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TRANSFORMING LEARNERS THROUGH SPELLING.

By Hanedzani Mbedzi



What began as a simple effort to support learners has blossomed into a meaningful programme that strengthens language skills and inspires learners to believe in their abilities.

Born and raised in the rural community of Ga-Moleele in Senwabarwana, Motadi's journey in education is rooted in dedication and steady growth. She began her teaching career at Rasekgale Primary School before the promotion to Departmental Head at Mama Primary School. Her path eventually led her to Dendron Primary School, where she rose to the position of Deputy Principal in 2013 while also leading the Languages Department, focusing on English First Additional Language and Sepedi Home Language. Today, as Acting Principal, she continues to champion programmes that empower learners academically and personally.

Central to her passion is the spelling bee competition, a platform where learners are challenged to spell words aloud, testing their accuracy, vocabulary and confidence. These competitions, often held at school, National and even international levels, go far beyond simple memorization. For Motadi, spelling bees open doors to deeper learning by enriching vocabulary and fostering a love for reading. They encourage learners to think quickly, recognize patterns in language and approach words like puzzles waiting to be solved.

According to Motadi, mastering complex words gives learners a powerful sense of accomplishment and boosts their self-confidence. The

In the quiet rural village of Ga-Moleele in Bochum, a passion for language and learning has grown into a powerful tool for shaping young minds. At Dendron Primary School in Bochum East circuit under Capricorn North Education District in Limpopo, Acting Principal Matome Cordelia Motadi is nurturing more than just academic success, she is cultivating confidence, curiosity and a love for words through the school's spelling BEE programme.

process sharpens their minds and encourages quick thinking, while the competitive yet enjoyable nature of the activity makes language learning exciting. For many learners, the spelling bee becomes a game of discovery, an opportunity to unlock the mysteries of language and realize their own potential.

Motadi's inspiration to help learners prepare for spelling bee competitions came from recognizing the natural talent many children possess for language. She saw an opportunity to nurture the potential while helping learners overcome challenges and build their self-esteem. By introducing spelling bees, she also added a lively and competitive dimension to language learning, transforming lessons into engaging experiences that motivate learners to participate actively.

Her teaching methods combine creativity and structured learning. Using a phonetics approach, she breaks words into sounds so learners can understand their construction. She also introduces word families, groups of words that share similar patterns, to help learners recognise spelling structures. Games such as word searches, crosswords and scrambled words transform learning into an enjoyable challenge, while visual aids like flashcards with pictures strengthen word association and memory.

Motivation plays a key role in preparing learners for the pressures of competition. Motadi believes in celebrating small victories, recognising every improvement as a step toward success. She focuses on positive feedback, guiding learners by highlighting what they are doing right rather than dwelling on mistakes. Encouraging learners to reflect on their own progress and set achievable goals also helps them stay motivated. Most importantly, she creates a safe environment where mistakes are accepted as part of learning, she believes that is where the real magic of growth happens.

Despite the excitement of spelling bee preparation, learners sometimes face challenges. Staying motivated during demanding practice sessions can be difficult and some concepts may feel abstract or complicated. Time management is another hurdle, as learners must balance practice with other academic responsibilities. To overcome these obstacles, Motadi encourages consistent practice using quizzes, flash-

cards and past papers. She teaches learners to break difficult words into smaller, manageable parts and emphasises the importance of starting preparation early to avoid stress and build mastery over time.

The results of these efforts have been remarkable. Since implementing spelling interventions, Dendron Primary School has witnessed significant improvements in learners' academic performance. Reading ability, comprehension and spelling skills have all improved, contributing to stronger results in English and a higher pass rate among learners. The spelling bee programme has become more than a competition, it is a catalyst for broader academic success.

Dendron Primary School builds a strong reputation for excellence in spelling bee competitions, producing learners who consistently perform at the highest levels. In 2023, the school celebrated a historic achievement when Lesedi Seemane was crowned the African Spelling Bee Junior Champion in Uganda, placing the school firmly on the continental stage.

