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Motivating learners



Rise of
eSports
in schools



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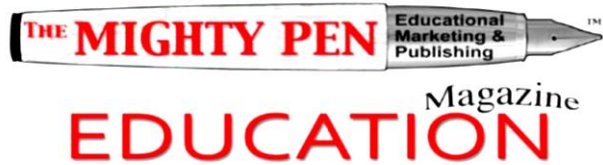
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Editor's Column

I read therefore I think

The most important educational skill a child will learn is reading. A report from the *Centre for Public Education* states, "Because reading is the gateway skill to further learning, children who cannot read proficiently seldom catch up academically..."

When children first start school, they learn the alphabet and how to identify words by sounds and sight. This is not only an essential skill for children to have, but it is also necessary if they want to learn how to read.

Once a child has learned how to read, they need to use this skill to learn new things.

The first and most obvious difference is that when children are *learning to read*, they are often taught by someone else. However, when children are *reading to learn*, they usually do so on their own with less help from a teacher or parent.

Another difference is the purpose behind each type of reading. When children learn to read, they are trying to get better at reading words to understand them better. This is usually taught before they reach 4th grade. Children often need guidance from their educators or parents while they practice this skill until it becomes second nature.

On the other hand, when children read for pleasure or general purposes, they might not even know what the words mean or even care about them if they understand what is being said to some degree.

The shift from learning to read to reading to learn happens throughout the foundation phase of schooling. It is important because it helps students become more independent learners and better equipped for success in school and life beyond.

As they progress in their reading abilities, they will begin using reading as a tool for learning new information. This means that when they encounter unfamiliar words in their reading, they will look them up in a dictionary or ask someone who knows more about the topic at hand if necessary.

Learning to read and reading to learn should be a simultaneous and continuous process as learners make their way through school. Moving towards a commitment to provide equitable literacy instruction to all students is just one step we can take to ensure our children are successful in school and beyond.

Blessings in literacy education

Janos Bozsik
Editor

The rise of eSports – in SA schools

Esports refers to organised, competitive video gaming where individuals or teams face off in popular titles such as FIFA, League of Legends, Fortnite, and Rocket League. It combines strategy, communication, quick decision-making, and teamwork, and is widely recognised as a modern counterpart to traditional sports.



Globally, eSports has grown into a multibillion-dollar industry with professional teams, streamed tournaments, and dedicated audiences.

In South Africa, eSports is rapidly gaining momentum, with individuals and school teams competing in structured tournaments that range from community-driven events to national championships.

Popular titles like FIFA, Counter-Strike, and League of Legends are common features, and these tournaments attract growing online and live audiences. South African players dedicate time to mastering strategies, refining reflexes, and building strong team dynamics - mirroring the commitment seen in conventional sports.

As schools integrate eSports into co-curricular offerings, students gain valuable digital skills, and top players earn recognition, rewards, and even international opportunities, helping elevate South Africa's presence on the global eSports stage.

In SA schools, initiatives like scholarships and school-level leagues are emerging. Schools are also recognising the various benefits of eSports for the development of digital literacy.

Organisations like ACGL Schools (African Cyber Gaming League) are providing platforms and frameworks for school-level esports competitions.

Initiatives in schools

- **Scholarships:** Centennial Schools has launched an esports scholarship for students in Grades 6 to 9, offering a prize package of R30 000.

- **School-level leagues and tournaments:** ACGL Schools offers school-level leagues and tournaments in popular games.
- **Esports arenas:** Some schools, like Centennial Schools, are creating dedicated eSports arenas for students to learn and compete.

Benefits of eSports in schools

- **Teamwork:** Esports fosters teamwork and communication, crucial skills for success in various aspects of life.
- **Strategic thinking:** Esports encourages students to analyse situations, plan strategies, and make decisions under pressure.
- **Problem-solving:** The fast-paced nature of eSports challenges students to think critically and solve problems quickly.
- **STEM skills:** Esports can provide a gateway to STEM fields, as students learn about hardware, software, and data analysis.

Recommended classes include computer-related courses (including digital design, game development, and programming), mathematics and social studies. If you plan to be a video game streamer and have a presence on social media, you'll need good communication and writing skills.



