly recognisable. What I learned about being consistent with the fundamentals like colours, fonts, look and style of photos, graphics, and how instructions and ideas are worded is turning into measurable results. During training events, this was drummed into us from preschool to Grade 07 lessons.

I believe I have Knowledge Network's Progressive Learning Programme, the learning methodology ILAMM for technology integration in teaching and learning, the approach to completing school projects and general interaction in learning to thank for where my business is at this moment.

The first step of establishing Beachals had to do with trademark registration and copyright. I taught Grade 04 to Grade 07 learners about trademarks and copyright when researching web sites for school projects.



They learned about trademarks and copyright and what the different symbols mean, the purpose of a registered trademark and the value it brings to a product be it National Geographic, or my business.

While all these topics are highly complicated at the legal level,



Monette Govender

at Grade 04 level, learners know they must check the copyright before using a photo, their research summaries need to be carefully completed, plagiarism is not allowed. Works used must be cited.

Learners learn there are research sites that are easy to understand and sites that cannot be used because the wording is beyond what a Grade 04 learner is expected to understand.

They learn photos are products. People make money from their artwork be it photos, graphics, writing or other types of copyrighted work. They learn too that if someone quotes a line from one of their Grade 04 poems, they must be cited too. The value of their work is instilled in them even at that early age.

One of the Knowledge Network iconic projects is the design of the front cover of a Time Magazine where learners learn about the design elements, the type of headlines and articles that make Time Magazine and Time Magazine for Kids in print and online so successful. Learners usually love it, and their production work is stunning.

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➤ from page 2

It amazes me how such a small thing such as designing the front cover for Time Magazine in class can become so important later in life. The font, the colours, the style of writing, the types of pictures for the cover, the headlines for articles and of course the price and how to buy it. Top companies always let you know quickly how to buy their products, how to easily get their products into your space.

It is quite a profound thought: what teachers teach to Grade 04 learners is the starting point for varsity and opening a business like mine.

Our next step in the Beachals establishment story was the creation of an ecommerce enabled website and promotion via social media Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.

The Knowledge Network Progressive Learning Programme includes what an online image is, that it is important and needs to be looked after carefully from an early age.



What goes onto the Internet is there forever. This enables awareness of the Internet as a public space even though one is generally completely alone when entering the worldwide web.

We put together a website using WordPress and Elementor. My daughter helped me. We needed the site to be ecommerce enabled. My daughter's knowledge started at a primary school that had also partnered with Knowledge Network.

I have received excellent feedback about the graphics on the website and on social media. People want to know which app I use. They are astounded when I tell them "No app, just good old faithful PowerPoint!."

Most schools don't have Adobe, Apple, or Corel products for production of illustrations for projects. They have PowerPoint. During the Knowledge Network lessons, I taught learners how to illustrate their projects for all the different learning areas using vector graphics, bitmaps, and multimedia. I used what I taught the kids in the production of all the Beachal visuals.

My message to teachers is it is so important to do your prep and understand what you are teaching. We think we are imparting knowledge to our students, but through doing all of that, everything I ever taught in the classroom has helped me to

achieve my goals in opening an online shop and having a social media presence.

Yes, I was the teacher, but through using the learning methodology Knowledge Network uses, I was the student too.

As a teacher, if you apply the principles that Knowledge Network has taught you, you will surprise yourself with what you can do.

I can honestly say our entire business is run using the skill set I learned through Knowledge Network, from pictures and memes to invoicing and stock control, website development and ecommerce integration.

Imagine where our kids will be when they leave school with all this knowledge including what is covered in coding and robotics, their own creative skills, confidence and understanding of their own self-worth.

These are all the ingredients of Knowledge Network which my principal identified when she chose the programme for the school in which I taught, which empowered me as a teacher and has now empowered me in my own business.



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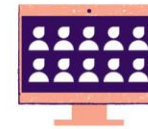
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New e-learning hub – for Somerset West school

Vergelegen IT manager Warren Daniel advises Natale Lange, a grade 12 learner at Gordon High School



Andrew-Lee Ninon and Chanelle Jonkers (front) and Miceala Jackson and Natale Lange (back) at the IT stations

A state-of-the art e-learning Hub at Vergelegen wine estate in Somerset West has given learners, who live on the estate, a new source of support and inspiration with their studies.

A cottage at Harmony Village has been freshly refurbished to incorporate 10 learning stations, seven of which have computers. Additional facilities at the spic-and-span Hub include a printer, stationery, a small kitchen to prepare hot drinks, toilets, and a small library. Teacher Kathryn Couzens is on hand every afternoon to offer support and guidance.

