

Visit to Masakhane CLC, Paballelo, Upington, Northern Cape on 2 November 2015

John Aitchison

The Centre

The Centre is housed on the premises of the Paballelo Secondary School in Paballelo, what was a township created for the black population in the days of the Group Areas Act,

The Centre is old, and was started in the late 1970s or early 1980s as a “night school”. The Centre is a main centre and it seems that most centres in the district are main centres (it was suggested that some previous clustering process had led to this situation).

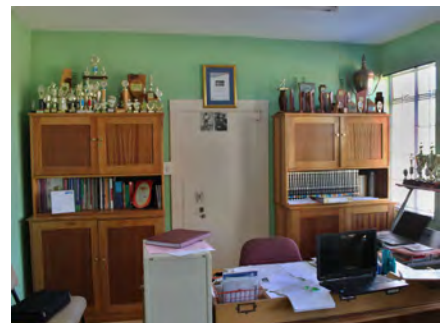
The Centre Manager and sole educator is Mr John Moiwa, who has taught for 7 years (previously he served at other centres).

The Centre, though there has never been a formal written agreement with the school has an excellent working relationship with the school and its principal, in whose office we met. It seems that the school actually handles some of the administration of the centre and does some photocopying (paper supplied by the Centre).

There used to be a Centre Governing Body about 2008 but this failed through lack of support over time.



The Paballelo Secondary School



The Principal's office



The classroom used for adult students



The storage space in the classroom

The enrolment and staffing



John Moiwa

Current enrolment is mainly young people. The enrolment has declined since 2013. The explanations given for this were actually explanations for dropout (getting a job or doing seasonal work) and therefore should not have influence on the issue of enrolment.

Only ABET level 4 is taught as there is only one educator left (the Centre Manager, John Moiwa), which also means elective subject choice is limited (for example there are no resources for Applied agriculture and agriculture or for Technology (both very useful in the local economy). There is pressure to prioritise the writing of the GETC (ABET Level 4) examinations.

It is thought that there is a large potential demand for Grade 12 (Senior certificate) classes and the NASCA.

There is an issue about the lack of tuition in Afrikaans, given that is the home language of many in the area.

Materials

There being no budget for materials, they are reliant on the Department to provide textbooks or workbooks. The only textbooks that have been provided (and that was three years ago) were one copy each of somewhat out of date textbooks on Life Orientation, Travel and Tourism, General and Social Sciences, and Economic and Management Sciences. These textbooks have very divergent and confusing instruction about how the learners do “an investigation”.

Some exercise books, exam pads, and two boxes of printing paper were provided in 2014.

Assessment

The Umalusi rules for the GETC examinations are onerous and unrealistic and assume a conventional school with, amongst other things, a safe.

The fiasco of the function shift

From discussion it emerged that the shift from the Provincial Department of Education to the Department of Higher Education, finalised in the function shift of 31 March/1 April 2015 had been characterised by an almost total absence of genuine communication, consultation and support. The Centre was almost totally in the dark as to what was happening or when it was happening.

First, for the last two or three years requests, budgets, etc. seemed to have been put on hold because of the forthcoming shift.

Second, there was some very little communication in late 2014 that there would be the function shift in 2015 – that they would now fall under the DHET. They were told that the new community colleges would run from 7:30 am till 10 pm, fall under the DHET, and it would no longer be only ABET but would go up to Grade 12. They had also been told that the NASCA was coming. But there was nothing on paper.

There has been no written communication at all about the function shift. It is, in the words of the Centre manager, like “an underground thing”. They have received no information about the community college of which they are supposedly a sub-structure.

With the function shift there were salary payment delays of three months and it seems that for some educators the back pay has not yet been received. (Some assistance has been given by the Rural TVET college, partly because a previous PALC educator working in the administration there is concerned.)

Meanwhile the previous District Coordinators who looked after the PALCs, though they still do attempt to provide some support has been forbidden to travel or use Department of Basic Education resources for this. The monthly reports that used to be submitted via the District are no longer done - there is nobody to send them to. Essentially the crucial district support system has been collapsed – “It died!”

Since the 1 April there was no communication until on 21 August 2015 the previous Director of Adult Education in the provincial department, Phillips, had a meeting with the Centre managers in the district. Then on 9 September 2015 Seyengu, from the DHET regional office for the Western Cape and the Northern Cape (based in Cape Town) met briefly with Centre managers (Seyengu also had a meeting the same day with the two TVET colleges).

They have heard informally that though Mrs K. Majele, the Acting Principal appointed to head the new community college (or the Community College Administrative Centre as it is called in the new Community College Policy) was meant to be based at the Northern Cape Rural TVET college in Upington, she has gone back to the old provincial Department of Education in Kimberley. Not a single written communication has been received from her, although she had a written plan for a Council setup, the Council having met in late October 2015 with two students and a educator from each district. Further, an agreement was signed on 10 October at a meeting in Gauteng by Acting D.G. Mahlobo of the DHET and the TVET colleges concerned, that the TVET colleges would procure goods and services on behalf of the Community Education and Training Colleges.