

**Report to Free State Department of Education
on Microsoft Partners in Learning Training
conducted in 2010**

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Introduction

A range of Microsoft Partners in Learning training has been conducted by SchoolNet SA in the Free State since the inception of the programme in 2005. In addition to funding some of this training, Microsoft continues to fund the development of the Partners in Learning courseware and capacity building for trainers which enables other organizations, corporate social investment initiatives and departments of education to offer Partners in Learning training to more schools than Microsoft could fund itself.

This report follows on from a previous report which outlined Partners in Learning Training which had been conducted in Free State in 2009. In this report training interventions that took place in 2010 are documented, as sponsored by the Free State Department of Education; corporate sponsors and Microsoft itself.

1 Partners in Learning training sponsored by the Free State Department of Education

1.1 *ICT Skills for Teachers in 20 Schools*

SchoolNet was contracted to facilitate the ICT Skills for Teachers course in 20 schools selected by the Department of Education. These schools are situated in different districts: Fezile Dabi, Motheo, Thabo Mofutsanyana Xhariep. Listed below is a brief description of each training session that took place in each district.

Fezile Dabi District

Thabang Secondary School

The training in this school was well received, the computers were in good condition and the necessary software was installed. Despite some of the educators who attended this training having no computer skills the teachers were positive about the training and very eager to learn. Although some of the educators were confused and struggled at the beginning, by the end of the course they were able to do some of the scenarios on their own. The participants were very excited to be exposed to computers and promised to implement what they have learnt in their everyday lives.



Phehellang Secondary School

There were enough computers at this school for everyone and training was delivered successfully. Some of the teachers in this school had never used computers before but they were paired with more skilled participants. With the help of their colleagues and the facilitator the novice users were able to attempt basic scenarios and during the follow up sessions they demonstrated greater confidence.

Tataiso Primary School

The majority of teachers at this school had minimal computer ICT experience. Nonetheless the participants responded positively to the training and felt that it was relevant to their needs. By the end of the training most of them expressed an interest in further training.

Boikemesetso Primary School

Due to lack of previous basic ICT experience these teachers struggled to find their way through the courseware but eventually managed to complete basic scenarios. By the end of the course the participants' computer skills had improved and the teachers had gained confidence in their ability to use the computers.

Motheo District

Qibing Secondary School

The lab at this school had 20 working computers with no connectivity. Out of 18 teachers who attended this training only one teacher had basic skills the rest could not even use a mouse. By the end of second day of training all participants were able to attempt basic scenarios on their own. During the follow up session the teachers discussed the problems that they had experienced when working on their own. The trainer was very impressed that they had practiced using the computers between sessions and was able to provide solutions to the issues they had encountered. The training continued with the participants displaying enthusiasm and cooperation.

Tjehebelopele Primary School

The majority of the teachers at this session had never used a computer before and they lacked confidence in the beginning. Despite this, they were very eager to learn which helped a lot. By the end of the training some of the teachers displayed great improvement and they helped those who were still struggling. The Deputy Principal committed himself to making sure that these teachers continue developing their skills.

Katiso Public School

The training venue had enough computers for everyone but unfortunately not all of them had the software required. Some computers did not have Microsoft Publisher; and others lacked Microsoft Word. As a result, some of the activities could not be completed which was a major setback in this school. Trainees had different levels of skills and those who had more skills did well to assist those that were struggling. Despite the challenges related to the software, the training was well received.

Lejweleputswa District

Setshabelo Public School

The training was well received at this school and the attendance was excellent. The trainer described the teachers as being "excited and very hungry for knowledge". By the end of the last session many of the participants were self sufficient and able to assist others.



This was a good sign as it proved that the teachers were comfortable with the training material and could continue with more advanced scenarios at their own pace.

Tlamanang Primary School

Teachers in this school were highly motivated and the majority of them had used a computer before. The computer lab had 25 computers but these were not networked and there was no connectivity. The teachers managed to complete some scenarios although some relied on the trainer for guidance. These teachers promised to visit the computer lab every day after this course because they realized that through continuous exposure to computers their skills would improve even more.