The Hub was opened recently, and it is currently available to grade eight to 12 learners. Eighteen of the 24 eligible learners have used the facilities to date, with eight learners visiting regularly.

Development of the facility has been a team effort by committed members of the estate staff, with the enthusiastic support of Managing Director Wayne Coetzer. Key participants have been IT Manager Warren Daniel; Security Manager Carl Langenhoven; Finance Manager Dean Carlse; and Hospitality and HR Manager Sharon Hosking. Social Media Manager A.J. van der Vyver also offers extra math lessons weekly.

Says Langenhoven: “It is important to keep the kids busy and to ensure they have the necessary resources to make more choices. We want to prepare them for adulthood and tertiary education. Our dream is to facilitate from grade R to grade 12, with the kids having the tools to get ahead and enter university.”

Daniel, who brings facilitation skills from working at Damelin College, plus IT expertise, says the Hub is intended to bridge the gap between school and home.

“Tech is ever evolving, and we can’t let learners fall behind. This is the starting point, and it is going to develop further. The Hub lends itself to more uses in future such as adult literacy classes and holiday workshops.”

Kathryn Couzens, who has 16 years of high school experience, says: “The response from the children has been overwhelmingly positive, especially with the core group who attend regularly. You feel that you can make an impact by working with their strengths and weaknesses. It’s wonderful to be able to share my experience.”

The staff say that they do not want the Hub to be a classroom environment, as the children already have this at school. Instead, children should feel comfortable and relaxed, and eager to learn new things.

The children are positive about their experiences. “It helps a lot when we study” and “our teacher helps us if we are struggling” were some of the comments from regular visitors Andrew-Lee Ninon, Natalie Lange, Miceala Jackson, and Chanelle Jonkers.

Daniel concurred: “You can see the spark in the children’s eyes.”

Bringing Nelson Mandela's vision – step-by-step to schools



Happy learners at Slovoville Primary School in Soweto after receiving their shoes on Mandela Day



M.C Weiler Primary School learners received new school shoes



In the heart of Johannesburg, 10 000 pairs of shoes were distributed, reaffirming the city's commitment to erasing barriers to education and nurturing the happiness of its children.

Member of the Mayoral Committee, Lubabalo Magwentshu of Community Development in the City of Johannesburg, expressed his dedication, saying, "Supporting these schools holds the promise of brighter futures for our children. Witnessing the smiles on their faces as they receive the shoes is a testament to the positive change unity and collaboration can bring."

This collaboration echoes Mandela's belief: "Education is the great engine of personal development." United under SPAR's #WereForSmiles campaign, the City of Joburg and SPAR radiate the spirit of positivity, bringing smiles and hope to our children's lives and lighting the way for a brighter future.

The City of Johannesburg and SPAR South Rand Stores have forged a heartwarming collaboration that not only embodies the spirit of Nelson Mandela's commitment to education and community upliftment but also aligns perfectly with SPAR's national campaign #WereForSmiles. This partnership is dedicated to bringing smiles to the faces of underprivileged schoolchildren and igniting hope for a brighter future.

Tapiwa Muchaonyerwa, Regional Operations Manager at SPAR South Rand, stated, "Our ongoing journey, kindled on Nelson Mandela Day, exemplifies our unwavering dedication to empowering the next generation and honouring Mandela's legacy. SPAR is at the forefront of this legacy, understanding that the drive to put smiles on faces extends beyond a single day."

Over the past three years, this collaboration has provided 2 million South African children with Bata school shoes, symbolizing not just an opportunity for education but also a chance to experience the joy of learning with a smile. This year, 125 000 pairs of shoes will be donated nationwide, exemplifying the remarkable power of collective action in creating smiles that transcend generations.

celebrating female forestry value chain role models this Women's Month



Noxolo Ndlovu is blazing a trail in the forestry industry as a researcher



In celebration of Women's Day in South Africa, *She Is Forestry SA* has launched the first four videos in a series aimed at inspiring the next generation of girls to stay in school and consider forestry and the myriad of career avenues it offers.

She Is Forestry SA, a non-profit forestry organisation promoting and uplifting women across the forest and forest product sector, launched the videos at their annual Women in Forestry webinar on 3 August. Their aim is to produce a series of videos showcasing all the potential careers found within forestry and related industries, from growing trees in a nursery to ensuring they reach maturity in a plantation while safeguarding the environment on which forestry relies.