The momentum continued in 2024 when Noko Raletjena and Boitumelo Semanya both secured first position in the cluster competitions, with Semanya also excelling in Grade 6. In the same year, Semanya claimed first position in the King-sley Spelling Bee South Africa Grade 6 category, while fellow learner Mokokwane Meyahabo secured third place. The school's success carried into 2025 when Thapelo Monyebodi, a Grade 5 learner from Dendron Primary School, also advanced through every stage of the competition.

she emerged as Champion at Circuit and Cluster levels, later finishing as 1st Runner-Up at both District and Provincial levels and she was named the Limpopo Junior Provincial Champion in the South African Spelling Bee, that earned her a place in the national finals held at Sun City in December 2025.

Through dedication, mentorship and a deep belief in the power of words, Matome Cordelia Motadi continues to shape the future of young learners at Dendron Primary School. In every carefully spelled word and every confident learner standing before an audience, her passion echoes and it is proof that sometimes the smallest letters can build the biggest dreams.



FOUR DECADES OF EXCELLENT SERVICE, MR. RASETHABA TAKES A BOW.

By Hanedzani Mbedzi



A career shaped and defined by principled leadership, ethical public service and steadfast dedication to democratic values. Through policy development, institutional leadership and community engagement, he has advanced equitable education and empowered communities through sustainable governance systems. The story of Roxley Rasethaba, a humble servant of the people.

From humble beginnings, classroom under a tree to the corridors where laws were shaped and history rewritten, the journey of Marwala Roxley Rasethaba is one that mirrors the transformation of South Africa itself. His life is a story of quiet determination, principled leadership and an unwavering belief that education is both a right and a powerful instrument of justice. As he makes his exit in the education sector, he does so not as one who simply held a position but as a dedicated public servant who helped build a system.

Mr. Rasethaba is a seasoned education specialist, policy contributor and community activist whose career spans classroom teaching, education governance, legislative development and

democratic transformation in South Africa. He is widely recognised as one of the pioneering officials who contributed to shaping post-apartheid education policy and governance frameworks in the Northern Province, now Limpopo and nationally. His work reflects a lifelong commitment to educational equity, democratic governance, social justice and community empowerment.

It was shortly after the dawn of democracy in 1996 when Mr. Rasethaba was appointed as the first Education Specialist, initially supervising two officials. He was later promoted to Deputy Director, a role subsequently restructured and translated into Chief Education Specialist due to departmental changes. Throughout his career, he carried key responsibilities that placed him at the heart of institutional stability and reform.

He led conflict management and dispute resolution processes in schools, managed labour relations for educators and staff, provided governance support and oversight of legislative compliance and led task teams implementing the Performance Management and Development System. He also managed curriculum processes during district expansion and formed part of the pioneering team that established Mogalakwena District. His leadership strengthened institutional governance systems, improved curriculum implementation and supported the professionalisation of education administration.

Beyond administration, Mr. Rasethaba became a foundational contributor to democratic education governance in South Africa. He was among the first officials who developed the Northern Province Education Act of 1995, legislation that laid the legal foundation for a democratic provincial educa-

tion system during the country's transition from apartheid to democracy. As an experienced and long-standing official, he helped explain the objectives and implications of this Act to educators, parents, governing bodies and the broader public through media engagements and community platforms.

Among his most meaningful contributions was influencing the inclusive definition of "parent" within education legislation. Drawing from the lived realities of rural Limpopo communities, where many biological parents worked in Gauteng and other distant areas while children were raised by grandparents, he advocated for a broader legal definition that recognised caregivers and guardians. This progressive inclusion empowered grandparents, particularly grandmothers, to serve on School Governing Bodies and participate fully in educational decision-making. It was a definition rooted in social reality and one that strengthened community-based governance in schools.

