

SOUTH AFRICAN EXTRAORDINARY SCHOOLS COALITION COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS - 16 MARCH 2022

Welcome and Introductions

Judy Tate the Executive Director of Khanyisa Inanda Community Projects (KICP) facilitated this first South African Extraordinary Schools Coalition for 2022. She welcomed all attendees and gave a brief outline of the upcoming CoP programme and activities.

Check-In and Group Discussion

Nomfundo Sibeko

Nomfundo Sibeko a project manager at Khanyisa Inanda Community Projects introduced the check-in activity. As most individuals continue to grapple with the Covid19 pandemic, Nomfundo initiated the group discussion by getting participants to list three feelings to demonstrate their emotions on the current status of the pandemic in our country.

The activity revealed that most people are still undergoing profuse anxiety, stress, uncertainty, tiredness, and exhaustion. However, it was also encouraging to hear the many positive emotions expressed, such as hope, excitement, happiness, and optimism of a future that looks slightly better.

In breakaway rooms, participants continued to share their feelings while also getting an opportunity to listen to each other. They related the challenges they currently face during the pandemic, and the related emotions experienced.

To continue engaging with this topic, participants were assigned two questions to take home and to reflect on:

- How will you be moving from how you are feeling?
- As leaders, how will we promote a culture of recovery in our own spaces?

Session 1: Inanda Seminary's Self-Directed Professional Development Project

Sdu Msomi introduced Team Inanda, a group of educators from the Inanda Seminary who are involved in a self-directed professional development project. This programme which was conceived during the Covid19 pandemic addressed the objective of the school's life-long learning programme and also provided a means to improving learning outcomes. The aim was to challenge the one size fits all approach of traditional professional development and move to an individualised and tailor-made professional development programme.

Professional Development (PD) is guided by the identified needs and areas of development, and enables individuals within each department to work at their own pace and within their own space. It does not only offer individuals an opportunity to grow but to strengthen areas of need in their teaching practice. The results of the PDs are reported during feedback sessions which take place in a group setting with the departmental HoD and subject teachers, and are guided by the Content Action and Report model.

Four teachers from the Inanda team reflected on their experiences and the learnings that were extracted from the professional development project.

- **Khanyisani Nguni:** a grade 9-12 Mathematics teacher, used the professional development project as a strategy to identify his developmental and other areas of need. He created a plan that guided him through the professional development process in teaching Mathematics using technology. The goals set for his PD aligned with the vision of the school, which is for learners to be better versions of themselves. He enrolled in online courses, watched videos, and drew lessons from his departmental meetings to help him improve the identified areas of need. Khanyisani's highlight throughout his journey is that "teachers need to take responsibility for their own development".



- **Nothile Ngcobo:** an isiZulu teacher, whose professional development plan was informed by the inevitable need to use technology and acquire ICT skills in online learning and teaching. Nothile's PD plan aimed to enhance the development of relevant digital skills and bridge the gaps that exist during teaching and learning in the pandemic. Google forms was a mode of learning used to get learners actively involved, using it as a formative assessment tool, to give feedback, to shape learning, and to harness some of the challenges they encountered in the subject syllabus, particularly in isiZulu paper two.

Some of the identified benefits of professional development are reflecting on teaching and lesson design, and thinking systemically and practically about teaching and learning. This tool paves the way for better planning and learning outcomes. Learners were engaged and excited to be using Chrome rather than being in the traditional classroom. Successful professional development requires an astute plan, research, and collaboration with colleagues.

Failure is a part of success, and one needs to be persistent in failure in order to succeed.

