Report on SchoolNet SA Teacher and Learner ICT Development Training in South Africa

July-September 2021

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Background

SchoolNet South Africa is a public benefit, not for profit company established in 1997 and acts as an advocate for effective digital learning as a catalyst for positive educational change. Digital learning is at the core of our focus and our work strives to engage learners, encourage and motivate teachers and senior managers to enhance their teaching approaches using the affordance of digital technologies and to build an inclusive society through Digital Skills for All.

SchoolNet SA serves the vital function of changing dialogue around technology in education and advocates for change leadership as an essential factor in the success of any technology in education initiative in South African schools. Our rationale is closely aligned to Chapter 9 of the National Development Plan and output goals of the national *Action Plan 2014: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025*[1]

Teacher Professional Development

SchoolNet has, over the last 24 years, supported the Department of Basic Education's programmes and policy implementation by facilitating teacher professional development in public sector schools throughout the country. Our national footprint allows us to implement projects within short time frames in schools and districts where support is most needed. Our model is to work in-school or in geographic locations that afford educators optimal opportunity to attend and actively participate in the professional development Workshops. All our programmes are SACE endorsed, and we further ensure that our facilitation methods showcase independence in ICT development and more importantly are focussing our efforts on the change in teaching practice.

Due to the COVID pandemic, our model has shifted to being mostly online, however we realise that in certain areas, face to face is still the best option as stable connectivity is still a challenge. In this quarter, there was an increase in face to face training, however online training still remains the focus area due to reach. Below is an account of the workshops completed in this quarter between July - September 2021.

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[1]Department of Basic Education (2014)

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Summary of Workshops

The table below captures the projects and workshops that SchoolNet has coordinated and facilitated since July 2021. We have completed workshops with just over 1555 participants from all provinces in South Africa.

Project	Province	# workshops	Project Time Frame	Face to Face	Online	Participants Jul	Aug	Sep	Q3 Total	YTD TOTAL
Cyberlabs	Eastern Cape	2	Jan-July 21	2	0	10		39	49	133
COL-Women and Girls	National	22	February - June 2021	10	10	23	0	0	23	965
C-DELTA Leadership	National	50	March - September 2021	25	25	77	174	484	735	2077
Google	National	16	Ongoing	0	16	320	234	0	554	879
Telkom ICASA	FS And MP		August 2021 - June 2022	6			55	58	113	113
Adobe	National	2	Ongoing	0	2			81	81	81
TOTAL		**90**		**37**	**51**	**430**	**463**	**662**	**1555**	**4248**

Overview of Workshops

ICASA Schools

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the DBE in partnership with ICASA adapted their national programme and Telecommunications companies were required to adopt the Virtual Classroom Distance Learning approach for its 2021-2022 Grade-12 intervention program. SchoolNet is Telkom's training service provider for the Virtual Classroom Distance Learning solution which is focused on supporting the delivery of lessons to Grade-12 learners on personal smart devices. This initiative additionally will support School Management Teams, and Teachers on basic digital literacy and the use of the sponsored digital infrastructure to achieve the goals of this initiative and next year expand to learners early in Quarter 1 of 2022.

Training for the Senior Management Team started in August for all four of Telkom's allocated schools. The sessions covered two modules of the Change Leadership for ICT Integration course. There are 7 modules to complete in this programme which is influenced by literature on the key elements of change management and the debate about change leadership which is underpinned by Michael Fullan's work on Learning to Lead Change; the idea that change needs energy, ideas, commitment and ownership rather than a controlling management
This workshop aimed to set the scene for the initiative by providing timely insights on the moral imperative for using the Sponsored Infrastructure and planning for how to optimize its use in the schools.

As Telkom's training service provider for the ICASA project, SchoolNet is following a sustained programme to support and guide schools on their Digital journey. As such, Digital Literacy Training for teachers followed the initial SMT leadership training in September. The sessions provided initial ICT Skills workshops and will be completed in the follow up stage of the programme, when teachers have had a chance to practice and master the skills learnt during the sessions.

This course is an introductory ICT Skills training programme that provides teachers of all levels with initial, intermediate and advanced scenarios that directly relate to their roles as teachers.

COL-Women and Girls

SchoolNet SA, in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning embarked on a project that focused on out of school women and girls aged between 18 and 35 to participate in a digital literacy programme. The aim of the project was to create awareness of digital technologies, provide access to entrepreneurial and education resources, facilitate soft or essential skills to build confidence, digital skills and opportunities for certification to open up employment and entrepreneurial income avenues.

The training sessions were offered to a total number of 303 women and girls ie. 29 girls who completed from the 30 girls cohort and 274 unique girls from the 150 girls program. The training for the 303 women and girls across the country took on a blended model with seven sessions hosted in virtual environments and four in face to face setting. Face to Face sessions were required in particular in rural spaces where participants would need more support and coaching during the programme. Most of these ladies used their personal cell phones and or laptops to connect to the virtual training offerings, while some girls accessed virtual sessions in their school computer laboratories.

COL C-DELTA Leadership

The Commonwealth of Learning's Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) implementation in South Africa started with a three-week online Master training for 50 participants. Assessment of participants was completed during the master training, and 19 trainers were formally appointed at the end of the course. An orientation session was arranged for the appointed trainers, where SchoolNet SA shared the training resources toolkit, reporting tools and discussed the expectations for the implementation of training. All trainers were tasked with planning their training workshops with at least 20 teachers and 20 learners. The majority of the workshops were completed in a face to face setting. In order to limit face to face contact, some facilitators opted to host virtual sessions. In many instances, where participants needed clarity about the course, instant messaging was of great use. To date 977 educators and 857 learners from all over the country completed the C-DELTA programme.

