

The Shongololo Interconnectivity Project

“Another important area being addressed under NEPAD is the issue of using information and communication technology to leapfrog the development of the continent forward. In order for Africa to benefit from the globalisation process and the information age, ICT infrastructure development on the continent is vital.”

President Thabo Mbeki

Address to the University of Oslo, Norway

13 May 2002

Summary

Simply put, this is a pilot project that is being run over a year, linking 20 developing schools and 20 developed schools (technologically speaking) in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa with 20 schools in the United Kingdom. The main objective is to have learners communicate with each other via e-mail; this to mutually solve problems, identify and enjoy differences and to discover commonalities.

Please note that

- educator and teacher are synonymous, as is learner and pupil. The former of each are used as the preferred term in South African education
- teacher-librarian has been used instead of media teacher or library media specialist
- developing schools in this context are schools that were previously disadvantaged
- developed schools are schools which have first world facilities

Educational phases: The comparative phases/age groups/key stages/years are as follows

UK

Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4
Year group 1-2	Year group 3-6	Year group 7-9	Year group 10-11
Age 5-7	Age 7-11	Age 11-14	Age 14-16

South Africa

Foundation	Intermediate	Senior	FET
Years Reception, 1,2, 3	Years 4, 5, 6	Years 7,8,9	Years 10,11, 12
Age 6,7,8	Age 9,10,11	Age 12,13,14	Age 15,16,17

Background

South Africa is a diverse country. Situated on the tip of Africa it is made up of nine provinces and has a population of 43 million people. There are many different population groups, and the ethnic divisions are as follows

Black	76%
White	13%
Mixed	9%
Indian	2%

(Microsoft Encarta 2002)

There are 11 different languages, Zulu being one of them and the language spoken in KwaZulu-Natal. English is recognised as being the language of learning and business.

Historically South Africa is in the process of recovering from the apartheid regime, a divisive policy of legalised discrimination that disadvantaged the majority of the population educationally, socially and politically. A peaceful resolution was finally found after years of resistance and a democratic election was held in 1994. Nelson Mandela (Madiba) was elected president of this new South Africa and the country is slowly attempting to transform into a more equitable society. The constitution of South Africa is one of the most liberal in the world and emphasises, amongst other things, tolerance and respect

1. Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms
2. Non-racialism and non-sexism

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996

It will however take many more years for the country to recover, especially when it comes to education and more especially technology. The HIV/AIDS is also a major problem and it is estimated that the infection rate in areas is as high as 25% of the adult population. The biggest challenge this creates other than the destruction of family life is economic as the functioning workforce is affected and it is estimated that there by 2010 there will be 2 million AIDS orphans, parentless families with no income. Violent crime brought about by poverty is rife and the average South African is five times more likely to be murdered than the average American (*The Shackled Continent Guest, Robert*). One South African man in four admits to having raped someone (*Scared at School: Sexual Violence against Girls in South African Schools Human Rights Watch, New York 2001*)

Education, communication and information are key to bringing South Africa into the 21st century although “some Africans fret that modernisation will mean the Westernisation of their culture: that television will kill traditional songs and festivals. It is a worry, African folk tales, if not written down may be lost”. (*The Shackled Continent Guest, Robert*). Historically Africans have an oral culture and this is endorsed by the number of cellular phones per capita. “In 1998 2 million Africans had cell phones, in 2002, 30 million” (*The Shackled Continent Guest, Robert*). Written communication, especially in a second-language, is difficult for some, and the advent and culture of e-mail quite foreign, not to speak of the nuances of e-mail netiquette.

The Digital Divide is ever widening as it is strongly related to economic and social disparities, South Africa has a 31% unemployment rate (*CIA Factbook*). 25% of the population in developed countries was online in 2001 and in South Africa only 6% of the population; 3.1 million of the 43 million. (*A Strategy for the Implementation of e-Education in KwaZulu-Natal Sept 2003 Mhlane, H*). The development of a Draft White Paper on e-Education articulates very clearly the implementation of a national rollout plan for technology and will impinge on the strategy finally implemented by KwaZulu-Natal.

According to the Schools Register of Needs Survey conducted in 2000 only 14.8% of the 27000 schools have computers for teaching and learning. The learner-computer ratio is therefore 164:1. KwaZulu-Natal is well below the national average as only 10.4% of the 6037 schools have computers, a little more than 600. 27% of the schools have libraries and an even smaller percentage have computers in those libraries. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education is responsible for the education of over 2, 5 million learners, has approximately 76,000 educators.

