

THE ASIDI BRIEF

Helping to restore dignity in education

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basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



ASIDI
Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative

SEDIBENG SPECIAL SCHOOL

There are 34 special schools in Limpopo and one of them is in the Waterberg district. It also happens to be an ASIDI school completed in 2014. Previously accommodated in two dilapidated houses, Sedibeng Special School for the deaf and intellectually impaired now boasts 12 classrooms, an admin block, nutrition centre, well equipped media centre, ablution facilities, hostels and four workshops. Before ASIDI, the school had up to three grades in one classroom in a multi-grade teaching format. The Principal, Mrs Merlyne Malepa in a 'life



after ASIDI' chat, tells The ASIDI Brief that the four workshops offer metal work, woodwork, needlework and cookery. She currently has 4 graduates of her school enrolled at the local TVET college whose lecturers and social worker interact with the school staff and principal on an on-going basis to coordinate progress and extra support. Concessions for examinations, in the form of scribes and tape recorders, are organised to allow learners a full shot at successfully completing their studies and eventually becoming independent adults who can contribute to the economy.

Exarro, who have previously donated 51 ipads for the school, is currently considering a three year proposal in which the company will fund a project to place learners in the world of work, in small business units around the town. The school has prepared the workloads and time tables for a skills development programme and is on the verge of signing a memorandum of agreement to this end. The smart partnership will allow school graduates to overcome learner barriers and ensure a smoother integration in the world of work. ASIDI is bearing fruit.

ZOOMING IN ON WOODWORK

One of the things that China excels at is producing the right skills for economic growth. Tim Cook, CEO of Apple, says companies go to China not because of low cost labour but "because of the skill that is in one location and type of skill it is". Precision tooling is vocational expertise that their educational curriculum continued to push on while other countries were de-emphasising it.



Back at Sedibeng Special School, two groups of learners have been undergoing year 1 and 2 of the Woodwork programme. The English group comprised 6 learners in Grades 6-7 and

the Afrikaans group had 10 learners in Grades 6, 7, 8 and 9. The English group comes from a previously disadvantaged background.

The learners were instructed in freehand drawings, isometric views and orthographic projections. They also learnt the theory of workshop safety, proper use and care of hand tools, the identification of parts, accessories, and use of woodworking machines. Learning included understanding timber, solid wood and board products as well as the conversion of logs, sawing, joining, mortise and tenon joints.



Practical work

To demonstrate understanding, learners had to make pencil cases and biltong carvers. The learners had to first draw the models, work out a cutting list and show the working procedures.

The outcome is beautifully crafted work, as the photographs show, and the next step is to make biltong dryers. This clearly necessitates a follow up visit by The ASIDI Brief!



ASIDI PROGRESS UPDATE

Progress since inception

Sub-programme	2011 /12	2012 /13	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017 /18	2018 /19	2019 /20	Total
New schools	-	17	36	59	52	16	14	21	14	229
Sanitation	41	89	161	152	38	41	32	207	73	834
Water	16	64	135	317	90	35	42	205	53	957
Electricity	-	148	101	39	18	-	66	Scope Completed	-	372

THE VALUE ADD OF EDUCATION INFRASTRUCTURE

A vicious drought has taken hold of the Eastern Cape and other provinces. The ASIDI Brief in a site visit in October to Chris Hani District West, revealed a part of the province in the grip of much more than a dry spell. We have never seen such scrawny sheep before in years of ASIDI school visits and official school handovers. The area from just after the Amathole Mountains pass after Cathcart towards Hogsback and Whittlesea is almost bone dry as one approaches Sada. Wikipedia tells us that “the word Sada means “finally” or “at last” in isiXhosa because the first settlers struggled to find a place before they settled in the area in 1964 following forced removals that accompany the history of this country almost everywhere”



Well finally, there is a state of the art school in the area, the aptly named Thembisa Primary School which was officially handed over by Eastern Cape Department of Education MEC, Fundile Gade on Friday 25 October. Another school has been completed in the area but that is a story for another day. It was a “good” Friday, because the community took occupation of a school that among other already well known ASIDI features, sports a Science Lab.

Why is this relevant?

The National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 is based on several principles, among them:

- Human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice: infusing the principles and practices of social and environmental justice and human rights as defined in the Constitution of the Republic of South

Africa.

