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Magazine EDUCATION

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**Early childhood
education**



Tablets vs. laptops



VS





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Our front cover

Snippets of some of our
exciting and informative
stories for this issue.



Publisher

Sunward Park High School
P.O. Box 17233
SUNWARD PARK, 1470

Branding

TheMightyPen.co.za

Editor

Janos Bozsik

Editorial panel

ASH Peens (Principal)
Dr. G.C. Pereira (SGB Chair)
Proof concepts

Contributors

- Bhavna Lutchman – Childline
- Michael Berger – UC-Wireless Education
- Christina Watson – CEO: Via Afrika
- Bez Sangari – MD: Sangari SA
- Gennady Padalka – Russian Cosmonaut

Correspondence and enquiries

editor@themightypen.co.za
082 940 3771

Advertising and publicity

marketing@themightypen.co.za

Production, design and layout

VLC WorX

Website

www.themightypen.co.za
www.sphs.co.za

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Editor's column

Diverse opinions on the digital debate

This issue certainly reflects those divergent views on the use of technology in teaching and learning. I tend to agree with Professor Steven Higgins of Durham University. Overall, the research evidence over the last 20 years about the impact of computer and digital technologies on learning consistently identifies positive benefits. But not as much as we think.

The increasing variety of digital technologies and the diversity of contexts and settings in which the research has been conducted, combined with the challenges in synthesising evidence from different methodologies make it difficult to identify clear and specific implications for educational practice in schools.

Studies linking provision and use of technology with attainment tend to find consistent but small positive associations with educational outcomes. However, a causal link cannot be inferred from this kind of research. It seems probable that more effective schools and teachers are more likely to use ICT and digital technologies more effectively than other schools. We need to know more about where and how it is used to greatest effect, then investigate if this information can be used help to improve learning in other contexts.

Research findings from experimental and quasi-experimental designs which have been combined in meta-analyses indicate that overall technology-based interventions tend to produce just slightly lower levels of improvement when compared with other researched interventions. The range of impact identified in these studies suggests that it is not whether technology is used (or not) which makes the difference, but how well the technology is used to support teaching and learning. This alignment of technology and learning is important. There is no doubt that technology engages and motivates young people. However, this benefit is only an advantage for learning if the activity is effectively aligned with what is to be learned.

It is therefore the pedagogy of use of technology which is important: the *how* rather than the *what*.

With computer and digital technologies there is a recurrent and specific challenge in understanding and applying the research evidence as it takes time for robust evidence to emerge in education and the rapid pace of change of technology makes this difficult to achieve.

Overall, the key implication is that the technology is solely a *catalyst* for change. What is it that teachers or learners actually do which brings about any improvement in learning? Focusing on the change (and the process of change) in terms of learning is essential in supporting effective use.

The use of digital technology is usually more successful as a supplement rather than as a replacement for usual teaching. Technology is not introduced into a vacuum. It is therefore important to identify carefully what it will replace or how the technology activities will be additional to what learners would normally experience.

But read on, and you decide.

Editor

Tablets in schools – hindrance or help?

Technology in the education sector is a flourishing market. As tablets have become more prevalent, a debate has risen over whether South African schools should switch from print textbooks to digital textbooks on tablets.



There is no doubt that the consumer market for mobile devices must reach saturation at some point, and therefore tech companies are hoping to make converts of the youth, and where better to find them but in schools. Many tablet vendors are pushing their products with the selling point that tablets allow lessons to be tailored to individual students, can have content updated automatically and so on.

Richard Firth, Chairman and CEO of MIP Holdings, says that while tablets are a good addition to the learning environment in terms of being able to hold hundreds of textbooks, save the environment by lessening the need for printing, and boost student interactivity and creativity, they are not an adequate replacement for laptops.



“I believe that we do need to use digital media in schools, but my concern is that laptops are in danger of being superseded by tablets as the perceived de-facto productivity tool, and that is certainly not the case in the work environment. Laptops have USB integration for third party systems, enable a much wider variety of work outputs, and programmers use laptops to write code – even those that write apps for tablets.”

For Firth, another major detractor is the fact that tablets don't have keyboards, which he sees as a core requirement for productivity. “It is far quicker and easier to use a machine that has a keyboard. The touchscreen that tablets use is incredibly difficult to type quickly

on, and nearly impossible to use for touch typists. Learning skills such as programming is impossible on tablets, as they do not have the same functionality as PCs.”



In addition, the costs could outweigh the benefits, he says. “These devices aren't cheap, and mobile technology is notorious for its ability to become completely obsolete in a question of months. Schools could find themselves in need of a slew of new devices sooner than they expect or have budgeted for.”

It's Firth's opinion that the crux of the matter lies in what the schools are trying to achieve through the use of tablets as learning tools. “Today's learners need to use digital tools in order to familiarise themselves with the skills they will require in the workplace. While tablets are a great way to store content, they do not provide a means to create content to the same level that laptops do. We are already seeing the proficiency needed in maths and science for tech and engineering jobs lagging, and by using tablets as the primary technology teaching tool, we are in danger of adding to future skills shortages.”



Safer Internet for children

in schools and homes

Opinion piece by Bhavna Lutchman: Online Counselling Project Manager at Childline SA

Bullying – which used to be limited to direct social environments like schools, parties and clubs – has bloomed into virtual spaces at a terrifying pace. Whether the bullying happens online or directly, the effects are the same. Children are often left with deep scars that ache well into adulthood. Children who are bullied are more vulnerable to a host of psychological effects and which can manifest in debilitating low self-esteem and can lead to self-harming, drug abuse and even suicide.



Cyberbullying is especially prevalent amongst the youth and ranges from rumours to threats to outright, unrelenting harassment.

Childline recognises that in light of the growing use and popularity of the internet and various on-line communication options amongst children and adolescents, especially in schools, and has tailored a way to be available through the very channels that young people are most familiar with.

And while bullying is a major concern, Childline aims to help protect youth in cyberspace against all the forms of abuse they are exposed to there. Young people need to understand the dangers of, amongst other things, data theft, cyber-stalking, the subtle ways in which sexual predators lure potential victims as well as internet addiction.



