

TEACHSA Executives (Founding Directors):

- Dr Futhi Mthoba (Board Chairperson)
- Mr Richard Masemola (current Executive director)

TEACHSA Programme Managers

- Ms Lerato Mathenjwa (Mathematics)
- Dr Peter Glover (Physical Sciences)

DBE Officials

- Ms Elspeth Khembo (Project Manager MST Office)
 - Mr David Silman (Project Manager, Reintroduction of Maths Project, (RoMP))
-

Introduction

In 2014, the DBE established that 186 schools had stopped offering Mathematics to their grade 10 – 12 learners, and were found to be presenting Grade 12 candidates enrolled for Mathematical Literacy only.

Following a Council of Education Ministers (CEM) Directive, the Director-General issued a directive to the Provincial Education Departments to ensure that all such secondary schools were to re-introduce Mathematics to the FET Band.

A primary reason for schools ceasing to offer Mathematics is a national shortage of competent Mathematics, Science and Technology (MST) teachers, who are prepared to serve in geographically remote rural and township schools. Some schools were found to have lost their MST subject teachers due to retirement, and could not attract appropriately qualified teachers to take up their vacant posts. Regrettably, some schools chose the 'Mathematical Literacy only' option with a view to improving their Grade 12 pass rate, since the Mathematical Literacy pass rate is significantly higher than the pass rate for Mathematics.

This practice runs counter to the National Development Plan (NDP) policy of increasing the number of school leavers who qualify for entry to Science and Technology related courses and professions.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE), supported by funding from the European Union (EU), developed an intervention termed the Re-introduction of Mathematics Project (RoMP).

In order to support Provincial Education Departments, the DBE, at the behest of Honourable Minister Angie Motshekga, established a partnership between TEACH South Africa (SA) and the DBE with a view to the selection and placement of academically qualified young graduates in schools where they are most needed.

The RoMP focuses on three activities namely the provision of academically qualified TEACH SA Ambassadors, on-site and ICT-based teaching practice support, including the provision of laptops and software for the use of the Ambassadors.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in February 2016 by the Director General of DBE with TEACHSA which formalised the partnership, in collaboration with provincial Departments. This allowed the facilitation of the placement of Ambassadors in Provinces that requested TEACH SA Ambassadors. The placement of TEACH Ambassadors is effected in conjunction with Districts and TEACH Ambassadors are placed in both rural and urban schools after aligning TEACH SA Ambassador Qualifications with District needs.

TEACH South Africa is not an employer in that TEACH Ambassadors are paid by Provincial Education Departments and Private Sector Partners who sponsor the posts filled. The TEACHSA Ambassador Program is a two-year commitment and once placed, Ambassadors teach full-time for two years at the assigned school.

In December 2015, 100 Ambassadors were inducted for placement in identified schools for the 2016 academic year. Preliminary data showed a significant improvement in Mathematics results as a direct consequence of this partnership. For example, Tsako Thabo Secondary School, a very disadvantaged school in Tshwane South district, improved Mathematics pass rate from 18% in 2015 to 48% in the 2016 results of the National Senior Certificate (NSC).

With the average age of teachers increasing, the number of in-service teachers of scarce-skills subjects is diminishing. The programme is increasing the pool of young Mathematics and Science teachers since TEACHSA recruit only graduates who are not students in education faculties. If not for the TEACH SA programme, these graduates would not otherwise have entered the teaching profession.

TeachSA Ambassadors are offered the opportunity to register for a professional teaching qualification, and since about 60% of placed Ambassadors are remaining in schools after their 2 year stint, this programme is increasing the pool of young men and women teachers who are well qualified, highly motivated and demonstrably competent.

Mr David Silman, Project Manager in the DBE's MST (Mathematics, Science and Technology) Directorate freely expresses his admiration of the TEACHSA Ambassadors. *"They are willing to be placed in schools anywhere in the country, some in villages that are 50km from the nearest tarred road. These amazing young people are ideologically driven and highly motivated to make a contribution to our nation's children. They exemplify the JFK spirit, asking not what their country can do for them, but rather what they can do for their country. Their selflessness really gives me hope for the future".*

PLACEMENT 2017 COHORT					
PROVINCE	No. of Ambs	No. of schools	English	Maths	Science
Gauteng	36	24	9	18	9
Northern Cape	7	6	-	3	4
Limpopo	16	14	3	7	6
Free State	9	9	-	8	-
KZN	1	1	-	-	1
EC	54	44	7	29	18
Mpumalanga	2	1	1	1	-
TOTAL	125	99	20	66	39

Conclusion

In 2017, 125 Ambassadors were placed in 99 schools, the largest number being 54 in the Eastern Cape alone. A bus was hired by the DBE to transport the Ambassadors to Mthatha, where they were handed over to the appreciative principals of the 44 receiving schools.

The DBE-TEACHSA MoU terminates in 2018 and renewal is recommended. No Ambassadors have been placed in 2018 due to the absence of PED funded posts.