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**Coding & robotics
teacher**



**Online school
benchmarking**



Parents involved



University success



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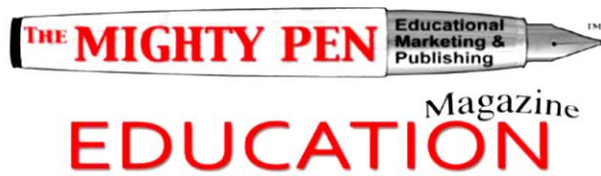
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Editor's Column

Would you consider homeschooling?

Homeschooling has gained increased popularity in South Africa in recent years since it was first legalised in 1996. This education system generally involves parents taking on the role of educators and teaching their children at home rather than sending them to a traditional school.

Some parents also choose to employ a full-time tutor to teach their children, particularly if they are busy as a result of their job, which may include significant travel. Many reasons contribute to choosing to homeschool, which could include a desire for personalised education, religious beliefs, or concerns over the conventional school system. Despite the controversy surrounding homeschooling, it has become a preferred option for many parents who want to educate their children in a tailored environment.

South Africa has also developed into a prime location for homeschooling, with legal recognition and support from the Department of Basic Education. Ultimately, homeschooling provides an alternative education system that fits the needs and preferences for many parents and students.

Under the South African Schools Act, parents have the right to homeschool their children, however, they must register with the Department of Basic Education within three months of starting. In addition to this, parents must also follow a suitable curriculum and keep detailed records of their child's progress. Homeschooling in South Africa requires a serious commitment from both the parents and the child, but with the right mindset and resources, it can be a rewarding alternative to traditional schooling.

One huge advantage in the South African context is that homeschooling allows for mother-tongue education. This in turn often leads to a pupil being more engaged and involved in their learning experience, meaning greater enjoyment on their part.

Naturally, homeschooling can also have its challenges, particularly for parents who want to deliver their chosen curriculum themselves, without the help or support of a private tutor. Home tuition takes up a considerable amount of time and effort, and therefore parents may find themselves struggling to cope with the demands of schooling their child or children on a full-time basis.

In SA, language and cultural practices could be a consideration influencing the homeschooling decision.

Yours in education

Janos Bozsik
Editor

My first 3 years of teaching - preparing kids for the technology world of coding & robotics

By Mpule Nkoana: Bachelor of Education, Wits University

Teaching is a bold and fun career. It is a noble and evolving profession. Now what makes it more exciting is when you are teaching IT, every child's favourite subject.

I am doing my third year of teaching computers at Craighall Primary School. The school is in partnership with Knowledge Network. The Knowledge Network IT learning system provides us with an amazing teaching program that helps both the teacher and learners.

During my first year of teaching, I was not confident enough to teach IT at a primary school as I did not do IT at the primary level.

With the help from my school and the Knowledge Network training sessions, after five days of technology integration training, I was able to step into the classroom and deliver what I have learned, and more, to my Grade 01 to 07 classes.

Using ILAMM Integrated Learning and Mentoring Methodology helps to enable epistemological access. As a teacher, you develop new ways and strategies to help learners solve difficult problems and discover the unknown.

In my first year, when I was doing graphics with my learners, I was learning from them. What I mean is that giving them something minor to do, such as drawing the African sunset in Paint, would bring about new advanced ways of improving the drawing. They would want to draw in both Paint (bitmaps) and PowerPoint (vector graphics) and elaborate on the difference between the two. That is what I call logic, and that is where the "wow" factor is built in.



Mpule Nkoana

Learners love computers and the Knowledge Network IT system makes it even more exciting. As a teacher, I am happy when my learners are happy with the content I deliver.

Teaching computers requires less information and more practice. The more learners do something, the more they make sense of what they do and the information it carries. In this way, practice comes with grasping new information and processing new information.

Doing graphics has helped me and my learners improve our drawing skills, IT skills, logic, and problem solving. I am impressed with what they can do from what they have learned. As we are progressing, we have started doing research and referencing. This has become my favourite topic to teach as it helps learners do projects of a high standard and accuracy of content with legal relevant pictures.

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Coding in ScratchJr, Scratch 3, and HTML is fun. Not only that it brings excitement, but it includes content from other learning areas, which makes it more fun to teach. It forms connections, you hear learners saying, “Oh, we’re doing Math now”.



