

Inkululeko Case Study: The DGMT Business Skills Course (2020)



MAIN OBJECTIVES:

- The project's main objective was to remotely facilitate learners gaining an understanding of entrepreneurship and developing business skills that will benefit them as they develop academically and professionally.
- Commence development and provide a new business skills course to 15 learners online via WhatsApp and MS Teams, in line with the terms of the amended DGMT-Inkululeko agreement.
- Successfully carry out our online training course for high school learners using free apps and online resources.
- Facilitate distance and/or online learning.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

- The DG Murray Trust (DGMT) funded the provision of the course for up to 15 learners.
- The Learning Trust provided co-funding for five additional learners. Inkululeko ultimately rolled out the course to 25 learners, and 24 learners completed it. Of the learners who completed the course, 19 achieved the 70% attendance necessary for them to obtain the certificate of attendance.
- The online sessions took place every Tuesday and Thursday for two hours – one hour of presentation and one hour of discussion and activities.
- The sessions were carried out by facilitators based in the United States of America (US) with the assistance of Inkululeko staff. Learner representatives were elected to assist facilitators and the project coordinator during the delivery of the course and help ensure attendance and participation by learners.
- Learners were encouraged to take ownership of their learning and treated as co-responsible for the success of the course. Their involvement was stimulated through election (by the learners) of learner representatives who were tasked with troubleshooting and ensuring equal participation among learners. This ensured that learners took responsibility for the program's success.

PROJECT PREPARATION:

- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, a retired senior lecturer from Rhodes University Business School developed a course outline for in-person sessions which was no longer suitable at the time of the project. Consequently, Inkululeko appointed two US based volunteers to develop a course that could be delivered online. One volunteer was an MBA student at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, and the other was a final year Bachelor of Business Administration student at Villanova University in Pennsylvania.
- The course was relevant to high school learners, and topics covered included: business studies, accounting, consumer studies, and economics at a high school level.
- The course was reviewed by Inkululeko staff to ensure that the content and language was appropriate for South African high school learners, and was approved by the DGMT Innovation Manager.



PROJECT STAGES:

JUNE

- Contacted learners to inform them of the online course.
- Learners were invited to join the course on the basis of their interest and motivation.
- A WhatsApp group was opened and learners were added. Messages were sent in the group by the project coordinator. This included informing learners of expectations, introducing facilitators, and laying ground rules. This was done successfully and the group was effective.
- The course outline (including material) was approved by DGMT and The Learning Trust.

JULY

- Learners had ten online sessions with the facilitators.

AUGUST

- Learners had their last five sessions with the facilitators.

SEPTEMBER

- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the practical component was not possible. Rather than utilizing a practical assessment, learners were assessed through a written test. Learners were required to submit their files, which contained the activities that they completed and their assessments, to enable their work and participation to be assessed. Most learners submitted their files and achieved the required 70% attendance of all sessions which was a prerequisite for being awarded a certificate of attendance.



OUTCOMES:

- Of the 25 learners, 19 attended 70% of the training sessions and satisfied all the requirements necessary to obtain certificates of attendance. Certificates were awarded on November, 13 2020, at an in-person event.
- Learners enjoyed the course and reported that it helped them better understand concepts taught in their business studies class at school.
- The course was delivered by two US-based volunteers: one, an MBA student at Le Moyne College in Syracuse; the other, a final year Bachelor of Business Administration student at Villanova University in Pennsylvania. Positive feedback was received from the volunteer facilitators, and they reported that the experience was meaningful for them.

CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED:

- Challenges during this project occurred mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic which prevented in-person learning and relegated the program to remote learning.
- Limitations on in-person learning hindered what could have been a 100% completion rate from all learners; due to the circumstances of the pandemic and challenges of remote learning only 24 of the 25 learners completed this course. Of the 24 learners, 19 met the requirements to be awarded a certificate of completion.

MAIN INSIGHTS:

- Motivated high school learners who are provided with encouragement and support are capable of taking ownership of their learning in the absence of face-to-face interaction with mentors and teachers and succeeding in challenging circumstances.
- The successes of the project during the COVID-19 pandemic and hard lockdown has proven Inkululeko's resilience and ability to innovate and meet challenges.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

- We are grateful to our funders, DGMT which made the course possible and The Learning Trust which provided co-funding.
- Thank you to Nicholas Cunningham and Theresa Larre for developing and facilitating the course. Their contribution was valuable.



Learners safely receive their certificates of attendance in November 2020.