The first question to ask ourselves is about the amount of exposure children have to these threats. It's been reported that the average teen spends around 31 hours a week online. If smartphone usage is included, it goes up to 100 hours a week.

And while social networks like Mxit, Facebook and YouTube are publicly criticised, the reality is that these are here to stay.

We cannot wish them away. We can only respond to them – and teach our children to respond to them in a way that keeps them safe.

Childline Services, in keeping with the ever-growing use of technology and the mobile culture, is meeting children where they are. We offer an online counselling service through Mxit.

The service is free of charge to South Africans under the age of 21 and who are registered on Mxit. The same service is available to adults who are concerned about their children. That service is available weekly from 2pm to 6pm.

These services are offered in close consultation with all Childline's provincial offices, to which children and youth who require face-to-face services are referred.

An example of a cyber-safety initiative

Safer Internet Day (SID), a 12 year old initiative promoting safer and more responsible use of online technologies, was marked across the world earlier this year.

Google Africa marked SID with more than 600 learners in day-long workshops in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal. In these workshops learners discussed and formulated their own ideas on how to make the internet a safer space.

Responding to the core theme of SID 2015, "Let's create a better internet together," Public Policy Manager for Google in South Africa, Fortune Mgwili-Sibanda says Google is committed to empowering young web users.

"Google has provided tools for parents, teachers, and most importantly young people to learn more about staying safe online. The aim of this cross-continent event is to reach out to young internet users and share information with them on how they can enjoy the multiple benefits offered by the internet, while at the same time staying safe from harm and exposure to age-inappropriate material." Mgwili-Sibanda said.

To ensure that lessons were shared by all those who took part in the events, all learners in the four participating countries took part in a virtual plenary and report back session. Also showing the learners how technology can be used positively, this session was held over Google Hangouts.

In the plenary session, a spirited discussion took place with learners both being pro and anti-anonymity as a solution to online safety.

Those in the pro-anonymity group argued points such as whatever information an individual posts online can never be used against them in the future. Other pro-anonymity positions argued that an entirely anonymous internet would protect young peoples' identities from potential abusers and molesters.

The anti-anonymity group argued that anonymity was often the very thing which led to bullying online. They also pointed out that if anonymity was the default setting online there would not be real interaction on the web. Much to the entertainment of the gathering, one learner pointed out that when using the internet for online dating one could fall in love with one's own cousin if anonymity were a default.

Google Africa also wants to ensure the day's messages of internet safety reach as many young people as possible. In that regard they have also partnered with key organisations.

In SA, Google Africa has partnered with the Film and Publication Board (FPB), to further address and publicise the issue of internet safety for young people.

"We are delighted to launch our back to school campaign with Safer Internet Day and highlight the importance of online safety," comments Themba Wakashe, CEO of the FPB.



We aim to explore and use all forms of electronic communication open to children, youth and adults in order to ensure that everyone – including those with disabilities, and especially those that are hearing and speech impaired – is included.

We are guided, in many instances, also by the sterling work done by tech companies such as Google, who provide safety guides for families and schools, including easy-to-use tools about safety basics. All adults, and especially parents and educators, now have an extended duty to protect children – not only out in

the "real" world, but in the parallel one in which our children now move more naturally than we do, and which they inhabit far more than we think they do.

Childline hopes to meet children where they "play" in the virtual world and to offer not only a shoulder to cry on, but a guiding hand.

Digital content



So what's all the Ruckus about?

UC-Wireless answers your school's Wi-Fi and e-learning questions

Compiled by Michael Berger – Head of UC-Wireless Education

UC-Wireless, serving South Africa and Africa since 2002, is creating a following amongst educational institutions when it comes to Wi-Fi and e-learning solutions. With an impeccable track record, they have identified key questions asked by principals when implementing Wi-Fi connectivity.

Michael Berger, Sales & Marketing Head of the Education/e-Learning Division at UC-Wireless, explains the importance of dependable Wi-Fi solutions in order to maximise the reliability of e-learning in schools today. This single father's passion for education and school management is evident by virtue of his intrinsic involvement in school governance over the past 10 years as the Chairman of his son's SGB, the Vice Chairman of his daughter's SGB and an elected provincial member of the Board of Trustees of the Governing Body Foundation (GBF). Michael often presents talks at schools with the goal of helping parents, educators and learners alike understand the significance of reliable Wi-Fi and e-learning solutions for all education institutions.

UC Wireless stresses the importance of expert Wi-Fi solutions. Why is this so important when it comes to e-learning?

An enterprise Wi-Fi solution is the foundation of any e-learning solution, without the correct Wi-Fi and expertise around it an educational institution is at a severe disadvantage from the get go! Schools' budgets are exhausted on mediocre solutions due to "cutting costs". This in the long run may cost schools even more as they often result in ongoing problematic Wi-Fi connectivity and therefore interrupted e-learning.

UC-Wireless has an impressive track record of successful Wi-Fi solution deployments into schools and educational institutions, including Sunward Park High School – the first public school to pioneer a 100% digital and e-learning solution. Currently close to 20 000 educators and learners are reliant on the ± 500 Access points that have been installed into educational institutions by UC-Wireless to date together with ongoing monthly support and monitoring that is realising +95% satisfaction on service level reports for speed, coverage and connectivity.

The growing list of schools and educational institutions include most recently:

- Boitumelong Secondary – one of the first GDE paperless township schools
- Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance – Benoni Campus
- Resolution Circle – a University of Johannesburg initiative
- Fourways High School – awarded Top School in 2007 and 2008 by GDE
- Rhenish Girl's High School – one of SA's oldest schools

So what does UC-Wireless offer that is different?

UC-Wireless has the best possible Wi-Fi product partner in RUCKUS WIRELESS, and the company is led by a Registered Professional Electrical and RF Engineer,

MD Quentin Daffarn, which further enhances the benefits for education in that they are also receiving expert and professional advice. This enables UC-Wireless to deliver effective, efficient holistic solutions that provide the necessary foundations on which to enhance and improve e-learning, and therefore education.

What is the market demand and need?

The education market in South Africa is massive and forever evolving, comprising ordinary public schools, rural schools, the so called former Model C suburban schools, semi-private schools, colleges, private schools, boarding schools, special needs education centres, FET colleges, training centres and universities.

