The Mveledzandivho (Knowledge Creation) Final Evaluation: Summary Report
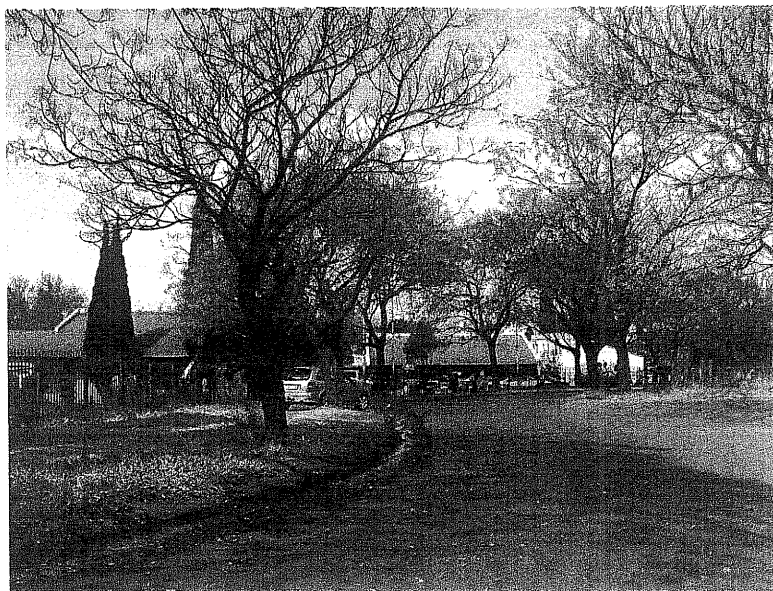
A joint partnership of **bhpbilliton** ...cing the future and **education** Department of Education REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA Managed by JET Education Services

JET EDUCATION SERVICES

MVELEDZANDIVHO

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HSRC
Human Sciences
Research Council

September 2008

Table of Contents

Abbreviations and Acronyms Used in this Report

AGM	Annual General Meeting
COSATU	Council of South African Trade Unions
DoE	Department of Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
HoD	Head of Department
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
JET	JET Education Services / Joint Education Trust
LOI	Language of Instruction
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LSM	Learning Support Material
NCS	National Curriculum Statements
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team

1. BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction

Between 1997 and 2000 the BHP Development Trust funded the *Masifunde* school-development project[1]. The Trust then decided to implement a new project, partly in succession to the first. This second project comprised a more comprehensive, structured programme of school support to selected schools in areas where the children of BHP Billiton's workers attended school. From discussions between JET Education Services (JET) and the BHP Billiton Development Trust during the second half of 2002 came the decision to call the new project *Mveledzandivho*, a Venda name meaning "Knowledge Creation".

By January 2003 JET had developed a proposal for a baseline study. On approval by BHP Billiton soon after that, JET's Evaluation and Research Division was contracted to do the study, and an internal report was subsequently delivered. The Baseline study was used to describe the pre-existing conditions in schools and to provide the funding institution and project managers with an indication of the nature of support that would benefit the schools. The Baseline report was also used to generate indicators to set targets for and measure the changes that were expected to take place in the participating schools. The Mveledzandivho Project's seven programme components, which are outlined below, then commenced.

Towards the end of 2005, JET invited bids for a Mid-term evaluation of Mveledzandivho. As JET was responsible for project management and overseeing the work of the contracted service providers, it was considered not appropriate for them to measure the project's effectiveness and the changes that it had brought about and it was necessary to contract an external evaluator. The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), in partnership with J Roberts Consulting Services, successfully made a bid and was contracted to conduct this Mid-term evaluation. The information collection took place during May 2006.

Towards the end of 2007, negotiations were initiated again by JET Education Services with the HSRC with a view to conducting a Summative evaluation in 2008, when the support and intervention project would end. The HSRC was invited to submit a proposal and budget for this task. An agreement was reached during March 2008 that the HSRC would conduct the final evaluation too. It would do so on its own this time as Ms J Roberts of J Roberts Consulting Services in the meantime had left the country to undertake other assignments in the Middle East. The information collection took place during May 2008.

Instrument design and methodology issues are discussed from Section 1.6 and further in greater depth. Only slight additions were made to the Mid-term instruments so that comparability of information over time would not be compromised, but to allow exploration, in much more depth, of issues such as sustainability, continuity and impact that become salient only at the end of an intervention like this.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The overall purpose of Mveledzandivho is to improve the quality of learning and teaching in the 27 participating schools[2]. The proposed specific objectives of the project were to:
- improve the quality of education and life of the children of BHP Billiton employees,
- ensure the long-term sustainability and impact of the project in the participating schools, and to
- improve the employability and life chances of communities around the BHP Billiton (SA) mining plants.