Hanover Intermediate School

None of the educators in this school had any computer skills and found working the mouse extremely difficult. The trainer focused on getting them used to navigating between the application in use, the scenario instructions and the tip sheets. By the end of the second day they their navigation skills had improved and as a result more scenarios could be completed. The attendance was poor during the follow up training but it is hoped that through more practice these teachers will gain more skills and experience.

Thabo MaFofutsanyana

Nexus Foundation School

The trainer began this course by explaining the role of the school and teacher in ICT and they found this very interesting. Most teachers were non-computer users and they had a fear of operating them. After practicing how to navigate through the materials, the participants were grouped to do some scenarios. On the second day they attempted doing scenarios individually and they gained confidence. By the end of the course many participants would look for solutions on their own and were proud that they could download programs without assistance.



Clubview Intermediate School

Most teachers at this school had basic ICT skills and good mouse skills. The participants understood the concept of windows, the opening and closing thereof and the navigating between open windows. Training went well at this school and everyone was happy to be part of it.

EE Monese Intermediate School

Five computers were not operational in this school and this had an impact on the amount of computers available to trainees. As a result, follow up was scheduled to take place at another school so that teachers would not have to share computers. All the trainees were very excited and positive about engaging in this type of training. The teachers were supportive of one other and interacted freely with the facilitator, making the environment pleasant and conducive to learning.

Manchea Primary School

This training venue had enough computers for all the participants including internet connectivity; however four computers did not have some of the required software. The trainees were teachers who were used to working together as a team and as a result the atmosphere of the training sessions was geared towards team work. During the follow up training the principal brought laptops to the school to ensure that teachers did not have to share computers. The workshop went extremely well because of the dedication and support shown by the management of the school.

Tsebong Olwazini Primary School



With the exception of three teachers who had some computer knowledge, the participants at this school were teachers who had never used a computer before. This created a great challenge as the trainees felt that knowing how to use computers was beyond their capabilities. The trainer encouraged the group to ask for assistance when they needed it. During the follow up session, teachers became more positive towards the training and their eagerness to improve their skills was very evident.

Xhariep District

Luckoff Combined School

The training venue had ten computers with no internet access and three computers that were not working at all. Initially four participants had to share computers, although the trainer was eventually able to fix the broken computers. Most of the participants were fairly well equipped in terms of ICT literacy skills. The teachers were able to grasp new skills quickly and managed to overcome the challenges they faced with the trainer's assistance. There is no doubt that with practice teachers from this group will become independent computer users.

Tswaraganang Combined School

Teachers at this school were ready to learn and teachers with more advanced computer skills were more than willing to help others where there was a need. There was no connectivity in the lab but arrangements were made to use the internet in one of the offices. This enabled teachers to experience the scenarios in the course that required internet access. Their desire to complete the online scenarios showed that these teachers are hungry for development and knowledge.

Bergmanshoogte Intermediate School

Trainees at this school were enthusiastic and willing to learn. There was no connectivity in this school and although trainees were interested in using the internet, unfortunately, this was not possible during the training.

Bronville Primary School

The workshop was a great success, with the majority of participants reporting how much they enjoyed being part of it. Some of the teachers had no prior computer experience but that did not stand in their way. They worked very hard and at the end they were much better at using ICT than they were before the training. The group enjoyed the opportunity to further develop their skills at their own pace. The attendance was not good during the follow up session because of the examinations and some teachers being on leave.

Nampo Combined School

Training for Nampo Combined is still in progress however their initial training was very successful and trainees are looking forward to attend follow up training.