Added to this dire state of affairs are issues such as the terrain and the vast distances that people have to travel. KwaZulu-Natal has a coastline and a mountain range with vast swathes of deep rural undeveloped land in-between. Some of the children have to ford rivers to get to school whilst others are transported illegally in the back of pickup trucks. These are the only vehicles that can cover the areas that lack proper roads.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education is committed to redress and reform and is proud of a substantial elevation in the Year 12 pass rate over the last ten years of democracy. There are schools with very little infrastructure which manage to produce quality results through the sheer determination of committed management and teaching staff. KwaZulu- Natal has a dichotomy in terms of delivery. There are schools which are world class in terms of provision of resources; although these are mostly

independent of the government structure and which reflect the income level of the parents. There are however many state schools which offer facilities comparable to anywhere else in the world. Closing the gap between these schools and schools which have no electricity, classrooms or toilet paper whilst still delivering a new curriculum that is innovative in content and resource-based in methodology is the challenge of the Department.

There have been many initiatives to alleviate the situation both within the Department and externally through non-governmental organisations. Technology is particular, is the area most favoured by the latter and schools are the recipients of donated computers. These can and do bring their own problems as often the computers are old, incompatible with current software, there is no technical support, upgrading is too expensive, connectivity is unaffordable on a dial-up connection, there is no training and the schools also become a target for theft.

“ Many of the projects that happened within the province of KwaZulu-Natal show an emphasis on hardware roll-out with significantly less investment in other key areas e.g. teacher professional development, infrastructure maintenance and support, research and development etc” (*A Strategy for the Implementation of e-Education in KwaZulu-Natal Sept 2003 Mhlane, H*).

The Department is in the throes of creating a donations policy with regard to computers and this is being informed by a book donations policy already in place. Very often books are donated which have no cultural or educational relevance to the recipients and some South African schools have been little more than a dumping ground for inappropriate and dated remainders. Some people view these donations as an attempt to re-colonise the minds of Africans with euro-centric material. Similarly there is also a certain antipathy in some circles toward the industry standard software which has been made available free to all our state schools and different platforms which will allow open source is gaining popularity.

A major mitigating factor in terms of connectivity other than lack of electricity and uneven terrain is the fact that we have one telecommunications service provider and the telephone or leased line costs are well beyond the financial reach of the average school. There have been alternatives such as satellite and wireless technology mooted but the reality is such that, as schools still rely heavily on fax and thus telephone connectivity, dial-up is the simplest to obtain.

ELITS

ELITS i.e. Education Library and Information Technology Services is one of nine Directorates in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. We have an Academic and a Provisioning component with

ICT falling under the latter although in reality it stands squarely between the two. Head Office function is to create policy and implementation is carried out within our four regions by the 28 ELITS regional personnel. ELITS has developed a school library policy for the Province and has relevant committees which address issues such as information literacy, reading, book selection, professional development. There is a long-term plan to provision all the schools in the Province with a library and this by 2010. A course in school library science has been re-established at our local university and it is anticipated that well over a hundred educators will be qualified in this field every year through a bursary scheme.

ELITS was privileged to have hosted the International Association of School Librarianship Conference in 2003 and this conference went a long way in convincing the departmental officials of the importance of school libraries. Jamie McKenzie was a keynote speaker at the conference and he emphasised the necessity for a lucid and balanced approach to ICT.

Information and Communications Technology

The ELITS school library policy clearly articulates the philosophy that governs ICT in our school libraries vis-à-vis

Rationale

- that ICT is seen to be a tool; a means to an end, not an end in itself
- that computers are used first and foremost by learners and educators for accessing information as opposed to administrative work by educators
- that for computer training to have meaning, applications are taught within context and at point of need (just-in-time versus just-in-case) across the curriculum and with meaning

Provisioning

- that reading and literacy are not taught using a computer therefore the provision of books and libraries remains an essential in our schools. Digital libraries cannot replace book libraries
- that where there are computers there should be a library and where there is a library there should be computers (information centres). This principle applies to all educator resource centres in the province as well as schools. Also, libraries and computer centres should be adjacent
- that a bank of networked computers is not a pre-requisite for effective use of technology. A single on-line computer, accessible to learners and educators in a school, and managed by a nominated person e.g. an information specialist, provides an excellent starting point to

information retrieval and collaborative learning projects e.g. Global Teenager so that computers are taught across the curriculum and in context