During a complex transition period, Mr. Rasethaba also served as a departmental representative in the media. He articulated, clarified and defended departmental policies with clarity and conviction. He explained governance reforms and legislative changes to educators, parents and communities, interpreted policies for radio, print and community platforms and provided guidance on the implementation of School Governing Bodies and learner representation structures. He addressed public concerns regarding admissions, learner rights and compliance matters with a steady and reassuring voice.

His work extended to drafting and issuing departmental circulars aimed at protecting learners' constitutional rights and ensuring fair access to education. He developed and communicated clear guidelines safeguarding learners' rights during school admissions and provided policy direction on the admission of undocumented learners, ensuring that lack of documentation did not unlawfully deny access to education. He formulated procedures for the admission and educational support of learners placed in secure care centres and guided schools on managing overaged learners through structured fast-tracking mechanisms and grade placement assessments. Throughout, he ensured compliance with national and provincial admission policies while upholding the best interests of the learner.

He further participated in creating the Learner Representative Council, later renamed the Representative Council of Learners and formally recognised under national legislation. This reform institutionalised learner participation in school governance and ensured that learners became active stakeholders in leadership and democratic processes.

The legacy of Marwala Roxley Rasethaba is both structural and deeply human. Structurally, he helped shape foundational provincial and national education laws, strengthened democratic governance systems in schools and ensured that legislation reflected the lived realities of communities. On a human level, he expanded access to education, protected the rights of learners and caregivers and amplified the voices of those often unheard.

As he exits the stage of public service, he leaves behind more than files and frameworks. He leaves behind institutions made stronger, laws made more humane and generations of learners whose paths were widened because he chose to serve.



DRIVING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

By Conny Mabunda



Klass Lebese, Director of Information Technology in the Department of Education is steadily reshaping the digital landscape of the education sector through innovation, resilience and strategic leadership.

With a passion for systems improvement and service delivery, Lebese has positioned ICT as a central pillar in ensuring that schools and administrative offices operate efficiently in an increasingly digital world.

Lebese holds a BSc in Computer Science from the University of Limpopo, formerly known as the University of the North. He further strengthened his academic foundation with a Bachelor of Administration and Business Administration Honours degree from Stadio, as well as a Postgraduate Diploma in Health Promotion and Primary Health Care in Education.

Demonstrating his commitment to continuous growth, he is currently registered for a Master of Business Administration (MBA) at Regenesys Business School, which he hopes to complete successfully.

Interestingly, Information Technology was not his initial career choice. Lebese had envisioned a future in Pharmacy or Optometry but his performance in Physical Sciences limited was a blow to his ambitions. It was through the encouragement of a mentor and close friend from home that he was introduced to the field of IT, a discipline he only became fully aware of during his time at university. That pivotal advice redirected his path and ultimately defined his professional journey.

Before joining the Department of Education, Lebese accumulated valuable experience across several government institutions, including Statistics South Africa, the Department of Agriculture, a Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) and the Office of the Premier. His tenure at the Office of the Premier proved particularly formative.

He was responsible for monitoring ICT across all 10 provincial departments and advising on ICT governance matters. This exposure not only broadened his understanding of public sector systems but also prepared him for the strategic leadership role he now holds in education.

Since assuming his current position, Lebese has led several transformative initiatives. Among them is the implementation of the Online Learner Admission system, designed to curb long queues and make applications more accessible to parents.

He has overseen the creation and activation of official email accounts for schools across the province, accounts that previously existed but were not fully utilised. He is also driving a comprehensive server refresh programme and strengthening IT security projects to safeguard critical information.

Under his leadership, ICT infrastructure has been expanded in both schools and administrative offices. Systems and support applications have been developed to streamline operations, while improved connectivity and server capabilities now enable the MEC to access and gather real-time information directly from schools

Despite these achievements, challenges remain. Financial constraints continue to limit the pace at which projects can be implemented. Connectivity across schools is uneven, with many schools having access only in administration blocks while classrooms remain disconnected.

