

**Report to Western Cape Department of Education
on Microsoft Partners in Learning Training
conducted between 2007 - 2009**

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Introduction

SchoolNet SA is the preferred service provider for offering training on the Microsoft Partners in Learning courses. Since the beginning of this programme, the Western Cape has been the recipient of various Microsoft funded training initiatives and more recently the province has invested its own funds in offering Partners in Learning training to its teachers. This report outlines the Microsoft Partners in Learning training that has been conducted in the Western Cape in the past three years sponsored by the Western Cape Education Department and Microsoft from 2007 to 2009.

1 Training sponsored by the Western Cape Department of Education

1.1 *ICT Skills for Teachers Training of Trainers*

In July 2008 ICT Consultant Gerald Roos trained 32 new ICT Skills for Teachers trainers. These trainers will be able to offer the ICT Skills course cost effectively within their districts. This is part of the Western Cape Department's professional development plan that will better prepare teachers to participate in Intel training.

1.2 *WebQuests Training of Trainers*

In February 2009 Kevin Sherman trained a group of educational managers and five facilitators who would be working for the Western Cape Education Department. The facilitator-trainees were required to develop their own WebQuest but most of the other participants adapted existing WebQuests.

One of the mandates for this course was to introduce blogs and wikis to the participants. While the goal of the WebQuests course is not to teach participants how to



make blogs and wikis, the facilitators believe that exposing teachers to these Web 2.0 tools will help scaffold their learning and provide foundational knowledge for the new Intel v.10 course. To satisfy this mandate, Kevin developed two wiki activities and two blog activities for the participants to experience. On the final day, the group informally evaluated how those activities went, and they made decisions about which ones they will use with their teacher during training.



1.3 ICT Skills and WebQuests Training organised by the WCED

The Western Cape Department of Education has been using their own ICT Skills for Teachers and WebQuests trainers to conduct training in schools. SchoolNet SA is still involved in issuing certificates and assessing the WebQuests that are produced. To date 244 certificates have been sent to teachers who have completed the ICT Skills for Teachers course and 218 certificates have been issued to teachers who successfully completed the WebQuest course.

1.4 WebQuests Training for Dinaledi Schools

Between December 2007 and January 2008 SchoolNet SA was contracted by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to arrange 10 sessions of WebQuest training for their teachers. Training was arranged in the various EMDCs to offer teachers an opportunity to attend training as close to home as possible, thereby reducing costs. Four teachers, 2 Science educators and 2 Maths educators, from each participating Dinaledi school were invited by the Western Cape Department of Education who also sent letters to the principal of each school describing the WebQuest course. The names of nominated teachers were then forwarded to SchoolNet who endeavoured to contact teachers to give them the details of their training sessions. Below is a brief report on each of the training sessions.

South EMDC- Cape Academy High School

5-7 December 2007

A total of 29 teachers attended training. Most teachers described themselves as beginners although this was meant to be a course for ICT literate teachers. The teachers from Oscar Mpetha high school arrived late every day because they had to sign in at their school first and left everyday after lunch. This was very disruptive to the assigned groups and the course in general. Despite these setbacks the other teachers were very happy to participate in the course and they gained confidence as the course progressed.



The venue was equipped with sufficient computers however due to power blackouts the day before the computers experienced network problems and were not performing at their optimal capacity. Internet connectivity was also not reliable for the duration of training.

7-9 January 2008

Only 5 teachers attended this session (2 teachers from Fezeka secondary School, 2 from Oval North High and 1 from Cape Academy). Due to the low attendance at Livingstone and Cape Academy, training was combined and all trainees were asked to report to the training at Livingstone High the following day.

Central EMDC- Livingstone High School

5-7 December 2007

15 teachers attended the sessions held in December. Teachers were positive and actively engaged in the activities. Most teachers were ICT literate and were able to complete webquests by the end of the course.

The venue had sufficient computers however it was not set up well for the course. The IT teacher at the school was unaware of any training and thus the lab was not set up to share files and the PiLP CD was not loaded on the network. The CD drives were disabled and software such as Adobe Acrobat and Front page was not available. The lack of access to these resources hampered training.

7-9 January 2008

Only 1 person from Thandokulu High School was present. His thoughts were that this was a poor time to schedule training because “teachers would realise there was only one week left for the holidays and they wouldn’t want to use it on a course”. On the second day there was supposed to be a combined training at Livingstone, however only 1 person arrived and the training was subsequently cancelled.

East EMDC- Bernadino Heights High School

5-7 December 2007



24 teachers attended this training. Teachers were very excited at the onset of the training however due to network problems and teachers not being able to find their saved work, they became very demoralised as the course progressed.

