

Report on DBE Teacher Centre Management Training

Building Functional Teacher Centres and
Competent Centre Managers to Support Quality
Learning and Teaching



Teacher Centre Managers' Course

10 – 15 August 2014



Representatives from 131 centres spread across all nine provinces arrived at Southern Sun O R Tambo for a week-long workshop from August 10th – 15th 2014. The purpose of the training programme was to explore a range of issues related to the functioning and management of Teacher Centres in all provinces in South Africa. The programme was designed to expose participants to the latest relevant policy documents, particularly the draft ***Norms and Standards for Provincial Teacher Development institutes and District Teacher Development Centres***. The intended outcome was for workshop participants to provide informed input to this policy.

The Integrated Strategic Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (ISFTED) is central to the establishment of the PTDis and DTDCs and was therefore also on the agenda to be interrogated. According to the plan, teacher education and development at the local level is going to rely on Teacher Centres which will become the

vehicle through which, the DBE will achieve Goal 16 of Action Plan 2014. Goal 16 concerns the professionalism, teaching skills, subject knowledge and computer literacy of educators.

In order to develop and manage the system through which the development needs of teachers can be identified and addressed, the DBE has already established the National Institute for Curriculum and Professional Development. The members of the NICPD were at the forefront of initiating and monitoring this week's workshop programme which was designed to expose Teacher Centre staff to the range of policy documents that affect their roles and responsibilities and very specifically to encourage input into the Draft Norms and Standards for Teacher Centres. Another focus for the workshop was the use of technology and more specifically the integrated use of ICT in education. Therefore SchoolNet SA was commissioned to collaborate with the NICPD in order to design and deliver the Teacher Centre manual and training.

Delegates were made fully aware of the strategic plans of the Department in relation to the improvement of teaching and learning country wide; details around the roles of both Provincial and District Teacher Development Institutes and Centres were fully explored as was the establishment of Professional Learning Communities – both physical and virtual.

SchoolNet SA has been working with ICT Resource Centres supported by the Vodacom Foundation for the past three year and we were grateful to Vodacom Foundation for covering the costs of SchoolNet SA developing materials for this training session; producing the materials and facilitating the five day workshop. We also look forward to the remaining component of this project which is to provide support and mentoring to the delegates and to visit selected Teacher Centres across all nine provinces to see the impact of the training first-hand.

Address by the national Minister for Basic Education



The Hon. Minister Ms A Motshekga



Delegates arriving for the address

On Sunday August 10th the Minister of Basic Education Ms Angie Motshekga MP addressed all delegates to the workshop. The Minister was clear in her message that teachers are central to the planned radical transformation of education that the Department is striving towards. The government is determined to advance economic empowerment and break the cycle of poverty. Furthermore she explained that centre managers need to be proficient

because their Teacher Centres were to be crucial to teacher training policy as outlined in the National Strategic Framework for Teacher Education and Development. The minister expressed gratitude to Vodacom for supporting this national education initiative and it was appropriate that Mr Tengimfene of Vodacom spoke next and confirmed their commitment to developments in the national teacher education process.

Design of the workshop and manual

The Teacher Centre Managers' Course addressed different aspects of national policy governing the administration of teacher centres. The programme also included a number of keynote presentations from DBE experts in their respective fields. The design of the course was focused on participants not only becoming familiar with the content and meaning of these policies but also with the teaching strategies that could be used in the teaching centres themselves particularly in the delivery of professional development courses for teachers. In this way participants could appreciate the advantages to learning brought about through the use of innovative teaching strategies rather than lecture format delivery.

Daily activities and teaching strategies

The theme for the week was, ***“Building functional teacher centres and competent centre managers to support quality learning outcomes”***. Each day had a sub-theme as outlined below. The five modules – one per day - consisted of the following content and teaching strategies.