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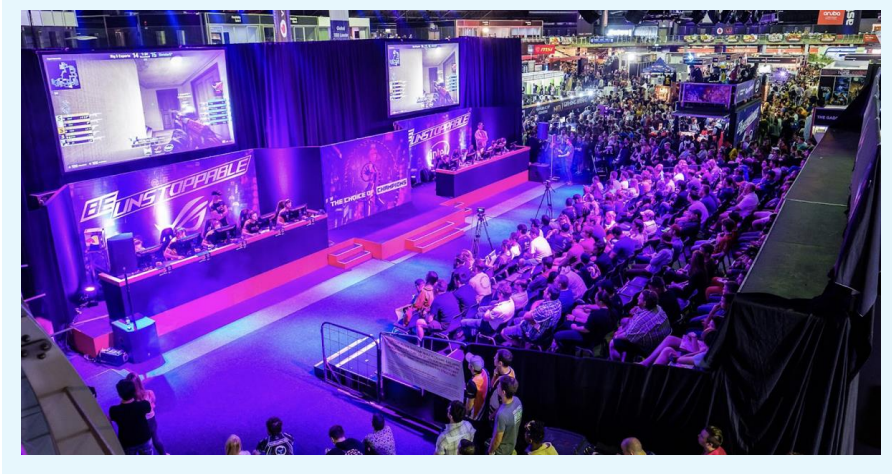


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It is imperative for schools to start introducing eSports as early as possible, to prepare students for a world where digital fluency and adaptability are non-negotiable, an education expert says.



Desiree Hugo, Academic Head of Schools at ADvTECH, says the institution has embraced eSports.

“Far from casual play, ADvTECH’s approach encourages students to strategise, collaborate, and compete at the highest levels, transforming virtual arenas into dynamic classrooms. By embedding these skills into an engaging and competitive framework, we can ensure that students are not just participants but active learners, honing abilities that are critical for success in an increasingly digital world.”

Central to this strategy is the school’s partnerships with industry leaders, which elevate the eSports experience beyond the school campus and into structured, competitive environments. These collaborations provide students with access to professional-grade platforms where they can test their mettle, refine their communication, and sharpen their leadership and decision-making skills.

“The broader vision that should be driving eSports initiatives, is to prepare students for a future where technology and innovation dominate,” says Hugo.

It’s not just about winning tournaments - it’s about experiencing life in a tech-driven world.

Future prospects

- **Growing market:** The South African eSports market is projected to grow significantly, with a user base expected to reach 18.5 million by 2029.
- **Increased adoption:** More schools and universities are expected to adopt eSports programmes as they recognise the educational and recreational benefits.

Key considerations

- **Parent involvement:** Parents play a crucial role in encouraging their children's participation in esports and understanding the benefits.
- **Faculty support:** Schools need faculty members who are willing to manage and support esports programmes.
- **Platform and infrastructure:** Access to reliable platforms, infrastructure, and resources is essential for successful esports programmes.

“By immersing them in a safe and managed gaming ecosystem, we are opening doors to careers in STEM, game design, coding, and beyond,” says Hugo.

Students who have a keen interest and learn to strategise in Minecraft today might code their own games tomorrow or analyse data to optimise performance in professional eSports leagues.

This isn’t just about keeping pace with trends; it’s about anticipating the interests and needs of tomorrow’s workforce and giving students a head start.

“Through this blend of competition and creativity, schools are able to support a generation equipped to thrive in fields that are redefining the global economy,” concludes Hugo.



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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Learners can study – for a data science career

By Asif Hassam - CTO at Zaio



Data science has emerged as a cornerstone of the digital economy, driving innovation and growth across industries. As businesses increasingly rely on data-driven insights, the demand for skilled data scientists continues to surge, creating unprecedented opportunities for those entering the field.

Decoding data science

At its core, data science involves extracting valuable insights from complex datasets to inform business decisions, predict trends, and enhance operations. The field encompasses various roles, including data scientists, analysts, and engineers, each playing a crucial part in harnessing the power of data.

The importance of data science has grown exponentially because of the vast amounts of data generated by digital operations. Businesses now have the tools to analyse this data, uncover patterns, and make evidence-based decisions. From enhancing customer experiences to optimising supply chains, data science is revolutionising business operations.

