

# Computer literacy for the information age

 By [Timothy Kasonde](#)

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A total of 53 teachers last week completed five days of intermediate computer literacy training at Coffee Bay Junior Secondary School and Mdedeleni Secondary School in the Eastern Cape. Twenty teachers attended a beginner's course at Lerato Secondary School in the Free State.

The training was conducted as part of the Internet Service Providers' Association of SA's (ISPA) nationwide teacher training programme.

"Teachers are agents of change and in order to effect change in the classroom we need to ensure that teachers are competent when it comes to using the tools of the information age," said Bernie Amler, chairperson of ISPA's Teacher Training Working Group.

"In order to bridge the gap between school, tertiary and ultimately the business world, there is a dire need to increasingly engage learners in computer literacy lessons in the classroom," said Tuliswa Makatesi, an educator in the Eastern Cape.

This year alone a total of 300 educators have received computer literacy courses sponsored by ISPA and UniForum. Training is conducted in computer labs previously deployed by NetDay. Since the programme's inception in December 2001, 1,405 educators have been trained over the past six years. The South African government's mandate for 2013 stipulates that no child will leave a public school in South Africa without basic computer literacy.

While statistics of the number of schools that have access to computers and the Internet for teaching and learning are dismal, it is important to acknowledge that teachers are critical to the future of our a young democracy.

The South African economy is moving towards a knowledge based society, resulting in organisations insisting on certain skills requirements in order to remain globally competitive. ISPA believes that investments in training will help address the skills gap within South Africa's IT sector.

"The provision of computers at schools is not enough without the presence of qualified professionals equipped with the necessary skills to help learners achieve a brighter future. This is where ISPA's teacher training programme demonstrates real value, " added Amler.

The ongoing sponsorship from UniForum SA, the CO.ZA Registry, is making it possible for teachers from previously disadvantaged schools to embrace technology and use it to its full potential. It is the valuable skills acquired from the teacher training courses that will ultimately make learners employable one day.

ISPA would like to convey its appreciation to the following member companies for their generous sponsorship towards training this year: Absa Bank, eNetworks, Snowball Effect, XDSL, Broadband, Imagnet, MTN Network Solutions, Cybersmart and Intoweb Training for sponsoring software.

SETA (Sector Education & Training Authority) accredited assessors from Avuxeni Computer Academy conduct training on OpenOffice2, approved by Open Source Lecturers.

An annual award ceremony offering 10 outstanding teachers the opportunity to participate in the "Super Teacher of the Year" awards will be held at iWeek, a specialist industry conference, in 2008. The awards recognise teachers that have participated in ISPA's "Train the Teachers" project and successfully imparted their newly-acquired knowledge to their learners and local communities.

*Published courtesy of*

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Timothy Kasonde is a Highway Africa News Agency correspondent in Lusaka, Zambia.

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