Below are the comments from the evaluation forms:

“I enjoyed the workshop to the fullest; it was a great learning experience for me and has learned quite a lot. Keep it up”

“Interesting training I wish to be trained more”

“I think that such training must be on a regular basis conducted”

“The training session was good, the trainer knows his work as a result he made the training enjoyable to us. After the training I felt totally empowered and skilled”

“Time allocated seem too little if they can increase time”

“I would like this type of training to be an ongoing process”

“The lecturer is helpful, but we are still trying to find our feet but we are keen to learn”

“There should be more training of ICT as education is also taking a direction of IT”

“I gained a lot of skills in this workshop and I strongly believe next time I will learn more. I will revisit my CD when my tutor is not here”

“The workshop is valuable to all educators. I propose that all educators at school should undergo such training”

“At least I improved drastically as I was afraid to attend the workshop, thinking that to deal with computer programmes is very difficult”

“I really felt honored to be chosen to come to this wonderful workshop”

“I was confident because I knew the basic skills and I need to train further more to improve my knowledge broader”

“The workshop was very interesting and eye opening”

“I have learnt a lot during this workshop. I am now going to use computers at my school”

“After the follow up course I really feel confident and I am looking forward to use my computer skills in my teacher’s career”

“What an important and interesting course I attended. It really helped me a lot as I knew nothing about the computer, so now I can sit in front of the computer and do my school’s work. I would like to thank all the people who organized this course for us, it was very fruitful”

“I thank the department for giving us this opportunity of learning computer skills”

“The training was super and the trainer was so supportive”

“More practice is required to develop more skills with the help of the CD”

“I have gained a lot since the workshop and I can now do things I never dreamed of doing”

“The computer workshop was really informative, I hope for the best in my new world technology”

1.2 One Step Further and Help Desk Training

In terms of the Guidelines for Teacher Training and Professional Development in ICT (2007) teachers are meant to build on their ICT competences. Through this initiative, the Free State Department of Education aimed to help computer literate teachers who had received ICT skills for Teachers training to now progress to the Adoption phase. To facilitate this training more effectively and to build capacity within the province, this project began with a train the trainer session for the Microsoft Partners in Learning One Step Further course. Once capacity had been developed the project then continued with a number of training sessions in the province. This project also included developing capacity for running the Partners in Learning HelpDesk course – followed by a series of training sessions in various districts.

One Step Further – Training of Trainers

Fifteen trainer candidates, with good ICT literacy, were selected by the Department of Education to attend One Step Further facilitator training on 10 and 11 January 2010 at the E-Learning Computer training centre in Bloemfontein.

The training started with the Introduction, Gathering information and Simple Research activities. As the training progressed it became evident that a few participants had very weak pedagogical knowledge, whilst the course requires a sound understanding of teaching methodology. A lack of language skills appeared to be a further barrier to understanding the tasks at hand.

At the end of the facilitator training, the following new One Step Further trainers were appointed:

Janet Genis

Wietzke Du Preez

Donovan Baatjies

Enid Yiga

Sandra Van Der Walt

Sunia Dokter

Hein De Lange

Randall Pienaar

Whilst many of the potential trainers for this course were CAT teachers, with good computer skills, it is suggested that in future trainer candidates should be selected for not only their ICT Skills, but also for their pedagogical knowledge. A concerted effort should also be made to find Mathematics and Science teachers for facilitation of the subject modules.

Clustered One Step Further Training in Five Districts

Ten clusters of training were organised to accommodate teachers from a range of schools in two training sessions in each of the five education districts. In addition to giving teachers an opportunity to complete the One Step Further course these training sessions gave the newly appointed trainers the opportunity to practice their facilitation skills.

Free State Provincial Government Office (11-12 February 2010)

Although 16 participants were invited, only 12 attended training. All participants were ICT literate and were familiar with the internet. The activities in the Maths and Science modules were very useful to participants and they worked through equation editor and graphing equations. Teachers were also able to find subject resources and evaluate their use.

Boitjhorisong Resource Centre (19-20 February 2010)

The venue was neat and air conditioned with sufficient computers for all participants. Connectivity was stable and both Encarta and One Note were pre-loaded. Some participants were not computer literate but remained positive despite this challenge. It was wonderful to note that participants who were computer literate were eager to assist those in need. Eighteen participants were present and the trainer worked through scenarios with participants. Teachers were also paired in some instances to ensure that those that were struggling were able to understand what was required of them.