There is a growing demand and need to implement e-learning and Wi-Fi deployments into all of these various channels based on their specific infrastructure, resource, strategies and adherence to governance and management.

Why should education providers use UC-Wireless?

UC-Wireless has the in-depth knowledge, skill and expertise – as well as leading industry partners at hand – combined with a true understanding of the business dynamics within education. Their goal is to equip a school with a viable and professional technical solution with underwritten guarantees of performance. An added value is that anything that they do or offer for the South African market is applicable to Africa as well.



Focus on the training of teachers



E-Learning is growing on the continent



Reliable connectivity is required

How is it better than other products?

Technically speaking, the solution has the following:

- Beamflex and now Beamflex Plus, patented by Ruckus Wireless Ensures:
 - Automatic interference mitigation with a better throughput.
 - Each tablet or device benefits from two to four times more gain, which results in optimal speed and better performance at range than other solutions.
- Band steering and airtime fairness: each user gets exactly the same amount of airtime and this means faster Wi-Fi.
- Future proof Dual band APs 2.4GHz & 5GHz to accommodate the future growth of tier 1 tablets that will soon evolve to there being many more that are 5GHz enabled.
- Fewer APs, since Ruckus uses up to 70% of the number required by other solutions, and this further improves performance and cost.
- Unique cloud hosted zone controller solutions.

What are the advantages of using the UC-Wireless solutions?

Advanced per user security and separate learner and educator policy enforcements, as well as reliable and predictable connectivity. The result is a self-provisioning and self-optimising high speed wireless backbone. The service includes easy deployment, administration and simplified device registration.

They also offer complete remote or off-site control management of all APs and controllers. Simply put, they have thought of everything!

What is the affordability and durability like?

UC-Wireless deploys its Ruckus Wi-Fi solutions with the fully backed Ruckus Wireless software and hardware support and lifetime warranties. All software and firmware is continually upgraded and a monthly remote management and monitoring service ensures that the solution is maintained and managed on an ongoing basis.

Why is this great news for the South African and African education market?

UC-Wireless is able to pass on the substantial education discounts and the written guarantees for design, performance and capacity based on the proven track record internationally with Ruckus Wireless.

What is the current and future status of education in South Africa?

There has been much debate between private and public schools' educational standards in recent years. Each presents their own unique value, challenges, statistics and outcomes that are sometimes difficult to compare, although both remain exciting and dynamic. A child's education is a tri-partied relationship between the parent, learner and the educator. On a school management level a cohesive and collaborative working relationship needs to exist between the various stakeholders. There is a serious need to focus on pedagogy and upskilling of teachers as well as the upskilling of school management teams and leaders, from the ground up.

2015 is a watershed year where the exploratory period of a "wait and see approach" is culminating and schools are now seriously embracing the digital divide and beginning to implement e-learning. However, an apprehension still exists predominately around educators themselves. There needs to be a drive on e-teaching in order to transform the educator's mindset in seeing the value of e-learning. Educators need to be well-informed on how to use e-learning effectively and to understand that technology is there to assist them in enhancing the learning experience and not take it over or control it.

Contact Michael or Quentin
Mobile: +27 83 395 6080
Jhb Office: +27 11 452 6633
CT Office: +27 21 939 1542
Email: education@uc-wireless.com
Website: www.uc-wireless.com



Digital education for the Class of 2027

This year's Grade 1 learners will be the 2027 matriculating class. And the way that they study through their school-years, because of technology, is likely to be vastly different to how learning has been done for generations before, and will continue to change as they move through the grades. Thanks to the digital revolution, it isn't an exaggeration to say that classroom is being redefined. Technology has changed how we conduct financial transactions, read the news, interact with our friends, plan trips and entertain ourselves. Technology is changing how education is done in classrooms across the world.

In 2011, South Korea announced a \$2.1 billion plan to transform every classroom into a digital-only space by 2015. In Sweden, the Vittra group of schools has abandoned the traditional idea of classrooms altogether. That model has children studying at their own pace, on tablets and laptops in spaces of their choosing within a cleverly-designed building. The idea of handing this much freedom to kids at school may sound bizarre, but the concept of it is not – they are still assessed and guided in their learning by a teacher – just in ways we never thought possible.

Digital technology has opened up the possibilities of how learning can happen. The Gauteng Department of Education has launched a digital pilot-project in seven schools in the province. The curriculum is matched to the “paper” schools, but the method of delivering that content is digital.

With various initiatives in place across the country, and the Department of Basic Education also looking at advancing digital learning in SA schools, the digital method of learning is only set to increase.

According to Micheal Goodman, Group Content Manager at educational publishing house Via Afrika, one of the greatest advantages of digital learning is that it delivers an individualised learning experience. This is a radical change from the



Micheal Goodman

usual whole-class teaching that has had to take place up to now.

“Digital education enables learners to study at their own pace, and educators to assess where gaps lie and step in to assist.

“For example with the Via Afrika Tabtor Maths tablet app, each learner works on the skills and concepts that match his or her specific needs. While working, answers are checked by the software to keep the learner motivated, but more importantly, every single step that the learner takes in the maths problem solving is tracked. The app tracks everything the learner writes, and deletes, and even how long a learner pauses to think before writing something down. The educator is then able to view this in real time, but not at the same time on her app. This means educators can track the entire process of problem solving, and identify mistakes where they happen and make the necessary interventions. This personalised instruction ensures that core mathematics concepts are not only covered, but understood before learners move on to new material.” Goodman says.

Developed in line with the CAPS national curriculum, Via Afrika Tabtor Maths is available to schools, as an augmentation of existing maths programmes.