Pedagogic Principles

- that new teaching methodologies need to be used if educators are going to use the potential of the technology (e.g. currency of information allows for authentic versus contrived problem solving - problem based learning)
- that the philosophy of outcomes-based education take place i.e. learners exercise choice as opposed to traditional teaching whereby the learners all follow the same instruction (free-range versus the battery hen approach). Beyond being a sound pedagogic principle, it means that resources are more equitably shared and that learners are developing different skills through using a range of resources

Human Resource Requirements

teacher-librarians (information specialists) are professionals and thus

- need to be qualified as such i.e. as educators, librarians and competent in the use of ICT
- collaborate with the educators in an equal and advisory role to ensure that information literacy takes place across the curriculum
- ensure that effective information skills are taught so that learners are thus ethical, competent and discerning users of information

The latter point is the most pivotal of all. ELITS is dedicated to creating information literate individuals i.e. a person who can manage the wealth of information available. This concept is beyond acquiring mere information skills but to make sense of this information and to create new and unique information from it.

ELITS believes that a single on-line computer that is managed by a competent and interested individual can go a long way into taking a school from a bicycle on the edge of the information highway to a fast motorcar.

The emphasis is on access to information and communication, not training in computer applications. Ideally, it is acknowledged, every learner in the Province should have the resources to both become completely computer literate and that a single on-line PC is definitely an interim strategy. If one waits however, for the ideal to happen, the learners in KZN will stay forever in a time warp of expectation and turn-of-the-last century education.

Project Outline

It is against this background that the concept of the Shongololo Interconnectivity Pilot Project was born.

A Shongololo (more correctly eShongololo) is an African millipede, with a black shiny shell - like skin and sensitive antennae. It is a shy creature which is seen most often after a tropical thunderstorm. When touched, it curls into a circle. Shongololo was chosen because the project 'grew legs' quite quickly as more schools came on board, the participants will have to be sensitive to others and at the same time quite hard skinned and robust in the face of technology.

Over and above learners communicating with each other via e-mail, the Shongololo Project has been created to facilitate the following in mind;

- communication on professional topics between the facilitators (educators) involved
- teacher exchanges, both locally and overseas
- informal internship between the librarians in the developing and the developed schools
- e-mail exchanges between other bodies in the school community e.g. library monitor body etc
- fund-raising by the overseas schools on behalf of the developing schools in South Africa
- information retrieval using the Internet for both educators and learners
- exposure to professional mailing lists for the educators

Developing schools in KwaZulu-Natal

Twenty schools in deep-rural KwaZulu-Natal were selected over a three-month period. ELITS has an ICT committee and within that committee are the ELITS Regional Heads. Lunga Molapo was elected to be the project co-ordinator and myself Joy Rosario, ELITS Head Office i/c ICT, Project Manager. The Regional Heads nominated schools in their regions as possible candidates and these were all visited. The selection was from each of the three phases i.e. Foundation, Intermediate and Senior and the regions also attempted to cover their three circuits to ensure as comprehensive participation as possible.

Amongst the list of criteria were;

- A willingness to participate
- Support from management
- Preparedness to fund the online connection

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- The provision of strong security
- A library
- A librarian who was prepared to drive the project in the school
- A telephone line in the library
- Time for face-to-face training

The Principal in each school had to agree to the participation of the school and also to a year long commitment from the date of the actual start of the project. ELITS had reserved the right to withdraw the investment of the computer if a school failed to maintain e-mail contact for any reason, be it unpaid telephone or electricity accounts etc. Should a school manage to sustain the project, the computer and all the peripherals would stay in the school and continue to be supported by ELITS, but not under the umbrella of the project as it were. Principals signed an itemised inventory of all the equipment given to the school and a letter pledging the school's commitment to the project.

Our investment

Each of the schools was then provided with a full-house Pentium 4 PC, printer, external modem, software (Norton's Virus software, Inspiration, Literacy Bank and, in the case of the Foundation and Intermediate schools Dorling Kindersley World Explorer and all received the Libwin library automation programme). The Microsoft Schools Agreement was duly completed by each school and they received the full MS Office suite, including Publisher and FrontPage, also Encarta encyclopaedia with the atlas and dictionary. Each school created a website during training and are busy populating the sites at present.