Commenting on the initiative, Jane Molony, executive director of the Paper Manufacturers Association of South Africa (PAMSA) adds: "As our sector looks to build its talent pipeline, initiatives like

this one expose youngsters to a world of opportunities using a green, renewable resource – farmed trees – to support the economy, deliver goods to society and build communities."

"People still have a 1970s view of forestry, that it is a male-only career path. This simply is not true," explains Makhosazana Mavimbela, executive director of the Forest Sector Charter Council. "We have women working in every single conceivable role within the sector, from operating heavy machinery to conducting world class research. Women populate our HR, communication, finance, and marketing positions, they manage plantations and nurseries, mills and lumber yards. Women own forestry businesses, contractor operations and small forestry-related enterprises. In short, there is a wealth of forestry opportunities just waiting to be explored."

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Each video follows a single woman as she discusses her role and the career path she followed. The women also explain some of the challenges they have faced along the way and how they have circumvented them.

The beauty of the videos is that high school learners watching them will be able to relate to the women they see on the screen. They are women who have come from rural communities and had to work hard and overcome obstacles to get where they are today.

“They are testament to what belief, determination and discipline can deliver, making them powerful role models for future generations to aspire to,” explains Forestry South Africa’s communication consultant, Katy Johnson, who was involved in the commissioning and production of the videos.

The videos came from a request made by several of the principals from the schools that *She Is Forestry SA* supports, who were experiencing high dropout rates among female scholars. They felt careers advice about the potential avenues open to women and positive role models already living these careers might help the girls to see the array of potential paths open to them and help to decrease the numbers dropping out.

While a career day at each school was an option, it would not have been sustainable and would therefore have a limited reach. Thus, it was decided to commission videos that will be hosted on *She Is Forestry SA*’s YouTube channel [ShelsForestrySA](#), and made publicly available. That way, any school, organisation, individual or group could access them and be inspired by the exceptional women and abundant career avenues found within the forestry sector.

“While these first four videos focus on quite obvious forestry careers – forester, nursery manager, forestry researcher and forestry contractor – we plan on commissioning many more videos to cover all the potential forestry career avenues, from environmental auditing to accounts, pulp processing to wood science and beyond,” says Katy.

“While this is a forestry initiative, *She Is Forestry SA* directors include government officials who will be taking this to their colleagues in education and suggesting this could be an initiative rolled out across other sectors. We believe forestry should be a trailblazer for something bigger, a multi-sector initiative to promote science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects to women and girls across the country by using real and relatable female role models,” she concludes.

Some of the women who are pioneering a career path in forestry



Nonku Ntinga – nursery manager



Yoliswa Phiri – managing forester



Zinhle Mbuyazi – forestry contractor

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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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Emotional Dysregulation – early interventions

Challenges related to emotional regulation are becoming increasingly common among children today. Emotional regulation refers to a child's ability to manage their emotions in a socially acceptable way, including the ability to delay immediate responses or use alternative responses. But many parents and educators aren't readily able to identify whether a child's behaviour is in line with expected development milestones, or whether they have specific needs related to emotional regulation which require additional support.

"Emotional regulation is the ability to respond to a range of emotions in a socially acceptable or tolerable way. This would include spontaneous reactions and the delay of an immediate response, or the use of an alternative response," says Dr Greg Pienaar, renowned Educational Psychologist and Principal of The Bridge Assisted Learning School.

He says emotional regulation is a critical aspect of a child's overall development, and that unresolved and unsupported difficulties in this area may have a negative impact on the child's academic, social, and emotional functioning.

"It is therefore important that parents who have concerns are able to identify whether their child needs additional help, so that they can receive the necessary support and interventions to promote healthy development," he says.

Dr Pienaar says some of the signs which may indicate a child is struggling with emotional regulation include:

- Not wanting to attend school at all, for instance if a child routinely cries when it's time to go to school.
- Being generally emotionally unhappy, where the unhappiness can't be connected to a concrete issue.
- Losing interest in everyday activities which would have interested the child before.
- Acting out, by displaying negative behaviour which wasn't in place before.
- Extreme anxiety (or possibly generalised anxiety) in other areas of the life of a child where there may not have been anxiety before.
- Becoming frustrated when a calmer, more reasoned approach would have been in place before.
- Becoming more sensitive to sensory stimuli.
- Struggling with separation anxiety.

Dr Pienaar says parents can assist struggling children to cope with Emotional Dysregulation by providing routine and structure at home, ensuring consistency, providing clear expectations and

boundaries, and by providing safe spaces for regulation.