The data science boom

The demand for data scientists is skyrocketing globally, and South Africa is no exception. Various sectors, including finance, healthcare, retail, and agriculture, are leveraging data-driven insights to drive efficiency and innovation. Financial institutions use data to detect fraud, assess credit risks, and offer personalised services. Healthcare providers improve patient outcomes and streamline operations through data analysis. Retailers optimise inventory and refine marketing strategies using consumer data. The agricultural sector benefits from precision farming techniques that boost crop yields and reduce waste.

Despite the growing need for data scientists, there is a significant skills gap in the market. This shortage presents a golden opportunity for individuals looking to enter this lucrative field.

Lucrative career prospects

The financial rewards in data science are substantial. According to *Payscale.com*, entry-level data scientists in South Africa can expect an average annual salary of R364 803.00.

Mid-career professionals with 5 to 9 years of experience can earn up to R624 232.00 annually, while those with 10 to 19 years of experience can command salaries as high as R915 628.00 per year.

Essential skills for success

Thriving in data science requires a blend of technical prowess and soft skills. Key technical skills include proficiency in programming languages like Python, statistical analysis, machine learning, and data manipulation techniques. Equally important are soft skills, such as critical thinking and communication. The ability to translate complex data into actionable insights for stakeholders is a hallmark of top performers in this field.

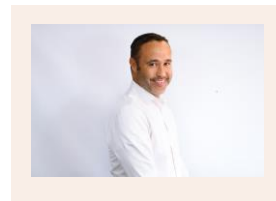
Pathways to data science

The impact of data science is creating vast opportunities for young professionals. While traditional university courses offer comprehensive theoretical foundations, online data science courses are emerging as compelling alternatives. These platforms often focus on hands-on training, allowing learners to gain practical experience in a matter of months. Some even offer job interview guarantees.

With the high demand for data professionals and significant career growth opportunities, now is the ideal time for individuals to explore data science education options. Whether through a university programme or an intensive online course, acquiring data science skills can unlock the field's transformative potential and pave the way for a rewarding career in the digital economy.

Learnerships, funding & jobs – links in the economy chain

By Daniel Orelowitz - MD of Training Force



Skills development in the form of learnerships is an essential element of the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) scorecard, accounting for a significant portion of the score for large enterprises in particular.

However, not all businesses have the capacity, availability, or ability to take on sufficient learners to meet their obligations.

Conversely, some businesses have available roles but do not have the funding to take on learners.

Hosted learnerships involve a three-way collaboration: one company provides funding, another offers learnership roles, and a reputable training partner serves as a facilitator. This arrangement creates mutual benefits, providing learners with valuable work experience and an income stream, while simultaneously earning B-BBEE points for both the host and the funding provider.

How it works

Hosted learnerships provide a way of bringing together corporates with funding for skills development, with businesses that have opportunity but not necessarily the financial means to provide the job experience. Both parties can leverage the B-BBEE benefits, and unemployed learners are given the vital opportunity to gain valuable workplace competence.

Aside from providing an income, learnerships have a significant practical component that delivers essential experience in the real-world working environment, which is critical in boosting the employability of people in the long term.

In addition, hosted learnerships typically take place in industries that are growing, which means that they have opportunity for career advancement and ongoing employment for the learners. For the businesses hosting the learners, it also provides an opportunity to develop the skills they need for growth. Hosted learnerships match people who can collaborate with companies that are able to employ them and provide them with skills.

This in turn can also help Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) as well as non-profit organisations and municipalities with additional manpower, especially where these organisations have jobs open but no money to pay the employee.

The right partner is essential

Hosted learnerships are more complex than the standard procedure and often require a great deal of coordination between the host company and the funding company to ensure alignment.

An experienced training partner can be instrumental not only in delivering the theoretical component of leaderships but also in managing administrative tasks such as onboarding, training, managing attendance and leave, and incentivising performance. A training partner can also handle the tasks of implementing, monitoring, and closing off the programme.

Moving South Africa forward

For South Africa to begin addressing rampant unemployment and the skills gap, broaden economic participation and inclusivity, and create the circular economy that is critical for sustainability, learnerships that put people in real world working experiences (and not simulations) are essential.

This requires participation from corporate South Africa as well as smaller businesses, but also a mindset shift on the part of learners.

When done correctly, learnerships are a gateway to grow and gain relevant qualifications to enhance skills and empower people to leverage opportunities. Hosted learnerships can be an important way for businesses to contribute to the upliftment of growth sectors, enhance the economy, reduce the unemployment rate, and create further economic activity.