The schools were also provided with a selection of paper-based material, mostly reference books such as dictionaries, encyclopaedias and atlases. Specifically, each school was also provided with the Dorling Kindersley Travel Guide to South Africa; this is a superb title which is content rich and clearly illustrated. It was felt that learners should be exposed to information about their own their country, especially as some has not had the opportunity to travel very far.

Training

Training then took place. This was over a period of three days and the Principal of each school was invited to the initial orientation day. Past experience has shown that if one does not have the support from management, then problems arise. It was also important to have Principals understand that a computer will not necessarily circumvent problems in the education system. There is the perception that technology is the answer to all ills with little realisation that it brings its own separate expensive issues.

Two educators from each school were trained, the teacher-librarian and another person to sustain and support the project. This was a wise move as already one of the teacher-librarians has been found to be 'in excess' and has moved on. The training in no way tried to create computer literate persons, more computer confident ones. By the end of training each individual had practised sending e-mail using Microsoft Outlook as this was a necessary skill above all other. Permission was granted to use the Educators' Network CD (produced by a local NGO as part of another initiative) in the project, primarily for the excellent tip sheets on using the different applications; something the educators could work through in their own time.

A website using FrontPage was created for each school, and the basics of FrontPage were then taught in order that the site can be maintained locally. It was suggested that the schools use Telkom, a national telecommunications agency, as their ISP as it was the most reasonable dial-up option available and offered 10mgs of web space on the server. This has proved to be something of a problem because the 'free space' does not support Windows. Discussion is ranging at present because the Microsoft School Agreement offers free software to schools and this includes FrontPage, yet Telkom does not support it. Telkom has otherwise been supportive in expediting telephone lines and schools that could provide a reference number were prioritised.

The educators then returned to their schools geared up to the project with the necessary hard and software and the elementary training to manage. The next stage was for the schools to familiarise themselves with the equipment, ensure the phone lines and security were in place, get connected and start e-mailing.

Developed Schools in KwaZulu-Natal

The project was advertised on InfoLink, a South African mailing list for teacher-librarians and ICT educators. It is, on the whole, representative of functional school libraries in South Africa with over 230 subscribers. Participation in the project was voluntary and it was gratifying to note the number of these schools which came forward. Most developed schools have outreach-type activities and this project offers a good platform. It was felt that the inclusion of these schools was a necessary aspect to the project as;

- it needed to be underpinned with local support
- intercontinental projects are a bit pointless if children in the same country do not have the opportunity to talk to each other, equally they enjoy the interaction with 'overseas' friends
- local developed schools are of world class standard

The facilitator in each school, mostly the teacher-librarian, made contact with the developing school and United Kingdom school.

United Kingdom schools

When this project was originally mooted the School Librarians Network (SLN) in the UK was going to be approached. The AfriTwin Education Trust was proposed as an alternative contact and ELITS decided that, as it already had an interest in connecting South African schools, we would work with the Trust. The twenty schools in the UK were duly recruited but unfortunately, just as the Shongololo school mailing lists were created, the Trust dissolved. We have subsequently found other schools through UK teacher mailing lists to take the place of schools that had withdrawn.

I had the opportunity to visit some of the schools in the UK whilst on another trip to the Northern Hemisphere. My visit consisted of giving a presentation at one of the participating schools to a meeting of the Principals involved and thereafter visits to the rest of the schools including technology colleges. This was most interesting as one of the schools that is a “Shongololo twin” had closed the library, put the books in storage and converted the space into two computer laboratories. The Deputy Head Teacher involved is endeavouring to reverse the decision as he understands what the school has lost in the process. This particular school boasts one computer for every two pupils.

It is interesting to note that ‘citizenship’ is a subject in the UK curriculum and quite a few citizenship teachers will be running the project. Sustainable development, fair trade and environmental issues will be relevant to learners in both countries. This is an interesting development and a useful one, as there is plenty of material on these topics both on and offline and they also stay clear of the issues our youth is exposed to exhaustively i.e. HIV/AIDS, crime and drugs.

Suggested topics for the project are based on real-life problem solving issues that are ‘citizenship based’ and phrased according to phase level e.g. ‘what did you have for breakfast?’ to what comprises a food pyramid (nutrition) in your country to how to make a nutritious soup. Topics are generated by the facilitators and pertain to issues that are of common interest in their schools.