WilgeRivier High (19-20 February 2010)

Although this venue had 50 computers, Internet was only available through the teacher's computer. The trainer had to first load the One Note software onto all computers before the training could start. Most participants were computer literate, however some primary school teachers experienced difficulties and the trainer worked through activities with them at their own pace. There were 24 teachers present at the training. Teachers reportedly found it easy to download information and to use the search facilities of both Encarta and the Internet. Teachers expressed a preference for Encarta as the information was presented in an easy to understand format.

Calculus School (27-28 February 2010)

This venue proved somewhat problematic as power cuts were experienced, some computers were not functioning and there was no air conditioning. The training was then moved to the CR Swart Building and this significantly helped the situation. There were 11 participants present and of these four teachers were not computer literate. All teachers responded well to the course, however many could not understand the language used in the materials. The maths and science modules proved especially useful for teachers.

Lejweleputswa Education Resource Centre (5-6 March 2010)

This centre had a well equipped computer laboratory and, with the exception of two teachers, all participants had previous experience of the ICT Skills for Teachers course. The gathering activity proved very exciting for teachers. Teachers admitted that they did not sufficiently inform learners about the importance of bias, accuracy and credibility of information sources, but would do so in future as a result of this course.



Free State DoE Headquarters (06-07 March 2010)

There were 19 participants including two primary school teachers at this session. Teachers were engaged by all the activities and eagerly participated in the information gathering tasks. Planning learning objects proved somewhat difficult because teachers could not understand the purpose of using learning objects.

Free State DoE Headquarters (13 & 14 March 2010)

This venue was perfect as there was stable connectivity and all the necessary software was loaded. There were 13 participants at this session and of these two were not computer literate. Some participants indicated that they had never used the Internet before and that as a result of this training session they had been exposed to the possibilities that exist for sourcing and developing learning materials using the Internet.



Welkom Education Resource Centre (23-23 April 2010)

All computers at this venue were in working order with the One Note and Encarta software pre-loaded as well as stable connectivity. There were ten participants, including a Maths teacher, a Science teacher and teachers of Language and Arts & Culture. Computer skills were somewhat lacking amongst this group, but this improved significantly by the last training day.

Castle Bridge & Joe Solomon Primary (23-24 April 2010)

The venue was well equipped and had stable internet connectivity. There were fourteen teachers present and although they lacked confidence using ICTs they were soon able to gain confidence through interactions around the Simple Research activity. Most teachers were from the Foundation Phase and they experienced some difficulty linking the course content to their teaching experiences.

Dr Blok Senior Secondary School (6-7 August 2010)

This venue proved to be ideal with the appropriate software pre-loaded and stable internet connectivity. There were sixteen participants, including two primary school teachers. Teachers attending this training were reportedly very dedicated and chose to work later on the first day in order to complete the gathering information activity. Teachers experienced some difficulty producing learner samples during the simple research activity. This exercise proved to be thought provoking and teachers felt that they would henceforth be more confident working with research project. They also indicated that as a result of this course “they understand the why and how to critically evaluate information much better”.



HelpDesk – Training of Trainers

The HelpDesk train the trainer session was held in Bloemfontein at the Motheo ERC from 15-17 February 2010. There were 18 participants, who were carefully selected according to their technical know-how. The training was well received and participants worked through the training manual.

Of those who participated in the train the trainer course, the following people were deemed competent to facilitate the HelpDesk course:

Wietske Du Preez
Enid Yiga
Randall Pienaar

Sandra Van Der Walt
Hein De Lange
Tyran Ferndale

Thabo Naledi Molelekoa
Janet Genis

Clustered Help Desk Training in Five Districts

There were 5 clustered workshops held in the Free State i.e. one per district. These courses had the intention of empowering teachers and learners with technical skills to solve basic hardware and software problems in their school computer rooms. The training also enabled the newly appointed trainers to practice their facilitation skills.



