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The alignment of SchoolNet SA courses to national policy frameworks

2 BACKGROUND

SchoolNet SA has been developing teacher professional development courses and implementation strategies since 1997. In the absence of national policy frameworks referring to technology¹ integration at the time SchoolNet SA developed its own set of teacher technology integration competencies which it used to align its coursework for multinational projects such as SCOPE, Thintana, Intel® Teach to the Future and Microsoft® Partners in Learning. SchoolNet SA developed *The Educators Network* in 2000 to host distance learning courses that it developed for the SCOPE and Thintana projects. These courses were later converted to an ACE qualification that was hosted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal until 2009.

This work influenced the *e-Education² White Paper* (2004). SchoolNet SA is one of the few teacher development agencies specifically mentioned in the White Paper and the contents of the White Paper were not foreign to its own goals, since the work of this NGO had influenced the content of the White Paper to some extent. SchoolNet SA was also influential in the final format of the *Guidelines for Teacher Training and Professional Development in ICT* (2007) which for the first time defined specific teacher competencies for technology integration.

Subsequently, the *Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025* (2011) endorsed the e-Education White Paper by stating that “e-Education considered a means towards improving teaching and learning” and “is also viewed as a tool that can improve education management in a variety of ways, for instance through the computerisation of routine administrative tasks”. SchoolNet SA had developed courses in partnership with Microsoft Partners in Learning as early as 2003 which addressed these sentiments in the most basic and effective way. Scenarios for teacher and school management contexts were developed in 3 courses named *ICT Skills for Teachers*, *ICT Skills for Principals* and *ICT Leadership for Education Managers*. All three of these courses formed the basic content in the ICT component for the Principals ACE which was developed in coordination with UNISA and the Department of Education in 2010. This worked aligned to SchoolNet SA’s strategic objectives at the time which included:

1. To be the thought leaders for ICTs in school education;
2. To empower and support departmental officials, schools, teachers and learners in the effective use of ICTs for teaching and learning;
3. To boost its reputation for the excellent standard of ICT professional development materials;
4. To grow excellence in training and project management;
5. To develop stronger support and liaison with schools and provincial education structures;

¹ “Technology” is defined as any form of electronic or battery operated device which will support teaching and learning through access to and display of information and learning resources, and support the communication of ideas in these contexts. A synonym is “ICT” (information and communications technology).

² “e-Education” is defined in the White Paper as the use of ICTs to access, analyse, evaluate, integrate, present and communicate information, create knowledge, enhance teaching and learning and allow learners and educators to function in a knowledge society.

6. To increase volumes of teachers effectively trained in and implementing ICT integration.³

In 2009 the UKZN ACE was adopted by the Commonwealth of Learning as a qualification known now as the Commonwealth of Learning Certificate for Teachers ICT Integration (known as CCTI) which has been implemented under SchoolNet's supervision in 6 Caribbean countries and is being considered by several African countries belong to the Commonwealth, notably Uganda.

3 NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORKS

The *Action Plan to 2014* identifies various ways in which learners and teachers can expect to benefit through e-Education.

For learners this promises:

- Exposure to the latest ICTs and how they operate;
- A greater variety of ways to learn what is in the curriculum;
- Access to a wide range of information through the internet;
- Learning through communication with learners around the world.⁴

For teachers this promises:

- Access to a wide variety of teaching materials;
- Easy access to professional development courses and modules;
- Tools that make the management of teaching easier;
- Membership of professional networks where ideas are shared.⁵

The *Action Plan to 2014* has 27 goals of which 5 were priority goals for the period up to 2014. One these priority goals which aligns to SchoolNet SA's objectives is Goal 16: *Improve the professionalism, teaching skills, subject knowledge and computer literacy of teachers throughout their entire careers.*

Government's response⁶ to this goal was to identify that:

- Training programmes should assist teachers with real classroom situations;
- Training be sensitive to the fact that different teachers deal with different challenges;
- Local and distance education programmes (referred to as the "e-Education training mode") be promoted (this was also specifically noted in the 2008 OECD review of South Africa's education system and the 2009 Medium Term Strategic Focus).
- New ways be found to stimulate the formation of local professional learning communities of practice (in support of the resolution from the 2009 Teacher Development Summit);
- SACE would implement the Continuing Teacher Professional Development management system which would endorse programmes which aligned to the strategic needs of teaching and learning programmes, one of which is goal 16 of the *Action Plan of 2014*. The *Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa* identified the need to establish The National Institute for Curriculum and Professional Development (NICPD) which

