



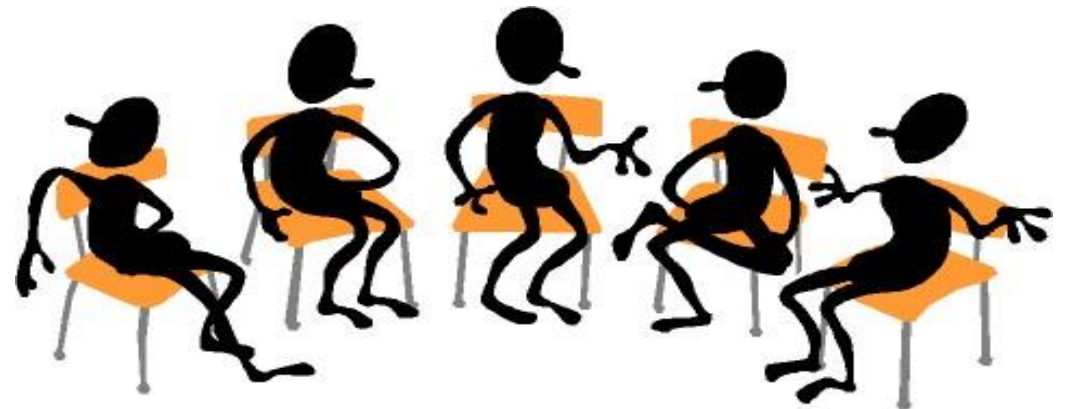
# Strengthening the professional development of teachers and school leaders through the implementation of PLCs: VVOB's South African story



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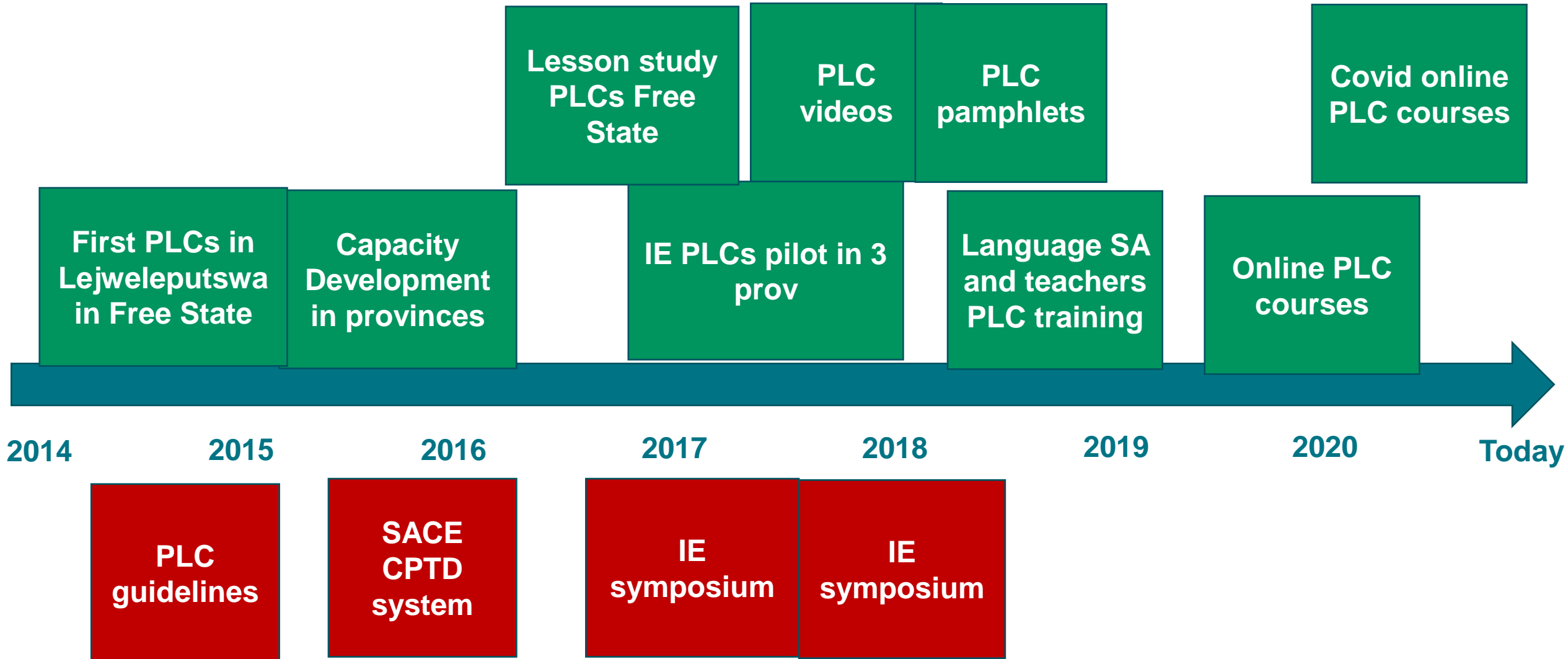
# VVOB's South African story