Motheo ERC (13- 14 & 19-21 February 2010)

One teacher and four learners from each of the following schools participated in this training:

Heatherdale
Dr Blok

Lere la Thuto
Vulamasango

This training was reportedly very successful with learners thoroughly enjoying working with computers and taking them apart.



Xhariep (5-7 & 12-14 March 2010)

There were 17 participants present at this training from the following schools:

Pellisier
Bloemfont
ein South

Petunia
Setjhaba Se Maketse

The schools were able to discuss challenges at their schools and solutions to these issues were discussed. Learner particularly enjoyed working practically with computer hardware and software.

Welkom ERC (5-7 & 12-13 March 2010)

There were 41 teachers and learners present at this training. Despite a full house, participants were very excited and eager to learn how to manage technical solutions. Learners once again particularly enjoyed the hands-on activity of re-building computer CPUs.

Sasolburg High School (19-21 & 26-27 February 2010)

There were 31 participants at this training. The first day of training proved somewhat challenging as there was no teacher from the host school present at the training making it difficult for the trainer to access the network without a password and login



information. The training was subsequently moved to Boitjhorisong Resource Centre. Teachers attended training with mostly grade 10 learners. This proved challenging for the trainer who had to explain computer terminology at great length to learners who had not started CAT/ IT lessons yet.

Tshiya ERC (13-14 & 19-21 February 2010)



This training was held at Tshiya for a cluster of four schools in the area. Only 10 teachers and learners attended from these schools. The poor attendance could be attributed to training being scheduled prior to SchoolNet formally appointing trainers. As it happened, the person who was originally scheduled to facilitate this session was not appointed and because of this some of the schools who were invited to the session may have assumed that the training had been cancelled.

1.3 Free State Department of Education - Current projects

In addition to the two projects that have been completed, SchoolNet SA has been commissioned by the Free State Department of Education to offer the following Microsoft Partners in Learning courses. This training is currently underway and will be completed by mid-2011.

- ICT Skills for Teachers – 30 Schools project which began in 2010 and is due to finish at the end of March 2011.
- One Step Further (10 clusters - two per district)
- Help Desk (10 clusters- two per district)
- WebQuests (5 clusters – one per district)
- Leadership (5 clusters- one per district)

2 Partners in Learning training sponsored by corporate sponsors

2.1 Multichoice Corporate Social Investment – Training in three Free State Schools

Multichoice has equipped three previously disadvantaged high schools in the Free State with multimedia laboratories. To help ensure that teachers will use the equipment to develop their own educational resources each of the following schools will be trained in the One Step Further course. These training sessions have been scheduled to take place during the first term of 2011 at the following schools:

- Tsoeletso High School - Bloemfontein
- The Beacon Secondary School - Phuthaditjaba
- Barnard Molokoane High School - Parys

3 Partners in Learning Training Sponsored by Microsoft

3.1 Peer Coaching: Bloemfontein Cluster

The aim of the Peer Coaching Programme is to train teachers to be able to mentor their colleagues towards adopting educationally relevant ICT methodology thereby contributing to the transformation of teaching and learning in the schools. During the past three years, Free State has had a cluster of Peer Coaches every year who have developed Peer Coaching skills over the course of the nine month long programme. Our experience is that this programme is the key to providing the ongoing support necessary to sustain teachers' motivation and confidence in their use of ICTs through developing multiple "ICT champions" who know how to integrate ICT to enhance teaching and learning. The programme introduces teachers to a structured method of sharing ideas about



new ways of teaching with ICT integration. The materials focus on good communication skills and resources to support the dialogue between peers.

