



Training of School-based ICT Champions in KwaZulu-Natal

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Ilembe District (413 ICT Champions)

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1. Introduction

As a public benefit, non-profit digital education and training specialist since 1997, SchoolNet South Africa was awarded a tender by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZN DoE) to empower ICT Champions in public schools. KZN DoE requested SchoolNet SA to equip ICT Champions at KZN DOE Public schools with the necessary tools and foundational skills to provide crucial first-line IT support to teachers, learners, and the wider school community, thus fostering the importance of digital literacy.

This report will focus on the completed training for **413** ICT Champions in the **Ilembe District**.

2. District Background



iLembe District Municipality is situated on the east coast of KwaZulu-Natal, bordering the Indian Ocean. It is the smallest of the province's district municipalities, making up a mere 3% of its geographical area. iLembe consists of four local municipalities located between Durban and Richards Bay, which include Mandeni, KwaDukuza, Maphumulo and Ndwedwe. The district straddles the Tugela River, the traditional border between former Colonial Natal and the Kingdom of Zululand, the site of historical and cultural events.

The district is home to a number of public schools, and the initiative to empower ICT Champions within Ilembe District is therefore particularly vital. It addresses the scarcity of onsite technical expertise, and ensuring immediate first-level IT support is crucial for overcoming existing digital barriers. This localised approach is essential for achieving sustainable digital transformation and improving educational opportunities in a district with unique socio-economic and logistical considerations.

3. Training Statistics

Following multiple attempts to finalise the training schedule since May 2025, compounded by strike action from education employees, the schedule was ultimately approved by the District Director in August for implementation during the second week. Training sessions for the Ilembe District were held in six main venues, namely, Ndwedwe Education Centre, Vukile Secondary School, Indukwetsha Secondary School, KwaDukuza Primary School, Mandini Academy, and North Coast Primary School. A total of **330** teachers were in attendance.

Venue	Dates	Expected Attendance	Attendance Day 1	Attendance Day 2	Male	Female
Ndwedwe Education Centre Group 1	18 - 19 August 2025	52	45	45	11	34
Ndwedwe Education Centre Group 2	18 - 19 August 2025	62	22	37	8	29
Vukile Secondary School Group 1	20 - 21 August 2025	63	47	45	13	34
Indukwetsha Secondary School	20 - 21 August 2025	32	31	29	10	21
Vukile Secondary School Group 2	22 & 25 August 2025	58	50	43	10	40
KwaDukuza Primary School	25-26 August 2025	29	31	32	14	18
Mandini Academy	26 - 27 August 2025	68	46	43	19	27
North Coast Primary School	28 - 29 August 2025	64	58	58	19	39
Total		413	330	332	104	242

4. Project Planning

Training for 413 ICT Champions in the Ilembe District was scheduled for the 14 circuits, namely, Ubhaqa and Umdloti, Ozwathini and Ndwedwe Central, Imati and Lower Umvoti Circuit, Insuze Circuit, Balcomb's Hill and Untunjambili, Kwadukuza Circuit, Gingindlovu and Mandeni, Umhlali and Phambela Circuits, with the help of district officials. The sessions were postponed several times due to union strikes and missed school exams. Invitations to schools were provided via a circular from the District Director to all schools. District officials confirmed the number of ICT Champions.

5. Overview Training

SchoolNet’s professional development programme is 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 are not sufficient to cover these complex topics in detail.



The professional development sessions began with a stimulating discussion on the need for ICT Champions at the school level. Participants quickly recognised the critical role these individuals play in providing timely IT support across Circuit, District, and Provincial levels, and understood that, as school-based ICT Champions, they would need a solid grasp of core IT concepts.

The two-day programme was structured as a guided learning journey, allowing participants to outline their expectations and actively contribute to shaping the sessions. This approach ensured that the training was interactive, responsive to participants’ needs, and supportive of their professional growth. By engaging with practical tasks and discussions, participants developed both the technical knowledge and confidence required to apply their skills effectively in their schools.

5.1.1 Ndwedwe Education Centre - Groups 1 & 2

Ozwathini & Ndwedwe Central and Ubhaqa & Umdloti



The ICT Champion training brought together participants from the Ozwathini, Ndwedwe, Ubhaqa, and Umdloti circuits, including principals, administrative staff, teacher assistants, and teachers of various ages. Participants' ICT knowledge was quite diverse, but despite this, engagement grew steadily through interactive tools such as Mentimeter. Day One of the training progressed smoothly, with participants showing enthusiasm and commitment from the start. Module 1 provided a thorough introduction to computer systems, where participants explored hardware, software, and the basic architecture of devices used in schools. The sessions were interactive, with participants asking questions and supporting one another during practical activities, which fostered collaboration and hands-on learning. Interest grew steadily as participants connected the concepts to challenges, they face at their schools.