Initially, the staffroom, equipped with a smartboard, 1 computer and printer, was prepared for the course. As the Webquest course relies on hands on practice, the training was moved to the computer lab so that each teacher would have a computer to work on. There were 4 monitors connected to one CPU and this made the network slow. The CD was not loaded onto the computers and the online version had to be used which was frustrating due to the unstable Internet connectivity.

7-9 January 2008

15 teachers attended the training and were keen to acquire new skills. Attendance dropped on the third day (1 trainee had a medical emergency, 2 trainees were called by their principal to attend a meeting and some stayed away for unknown reasons). The decline in numbers could also be attributed to a problematic venue.

The network was not up and running at the start of the training and there was no internet, nonetheless training was able to continue using the offline version of the WebQuest materials. On the second day, the network was functional, however the IT technician found a virus on the system

and the session had to end early. The last day was even more problematic as the entire system ground to a halt. The trainees agreed to resume the training at Sarepta High School on the 2nd February 2008. Attempts to confirm attendance were not successful and this intervention was then cancelled.

South Cape Karoo –Bridgeton High School

7 teachers attended the training in December. The distance to the host school was listed as a problem. Many teachers were first time computer users and therefore required much tutoring on basic ICT skills. Despite this they were enthusiastic and excited about their ideas; although only a few teachers managed to complete webquests.

The venue was well organised and equipped with a projector and smartboard. There were no CD- ROMs however the CD was accessed via the server. According to the trainer reports the “Internet access was superb”. This was a good venue and should be used again.



North EMDC – Elkanah House

Only 7 teachers attended the course in January despite more having confirmed their attendance. The trainees were all very keen and excited about the course and worked well together. They had the necessary IT skills to cope with the course. The course worked well because teachers had common subjects and could therefore share ideas and brainstorm about subject related topics. One teacher could not attend the last two days as she had to attend a curriculum meeting for Science teachers.

The venue was well organised and there was good connectivity. This venue was free from power failures and should be used again.

Westcoast/Winelands – Bergrivier Senior Secondary School

The 10 teachers that attended this session were very eager to participate and had a strong work ethic. For example, on the last day some teachers who were not satisfied with their work stayed until 20:30pm to complete their webquests.

The venue was well organised and had good resources such as a smartboard and a projector.



Overberg- Esselen park Secondary School

There were 10 trainees and they were engaged in all activities. They were also eager to share their skills with their peers.

There were sufficient computers at the venue however they did not have CD-ROMs. The CD was loaded and accessed via the network. The internet was operational, but no major searches could be performed; technicians explained that there was a problem with the Telkom line.

The following comments extracted from the course evaluation forms indicate that on the whole the training was well received, despite challenges around the date and ICT literacy of some participants:

“This course was excellent as it allowed for hands on participation. I feel confident that I can easily design webquests for my subject.”

“Webquest is definitely a great teaching aid. I think that I can definitely use it as a method to engage my learners in a higher level of thinking.”

“Fantastic. Is there more??”

“I truly did not expect to enjoy this workshop, but initially attended for professional improvement. I must mention that I have thoroughly enjoyed the webquest training facilitated by Fiona Beal.”

“Although I initially felt that the timing of the training (during the holidays, right after exhausting last days of school) was not appropriate, I thoroughly enjoyed the presentation of the workshop and I am empowered to develop my own webquests. I shall surely use this as a tool in my classroom practice from now on.”

“A very valuable course which made one re-evaluate your teaching methods. A perfect way to start the new year!”

“The course was organised very professionally. I enjoyed the course and definitely learned a lot and will apply my new knowledge to the extension of my classroom.”

“I found the course extremely useful in terms of learning new skills on a computer and able to use the webquests to assign projects and incorporate this with other learning areas.”

“Webquest is a powerful tool that can be used to introduce our learners to a new and exciting way of teaching and learning. Webquest is very suitable for the new curriculum and in line with the current changes in education with respect to new technology introduced into our schools today.”

The training sessions have in the main been enjoyed by teachers and they have gained a wealth of new ideas and skills to improve their current teaching methods as well an exciting way to get learners interested in their work.



Our recommendations to further improve on future training sessions are as follows:

- Information letters should be sent to Principals and candidates must sign that they are aware of training requirements. This is so that trainees come prepared to interact

meaningfully and not use the excuse that they did not know what the course was about. (For this round of training principals were sent a detailed overview of the WebQuest course but some teachers claimed this information was not passed on to them.)

