

ABSA Foundation and Sci-Bono

Bright Future ICT Skills Training in Thirteen Schools

Background to the project

The ABSA Foundation and Sci-Bono requested SchoolNet to facilitate the ICT Skills for Teachers Course in thirteen previously disadvantaged schools in Gauteng as part of the Bright Future project. The schools were selected by Sci-Bono and the bulk of the training was scheduled to take place during the June-July holidays with the intention of completing the course by September 2009. This report covers the completed 13 schools training.

Description of the course offered

ICT Skills for Teachers is a Microsoft Partners in learning course that aims to provide teachers with their initial computer confidence. The learning methodology is based on just-in-time learning and adult learning principles. It ensures that teachers learn all the necessary skills they require to use applications software such as word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, email and internet. However all learning takes place in the context of the teachers' own professional life needs, so for example through designing a mark-book teachers learn how to set up and work with spreadsheets.

Training Rollout

Listed below are the schools that have received their training so far through this project. Beneath this, the courses that were held at each school are then described in more detail.

School	Training Dates	Number of Participants	Trainer
Johannesburg Secondary School	29 June – 3 July 2009	23 (all present on all days)	Busisiwe Khanyile
Stanza Bopape High School	29 June – 3 July 2009	17 (one did not complete)	Motladi Makwela
Thembisa High School	29 June – 3 July 2009	25 (all present on all days)	Matodzi Netshikhudini
Phatudi Public School	6 – 10 July 2009	22 (all present on all days)	Matodzi Netshikhudini
Khomanani Primary School	13 – 17 July 2009	18 (all present on all days)	Daniel Maedi
Tsolofelo Ya-Afrika Secondary Progress High School Reasoma Secondary School	13 – 17 July 2009	9 (all present on all days)	Enoch Mankune
Memezelo Secondary School	13 – 17 July 2009	7 (one did not complete)	Saul Pila
Realogile Secondary School	19 – 21 July 2009 & 21-22	15 (all present on all days)	Victor Ngobeni

	August 2009		
Rutasetjhaba Secondary School	13 – 17 July 2009	26 (five did not complete)	Matodzi Netshikhudini
Buhle Busile Secondary School	10-11 July & 29-31 August 2009	22 (all present on all days)	Daniel Maedi/Matodzi
Prosperitas Secondary School	10-11 & 17-18 July 2009	11 (three did not complete)	Matodzi Netshikhudini
Randfontein High School	13-17 July 2009	14 (one did not complete)	Tshilidzi Tshiredo
D H Peta High School	15-16 August & 29-30 August 2009	12 (two did not complete)	Saul Pila

Johannesburg Secondary School

The trainer reported that the participants (teachers and school administrators) at this school were eager to get to the workshop each day despite the fact that the majority had no computer literacy skills prior to this training. The teachers were shown how to use the tip sheets, but their lack of confidence meant that most of them still asked the trainer for assistance. To try to help teachers overcome their fear of the computers, the trainer gave them a “guided tour” through Microsoft Word and Excel to point out the key features. When the trainer suggested that the teachers make regular use of the computer room to practice their ICT skills the teachers mentioned that school management did not allow teachers to use the school computer room. After a discussion about this the school management promised to make the computer lab available to teachers. The school catering committee organised lunch for participants.

Whilst at the start of the course the majority of participants described themselves as having no computer confidence or “struggling for confidence”, by the end most teachers reported that they were “gaining confidence”. The course was greatly appreciated, as shown by these comments:

“The programme was well planned and well done. Excellent work was done.”

“Very educative, gained a lot. Instructor very supportive and patient and good.”

Stanza Bopape High School

This venue was well suited to host training. It had computers in good working condition although Internet connectivity was not always reliable. The Gauteng online lab also restricted the use of Cd ROM drives and USB ports. The training materials were accessed online however this was not always possible due to unreliable access.

The participants were reported to be “very eager and accommodating”.