Present status

All the developing schools were visited in November, a four day round trip which covered over 1800 kilometres (1125 miles). The object of the visit was to create an interim report, discover new challenges and recognise successes.

- Establish connectivity
- Explain the library automation system further
- Discuss the topics and groups of learners
- Explain and demonstrate virus protection
- Establish that e-mail is understood and functional
- Check the cache of connected machines
- Demonstrate the books/videos and CDROM disks brought back from England
- Check security
- Check the ongoing interest
- Password protect the computer
- Check that the school has joined the relevant Shongololo group
- Troubleshoot any other problems

Challenges

This project was conceptualised against the background of a similar project run in the Western Cape called the Amy Biehl Connection Project. The lessons learnt from that project were applied to this but we still found unexpected challenges! It must be pointed out that, at no time, did we anticipate a smooth trouble-free scenario and indeed, deliberately built in features which would create problems. The main one was taking a school which had perhaps only ever used a computer for clerical work, not communication and information, and expecting that school to participate in an e-mail project with only three days training. We could have located schools in KwaZulu-Natal that were already using online computers but that is not reflective of the broad reality. The project had to perform the function of teaching us what to anticipate in the worst-case scenario. Successful rollout of this project will be entirely dependent on the outcome of this project which is after all, a pilot. The province of KwaZulu-Natal is littered with failed projects and sustainability is seldom thought right through, mainly because there is an over-optimistic understanding of the circumstances in which projects are introduced.

We found that

- *Responsibility*

Although the project was to be run by the two people initially trained at ELITS, in some schools the ELITS trained staff would disempower themselves by deferring to the computer teacher who was a more confident computer user. Intervention through support and understanding from the Principal and the management team is essential.

- *Use of the equipment*

In some of the schools the staff members have used the equipment for administrative purposes and the learners thus have limited access.

- *Cost of consumables*

The printer was there for the librarian to use for library use, including printouts of Internet sites and Shongololo related material. In some cases the cartridge has been used up on administrative tasks and not replaced.

- *Settings*

Evidence was found of people interfering with the settings on the computers, deleting software and loading other software. All the computers have now been password protected and are thus the responsibility of the librarian. We are instructing the schools that the cost to repair any such damage will be borne by the school.

- *Private and inappropriate use*

Schools need to be informed of the Government policy regarding private and inappropriate use of government computer property e.g. the downloading of music files, spam, flaming and bad language, pirated software and accessing unsuitable websites, using the CDROM writer to pirate software etc.

- *Virus software*

All the computers had virus software especially installed, mainly to protect all the schools in the project. An update of the latest virus antidotes however, has not been run in some of the schools on a regular basis and schools' computers have been infected. Similarly schools also need to be reminded to check any floppy disk for viruses.

- *Shongololo Facilitators and Shongololo Groups*

Invitations, only valid for 7 days, to join these groups were sent out to all the schools on a number of occasions and not all the schools joined both groups. Joining the groups is essential in order to protect the integrity of the project and prevent misunderstandings, to share information and to ensure that the e-mails stay active between the learners. Some of the developed schools have fire walled Yahoo which has created a problem and a couple of the schools distrust Yahoo groups. Ways around this is to create a website with a mailing list contained within the site, alternatively to use an educationally recognised site such as Blackboard.com.

- *Connectivity*

There were instances of people attempting to create more than one connection to the Internet resulting in e-mail not working. Schools were asked use only one e-mail programme i.e. Microsoft Outlook (preferably not Outlook Express as it does not have the same features) and to ensure that settings are left alone.

- *Software*

The software i.e. Encarta encyclopaedia, Inspiration, Literacy Bank, World Explorer and Publisher installed on the computers is not being used by either staff or learners.

- *e-Mail*

We found that some schools do not maintain regular e-mail contact with their partner schools. There have been several instances of schools dropping out because of lack of response for whatever the reason and this has been perceived as lack of interest. There is no way of knowing that this is the case unless schools join their Yahoo group so that the problem can then be identified. The habit of checking e-mail on a daily basis needs to be inculcated.

- *Library automation*

All the schools have had elementary training using the library automation programme Libwin. This is a cost effective South African product and was selected because of the user-friendly interface as well as features such as using it on a standalone as well as on a network. Only some of the schools had captured data so the programme is not being used to its fullest extent (stock take, OPAC etc).

