

600 Teachers throng to ICT in the Classroom Conference



The Deputy Minister of Education, Rt Hon. Enver Surty



A Tribute to Mandela from the children of Bloemfontein



Shafika Isaacs, Chairperson of SchoolNet SA



Baldev Singh, Imagine Education, Bristol, UK

THE OPENING SESSION

The vast auditorium at the University of the Free State campus in Bloemfontein was almost filled to capacity on the first morning of the national, **'ICT in the Classroom'** conference hosted by SchoolNet South Africa from 2 – 4 July 2013. Six hundred delegates from around the country attended the conference, including educators, provincial and national educational department officials, sponsors, as well as representatives from other development and training organizations.

Delegates were privileged to receive an opening keynote address from Baldev Singh from Imagine Education in Bristol, England. This keynote focused on how we live in exciting times when technology trends are impacting the world, global communities, the society we live in, our education systems and our personal lives. Baldev illustrated how changes in technology have created new and exciting possibilities and how the world view through the eyes of young people is changing as global citizenship and international learning starts to shape many curriculum structures around the world.



A beautiful tribute to Nelson Mandela was made by a group of primary school learners from Bloemfontein, orchestrated by Saretjie Musgrave from the University of the Free State.

The conference has been a premier event for teachers who are passionate about ICT in education for the past fifteen years and has been hosted in different venues around the

country every second year. This year the venue was Bloemfontein and delegates received a warm welcome even though it was in the Free State midwinter.

The main sponsor for the conference was the Intel Corporation who has generously funded SchoolNet conferences for the past 10 years. Other loyal sponsors include CozaCares, who made it possible for a large number of teachers to attend and Microsoft who funded the cocktail party event as well as the attendance of teachers who had uploaded engaging Learning Activities to the Microsoft Partners in Learning Network.



The conference was officially opened by the national Rt Hon Deputy Minister of Education, Enver Surty, MP who got everybody laughing and feeling at ease with his opening comment about not using a PowerPoint for his presentation “You have the power and I have the point”. In his motivational address he praised the educators for their dedication and a job well done despite economic setbacks such as budget cuts and other difficulties often

experienced in the context of South African education. The Deputy Minister might have started his address on a sombre note after learners had presented their tribute to former president Mandela but the passion of the DM for learning and his commitment to improve education shone through so strongly that he ended on a high note with the whole auditorium enthusiastically applauding his address.

Over the three day conference, presenters and teachers were focused on how to find the best ways to prepare today’s learners for tomorrow’s challenges. The conference themes were:

- **Connecting classrooms** - learning activities that use technology to connect classrooms beyond the school's boundaries.
- **Learning with tablets** - learning activities that are unique to the use of tablets in and beyond the classroom.
- **Learning with mobile phones** - learning activities that are unique to the use of mobile phones in and beyond the classroom.
- **Innovative teaching** - any teaching with technology that the presenter feels is innovative.
- **ICT leadership in the school** - ways in which the presenter has shown successful leadership of ICT integration activities in school generally.
- **Curriculum delivery through digital content** - how the inclusion of digital content in the curriculum has enhanced teaching and student learning.

SPEAKERS

Delegates enjoyed some inspiring international keynote speakers as well as local teachers. They shared ideas face to face but also using Web 2.0 tools and communities such as Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and the Partners in Learning Network during and beyond the

conference. There was a range of vibrant exhibition stands and demonstration sessions for delegates to experience the latest innovative technologies.

SchoolNet SA was fortunate in securing the following international guest speakers and workshop leaders who were working hard throughout the conference:



Naomi Harm is from Minnesota, USA. She is an education consultant who is well known in South Africa and ran workshops throughout the conference on Global Classroom Collaboration, Learning with Tablets and Designing blended learning for the classroom. Naomi's attendance was sponsored by Intel Teach.



Frédéric Kastner is the programme manager at The Virtual School in London, UK. He presented on how teachers can make their own educational videos and giving a global view of what is happening in the world of digital subject content with particular reference to open educational resources.



Malik Wilson is an English Media Professional with a passion for using technology and creativity to inspire innovative education. As Creative Manager for The Virtual School, London he leads a team of creative professionals who collaborate with teachers in creating engaging educational videos that are accurate and relevant around the world.