The first objective in particular has been pursued in the support programme through: educator or teacher development and support in Mathematics, Science (Life Orientation for Foundation Phase learners in Grades

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[1] The accompanying technical report provides more detailed information (see Chapters 1 and 2) concerning the contents presented in abbreviated form in Chapter 1 of the present summary version of the report.
[2] A detailed profile of the participating schools is provided in Chapter 4 of the technical report.

R to 3) and English/Language across the curriculum; the introduction of schools and teachers to technology education; training and support for school management teams and governing bodies; the provisioning and/or improvement of physical infrastructure, learning support material and other critical resources; and the creation of a conducive learning environment by addressing youth and social development issues in the context of inclusive education through recreational, sporting and cultural activities and training/workshops. The remaining two objectives lie more at the level of process, and at appropriate places in the technical report, but more specifically towards the end of this summary or executive-level report (see Chapter 3), which concentrates on conclusions, implications and recommendations, comments are made about them. However, the third objective could/can never be evaluated conclusively even by this Summative evaluation, as it presupposes some post-school investigation of the uptake of learners into the world of work or tertiary studies, for example through some kind of tracer study. At best one could deduce from learner performance levels and other related factors whether or not the project benefited their chances of success in that domain.

In line with these overall objectives and the various approaches followed by service providers in delivering the intended benefits through seven focus areas (see Section 1.3), the evaluation therefore set out to provide the funders (and programme managers) with:

- a review of conditions and practices existing in schools after five years of intervention;
- a comparison of these against the situations that existed at the Baseline and Mid-term;
- an update of the biographic data on each participating school;
- the recent learner performance profiles for each school, also in comparison with the Baseline and Mid-term situations;
- the perceptions that stakeholders have about the value and success of the support programme; and
- much more substantive reflection on the effect that the support programme had over and by the end of its implementation, with special reference to matters of sustainability of impact, wider implementation of lessons learnt, and remaining development needs in schools in and even outside the Mveledzandivho project.

As with the Mid-term report, producing the findings related to the purposes listed above is amplified by an additional product. This refers to the compilation of individual school profiles with regard to the achievement of targets that had been set in terms of the various specified indicators.

An additional element of (or companion to) the evaluation all along has been the monitoring side. A separate monitoring instrument or system that would assist the programme managers to record the past and track the remaining service-delivery volumes up to the end of the project, was designed and handed over to the client in 2006. The system for monitoring project delivery and participation did not form part of the Mid-term report, and does not now at the Summative evaluation make up one of the deliverables. However, the intention has always been to make use of the information contained therein, as updated by the support-programme managers from 2006 to 2008, to get a sense of the ways in and extent to which interventions and support could improve school and teacher functioning, and learner performance in the end. The present report hopes to be able to do that.

1.3   The support programme components

The Mveledzandivho support or intervention programme was designed and conceptualised to focus on seven interrelated focus areas. These areas were also closely followed in the development of the indicators and instruments applied during the execution of the evaluation. Without going into the detail of any of these focus areas, because that is done in the various chapters of the technical report, the gist of the focus areas, or sub-programmes of support, are provided in the following list:

- **Curriculum** support (with designated outcomes such as improved teacher knowledge and expertise in Mathematics, Science and Technology, and English/Language, delivery of these learning programmes, methods of teaching and assessment strategies, utilisation of technology, management of learning and teaching resources, and learner performance).
- **Governance and management** support (with designated outcomes such as improved management and administration of financial, material and human resources by School Management Teams (SMTs), capacity of schools to develop, implement and monitor their school development plans, distribution and utilisation of learning and teaching resources, capacity of School Governing Bodies

(SGBs) and Representative Councils of Learners (RCLs) to fulfil their roles, management of the school curriculum and teaching time, and Section 21 status).

- **Youth and social development** support (involving the social, physical, emotional, intellectual, moral, religious and aesthetic aspects of learners' engagement in activities such as sports, arts, culture, religion, and education (or awareness programmes) on substance, sexual and physical abuse, violence, teenage pregnancy, and poverty alleviation).
- **Early Childhood Development (ECD)** programme / support (with designated outcomes such as enhanced capacity among ECD facilitators to implement effective learning techniques, skills and capacity to develop own learning and teaching materials, and provision of essential learning and teaching materials to Grade R classes).
- **Learning Support Material (LSM) and resource provisioning** (including basic resources and advice on their use, management and maintenance).
- **Infrastructure refurbishment** (in provision and maintenance of basic items such as blackboards).
- **District training and support** (with designated outcomes such as enhanced capacity to undertake regular monitoring of project activities, collection and analysis of project data, use of any available information to advise on interventions, and application (sustainability) of skills elsewhere).

