



Teacher Professional Development kicks off in the Telkom Connected Schools Project in Ga-Rankuwa



All grade 8 teachers from Ruabohlale, Seageng, NM Ntsuene, MH Baloyi and Winterveldt High School attended a three-day ICT workshop hosted at Winterveldt High School. Teachers spent the first 3 days of their April holidays to learn basic ICT skills that could help teachers prepare lessons for teaching in classrooms that use various learning technologies.

The first day of training allowed the facilitators to split the groups of teachers according to their ICT skills level as this ensured more focussed activities and explanations. SchoolNet facilitators implemented the cognitive apprenticeship model which allowed teachers to work at their own pace and practice to master the skills learnt daily.

All 60 teachers also received a surprise as they were issued with a laptop, and a laptop bag for use at home and school for teaching and learning. Suffice to say all teachers were super excited as this allowed them to further practice their skills before the next day's session.

At the end of the second day of training, SchoolNet's Ms Mathapelo Sehume, interviewed three teachers from each of the groups to assess their progress at the workshops. The following comments are what they had to say:

Mr Mpho Ngobeni (Ruabohlale Secondary School) was in the intermediate skills group facilitated by Mr Klas Maluleke. He reported that liked how the project was introduced to them and teachers have responded positively to it because of the involvement from learners, parents, school management and Telkom Foundation. He further advised that all the Grade 8 classrooms have been renovated and there is a renewed sense of pride as learners walk

through the school grounds and have noted a more positive attitude towards their peers and teachers.

The teachers cannot wait to be a fully ICT school and this will be in place in the next three years with Telkom in partnership with the Gauteng Department of Education. Teachers have been given laptops and being shown how to maximise the use of the devices for planning and teaching. Mpho especially liked the training that they were going through because it focussed on what a teacher needs to know and the materials allow teachers to find information themselves and this will help them after the course as well.



After this workshop teachers will be guided at school to change their current teaching practice and implement what they have learnt. He feels strongly that this will excite learners and challenge them to grow and become independent thinkers.

Mr Ngobeni acknowledged that being able to fully integrate ICT in their classrooms will take some time however he remains positive that with the support and training that SchoolNet would be offering throughout the year, they will eventually be empowered to be innovative and their learners will be the benefactors.

Ms Irene Sebate (MH Baloyi) is a Setswana and Mathematics educator. She admitted that she is not a grade 8 teacher, however when she heard about the training she had to seize the opportunity. She believes that ICTs are the game changer in education and this type of workshop should be available for all teachers.

She reported that she has learnt skills on presenting multimedia, working on mark sheets using Excel and tracking other schedules required by teachers. Teaching and learning would



be more interactive, more fun and less of a burden and most importantly learners will gain additional skills that they will use beyond school.

Books can be heavy and if technology is used effectively learners can get their work done online, work uploaded onto Google drive and shared without learners having to carry their textbooks daily. What Ms Sebate likes most about this way of learning is that teachers will also be learning from their learners –being born before technology will no longer be an excuse because teachers are being skilled and with time they would get better and this will ultimately benefit learners.

Some people may feel that there is burden to learning new skills, however in the long run education must empower our learners for the world out of school and teachers cannot sit back and not be actively engaging with learners needs in the 21st century

Ms Sebate likes going against the norm she says that getting an education in old age can be a daunting experience but she says being part of the beginner class during this training has encouraged her to keep practicing.

Ms Sebate's final words were "I like ICT because it will help us solve some of our human resource issues and the competence issues that educators have particularly in teaching Mathematics – educators can use resources to plan for their lessons and have enough time to practice and with time teachers can teach their subjects more innovatively-we are too heavy on our learners with old methods –we must let the children learn as much as possible. Having ICT in the classroom and being able to use it effectively is like having a second educator at hand so there is no excuse for our learners to fail."

From the advanced class, **Mr Thabo Mhlongo from Seageng Secondary School** was interviewed. Thabo is a Grade 8 teacher who also teaches Mathematics and Science to Grade 10 and Grade 11.

Thabo reported that he found the training very useful because it did not just focus on ICT skills but more on how to integrate ICT in the classroom. Mr Mhlongo confirmed that he already had ICT skills and he is learning more skills because of the focus on integration in the classroom. The training is a refresher course for Mr Mhlongo and at the same time he is re-learning some Excel skills that he had long forgotten because he had not been using them. "Using the skills that I already knew and learning how to use them in the classroom is motivating."

Mr Mhlongo says that he will use what he has learnt, he will approach teaching and learning differently, have a positive attitude towards ICT. As teachers get excited, they feed this excitement to learners and a whole new cycle of motivation to do better is fostered at school.

He notes that technology is great however it will not take away the responsibility from teachers to facilitate teaching and learning and the sooner teachers get on board the better, technology can provide all the resources required for teaching and learning, however teachers must direct the learning and bridge the gaps between curriculum, pedagogy and technology. Not all information found online is accurate and it is the teachers' role to also show learners how to sift through information, summarise effectively without plagiarising and focus on what is relevant.



Teachers will always be key to teaching and learning, however they must be able to learn skills and incorporate tools that help learners learn better. Teaching and learning is dynamic and the current direction is to use ICTs in the classroom to address educational challenges and teachers must be able to change their classroom practice.

The recommendation from the advanced group is to have subject specific ICT integration training where focus can be on assisting teachers to design more interactive lessons and to help learners improve their academic performance.

SchoolNet with the schools and project partners will customise further integration training workshops that address the expressed needs of the schools.

Ms Mathapelo Sehume

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May 2017