Creating a culture – of reading in children

In South Africa, the ability to read for meaning is a critical skill that remains elusive for many children. According to the *Reading Panel 2030* report, a staggering 78% of Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning in any language.

This alarming statistic underscores the urgent need to foster a love of reading among students to ensure their academic success and personal development.

Reading is foundational to learning and personal growth. It enhances vocabulary, improves comprehension, and stimulates imagination. Moreover, reading is linked to better academic performance across all subjects. For South Africa, where educational disparities are significant, promoting reading can be a powerful tool to bridge the gap and empower future generations.

In a world dominated by social media and mobile devices, keeping a child's interest in reading can be challenging.

By integrating reading into daily life from a young age, and making it an enjoyable activity, parents can help their children develop a lifelong love for reading, thereby improving their prospects of personal and academic achievement.

The findings of the *Reading Panel 2030* report highlight the critical need for efforts to ensure that all children in South Africa can read for meaning by 2030. And while the Department of Education is committed to addressing challenges identified in the report, this mammoth task could not be left to educators alone.

Schools and teachers play an important role in teaching students how to read, but few are equipped to instil a genuine love for reading by the time children begin formal education. This essential passion must be nurtured at home to create a supportive environment where students can thrive once they master their ABCs.

Creating a reading-friendly environment & leading by example

Second-hand books are often very affordable, and libraries are free, making it easy for families to fill their homes with a diverse selection that caters to their child's interests and reading level. Choosing books together can be a fun and exciting activity, providing valuable parent-child bonding time.

By modelling positive reading habits and setting aside dedicated reading time each day, parents can help cultivate a lifelong passion for books in their children.



Using technology wisely

Excessive screen time can negatively impact a child's development, prompting many schools to limit mobile phone usage to create more focused learning environments. To balance screen time at home, families can implement "reading timeouts" that benefit both child and parent.

Reading apps can foster deeper engagement with reading material by connecting it to real-world situations and encouraging critical thinking. However, it's essential to also incorporate non-screen reading to ensure children develop a well-rounded love for literature alongside their digital experiences.

Making reading an interactive experience

Encourage children to engage with books before diving into the text by taking time for 'picture walks', where they can flip through pages and explore the illustrations. This approach helps minimise distractions and prepares them for a more focused reading experience.

Consider using the "5 W" principle - asking who, what, when, where, and why questions about the book - to spark discussion and curiosity. Before reading, ask children what they think the story might be about, and always include the follow-up question, "How do you know that?"

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Encourage and praise – children for success

Praise is a powerful tool that can shape how a child thinks about themselves and ultimately impacts on their behaviour, motivation and self-actualization. When used mindfully, praise can help to create an affirmative, enabling learning environment and the development of a growth mindset.

An education expert says it is important to understand the dynamics of effective praise, to ensure it has the intended impact.

“As a parent/guardian or teacher, understanding the nuances of praise and the significant impact that it has on a child’s development and psyche is paramount. While praise is essential, it is equally important to encourage effort, resilience, and the development of a love of learning in the child. Combining this with a supportive environment means empowering the child and enabling them to thrive and be successful,” says Lynda Eagle, Academic Advisor at ADvTECH schools.

Eagle says effective praise should be specific, celebrate effort, and emphasise practise. “Praise should focus on the actions, rather than the innate characteristics of a child,” she says.

Be specific and descriptive

Being specific helps children understand what they did well, and how they can build on or extend their skills, understandings and knowledge.

“Instead of using a generic praise such as ‘good job’ it would be more impactful acknowledging the work that has been done and the effort applied - ‘I noticed how carefully you arranged those blocks when creating your pattern. Would you like to explain to me your thinking?’,” advises Eagle.

When praising a child, it is important that the adult is fully present and shows genuine interest. This fosters connections and helps build reciprocal relationships. It is an opportunity to engage with the child to share in their experiences to gain a deeper understanding of the child’s thinking.

Celebrate effort and progress

Where a child is working towards a goal, then it is important to provide support and encouragement over time. Adults can offer praise and acknowledgement of the work that has been put into achieving the result. This highlights the fact that the effort and process in achieving the goal is as, if not more, important than the outcome.



Acknowledging that learning through our mistakes is a valid part of the learning process removes performance paralysis and inculcates a growth mindset.

Mistakes and setbacks are seen as important learning opportunities. Praise children when they manage disappointments well and encourage them to keep trying and moving forward.

