

RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN OUR SCHOOLS

On Wednesday 10 October 2007 an experimental workshop took place at Madiba Primary School, Lenasia South, Gauteng. It was attended by 24 teachers from various schools within the Johannesburg South district. The workshop lasted from 14:15 to 16:00. Three facilitators from the side of the Desmond Tutu Diversity Trust were present. The programme went as follows:

1. **Introduction** – The Desmond Tutu Diversity Trust was introduced. In outlining its aims and objectives, it was pointed out that diversity in our schools pose serious challenges if not addressed. On the other hand, diversity could be turned into an asset and a feature of South African life that can be celebrated.

2. **Ice-breaker** - The exercise of pairing with an unknown person from a different cultural or faith group, sharing of personal information, identifying that which is important to you as a South African and then introducing your partner to the group served as an excellent tool for listening and going beyond the usual social niceties.

3. **The Constitution as a guiding document for a human rights culture** – The importance of acknowledging the Constitution as the means of fostering social integration and multicultural relevance, was stressed.

4. **Identifying impediments to diversity** – The group was divided into smaller groups which were given the task to address the following questions:

4.1 Do my pupils understand and appreciate diversity?

4.2 What are the impediments to getting an appreciation of diversity among my pupils?

5. **Creating a mind-map based on responses** – participants met in on whole group again to help with the creation of a mind-map based on responses coming from the smaller group.

6. **Identifying the most critical impediments** – the whole group participated in this exercise.

7. **Let's be part of the solution and not part of the problem** – in small groups participants engaged in problem solving exercises.

8. **Three best solutions** – the whole group together identified the three best solutions.

THE WAY FORWARD:

In a meeting between officials of the Gauteng. Department of Educations and members of the DTD, held on 6 November 2007, the following were decided:

1. The experimental workshop will be continued with as a one day workshop.
2. A total of 50 teachers will be recruited to attend a one day workshop, running from 08:00 to 16:00.
3. Whilst the first workshop is planned for the Johannesburg South district, it is envisaged to present workshops in all 12 districts of Gauteng Education Department

4. Starting in February 2008, it is hoped that approximately 600 teachers could be trained by the end of 2008.
5. Reaching out to the other nine provinces appears to be a natural development once the Gauteng experiment has been proven successful.