Furthermore, the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 aims to produce learners that are able to:

- identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;
- use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others; and
- demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation

The focus of the teaching of Natural Sciences is “understanding the natural world”, while that of teaching technology is “the understanding of the need for human-made objects and environments to solve problems”.

Bongani Bantwini, writing in issue 67 of the Journal of Education (2017) states, “The physical structure of a classroom is a critical variable that affects student morale and learning (Phillips, 2014) and therefore should be inviting to make students enthusiastic about learning. A science classroom should inspire learners and not depress them and make the subject seem difficult, especially learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. According to Marcinek (2011), the physical space and environment, the lighting, the colour of the walls and the arrangement of tables and chairs affect our overall mood, our ability to learn and productivity. Teachers should therefore ensure that the classroom environment is conducive for learners to progress well”.

The ASIDI team has been consistent with the message that we are about a lot more than brick and mortar. We are conscious that we are helping to build a nation through the provision of infrastructure which allows for the development of fully functioning citizens. In this regard, our infrastructure components (spacious, cool in summer, warm in winter, new furniture, nutrition centres, labs, stimulating learning environment) all combine in conspiring to producing that outcome: a learner who will grow in to a citizen who seeks solutions for their environment, be it natural, social economic or futuristic.

As the saying goes, “in every crisis, there’s danger and opportunity”. The discerning and enterprising educator has the opportunity out of the current national crisis to take learners on a school outing to the ironically named Waterdown dam to witness the “visible” decline in water levels, along the way to observe the scrawny sheep desperately seeking pasture on

the plains and their anxious farmers who are most likely older siblings and parents. There can be no greater context, therefore, in understanding the problem at hand before beginning, once back in the state-of-the-art ASIDI classroom, to attempt a lesson on a solutions-based approach to the issue.

One of the major issues identified by educational psychologists is “Mother inadequacy hypothesis” which basically argues that the less knowledge a nurturing mother has, the less the chances of her being able to help a learner with additional knowledge or homework. Imagine, therefore, her joy and sense of fulfilment, when her children ask for help because the homework subject is:

- “What kind of crops did Grandpa and Grandma grow before we started buying refined maize meal at the shops?
- How and when did they plant them?
- How did they cope with water shortages?

Pearl millet, for example, is a widely grown crop in Namibia, Tanzania and India. Its decline in Southern Africa has been due to the popularity of growing maize. Critically though, apart from being more nutritious, Pearl millet is drought resistant. The grain can be a subject for a homework assignment.

The learning cycle is almost complete: classroom learning, field trip, parental involvement and right there and then, the ASIDI programme may have helped to trigger a future career of a specialist in drought resistant crop research.

As another saying goes, “the future belongs to those who see possibilities before they become obvious.” In this age of climate change, many a pedagogical expert would argue for the teaching of the four “Cs”: critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity”.

The ASIDI programme is providing the facility. Communities, educators and learners must take full advantage and sweat the assets to the benefit of self, fellow citizen and country.





WORK PLACE EXPERIENCE WITH ASIDI



Mickyle Jordan Sewlall is a first year student at the Durban University of Technology studying for a National Diploma in Architectural Technology. He has been gaining valuable work experience doing site inspections of ASIDI projects with the project architect, taking minutes of meetings, doing revisions of drawings, sketch plans, conceptual layouts and working drawings.

Manelisi Dwabayo was born and grew up in Ngqeleni location a rural area just outside Mthata. His primary education was at Zanoxolo Junior Secondary School and he completed his matric at Idutywa School Of Excellence. In 2012 he started studying for his Diploma in Building at Walter Sisulu University. He chose building because he found it to be an interesting industry and was looking forward to gaining technical skills with the hope that he would one day run his own business. He is currently in work experience training under Zibele Construction.

His duties include shadowing the foreman on site, taking levels, supervising labourers and organising material. He also provides site progress updates to his manager and prepares payment certificates. He has enjoyed preparing platforms, setting out and casting concrete for the slab. As mundane as it sounds, attending meetings has been a source of valuable feedback and growth.

Charles Darwin once observed an enduring truism, *"It is not the most intellectual of the species that survives; it is not the strongest that survives; but the species that survives is the one that is able best to adapt and adjust to the changing environment in which it finds itself."*

Right across the country, the ASIDI programme is helping to develop the human capital that will meet local, regional and national needs for South Africa. It has been an investment worth pursuing.

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