

November 7 to 13 2008

# Project Teach to the rescue

**Monako Dibetle** reports on an educational initiative that will give hope to many township learners

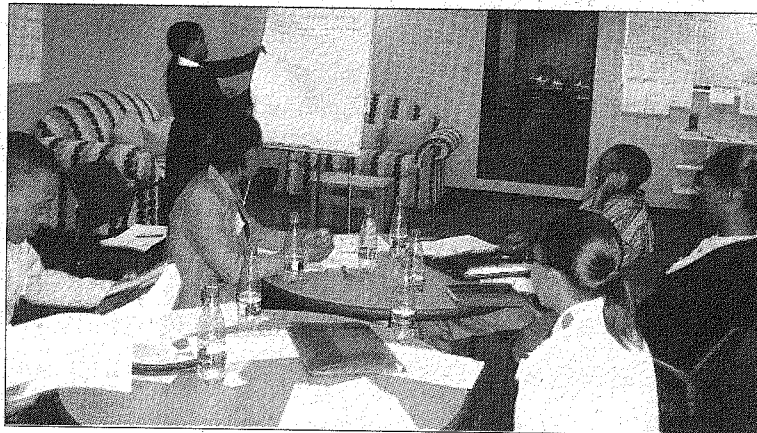
In a desperate rush to address the national teacher shortage a teacher training programme, known as Teach South Africa, initially aims to train more than 60 university graduates to become school teachers.

"This is my opportunity to finally give back to the community through teaching," says an excited Teach South Africa ambassador, Nonkululeko Mnguni (20), from Soweto.

Mnguni and more than 60 other lucky university graduates from across Gauteng stand to benefit from this new pilot project. The programme was founded on the premise of harnessing teacher talent among young people. Corporate giant Deloitte spearheads the programme, which operates as a Section 21 company.

The acronym "Teach" stands for Teachers, Education and Curriculum Help. Teach South Africa wants to dig out the talent of recent tertiary graduates (known as "Teach Ambassadors"), who are promising future leaders, from all disciplines, with special emphasis on mathematics, science and English.

After undergoing training on teaching techniques and leadership devel-



Day one of the Teach South Africa selection process

opment, the ambassadors commit for a minimum of two years. They will be given continual support in the form of mentorship, short teaching courses, leadership, business management and life skills. They will be given the chance to obtain a teaching education qualification during the initial two years, enabling them to become qualified teachers. This will be achieved through mentoring made available by Deloitte.

Teach South Africa will partner provincial departments of education for the payment of ambassadors' salaries. The first intake of ambassadors will be in Gauteng. They will receive salaries from the Gauteng department of education. "Teaching is like building from scratch and means a lot to me. Young people should understand that giving your services to your country should not come with a price tag," said Mnguni.

Her counterpart, Busisani Mhlambi (21), a University of Johannesburg accounting graduate, said the opportunity to teach in the townships fascinates him.

Said Mhlambi: "I grew up in the township and I have realised that children there grow up without role models. It will make me happy to see some of the people that I will teach go as far as obtaining their degrees. Then I will know that I contributed in making a difference in my country."

For Michael Kemson (21), a BCom marketing management major at the University of Pretoria, the challenge of being a Teach ambassador involves developing a strong character.

"Patience, understanding and objectivity towards people of various cultures and creeds [are what ambassadors need]. They need to have leadership abilities and, most importantly, they need to be able to transfer their knowledge to the children they teach," said Kemson.

Futhi Mtoba, chairperson of Deloitte and founder member of Teach South Africa, said the programme targets university graduates of all academic

backgrounds and majors who have excelled at tertiary educational facilities. Mtoba said the programme is for people who are willing to make a contribution — not just in the classroom, but in the school community.

More than 248 graduates have taken part in the application process since August this year and 38 were invited for selection.

A second and last round of selections was conducted in October at the University of Johannesburg, Wits, the University of Cape Town and Cida Campus. "We are excited about this initiative. An evaluation of what schools need has taken place at the action learning schools to identify capacity challenges — particularly infrastructure, equipment, books, governance structures and systems," said Mtoba.

Teach South Africa will be piloted in Ekurhuleni in early 2009 and will be extended nationally between 2010 and 2011. "There are tremendous benefits for the scholars and, since the minds of our future leaders are in the hands of their educators, it is time that we pay attention to this neglected issue," Mtoba said.