Eagle says body language is also important. Using an enthusiastic tone, adopting a relaxed posture, while smiling and acknowledging the child, drives the message of support home and gives children the psychological boosts they need to continue doing their best. Take care to be sincere however, as children can sense inauthenticity and fake praise.

Balance and reflective practice

By offering praise when warranted, and providing constructive and mindful feedback when necessary, the child builds trust in the process and the support provided as they navigate their way through the various learning experiences.

By mastering the art of praise, parents and teachers can inspire confidence, resilience, a growth mindset and most importantly, a love of learning in their children

How teachers – can become school managers

South African teachers face several challenges on the personal and professional development front, which hinders them from progressing in their careers as leaders and managers. Topping the challenges that face them, are time and money, which are both needed to further their qualifications.

Various public and private higher education providers offer distance learning and online learning certification courses for teachers to train and qualify as school managers, and ultimately, principals.

“The importance of accessible development opportunities for South African teachers cannot be overstated,” says Siyavuya Makubalo from Oxbridge Academy.

School managers lead, plan, develop and manage developed systems for effective and efficient delivery of quality education by ensuring the implementation and support of a value-driven ethos for quality teaching.

Teachers need to learn to lead and manage teaching and learning in a school; plan and manage the resources of the school; establish, lead and manage the relationship between and the impact of the internal and external community for the development of the school, and develop self and others through life-long learning to deliver quality teaching and learning.

“The benefit of continuing professional development via distance learning, is that time-and-finance-stretched teachers can affordably study at their own pace while working and taking care of their loved ones,” says Makubalo.

Courses must be SAQA and NQF-level accredited and should include the following elements:

- Knowledge modules
- Practical skill modules
- Work experience modules

Knowledge modules include an introduction to education leadership, management and administration in a changing education landscape; curriculum management and adaptation for holistic development of learners; human resources development, empowerment and support of all school communities; financial and asset management, and institutional management and administration.

Practical skill modules provide exposure and opportunities for developing leadership and management competencies based on case studies, scenarios and reflective practice. These modules include leading and managing the development of a school strategic plan; managing teaching and learning; managing and using data to improve learner achievements; leading and managing continuous improvement of curriculum delivery; financial management, school asset maintenance, human resources management and stakeholder engagement.

Work experience modules take place in the operational environment of the school. These modules cover strategic planning processes and procedures; effective curriculum delivery, financial and supply chain management; asset management processes and procedures; HR development and management, and stakeholder engagement.



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Current trending recruitment – areas in SA

Prospective students are often advised to consider the current job landscape and projections for the future before deciding on what career to pursue and what they need to study after school.

These projections can however be a tricky call, which is why guidance in this regard is crucial, an education expert says.

“There is a growing emphasis on skills and reskilling rather than traditional career paths and job titles, and the importance of developing a versatile skill set to thrive in the modern workforce,” says Peter Kriel, General Manager at The Independent Institute of Education.

Key skills that are increasingly valued include analytical thinking, creative thinking, resilience, flexibility, agility, motivation, self-awareness, curiosity, lifelong learning, technological literacy, dependability, attention to detail, empathy, active listening, leadership, social influence and quality control.

Developing these skills throughout one’s educational and life journey is relevant regardless of the field of expertise pursued.

However, decisions about choosing a specific career should be made with insight into the roles that are in demand in the workplace, now and also likely in the future.

“The Department of Higher Education and Training has about 240 careers on its *National List of Occupations in High Demand* that requires some form of post-school education ranging from Higher Certificates at NQF Level 5, to those that require a PhD,” says Kriel.

A high-level analysis of the positions being advertised on various platforms aligns strongly with this list.

Kriel notes that South Africa's dynamic economy and evolving job market have led to significant growth in several key sectors. Among the most prominent are Medicine and Health, Engineering, Business & Management, Finance and Accounting, Law & Legal, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Sales & Marketing.

Medicine & health

While becoming a medical doctor, pharmacist or nurse are some obvious career options in medicine and health, there are more ways to access these disciplines, for example, a career in the Public Health sector.

- **Bachelor in Public Health:** Equips graduates with knowledge and skills to promote health and prevent illness in populations through disease prevention.



- **Postgraduate Diploma in Public Health:** Aimed at working professionals for acquiring, strengthening and deepening knowledge to effectively contribute to strengthening public health service delivery systems.