- *Outstanding accounts*

Some of the schools have had their electricity or telephone lines cut off because of non-payment, in some cases this affected the installation of the phone line to the library. This has caused great difficulties as a lot of time has been wasted. Several of the schools managed to raise sponsorship money towards security and also their telephone connectivity charges.

- *Lightning strikes*

Lightning strikes are a problem as KwaZulu-Natal has tropical thunderstorms during summer; external modems were installed for this reason. All the schools were advised to unplug their computers from the wall and in a couple of schools neglected to do this. Unfortunately the two-year onsite warranty for the destroyed hard-drive is null and void and the school will have to carry the cost.

- *Lack of technical support*

Given the fact that the KZN Department of Education does not have the infrastructure to provide technical support in the Regions the project in some schools has stalled on trivial hardware problems. The ELITS staff is not technically trained and furthermore it is not their mandate which leaves the schools dependent on expensive service providers or worse, quasi “technicians” who create more problems than solutions. Distance militates against prompt Head Office support which creates a bottleneck and causes frustration and ELITS having relatively few library advisors servicing the Regions adds to the problem.

- *Topics considered inappropriate*

Some of the topics mooted by our local schools such as rape, HIV/AIDS, domestic violence and teen pregnancy might be considered inappropriate discussion topics by overseas schools, however they

are daily realities for some of our schools – even primary schools. ‘Safe’ topics equally, might be considered trivial e.g. animal rights or genetically modified foods when the reality is children eating cheap sweets for breakfast.

- *Further training*

We found that a lot of the problems were caused through people either being frightened of the computer or being over-confident and interfering with settings. Further training on any aspect of the project and equipment is available to all the participants.

Successes

The most important success of this project has been going from school to school and experiencing the delight and amazement of educators and learners alike as they receive their first e-mail! There are various degrees of success ranging from a school that is operating on the most basic e-mail correspondence to schools which have had learners actually visit on a face-to-face basis. Everybody involved in this project has experienced a steep learning curve, the project managers included. It is already patently evident that as the project grows there will be no limit to the benefits to educators and learners alike.

ELITS and similarly the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education as a whole continue to be supportive of the project, especially as the lessons learned to date will ensure sustainability.

Future Status

It is anticipated that ELITS will be funding more schools and growing the project. Schools in the United States and in Australia will be included in Phase 2. So much depends on viable technical support and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education is in the midst of creating an ICT infrastructure which will deliver on this necessary aspect. ELITS will, in the interim, quietly continue developing the connections.

Conclusion

The project is an effort to facilitate communication, build confidence and enhance skills for the school community educators and learners alike. There has been a considerable investment in both time and money in this project and it simply has to succeed. Fortunately ELITS is committed to the time and expense of this particular project as it is important that the notion of a single online PC making a difference proved. As the dynamics of the project change so will the management, not all the issues will have been foreseen and we are also dealing with the internal issues in each school, all very different from each other.

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Addenda

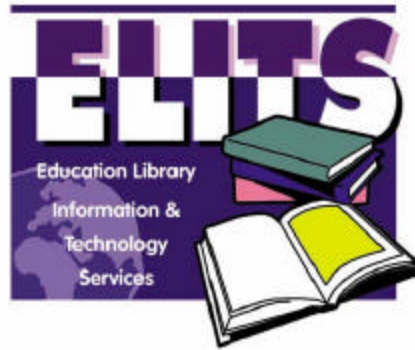
Pledge

Certificate

Topic list

Topic evaluation

Project Guidelines



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PLEDGE

Name: _____

Grade: _____

School: _____

Date: _____

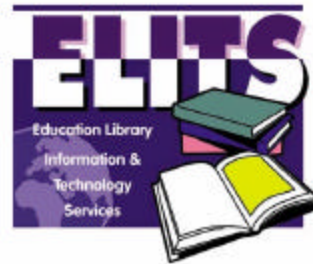
I, _____, promise to

1. abide by the rules of Netiquette and to not send any offensive e-mail. I will not use bad language, will not be rude and will not use e-mail for political purposes
2. not use e-mail for personal gain
3. not divulge personal details e.g. address which could result in me being privately approached
4. not e-mail the participants of this e-mail project privately
5. not forward any jokes or anything of that kind e.g. sayings, chain letters etc
6. not send pictures unless specifically requested (file size to be kept to a minimum)

Learner's signature: _____

Facilitator's signature: _____

Shongololo Interconnectivity Project



This certifies that

Name of participant: _____

Has successfully participated in the project

Signature of facilitator: _____

Signature of Principal/Head Teacher: _____

Date: _____

Shongololo Topics

Who am I?