My learners love it. The first strategy that I used was giving them code without telling them what we are coding. It brought about curiosity, critical thinking, and logic. When the code is done, they run it and tell me what they thought it was going to be. Some learners would say “I knew from the 360 degrees that we were drawing a full circle” and others would say “Wow how did we draw a full circle?” It sparks my interest and helps me to explain and help them understand the knowledge behind the coding of drawing a circle.

This year I have started Python with my Coding Club and we are going to do more when we open for term three.

The foundation I have built so far will equip the kids for robotics using simulators in term 3. The kids are going to love it. The robotics coding includes logic, loops, music, graphics and own creative inputs. Robotics is not covered in isolation; we include other learning areas resulting in integrated projects accommodating learners’ different interests.

With Foundation Phase kids, you get to experience how a child makes sense of the world. In grade one, doing coding with them is like playing with puzzles. How they respond to everything, tells you what they already know and what they do not know. The questions that come are “What is a code? How did we make a person move?” The output makes a good connection between prior knowledge and formal knowledge. You hear them say “The code works like a puzzle and each button has a different colour and purpose.”

As a teacher, it is important to allow learners to question and find an understanding of what they are doing. Knowing ‘how and what’ is key. After a lesson, they must be able to say, “I know what we were using the red button for, and I know how to make something move from left to right.” As you go further, they start wanting to make their own projects. Some learners even figure out what they have understood, what they did not understand, and how they can solve it on their own.

With the foundation I have built so far, I am super excited to start teaching robotics in term 3, I know the kids are going to love it.

I am very grateful for the support that my school has given me, and I am more confident to say Craighall Primary School is a good school. And being in partnership with Knowledge Network makes it the best.

With what I have achieved so far, my teaching philosophy is simple; give it your best, just do what it takes.

Being the youngest teacher at such a good school has made me realize that I do not have to be big to do good. “Dynamite comes in small packages.” It is always good to go for it and do your thing, show the world what you have to offer. Your work will speak for you.



Online schools -- international benchmarking



One of the best indicators of a school's ability to provide the highest quality of academic excellence in an online environment is its international MAP ranking, an education expert says.

MAP is short for the Measuring Academic Progress International Benchmarking evaluation, and any online school worth its salt should be able to produce its current standing, says Colin Northmore, Principal of Evolve Online School, a brand of ADvTECH, Africa's largest private education provider.

"International Benchmarking enables schools to objectively compare their students' performance against students in other schools, including brick and mortar as well as online schools, and against students in other countries. It is a tool to monitor the effectiveness of a school's focus on consistent student growth and to track effective teaching and learning," says Northmore.

"Choosing to go the online route is often a step into unknown territory for most parents, so knowing beforehand that a school is in excellent standing in terms of international benchmarks can save much time, anxiety and money for families," he says.

MAP is used in 1500 schools in 145 countries, with 9 million students participating. Data are presented at the individual level but also provide school, regional, continental, and global comparisons.

MAP's Growth tests evaluate Mathematics, Reading and Language Usage for students from Kindergarten through Grade 12, and the tests are given 2 to 3 times per year to measure progress - most often at the beginning, middle, and end of the year.

Northmore says that in addition to ensuring a positive international benchmarking positioning, parents evaluating online schools should also consider the following:

- That proper registration and accreditation are in place with all relevant authorities.
- That the school has a reputation for academic excellence over at least a few years.
- They enquire from current and past parents about the school's reputation.
- That the school forms part of a larger group which can provide the best institutional support and, if not part of a larger group with a strong track record, that the school can demonstrate that their support structures are sound.
- That the school can demonstrate logistical competence in terms of academic delivery, and
- That there is an excellent balance between screen time, dream time, team time and green time to avoid the student developing feelings of isolation.

Schools hockey: a thrilling national tournament



The Wendell Domingo & Sandra Jordaan Trophy.

An affiliate member of the South African Hockey Association (SAHA), the South African Schools Hockey Association (SASHOC) is a regulatory board which promotes, upholds, supports, controls and maintains rules for all schoolgirls and schoolboys playing hockey in South Africa.

SASHOC Nationals opens with welcome ceremony and thrilling action in Bloemfontein

Hundreds of youth hockey players were given a rousing welcome before the action got underway this month as the 2023 edition of the SASHOC Nationals was officially opened in Bloemfontein.

