SchoolNet South Africa

Training of School-based

ICT Champions in KwaZulu-Natal

BID #: ZNB 0144E 17/18

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Amajuba District

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1. Introduction

As a non-profit digital education and training specialist since 1997, SchoolNet South Africa was one of the successful service providers to bid for the ICT Champions requested by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZN DoE). The KZN DoE requested SchoolNet SA to equip 1866 ICT Champions from four districts, namely, Amajuba, iLembe, uThukela and Zululand, with the necessary tools and foundational skills to provide crucial first-line IT support to teachers, learners, and the wider school community, and be the school-based champion for the Province.

This report will focus on the completed training for 226 ICT Champions in the **Amajuba District**.

2. District Background

The Amajuba District Municipality is situated in the north-western part of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), bordering the Free State and Mpumalanga provinces. It encompasses three local municipalities: Newcastle, Emadlangeni, and Dannhauser. Amajuba is recognised as a significant industrial hub within KZN, with a diverse economy driven by manufacturing (notably steelworks, textiles, and chemicals), mining, and agriculture (dairy and crop farming). The district comprises a substantial number of schools, and ongoing efforts are made to improve educational outcomes continually. Addressing various ICT challenges through the school-based ICT champion initiative is crucial for ensuring equitable access to quality education and preparing learners for a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

The Amajuba District training was facilitated at the ArcelorMittal Science Centre.

3. Training Statistics

All four training sessions for the Amajuba District took place at the ArcelorMittal Science Centre in the Madadeni Area. Each workshop was expected to have approximately sixty ICT Champions. A total of 184 teachers were in attendance in the four different training rooms.

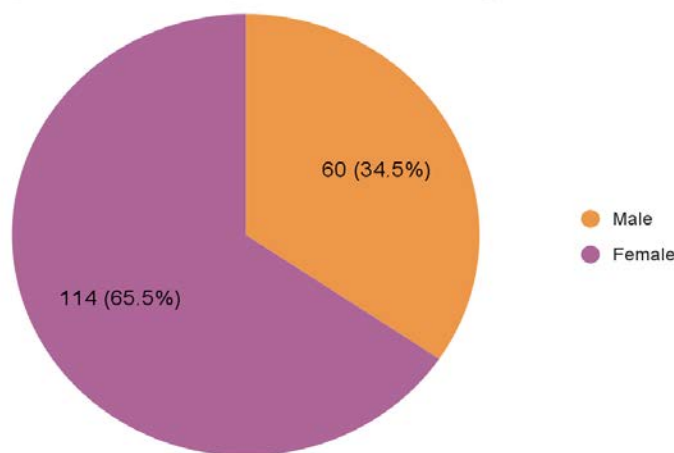| Circuits	Dates	Expected Attendance	Overall Attendance	Male	Female
Buffalo Flats & Nomaindia	28-29 May	60	55	16	39
Ebuhleni & Umzinyashana	28-29 May	60	45	16	29
Phumelela & Masakhane	28-29 May	60	39	14	25
Madadeni & Osizweni	28-29 May	60	45	18	27
TOTAL		226	184	64	120

4. Project Planning

The initial RFQ intended to host three sessions of seventy ICT Champions. After discussions with the district, the programme had to be amended as the classrooms at the venue could not host seventy per classroom. The district amended the programme to host four sessions on the 28-29 May 2025. SchoolNet organised the additional trainers due to the number of sessions and expected attendance and finally ended with seven trainers based at the venue.

5. Scope and Demographics

A total of 184 teachers attended the ICT champions professional development training. This provincial focus fostered a cohesive environment for targeted learning and collaboration among educators in the region. Female participants outnumbered males by 65.5% and 34.5%, respectively. It was encouraging to see that schools selected more female staff to be ICT Champions and break into the space that was previously dominated by males.

Amajuba ICT Champions: Gender Representation

60 (34.5%)

● Male
● Female

114 (65.5%)

6. Overview Training

SchoolNet's programme for all workshops aligned with the request for this bid with seven topics as highlighted in the pathway of skills below. The topics were designed to be introductory sessions as two days is not sufficient to cover these complex topics in detail. Based on discussions with the Department, this would be the first of many workshops for ICT Champions that would be required to reinforce the Departments support of schools in all its Districts.