- Presentation overview
  - *The 'why', 'how' and 'for whom' of PLC's in South-Africa*
  - *Success stories and challenges*
  - *Lessons of experience*
  - *Innovation and the future*
  - *Conclusion*



- Educational outcomes in SA have lagged behind that of peers in the region and internationally.
- The South African DBE has identified CPTD particularly PLCs, as key to improving educational outcomes
- A planning framework developed - ISPFTED 2011-2025
- PLCs promote collaboration and peer learning which are indicators of effective PD
- Educators in PLCs take control of their own professional development
- PLCs help educators find autonomy, a sense of belonging, increase their confidence and improve their level of competence.
- PLCs positively influence teachers' teaching strategies, and thus have potential to improve education for all learners

# VVOB support for PLCs (highlights)



# Lessons of experience

Certain key messages have come out of South Africa and are confirmed by local and international research

- *All educational stakeholders have to play their part*
- *PLCs focus and constellation can be varied*
- *PLCs are needs-driven and this adds to motivation.*
- *PLCs require mutual trust and respect and lead to collaboration*
- *Collective responsibility for students' learning*
- *Facilitation of sessions – requires particular skills including directing proceedings, enabling participation and coordinating sessions*



# Lessons of experience

*To get to high functioning PLCs, our research shows:*

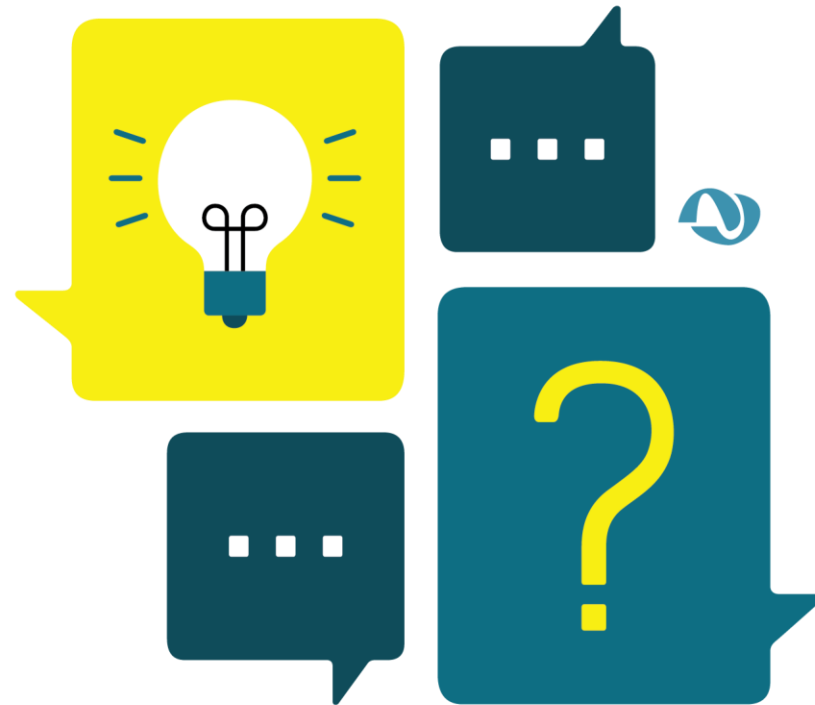
- the need for an initial push from officials to kick start PLCs,
- that PLCs need to meet regularly to be more effective
- that Departments and NGOs can support PLCs to use data-driven approaches such as error analysis, lesson study and action research
- Departmental officials can encourage PLCs to invite experts who can provide input on certain difficult topics or, can use their own content expertise to support a PLC to consider new approaches



# *Innovation and the future*

VVOB South Africa continues to support the DBE to increase the number of PLCs (quantity) and improve their performance (quality). This is being done through the use of innovative methods including:

- Pamphlets
- Videos
- Online courses



DO YOU WANT TO  
FIND OUT MORE?