1.4   Relationship between the Baseline, Mid-term and Summative evaluations

As indicated already, trend analysis in terms of system functioning and learner performance forms the core of the current evaluation activity. However, as in all dynamic and open processes, some aspects remained consistent and others not, especially between the Baseline and Mid-term evaluations.

In the case of Mveledzandivho, the research team aimed to maintain as much consistency as possible between the three studies in terms of approach and methodology, including keeping constant the time of year that the information was collected, and ensuring that the same learner performance tests were used and administered by the same agency. The decision in 2006 to partner with J Roberts Consulting Services was driven by the fact that Ms Jennifer Roberts had been responsible for managing the Baseline study during her tenure at JET and would therefore have a sound understanding of the project's history and the methodology used in the Baseline study. Having completed the Mid-term evaluation jointly left the HSRC more than able to conduct the Summative evaluation similarly and on its own, given Ms Roberts' unavailability now in 2008.

As with the Mid-term study, the Summative evaluation was designed to measure progress against the indicators set for the project, some of which remained constant from the Baseline study and some which were introduced later at the Mid-term point, and for which no baseline data existed. Where possible (especially at the Mid-term), similar research instruments were used and, where appropriate, questions were phrased the same way as in the Baseline study, particularly in terms of curriculum delivery and school governance and management. From the Mid-term to the Summative evaluation, no items were changed at all, with the exception of adjusting relevant dates or periods to always cover events occurring during the foregoing two years. The items added now at the Summative point related to *post-facto* matters such as eventual user satisfaction with the interactions of and support by the service providers, the availability and use made of the Baseline and Mid-term reports, the overall sense among recipients of the success, outcomes and impact of the support, any needs that may remain unaddressed, and suggestions and recommendations that anyone may want to offer.

Those discontinuities and changes that existed between the Baseline and Mid-term studies had largely been due to the incremental way in which the project had been set up (and service providers had contributed to the formulation of specific objectives and form that programme components took). In addition, the implementation of different project components took place incrementally. The components focusing on school management and curriculum delivery were amongst the first to start and operated longest, while other components, such as the ECD programme, came on stream much later, with training only commencing in some provinces in early 2006. Indicators for the ECD component were only finalised in April 2006. At the time of the Mid-term study, as now, there were no formal indicators or targets for the district support and youth and social development project components.

The phased implementation of different components has a number of implications for the study, including the fact that the effects of different inception dates and levels or stages of progress have to be taken into consideration during the discussion of each focus area concerned.

1.5 The technical report

The technical report has been structured in such a way that it mimics the structure of the Baseline report, and replicates that of the Mid-term report, taking into account the additional components that were added at the Mid-term (including profiling ECD practices and the role of the districts in co-ordinating and supporting schools). The technical report comprises the following chapters or sections (and these have been replicated also in the various sub-sections of Chapter 2 of this summary version to enable providing an overview of key findings pertaining to each listed topic):

- Introduction – Chapter 1 (and Sections 1.1 to 1.4 above)
- Methodology – Chapter 2 (and Sections 1.5 to 1.9 below)
- Role of the district – Chapter 3 (and Section 2.1 in the next chapter below)
- School plant and infrastructure[3] – Chapter 4 (and Section 2.2 below)
- Management and governance structures in schools (including both School Governing Bodies and Representative Councils of Learners) – Chapter 5 (and Section 2.3 below)
- School Development Planning – Chapter 6 (and Section 2.4 below)
- Managerial functions and processes – Chapter 7 (and Section 2.5 below)
- Time management – Chapter 8 (and Section 2.6 below)
- Curriculum planning and coverage – Chapter 9 (and Section 2.7 below)
- Curriculum delivery – Chapter 10 (and Section 2.8 below)
- Use of Learning Support Material in classrooms – Chapter 11 (and Section 2.9 below)
- Assessment practices – Chapter 12 (and Section 2.10 below)
- Promotion of proficiency in the language of instruction – Chapter 13 (and Section 2.11 below)
- Participation in the Mveledzandivho Project and attitudes towards the services delivered – Chapter 14 (and Section 2.12 below)
- Early Childhood Development – Chapter 15 (and Section 2.13 below)
- Youth, Sporting and Cultural activities – Chapter 16 (and Section 2.14 below)
- Learner performance (in Grades 4, 7 and 10) – Chapter 17 (and Section 2.15 below)
- The link between support interventions, school functioning levels and learner performance – Chapter 18 (and Section 2.16 below)
- Brief conclusions – Chapter 19 (with a more extended integrative version in Chapter 3 below).