In the afternoon, Module 2 focused on troubleshooting and safe use. One participant shared an example of best practices, prompting others to contribute their experiences and creating a lively and engaging learning environment. Participants practised identifying, diagnosing, developing solutions, implementing fixes, and verifying outcomes, and many expressed appreciations for gaining practical skills applicable to their own devices. Module 3 concluded the day by highlighting the importance of effective communication in technical environments. Participants recognised their responsibilities as ICT Champions, including maintaining asset registers, documenting faults, and escalating issues only when necessary. This reinforced accountability and the systematic management of ICT in schools.

Day Two began with a thirty-minute recap, allowing participants to consolidate learning and helping latecomers to catch up. Modules 4–7 focused on applied skills and compliance. In Module 4, participants explored Microsoft Forms and M365 tools. While some devices lacked Microsoft 365 installations, Google Docs was used to simulate activities. The value of Teams and OneDrive for school use was highlighted, with Mr. Makhado pledging support for deployment. Module 5 addressed Internet Connectivity, introducing the C.H.E.C.K. method (Connections, Hardware, Errors, Configuration, Knowledge) for troubleshooting and testing network speeds. Module 6 focused on IT Security, raising awareness of cyber threats such as phishing, malware, and scams, while reinforcing the importance of strong passwords and secure practices. Finally, Module 7 covered POPIA and PAIA compliance, ensuring that ICT Champions understood their responsibility to safeguard personal information and maintain data governance. By the end of the second day, a WhatsApp group including the District IT Officer was created to support ongoing learning and Microsoft 365 account setup.

5.1.2 Vukile Secondary School Group 1

Imati & Lower Umvoti



Vukile High School, situated in the Maphumulo area of KwaZulu-Natal, has an enrolment of 1,400 learners and 38 educators. The Department of Education selected this school as one of the venues for the training because of its convenient location along the main road, making it easily accessible to teachers in the circuit. The workshop was conducted in the school hall, which provided adequate space to accommodate the large number of teachers. Participant teachers were from various schools across the Imati and Lower Umvoti circuits, with about 90% already possessing knowledge, skills, and experience in digital technologies.

Day one began with teachers demonstrating eagerness to learn, with many arriving early to prepare for the workshop, which 47 participants attended. Mr. N. Mtungwa from the Department of Education welcomed the attendees, acknowledged those who were in

attendance, and emphasised the importance of such workshops in enhancing their professional knowledge. To facilitate communication, a WhatsApp group was created using a QR code, and both manual and electronic registers were completed, with a disclaimer regarding the consent to use of photos and videos highlighted. Throughout the workshop, teachers remained highly engaged, actively contributing to discussions, completing activities, and showing enthusiasm and willingness to learn. The training comprised four modules: Module 1 (Introduction to Computer Architecture) delivered through interactive discussions and shared notes; Module 2 (Troubleshooting and Safe Use) conducted before lunch; Module 3, in which teachers collaboratively developed a fault reporting tool; and Module 4, which addressed challenges related to KZN school email accounts, noting that these are institution-based and not widely utilised. The day concluded with an endline survey administered via QR code or link.



On Day 2, the session commenced with a recap of the modules from the previous day and addressed questions from the attendees before proceeding to Module 5: Basic Internet Connectivity, which was delivered using a question-and-answer approach. Teachers actively engaged in discussions and completed the activities for the module, and the notes for Module 5 were shared via the WhatsApp group. Prior to starting Module 6, it was necessary to revisit Module 4 to address outstanding questions from participants. Following this, the workshop continued with Module 6: Security Best Practices, and concluded with Module 7: POPIA and PAIA. Participants were required to complete tasks for their portfolios and were provided with the facilitator's email address to submit their activities. The endline survey for Day 2 was administered via QR code or link, a group photo was taken, and the day concluded with a prayer.

5.1.3 Vukile Secondary School Group 2

Balcomb's Hill & Untunjambili



The training session was conducted at Vukile High School in KwaNgoni, KwaMaphumulo, approximately 146 km from my residence. Teachers from the Balcomb's Hill and Untunjambili circuits participated in the session. During the training, Amanda Fanelesibonge Ngema, a learner from the school, was acknowledged for achieving 5th place among the Top 10 performers in the 2024 KwaZulu-Natal National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations. The session was held in the school's dining hall, which offered a clean and spacious environment sufficient to accommodate all participants. A blank wall served as a screen for the projector.

