

DBE sets the record straight on Lockdown Digital Classroom

The Lockdown Digital Classroom is a free and voluntary virtual classroom that encourages pupils to continue learning during the lockdown, the Basic Education Department clarified on Tuesday.



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The initiative, which is the brainchild of Africa Teen Geeks - an organisation that does work in the basic education sector, received criticism on social media with users expressing concern over the use of celebrities as opposed to qualified teachers.

“The initiative was created by a non-profit-organisation called Africa Teen Geeks (ATG) who approached the department with an idea for an intervention to support learners during the lockdown resulting from Covid-19,” said the department.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) further clarified that the Lockdown Digital Classroom is not a formal school, but rather a project.

“It is an out-school project that was put in place as a temporary activity to urge learners to continue learning at home. It is optional and participation is voluntary. No subscription is required. It is free,” it said.

According to the DBE, of the 56 teachers involved in the virtual classroom, 54 are qualified and registered with the South African Council for Educators (SACE).

Two are student teachers.

The initiative is funded by the Sasol Foundation.

The project comprises two components that run concurrently. The first is the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) Lockdown Digital School which supports learners with school work during the lockdown.

For STEM, a teaching qualification or training in teaching is required.

The second component is the Lockdown Book Reading Club that raises awareness about reading. For the reading club no qualification is required.

Support

Africa Teen Geeks approached the Department of Basic Education seeking support.

“There is no financial implication to the department but only advocacy support as the project is fully aligned with the work of the department especially during the COVID-19 lockdown. There was no tender involved,” said the DBE.

Through its website and social media handles, ATG advertised that it sought STEM teachers to apply and become part of the lockdown e-school.

ATG received over 9000 applications. A proper screening process was undertaken and 54 teachers were appointed to assist with the catch-up lessons.

Qualified teachers who were unemployed, were requested to apply to become part of the teaching pilot programme.

“There was no intention to undermine the teaching profession in any way. The 56 teachers involved in the actual learner support programme are qualified or in the process of obtaining their teaching qualification.”

On the use of celebrities for the reading club, the DBE said the practice has been in place since the Read Lead campaign was launched in 2015.

“The practice of using familiar personalities to drive campaign is an age-old strategy used to promote world causes such as the reading revolution,” it said.

Welcoming the interest shown in the initiative, the Department and Africa Teen Geeks encouraged the public to continue to focus on literacy and numeracy campaigns.

Book clubs

The department invited the public to form book clubs or existing clubs to share their reading activities online or exchange their reading lists.

It also urged parents to continue to support their children at home while schools remain closed due to the coronavirus (Covid-19).

“The Department has made available online resources that are user-friendly and appreciates the involvement of partners in minimising the impact of the Covid-19 on basic education. The department urges parents to continue supporting their children at home during the lockdown.”

More information about available resources can be found on www.education.gov.za.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>