

Senkhoane Community Learning Centre [Letjhabile Community Learning Centre], Thabong, Welkom

John Aitchison

The Centre

The Senkhoane Centre is actually part of the **Letjhabile Community Learning Centre**, an old closed school, where three other Centre managers also run classes, though they also have other sites elsewhere. It used to have a Centre Governing Body but this was amalgamated into one for the Letjhabile Community Learning Centre.

The current Senkhoane Centre Manager, Mr Solomon Maswanganyi (Maswanganyi.Solly@gmail.com) appears to be the senior person.

The Letjhabile Community Learning Centre is fenced and the classrooms and administrative centre well kept. There are about twelve classrooms, clean, in good conditions and with chairs and desks, chalkboards and pin boards. All the windows are covered with substantial metal guards. There are rubbish bins. There is are two sports field, though rather rough and unkempt.

There are two offices, used by Mr Maswanganyi and three other centre managers. There is a large built in safe, a broken photocopy machine, a fridge, water cooler, a laser printer and one shared laptop. There is an alarm system but it is not operational at present, the contract having lapsed.



The soccer field

Vukuzenzele Centre Manager
Ms S.E. Khumalo

Sekhoane Centre Manager in a
In a classroom

The completed questionnaire

Each of the four centre managers has filled in separate answers to questions 1 to 8 and jointly done the remaining questions.

The educators

There were four centre managers present:

Mr Solomon Maswanganyi (Senkhoane)

Ms N.S. Mpakate (Letjhabile)

Ms S.E. Khumalo (Vukuzenzele)

Mr H.D. Lenong (Tiakeni)

The educator qualifications and their conditions of service

More than half the educators at the four centres have a diploma and the next largest group have a teaching degree.

The centre managers had a pessimistic perception of their future: “adult education is dying” and “the support is dying”, not in the sense that there was no demand for adult education, as “the need will always be there”, but that adult education received little official support and funding, was neglected and that their conditions of service seriously disadvantaged them – temporary contracts with no benefits, medical aid or pension or support to upgrade qualifications.

They sometimes teach extra classes on Fridays and weekends because “of the passion that we have”. They queried the origins of the “only teach from Monday to Thursday” custom.

They also do their own cleaning and they have hired a part-time site caretaker using their own money.

Programmes

The four centres currently run ABET levels 2 to 4 or 3 to 4 and the (Amended) Senior Certificate.

ABET enrolments are declining, and the teaching times, 1:45 pm to 6:30 pm may not be suitable for the young participants. Sometimes people register at Letjhabile and then transfer elsewhere. There were no ABET level 1 learners as Kha Ri Gude had attracted them all (and they get free materials and stationery). There were promises that Kha Ri Gude learners would be directed to the centres to start at ABET level 2 but nothing happened. The Senior Certificate has been run since 2007 and enrolments are increasing overall but mainly at Letjhabile.

The ABET subjects they teach are:

Language, literacy and communication (English)
Mathematical Literacy
Human and Social Sciences
Economic and Management Sciences
Natural Sciences
Life Orientation
Applied Agriculture and Agricultural Technology
Ancillary Health Care
Travel and Tourism
Early Childhood Development

Materials

There are no Senior Certificate materials at all. They have to get old out-of-date books from schools. Learners borrow prescribed literature from school children.

They do have some ABET materials, provided in 2013 or before, but they were not very good and in insufficient quantity.

They had some textbooks for Numeracy (Level 2), Mathematical literacy (Level 4), English (Level 2), Economic and Management Sciences (Level 4), Economic and Management Sciences Level 4), Natural Sciences (Level 2), Life Orientation (Levels 4 and 4), Ancillary Health Care (Levels 3 and 4).

They had no equipment for Ancillary Health Care.

They have no readers at all.

Learners are asked to pay a small fee for photocopied materials

Both teachers and students have to pay money at internet cafes to download learning material. The learners are very conscious of the lack of resources.

Funding

Previously things such as electricity and water were meant to be paid by the Department of Education. They have been told that there is now a R33 000 debt for water. The department of Education also fixed the toilets.

In the questionnaire it states that they got no funding in 2013 and 2014 but in fact for those years utilities were paid for by the Department.

They have been told that they will receive R20 900 per centre in 2015. This amount is supposedly based on enrolments but it seems to be the same for all centres. This means that the four centres will collectively get R83 600.

In the past the mines used to send learners to the centres and pay for their travel, but now they train them in-house (this has also led to the reduction in ABET numbers).

The builders of a new mall in Welkom have promised to equip a computer laboratory and science laboratory.

Sport and cultural activities

Unusual for most centres, Letjhabile Community Learning Centre has sports activities (soccer, netball, volleyball, chess, and indigenous games) and choirs. Trophy cups are presented for these and they have team clothes.



Ms S.E. Khumalo (Vukuzenzele Centre Manager) holding a picture of the netball team



Ms N.S. Mpakate (Letjhabile Centre Manager) with a picture of the 2012 soccer team

Monitoring and support

Previously there was a District Coordinator and three curriculum subject specialists (one of whom was in Bloemfontein) who provided some support.

They think they may have been transferred to the DHET but are still at the Department of Education district offices.

The Centre manager used to write a quarterly report. This has now stopped as he doesn't know who to send it to or where to send it to.

Function shift

They were briefed in 2014 about the impending function shift and they were aware of the 31 March/1 April 2015 transition date. The Senkhoane centre drafted a submission "Contributions by Centre Managers and AET Educators towards an AET Turnaround Strategy" dated 20 October 2014.

This document noted the following issues:

1. Lack of infrastructure (offices, own classrooms, furniture, ablution and other facilities) and they recommended all centres should have these as well as staffrooms, library, computers laboratory and sporting facilities for extramural activities.
2. Lack of LTSM (Learning and Teaching Support Material) including stationery and equipment and apparatus.
3. Lack of a full complement of forms, books, codes of conduct, log books, etc.
4. Problem of adult learners lacking focus due to unemployment, hunger, lack of LTSM, having to spend on money on the internet, etc. and lack of celebratory events should be addressed including by feeding schemes and full supply of LTSMs and public announcements of results (as with school matric results).
5. Lack of support for educators, their teaching time is limited, and there are no workshops or them. "They feel they are not being recognised and are still seeking better employment." They need better Conditions of Service.

There was another meeting in December in Bloemfontein.

The Centre Managers understand that they are now only in Acting positions and that these posts will be advertised. Two of the current centre managers have been so since the mid 2000s and two since 2013.

With the 1 April function shift they had payment problems. Some were paid late and some not at all. They are still not receiving payment advices timeously. The problems related mainly to those on REQV 11 or REQV 12.

In May they were asked to bring budgets and submissions to a district meeting.

Though they are expected to invigilate, mark and moderate the GETC examinations and also invigilate the Senior Certificate examinations they are no longer being paid (as they were before by the provincial Department of Education).