³ Strategic Review of SchoolNet SA (2011)

⁴ Action Plan to 2014 (p94)

⁵ Ibid (p94-95)

would bring together various stakeholder including NGOs such as SchoolNet SA to develop continuing professional development courses that are pedagogically sound, content rich, quality assured, and endorsed by SACE.⁷

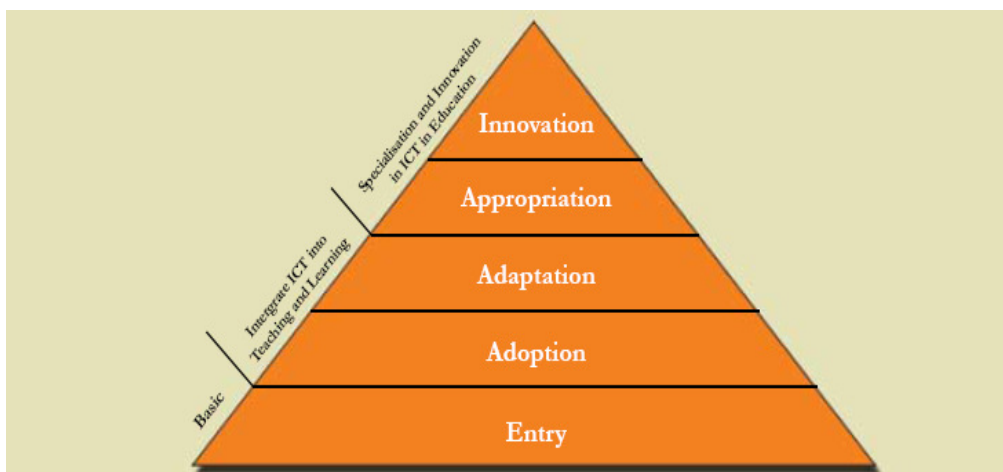
The *Guidelines for Teacher Training and Professional Development in ICT* (2007) identifies that teacher development should include three dimensions:

1. A pedagogical dimension which implies knowledge and understanding of the opportunities that ICT offers for teaching and learning in curriculum contexts;
2. A technical dimension, which implies an ability to select, use and support a range of ICT resources as appropriate to enhance personal and professional effectiveness;
3. A collaboration and networking dimension, which includes a critical understanding of the added value of learning networks and online communities of practice.

The teacher development framework in these Guidelines identifies 4 main elements of practice and 5 levels of competence. The main elements are:

1. ICT Professional Attitude
 - 1.1 Knowledge, skills, values and attitude to ICT
 - 1.2 Utilisation of ICT application programs
 - 1.3 Technical skills
 - 1.4 Accessing and using electronic information and communication resources
2. Integration of ICT into the Curriculum
 - 2.1 Information management
 - 2.2 Research
 - 2.3 Teaching and learning environment
 - 2.4 Assessment
3. Management
4. Innovation

The five levels are summarised in figure 1.



Source: *Guidelines for Teacher Training and Professional Development in ICT*

⁷ The *Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, 2011–2025* (p5)

4 ALIGNMENT OF SCHOOLNET COURSES TO FRAMEWORKS

4.1 EXPOSURE TO THE LATEST ICTS AND HOW THEY OPERATE

SchoolNet SA is an NGO that focuses on educator development in technology integration. All its courses are therefore focused on exposing educators (teachers and education managers) to the latest ICTs. SchoolNet technology integration courses do not confine users to computers, but can be accessed on all ICTs including tablets and smartphones (with few exceptions) and skills gained can be applied using any appropriate ICTs.

SchoolNet has always taken ICT literacy one step further than “how they operate”, believing that educators learn more effectively how to teach with ICT but integrating the “how they operate” with the “how to use technology resources in the classroom”. Courses which focus on scenarios and contexts of using ICT skills and resources in the school and classroom context include:

- Partners in Learning: ICT Skills for Teachers (and the principals’ equivalent)
- Partners in Learning: One Step Further
- Intel® Teach Getting Started
- Commonwealth of Learning: Technology Enriched Teaching

More recently SchoolNet has developed its own course, *A Journey with Tablets*, which focuses specifically on tablets and smartphones and has been a partner in the development of the *ICT4RED* teacher development course. SchoolNet has also been commissioned to develop the new Samsung School teacher development course.