Engineering

Engineering remains a cornerstone of industrial development and innovation in South Africa, with significant demand in fields such as civil, mechanical, electrical, and chemical engineering.

- **Bachelor of Engineering in Electrical and Electronic Engineering:** Focuses on the principles and applications of electrical systems, electronics, and electromagnetism in various industries.
- **Bachelor of Engineering in Mechanical Engineering:** Emphasises the design, analysis, manufacturing, and maintenance of mechanical systems and machinery.
- **Bachelor of Engineering in Civil Engineering:** Concentrates on the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of infrastructure projects such as buildings, roads, bridges, and water supply systems.

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Business & management

The Business & Management sector drives organisational growth and strategic development, with demand for skilled managers, consultants, and executives. This area offers a diverse array of career options, making it one of the most versatile and dynamic sectors.

- **Bachelor of Commerce:** Provides a solid foundation in general business with opportunities to gain in-depth knowledge in selected areas of specialisation.
- **Bachelor of Business Administration:** Provides a broad foundation in business principles and management practices.
- **Bachelor of Business Administration in Logistics and Supply Chain Management:** Building knowledge and skills to efficiently manage the storage and movement of goods and services, ensuring effective and efficient supply chain operations.
- Other qualifications include: **Bachelor of Commerce in Entrepreneurship, Postgraduate Diploma in Management, Postgraduate Diploma in Digital Business,** and the **Postgraduate Diploma in Futures Thinking.**

Finance & accounting

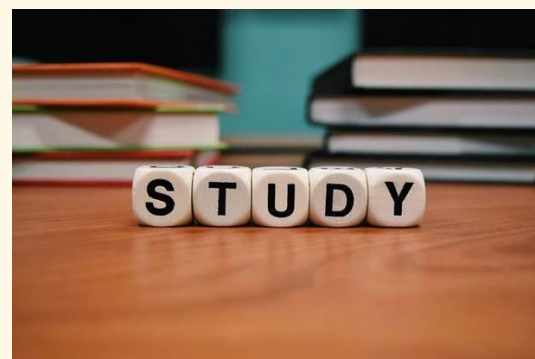
Finance and Accounting professionals are crucial for managing company finances, ensuring regulatory compliance, and strategic financial planning.

- **Bachelor of Accounting:** To qualify students in the field of accountancy and provide a stepping stone to a range of professional accounting qualifications.
- **Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting:** Enhances employability and prepares students to write the SAICA ITC exams in order to become a Chartered Accountant.
- Additional qualifications include: **Postgraduate Diploma in Finance and Accounting** and the **Postgraduate Diploma in Internal Auditing.**

Law & the legal profession

A career in law and the legal profession is both intellectually stimulating and socially impactful, offering a wide range of opportunities for specialization and advancement.

- **Higher Certificate in Legal Studies:** To enter the legal world of work in an entry level position such as a legal intern or the beginning of your legal journey as you choose to transition to a further legal qualification.
- **Bachelor of Commerce in Law:** Develops a firm foundation in commercial and law subjects which would assist in the corporate world or in running their own businesses.



- Further legal qualification options include: **Bachelor of Arts in Law** and **Bachelor of Laws.**

Information & communications technology (ict)

As digital transformation accelerates, the ICT sector not only in South Africa, but internationally, is booming, with high demand for professionals in software development, cybersecurity, and systems administration.

- **Higher Certificate in Mobile Application and Web Development:** Foundations of developing applications for the web and mobile devices, in order to become a junior application developer.
- **Bachelor of Computer and Information Sciences in Application Development:** Extensive exposure to developing IT systems for a variety of platforms, including desktop databases and applications, cloud databases and web applications, and mobile applications.

Sales & marketing

Qualifications include: **Certificates, Diplomas and Bachelor degrees in Commerce, Digital Marketing, Strategic Brand Management and Business Administration in Marketing.**



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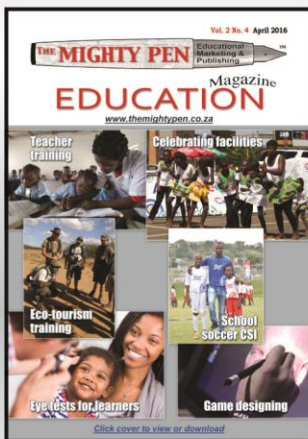
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