Baldev Singh

Baldev presented his opening keynote on "*Trends in Technology and Implications for Learning, Teaching and Developing the International Dimension in Schools.*" He spoke about how ICT in education is not a question of IF but HOW. Students are not who we used to be. He showed teachers ways to empower themselves in order to be active in their learning progression with ICT. He urged teachers to model ways to empower student learning with the latest technology trends of integrating educational video clips and segments to inspire curiosity and the love for lifelong learning.



Baldev made mention of the British Council's programme, Connecting Classrooms and Schools Online as one of the mechanisms for teachers to ensure that the learners in their classrooms were connected and part of inter-classroom collaboration initiatives world wide.

British Council Connecting Classrooms-Global Citizenship



One of Baldev's quotes was constantly tweeted throughout the conference 'Technology might be the answer but what was the question?'

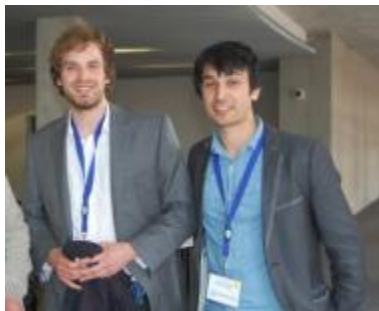
Schools|Online

Baldev's workshop sessions in the following two days included:

- 21st Century Learning Design Through a Technology Lens
- Create System-wide Change. Build Innovative Schools
- TeachMeet

Frédéric Kastner and Malik Wilson

Frédéric and Malik presented a keynote entitled '*Open Educational Resource Movement –*



Inspiring your Teaching and Sharing with Teachers around the world'. During the conference they provided sessions of hands-on movie making projects through digital video productions and screen casting opportunities with free online and offline resources. Teachers were very eager to participate in these content creation technology sessions and one couldn't easily get a seat in their sessions.

Their sessions included:

- Finding and using OER in and around the classroom.
- Enabling teachers to create their own Multimedia Lessons

Naomi Harn

Naomi provided a 2-hour learning session called 'K-12 Global Collaboration and Virtual Video Field Trips' on the first day. This session allowed a backchannel chat using Today'sMeet to hear the voice of all the attendees in this collaborative and hands-on session. It showed the importance of global literacy in today's K-12 classroom teaching and learning environments and how to connect with other educators safely and effectively. Naomi presented tirelessly through the Conference with her various presentations and the closing keynote in which she summed up the Conference with her '*Top 10 Learning Tips*'. Naomi's presentations included:



- So You Want to Hangout In My Community?
- What Would You Like to Create Today? iPad Literacy Center “Apptivities”
- Intel Elements: Blended Learning
- Visualize Your Thinking and Learning - Visual Ranking App
- Closing Keynote

HIGHLIGHTS

At the end of Day 1 Microsoft treated the SchoolNet team, keynote speakers, Vodacom ICT Resource Centre managers and teachers who had uploaded engaging and innovative learning activities to the Microsoft Partners in Learning Network to a traditional farm dinner plus star-gazing at De Oudekraal on the outskirts of Bloemfontein. This was a wonderful opportunity of viewing the beautiful star-filled galaxy landscape of the night sky, while we lay on our backs on the provided mattresses. A guide gave an astronomy overview of the night sky and pinpointed the Southern Hemisphere's constellation and the beautiful Milky Way. Our keynote speakers viewed this as a very special treat as they were able to see the stars of the Southern Hemisphere.



At the end of Day 2 all the attendees celebrated at the Microsoft Partners in Learning Cocktail Party where they were shown interesting insights to future technologies and had an opportunity to see exciting features of Windows 8 being demonstrated on phones and tablets. That was followed by delicious refreshments, music and networking, culminating in most of the attendees dancing the night away in time to the rhythmic music provided by the live band.

PRIZES and GIFTS

Naomi Harm concluded the conference at the closing plenary by presenting the Top 10 Learning Tips which was insightful as well as pragmatic. Naomi shared all of her presentations from her blog <http://blog.innovativeeducator.us/> Regular conference goers would already know that Naomi also tweets regularly with treasure troves of links to resources.



Keynote speakers were awarded gifts for their excellent contributions to the conference.

Social media played an important role at the Conference. Our [Conference blog](#) kept teachers updated on the presenters and their presentations. Maggie Verster encouraged teachers to tweet constantly using our conference #schoolnetsa hashtag. She held a preconference session during registration to encourage those new to Twitter to get connected. At the end of the Conference in the closing session the ‘Tweet Awards’ were held and prizes were given out to the biggest Edutwit (Vicky Marks) and the biggest Newbie Edutwit (Obert Gera).