4.2 A GREATER VARIETY OF WAYS TO LEARN WHAT IS IN THE CURRICULUM

SchoolNet has a range of courses that have a pedagogical focus. These include contexts for using technology to develop 21st Century learning skills and approaches to learning which are constructivist, such as project-based learning. While the target audience of courses is teachers and education managers, the aim of the courses is always to enhance teaching and learning in curriculum contexts. Educators are therefore exposed to a variety of courses that give access to curriculum resources in a number ways, including:

- Partners in Learning: One Step Further – basic digital research skills
- Partners in Learning: ICT Integration (WebQuests)s – a project-based approach
- Intel® Teach: Essentials – designing project-based units
- Intel® Essentials: a series of courses focusing on project-based approaches, 21st Century learning, thinking critically and collaboration in the classroom
- Commonwealth of Learning courses – 6 distance-based courses out of the programme of 9 courses focus on teaching with technology in and beyond the classroom

4.3 ACCESS TO A WIDE RANGE OF INFORMATION THROUGH THE INTERNET

All the courses that SchoolNet have developed which focus on pedagogy and education management draw content from online and hyperlink to online resources. Educators are encouraged how to find their own resources and to share resources with each other. As a result the majority of SchoolNet courses are

housed online and require Internet access for their full use, although offline, CD-based alternatives are available for communities with poor or no Internet connectivity.

Courses which focus specifically on finding, accessing and evaluating information on the Internet include:

- Partners in Learning: One Step Further
- Intel® Getting Started
- Commonwealth of Learning: Professional Development with Technology
- Commonwealth of Learning: Technology Enriched Teaching
- Commonwealth of Learning: Education in a Digital Society

4.4 LEARNING THROUGH COMMUNICATION WITH LEARNERS AROUND THE WORLD

SchoolNet is involved with or endorses several projects in which inter-classroom classroom is the key feature. These are:

- Schools Online (endorsed)
- Partners in Learning Network and the Microsoft Expert Educator programme (previously Innovative Education Forum)
- Adobe Youth Voices

In addition to this all the course which are pedagogically focused and include collaboration as a learning approach will by default require learners to communicate with others because SchoolNet's definition of collaboration is to engage in mutually beneficial activities while working towards a common product/gain. Courses which make specific recommendations for online global communication include:

- Commonwealth of Learning: Innovative Approaches to Learning with Technology
- Partners in Learning: ICT Integration (WebQuests)
- Microsoft® Expert Educator

4.5 ACCESS TO A WIDE VARIETY OF TEACHING MATERIALS

The nature of SchoolNet's work means that every course:

- is focused on teachers and/or education managers;
- is available in digital format;
- accesses and points to digital resources within the school and online.

In addition to these many courses also encourage educators to find educational resources online or develop their own resources, and to share these resources. These course include:

- Partners in Learning: ICT Skills for Teachers (and the principals' equivalent)
- Partners in Learning: One Step Further
- Intel® Teach: Getting Started
- A Journey with Tablets
- Partners in Learning: Peer Coaching
- Commonwealth of Learning: All courses

4.6 EASY ACCESS TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSES AND MODULES

All SchoolNet courses are accessible online and developed as open educational resources (OER). This is SchoolNet SA's core business as an NGO. SchoolNet has also developed a Commonwealth of Learning course on *Professional Development with Technology* which focuses helping educators to find and use global professional development courses and classroom resources.