What did I eat for breakfast?

I use my break times to ...

What did I do with my day?

What did I do at the weekend?

The best holiday I have ever had...

My world would be improved if...

Who are you?

I am what I eat therefore could I eat better?

Break times are time to...

A typical day in my life would be...

This weekend I plan to...

The furthest place I have ever been was

My environment would be improved if...

Teenagers are all the same

Does a balanced diet really matter?

As a global citizen I have responsibilities to...

The world I would like my children to inherit would...

Children can make choices

Animals are important to us

The local police help us

Diversity is something to celebrate

Our school grounds could be improved by

Children have rights and responsibilities

How do rules and laws affect me?

Property should be respected

Graffiti looks good

Democracy is not always a good idea

What is in the news today?

Homework should be banned

School uniforms take away individuality

How can I make a difference in my community?

How are we the same?

How are we different?

People who influence me
I don't read because ...
I read because...
What makes people poor?
What makes people rich?
What is an asylum seeker?
What is xenophobia?
Countries have a responsibility to look after each other
Countries should stay out of each other's business
My family tree looks like this
What is fair trade all about?
What is organic farming?
There is nothing wrong with genetically modified food
What is the difference between aid and trade
Life is so unfair
Even rich people can be poor
Even poor people can be rich
I get to school by...
What is solar energy?
Schools need rules
What are the consequences of crime?
Friends are special
If I could wave a magic wand...
If I had three wishes...
If I won a million rand/pounds/dollars...
If I were to start a business I would...
All the problems on earth come down to power and control
There are two sorts of people the "why nots" and the "yes buts"
Creative people are more intelligent
Wealth is more important than health
Everybody has a right to go to university

Shongololo Project

TOPIC REPORT on Shongololo Group

Topic:

Age level:

Number of participants:

Length (in weeks) of discussion:

Evaluation of topic:

Suggestions for improvement:

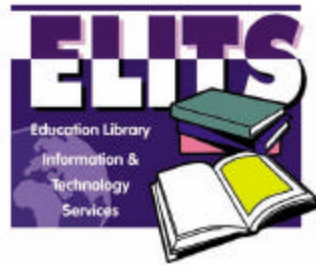
Quality of participation:

Conclusions reached:

Facilitator: _____

School: _____

Date: _____



The Shongololo Schools Interconnectivity Pilot Project

Guidelines for the Developed Schools

Outline of the Project

What is this project about and who is running it?

ELITS, the Education Libraries and Information Technology Services Directorate in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture is running this project in partnership with schools in the United Kingdom. There are sixty schools involved, twenty developing schools in rural Kwa-Zulu-Natal, twenty developed schools in urban KZN and twenty in England.

The project will run for a year and will be supported locally by ELITS school library advisors in the regions as well as Lunga Molapo as Project Co-ordinator (083 7851607) and Joy Rosario (082 3654663).

Troubleshooting

We do anticipate that there will be problems beyond the obvious, like security of computer equipment and accessibility e.g.

- technical and connectivity issues
- connectivity costs
- sustainability on the part of the educators involved
- sustainability on the part of the educators involved
- misunderstandings because of the nature of e-mail
- fear of the technology
- fear of participating in group discussions
- personality issues within the schools, both with learners and educators
- timetable issues

but have done our best to ensure they are kept to a minimum without being too prescriptive. Each school will have the freedom to manage the project within their own time frame and circumstances and it would be appreciated if all difficulties are addressed immediately and resolved. A facilitator's mailing list has been set up for all the educators so that we can all participate in airing, and hopefully solving, problems. Should you wish to contact the Project Manager please e-mail Joy Rosario at joyr@kznedu.kzntl.gov.za

It is hoped that everybody bears in mind that this opportunity for learners, and educators to communicate with each other, both locally as well as with another country is invaluable. A lot of time and energy, as well as expense, has gone into the project to date and project managers are committed to seeing the project to completion. We realise the pressures that teachers face and have thus tried to ensure that the project will be self-sustaining with the facilitator merely ensuring that the discussion is ongoing. It is suggested that there be a notice board in your school relating to the project

and relevant e-mails be posted on this board. Please bear in mind that this is a pilot project so it will be fairly dynamic i.e. changes will be made in response to the needs of the schools. The project will be written up and it is hoped that it will provide an example of best practice in KwaZulu-Natal Schools so as to encourage others to be involved in further phases.