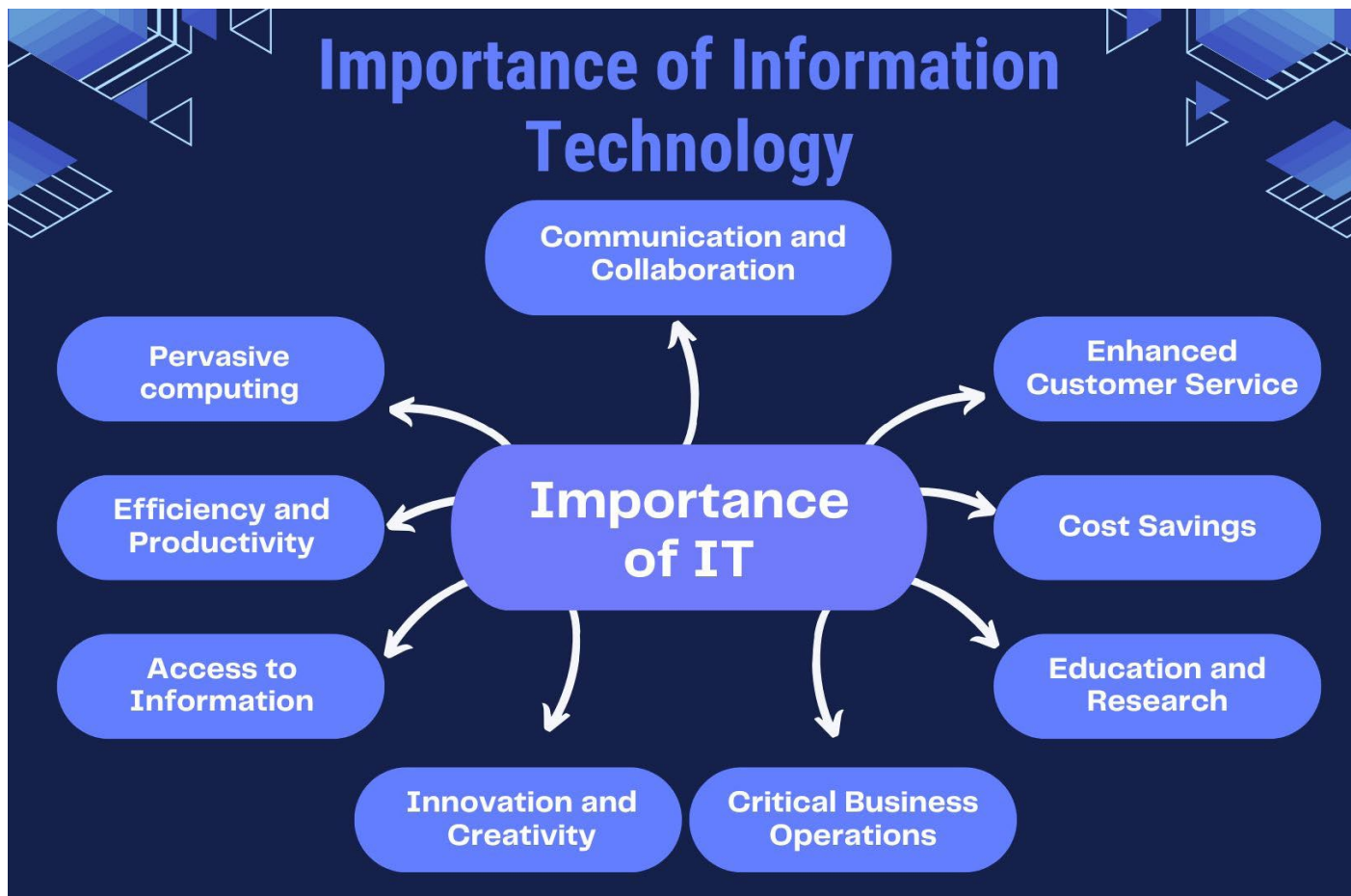
To date, 80 circuits out of 131 have been connected, in addition to 10 that were already operational. While initiatives such as SA Connect and SETA have assisted in connecting some schools, reliability remains a concern. Lebesse and his team are exploring the establishment of central wireless connectivity points to cover entire school premises, alongside the phased implementation of fibre infrastructure.

