

# Teacher development is critical to rescuing SA's education system

- [60%](#) of grade 4 learners in the public schooling system are not able to read fluently and with understanding.
- [13%](#) of foundation phase new teacher graduates had an African home language; by contrast, [83%](#) of learners have an African home language.
- South Africa ranks worst for Science Achievement among more than [60](#) countries.
- Research indicates that [61%](#) of grade 5 learners unable to do basic maths.
- [79%](#) of Grade 6 maths teacher unable to score 60% or higher on Grade 6 or 7 level questions.

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South African education is in crisis. Children attending South African schools fare poorly on almost every metric and are not prepared for the world after school. Added to this, several studies on teacher development and teacher quality note the high turnover rate amongst South African teachers.

However, teacher quality and empowering teachers through access to development is critical to improving our education system in South Africa. According to [Professor Gabrielle Wills](#), an education economist at Stellenbosch University, "You cannot win the war if you don't train your army."

Professor Wills believes that teachers are the key agents for change needed to deliver quality education to South Africa's children. However, to achieve this requires us to think innovatively about what quality teachers look like, and it requires large amounts of collaboration. This includes government, teacher training facilities, schools themselves and the private sector.

"We have to start remodelling what teacher excellence looks like," says Professor Wills.

Even experienced teachers confront great challenges each year, including changes in subject content, new instructional methods, advances in technology, changed laws and procedures, and student learning needs. Educators who do not experience effective professional development do not improve their skills, and student learning suffers.

It is this challenge that caught the attention of the Capitec Foundation. They invest in teacher development projects managed in partnership with the [Schools Development Unit at UCT](#). These projects create an enabling environment in the classroom giving teachers the tools to navigate the evolving changes in education.

[Neptal Khoza](#), from the Capitec Foundation: “The teacher is key to improving quality education. We know that educational technology, school district guidelines and curriculum standards are constantly changing, making it challenging for teachers to keep up with trends and best practices in the field. Professional development transforms teachers into better educators enabling them to create relevant and tailored course instructions for today's students.”

Their projects empower the teacher to design the learning experience in a way that enables learners to focus on the critical aspects of the object of learning. The theory is grounded in the principle of collaboration among teachers, to plan and reflect on lessons using a common vocabulary. In this way, the theory builds a collaborative professional culture within the group of teachers.

In addition, [Capitec Foundation](#) sponsors the Teacher Development topic on the [Trialogue Knowledge Hub](#), a digital platform for social investment information. The Knowledge Hub provides a vehicle for companies that recognise the value of driving thought leadership in social investment and development.

“The shift in education that we want to see is a long-term trajectory. The Capitec Foundation is committed to supporting education initiatives that help improve learners’ performance primarily in maths and science but extends the overall learning experience,” concludes Khoza.

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