Day 1 session began with teachers showing enthusiasm to learn, although some participants arrived late. Mr. N. Mtungwa once again was available to welcome the attendees and highlighted the importance of the workshop in enhancing professional knowledge. Registers were completed, and a disclaimer regarding the use of photos and videos was provided.

Teachers remained engaged throughout the day, actively participating in discussions and activities. Those with prior computer literacy were paired with colleagues with foundational knowledge, which positively influenced classroom attitudes and engagement. Collaboration among participants contributed to the smooth delivery of the training. Teachers who had forgotten their KZN school email accounts were provided with temporary Microsoft 365 accounts from SchoolNet to enable them to participate in the assigned activities.

The workshop covered four modules: Introduction to Computer Architecture, Troubleshooting and Safe Use, collaborative development of a fault reporting tool, and addressing challenges with KZN school email accounts.



Day 2 began with Module 5, Basic Internet Connectivity, delivered through an interactive question-and-answer approach. Educators actively engaged with the content, asking questions and contributing to discussions. The facilitator reminded participants to clarify any queries related to their Portfolios of Evidence (PoEs) required for the Certificate of Completion. Notes for Module 5 were shared to support ongoing reference and study.

Before moving to Module 6, Security Best Practices, Module 4 was revisited to address outstanding questions, demonstrating participants' commitment to understanding the material. During Module 6, educators remained engaged, contributing to a dynamic learning environment. The final session, Module 7, POPIA and PAIA, focused on data protection and privacy regulations, with teachers showing strong interest in applying these principles professionally.

The session concluded with participants working on their portfolio tasks, and the facilitator provided an email address for submission of completed activities. The day was marked by collaboration, active engagement, and a shared dedication to professional development.

5.1.4 Indukwetsha Secondary School

Insuze



Indukwetsha Secondary School, located in the rural area of Insuzegcwenza near Ozwathini in KwaZulu-Natal, the school serves learners within the Ndwedwe Local Municipality. The school has shown consistent academic excellence, with a steady increase in enrolment from 204 learners in 2021 to 227 in 2023, reflecting the community's growing confidence in its educational standards. Indukwetsha Secondary School was selected as a training venue due to its stable performance and supportive learning environment, making it an ideal location for professional development workshops. The school continues to be a source of pride in the region, fostering academic growth and empowering learners in a rural setting.

The first day of training began with a warm welcome to all participants, highlighting the importance of the workshop in enhancing educators' professional knowledge and digital skills. Participants arrived on time, and the overall atmosphere was characterised by enthusiasm and a strong willingness to learn. Teachers demonstrated high levels of engagement throughout the session, actively contributing to discussions and completing assigned activities. To promote peer learning, participants with advanced computer skills were paired with colleagues possessing foundational digital knowledge. This collaborative approach positively influenced classroom dynamics and participants' attitudes as the day progressed.

Participants had outdated system software, which contributed to slow-performing laptops and intermittent network connectivity, and a few participants arrived without devices. Despite these challenges, the workshop progressed smoothly. Teachers who had forgotten their KZN school email credentials were assisted, while some opted to use their personal Gmail accounts for convenience, enabling them to complete activities more efficiently.

During the session, participants were very happy and actively engaged, asking questions to gain clear clarification on some of the slides and activities presented. The day's training comprised four modules. Module 1: Introduction to Computer Architecture was delivered through

interactive discussions and shared notes. Module 2: Troubleshooting and Safe Use. Module 3: Fault Reporting Tool Development involved collaborative problem-solving. Module 4: KZN School Email Account Challenges addressed practical issues and provided solutions, enabling participants to apply their learning effectively.



The second day commenced with Module 5, Basic Internet Connectivity, delivered through an interactive question-and-answer approach. Educators actively engaged with the content, asking questions and contributing to discussions. The facilitator reminded participants to clarify any queries related to their Portfolios of Evidence (PoEs) required for the Certificate of Completion. Notes for Module 5 were shared to support ongoing reference and study.

During Module 6, educators remained engaged, contributing to a dynamic learning environment. The final session, Module 7, POPIA and PAIA, focused on data protection and privacy regulations, with teachers showing strong interest in applying these principles in their professional contexts.

