

# Exploring the MSLA

**Skills in maths and science are vital to fostering a career in the automotive industry – and a STEM school in Kimberley has focused on the subjects to promote the talents of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds**

Herbert Lonsdale, International Business Development Manager of the UK's Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI), and Louis van Huyssteen, Regional Manager for the RMI in the Free State and Northern Cape, recently visited Kimberley's Maths and Science Leadership Academy (MSLA), a not-for-profit educational facility that has been running maths and science programmes for learners from poor backgrounds since 2007.



The IMI's Herbert Lonsdale with Edwin Molusi, head boy of St Boniface School, who has been selected to participate at Eskom's National Science Expo, and Anne Maclean, managing director of the MSLA

Anne MacLean, managing director of the academy, said 280 learners in Grades 9 to 12 were currently enrolled in the programmes, their numbers swelled by a further 300 learners in Grades 4 to 6 and 400 learners in Grades 7 to 12 who were attending maths problem-solving classes under the guidance of 30 teachers.

De Beers has donated land in Kimberley to the organisation to build an innovative 21st century STEM education centre to be called Opportunity Island which will enable the organisation to extend its impact throughout the Northern Cape Province to areas where it is needed most.

The heart of Opportunity Island will be the state-of-the-art school that will address the inequalities in education and provide talented learners from poor areas throughout the province with access to world class education, with special focus on maths and science.

While the Opportunity Island facilities will serve the planned state of the art school, the organisation aims to use them creatively for various other educational purposes, including serving as a teacher training school linked to the new Sol Plaatje University in Kimberley and as a support centre for schools in the remote areas of the Northern Cape Province.

The establishment of Opportunity Island in Kimberley will serve to grow the pool of students who have the necessary skills, knowledge and values to become future professionals and leaders who are passionate about STEM and the growth of a more prosperous and greener Northern Cape Province.

Jakkie Olivier, CEO of the RMI, said the organisation was committed to promoting the STEM skills concept in South Africa. It had been active in introducing local and international industry stakeholders to the MSLA, and at Automechanika Johannesburg it had helped to showcase the importance of skills acquisition through its involvement in the WorldSkills Competition.

Further, it had invited learners from schools in Johannesburg to attend its Rewards Just Ahead conference, which had focused on creating awareness of the role skills played in automotive careers.

Olivier said the Northern Cape Province, such as other provinces in South Africa, was in dire need of fostering interest among young people in science and maths as subjects vital in furthering studies in technology and automotive fields.

He praised the work of Dave Rowley, Education Director of the Bloodhound SSC project, who had an office at the MSLA. "The RMI values his work with learners and his promotion of the automotive industry as a career of choice.

"At our Rewards Just Ahead conference, Dave highlighted in his presentation the importance of maths and science in developing a car designed to run at 1 600km/h – making the subjects exciting. Equally, Herbert Lonsdale's address at the conference highlighted a recipe for employer rewards – which again shared the RMI's objectives in promoting world-class skills training and making the automotive industry attractive to school leavers."

## Managing HIV/AIDS in your workplace

While there is access to a lot of information about HIV/AIDS, often this information doesn't deal with myths. The problem is that myth-based attitudes lead to stigmatisation and discrimination, which effectively stops people getting the help they need because they fear being singled-out or rejected.

Section 8.1 of the Department of Labour's Code of Good Practice argues that workplaces need to provide comprehensive education programmes, and that these programmes should deal

with myths and misconceptions. So let's look at a few of these...

**Myth: HIV can be passed on in everyday social contact.**

**Truth:** HIV can only be passed on when one person's body fluids – blood, semen, vaginal fluids but not saliva – get inside another person's body. So it can't be passed on when you hug someone, share a plate, cup or fork or use the same bathroom – there is no risk in these situations.

**Myth: People with HIV pass it on every time they have sex.**

**Truth:** In the same way that a woman doesn't become pregnant each time she has sex, HIV is not passed on each time either. Used correctly, a condom will minimise the risk of HIV being passed on. The risk is even lower if the person with HIV is also taking antiretrovirals.

**Myth: You can't get HIV if you are married.**

**Truth:** Unfortunately, people who are married or in long-term stable relationships have become HIV-positive. This happens

where one partner had HIV before they met or when one of the partners was unfaithful and had unprotected sex.

**Myth: Antiretrovirals have terrible side effects.**

**Truth:** Today's antiretroviral drugs have fewer and less severe side effects. If one drug causes problems, a doctor is usually able to provide a replacement drug. Most side effects are caused by the body getting used to a new drug and should go away after a few weeks. Severe, long-term side effects are much less common.

**Myth: You only have to start antiretrovirals when you feel ill.**

**Truth:** Without treatment, HIV silently damages the immune system and some of this damage cannot be repaired. It's better to start taking treatment before the immune system is damaged – this helps to prevent future illnesses. A blood test called a CD4 count confirms when it's a good idea to start taking treatment.

Contact Redpeg for accredited HIV/AIDS workplace training, consulting and research.

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