Google Skills for Africa

Digital Skills for Africa is a Google initiative in conjunction with various training partners, which aims to train unemployed or youth in need of digital skills and assist small businesses by providing tips to increase their online presence, and digital marketing strategies to support the growth of their businesses.

SchoolNet South Africa provides free training through live streaming via Youtube. These workshops as with all SchoolNet programmes are provided free of charge and are open to any interested participants. Through this training intervention SchoolNet has trained 554 youth. Some of the participants are small business owners whilst others are burgeoning entrepreneurs. Training sessions are provided as live online training sessions, with some youth watching the recorded version of the training videos.

Biotherm Renewable Energies

Biotherm Energy is an independent power producer that recognised the need to provide underserved and rural communities with inclusive access to digital technologies and basic digital literacy. To this end, Biotherm Energy requested SchoolNet South Africa to propose a solution to enable a learning environment at Witbank Primere Skool, Northern Cape through the provision of an ICT lab, teacher professional development and basic digital literacy training for the out of school community around the school. The computer lab renovations are underway and are soon to be completed. The Change Leadership for Technology Integration training for the SMT

member is scheduled to take place in October followed by ICT Skills for Educators training for all the educators and then Digital Literacy Skills course for the youth.

DCDT Cyberlabs

This project sought to address the needs of building digital expertise and experience in the Ntabankulu and Mthatha areas of the Eastern Cape. The aim was to support and grow skills for integrating technologies into classroom practice. The project was meant to achieve improved curriculum focus, their pursuit of professional growth and leading change through digital learning.

Digital infrastructure was provided to the two schools and Teacher Development was provided to support Digital Integration and adoption. Two workshops conducted this quarter benefitted 49 teachers.

Adobe

Adobe Spark empowers students and teachers to easily create and share visual stories. One of the biggest challenges that Adobe Spark helps to address is finding ways to engage students of all ages, levels, and learning styles, even within the same classroom. Adobe partnered with SchoolNet to host virtual sessions for teachers. Two workshops were hosted thus far, where teachers were introduced to Adobe Spark for web and mobile to make it easy to create social media graphics, web pages and short videos. Additionally, Meme Creation as an assessment tool was also facilitated with a view to using this tool for individual learners, by a peer or by the teacher. A total of 81 teachers attended these workshops.

Training Statistics

SchoolNet has reached over 1555 participants in ICT in Education workshops in the third quarter of 2021. These workshops have ranged from Digital Skills, the use of Virtual Platforms for Teaching and Learning, Digital Education Leadership, Finding and Using Digital Education Resources and Designing Blended Learning.

The provincial breakdown of workshops follows in the pie chart below.

Participants per Province (Q3)
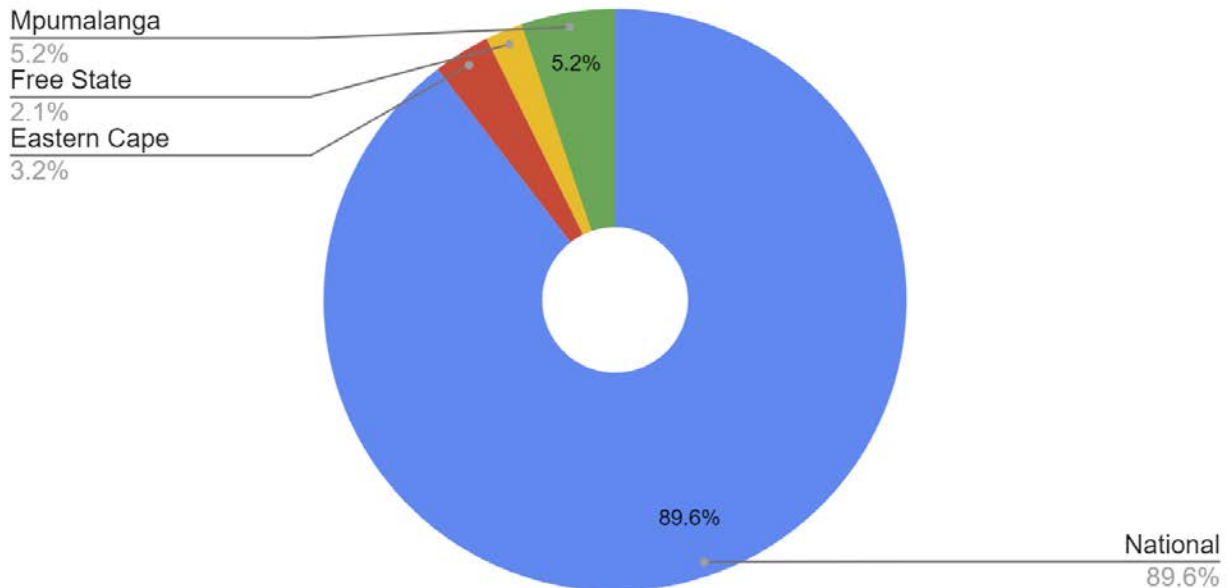
There were a total of 64 workshops facilitated between July and September 2021. National workshops held online formed the majority of the workshops with 89,6 % participants having attended the online facilitation. The Eastern Cape (3,2%), Free State (2,1%) and Mpumalanga (5,2%) have displayed an increase in face to face training.

Conclusion

SchoolNet prides itself on facilitating digital training workshops to enhance teaching and learning and optimizing the affordances of digital technologies. We continue to implement a range of workshops that align to basic digital skills for administration of teaching and learning, lesson planning and workshops to provide development and support for Virtual and Blended teaching and learning activities. Whilst funding has slowed down due to COVID-19, we are optimistic that more CSI funding and Provincial Projects will come to fruition in the next quarter.

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