1.6 Introductory notes about method

The terms of reference issued at the outset to the evaluation consultants included two core elements: monitoring of project service delivery and measurement of change over the Baseline study. This technical report, as did the Mid-term report, focuses predominantly on the evaluation of change in district and school management (and governance) and teaching practices over time across indicators and against targets set. The methodology followed to achieve this is presented in the sections that follow, and also in much more detail in Chapter 2 of the technical report.

The Baseline evaluation conducted in 2003 sought to describe conditions in schools prior to the start of interventions, and had been designed to serve two purposes: to offer a reference point against which future change could be measured and the effects of the project could be quantified; and to assist the project planners to determine the focus areas that service providers should address. Similarly, the Mid-term evaluation served two functions: to describe changes in schools against baseline data and to provide the programme managers with suggestions as to how project design and delivery could be improved. The Summative evaluation focused on describing change against the baseline, determining the achievement of set targets, and evaluating the ways in which the programme could have contributed to any improvements (or otherwise).

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[3] Including an overview of the participating schools (see the technical report in particular)

1.7 Research questions

For the Summative evaluation, the main purpose, as contractually agreed on, was to assess the extent to which the project achieved its objectives and the impact it had on the overall functionality and effectiveness of the participating schools. In doing so, it has built on the Baseline and Mid-term reports, and other essential relevant information, including the monitoring data for which a system was developed and handed over to JET Education Services in 2006.

The research questions below, as set out in the terms of reference before the Mid-term study, still apply, and include establishing change over the Baseline in each of the areas of work of the nine project components. Where specific baseline data existed (relevant to the bigger part), the research questions were:
- Is there any discernable change in the measured indicators since the Baseline study?
- How do district officials/ managers/ governors/ teachers perceive the changes that have been brought about by the project?
- What level of service delivery has taken place?
- What level of satisfaction exists with service delivery by Mveledzandivho?

Where baseline data did not exist (e.g., for district interventions and, to some extent, for the ECD component), the Mid-term and Summative evaluations sought to describe participants' perceptions of change since the inception of the project and presented a picture of such practices or conditions. In some cases, additional indicators had been developed and started operating at the Mid-term evaluation.[4]

1.8 Research design

The research design has followed a classic pre-intervention, mid-term and end-of-intervention evaluation (as illustrated further below).

Baseline 2003	**Mid-term 2006**	**Summative/Final 2008**
Assess conditions prior to intervention	*Review changes against indicators after 1.5 to 2 years of implementation*	*Review changes in performance after completion of the project after about 4 years*
Data collection based on theory of teaching and learning.	Data collection based on indicators reported on in Baseline study and additional indicators set by the project.	Data collection based on the indicator framework, with deliberate alignment with the Mid-term evaluation report.
Formal indicators not finalised at time of data collection.	Greater focus on monitoring than in other studies.	Greater focus on sustainability, user satisfaction, remaining needs and wider implementation.
Purpose is to inform project design.		

The research design was based on the following principles:
- Coherence with the Baseline and Mid-term studies
- Adherence to the indicator framework
- Demonstration of logical linkages between programme inputs (services delivered) and the outcomes attained
- Scientifically defensible research principles
- Reliance on data-collection methods that will yield the most reliable and valid data.

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[4] The specific situation applicable is consistently indicated in each chapter of the technical report.

Following the completion of the Baseline study the project further refined the draft indicators that had informed the Baseline study. The Mid-term study was based on the almost 150 indicators (on school management and governance, curriculum practice and ECD) that were developed by the project and service providers at the time. These are still in place and have been followed further in the Summative evaluation.

1.8.1 The project indicator framework

When embarking on the Summative study the researchers took care to ensure that it was as closely aligned with the Baseline and Mid-term studies as possible in order to ensure maximum comparability of data between the three studies. This was done by:
- conducting the studies at roughly the same time of the year,
- very closely replicating the research instruments (such as interviews and questionnaires) from the Mid-term study, that in turn had been based on the instruments used in the Baseline study, and
- making reference to data collected during both the 2003 and 2006 studies, and reflecting change against the same indicators that were used in the Baseline and Mid-term studies.