Learners feel more independent



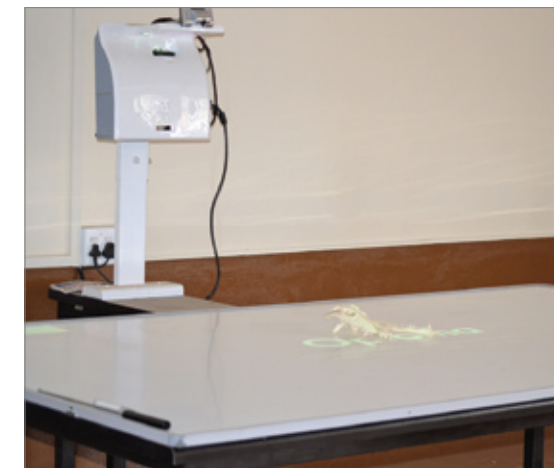
Some teachers are leading the way

So even though digital methods may be on the brink of taking over schooling methods, the basics of teaching – having a person guide the work of the learner – will still apply. How teaching happens will be entirely up to the imagination. Just as in the schools in Sweden, children will no longer have to be confined to four walls; their learning community reference will not just be the children in their class but will include virtual communities and learning spaces. The value of social interaction in learning will increase in importance – kids will learn how to curate and share relevant information across the internet, for example.

The possibilities that digital learning opens up are endless. And these possibilities do not exclude learners living outside of wealthy urban areas. With

the right application of resources including extensive and appropriate teacher training, children in inaccessible or poor areas who will be able to receive a great education, all via apps on a cheap tablet. The best teachers we have will be able to work remotely to assist these learners and other teachers, because of digital technology.

We're only at the start of the classroom's digital revolution.



Revolutionary teaching technology

Editor's comment

It was interesting to read through a report titled: *The impact of digital technology on learning*, by Professor Steven Higgins et al, from Durham University. He points out certain contemporary myths and fallacies about digital technology use in education.

- **Myth 1:** New technologies are being developed all the time, the past history of the impact of technology is irrelevant to what we have now or will be available tomorrow.

The introduction of technology has consistently been shown to improve learning, the trouble is most things improve learning in schools when they are introduced, and technology is consistently just a little bit less effective than the average intervention.

- **Myth 2:** Today's children are digital natives and the 'net' generation – they learn differently from older people.

Just because young people have grown up with technology it does not mean they are experts in its use for their own learning.

- **Myth 3:** Learning has changed now we have access to knowledge through the internet, today's children don't need to know stuff, they just need to know where to find it.

Googling is great for answers to a pub quiz, but would you trust your doctor if she was only using Wikipedia?

- **Myth 4:** Students are motivated by technology so they must learn better when they use it.

There is caveat here as the motivation in school may be partly because using technology is either novel in school, or simply a change from what they usually experience. It may not be the case that this motivation will be sustained over time.

- **Myth 5:** The Everest Fallacy: we must use technology because it is there.

The challenge is knowing which technology is the best to choose for use in schools and for what purposes and learning outcomes they should be employed.

- **Myth 6:** The “More is Better” Fallacy.

Enthusiasts assume that if a little technology is a good thing then a lot will be much better.



Sometimes donating is dumping

R4 billion lost annually on CSI Projects in the education sector

With more than R16 billion being spent annually on Corporate Social Investment (CSI) projects in SA and about half that spent on technology-based projects in education, at least half of these projects fail, amounting to about R4 billion wasted annually mainly by JSE-listed companies.

Sangari South Africa, a locally-based supplier of training solutions, says it has a history of success in CSI projects within the education sector. The company says there are key issues that need to be addressed as a prerequisite to a successful project.

“Engaging with all the stakeholders involved is crucial. This includes headmasters, teachers, parents, regional educational directors, as well as community bodies. Without regional, political and community buy-in, the project could be doomed for failure,” says Bez Sangari, MD of Sangari SA.

“Organisations too often put funding into a project that seems, on paper, to have no downside but is destined for failure because buy-in from all the participants has not been obtained,” he says.

“It is crucial to get community involvement in a schooling project. Communicating with parents about the benefits is important. In addition, if parents are offered educational classes at the same facility in the afternoons or evenings this adds to the potential success of the project and enhances the utilisation of resources.”

Reasons why CSI initiatives fail

- Poorly managed projects
- Funds going missing
- Technology not being properly used
- Lack of enthusiasm on the part of project recipients

These are some of the factors resulting in technology-based CSI educational projects failing.

The aim of any successful CSI project is to provide technology that enhances the learning experience, not simplifies it. Teaching systems should aim to convey knowledge and enable teachers to become more than just content experts, but experts in teaching that specific subject matter.

“In addition, regularly testing students’ progress is crucial, but often not done. This is because it draws too much on teachers’ time – composing and marking of tests is time consuming and arduous. Technology should be available to test students at any point during a lesson to provide feedback on their assimilation and retention, enabling the teacher to quickly take corrective action,” he says.

“Another goal is to elevate teacher skills and provide more knowledge to both teachers and students. The technology should challenge the student,” says Mr Sangari.

“There is a plethora of technology solutions available, but many are ineffective because of an often piecemeal approach to CSI projects. It is important to understand the specific issues and implications being experienced by the recipient institution. Only then should a solution that incorporates benchmarking of current performance, project management, appropriate technology, training, monitoring and evaluation, and regular reporting on the project progress. The technology should become an integral part of the subject being taught and not an add-on.”

Corporates want to assist in developing SA education

but experts must lead the way

By Christina Watson, CEO of educational publishing house Via Afrika

We are right to view the state of education in South Africa as a matter of national concern. Having said that, we do a disservice to the education system by making pronouncements based on only one metric – matric pass rates. Again, this year, we saw much hand-wringing over the drop in maths pass rates, which whilst understandable, is by no means the full picture of what is truly happening in South African maths education.

Perhaps this distorted view of the state of maths education in South Africa was most clearly displayed in last year’s widely reported, and quickly discredited, *World Economic Forum Global Information Technology 2014 Report*. The report ranked the quality of South Africa’s maths and science education last out of 148 countries. The base reason the report was so quickly discredited was that it surveyed business leaders’ views on the quality of South African education – not necessarily how good or bad our education system is.

Though discredited, this report still is worrying.

It concerns me how misconceptions about education in South Africa are clearly prevalent among the opinions of business leaders. According to independent research group Trialogue, companies spent R8.2 billion on Corporate Social Investment (CSI) projects in 2014 with the lion’s share going into education initiatives.

Additionally, it found that between 2008 and 2013 there was an increase in the country’s overall CSI spend on education, from 31% to 43%. Should business leaders’ perceptions remain that education is a ‘lost cause’ in South Africa, it is possible, and likely, that the needed spend in CSI projects in education will drop.

Spending more money on something that has little success makes no business sense.