The day concluded with participants working on their portfolio tasks, and the facilitator provided an email address for submission of completed activities. This session was characterised by collaboration, active engagement, professional growth, and a shared commitment to development.

5.1.5 KwaDukuza Primary School

KwaDukuza



KwaDukuza Primary School is located within the Ilembe District Municipality under the KwaDukuza Local Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). The school, situated at 1 Grammar Road in Stanger (4450), functions as a public primary institution in the Stanger urban area of KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. It accommodates a total of 1,156 learners, supported by a committed staff of 34 educators.

The participants were from various schools within the KwaDukuza Circuit. They included Information Technology (IT) educators, administrative clerks, EA ICT personnel, as well as educators from different subject areas. Participants demonstrated varying levels of ICT proficiency. While IT teachers were generally comfortable with most of the content, they also identified specific areas where additional support was required. The majority of participants engaged actively by following the facilitator's instructions, although certain aspects of the content remained challenging for some. Their willingness to follow guidance reflected their commitment to learning. Participants displayed a positive attitude towards the training. Several expressed the need for further sessions covering Microsoft Word and Excel, as these applications are widely used in schools. A few participants did not bring laptops as requested in the official circular and instead used cell phones, which presented limitations for completing certain activities.

Day One of the training progressed smoothly, with participants demonstrating enthusiasm and commitment throughout. The workshop covered four modules: Introduction to Computer Architecture, Troubleshooting and Safe Use, collaborative development of a fault reporting tool, and addressing challenges with KZN school email accounts.

Module 1 introduced computer systems, where participants explored hardware, software, and basic device architecture. The session was interactive, with participants asking questions, assisting one another, and linking concepts to challenges faced in their schools. In Module 2, troubleshooting and safe use were emphasised through practical exercises, where participants practised diagnosing and resolving issues. Shared experiences created a lively atmosphere, and many valued the opportunity to gain practical, transferable skills. The day concluded with Module 3 on communication in technical environments, which reinforced participants' responsibilities as ICT Champions, maintaining asset registers, documenting faults, and escalating issues appropriately, highlighting the importance of accountability and systematic ICT management in schools.



On Day 2, four modules were covered. The first, *Communication in a Technical Environment*, focused on effective communication for ICT Champions, the distinction between hardware and software, the importance of an asset management register, the roles of ICT Champions versus district IT technicians, and the escalation process in fault reporting. Participants also shared experiences from their schools.

The second module introduced Microsoft 365, where participants explored www.office.com, created accounts, customised profiles, and practised using Microsoft Forms for fault reporting. They also learnt to save and share files on OneDrive and explored Microsoft Teams, including scheduling meetings and understanding synchronous versus asynchronous learning. The third module covered Internet Connectivity, highlighting wired and wireless connections, internet hardware, mobile networks, Bluetooth sharing, and steps for testing network speed.

The final module focused on IT Security Best Practices, covering cybersecurity essentials, strong password creation, methods used by hackers, BYOD risks, and the importance of antivirus protection.

5.1.6 Mandini Academy

Gingindlovu & Mandeni



In January 1954, Mrs. Frikkie Snyman established The Mandini Government School starting with just 18 learners between the ages of 2 and 12. The first student to be enrolled was Trevor Wiggill, marking the beginning of what would become Mandini Academy. As the school grew, it relocated to the newly built Mandini Club, where classrooms were divided by seven-foot partitions. Mr. Moggee was appointed headmaster, supported by two assistant teachers, to accommodate the rising enrolment. Today, Mandini Academy is a thriving public school in KwaZulu-Natal's Ilembe Education District, proudly serving 863 students with a dedicated team of 40 educators.

Participants were teachers from various schools across the Gingindlovu and Mandeni circuits, with approximately 90% already experienced in digital technologies. The sessions began with a discussion on the importance of ICT Champions at the school level. Participants quickly recognised their critical role in providing timely IT support across Circuit, District, and Provincial levels and understood that, as school-based ICT Champions, they would need a strong foundation in core IT concepts.

