

**Report to Northern Cape Department of Education
on Microsoft Partners in Learning Training
conducted from 2007 - 2011**

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Introduction

A range of Microsoft Partners in Learning training has been conducted by SchoolNet SA in the Northern Cape 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 describes the Microsoft Partners in Learning training which had been conducted in Northern Cape from 2007 until the present as sponsored by Microsoft and Multichoice Foundation. Other training initiatives may have taken place in the province, organized by the Northern Cape Provincial Department of Education using the Microsoft Partners in Learning courseware, but if this is the case these training sessions were not organized through SchoolNet SA or reported on to SchoolNet SA and thus they are not included in this report.

1 Partners in Learning training sponsored by corporate sponsors

1.1 Multichoice: One Step Further Training

Multichoice has equipped a number of top performing previously disadvantaged high schools with multimedia laboratories consisting of a fully equipped and networked computer laboratory as well as access to a bouquet of educational DStv channels. To ensure that this investment is used by teachers at these schools they have also agreed to sponsor training on how to use the DStv content in teaching as well as a course on ICT integration.

Through this project, SchoolNet SA was commissioned to offer the One Step Further course to teachers from two schools in the Northern Cape, namely, Galaletsang Secondary and Kgomotso Secondary. Each of these training sessions lasted for two and a half days and took place in February 2011. The computer rooms at both schools were very similar, both having been recently equipped through the Multichoice sponsorship. Each computer had 30 working computers and Encarta 2009 had been installed, however neither of the computer rooms had access to the internet. Both computer rooms had air conditioners, but only Galaletsang Secondary had a data projector.



At both schools, the course followed a similar structure. On the first day the trainer began by asking the teachers to introduce themselves and to state their expectations of the course. As the teachers had not heard of One Note before, the trainer then divided them into groups and began orientating them to this application as well as its possible benefits and uses for teachers and learners. The trainer then explained that the course would help teachers to develop a simple research project and

went through the course navigation. The groups particularly enjoyed the learning styles content and had a debate about learning behaviors. The first day then ended with a task around information gathering.

The second training day began with reviewing the gathering activities and linking these to the steps for developing a simple research process. The trainer asked participants to briefly share a research question that they gave to their learners and this gave him an opportunity to assess the teachers' knowledge of the following four aspects of research:

- Learners being challenged with task or question
- Gathering activities
- Processing that takes place
- Conclusions shared



The rest of the day was spent with each teacher developing a simple research project.

By the third day of training the participants began to understand exactly what was required of them and in some cases teachers changed their topics as they could not find relevant support material from Encarta and the Internet was not available. Although completing the research process was not easy for some, by the end of the session all the teachers understood what was required for this type of task and most had created a resource that they could use with their learners.



At Galaletsang Secondary the trainer reported that “all educators enjoyed the course with the exception of one who only attended a day”. This teacher claimed to be bored; however the trainer reported that out of the group he had the weakest computer skills. The trainer reported that on the whole the group displayed good computer skills, with many being able to complete advanced scenarios using Excel. He further reported that both the CAT and IT teacher were very helpful towards their colleagues during the training, as was the principal who was ICT literate.

Prior to the One Step Further course being run at Kgomotso Secondary, all educators had attended the ‘Intel Getting Started’ course which helped teachers to improve their computer literacy. Although the teachers in this group were not as skilled in using computers as the Galaletsang team, the trainer reported that they displayed a positive attitude towards the course and that they were cooperative and time conscious. He also noted that the deputy principal was present and helpful for the entire duration of the course.

The following comments from the participant feedback forms indicate that the course was well received at both schools:

“The course was fruitful and will be able to use it in my class. I appreciate the good work that you are doing to us”

“We need more such courses”

“Highly recommended for all educators”



2 Partners in Learning Training Sponsored by Microsoft

2.1 Northern Cape Capacity Building

Prior to 2007, the Northern Cape had great success in rolling out ICT training to teachers, most notably through the SCOPE project funded by the Finnish Government. More recently however very little Partners in Learning training has taken place in the province and the pool of suitable trainers has diminished. In December 2008 Microsoft agreed to sponsor the training of additional trainers which, it was hoped, would enable a more cost effective rollout of future training in the province. This project would have seen the participants attend a two day ICT skills for Principals course followed by ICT leadership for Education Managers. Sufficiently suitable candidates would then have been trained to be trainers in the ICT leadership for Education Managers course. Unfortunately this training initiative was largely unsuccessful as is described below.