CSI initiatives in education can often be based on noble intentions but without a solid understanding of what is needed to make a significant change. There are too many glamour CSI projects, especially in the apparent quick fix of digital learning because of all the promise it holds, that at best do nothing more than enhance a company’s image, and at worst, do nothing for the school system because of their short-term focus.

Current interventions by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) do seem to be working; an example is the Annual National Assessment (ANA) – the results of which provide a picture of levels of performance in literacy and numeracy at the key transitional stages of Grades three, six and nine.



There are indeed criticisms of the ANAs, but they do provide us with a regular snapshot of whether initiatives that have been put in place are showing promise. DBE minister Angie Motshekga pointed out when the 2014 ANA results were published late last year that 12 out of 81 districts achieved average percentage scores of 50% and above in Grade 6 mathematics – clearly the improvement plans put in place as a consequence of the 2013 ANA results have paid off. The 2014 ANA results showed some heartening signs. Grade one maths came in at 68.4% – up from 59.6% in 2013; and Grade two learners averaged 61.8%, an increase from 58.9% the previous year.

There has been much excitement about digital technologies in education and how they are revolutionising the classroom. I firmly believe digital learning holds the promise to assist in alleviating problems in South African education. The corporate world has clearly shown a commitment to working hand-in-hand to develop education. It is necessary to ensure that corporate interventions bear the intended and best fruits for our learners.

Inspiring SA schools from Space

The pupils of Forte High School in Dobsonville Soweto tuned in to a radio broadcast where Russian Cosmonaut, Gennady Padalka, who is currently orbiting the earth, addressed them from the International Space Station. The recorded broadcast from space to address South African pupils is the first initiative of its kind and magnitude – a giant leap to improve our education system.



Learners of Forte High School in Dobsonville Soweto reach for the stars

The initiative is part of a series of ideas by the South African registered non-profit organisation *One School at a Time* (OSAAT), that aim to inspire children to dream bigger than ever before – to reach for the stars.

Since its establishment in 2008, OSAAT has been committed to creating a world-class education system in South Africa, by supporting and motivating students in township schools, starting with current partner schools Forte High in Soweto and Itirele-Zenzele High in Diepsloot. The initiatives by OSAAT have led to Forte High's matric pass rate increasing from 52% in 2008, to 93% in 2014.

This year the team at OSAAT, in collaboration with communications group *Joe Public United*, asked some important questions; how do you continually inspire children who struggle to receive even basic needs such as food and clothing, and who are often without parents or role models? How do you elevate the power of inspiration without the usual suspects (politicians, teachers, business executives, motivational speakers, celebrity role models, etc.)?

"This is why we came up with **Project Space** – an initiative that aims to inspire our children to believe that they can do great things, no matter what their

background or circumstances," says Bronwyn James, Managing Director of OSAAT.

"We contacted *Space Adventures*, and they connected us with the Russian Cosmonaut, Gennady Padalka, who is currently part of the International Space Station Expedition 43/44," says James, "Padalka agreed to record a radio message whilst in space about how he achieved his dream of becoming a Cosmonaut. We approached *Ultimate Media*, who bought *Talk Radio 702* onboard as partners to broadcast the message to Forte High."

The pupils at Forte High gathered in classrooms on Friday, 17th April, to



This is what he had to say:

Hello Forte High School.

What an honour to be talking to you all the way from space. I'm Gennady Padalka and I'm a cosmonaut with the Russian Space Programme. I'm working at the International Space Station, about 354 kilometres above Earth. Up here, I get to float, literally float, amongst the stars. I've been asked by One School at a Time to talk to you today about something really important to me.

When I was younger, just like you, all I wanted to do was travel to space. I was nobody special.

An ordinary boy from the middle of freezing Russia looking out of my window at the night sky and imagining what it would be like to be up there, looking down.

I never doubted that one day it would happen. I had to study and work very hard, and it took a long time and a lot of sacrifice. Sometimes it was so tough that I wanted to give up but then I looked to the night sky, and I remembered the excitement and longing that I felt as a child, and I was that boy again, ready to do anything. Now I can smile, knowing it was worth it because I get to live my dream every day.

The purpose of your school is to be a shining example to other schools in Soweto, so dream big, reach for the stars.

Reach for them – no matter who you are or where you come from. Believe me, if you set your mind to it, no one can stop you. When you find it difficult, and at times it will be very difficult, look up and remember that the stars are always there, waiting.

And you can reach them.

I know, because I did.

Goodbye everyone. Do svidaniya.

listen to the radio broadcast of Padalka sharing his inspirational story of how he studied and worked hard to achieve his dream to (literally) reach the stars.

Join the Reach for the Stars conversation and help inspire our children across the country, not just in Soweto.

Visit: www.oneschoolatatime.co.za



The space station crew



Russian Cosmonaut, Gennady Padalka

Sobering facts that teachers need to know

Up to 11% of the young learners in their classrooms could be victims of prenatal alcohol exposure and consequently afflicted with intellectual, learning and behavioural challenges.

New research has identified economically marginalised urban black women as a new risk group for exposing unborn babies to alcohol. This was revealed in a recent study undertaken in Kimberley by the *Foundation for Alcohol-Related Research* (FARR), commissioned by the Northern Cape Department of Social Development.

FARR is a South African NGO, established in 1997, that works towards reducing the incidence of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and its societal impact. Going into vulnerable communities on a by-invitation-only basis, it runs detection and intervention programmes in many parts of South Africa, from the Western Cape to the Northern Cape, Gauteng, and most recently, the Eastern Cape.

FASD includes a wide range of intellectual, emotional and physiological disabilities in children whose mothers drink alcohol during pregnancy. The most severe manifestation of FASD is Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). The main effect of FAS is permanent damage to the central nervous system. People with FAS are afflicted with lifelong intellectual, learning and behavioural challenges. As the prenatal alcohol exposure can affect any of the baby's developing organs, people with FAS can also present with visual, hearing, cardiac and other problems.



Ensure the school has a feeding scheme



FARR CEO Leana Olivier

It was only towards the latter part of the 20th century that medical researchers in the US and Europe began collaborating on their findings that established a link between prenatal alcohol exposure and disruption of fetal development. Although there had been medical observations linking drinking during pregnancy with birth defects as early as the 18th century in England and the 19th century in France, the term FAS was only coined in medical literature in 1973.