- Principals should be made aware that training courses are provided to improve on teachers' use of ICT and are for the benefit of the school in general. Schools should therefore be held accountable for poor attendance after confirmation of teachers' attendance. In this way, teachers would be motivated by Principals to attend the courses provided by the Department.
- The venues for the training must be verified prior to the training so that network problems can be addressed, the Partners in Learning CD can be loaded and internet connectivity can be ascertained. This is to ensure that the training can be facilitated optimally and that teachers can focus on the course materials and not be frustrated by technology-related problems.
- Training dates should be arranged for March and September as they are dates that are easier to plan into a calendar. In December many teachers are marking matric exams and in January teachers are on holiday, are difficult to contact, and not eager to participate wholeheartedly.

2 Training sponsored by Microsoft

2.1 ICT Skills for Teachers

In 2007 Microsoft offered ICT Skills for Teachers training through its 60 Schools Project with the aim of exposing as many schools as possible to the Partners in Learning ICT Skills for Teachers course. Although this project focused primarily on less well-resourced provinces Springdale was included in the roll out following a special request from the WCED. The training session went very well with the trainer commenting that the computer facilities worked well and the staff was very receptive to the training:

“Very excited and motivated group who enjoyed themselves with the training. The novices appreciated the fact that they could work at their own speed. This enhanced their confidence as they worked on the computer.”

“The school had all the necessary programs available on computers as well as the internet. It was great working with such a competent staff complement. They all got stuck into the course and definitely attempted a lot on their own.”

A further Microsoft project run in 2007 was ICT Capacity Building for College Professionals. Through this project, Microsoft's aim was to assist 18 FET colleges nationally by offering capacity building programmes for college professionals achieve the ISETT SETA developmental objective to “capacitate and skill competent FET college personnel capable of delivering requisite ICT skills for South Africa”.

False Bay FET College received their training in June of 2007. Despite battling to arrange dates for training because some FET colleges appeared to resist training interventions, trainee reports indicated that the courses were successful as is indicated by these extracts:

“There were things that I didn’t know I could do but the scenario helped me a lot. I learned a lot. The trainer was so helpful she had time for every one she knew how to accommodate everyone. The pace was excellent.”

“The course was well structured and catered for educators with varying abilities. Educators were able to work independently, at their own pace and do activities that were relevant to their needs and interests. The CD is well designed and will be very useful.”

2.2 WebQuests

The aim of the Microsoft WebQuests in Schools project was to offer teachers from Dineledi schools training in completing WebQuests. Dineledi schools were selected as teachers from these schools have tended to show the most promise during ICT Skills for Teachers training. It was hoped that through providing computer literate teachers with additional training that these teachers would be able to take the next steps towards implementing ICT integration. The second intention of this project was to train more trainers and to include provincial officials wherever possible in order to help make the training model more sustainable.



As part of this project 11 potential trainers received instruction at Square Hill Primary School in the Western Cape. The participants enjoyed the course and participated fully, however some participants were more competent than others. As a result of this the master trainer used a number of exercises and manipulations to ensure that participants would mix and share feedback with one another. Everyone seemed to struggle with Front Page and the master trainer recommended that all trainers use Word templates when conducting training, unless participants were very familiar with Front Page as otherwise too much time would be lost. At the end of the session, eight of the trainees were awarded the status of “WebQuest Trainer” and were then eligible to conduct training in 50 Dineledi and Focus schools.



2.3 Innovative Schools Programme – Christel House

Christel House was selected to be offered the 6i Process by Microsoft with a view to this school potentially participating in the Microsoft Innovative Schools process. The 6i Process included a staff workshop that began with a diagnostic exercise designed to gauge the feelings of the staff about their past, the present change of venue and a vision for the future. The resulting display of flashcards suggested that the teachers at the school felt a sense of achievement from the past (despite the

challenges of teaching), were largely very excited (yet apprehensive) about the move and the change that it represented and saw the future as an opportunity to grow, change and succeed.



The workshop also allowed staff to come up with a set of non-negotiable principles were on which they thought the school did or should operate and to consider factors that motivate learners and the obstacles that they face. Christel House also benefitted from ICT Skills for Teachers Training and selected teachers participated in the 2009 Peer Coaching cluster.

Unfortunately the pressure of relocating the school to new premises and the demands of other workshops on the staffs time resulted in the 6i process being suspended. We hope that the staff at Christel House will still be able to put into practice what they have learnt and that when time permits they will resume the process.

2.4 Peer Coaching Programme

In 2007 the following Western Cape schools participated in the Peer Coaching programme: Crestway High School, Harmony Primary School, Square Hill Primary School, Steenberg High School and Zwaanswyk High School.



Although there were only nine peer coaches in the Cape Town group, the facilitator reported that they differed widely in terms of skills and the amount of leadership support that they received at their schools. Everyone in the group reported that developing their own portfolios in order to gather and organise online resources and learning how to present these were extremely useful skills that they had learnt through the course.