In preparation for the 18-day festival, participants attended an opening ceremony over the weekend to launch the highly anticipated annual event, which showcases South Africa's rising hockey talent.

Among those who addressed the players at the official opening were Southern Free State Hockey chairperson Louise van der Merwe, representing the host province, as well as SA Schools Hockey (SASHOC) chairperson Wendell Domingo and SASHOC marketing representative Clarika Strydom.

They were also motivated ahead of the tournament by various guest speakers including former Proteas cricketer Ryan McLaren.

The top-flight annual schools hockey tournament, featuring world-class organisation and hospitality, will host players in three age groups.

The event opened with the U-18 tournament, to be played between 25 & 30 June, and will be followed by the U-13 competition, being played between 2 & 5 July, and the U-16 event, to be contested between 7 and 12 July.



Louise van der Merwe (Southern Free State Head of LOC), Wendell Domingo (SAHOC Chairperson)

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(From left)
Despina Brooker (Sportsmans Warehouse),
Dean Stokes (Trompie Sport),
Nicole Birch (Sportsmans Warehouse),
Wendell Domingo (SASHOC Chairperson),
Tiaan van der Merwe (Trompie Sport),
Marlene Gunter (SPAR),
and Kobus Bresler (Grays Hockey)

With organisers offering world-class facilities, A-section games will be played at the Kovsies Astro university ground. The B-section matches will be played at Grey College and Eunice High School for Girls.

Getting the action underway, there were standout performances across the board over the first three days of competition in the pool stages of the U-18 tournament.

Host province Southern Free State were leading a closely contested battle in Pool A of the girls' A-section, going unbeaten in their opening four games to top the standings with 10 points. In Pool B, Western Province were at the summit of the log with nine points.

In the boys' A-section, Southern Gauteng and Western Province were leading the charge in Pool A, with both teams winning their first four matches and taking 12 points each. Similarly, KZN Coastals were top of the Pool B table, also with 12 points after four wins.

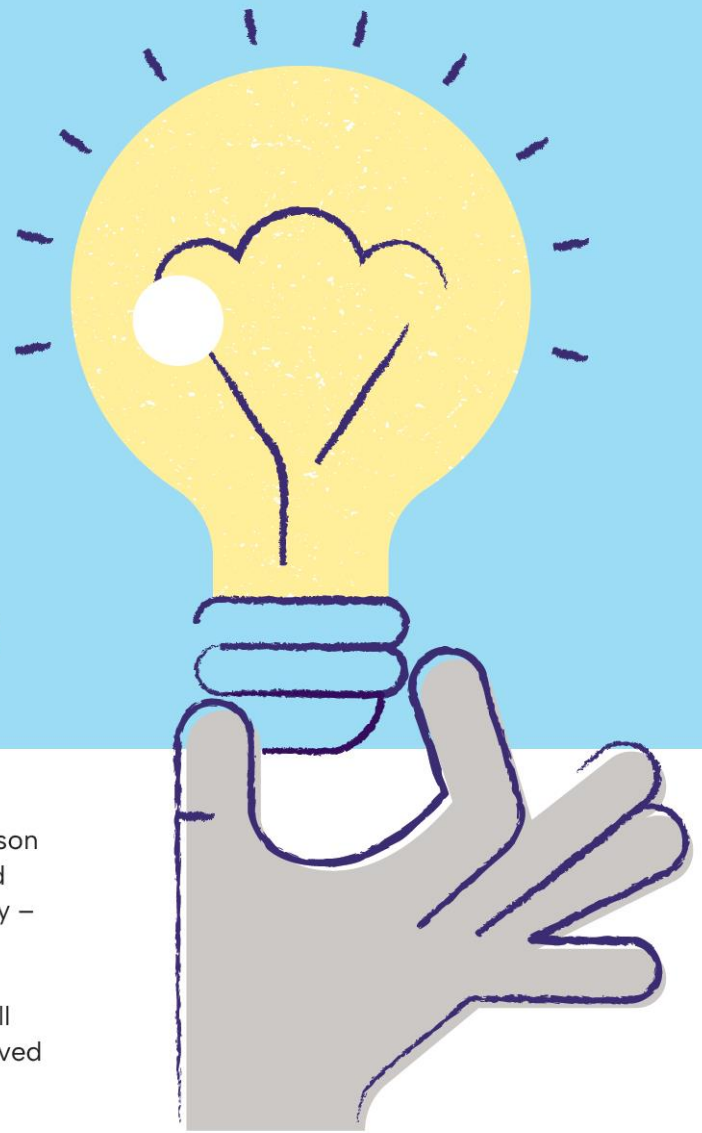
In the girls' B-section, Western Province were in control of Pool X

with 10 points, while Eastern Gauteng and Southern Free State had raked in nine points each in Pool Y. Southern Gauteng and Northern Gauteng led their respective pools, with nine points each, in the boys' B-section.

