

Bio: Dr Allistair Witten



Al Witten was the founding director of the Centre for the Community School, which is located in the Education Faculty of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. He has been involved in the field of education for almost 30 years, and has more than 20 years of experience as a teacher and principal in township schools in Cape Town.

Al held the position of interim director at The Principals' Centre at Harvard University, where he was involved in leadership training and development for school leaders in the United States and across the world. He was responsible for the design and implementation of the School Leadership Initiative—a collaboration between Harvard University and the University of Johannesburg to train school and district leaders in South Africa.

Al Witten holds degrees from the University of Cape Town and the University of the Western Cape in South Africa. He obtained a doctorate in education at Harvard University. Al has extensive practice-based and training experience in the areas of school leadership and management; organizational change and development; and systemic school improvement.

The current focus of his work is on developing the concept of the community school as a theoretical and practice-based model for school improvement in South Africa. He has facilitated the establishment of the Manyano Network of Community Schools, a grouping of schools that are focusing on improving teaching and learning while simultaneously addressing some of the social challenges to these core functions. Current interventions in the network range from curricular support for teachers and learners to community-based programmes aimed at encouraging greater parental and community involvement in the schools.