The schools involved in the Cape Town Peer Coaching cluster in 2008 were Bernadino Heights, Sarepta High, Scottsedene Secondary, Malibu Secondary, Kleinvele Secondary and Uxolo Secondary.

The following extracts from the principal's comments show the value of this course:

"Thank you for this session. I found it most useful and appropriate. Thank you for inviting top management. Change also has to take place on their level in order for the school to go forward. Learner achievement is ultimately what this is about.!"

"Very informative and useful session. Very relevant to the creation of an improved culture of teaching and learning at any school. It's very clear that a principal has to play a definitive role in encouraging and supporting the intellectual growth of educators. Peer coaching can undoubtedly improve teachers skills which can result in improved delivery. Principals and educators should view Peer coaching as a very important and relevant professional development opportunity."

In 2009 the following Western Cape schools participated in the Peer Coaching programme: Eersterivier Sec. School, Blackheath Primary School, Christel House, Malibu High and Forestheights Primary School

There were 20 peer coaches in the Cape Town group and 14 participants completed the course. This course proved very successful in terms of skills acquired by participants; getting to grips with coaching skills, communication as well as lesson planning techniques. It was, however, disappointing to note that school leadership was not demonstrative of support to teachers. Opportunities for sharing of ideas as well as development of coaching plans for participating schools went amiss due to non-attendance of workshops.



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coaching plans for participating schools went amiss due to non-attendance of workshops.

Despite the lack of leadership support, coaches felt that this course was most useful as is indicated by the following comments:

“It is a pity that the course has to come to an end as there is still so much to learn. This programme has brought much change in my thought processes. It will contribute to the paradigm shift I made in terms of OBE teaching in South Africa. I will be of great help to colleagues at my school.”

“The session was informative and rewarding because it allowed me to think about the effect of the course on my own teaching, as well as that of my coaches. I really appreciate the opportunity that I was given to learn about so many new things in enhancing teaching and learning and also to have been able to meet and engage with so many teachers which I would not have been aware of before.”

“It makes one realize that we can reach our goals if there is active and constant collaboration. If we understand that this is an ongoing process and that there is no quick fix in our desire to make a difference and improve the quality of education.”

“I have been privileged enough to have been included in the Peer Coaching programme. Much has been learnt in a collaborative fashion from the trainer, colleagues and peer educators. I am eagerly looking forward to being an agent of change in this area of my facilitation as an educator.”

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2.5 Microsoft Innovative Teachers Forum and Innovation Workshops

The Microsoft Innovative Teachers Forum is an annual event that recognizes teachers who are using technology in creative and engaging ways in the classroom. In 2008 Microsoft began offering Innovation Workshops in various provinces to help teachers come up with creative ideas for projects that use technology in the classroom. The workshops involve teachers brainstorming ideas, looking critically at previous winning projects and obtaining input and guidance from a skilled facilitator on how they can enhance their current teaching practices to produce a project suitable for this competition. In 2008 and 2009 Innovation Workshops were held in Cape Town and teachers from throughout the province were invited to attend.



In 2009 – the Western Cape produced two winners in the Microsoft Innovative Teachers Forum.

Cheryl Douglas from Bishops won the Innovation in Collaboration category at both the South African and Pan African Microsoft Innovative Teacher Awards for her project entitled “Teaching for the future”. Her project involves using ICT to encourage learners to be aware of global issues with an emphasis on sustainability. This ongoing project looks at how to increase awareness of global issues in the classroom and through the creation of an extramural Global Issues Network group.

Fiona Beal from Fish Hoek Primary School won the Innovation in Community category for her project called “Blogging Bonds and Uplifts Communities”. The project began when Fiona’s Grade 4 and 5 learners found that blogging and Web2 opens the door to a whole new set of exciting relationships and enriched learning experiences. They connected with the local elderly community (even teaching them how to blog), as well as with classrooms around the globe, in collaborative writing projects. This project was the runner up in the Innovation

in Community category at the Microsoft Pan African Innovative Teachers Forum held in Mauritius.

Cheryl Douglas and Fiona Beal's successes at the Pan African event made them eligible to attend the Worldwide Innovative Education Forum held in Brazil in November 2009. The contacts made at this event and the project ideas that they were exposed to mean that both Cheryl and Fiona are well placed to offer support and guidance to future Innovative Teachers in the Western Cape.



Conclusion

Microsoft and SchoolNet SA are grateful for the Western Cape Department of Education's support of the Microsoft Partners in Learning courses. We look forward to working together on future projects in 2010.

Megan Rademeyer

Programmes Manager

SchoolNet SA – December 2009