In 2010, Microsoft sponsored the Bloemfontein Peer Coaching cluster which included 21 participants from the following schools as well as a two student from the University of Free State and a participant from the Lesotho School Technology Innovation Centre:

Eunice Girls

Heatherdale

Castle Bridge

Dr Blok

Marang Intermediate

Tintinkieland

Atlehang Secondary

Joe Solomon Primary

Roseview Primary

Lenyora La Thuto

Mamoeketsi Primary

Phethahatso Primary

Pasaite Primary

This group of participants was more computer literate than any of the previous Peer Coaching groups in the Free State. This enabled a better working environment and a group that could concentrate on the programme objectives. Although computer literate, not all teachers in the group possessed email addresses. The Partners in Learning Network provided another challenge as initially it was difficult to get the teachers registered and to register multiple teachers from one computer.



Only 19 teachers attend session two and three however in sessions four and five the group increased to 24 participants as the Peer Coaches were joined by Lesotho Innovative Teachers who visited for the session. This visit provided a great opportunity for teachers to share ideas and experiences of teaching using ICTs in two different countries. As a result the Bloemfontein teachers decided they wanted to visit Lesotho and the Lesotho teachers were eager for the group to come to Lesotho to tell their colleagues about Peer Coaching.

Session 6 was held on Saturday, 16 October 2010 and in a first for the Peer Coaching programme it involved a visit to another country – a trip across the border into Lesotho! Nineteen teachers left Bloemfontein at 6 am for Lesotho, many with their first passport in hand! The bus was loaded with 30 laptops, lunch packs, a data projector, white screen and all other training equipment.

Groups with at least one Bloemfontein and two Lesotho teachers were formed. The focus was to give the Bloemfontein Peer Coach teachers the opportunity to put their coaching skills into practice and they were more than willing to do so. The basic Peer Coaching principles were shared and Bloemfontein teachers had the opportunity to share their reflections of the value of Peer Coaching for their schools with a wider audience. Various coaching roadblocks were highlighted and possible solutions were discussed. There was no internet access available and therefore all discussion took place face-to-face.



Teachers used both the resources on the Peer Coaching CD and the PIL Learning Suite CD to identify resources that match the curriculum focus of staff. Where applicable they created samples to be shared with the other teachers attending. While presenting their sample lesson ideas, teachers practiced their active listening, paraphrasing, and questioning skills to reflect. Teachers again enjoyed the power of the Wows and Wonders protocol.



On Saturday 13 November the Bloemfontein Peer Coaches left again at 6am for Lesotho – this time accompanied by James Bernard – the Worldwide Director of the Partners in Learning programme. This time the training took place at St Barnabas High School about 50 km outside Maseru. During this workshop, groups of teachers used the Partners in Learning Suite CD to learning new programmes and develop lesson ideas. It was seen as valuable for both the Peer Coach teachers from Bloemfontein and the Lesotho teachers.

Session 7 & 8 have not been scheduled yet but should be completed in the first term of 2011.

The following comments from the Peer Coaching teachers illustrate the value of this programme:

- What a great treat to have the Lesotho teachers here! I loved hearing their stories
- Thank you once again for all the hooks to keep us coming back
- Slowly I gain confidence to share what I have learned
- I cannot explain how much I have learned – thank you
- I love coming to Peer Coach sessions – even till 9 on a Friday night!
- I hope I can make a difference in my school
- I wish I had internet at school to access the partnersinlearningnetwork... HELP!

- Mmm food mmm computers mmm other peer coaches mmm Saretjie
- Can't wait to use my changed lesson
- I now realize that there will always be challenges with peer coaching – I should not avoid them but use them – I should not wait for the perfect moment to coach another teacher.
- I am learning to act creatively in the way I help teachers in my school.
- Peer coaching is contagious sharing
- A little bit of coaching in my school can make a big difference!
- Great job done by the facilitator.
- Thank you for your effort to make this training a time to remember.
- An outstanding and worthwhile experience. I feel like a “rich and resourceful” woman after these two sessions! Thank You!!!

3.2 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. Free State teachers have always done well in this event, and 2010 was no exception.