The role played by the project's indicator framework and its influence on the research methodology (and relationship to the Baseline and Mid-term studies) are set out in the Mid-term evaluation report.[5] The indicators used since the Baseline study were based on Taylor, Muller and Vinjevold's (2003) book *Getting Schools Working*[6] and their ideas on the behaviours that have to be in place in order to have highly functional schools. These indicators were discussed and further refined at a meeting between JET (including the Evaluation and Research Division) and the project's service providers, which was held towards the end of 2004. The final set of indicators accepted differed slightly from the initial ones, which means that baseline data is not available for each and every indicator. For a few indicators there are only two measurement points (Mid-term and Final/Summative), whereas for others there will be three measurement points.

The instruments used in the study were structured so that they measured each of the indicators set out in the indicator framework. As these only covered three key areas (management/governance, curriculum delivery and Early Childhood Development) the researchers had to identify key issues which were likely to have been influenced by the project and where no baseline data existed, to structure the instruments so that they would be able to describe the state of affairs in schools or districts at any later point.

1.8.2 Sampling

The study involved the entire population of schools participating in the project[7]. As per the terms of reference issued by JET, the evaluation sample excluded KaMagugu school for learners with special educational needs. This meant that it was not necessary to develop a school-based sampling frame. Within schools, it was necessary to sample the teachers who would be observed and interviewed. As the learner performance tests were administered at the levels of Grade 4, 7 and 10 it was decided that the classroom observations would take place in these grades to facilitate linking performance to observed practices.

The selection of the focus grades was driven by the need to measure levels of learner attainment at the end of each phase in the General Education and Training Band (namely Grades 3, 6 and 9, or the Foundation, Intermediate and Senior Phases). Given that the study was taking place in April/May it was not possible to administer the tests to Grade 3, 6 or 9 learners as they would not have covered enough of the curriculum to be able to complete all items in the test. It was therefore decided (in the Baseline, Mid-term and Summative studies) to administer the tests to learners in Grades 4, 7 and 10 in the hope that these learners would have covered the entire curriculum from the preceding year.

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[5] Prinsloo, C.H., Roberts, J. & Pereira, C. (2006). *The Mveledzandivho (Knowledge Creation) Mid-Term Evaluation Report*. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.
[6] Taylor, N., Muller, J. & Vinjevold, P. (2003). *Getting schools working: Research and systemic school reform in South Africa*. Cape Town: Pearson Education South Africa.
[7] Between the Baseline and the Mid-term studies, two schools were removed from the initial project population and two new schools introduced. For these schools there is no baseline data. Between the Mid-term and Summative evaluations, one ailing school was disbanded and removed from the evaluation.

In the Baseline study the learner performance tests were administered to a group of 40 learners randomly selected across each of the three focus grades. It was therefore decided that schools (and teachers) could self-select the Mathematics, English and Science teachers to be observed – as roughly equal proportions of learners would be selected from each teacher's class. Where possible, the researchers tried to observe teachers who had been participating in the Mveledzandivho project. However, this was not a prerequisite for participating in the study.

1.8.3 Data-collection methods and instruments

In collecting data, the researchers sought to gather data that would be most reliable and valid. In order to do this, documentary evidence was used to validate and cross-check interview data. The interviews collected a mixture of self-reported descriptions of behaviours (checked against documentary evidence), respondents' perceptions of changes in schools and their responses to the project.

An overview of instruments and respondents is provided next (see Table 2.1, technical report), indicating the following contents for each item: instrument; nature of data collected; respondent; and project components.