- **Philisiwe Mthimkhulu:** An English teacher, used her professional development plan to improve teaching and learning in her classroom. This was done through the development of ICT skills and the use of Google classroom as a platform for teaching and learning. In her professional development journey, she subscribed to a Google for Education on YouTube channel, dedicated an hour to learn other ways of using Google classroom, testing ideas on the effective use of ICT in the classroom. Grade 10 and 11 learners used Canva to create advertisements and the activities were sent to Google classroom for grading while grade 12 learners used the Google Classroom database to upload literature and generate resources, tools, practice papers, videos, and other materials. The platform enables the teacher to send feedback and reflect on the learnings through the rubric function. Philisiwe concluded her presentation with the quote "learning and growing indeed takes place out of the comfort zone".
- **Mmabatho Nthutong:** A Geography and Mathematics teacher, highlighted the difference between traditional (one size fits all) and self-directed (tailor-made) professional development. Experience alone does not lead to learning but reflection makes the experience more meaningful.

The professional development process is not seamless as it has lowlights and highlights. The Inanda self-directed PD is no exception. The process entailed lowlights that enumerate some

of the risks experienced on the path towards achieving a positive PD goal; these include decisions on current content structure, self-discipline, and a focus on pedagogy, teaching and learning. During this time, Mabatho also observed some highlights such as the individual choosing an area of development, encouraging autonomy, problem-solving skills related to teaching and learning, reviewing content and having access to quality material through videos, articles, and collaboration.

Professional Development Reflections: Glen Harpur

Glenn Harpur

Ensuing the previous sessions, Glenn Harpur encouraged participants to reflect on the professional development project and the teacher experiences. Using the traffic light image below participants were able to reflect on the experiences and learnings of the teachers on the self-directed PD by using the descriptors: 'Love it...' 'Good idea...' or 'Seems impossible'.



Some of the responses captured are shown below:

Green

- Loved that everyone in the team recognised their limitations with regards to technology and they themselves wanted to improve themselves
- I loved that new teachers were able to move so seamlessly into such a SD programme - illustrating possibilities for all
- Self-directed allows one to grown at their own pace

Amber

- Good ideas but we do not really have free time to do these because of teaching loads.

Implementation would also be a bit of an issue with learners because of resources (technology).

Red

- No responses received. (Encouraging to note that none of the PD paths chosen were considered impossible).

Session 2: Transformation and Diversity

Gugu Radebe introduced this session with two intriguing questions; How do we create spaces that are transformational? and How do we create spaces that appreciate diversity?

Inclusive and appreciative spaces are those which celebrate differences and include individuals as part of their stories. What necessary steps need to be taken to ensure transformation? Should we introduce or start new traditions? Are there new definitions of culture? - These are some of the questions the teachers will tackle in their discussions.

Below follow the narratives of teachers who take us on the journey of transformation currently playing out in their spaces.

Noloyiso Lange: Small Steps

Noloyiso is an English teacher from St David's Marist school. She reflected on how talents play out in her school. The school encourages diversity through extramural activities, and this enables the school to embrace skills diversity.

[Click here to view Noloyiso's video](#)

St. Davids currently encourages diversity using contemporary music. The video shows a group of learners from the school singing a song with an English verse and an isiZulu and isiXhosa chorus. While practicing the song, Noloyiso taught the learners to pronounce basic isiZulu and isiXhosa words. The learners' willingness and interest to learn new words, practice correct pronunciation, and connect with culture has shown their inclination to challenge themselves and grapple with issues of inclusivity and transformation. Their worlds and their thinking have opened up: there is an appreciation of other languages; adapting to different cultures; respect for difference and an overcoming of the culture shock. This opens up a possibility and path where people of different ethnic groups are comfortable around each other.

[Click here to view Noloyiso's video](#)

Nomcebo Dladla: Big Steps

Nomcebo is a Socio-Emotional Learning project manager at KICP. Where people are involved there is constant growth and change which in turn results in transformation. A transformative space listens to varying voices, encourages difficult conversations, acknowledges difference, appreciates diversity and demonstrates that people's voices matter. Diversity includes how we think, behave and the norms that inform our everyday behaviour.

To initiate her presentation Nomcebo asked: "what comes to mind when you think of transformation?".