Rae Gagiano of Eunice High School won the Educators' Choice award for her “Paying it Forward” project. Through this project, learners from the Paying/Playing it Forward club attended workshops to learn new skills and then put these skills to work by doing something worthwhile for the community. Projects included creating books for abandoned babies and creating movies for terminally ill orphans. Using WikiSpaces learners then shared their progress and thoughts with learners in Nigeria.



Sunia Dokter (Dr Blok High School), Shireen Persens (Heatherdale High School), Ngaka Ralekoala (St Bernard's High School) and Lehentse Seekoei (Lereko Secondary School) collaborated to produce a project entitled “Children who care”. Through this project, Learners from participating schools received training in ethics and research methodology and then conducted research in their local community to determine the needs of vulnerable children. Through this project, learners were given the opportunity to collaborate with

other schools, the University of the Free State as well as experts in the field of Social Action research from the De Montford University in the United Kingdom via the Internet.

This project won the Innovation in Collaboration prize at the South African Innovative Teachers Forum and was the runner up at the Pan African Innovative Education Forum held in Mombasa, Kenya. This achievement led to this group representing South Africa at the Microsoft Worldwide Innovative Education Forum in Cape Town in October 2010.

What is especially gratifying is that all of the winning Innovative Teachers from the Free State have participated in one or more Microsoft Partners in Learning course including Peer Coaching, One Step Further training and/or the Innovation Workshop. This shows that over time, talented teachers are being nurtured through the Partners in Learning programme and encouraged to take their integration of ICTs in the classroom to new levels.

3.3 Innovative Schools: Localisation and pilot workshops

ICTISE has collaborated with Free State Department of Education (Curriculum) and Microsoft Partners in Learning to identify five schools to be part of a five year program to support school leadership, teacher professional development and to improve the quality of teaching and learning. By providing ongoing support, regular visits and training to these schools, the hope is to see a sustainable improvement in the development of school leadership and staff, leading to a gradual improvement of the Grade 12 Exams results of the next 5 years. The five schools selected are:

- Vulamasongo
- Moemedi
- Kaelang
- CommTech
- Kopanong

One of the key programmes to support these schools is the Innovative Schools programme that forms part of a worldwide Microsoft Partners in Learning Programme. Implementing the Innovative Schools toolkit in these five schools will be done as a pilot study for Microsoft South Africa. This project allows for the localisation of content and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the program on local, previously disadvantaged schools. The hope is that once this program has been localised, it could be implemented across the broader South African School Spectrum.

This project began in February 2010 with the selection of the schools and a meeting with the principals and SMTs to discuss the program and the schools' possible participation. The program was then launched in August 2010 and two workshops have taken place since then. A further eight workshops will take place before the end of 2011.

This program has had a number of challenges including three of the five schools changing principals in the past year. The content of the workshops as offered on the Innovative Schools website has also been revised which led to changes being required in the localized version. Communication has also been problematic as one of the participating schools does not have a telephone or fax facility and can only be reached by visiting the school.

Despite these challenges, an average of 38 people have attended each workshop and the following participant feedback indicates the value of the training:



“I have never seen my teachers enjoy a workshop so much – I think it is because it is so relevant”

“Not one of the SMT is allowed to miss any session”

“We are ready to make things work at our school. We feel prepared”

“We now have plans to involved the parents more”

“the best workshop I have every attended”

Conclusion and Recommendations

SchoolNet SA is proud of the training that we have offered to teachers in Free State and believe that we have helped to empower teachers to begin to use ICT effectively in education. We are grateful to Microsoft for their continued commitment to enhancing the training materials and developing capacity in the province. It is this investment that enables the DoE and other sponsors to be able to offer quality training more affordably to a larger number of schools. Our hope is that we will be able to continue to offer training to more teachers at more schools in this province and that we will be able to go back to schools where we have already offered some training to continue to develop skills further. We look forward to working with the Department of Education, Microsoft and other stakeholders to continue to offer professional development opportunities in Free State.

Megan Rademeyer

Programmes Manager

SchoolNet SA – February 2011