The training was held at the teachers centre in Kimberly in an ordinary classroom with participants using laptops. The participants reflected that they were not informed of this training in advance by the Department of Education and during the training some participants were called out of training to complete other work. Still other participants only joined in the training at lunch time and left shortly thereafter. The five participants who fully attended the course were at various skill levels which further hampered the progress of the proposed course. As a result of these various factors, the training was called off early as the small group and limited skills meant that it was unlikely that any of those present would be able to eventually facilitate the Partners in Learning courses.

The trainer reported that the participants who did attend the whole course were hardworking and able to work through the materials competently. Participants requested that further scenarios be developed to assist them in their job responsibilities. Some of these included learning how to: Type reports; Find LTSM on the Internet; Create exemplars of tasks; Develop learning programmes; Budget; Summarise data; Lesson planning and Workshop planning. Although some of these scenarios are covered in the ICT Skills for Teachers course, it should be noted that some of the suggested scenarios do not rely on the use of ICT and are instead job skills that subject advisors and department officials should either possess or develop through other professional development (not a course on ICT Skills).

The general feedback from participants was that the course was useful, however in order to ensure that full advantage is taken of the courses that are implemented in the Northern Cape, the Northern Cape Department of Education was advised that:

- Department officials and subject advisors should first be exposed to courses as participants before attending a train the trainer course.
- Department officials should ideally complete the full Partners in Learning bouquet of courses to develop their own skills and to become aware of the courses available.
- A needs analysis should be conducted to assess exactly what skills are needed to ensure that Department officials function at full capacity within the province.

- The Department of Education use funding within its structures to provide basic ICT Skills for its officials before embarking on more involved courses; this will ensure success on a larger scale and equip the province with trainers that are able to grow teachers and thus learners within the province.

2.2 Carnarvon High School – ICT Skills for Teachers

In 2008 it was decided that instead of offering only one Partners in Learning course to a school it would be preferable to offer selected schools the full bouquet of Partners in Learning courses – thereby building a depth of capacity and fully demonstrating how the courses collectively form a learning pathway. Nonetheless, certain schools were still selected to receive individual Partners in Learning courses for a range of reasons and one of the beneficiaries of such a course was Carnarvon High School in the Northern Cape.

As part of a larger project being run by the Department of Science and Technology, Microsoft was asked to provide training for teachers at Carnarvon High School. A total of 19 teachers from this school participated in the ICT Skills for Teachers course between July – August 2009.

Training began with the trainer demonstrating how to use the materials by going through one scenario. Teachers were then encouraged to complete a scenario (or two or three) that appealed to them. As some of the teachers in the group had good computer skills they were able to help others. As there was no internet connectivity the teachers could not complete the email scenario, although the trainer did show them how to write an email.

The trainer remarked that “The course is well designed for intermediate computer users and ones that are learning the basics”. She hoped that teachers at Carnarvon, especially those with more advanced computer skills will have an opportunity to complete a course such as WebQuests where they will have an opportunity to plan a lesson that uses 21st Century Skills.

2.3 ICT Capacity Building for College Professionals

One of the skills development objectives of the ISETT SETA is to “capacitate and skill competent FET college personnel capable of delivering requisite ICT skills for South Africa”. In 2007, Microsoft embarked on a project to develop the ICT capacity of college professionals and the following two Northern Cape FET colleges benefited from each receiving the ICT Skills for Teachers course:

- Northern Cape Urban FET College
- Northern Cape Rural FET College (Upington College)

Despite battling to arrange dates for training, trainee reports indicated that the courses were successful as is indicated by these extracts:

“There were things that I didn’t know I could do but the scenario helped me a lot. I learned a lot. The trainer was so helpful she had time for every one she knew how to accommodate everyone. The pace was excellent.”

“The course was well structured and catered for educators with varying abilities. Educators were able to work independently, at their own pace and do activities that were relevant to their needs and interests. The CD is well designed and will be very useful.”

Conclusion and Recommendations

SchoolNet SA is proud of the training that we have offered to teachers in the Northern Cape 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 Northern Cape.

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