4.7 TOOLS THAT MAKE THE MANAGEMENT OF TEACHING EASIER

The educational contexts of all courses focusing on ICT skills means that teachers and principals are developing documents and artefacts that could assist them in their classroom or office on the very next day. In addition to this SchoolNet has developed a number of courses that focus on education management, ICT and change leadership and school-based technology planning. These include:

- Partners in Learning: ICT Leadership for Education Managers
- Change Leadership
- Commonwealth of Learning: Planning Technology Integration
- Commonwealth of Learning: Technology Leadership in Schools
- Teacher Education Centre Managers

4.8 MEMBERSHIP OF PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS WHERE IDEAS ARE SHARED

The model that SchoolNet SA has used since its earliest distance education courses has been based on teachers communicating with each other, sharing ideas and experiences and giving feedback to each other. This was originally managed through email groups, but more recently through the use of blog forums and online learning management systems (LMS). Courses that are currently run on an LMS and include professional communities online are:

- Partners in Learning: Peer Coaching
- Learning Gains (X Box project)
- All the Commonwealth of Learning courses
- A Journey with Tablets
- All Partners in Learning courses link to the global Partners in Learning Network for educators.

SchoolNet also runs a free Premium Membership programme which is hosted on a blog and includes a series of free online webinars for educators hosted by SchoolNet's specially appointed professional development coordinator who recruits educators as presenters. This is essentially a professional learning network.

In addition to this several courses refer specifically to professional learning networks and require participants to join and/or develop such a network which caters to their needs and contexts. These courses include:

- A journey with Tablets
- Commonwealth of Learning: Professional Development with ICT

4.9 ENDORSEMENT BY THE SACE CONTINUING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM
 SchoolNet SA has submitted relevant courses and continues to submit courses for endorsement by SACE. At this stage the following courses have been endorsed:

- A Journey with Tablets (pts)
- Partners in Learning: ICT Skills for Teachers (pts)
- Partners in Learning: ICT Skills for Principals (pts)
- Partners in Learning: One Step Further (pts)
- Partners in Learning: ICT Integration (WebQuests) (pts)
- Partners in Learning: ICT Leadership for Education Managers (pts)
- Partners in Learning: Student Helpdesk (pts)
- Intel® Teach: Essentials (pts)
- Intel® Teach: Thinking with Technology (pts)
- CCTI: all 10 courses representing the previous UKZN ACE (pts each)

5 ALIGNMENT TO COMPETENCIES OF THE TEACHER TRAINING GUIDELINES

Table 1 refers to the teacher competencies outlined in the *Guidelines for Teacher Training and Professional Development in ICT*.

E										
D										
C										
B										
A										
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3	4

Table 1

Each element is numbered as follows:

1. ICT Professional Attitude
 - 1.1 Knowledge, skills, values and attitude to ICT
 - 1.2 Utilisation of ICT application programs
 - 1.3 Technical skills
 - 1.4 Accessing and using electronic information and communication resources
2. Integration of ICT into the Curriculum
 - 2.1 Information management
 - 2.2 Research
 - 2.3 Teaching and learning environment
 - 2.4 Assessment
3. Management
4. Innovation

Each level is labelled as follows:

- A – Entry
- B – Adoption
- C – Adaptation
- D – Appropriation
- E – Innovation

SchoolNet SA does not believe in separating courses for the Entry and Adoption level, preferring to teach all skills in the contexts of their adoption in the classroom.

Shaded cells represent the fact that at least one activity in the course aligns to the detail in the corresponding grid of the teacher competencies as outlined in the *Guidelines for Teacher Training and Professional Development in ICT*.

ICT SKILLS FOR TEACHERS & ICT SKILLS FOR PRINCIPALS

E										
D										
C										
B										
A										
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3	4

ONE STEP FURTHER

E										
D										
C										
B										
A										
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3	4

ICT INTEGRATION (WEBQUESTS)

E										
D										
C										
B										
A										
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3	4

PEER COACHING

E										
D										
C										
B										
A										
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3	4

ICT LEADERSHIP FOR EDUCATION MANAGERS

E										
D										
C										
B										
A										
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3	4

STUDENT HELPDESK

E										
D										
C										
B										
A										
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3	4

INTEL® TEACH ESSENTIALS

E										
D										
C										
B										
A										
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3	4

INTEL® TEACH THINKING WITH TECHNOLOGY

E										
D										
C										
B										
A										
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3	4

A JOURNEY WITH TABLETS

E										
D										
C										
B										
A										
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3	4

CHANGE LEADERSHIP

E										
D										
C										
B										
A										
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3	4

ICT4RED TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

E										
D										
C										
B										
A										
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3	4

MICROSOFT EXPERT EDUCATOR WORKSHOP

E										
D										
C										
B										
A										
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3	4