- Biographic data sheet; self-completed questionnaire; school principal; infrastructure and observation of facilities.
- District site-visit schedule; interview with key manager(s), and document review; district manager (or representative/s); governance and management, curriculum, youth and social development.
- School Management Team interview; semi-structured interview; school principal (and/or one or more members of the SMT); governance and management, curriculum, infrastructure, youth and social development.
- School management review schedule; document review; principal, deputy-principal(s), and/or other member(s) of SMT; governance and management, and curriculum.
- Head of Department interview; semi-structured interview; individual HoDs or focus-group (depending on number/availability); governance and management, and curriculum.
- School Governing Body interview; interview with SGB group, and documentary review of key governance documents and policies; group of 4 to 6 SGB members; governance and management.
- Representative Council of Learners interview; group interview with RCL members, and documentary review of key activities; group of 2 to 6 RCL members; governance and management, and youth and social development.
- Classroom observation; narrative description of lesson completed by observer; completed by researcher, but focus is on the teacher observed; curriculum, and infrastructure.
- Classroom delivery review form; closed responses that summarise lesson observation, and documentary analysis of key documents – curriculum planning, assessment records, learner workbooks; completed by researcher, but focus is on the teacher observed; curriculum.
- Teacher interview; individual semi-structured interview with the teachers who were observed; observed teachers (did not need to have participated in the Mveledzandivho Project); curriculum.
- Teacher focus-group interview; focus-group interview on attitudes and perceptions concerning Mveledzandivho and most significant changes brought about; 6 to 8 teachers who have participated in Mveledzandivho training; curriculum, training and support participation, satisfaction levels.
- Early Childhood Development interview; interview with ECD teacher, documentary review, and observation of conditions in the ECD classroom; teacher responsible for ECD class(es); ECD, curriculum, and infrastructure.
- Teacher participation questionnaire; self-completed questionnaire on project participation and levels of satisfaction with service delivery; teachers who had participated in the project (researchers sought to administer up to 9 per school); demographic data, training and support participation, and satisfaction levels.
- Management participation questionnaire; self-completed questionnaire on project participation and levels of satisfaction with service delivery; members of the SMT who had participated in the project; demographic data, training and support participation, and satisfaction levels.
- Project impact and sustainability sheet (2008); interview or questionnaire items attached to most of the other instruments above; members of SGB, SMT and RCL, HoDs, teachers, learners, and district officials; receipt and use of resources, value of reports, and remaining needs.

In Table 2.2 in the technical report the number of instruments completed and returned is summarised in detail. That information indicates which schools offered teaching and learning across grades at the secondary school level, and as a result had Representative Councils of Learners, or had Grade R classes as part of primary school teaching and learning, and thus had to specialise in Early Childhood Development. It also indicates which schools get coordinated by which district offices, also according to province.

The numbers of completed classroom-related instruments (classroom observation sheets, classroom delivery forms, and teacher interview schedules) vary between about six and nine in any given school, depending on which two or three of the designated grades (i.e., Grades 4, 7, and 10 (or 9)) have been present, and on the presence or availability of teachers. Six instruments were completed in schools with two focus grades (that is, Grades 4 and 7 for primary schools, and Grades 9 and 10 for secondary schools), while nine instruments should have been returned where there were three focus grades in a school (as was the case in combined schools). Teacher presence, availability and subject timetabling also influenced the number of instruments returned. (Table 2.2 in the technical report is used for reporting the detailed figures per school.)

As in 2006, completion and return rates were quite good. Many more classroom review and teacher interview documents were returned in 2008 (165 and 153 respectively). Slightly more teacher focus-group (24) and ECD interviews (8) were also completed in comparison with 2006. Fewer teachers and managers, though, completed the questionnaires evaluating the Mveledzandivho training received from 2006 to 2008 (139 and 68 respectively). However, response rates were not low, but fewer of the originally trained staff remained at schools, reducing the volume of follow-up training. The previous low return rates from respondents from Lizwi Secondary (School 10), disrupted in 2006 by labour action, were turned around dramatically. More or less equal numbers of schools, spread rather evenly across provinces, respectively showed increases or decreases in returns. Demographic information sheets, SMT interview schedules, and school document review sheets were completed at all 27 schools, while SGB interviews could be held at 25 schools. Forty four HoD interview schedules, eight district interviews, and 21 RCL interviews were also held. The number of newly added IMPACT questionnaires completed in 2008 came to 304.

1.8.4 Process of data collection

A team of three researchers visited each school. The workload was divided between the researchers as follows: a senior person was selected as management specialist and covered the protocol and scheduling arrangements, the interviews with the principal, SGB, RCL, SMT and Grade R teacher, and the documentary review and observation of school facilities. A specialist in language teaching covered classroom observations (for two grades), the related documentary review, an interview with observed teachers, the focus-group interview with teachers participating in the project, and the HoD interview. This second team member also assisted the first when required. A Mathematics specialist was responsible for classroom observation (two Mathematics and two Science classes), the related documentary review, and an interview with the observed teachers (group). In most cases, each school was visited for a full day. Schools that had all three focus grades were visited for at least a day-and-a-half. (More detail is presented in Table 2.3 of the technical report.)

