

MEDIA RELEASE / CIRCULAR

SUBJECT: Teacher Laptop Initiative

DATE: 27 February 2010

1. INTRODUCTION

The much-anticipated rollout of the Teacher Laptop Initiative, which was intended to be in February 2010, has been delayed by a few crucial matters that have to be finalised. The official rollout of the TLI has thus not yet begun. However, it is important that teachers should be aware of developments and not be misled into purchasing a laptop only to discover at a later stage that they do not qualify for a subsidy and/or stop order facility.

The Department of Basic Education (DoBE) informed the ELRC that the rollout will be done in cohorts specific to the size and funds available to the individual Provincial Education Departments (PED).

According to Government Gazette 32207, the PEDs will implement the allowance on a preference list of educators based on their seniority. The DoBE advised that seniority refers to rank and has already sent an instruction to the provinces that principals will be the first group of educators who will be eligible to purchase a laptop.

2. ACCREDITED SUPPLIERS

What is important to note is that only when an educator purchases a laptop package from an accredited supplier, he/she will qualify for a stop order facility. Although teachers may purchase a laptop from any outlet in order to qualify for the subsidy (R130 pm), the teacher will not receive this allowance if the laptop does not meet all the specifications as stipulated in the Government Gazette 32207. It is unlikely that a dealer who is not an accredited provider will be able to supply the full package (hardware, connectivity, insurance and finance) at the same price as the accredited provider.

The ten **provisionally** accredited consortia/suppliers for participation in the first phase of the TLI are: Dell/Laptitude, Fujitsu, Hewlett-Packard, Lenovo, MTN, Pinnacle, Sahara Systems, Telkom, Mustek and Vodacom. The word "provisional" is used as the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the ELRC on behalf of the teacher unions, and the service providers has not yet been finalised.

3. PROCESS AND PURCHASE

The accredited service providers will identify outlets or "one stop shops" where a teacher may purchase the complete package (including the finance agreement). The accredited service providers will have a "good, better, best" range of packages where the **maximum all inclusive monthly repayment cannot exceed R390.00**. Qualifying teachers will receive a monthly allowance of R130.00 (taxable) and will be required to fund the difference between the allowance (R130.00) and the monthly repayments of the package. Most of the packages from the provisionally accredited suppliers cost between R250.00 and R350.00 per month. The repayments will be spread over a period of five years.



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The process for purchasing the laptop package is in the last stages of development and currently stands as follows:

1. The Provincial Education Department (PED) will identify and inform educators who qualify for the TLI.
2. The written notification from the PED will be shown to the accredited service provider (the PED will issue a list of the providers and their identified outlets).
3. The educator and accredited service provider will enter into an agreement.
4. The service provider will issue the educator with a certificate that must be sent through to the PED to enable the allowance and the monthly stop order for the repayments, to be activated.

Once the MOUs are finalised, all the information will be posted on the ELRC website, which will make it easy for teachers to obtain information. A frequently asked questions page will also be added to the ELRC website to answer questions that teachers might have.

4. STRATEGIC PARTNERS

The strategic partners to the initiative are: The software suppliers Microsoft, Symantec and Adobe who will be reinvesting in the initiative towards professional development of teachers; Dimension Data who has designed the central database that will be used by all the service providers to register the laptop packages purchased by educators; and Intel who will be supplying the *Intel Skool*TM software and will be providing training for teachers.

Software to be preloaded on all laptops before allocation is:

1. Microsoft Windows 7 Pro operating system
2. Microsoft Office Enterprise software
3. Symantec Security software
4. Adobe Digital Schools Collection
5. Adobe Presenter Package
6. Intel Skool (School) training materials
7. Microsoft Digital Literacy Curriculum and the Partners in Learning Teacher Training Model
8. Connectivity Software
9. Microsoft Live@Edu email address activated against individual PERSAL numbers
10. ELRC Policy Materials

5. MATTERS TO BE FINALISED

Some of the immediate matters that need finalisation are:

1. The MOUs between the ten provisionally accredited suppliers and the ELRC on behalf of the unions need to be finalised. Before this can happen however, the legal entity representing each consortium must be registered with National Treasury and allocated a stop order code. Stop orders from payroll can only be processed with a National Treasury issued stop order code. The DoBE is currently in the process of finalising the matter with National Treasury.
2. Further, a proposal has been submitted to National Treasury to automate the process of stop orders and allowance activation by using a single collection agency that is recognised by PERSAL and/or is already integrated to PERSAL at the DoBE and National Treasury. This will not only speed up the process involved in collecting and distributing funds, but will centralise the entire process with a National Treasury approved service provider and minimise the opportunity for fraudulent activities. The process will be finalised once National Treasury approves the proposal.
3. Final updated pricing needs to be submitted by consortia in order to populate the central registry developed by Dimensions Data.
4. The code of conduct that teachers will have to sign as undertaking, as well as the application forms that they are required to complete, are currently being finalised between the DoBE and the teacher unions.

6. CONCLUSION

The aim of this initiative is to improve student performance and continuous teacher professional development. The main focus of all stakeholders involved in this process is to ensure that all possible challenges are confronted and solutions sought before the rollout. This will in turn ensure that the initiative serves its purpose as an essential component in our collective quest for a quality education system.

7. HEALTH WARNING TO ALL EDUCATORS

Educators are urged to be patient and allow for all the necessary processes to be completed before the rollout can take place. The official rollout will only be announced by the ELRC on behalf of the teacher unions.

Teachers are advised to wait for the list of approved service providers and for the official notification letter from the PED.

END

Issued by: ELRC obo Teacher Trade Unions (CTU-SADTU and CTI-ITU)

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