Ensuring the SASHOC Nationals is well supported, the national federation was backed by multiple partners, which include sponsors Sportsmans Warehouse (retail partner), Grays Hockey (ball and umpire shirt supplier), Trompie Sport (sports facilities partner), and renowned brands SPAR, iKhokha and Airlink.

Matches will also be streamed live on the SuperSport Schools app, ensuring hockey fans, family members and friends can follow every minute of action throughout the tournament.

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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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Parental involvement - is essential for kids

Parents and guardians play a vital role in the overall development and academic growth of their children during their educational journey. However, in today's world, despite an increased need for parental support and involvement, many parents find it challenging to fulfil this role due to various reasons including, but not limited to, time constraints, lack of knowledge about modern school curricula, and personal or work-related circumstances.

But parental involvement isn't an all-or-nothing proposition – either one is part of a child's journey or not – because there are various small ways in which a parent can become a valuable pillar of support and encouragement for their child, which can make a huge difference even with limited but consistent investments of time and effort, an education expert says.

“Parental involvement is essential for a child on all levels, including academic achievement, and it is undeniable that children whose parents or guardians support them in their educational journey have a stronger foundation for academic performance, positive learning experiences, and personal growth,” says Desiree Hugo, Academic Head: Schools Division at ADvTECH.

“Nonetheless, and very understandably so, many parents struggle to strike a healthy balance between their daily obligations and work responsibilities while also providing the necessary support and encouragement their children need on their academic journey.

“Fortunately, being involved doesn't require parents to drop the other balls. Even small but consistent connections to School, can make a significant difference in their child's educational success and emotional wellbeing,” she says.

Maintaining open lines of communication is crucial, Hugo says. “Parents should ensure that they receive and stay informed about all school communications. If any issues arise, prompt communication with the school can address these matters before they escalate into more significant challenges.

“Additionally, parents should engage in daily conversations with their child, to understand their experiences, both positive and negative. This simple practice requires minimal time but provides valuable insight into potential challenges, enabling parents to stay proactive regarding their child's performance and well-being while also staying connected to what is happening in their lives.”

Whenever possible, parents should participate in school activities and events. Where schools organise events such as parent-teacher conferences, school fairs and sports matches, making the



time to attend these activities periodically, demonstrates interest in and appreciation for the importance of a child's educational journey and holistic development as part of a larger learning community.

Maintaining a positive attitude towards the educational journey is also essential, says Hugo.

Students benefit from having supportive structures in place as part of their daily routine that are conducive to learning. Parents can help create a positive atmosphere and should where possible provide a dedicated space for studying that is quiet and comfortable. “Children often feel anxious and overwhelmed by their studies, making it crucial for parents to remain positive and encouraging, even during challenging times.”

In addition to providing logistical support, parents should also help their children develop a growth mindset and a love for learning. Encouraging curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking, as well as assisting them in setting realistic and achievable goals, can foster their academic and personal growth.



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Research reveals – early university success

The dropout rate among first year students at South African universities has long been a cause for concern, with little improvement in the trends annually despite attempts by universities to address the problem.

Now, new research has revealed a surprising – and surprisingly simple - early indicator of the future success of a student and has led to the development of a programme to support students during their first weeks to build those skills that will better prepare them to make the transition from school to higher education.



After observing a trend apparently correlating to successful studies down the line, two academics from The Independent Institute of Education (The IIE), SA's leading private higher education provider, this year launched a research project to determine which factors were likely to be early indicators of first year students' ability to get to grips with university academics.

And it turned out that whether a student handed in their first assignment completed and on time, was a high indicator of their readiness and likely success.

The research resulted after two academics of The IIE engaged with students who failed to hand in their initial assignments, with most saying the reason for non-submission was "running out of time". It was also considered that the reason for non-submission may have been as a result of not knowing what to do (lacking the requisite academic skills) and the fallout from the lockdown era.