Once recruited, the researchers received a full day's training to orient them to the project and the manner in which the research instruments were to be administered. Each research team was visited at least twice during the data-collection period and monitored by a quality assuror who provided researchers with feedback on their performance and, where necessary, further training and support on the completion of instruments and general data-collection practices. These visits were planned so that all four teams were visited on the first day already so that appropriate standards could be set and confirmed at the outset of the study. In order to ensure maximum consistency, a strict requirement was set regarding teams of researchers having to be available for the full two weeks. This requirement was met in all cases.

The data was captured and analysed using Microsoft Access, Microsoft Excel and SPSS. In most instances data is presented as the percentage of respondents who gave a certain response or exhibited certain behaviour. Where necessary, the total number of respondents used to generate the percentage has been reduced where a preceding response would have produced a large number of missing or not-applicable responses (for example: when describing the level of detail in curriculum plans, this is based only on the total number of teachers who could produce such plans for review, and not the total number of respondents in the

study). In some instances where the project's targets make reference to the total number of teachers in schools that should exhibit a certain behaviour, a second figure is given, where the frequency is calculated using the full sample – to enable comparison against indicator targets. An additional illustration in this case could be where the immediate availability of certain documentation, beyond merely reporting their existence, would be the only solid evidence towards confirming functional operations pertaining to a given aspect, thus warranting the use of the full number of schools as the total number of cases. Be it as it may, care has been taken to indicate the basis of reporting in each individual instance.

1.9   Limitations

The following limitations to the study have to be noted:

* *Reductions in the expected research sample*

Although no research sites were skipped (in 2006 and 2008) during the school-visit window, the intended teacher sample in particular fell short in a few cases. This can be ascribed to a number of reasons including:
  * Teacher absenteeism. Teachers were not at school on the day of the visits.
  * Strike action (in 2006). South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) members participated in the national COSATU strike. Even re-scheduling did not avoid missing some interviews.
  * Unavailability of documents for review. In some cases teachers claimed not to have all their documents at school on the day of the visit and managers could not source the required documents – in spite of having been given advance notice that these documents would be required.
  * Time tabling. Not all required grade and learning area combinations were taught in the visit window.
In an isolated case or two not enough outside SGB members could be convened in time for a meaningful focus-group interview. A limited few teacher focus-group interviews were skipped, especially because of the full school and visit programme, or teacher absence. However, triangulation ensured very little data loss.

* *Lack of baseline data*

As noted already, the status of the indicators at the time of the Baseline report differed slightly from the final iteration of the indicators in late 2004. This means that for some of the indicators used since 2006 there is no baseline data against which Mid-term and Summative performance can be compared.[8]

* *Methods used to calculate Baseline indicators unclear*

In some cases the calculations behind Baseline indicators were not known (such as whether missing or not-applicable responses had been excluded from the calculation of frequencies). Where doubt existed, information is given on the calculation of indicators since 2006, which may explain discrepancies in scores.

* *Data is a snapshot of school performances*

Due to the high cost of field visits, only one day could be spent per school (except for schools with three focus grades). During such high-stakes visits teachers can either put on overly-impressive (rehearsed) performances or nervously under-perform. Learner work spanning longer periods were analysed from their workbooks for a more accurate picture of the level of work completed over time and the focus of lessons.

* *Absence of control conditions*

The nature of the evaluation assignment and the time at which the external evaluators came on board were such that the design centred on measuring school progress against set targets in terms of a range of specified indicators. The use of a control group was therefore not an option. The evaluation thus relies much on qualitative argument in terms of project objectives, interventions and process, instead of quantitative

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[8]   Unfortunately JET Education Services' Baseline data got disposed of early on, so that it was not possible to reconstruct any scores for some of the newer indicators (where such information would or may have existed).

significance testing (which would in any case have been problematic given the low number of schools). However, such evaluation in itself is meaningful, and much value can be derived in this manner.

- *Small size of the sample*

The number of schools evaluated comprises only 27. Given this relatively low number, as well as the fact that a combination of primary, secondary and combined schools had been included, another implication was that an even further reduction occurred when analyses were done by grade. The reason for this is that only 15 schools would be primary schools or schools teaching at grade levels in the primary school range (Grades R to 7). The same applied at secondary school level when analyses covered Grade 8 to 12 activities, albeit that slightly more schools could then be retained (21).

In spite of these limitations, the research team remains confident that the level of data integrity and quality was sufficient enough to have enabled deriving scores for the various indicators and provide the project managers and funding institution with a clear indication of the effects of the project on participating schools.