Catering was provided by the school and was always on time and well prepared.

In general the course as well received, as indicated for the following comments:

“Thanks for empowering me on ICT learning and other related computer skills I was introduced to and trained on”

“We still more days to improve our ICT, by we really enjoy the workshop”

“The training was excellent, I have gain a lot”

“The whole course was a great achievement, wish we could have more”

“Training was good and useful”

Thembisa High School

On the first day of training there was a delayed start caused by problems with installing the Partners in Learning CD and lots of litter in the computer room that had to be cleaned up. The trainer began the session by demonstrating how to use the materials using the basic Microsoft Word scenario “Design an Assessment Tool”. She also asked the teachers to introduce themselves and describe their expectations of the course. It was revealed that despite having had some training most teachers were not familiar with computers.

As the majority of teachers wanted a lot of guidance, the trainer demonstrated additional scenarios to them early on in the training session and also asked three teachers with more advanced computer skills to assist the beginners. Towards the end of the course the teachers were gaining confidence and they particularly enjoyed creating presentations using PowerPoint. The trainer reported that their presentations went well with teachers showcasing interesting topics and a variety of design templates.

On the final day the group moved to the Gauteng Online Lab which had internet access to work through the internet and email scenarios. There were some problems with online access yet most teachers were able to create email addresses for themselves.

Whilst the trainer described the participants as “good people” she complained that they often talked whilst she was trying to explain something. Some of the participants complained about the lack of catering and said that as they didn’t have their own personal computers they would be unable to practice their skills, most comments were positive, for example:

“Please attend also other school as they need training just like me.”

“Good work keep it up I have improve my presentation skills: Thank you.”

Phatudi Public School

This training proceeded smoothly in a clean lab with good internet access. There was no printer available and some participants mentioned that they would have liked to have been able to print out the documents they produced. Participants complained the venue was cold although to overcome this most teachers brought blankets from home. Another challenge was the lab layout which prevented all participants from being able to see work that was being projected. No catering was organised for these sessions – leading to the comment “Catering should be organize on training like this”.

The trainer described the participants as caring and loving characters who listened respectfully to the opinions of others. On the first day of training the facilitator demonstrated how to use the materials and worked carefully through the tip sheets, instructions, examples and outcomes. By the second day most

participants were able to switch between their own document and the tip sheets and they were also helping one another. Two of the highlights of this training session were creating their own email addresses and producing presentations using PowerPoint. The participants valued the course as is shown by these comments:

“It was an interesting course and very useful. I enjoyed. I wish there could be a follow up course.”

“Matodzi really empowered me a lot and she is the best when teaching the grown –up: Keep up the good work.”

Khomanani Primary School

At this school training took place in the Gauteng Online computer room. There were problems accessing the training materials on the network and CD ROMs although the trainer was able to overcome this by directing teachers to the online version of the Partners in Learning CD. A further complication arose when work that had been saved was lost but fortunately the trainer had saved a back-up of most of the documents that had been produced.



The trainer reported that “the trainees were a relatively cooperative group of educators that were so much willing to learn. Most of them will have been exposed to some orientation to the computers but due to lack of practice, did not remember most things they were trained on in the past thus we had to almost start them from scratch.” The trainees made a request for additional training and to have some follow-up sessions after they have had some time to work independently. Whilst this is a possibility – ideally we hope

that teachers will practice their skills independently so that they will not forget what they have learnt on this course.

In terms of catering the teachers had been informed that they should bring their own lunch from home although tea and coffee was made available.

In general the course as well received, as indicated from the following comments:

“Training was direct and relevant to the school curriculum”

“Training will make life really easy and the facilitators were very good.”

“Training will encourage me to do practice on my own.”

“My computer skills have drastically improved.”

Tsolofelo Ya-Afrika Secondary / Progress High School / Reasoma Secondary School

This training was conducted at the Sci-Bono computer lab which is equipped with 30 computers and has stable Internet connectivity.