Before FARR embarked on its three-year FASD social awareness, prevention and training project in Kimberley, the NGO undertook a prevalence study in the two biggest residential areas, Galeshewe and Roodepan. Together these two communities account for about 80% of the city's population.

It was found that for every 1 000 children tested in the study, 60 presented with FAS, the worst possible form of FASD.

FARR CEO Leana Olivier says that an incidence of 6% is consistent with

what the national Department of Health believes is the prevalence rate in South Africa.

"Obviously, this is tragically and unacceptably high, for without prenatal exposure to alcohol, there would be no FAS or FASD at all. What is particularly disturbing, however, is that for the first time we are encountering new patterns of alcohol abuse amongst young black women, a group that has never been at risk until now. We attribute this change to a migration towards the cities, a weakening of social support structures, as well as changes in social mores."

She confirms that in some parts of Galeshewe, the FAS prevalence was found to be as high as 110 per 1 000 (11%).

A high number of all the women in the study exhibited very low self-esteem. "Part of our awareness training and encouraging women to assume greater responsibility for their lives is to get them to see value in themselves."

FARR's three-year Kimberley project has been funded jointly by the Distell Foundation, which has made FASD a core focus of its social responsibility investment, the Discovery Foundation and the Northern Cape Department of Social Development.

Olivier explains that FARR begins its initiatives with a study to understand the extent of FASD within the community where it is involved. The diagnosis provides the foundation on which to build its awareness, prevention and training drives.

Industrial theatre is a potent instrument in raising community awareness in a non-threatening, accessible and entertaining way, she says. FARR partnered with the *takeAWAY* theatre group to perform a number of its Liefdeskind shows in Kimberley. Such theatre also provides a good platform to highlight the role of men in supporting their partners and sisters in not drinking during pregnancy, she adds.

She says the engagement of community is critical, as its role in curbing and preventing FASD is core to the sustainability of FARR's work. Community members are trained to share the message of not drinking during pregnancy to create a supportive, safe and enabling environment for women who want to change their behaviour.

A central feature of FARR's evidence-based intervention is what it terms its "Healthy Mother, Healthy Baby Programme" a wellness initiative that involves all pregnant women willing to participate, whether they drink or not, in learning how to maintain their own health and so promote that of their unborn babies.

The programme includes a post-birth assessment of the children at nine months' old, so children with symptoms of FASD or any other health and/or psycho-social challenges can be directed towards appropriate support from the local medical, social and educational authorities.

FARR's training academy, targeting health professionals, social workers, community leaders and educators, gives these influencers a more detailed understanding of FASD and exposes them to the measures it has developed to support mothers and children and to encourage prevention. In Kimberley, the

organisation was able to train close to 200 professionals during its three-year project.

"It's important that once our projects come to an end, there are people within the community equipped to continue the work in combating the incidence of FASD," says Olivier.

The *Distell Foundation* not only co-funded the Kimberley project, but it also provides financial support to FARR through its membership of the ARA (Industry Association for Responsible Alcohol Use) and funds a range of educational campaigns in vulnerable communities elsewhere in South Africa to reduce the incidence of FASD.



Stimulation in the classroom is important



Monitor learning activities

Education divide between racial groups is narrowing slowly

Study Time trend projections show that it could take almost 16 years to close the education gap between black and coloured South Africans, 23 years to close the black-white gap and 26 years to close the black-Indian gap.

This is according to Prof Acheampong Yaw Amoateng, research professor of Sociology and Family Studies at the Mafikeng Campus' School of Research and Postgraduate Studies. In a study published in the *South African Review of Sociology*, he and two collaborators from Brigham Young University in the USA investigated racial differences in educational outcomes in South Africa. Educational outcomes refer to the average number of years of schooling completed by a child between 2002 and 2009. "Races in the society had unequal access to education in the past so we wanted to see whether the trend has been arrested in the post-apartheid era," Prof Amoateng says.

Focusing on recent changes

"The countrywide study focused on boys and girls aged 7 to 18 years in the four major race groups, namely Africans, Coloureds, Indians and Whites," he says. "Our interest was in assessing recent changes, using Statistics South Africa's General Household Survey data for 2002 and 2009." In terms of average years of school completed, Africans have nearly one year's less schooling than the average of 1.1 years of schooling. Coloureds are more than a third of a year above Africans, while whites are nearly a year above Africans and Indians are 1.2 years above Africans.

"Indians have an advantage over other race groups by age seven and maintain that advantage as they age," says Prof Amoateng. "Other race groups too have similar educational attainment by age seven but the gap increases as they age. For example, by age 18, Africans and Coloureds have substantial disadvantage in attainment."

The researchers believe that these differences may be linked to racial differences in family and household characteristics. "While not disregarding infrastructure, income and service disparities, some of the educational disadvantage of African and Coloured children may be due to an unequally distributed disadvantage in family backgrounds and school conditions." For example, about half of African children live in female-headed households, while 12% live with only fathers. African and Coloured children also live in households with more siblings, fewer economic resources and less educated parents.

Disparities linger but are declining

"Our findings imply that despite the democratic government's efforts to address the educational inequalities and inequities of the past, discrepancies still exist,



especially as far as the African majority are concerned," he says. "However, we also observed that even though the magnitude is small, there is a decline in inequality between Africans on the one hand, and whites and Indians on the other. This shift suggests that the household circumstances of Africans are changing for the better, since without this they would be doing a lot worse than they are doing now."

The improvements give credence to government's claim that it has a good story to tell in terms of improving the circumstances of the poor and previously disadvantaged. "However, to ensure that the narrowing of the educational gap between Africans and other race groups is sustained and deepened, there is a need for more effective education policy that addresses both issues of racial inequality and disadvantaged family background."

Prof Amoateng says the study has raised further questions for investigation. "We would like to look at this issue from the point of view of social class and see if there are variations or differences in educational outcomes within the black group. In other words, how is the so-called black middle class doing compared to other classes of blacks? "Better still, does the black middle class compare favourably with the white and other middle classes in educational attainment? These would be interesting questions to examine in future."