Should these early interventions not have an impact, professional help should be sought, which may include regular therapy where a child learns alternative approaches, and potentially prescribed medication.

One of the main sustainable interventions which will help children through their dysregulation journey however is to ensure they are in the right educational environment, where they can enjoy the support of qualified, knowledgeable, and experienced professionals who understand their challenges and where they won't merely be sidelined in the classroom because of challenging behaviour.

"A smaller cottage-style school may be more appropriate, but ideally a specialised environment geared specifically to assist neurodiverse children with unique emotional needs should be sought. Educators and staff in these schools have specialised training and experience which enable them to understand and assist students struggling with Emotional Dysregulation.

Research has shown that effective interventions, such as behavioural therapy, can significantly improve emotional regulation skills in children.



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Academic goalsetting - help your child achieve



Desiree
Hugo



Parental participation

There are few tools as valuable as setting goals and constantly measuring a student's progress against these goals in ensuring a successful academic journey, an education expert says.

However, it is not enough to have vaguely defined ideas of what success will look like down the line. Instead, parents, students, teachers and schools must have a coherent goal/measurement strategy in place from early in a child's school career, says Desiree Hugo, Academic Head at ADvTECH's Schools Division.

"Setting goals is an important part of a student's educational journey. It helps them stay focused, motivated and on track to achieving their academic and personal aspirations," she says.

Hugo says setting clearly defined goals which are regularly reviewed, helps students manage their priorities and build confidence.

"When students have a clear goal in mind, they are more likely to stay focused and motivated. It gives them something to work towards, along with a sense of accomplishment and positive momentum once a goal is achieved.

"Setting goals also allows students to prioritise tasks and manage their time effectively, so they can focus on what is important and avoid getting side-tracked."

In addition, goalsetting helps with decision-making.

"When you have a clear goal in mind, it's easier to make decisions that align with that goal. Students can evaluate their options based on whether they will help or hinder progress."

Most importantly, students themselves must take ownership of the process, with the support of their teachers, school, and parents.

"Students must be placed front and centre when it comes to setting and tracking goals. That is why we have introduced Student-Led conferences - what in the past would have been called parent-teacher meetings. Instead of parents meeting alone with teachers to receive feedback, all three parties including the student now sit together. And then the student provides an update of their performance and progress in line with their personal plan."

Hugo says that while the student takes ownership of their personal academic map, schools and parents play an important role in helping them navigate in the following ways:

- Providing guidance on how to set goals that are realistic and achievable, and helping students create action plans.
- Providing the resources required on the way to achieving those goals, including additional support where required.
- Regular scheduled check-ins, where goals are monitored, discussed, and updated if necessary so that students remain accountable and empowered.
- Creating a supportive environment that encourages growth and collaboration.

"In today's highly competitive environment, cruise control won't suffice in ensuring a student leaves school with a competitive advantage. The practice of goalsetting should be developed from early in a student's academic journey – starting with setting small goals and leading to the important ones," concludes Hugo.



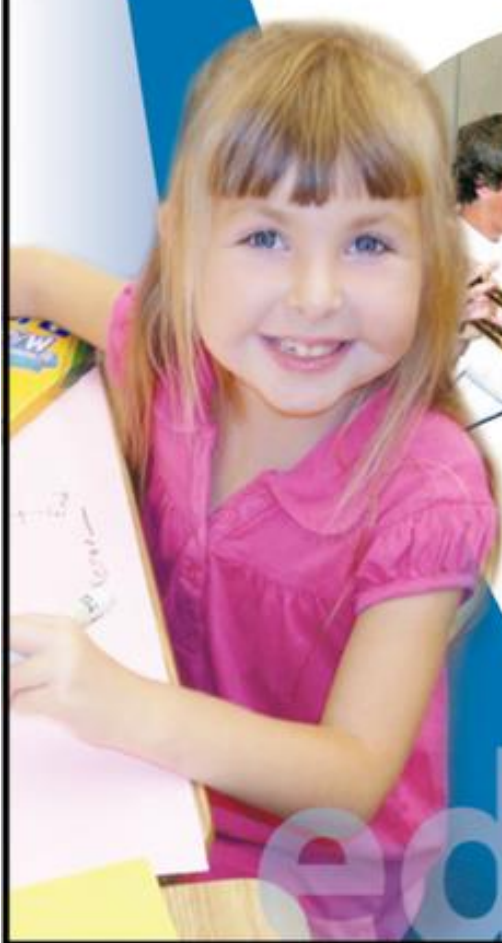
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Map your career – from early in your studies

As hundreds of thousands of students apply at universities throughout South Africa, they enter a world of study that has already changed just from last year and will continue to do so more rapidly than ever before due to technological advancements changing the landscape almost from one day to the next.