All participants were eager from the start of the training and as the days progressed gained more confidence in their ability to use the computer applications as needed. Seeing that there were only nine participants they started working independently much sooner and required “very little and even no help at all”.

The participants did feel that time was not enough and would have enjoyed more practice time.

As arranged with participants the teachers were informed that catering was not provided and they needed to pack a lunch from home.

In general the course as well received, as indicated for the following comments:

“the course was so interesting, more time should be given so as to gain knowledge. MORE workshops please”

“the lecturer was superb, understandable and able t clearly explain and give practical examples and gave me confidence.”

Memezelo Secondary School

The training started off poorly with teachers waiting for the computer centre to be opened. In addition there were no arrangements made for toilets to be opened for participants. The training venue also had problems; the server was locked and there was no access to CD-ROMs at each station. As a result the trainer had to improvise and worked through scenarios using the projector with teachers working on their individual documents at their stations.

There was no catering provided for participants or the trainer.

In general the course as well received, as indicated for the following comments:



“the workshop was beneficial to enhance my teaching. To even search for more information in the Internet To be able to e-mail came as a rescue because now I can interact with the outside world.”

The workshop was eye opening. The workshop was invigorating. There should be more workshops.”

“Initially I knew nothing about computers. But now I am confident about it. I can work on my own. All in all I compliment the facilitator for his good work.”

Realogile Secondary School

At the start of this training session it was discovered that almost half the computers did not have all the necessary software (e.g. MS Publisher, MS Word and internet access). Luckily, the school computer lab technician was also in attendance, and he pledged to work through the night in order to get the situation sorted out. By the second day the school technician had done tremendous work to ensure that all computers had the necessary software. However due to inclement weather which caused poor reception on the i-burst system, the lab still did not have internet access.

The trainer reported that in general he had “a very enthusiastic group of educators with mixed abilities. At the start of the course about half the participants already possessed basic skills on the computer, and therefore this made the introduction a little smoother. Apparently most of the educators at the school did not have easy access to the computer resources prior to this course (allegedly for fear of breaking them), and therefore there was a sense of “liberation” amongst educators while doing this course. This made educators celebrate every little success throughout the course.” We were lucky to have the school IT Technician, Fungai, throughout the course, as he could attend to technical problems on the go.

Food and drinks were provided by the school and they were of good quality.

In general the course was well received, as indicated for the following comments:

“The course was excellent”

“The course was well, informative but came a bit late, on some issues now that we have SAMS which does the reports for us”

“The training was marvellous each and every teacher got the opportunity to work on his/her own, also at his/her pace independently”



Buhle Busile Secondary School

The venue presented problems on arrival as the password provided for the computers was not correct. The computer centre was also very dirty. There was no internet connection for the duration of the training and the computers kept losing the path to the Cd drives. The arrangement of the computers did not make it easy for projected work to be visible to all teachers which hampered the training.

On the first day, participants were asked to introduce themselves using the computer; many teachers displayed a lack of ability although teachers had been for prior training. By the second day teachers were showing more confidence in their ability to work with computers and were able to complete a variety of different scenarios. Four teachers were working independently with advanced scenarios and only required occasional assistance.

No catering was provided by the school.

In general the course was well received, as indicated from the following comments:

“Please help us on how to use the Internet.”

“the training was more interesting but time allocated was limited.”

Prosperitas Secondary School

This venue was well suited to host training. It had computers in good working condition with stable Internet access and sufficient space to move around the centre. It was however a Gauteng online lab which restricted the use of Cd ROM drives and USB ports. As a result the training materials were accessed online.

The participants were reported to be “very eager and accommodating”. This course was attended by 6 teachers and the remaining were support staff. Participants struggled at first but gained confidence over time.



There was no catering provided.

In general the course as well received, as indicated for the following comments:

“We need more sessions”

“we still need lots of practice.”

