

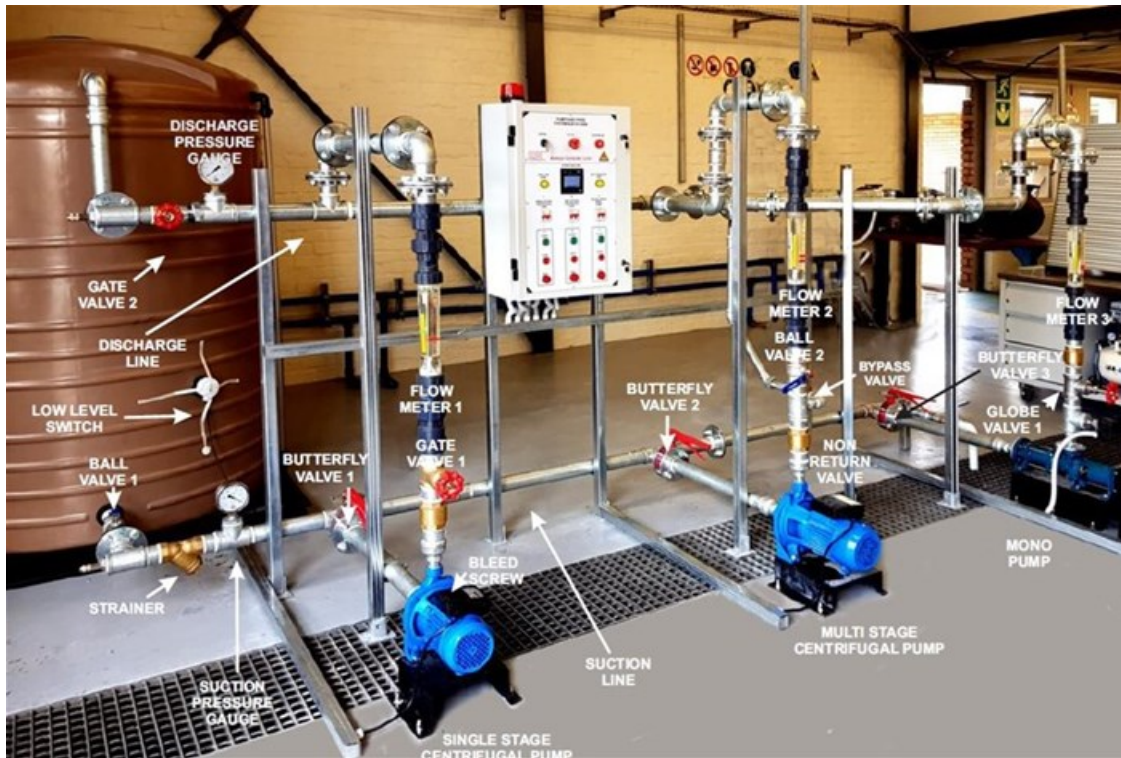
Unusual lockdown lesson

Issued by [Pert Industrials](#)

26 May 2020

Here's an unusual lockdown lesson: in this time of distance learning, colleges should start investing in large scale, physical, hands-on training equipment.

What do I mean? Something like this for water reticulation and pump maintenance, recently supplied to Northlink College Wingfield:



Or else this from the new Automotive Trade Test line: (other versions at College of Cape Town, Athlone and Northlink College, Bellville):



Or this procured in bulk by the Western Cape Education department for Electrical Technology in Technical High Schools:



And finally, this from the new Mechanical Workshop at False Bay College, Westlake:



Why? Recently, we have all had to consider the meaning of an 'essential' service: electricity, water, transport, machinery maintenance. These services continue, even if we suspend almost everything else. Each item pictured is for training in these fields. (Each of these, by the way, is designed and manufactured in South Africa #ProudSouthAfrican.) That is the primary reason that colleges need to invest in this training material. The lockdown levels have shown us what is fundamental to our economy and even our existence.

The second reason relates to distance education. During the lockdown, I have been assisting customers to move labs over to remote learning and I have come to realise what I have long suspected: there is a lot of fantastic free or nearly free material out there. Did you know, for example, that Khan academy offers a course in electrical engineering?

www.khanacademy.org

That free PHET simulations now work on almost any device?

<https://phet.colorado.edu/>

That LearnEngineering has over 80 cross sectional animations on intricate mechanical devices?

<https://www.patreon.com/LearnEngineering>

We have also assisted some customers in this Covid crisis by adapting their standard laboratory practicals for home-based assignment version:

<https://www.pasco.com/resources/home-science-tools#overview-panel>

www.tina.com

It is quite impressive how well you can learn on your own for free. And this raises the question: in the year 2020 why should you go to school at all? For the society? But that is something provided *at the school* and not *by the school*. For the teacher? For me that is indeed critically important but not so much for this new generation. My 17-year-old is quite comfortable with four friends on Whatsap and a teacher on YouTube. After all, she has had years of juggling cyber feeds.

My daughter, like all the kids today, is a digital native.

Ultimately, schools are going to have to distinguish themselves by offering something that a learner cannot get at home, something like those items pictured above. Colleges all over South Africa need to step up to the level of capital investment currently underway in the Cape Town schools.

For more information on available training equipment, or assistance in adapting practical work for distance learning, please mail me: peter@pert.co.za

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