Early Childhood Development experts teach the teachers

Research continues to demonstrate how Early Childhood Development improves results in later years. This, according to Magdél Botha and Mariet Lambrechts, both qualified teachers situated in Ceres, is what spurs their Leer & Leef programme at pre-schools in the Cape Winelands, especially on farms.

Established over five years ago with the belief that early childhood is a crucial stage in human development, not only for health and physical development, but also for cognitive and social-emotional skills, the duo have provided input at both Early Childhood Development (ECD) and After School Care (ASC) centres.

"We're a non-profit organisation equipping teachers in disadvantaged communities with the skills, knowledge and values that they need to ensure that children of South Africa receive quality care and education," Mariet says.

The group found that, although many ECD and ASC centres provide a safe environment for young children, they often lack a structured programme to fully stimulate each child and promote the development phases they go through.

"For pre-school children we promote a safe, controlled environment in which the child can learn and develop holistically so that they will achieve more success at school. For school children an exciting and diverse after-school programme promotes a fun, safe learning environment in which a child can develop", Mariet says.

An important byproduct of better skilled children is a better home-life. "Because children perform better and bring positive behaviour to the household this positively impacts the whole community," she says.

Occupational Therapist Chantel Griesel is a Trustee and Project Manager at non-profit *Kula Foundation*. She received a TUKS/UP Masters Degree in Early Childhood Intervention and is currently investigating a PHD degree with the University of Stellenbosch. The Boland Farm School Project has already been running for two years. "We partner with Ceres Farm Crèches and aftercare facilities. Three out of four of these schools teach using Leer & Leef and the development difference between the schools that use the programme and those that don't is very evident within our Developmental and Visual Perceptual Assessments."

"In one of our recent farms where we assessed 97 children aged 0 to 13 years the differences in exposure was very evident as only 43% of children aged 0 to 5 showed developmental delays. Within school going children it was even more evident. Visual Perceptual and Visual Motor Integration skills (both are integral skills needed for learning) within children from Grade R to Grade 3 tested considerably better than those in Grades 4 to 6. We see that more children are functioning on the average for their age within the younger age group who benefitted from Leer & Leef than those in the older grades who did not," she says.



Mental nutrition for thousands of learners

Nearly one-fifth of South African children are not eating breakfast before going to school. To help address this need, Kellogg launched a large-scale *Breakfast for Better Days™* Initiative in 2014, which is running again in 2015, providing five million servings of breakfast to children throughout the school year, with 25 000 school children receiving breakfast every school day.

With one in eight people around the world facing food insecurity each day, Kellogg Company and its foundation, the Kellogg's Corporate Citizenship fund, have pledged to provide half a billion servings of breakfast and snacks to children and families who need it most, through this global initiative. In South Africa, a breakfast of Kellogg's cereal and milk will be provided to children in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape and Eastern Cape provinces. Partnering with Kellogg are *FoodBank South Africa*, the country's largest food banking network and Kellogg's international partner in the global initiative, who are responsible for distributing the food.

Breakfast benefits

Children who don't eat breakfast before school are at a disadvantage, and no one has better insight into this than the teachers on the ground. Khuziwe Shiba is a Grade 2 teacher at Ikwezi Primary School in Mofolo North, Soweto, one of the schools that benefit from the *Breakfast for Better Days™* Initiative.

She says: "The kids that have breakfast come to school bubbly, loving, smiling and active, and look forward to the day ahead. The ones that don't have breakfast are gloomy, tired, passive and don't want to play or participate. They are not able to concentrate and easily lose interest. A hungry child struggles to follow what is going on in the classroom." Studies indicate that breakfast helps children feel more alert and be in a better mood in the morning. That first meal of the day supports concentration in the classroom and helps fuel physical activity on the playing field, which can translate into more fun. Breakfast intake



Thembelihle Mhlongo (front of line) and Sifiso Magubane from Ikwezi Primary School in Soweto line up to receive their breakfast before school starts. The school participates in the *National Kellogg's Breakfast for Better Days Initiative* which serves breakfast to 25 000 learners each school day of the year across the country, to help address the fact that 1 in 5 children in South Africa go to school hungry

has also been associated with improved memory, test grades and school attendance. Cereal is high in carbohydrates, which are the body and brain's main source of energy. Research has shown that children who start their day with breakfast tend to have a lower Body Mass Index (BMI) and less chance of being overweight or obese.

"Breakfast is not just a meal; it's part of the making of a brighter future. When kids start the morning right, there's no end to the opportunities for fun and learning that each day can bring," said Jack Kruger, Kellogg's Marketing Category Manager. "We want every child to have a bright start, fuelled by the power of breakfast. That's why we are donating five million servings of breakfast in this year, and hopefully we'll help make a tangible difference in their lives."

Banking on a better future

Kellogg partners with FoodBank, who distribute breakfast to the 25 000 children every school day in 2015. FoodBank collect and transport cereal and milk from Kellogg's Distribution Centres to its own warehouses, where it is sorted and packed for each individual participating school and delivered monthly.

"Providing regular breakfasts to these children, many of whom come from disadvantaged communities, gives them an opportunity to concentrate better in class," said Neil Davison, National Operations Manager for *FoodBank South Africa*. "The better concentration in class and significantly improved attendance figures, which we know we will see, will go a long way towards improving the standard of education in these classrooms," he added.

A beacon of hope for youth

Following Investec's partnership with *Khulisa Social Solutions* (KSS), a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) with a focus on social vulnerabilities as a systematic problem, the KSS team suggested that Investec consider becoming involved with the Westbury Youth Centre.

After visiting the project and engaging with the people on the ground to get a better understanding of the centre's vision for the community, Setlogane Manchidi of Investec CSI said, "The Westbury Youth Centre catches youth that are falling through the cracks of the education system, giving them a fresh chance in the personal development areas of education, full time employment or community enrichment activities, that will help guide them away from destructive behaviours and restore hope to young lives." Over the past two years more than 300 staff, working a collective 1 500 hours have been involved in completely transforming the abandoned bottom floor of the old boys section of the Westbury Secondary school hostel into a youth centre which now houses various training rooms, a small library, counselling rooms and various offices for a number of NGO's that service the Westbury community.

