

Inspiring message from Vis Naidoo

- Long-standing board member and dedicated Chairman of SchoolNet South Africa for most of its 20 years

Congratulations SNSA – 20 years of making a difference

WOW, I guess some things are meant to last.

When we decided to form SNSA, I can say, without any fear of contraction, this is an example of a ground-up movement. The genesis of using educational technology in the classroom started in a few provinces, mainly in ex-model C and private schools. The amazing thing about these teachers who were early adopters, they were keen to take educational technology to all schools and to benefit all learners in South Africa.

In 1996, I was appointed Director – Centre for Educational Technology and Distance Education at the national Department of Education and with my Team, we recognised the value of this ground-up movement and the potential of technology. The leadership of the Ministry and Department of Education recognised this, hence the establishment of the Centre and enabled us to advance various edtech initiatives.

SNSA has had executive directors that provided good leadership and guidance at different times in the history and development of the organization. Denis Brandjes was the first executive director and the right person to set up SNSA. I was fortunate to be part of the Board and represented the Department of Education. It was exciting times, we were starry-eyed about what we wanted to do and had good people both within and outside the country that supported us. Thank you, Denis, for your leadership of SNSA.

Rod Grewen took the helm during a difficult time in SNSA's development and was able to provide a degree of consolidation that was essential at the time. He faced a tough Board and challenging external conditions in our school system. Thank you, Rod for helping with the consolidation of SNSA.

Janet Thomson is the current executive director and she has been instrumental in shaping the organization's new vision, led it to become focused and ensured it is well managed and funded. She has also helped SNSA grow and have a presence in all provinces. Janet is an amazing leader who has taken the organization forward and ensured it is a central element of ICT in education processes and keeping the focus on supporting our teachers. Thank you, Janet, for your focus on building the organization and ensuring strong support for our teachers.

During the past 20 years, we have had esteemed and distinguished folks on the Board. I was a member of the inaugural Board and remained a member for the first 15 years, becoming the Chairperson in the latter year. It was a privilege to serve on the Board and to shape the organization. The current Board is tasked with ensuring SNSA does not remain stagnant or goes into decline. It is tasked with directing SNSA to keep innovating and raise the bar on how edtech will support our teachers and learners.

To Janet and her team – thanks for believing in educational technology supporting learning and teaching. Thank you for believing in SNSA. Thank you for all the work you put into supporting our teachers and learners. It can seem like an endless task, a thankless task, sometimes it seems there is no progress, you have to put up with unfounded criticism – yet you have continued and I have not doubt you will persevere.

So, what will the next 20 years look like?

This is the challenge to the SNSA Board, Janet and her staff and most importantly, all of you at this conference – the leaders in the use of ICT in education. You need to keep this ground-up edtech movement going forward and keep making a difference to the learners of South Africa – one click at a time.

Thank you.