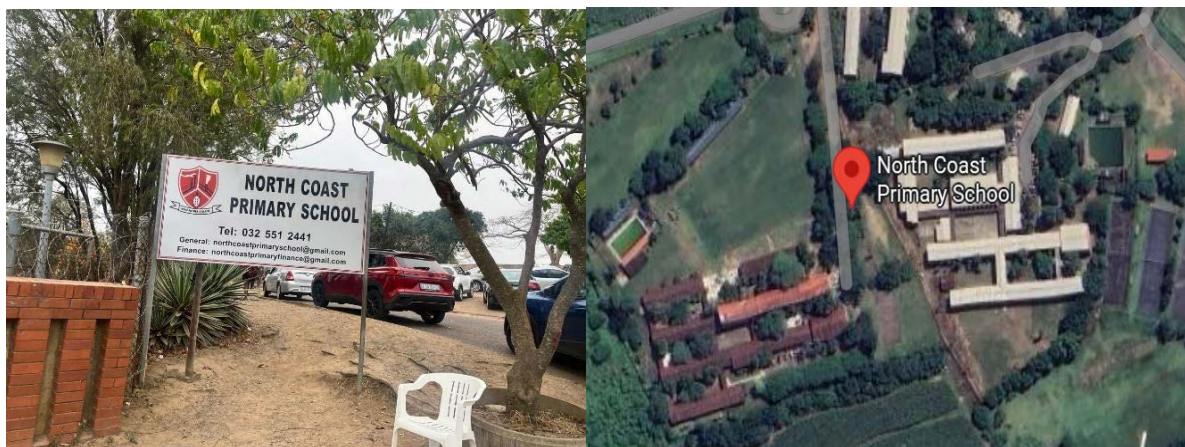


Day 1 training session commenced with a warm welcome, emphasising the importance of enhancing educators' professional and digital skills. Participants arrived on time and showed great enthusiasm and a strong willingness to learn, actively engaging in discussions, asking questions for clarity, and completing all assigned tasks. To foster peer learning, those with advanced computer skills were paired with colleagues who had basic digital knowledge, which positively influenced collaboration and classroom dynamics. Despite challenges such as outdated software, slow laptops and a few participants lacking devices, the workshop progressed smoothly. Teachers who had forgotten their KZN school email credentials received assistance, while others used personal Gmail accounts to complete activities more efficiently. The training covered four modules: Module 1 introduced computer architecture through interactive discussions and shared notes; Module 2 focused on troubleshooting and safe use; Module 3 involved collaborative development of a fault reporting tool; and Module 4 addressed practical issues with KZN school email accounts, noting their limited use across institutions. The day concluded with an endline survey accessed via QR code or link, capturing participant feedback and reflections.

Day 2 of the training commenced with a brief recap of the previous day's modules, followed by a Q&A session to address participants' questions. The facilitators then introduced Module 5: Basic Internet Connectivity, delivered through an interactive question-and-answer format, with notes shared via the WhatsApp group. Before proceeding, Module 4 was revisited to resolve outstanding questions. The session continued with Module 6: Security Best Practices and concluded with Module 7: POPIA and PAIA, during which participants completed portfolio tasks and were provided with the facilitator's email address for submission. The endline survey was administered via QR code or link, and a group photo was taken. The day also included three additional modules: Communication in a Technical Environment, which covered effective ICT

communication, hardware vs. software distinctions, asset management, ICT Champion roles, and fault escalation procedures; Microsoft 365, where participants explored Microsoft 365,, customised profiles, practiced using Microsoft Forms for fault reporting, and learned to use OneDrive and Microsoft Teams; and Internet Connectivity, which focused on wired and wireless networks, mobile data, Bluetooth sharing, and network speed testing. The final module reinforced IT Security Best Practices, highlighting cybersecurity fundamentals, password safety, common hacking methods and antivirus protection.

5.1.7 North Coast Primary School



North Coast Primary School is a public primary school located in Theunissen Street, Kwadukuza, within the Ilembe District. Participants were drawn from various schools; however, there seemed to be a misunderstanding regarding the intended audience for the training workshop. Some schools sent Educator Assistants (eCadres) who had recently participated in the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative (PYEI) training. Given that their employment contracts are set to expire in two months, concerns were raised about their ability to implement the newly acquired skills within the limited time remaining. The training venue was well-suited for the workshop, equipped with a data projector and screen, and supported by clean and accessible restrooms. The school staff were welcoming and provided excellent support. Participants demonstrated enthusiasm and eagerness to learn. They arrived prepared, bringing along their own devices, including mobile data resources.

Day 1 session began with a baseline survey, which participants approached with enthusiasm. The day's modules included Hardware Basics, Troubleshooting and Safety, Effective Communication, and Office 365. Participants were encouraged to deepen their understanding of computer hardware terminology and functions, as this knowledge would support them in providing

effective technical assistance at their schools and to accurately reporting faults to the district ICT support. Practical guidelines were shared to help initiate their roles as ICT Champions, such as identifying all ICT equipment at the school, understanding its origin, knowing the appropriate reporting channels in case of faults, labelling devices, creating an asset register, and recording hardware warranties.