Randfontein High School

After initial confusion about the training venue, training began uninterrupted. Internet connectivity was reliable and there were sufficient working computers for all participants.

Most participants had basic ICT literacy and thus concentrated on the Intermediate and more advanced scenarios. Only one teacher struggled with the basic scenarios and therefore required a lot more assistance.

This teacher however was able to build confidence and complete a few intermediate scenarios.

Catering was provided from the second day of training and was done superbly.

In general the course as well received, as indicated for the following comments:

“Please do make a follow – up on the good job done so that this may not end up here in this course but continue even in future”

“I really appreciate your dedication and commitment in improving my knowledge on ICT. I am a better somebody from the knowledge I had after this interaction. Thank you!!!”

D H Peta High School

The CD Roms drives were not working and thus the CD had to be installed individually which was time consuming. An additional problem presented on the second day when the installed materials had to be

reinstalled as the Gauteng online lab was set to erase the memory on the machines at the end of the day. In addition the alarm on many occasions was set off for no apparent reason.

Many of the participants were able to cope with the basic scenarios and moved onto the Intermediate and more advanced scenarios. Only one teacher struggled with basic scenarios and lacked keyboard and even mouse skills. Generally teachers showed evidence of trying, however this was not apparent in the case of this teacher and as a result this teacher did not attend the follow up training.

Catering was provided by the school. Food was bought and staff cooked at the school. There was always enough for everybody. Tea and sandwiches were also provided.



In general the course was well received, as indicated for the following comments:

“The ICT training workshop was very helpful. It motivated me from today onwards, I should try and work at least daily if possible on the computer. My confidence was really boosted and I think I will be able to present a much more professional work to my colleagues.”

“I have learnt a lot. I will be able to make my own marksheet and class lists. I will also be able to type and save my tests for future.”

Photos

More photos can be accessed from the links below:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/motladidiale>

<http://picasaweb.google.com/schoolnetsa/SciBono13Schools2009?authkey=Gv1sRgCPOiwP33ouf9sgE#>

General Findings

The training sessions have in the main been enjoyed by teachers and they have been exposed to a wealth of new resources and gained new skills to improve their administrative tasks and lesson planning.

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

- The venues made provision for 25 participants to attend each training session. Out of a possible 325 participants only 221 teachers participated. To maximize the attendance it is advised that teachers should be invited at least 1 month in advance with supporting documentation explaining the type of training that is being offered. Attendance registers must be forwarded before the training can commence so that we can send out reminders to participants before the training.

- Not all venues have Internet connectivity and thus not all teachers were exposed to the email and Internet scenarios during the training. This is fast becoming a necessary skill as more and more teachers request training on this. Future training projects should make provision for alternative venues with Internet connectivity as this will allow teachers to gain skills in this area.
- More information about this project should be forwarded to principals as in many cases they did not understand what the course was about and who was funding it. As a result many training sessions were not taken seriously and had to be re-scheduled many times.
- Of the 13 schools, seven schools had 100% attendance which is indicative of the teachers' eagerness to learn more. These schools should therefore be given priority in further training interventions.
- Teachers were able to display skills by creating products that are useful in their teaching environments. For further proof of skill, it is recommended that teachers complete the Digital literacy curriculum which assesses teachers' proficiency in application programs and they can print their own certificates if they complete the curriculum successfully.

Conclusion

SchoolNet SA has been excited to be involved in this training venture and we would be interested to further assist by providing more depth to learning by implementing the ICT Skills for teachers' course to teachers that were not included in this initiative. It will also be possible to provide sustained training to the teachers that have completed ICT Skills by implementing our range of further courses. This would facilitate teachers being able to complete a learning pathway that will help them achieve the competences as stated in the national policy guidelines document for teacher training and professional development.¹

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¹ Department of Education (2007) *Guidelines for Professional Development and Teacher Training for ICT*