With four training rooms and seven trainers in full swing, the professional development sessions followed the same programme and training strategies. Participants were divided into circuits, Buffalo Flats and Nomaindia, Ebuhleni and Umzinyashana, Phumelela and Masakhane, and Madadeni and Osizweni.

The sessions began with an exciting introduction to the question of why ICT Champions were needed at school-based level. The participants quickly appreciated their value to the Circuit, District, and the province to be able to offer more timely IT support. As school-based ICT Champions, the participants would need to have a thorough understanding of IT concepts, and the topics as highlighted during the programme. The participants were taken through the two-day learning journey and provided with the opportunity to share their expectations of the training sessions.

Day one focused on the foundational understanding of computer systems. Participants delved into Basic PC Hardware, covering the core components of computers, software, peripheral devices, and school network architecture. This hands-on module emphasised identifying and understanding the physical aspects of technology. Building on this, the trainer moved to Troubleshooting and Safe Use, teaching practical strategies for diagnosing and resolving common IT issues that are encountered at schools alongside critical safe-use procedures.

The day concluded with Effective Communication in a Technical Environment, where participants learned to establish basic help desk functions, manage asset registers, and implement efficient fault reporting systems within their schools. These would need to be implemented at school-level to ensure that IT infrastructure was being maintained and that faults were reported and tracked for District personnel to be aware of the challenges schools were facing. This in turn would inform a broader provincial strategy for supporting schools.

Day two advanced to software applications and digital citizenship. The session introduced Microsoft 365 (M365) applications, enabling participants to navigate tools, create fault reporting forms, and practice file sharing and collaboration using OneDrive and Microsoft Teams. Following this, the Basics of Internet Connectivity covered defining internet types, connecting devices, and testing internet speeds. The crucial module on IT Security Best Practices raised awareness about cybersecurity threats like scams and viruses, emphasising strong password creation and identifying weaknesses in IT systems. Finally, participants gained an understanding of the POPI and PAIA Acts, clarifying their responsibilities as ICT Champions regarding personal information and data governance within their schools. This also raised the importance of safe-guarding school data and ensuring backups were in place.

7. Challenges

Communication: Not all schools received or read the circulars which in turn delayed the response for sending the correct staff member to attend the session.

Time: Participants arrived late and continued to come one at a time, which disrupted the training sessions. This caused some participants to miss some introductory information on the topics.

Connectivity: Participants were expected to bring their school-allocated MIFI's and routers for connectivity; however, most did not have access to the internet. Whilst the trainers did have connectivity, this was not sufficient for the large groups.

Catering: Most teachers complained about the amount of food for a full-day session.

Attendance: The expected attendance compared to the actual attendance in the Phumelela & Masakhane circuits was low due to school commitments such as awards and principals' meetings.

8. Recommendations

Access to stable connectivity: Participants need to create professional habits of ensuring that they read circulars carefully and ensure that supplied provincial resources are used when requested. Ideally, in workshops where there are many participants, the district/province should arrange additional bandwidth/connectivity from the relevant telecommunications service providers.

Charging stations: Participants requested multiplugs and extension cords for charging devices. Whilst trainers had multi-plugs available, this was not sufficient for all participants. so ideally, regular departmental training venues should have these available for use.

Venue: Participants indicated that the venue was too far, which caused longer travel distances for some. A more central location would have been better served. Unfortunately, the timing of the sessions was during exams and hence, more central school venues were not possible for use during these sessions.

9. Conclusion

Despite some minor challenges, the training achieved significant success, with strong participant engagement in both content and pedagogical strategies. Participants found the content to be particularly important for their ICT journey. The ICT Champions reported that they are eager to start implementing what they have learnt at their respective schools.

10. Annexure A: Proof of Performance

Below are the links to both Departmental registers and SchoolNet SACE Registers as well as photos and videos confirming that sessions were completed.

Workshop **ArcelorMittal Science Centre**	Attendance Registers	Photos/Videos
Session 1	**Group 1 Registers**	
Session 2	**Group 2 Registers**	**https://tinyurl.com/3sjy529u**
Session 3	**Group 3 Registers**	
Session 4	**Group 4 Registers**	

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