This is why these students should, as soon as possible, strategise their career trajectory, taking into account not only their current graduate studies, but also potential post-graduate options, an education expert says.



“Today’s students are developing their skills in the face of an uncertain future, the only certainty being that they will be competing in a very tough job market by the time they graduate. One of the most important reasons for strategising one’s career trajectory from early in your studies, is to reduce uncertainty and stress, by knowing that you have a solid plan in place which will allow you to focus on going above and beyond in your everyday endeavours during your academic journey,” says Peter Kriel, General Manager at The Independent Institute of Education (IIE).

“By having a plan in place, you will feel more confident and in control of your future, which will allow you to be resilient if the landscape changes on the way and allow you to make decisions with greater clarity and purpose, rather than feeling overwhelmed by the many options and uncertainties that will be coming your way,” he says.

Kriel says in coming years, a post-graduate qualification will become a non-negotiable for remaining competitive in the job market, which is why it is important for students to factor that into their academic journey from as early as possible.

“Postgraduate studies are of course a significant investment, so it is, therefore, important to carefully consider your goals and

options before pursuing an advanced degree. It’s also important to choose a programme that aligns with your career goals and provides the skills and knowledge you need to advance in your chosen field. It is for this reason that this decision should be top of mind throughout one’s graduate studies, and not be left until the last moment.”

Kriel says making the contemplation of post-graduate studies part of one’s graduate student career has several benefits, most notably the fact that time is on one’s side.

“When you start planning your career trajectory early, you have more time to explore different options and make informed decisions. You can take advantage of opportunities as they arise and adjust your plan as needed.”

It also allows a student to continuously align their academic and career goals.

In other words, you’ll be able to select programmes leading to qualifications, the elective modules within such programmes where applicable and the focus of any research projects in such a way that will best support your career aspirations and build the skills and knowledge you need for your future studies and career.



“Knowing that you’ll be continuing your studies will also allow you to start building your professional network,” says Kriel.

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While studying towards your first qualification in university, you will have opportunities to connect with academics, alumni and industry professionals who can help you build your professional network, which will not only be able to support you as you progress to post-graduate study and point you towards new opportunities but who will also later be a valuable support network as you enter the job market.

“With technological advancements and automation changing the nature of work, employers will in future increasingly look for candidates who have advanced skills and knowledge, regardless of their field of study, as no field is exempt from these developments,” says Kriel.

A postgraduate degree not only demonstrates your commitment to professional development and objectively increases your competitiveness and earning potential in the job market, but also proves that you have deepened your understanding in your field of expertise and that you can stay on top of new developments. By starting now and taking the time to consider your options and make informed decisions, you can set yourself on a path to a successful and fulfilling future from early in your university career.

Study trajectory: how each qualification level builds on the next

FIRST DEGREES AND DIPLOMAS (NQF Levels 6 or 7)

A first degree or diploma equips you with the toolkit to do certain tasks and enables you to become competent in delivering on the key outputs in line with these tasks. Some four-year professional degrees are on Level 8).

HONOURS DEGREES (NQF Level 8)

When competency has been achieved in terms of the toolkits acquired in the first qualification, an honours degree allows you to level up by learning how to use different tools at once, particularly in relation to one another. This brings a new level of maturity within the field.



POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMAS (NQF Level 8)

An option to expand your knowledge base and specialisation. For example, if you have a general business-related undergraduate degree and you would like to gain deeper insight into for example marketing or human resource management – or even beyond that.

MASTER’S DEGREES (NQF Level 9)

A master’s degree develops the art of being able to synthesise and develop independence in a field. Instead of just being able to competently develop an identity for a brand, now you start to be able to stretch a brand’s identity into mergers and acquisitions and product portfolios.

DOCTORATES (PhD) (NQF Level 10)

Doctorates enable you to contribute to thought leadership and development of the field.





Magazine EDUCATION

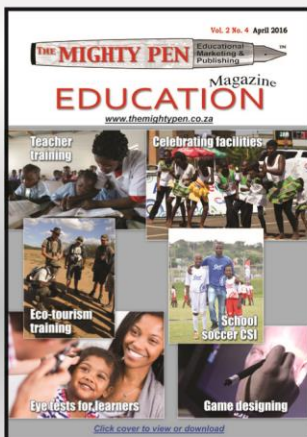
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