How will it work?

The project will involve

1. Learners (Shongololos) e-mailing each other
2. Educators (facilitators) e-mailing each other
3. Face-to-face visits/intern training (this is voluntary and will be between the schools involved)

Every effort has been made to equip the developing schools with the hardware, software and the technical training necessary to the success of the project. The 60 schools involved will be divided into triangles or rings of three, a school in rural Kwa-Zulu will be linked to one in urban KZN and these two linked to a school in the UK. It is suggested that each school has a group of about six pupils (or learners) who participate for three months at a time. This means that there will be 18 learners in a triangle and they will be expected to check the e-mail of the triangle on a regular basis and reply to any discussion. Some people are more shy than others, but it is important that everybody feel comfortable about sending e-mails.

We have attempted to match 'like' schools e.g. government with government, independent with independent and also match at similar levels; Foundation, Intermediate and Senior. The UK has a different system, namely four Key Stages, of which the first three are relevant to the project, as we would prefer not to take it beyond Grade 9 (this is at each school's discretion however). We have also tried to match the schools geographically in KZN and also by phase.

As soon as a school is on e-mail the educators can start e-mailing each other. I suggest we call you facilitators, as you will be facilitating the project. Once contact has been made and the mailing lists prepared (they will be called Shongololo1 etc and you will be informed when they are ready), the learners can start their communication.

How will I manage the learners or Shongololos?

1. Ask for about six volunteers who would like to be Shongololos for three months. You can call it the Shongololo Internet Club perhaps.
2. Have each volunteer sign a pledge (attached)
3. Make sure that each volunteer understands that he/she has to check and reply to e-mail regularly. The Shongololos need to know that the facilitators are listening (lurking) in the background of any e-mail discussion but will not be interfering unless absolutely necessary
4. When a topic is suggested, the discussion will revolve around that (a discussion thread), as well as any other issues that are ongoing at the time. Example of a thread might be "Who am I?"
5. Facilitators are welcome to suggest discussion topics relevant to the interests and age groups of those in their clubs
6. When a discussion thread has reached a conclusion, a new one will be introduced. It is anticipated that a new thread might be introduced as often as every two weeks. This will be up to the schools, some might prefer the discussion to go on longer.
7. Groups might be requested to research a topic and even debate it.

8. After three months it is suggested that new members be recruited and the old ones each receive a certificate of participation (attached). Should a school wish to keep the same group or change more often, that is their decision to make.

What should I do in the Facilitator group?

1. Please check your Shongololo group mail and reply as often as you like
2. Chat about professional issues as well as anything else you wish to bring up. This will be an informal group where people are expected to use first names and mutually support each other. Occasionally we will suggest that you go to a website and print it out for the use of other educators on your school. You might also wish to suggest websites.
3. This list will stay in existence as long as it has a life, even beyond the time frame of the Shongololo Project itself

Netiquette (informal rules of behaviour on the Internet)

- Put a subject in the subject line
- Be careful how you write a message so that you don't hurt anyone's feelings
- If you want to, use emoticons. These are little signs showing how you feel e.g. :-) is a smiling face
- Don't type a whole word using capital letters as these means you are shouting
- Don't insult anybody (called flaming) or use the e-mail to advertise (spam)
- Do not forward any chain letters, jokes or personal messages
- Do not use e-mail for any illegal or unethical purpose
- Remember that e-mail is not private
- When in doubt, don't send an e-mail until you have re-read it
- Use appropriate language and never swear
- Do not reveal your home address or personal details
- Keep your message brief

Possible partnership outcomes

Professional support can be achieved in three ways

1. Using the facilitators mailing list
2. Developing a relationship with your local partner school and visiting that school either just for the day or for a more extended internship/shadowing experience
3. Developing a relationship with the overseas partner school and inviting their facilitators over. The British Council has a teacher exchange programme which we would encourage.
4. Developed schools might be willing to consider raising funds for the developing schools and we would encourage that. Just remember that it is largely pointless in goods being sent over from their home country as the customs duties are prohibitive.