You can scan this QR code with your device to read the DBE guideline: Professional Learning Communities: A guideline for South African Schools.



You can scan this QR code to view video clips on PLCs, based on the experiences of South African educators.

## SCHOOL LEADERS ENCOURAGE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES OF TEACHERS

MY SCHOOL –  
A LEARNING ORGANISATION

OCTOBER 2019

SCHOOL LEADERS

### WHAT IS A PLC?

Professional learning communities (PLCs) are groups of professionals who decide to come together regularly to learn with and from each other on needs they have identified themselves. The Department of Basic Education considers PLCs to be an effective way to do professional development as explained in the Integrated Strategic Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development (ISPFTED 2011-2025): PLCs allow teachers to take responsibility for their own professional development with the support and encouragement of the school's leadership and district officials.

PLCs are a strategy for professional development which allows all steps in the learning process (shown below) to take place. Currently, professional development is usually offered in the format of workshops or training sessions. Such professional development can help teachers to develop awareness and

A number of pamphlets targeting mainly district officials, school leaders and teachers were developed and these are distributed in districts around the country.

They inform education practitioners on what PLCs are and how as individuals they can support the formation and sustainability of PLCs.

One pamphlet targeting teachers gives a step-by-step practical approach on how a teachers can take the initiative and start a PLC in their school where previously there was none.

The pamphlets for district officials also explain what the advantages of having PLCs in their districts and schools are and lists ways in which the school or the district could support the formation and sustaining of PLCs.





*Another method for advocacy and learning that the DBE and VVOB have harnessed is the use of videos.*

*The videos are used in most training workshops to illustrate certain aspects of PLCs but are also used just to give a visual description of certain concepts*

*There are four videos developed in 2019.*

- One of the videos illustrates ideas of facilitation and coordination of PLCs which VVOB SA regards as critical skills that make or break a PLC.*
- Another video talks about support for a PLC through inviting experts to give input in PLC sessions*
- One video summarises and illustrates the key messages of PLCs*
- The last video is a series of testimonies given mostly by teachers who participated in the Inclusive Education PLCs from 2017 to 2018*

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## VIDEOS





The most exciting innovation that the DBE and VVOB South Africa has been involved in has been the development of online PLC courses. This innovation started in 2019 before the appearance of Covid-19 but became even more relevant because of the pandemic. The first set of courses are based on all the knowledge in the training of teachers and officials on PLCs that has been accumulated over the last several years in South Africa. There are two sets of courses on PLCs so far. The first set is about information on PLCs, what are they who are they for and how they can be established:

- **Basic PLC course** - This is targeting anyone who wants to learn more about PLCs in South Africa.
- **Extension course 1: Establishing effective PLCs** - For educators who want to establish a PLC
- **Extension course 2: Supporting PLCs in your schools.** - For district officials and school managers who want to support PLCs in their schools.

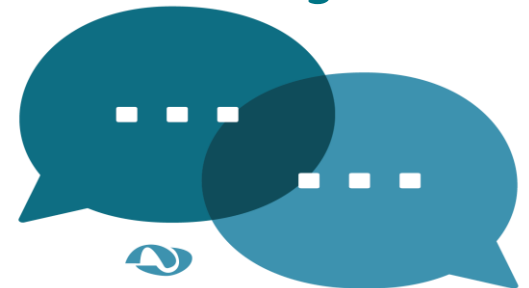
The other set of online courses are based on the Covid pandemic and are two courses so far, one targeting educators and the other SMTs.

## 1. PLCs in response to COVID-19 for Educators:

- *who want to establish PLCs to learn around COVID-related topics, or,*
- *who want to include learning around COVID-related topics in their existing PLCs.*

## 2. PLCs in response to COVID-19 for SMTs:

- *who want to establish PLCs to learn around COVID-related topics, or,*
- *who want to include learning around COVID-related topics in their existing PLCs.*



# Conclusion

- It has been exciting times for VVOB particularly because the online courses have added a new dimension.
- South African teachers still not confident with ICT and these developments offer opportunities to join new era
- Teachers can also earn CPTD points for completing the online courses which are zero rated
- For VVOB staff, working with service providers developing the online courses was an exciting learning curve and it continues with development other online courses
- It is hoped that learning on PLCs will become more accessible and make PLCs even more popular among South African teachers leading to their sustainability