"Young people are often asked to aspire to great things while living in oppressive conditions," said John Simon of *Kone Centennial Foundation*. "We rely hugely on the support of corporates to assist in setting the tone for social development in South Africa. Over the past two years, Investec did just that as volunteers turned around a run-down abandoned space into a cheerful and productive communal environment, demonstrating to the centre's beneficiaries that it is possible to improve not only their own lives, but the community in which they live – the refurbished centre is a beacon of hope to the youth in Westbury and surrounds."



(Left to right) Dr Robinson (Westbury Secondary School Principal), Mrs Jacobs (Deputy Principal), Mr Swarts (Chairman of the SGB), Linsey Sherman (Investec CSI Consultant), Richard Wainwright (Head of Investec Corporate and Institutional Banking), Setlogane Manchidi (Head of Investec CSI), Reginald Botha (Westbury Youth Centre Manager), Kelvin Joel (Chairmen of the Mashup board), Tracy Dennis (Westbury Youth Centre Project Coordinator and Sustainability Manager)

Jumpstart careers for unemployed graduates

So many highly qualified South African youth struggle to get jobs after graduation, or move up the corporate ladder. This is often due to a lack of the vital soft skills key to survival in today's competitive marketplace – attributes which may be neglected by South African universities.

In response to this, the TSIBA Career Centre, a division of the *Tertiary School in Business Administration* (TSiBA) has developed a unique programme called 'Umbono' – which means 'a clear vision' in isiXhosa. The programme aims to address this vital gap by providing young graduates, both unemployed and employed, with the cognitive and emotional tools to become empowered, confident and resilient. This will help them to get a foot in the door and kick-start their careers. It also gives them an edge when they do get an opportunity to get onto the corporate ladder. One of the TSIBA Career Centre Umbono candidates Luzuko Mbilini says, "I gained soft skills which I did not realise are so important to market myself to potential employers. I now know how to use them in order to be marketable".

Graham Moore, TSIBA Sustainability Manager, explains that, "TSiBA has been regularly placing students and graduates into employment for many years. We have now expanded this offering into a professional recruitment entity. The TSIBA Career Centre provides services in permanent and temporary recruitment as well as skills development interventions for early career placement – such as Umbono".

Moore continues, "The Career Centre functions as a Social Enterprise supporting the vision and mission of TSiBA Education. Proceeds from every placement and skills programmes facilitated go towards TSiBA scholarships and thereby igniting opportunity for our student population of whom most are first generation tertiary education entrants".

While the programme is relatively new it has already achieved results. Andiswa Nziili, recently placed through the programme working at Maestro Investment Management says, "I'm so pleased that my job hunting journey has finally come to end".

Men in the Making – inspiring teenagers

While it has its own active corporate social investment programmes, short term insurance innovator MiWay is firmly behind the *Men in the Making Day* initiative. That's because the company believes in the concept of inspiring teenagers to become positive agents for change in their broader circles of influence and to help more youngsters grow into responsible, caring adults.



That's according to MiWay Head of Marketing and Brand, Nthabiseng Moloi, who notes the company launched its MiHeart Project in 2014 to improve computer literacy and ICT facilities in schools. "Through this initiative, we have formed close and special relationships with the schools where we are involved. Infusing Men in the Making Day into our project adds a direct and personal impact on the lives of the boys, their families and the communities we operate in," she explains.

The *Men in the Making Day* (MIM) programme is an initiative by vehicle monitoring company Tracker. MIM identifies disadvantaged boys and provides mentorship and skills training to better equip them to become providers and contributors to society, on the one hand, while establishing solid foundations for personal successes on the other.

Decision makers from SA's top brands pledged their commitment to MIM and invited grade 10 to 12 boy learners into their workplace for motivational talks, career guidance, team building and job shadowing, in a drive to provide much-needed mentorship and inspiration. Over 1 000 students nationwide were inspired by the day.

MiWay selected eight boys from Moletsane High School in Soweto, at which its MiHeart Project has already transformed the Computer Centre, to participate in its contribution to MIM.

However, the company is taking its contribution to MIM further, pairing the boys with four of its senior managers who will provide ongoing mentorship and support as the youngsters work their way through Grade 12. While cognisance is taken of the demands of study, sport and general life on the time of each individual, the mentors will spend time with learners to provide insights into career fields and options, while imparting various 'soft skills'.

"Through the contributions of our senior managers, we want this to be the best year of these boys' lives as they grow into young men. Our hope is

that in our own small way, MiWay can fire up a spark in each individual; to give a glimpse of the endless possibilities that are out there; and for some of us, who also grew up in the township, to remind them that they have the freedom to be the best they can be," Moloi adds.

Role models such as those introduced by the MIM programme can play a crucial part in helping youngsters who don't have a strong father figure in their lives to appreciate the value which flows from making the right choices.

"Our participating staff members are a mirror for these boys, showing them how much is possible through hard work and the right attitude."

Moloi says MiWay intends to award a bursary for further study to the best performer of its MIM participants.

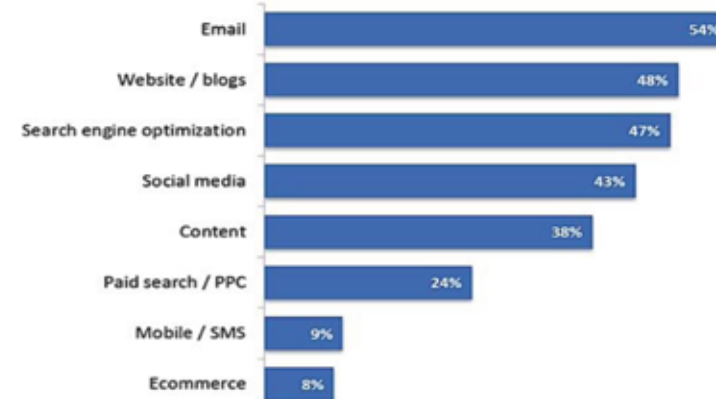
"Ultimately, initiatives like this can and do make an impact on our country, one boy at a time. By adding MIM to the MiHeart project, we're able to focus not just on the school and the needs of the ICT department, but now also on the needs of some of the most at-risk learners," she concludes.



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CT Office: 021 939 1542

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