Day 1: Teacher Centres in Context

Mr M Tengimfene from Vodacom started the day by addressing the delegates in the first plenary. Dr Kojana also took the opportunity to introduce the key role players in the implementation of the ISPFTED – members of the NICPD as well as Rabia Awasi from Vodacom and Shafika Isaacs from his directorate. Dr Mweli was invited to deliver a presentation on the current status of programmes and progress at the national DBE and proved to be a highly popular presenter.



Activities for Day 1 covered getting to know each other, sharing expectations, establishing

current programmes existing resources and then mapping the way ahead. Skills targeted were critical thinking, collaboration (both verbal and silent) and team work. Teaching strategies employed were Chalk/Talk, Brainstorm, silent reflection and Scavenger Hunt.

Day 2: contextualising norms and standards for Teacher Centres

Mr P Mnisi, Director of e-innovation at the national DBE opened the day with a presentation on the E-education White Paper and its implications for Teacher Centres. Towards the end of the day two members of the NICPD Kulula Manona and Phillip Dikgomo presented on the content and resources available for teachers from the national department.

Activities for Day 2 covered reflection on the moral purpose of centres, building a shared vision and debate around specified aspects of the Draft Norms and Standards for Teacher Centres. Skills targeted were collaboration on a small and very large scale, critical thinking and creativity. Strategies employed were Give One Get One, Facilitated discussion, Scaffolded vision building and a Gallery Walk.

The day concluded with a presentation by Dylan Busa from Mindset which included a live webinar. Further links and resources were provided by Dylan and added to the flash drive to be issued at the end of the week's workshop.



Day 3: Driving optimal use of your Teacher Centre

Mr H Mahomed from the Teacher Education Directorate at the national DBE delivered a comprehensive presentation on all aspects of the ISFTED and explained exactly how Teacher Centres perform an integral function within this policy.

Activities for Day 3 included a provocative debate on Leadership for Change led by Hlengiwe Mfeka, a Jigsaw activity led by Shafika Isaacs, Kulula Manona, Aaron Nkosi and Phillip Dikgomo, a presentation on requirements from Teacher Centres from Mr Nkosi with the climax of the day being a role play activity. Skills targeted were collaboration, information sharing and problem solving.

Module 4: Teacher Centres as Hubs of Professional Development

Two keynote speakers from the DBE started Day 4. The first speaker was Dr Simelane who spoke about how Teacher Centres would play a role in inclusive education. The second speaker was Mr Q Moloï who spoke about the role of teacher centres in assessment and more specifically in the implementation of ANAs and NSC.

Delegates worked on planning programmes for their centres. These were captured and WhatsApp'd to the facilitator group for recording.

Working with UkuFUNda was presented by Shafika Isaacs with a workshop by Andrew Rudge from MXit Reach. Ms Isaacs outlined the structure of ukuFUNda and how it would serve the various facets of the department of basic education. All delegates were assisted to register by the SchoolNet facilitators.

The penultimate plenary session was a TeachMeet. This strategy allows volunteers to step up to the podium and explain a great idea within a 3 minute time limit. Centre managers were asked to present ways in which their teacher centres either are or will develop professional learning communities. Presentations ranged from activities that had been undertaken at Algoa College and Amajuba Centres in the Eastern Cape to Innovation Days being run in the Free State.

The excitement of the TeachMeet was hard to follow but Josine Overdevest managed to present the last session of the day on the use of the Vodacom Digital Classroom.

Gala Dinner





The Gala Dinner was a dazzling occasion. Not only did every speaker capture the imagination of the audience but even the musical items as well as the MC, Dr Galane, were on top form, adding something special to the atmosphere. Vodacom and the DBE clearly demonstrated how well public private partnerships can work – no expense appeared to have been spared as the delegates were treated to a night to remember.