The following responses were recorded from participants:

- Mindset shift
- Challenging assumptions
- Inclusivity
- Recognising differences and similarities
- Change that occurs in either a positive or negative direction
- Rethinking and regrouping; learning and unlearning

Schools need to clearly identify how they want to transform their schools. To address issues related to transformation, there needs to be inclusivity, a different approach and way of thinking, and a different language to use when addressing the range of social issues. It is imperative to create spaces that encourage speaking out, acknowledge and create solutions and validate individual voices. Creating diverse spaces requires disruptive thinking, and having difficult and uncomfortable conversations. These conversations should evaluate what is acceptable and unacceptable but this will be complex as people have varying experiences and life journeys.

The Pretoria Girls High hair issue, the St. John racial issues, and bullying are amongst some of the issues that call for transformation. This transformation can start with small conversations and changing how we talk and think to achieve a common goal.

The core components of transformation are self-reflection as when the self gets better the organisation also gets better. The culture of transformation is nourished by emotional acknowledgement, honest conversations, and empathy.

[Click here to view
Nomcebo's presentation](#)

Future Leaders: Social Responsibility Ideas

Solange Kabeya

Social responsibility is one of the essential domains at the Global Teachers Institute. It aims to cultivate social responsibility and the work of generosity in communities. GTI has three steps towards tackling social responsibility, these can be viewed in the slides link below.

[Click here to view Solange's presentation](#)

Communities members should play an active role in tackling social issues. They can do this through the contribution of time and resources and not only being passive recipients. The project encourages future leaders to engage in community projects, afternoon classes, soup kitchens, etc. and to do this with love, passion and commitment.

Emily Mamolo a future leader from Jane Furse in Limpopo has taken the initiative towards social responsibility through the social development project. She identified a Drop-in centre that required help in the area and assisted with food, clothes, monetary contributions, breakfast preparation and playing with children. The Drop-in centre had an impact on the community and the contribution by the future leaders has brought immense change in the community such as:

- Providing nutrition to kids in the community (breakfast)
- Helping with homework
- Offering discipline
- Taking young people off the streets.

The future leaders will continue donating to ensure that the Drop-in centre can continue having an impact on the children while ensuring that the centre adheres to the Covid19 protocols.

[Click here to view Emily's video](#)

Teach with Africa (TWA) is an initiative that involved an exchange programme between SA students and USA students with the same interests. The students chose topics of their choice and met once a month to present on the social responsibility topics. The students completed the programme successfully and a Zoom virtual celebration was held in August 2021 with GTI and TWA.

SAESC Advocacy: John Gilmore

For the past few years, the SAESC has been a transformative space where the future of education is anticipated and achieved. During this time, the SAESC vision has also been accomplished. The Coalition is an African gift that will not polarise but create balance in education through continuous collaboration and dialogues.



The discussions that unfold in the Coalition prove that there is no straight road but rather a giant labyrinth where decisions occur collaboratively at crossroads. This will be unpacked in a special Stakeholder meeting to be held in April.

A graphic featuring a sunset over a dirt road, a quote about a labyrinth, a signpost with 'SHOULD' and 'MUST', and a meeting announcement.

I know there is no straight road
No straight road in
this world Only a giant
labyrinth Of intersecting
crossroads

SHOULD
MUST

Tuesday 26 April from 14:00 to 16:00
SAESC making choices for SAESC in the global labyrinth.

The incredible energy and passion displayed in this Coalition demonstrate that the SAESC is the African gift, therefore the Coalition encourages active participation and leaves no room for spectators.

You are all encouraged to join this meeting.

Closing

Patience Voller from BRIDGE, closed the meeting by thanking all presenters and participants for the stimulating presentations and engagement.

Please look out for an invitation to a special Stakeholder Engagement meeting which you will receive shortly. The meeting will take place 26 April from 14:00 – 16:00

The next CoP date will be communicated in due course.

The CoP is reminded of BRIDGE's knowledge management role. All meetings, presentations and discussions are captured and shared on BRIDGE's Knowledge Hub. To view, follow this [link](#).