He also points to the challenge of “shadow IT,” where individuals outside the directorate attempt to influence IT procurement decisions without proper alignment to governance frameworks. In addition, skills gaps within the HR environment present further obstacles to fully optimising technological systems. Cybersecurity remains another pressing issue.

As Lebesse notes, “the cost of protecting information is substantial, yet cybercriminals are equally investing resources to breach systems, making it an ongoing battle in both government and the broader national context”.

Through it all, Lebesse remains focused on the legacy he hopes to leave behind, a department where parents can apply online without standing in long queues, where every school is fully connected and where technology is effectively used to enhance teaching, learning and service delivery.

His leadership reflects not only technical expertise but also a clear vision of a digitally empowered education system that works for all.



THE CIRCUIT CORNER WITH SEPADI SOLOMON MAKOTANYANE, BOGWASHA CIRCUIT MANAGER.

By Seshoka Lephale



For over three decades, Sepadi Solomon Makotanyane believed that all learners in the country regardless of the race and background, should have equal opportunities to access quality education.

Throughout his entire career, he has fulfilled his ambition by raising the bar in the education fraternity to ensure that basic quality education is delivered to all the learners without hinderances.

Makotanyane has become a household name in Sekhukhune East Education District because of his passion for the job and for raising the bar.

Makotanyane started his teaching career at Phutinare Secondary school in 1993 and later served as a lecturer at Sekhukhune College of Education from 1997 to 1999.

He believes that quality education is a must for every learner in the country. His journey is not only confined to the borders of Limpopo, but he also worked at the Gauteng Department of Education in 2000 as head of Department at Zitikeni secondary school until his promotion to the principalship post at Mogolahlogo secondary school.

He was appointed as a First Education Specialist at Gert Sibande Region in Mpumalanga and subsequently joined the Capricorn District as a CES from October 2007, and a year later, he was appointed the Circuit Manager of Bogwasha.

One of his greatest achievements at Bogwasha, Circuit Manager Makotanyane managed to present most improved schools in 2024 and 2025 as well as top learners during the announcements of the NSC results in 2025.

Makotanyane believes in Data Driven accountability approach which enabled the circuit to achieve 94,3% in 2025 Grade 12 NSC results and further provincial recognition as the most improved circuit. He was recently awarded for steering the ship in the right direction early this year at The Ranch Hotel for his consistency in ensuring that Sekhukhune East District is counted amongst the best.

Mr. Makotanyane is an inspiration and a symbol of hope to all the Principals and Educators under Bogashwa and the neighboring circuits.



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BANA PELE ECD REGISTRATION DRIVE

The Limpopo Department of Education invites all Early Childhood Development programmes to take part in the **Bana Pele ECD Registration Drive** aimed at accelerating Silver and Gold registrations.

Services to be offered:

Silver registration briefings

- eCares application support
- Assistance with required documentation
- Health & safety compliance guidance
- Site visit scheduling

For more information contact,
ECD Bana Pele Champions,
Ms Caroline Mongwe at **061 475 0532**
and Mr Gift Hlongwane at **061 477 6634**

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INTERESTING FACT

Did you know?

The Limpopo Department of Education continues to strengthen learner support through dedicated psychosocial services. Our current workforce includes:

- 63 Early Childhood Development (ECD) Social Workers
- 10 Auxiliary ECD Social Workers
- 5 Social Workers focusing on Employee Wellness
- 34 Social Workers serving in Special Schools



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