The Troubleshooting and Safety module received particular emphasis. Participants were introduced to practical tips and techniques for addressing common issues at the school level, which could save both time and resources by reducing unnecessary escalations. In the Office 365 module, most participants received their account credentials. Through access to the Ilembe District M365 database, logins were retrieved and distributed. Although the process was time-consuming and required an after-hours effort since accounts had to be searched individually, most participants successfully received their login details and were able to access the platform.



On Day 2, a Mentimeter activity was used as an icebreaker, followed by a recap of the previous day's activities. The key topics covered were Basics of Internet Connectivity (Computers and Mobile Devices), IT Security Best Practices, and the POPI Act & Promotion of Access to Information Act. Participants were introduced to various methods of connecting to the internet and explored the range of services available in the market. They engaged enthusiastically in activities such as testing internet speeds and comparing different packages, gaining clarity on distinctions such as unlimited internet connection “unshaped, unbundles and unthrottled” versus “unlimited internet with throttling.”

Cybersecurity and online safety were strongly emphasised, equipping participants with essential skills to safeguard themselves and their schools. The session also highlighted the importance of understanding the *POPI Act*, particularly its serious legal implications for non-compliance. Everyday examples of POPIA offences were shared, such as the widely referenced “educator and the dinosaur kid” story, and the case of the “child advertising bread.” These illustrated how

seemingly harmless actions can contravene the law. The day concluded with a reflection survey, allowing participants to provide feedback on their learning experience

6. Challenges

- The main challenge encountered was **late attendance**. Several participants joined only on the second day, missing the critical foundational modules from day One. This disrupted the flow and limited the effectiveness of their overall learning. Ensuring that participants attend from the beginning of the programme is essential for the continuity and success of the training.
- The venue had a limited number of **electrical outlets**, which resulted in some teachers' laptops running out of battery during the session, making it challenging for them to use their mobile phones to complete certain activities.
- Several participants encountered difficulties accessing their **Microsoft 365 accounts** due to forgotten email passwords. While the district office assisted with password resets, some educators were still unable to log in. To ensure full participation, demonstration accounts were provided. This process was time-consuming, as additional support was required to issue and connect accounts for affected individuals.
- Slow-performing laptops and intermittent network connectivity. A few teachers were unable to bring laptops to the training.
- A key challenge identified was the attendance of Presidential Youth Employment Initiative (PYEI) Educator Assistants (eCadres) instead of permanent school staff. While these participants were enthusiastic, their short-term contracts set to end within two months raised concerns about the sustainability and long-term impact of the training. This limited timeframe may hinder their ability to implement the skills acquired effectively at the school level.

7. Recommendations

- Communication with participants needs to be clear and shared well in advance, and ensure clear communication with schools on the intended audience for workshops, prioritising permanent staff to maximise long-term impact.
- Time management and punctuality are emphasised to avoid disruption.

- For district training, it is essential that digital training have strong and stable internet access at venues to ensure smooth practical activities.
- Microsoft 365 accounts must be shared with participants in advance of sessions. Temporary or demonstration accounts should be available to ensure uninterrupted participation. Participants should be encouraged to bring fully functional laptops that meet minimum system requirements.
- Dedicated technical support staff should be assigned to assist with account access and device setup, minimising delays. Pre-workshop communication should include clear instructions and troubleshooting guidance for Microsoft 365 access, including password reset procedures.

8. Conclusion

The training was successfully conducted, providing educators with opportunities to enhance their professional knowledge and digital competencies. Participants demonstrated high levels of engagement, enthusiasm, and collaboration throughout the sessions, actively contributing to discussions, completing activities, and supporting one another in learning new concepts. Despite minor challenges, including device and connectivity issues, all participants were able to fully engage with the training content. The structured modules, combined with practical activities and peer learning, ensured that teachers left the workshop better equipped to integrate digital tools effectively into their classroom practices. The training fostered a positive learning environment, strengthened professional skills, and reinforced participants' commitment to ongoing development in educational technology.

9. Annexure A: Proof of Performance

Workshop	Attendance Registers	Photos/Videos
Ndwedwe Education Centre (2 Groups)	Registers	https://tinyurl.com/35uhuhcr
Vukile Secondary School (2 Groups)	Registers	
Indukwetsha Secondary School	Registers	
KwaDukuza Primary School	Registers	
Mandini Academy	Registers	
North Coast Primary School	Registers	

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