Deputy Minister Surty delivered a riveting and passionate speech in which his love for innovative teaching with technology was evident. Maya Makenjee, Vodacom Chief Office Corporate Affairs was also a popular speaker because she spoke about issues that were highly relevant to education and particularly to the Teacher Centres audience. The two guests of honour awarded prizes in the following categories: Twitter Bug (2 prizes) Digital Classroom Award, Best Teacher Centre Data Award, Best Teacher Centre Photographer Award, Best Teacher Centre Vision Award and the UkuFUNda Fundi award. Further awards could only be made on the next day – Friday, the final day of the workshop.

Day 5: Teacher Centres – Gearing up for Action

On the final workshop day delegates were to reconsider their Professional learning Networks that had been explored on day 3. By day 5 of the workshop there were not too many delegates who had not at least tried to sign up for Twitter. Megan Rademeyer from SchoolNet presented the background to Twitter and the reason why it has been the top educational tool worldwide for the past 5 years. Centre managers were shown how Twitter can be used to develop professional learning networks and for anywhere, anytime professional development. Once centre managers were briefed on the difference between Twitter handles and hashtags they were asked to continue using #DBEcentres in their tweets related to their teacher centres so that others would be able to see what they were doing.

Mr M Tengimfene of Vodacom Foundation and Mr TS Kojana of DBE gave their closing remarks. Both thanked the various people who had contributed to making the week of training such a success. Centre Managers were urged to return to their Teacher Centres to implement what they had learnt so that the training will achieve its aim of “Building

Functional Teacher Centres and Competent Centre Managers to Support Quality Learning and Teaching”.

Facilitation and Materials Development Team



Planning the weeks' worth of training, developing materials and having the materials professionally laid out and printed in under a month was a mammoth undertaking. SchoolNet SA was grateful for the support of Vodacom Foundation that sponsored the costs of developing the materials as well the support of Vodacom's Rabia Awasi who participated in the weekly planning meetings and who was always eager to assist. The members of the National Institute for Curriculum and Professional Development (NICPD): Kulula Manona, Shafika Isaacs, Dr A Nkosi and Mr Phillip Dikgomo were very much SchoolNet's partners in conceptualising and developing materials that we all could be proud of. Antionette Prophy and the team at Afrofusion put in long hours and huge effort to make sure that the learning materials and CD were presented in a professional and visually attractive manner.

Throughout the week, fourteen SchoolNet facilitators were always on hand to help participants through the activities; these facilitators worked flat out for 5 full days ensuring that the programme ran smoothly. The facilitation team included SchoolNet SA staff, a University of Johannesburg lecturer, two independent ICT trainers and a number of officials responsible for ICT coordination in various provinces who had sought permission to attend the training as part of their own professional development. A great deal of debriefing and planning for the following day took place behind the scenes. When in a plenary session and faced with issues of controversy, frustration or boredom we could all rely on Chief Director Rabotapi to restore calm and to allow common sense to prevail. He was the most expert and yet the most good-natured master of ceremonies and was certainly the most popular personality of the week. This could have had something to do with the excellent jokes he told while waiting for presenters to arrive.

Many delegates remarked that they felt part of a nationwide initiative simply because senior ranking officials not only addressed them in keynote speaker sessions during the course of the week but many of them were present throughout the full week. Chief Director, Dr Kojana in particular was noted for being present, available and approachable on any issue that arose.

Conclusion

The objectives of the workshop had been to familiarise delegates from Teacher Centres with the national policy documents that pertain to their roles and responsibilities. A further aim was to expose participants to a wide variety of teaching strategies and to ensure that they were equipped to manage their centres proficiently.

Overall it was clearly evident that delegates felt they had learnt a lot. Their tweets declared this! Facilitating sessions of the magnitude of 150 to 200 delegates is no mean feat. However that had not deterred the organising team from ambitiously attempting to demonstrate some of the more complex teaching strategies with the aim of achieving greater depth in such skills as critical thinking, collaboration and promoting creativity.

The SchoolNet team felt very proud when they were commended at the Gala Dinner for the way in which the event had been implemented. Although the time frames had been tight, and the workshop programme packed, it showed that excellent team work had resulted in the event being a resounding success.