"After these observations, a large research project was launched, the results of which were presented at this year's IIE symposium of Teaching and Learning, which provided an opportunity for our researchers to share their research on ways of informing best practices in terms of teaching and learning," says Dr Gillian Mooney, Dean: Academic Support and Development at The IIE.

The research project - An investigation into the Effectiveness of a Soft Skills Support Programme for Students Entering Tertiary Education – was conducted by Dr Mooney in conjunction with IIE academics Mary Robinson and Twané Lottering.

It found that AUTONOMY was a major factor in the success of students, but that many students lacked the ability to take responsibility for their own learning.

Their findings and recommendations are likely to make a significant impact on the readiness of undergraduate students where additional support as indicated is introduced by higher education institutions.

"There is a long tradition emphasising the need to manage the transition between school and university, and this management traditionally requires the development of academic and socio-emotional skills. More recently, the need to intervene is considered to be even more important due to the relationship between technology and teaching," notes Dr Mooney.



"What we have seen is that the use of technology as well as the lockdowns have resulted in the need to even more closely manage BOTH academic and socio- emotional integration into university life."

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Dr Mooney notes that while it is well understood that there is a substantial paradigm shift required when moving from high school - where much motivation is still extrinsic and coming from authority figures such as teachers and parents - to university, where intrinsic motivation and autonomy are required, few interventions to date have been able to measurably provide students with the so-called soft skills they need to succeed.

However, flowing from The IIE's research, a programme was introduced that is notching up the successes. Issues addressed in the programme presented to first years during their first weeks in uni include how to work with resources, how to adjust to a student mindset, time management, understanding assessments, reading and research, presentation skills and future planning, among others.

A survey before and after indicated a mindshift on the part of students towards greater autonomy. For instance:

- Before the programme, 45% of students believed lecturers were responsible for their success compared to 22% after the programme.
- Before, 79% of first years believed it was the duty of lecturers to ensure students submit work on time, compared to 31% thereafter.
- Initially, 79% of students considered it acceptable to get other students to complete or do part of their projects or assignments for them, compared to 19% after the programme.

“As a result of our identification of objective indicators of success early on, combined with the development of the programme which assists students to make the leap from a school mindset to a higher education one, there has been a clear impact on students’ personal growth and academic readiness. We have seen this as more of them understood their responsibilities on their path to success.



“As an added bonus, the Empower Programme, as it is now called, leveraged peer learning run by senior students to help their freshmen peers settle into campus life as soon as possible, which means the programme was also of benefit to senior students.”

Dr Mooney says she believes that this latest research is helping to close the gap between the knowledge that students need additional support, and the actual support that will get them set for study success.

“Research has shown that a student’s autonomy and their ability to manage their time to do more complex work, combined with their academic research skills are essential to university success. We are delighted and confident to have founded an early-intervention programme which holds much promise for success for young students of the future across our 32 campuses nationwide.”





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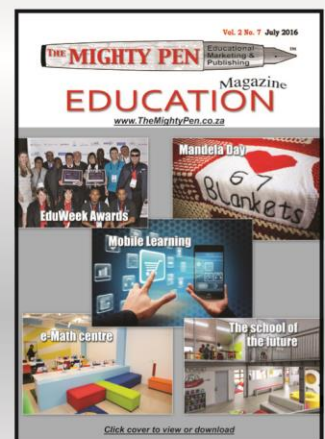
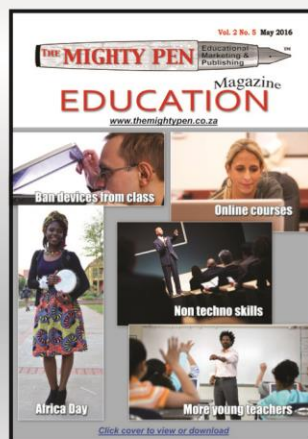
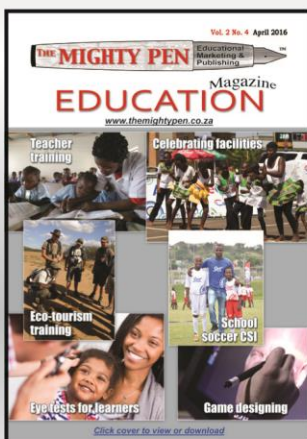
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