Furthermore, SchoolNet is very grateful to a number of special sponsors who donated prizes for teachers to win at the closing ceremony.

Here is the list of prize winners:

1. Computers for Kids sponsored one school a site license and full access to all content for a year (Matshidiso Sekhejane -Thandaku Primary School)
2. Computers for Kids sponsored 9 educators e-Learner for Educator certificate including the site licence
 - Lorraine Mmusi - Nkukime Primary School
 - Thembisile Ndlovu - Inanda Secondary School
 - Suzan Tjabane - Witsieshoek (UFS)
 - Salathiel Molebeleli - Motheo FET college
 - Mphulo Moeti - Protem LSEN School
 - Cecillia Handa - UFS
 - Ntsoaki Mokala - Almont technical high school
 - Ike Mbongo - Atamela Primary School
 - Matshidiso Sekhejane-Thakadu Primary School
3. Intel training sponsored by Deb Avery
 - Bathabile Ngcobo - Slangspruit Primary School
4. Intel also sponsored one school to receive an Intel Elements training course
 - Phumla Lungulwana and Nomhle Mthembu - Khaya lethu Primary School
5. Microsoft SA sponsored three mini speakers
 - Duane Bates-Goue (Arend Primary School)
 - Jacolene Visage -Milner High School
 - Mary Faragher- eShowe School
6. Adobe Youth Voices sponsored 5 digital cameras
 - Feikie Sindiswa-Thandaku Primary School
 - Lebohlang Walter Rampheng-Moroka High School
 - Nomusa Keninda Emalahleni
 - Obert Gara Arthur Mfebe
 - Francois Papers- Vaal Reefs Technical High School
7. Google Summit sponsorship
 - Francois Papers - Vaal Reefs Technical High School
8. Sangari SA donated an Android tablet
 - Baby Roy Kattukkanal - St James Senior Secondary School)
9. Train Your Brain donated an Android tablet
 - Bennett Johannesen - NC Vodacom resource centre
10. Intel sponsored two Windows 8 Laptops
 - Lientjie Kotze - Motheo FET college
 - Bhekisisa Thabani Shabalala - University of Johannesburg
11. DigiCape sponsored an Apple iPad Mini
 - Thabo Molelekoa - Fezile Dabi Education Center

12. Vastratech sponsored a Smartboard to the teacher whose Learning Activity on the Microsoft Partners in Learning Network received the most “likes”. This was presented at the Microsoft Cocktail Function to the following teacher:

- Michelle van Wyk - Onze Rust Primary School

As part of the closing plenary Janet Thomson called the organising teams to the stage at the end of the conference to thank them for the effort put in to make the conference such a success. This included the team of students and staff from ICTISE at UFS as well as the group of conference staff from SchoolNet South Africa who together had fused to form one big organising team.



COMMENTS ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

The predominant comments overheard or tweeted on the #schoolnetsa hash tag were that the 2013 delegates to the ICT in the Classroom conference definitely had considered attending the conference and sacrificing their holidays well worth the effort as the conference had provided an opportunity to engage in the chance conversations and the camaraderie of educators reaching for the future.

Charli Wiggil: Thanks again for a great meeting of innovative and passionate minds. Please pass on great BIG THANKS and good wishes to all your staff who made this possible.

Alan Goldberg: I thought I'd drop you a line to say thank you for opportunity to present at the conference. It was the second year I have presented (and attended courses) and found it most useful, both from a learning and a networking perspective.

Party Vumase: @SchoolNetSA the conference was so stimulating. Really quite massive. So informative. Thumbs up to the organizers.

Arthur Preston: @SchoolNetSA Thanks for the opportunity to present at this year's conference - hope to be back in 2015! ;)

Mary Faragher: The last three days I have been at a conference for “innovative teachers” in Bloem and it has been amazing! From the breadcrumb navigation to presentations of the latest technology, to the active workshops that formed the bulk of the programme, it has been an eye-opening journey.

Louise Cokayne: Thanks @SchoolNetSA for a good conference and to @JJ_UFS and the ed department for hosting us #schoolnetsa

Gareth Heuer: Thanks for a very well-run conference. I'm sure you all feel like you could probably do with a well-deserved break, but I suspect that the show must go on.

We have sent out an online evaluation form so as to get an anonymous appraisal from those who attended but generally we are sure that the conference was a great success and we are grateful to the sponsors who made it possible as well as the presenters who shared their ideas and the teachers who participated so actively in the sessions.