2. KEY FINDINGS

This chapter comprises a summary of key findings for each programme or support component as recorded in the various chapters of the technical report. The main focus is on trends over time. The resulting information is sequenced to present outcomes perceived to be very positive first. Then, any inconsistent, static and/or slight shifts in trends are reflected, followed by comments about areas of particular concern. Very informative observations (e.g., about high achievement levels) are noted as special comments. Significant shifts upwards or downwards in terms of functioning levels had to comprise changes of at least 20 to 25 percentage points to qualify for inclusion. The research team would identify any additional observations that would be considered important, repetitive across sources or themes, or very illuminative for the evaluation.

2.1 The role of the district

Positive trends in functioning

- Accepting their role as districts in supporting and monitoring SGB functioning.
- Dedicating and tasking a section in the district to do SGB support.
- Training SGBs for their administration, financial and human resources tasks.
- Guiding and supporting SMTs, monitoring their policies and plans, and recording monitoring visits.
- Monitoring schools' practices related to curriculum implementation.
- Conducting teaching and teaching support training / workshops, and overseeing annual assessment.
- Rating Mveledzandivho assistance to schools as worthwhile pertaining to curriculum policy formulation and quality assurance, support, training, monitoring, planning and providing calculators.
- Ensuring optimal time management and use at schools.
- Approving (beforehand) deviations from optimally using teaching time at schools.

Selected comments on trends that were inconsistent, static or improving/deteriorating only marginally[9]

- Slightly decreased extent of verifying over time to fieldworkers (through making available authentic documents) the existence of good practices pertaining to SGB and SMT functioning, school budgets, performance appraisal, NCS and curriculum implementation and language policy, although such records were more frequently than before verbally claimed to exist.

Deterioration in functioning

- Providing training to schools on school development plans and planning (largely fulfilled by 2006?).
- Ensuring that school meetings are limited to after-hours timeslots.

Aspects deserving special mention

- Data gaps pertaining to 2006 have been overcome with improved completion rates across provinces.
- The number of districts accepting their role and involved in SGB training is very high.
- In six of the eight district interviews Mveledzandivho teams were acknowledged as having lead the implementation of school development planning and plans very actively and well.

2.2 School plant and infrastructure

Positive trends in functioning

- Two primary schools now have Grade R classes, not having had them in 2006.

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[9] In order to only present and summarise strong evidence in Chapter 2, many other observations that would every time belong under this heading were left out. They are included in detail in the technical report.

- Increasing numbers of Grade R teachers are reported to have a specialist qualification in ECD.
- Many schools were able to make new staff appointments. These included many temporary positions.
- Schools managed to acquire additional space over time and they were able to utilise this in such a way between teaching needs, on the one hand, and storage and non-teaching purposes, on the other hand, that teaching space or learner:classroom ratios have not been compromised.
- Multi-grade classes and teaching have decreased.

Selected comments on trends that were inconsistent, static or improving/deteriorating only marginally

- While some schools have been able to decrease the rate at which Grade 10 learners are lost[10] before reaching Grade 12, others were not. In two schools, the drop-off rate is very high.
- The learner:classroom ratio underwent a very slight increase, and stands at a relatively high 44:1.
- Equal numbers of classrooms that had been in need of minor attention before were left to either deteriorate and now require more urgent attention, or were restored to good condition.
- Availability of electricity has improved slightly, while access to water remains reasonably high.
- Security fencing and other arrangements remain at a high level with some fluctuation in schools.

Deterioration in functioning

- One school lost its capacity to teach up to Grade 12 and has no final-year learners any longer.
- One school lost its Grade R and 1 classes.
- The number of schools where all their flush toilets were functional dropped greatly.

Aspects deserving special mention

- More secondary schools now have more than 1 000 learners, which may impact on resource needs.
- Schools maintained their Section 21 status, with most of the rest all having applied for it.

2.3 Management and governance structures in schools

Positive trends in functioning

- More management teams have lately attended to school discipline as an important function.
- Governing bodies met more frequently than before.
- More schools kept and used sound administrative documentation, files and systems.
- A growing number of SGBs had a formal constitution, as well as minutes of meetings.
- Parents were more often encouraged by the SMT to become involved in school activities such as maintenance, sports and cultural days.

Selected comments on trends that were inconsistent, static or improving/deteriorating only marginally

- Just more than half of the management teams, having increased slightly, met at least every two weeks, with such meetings scheduled on the year plan in a consistent 75% of the schools.
- Diverse and varying activities are seen as the role of SGBs in school management.
- After some deterioration up to 2006, the situation regarding codes of conduct improved again.
- Slightly fewer SGBs could verify through documentary evidence that they met at least monthly.
- Parental apathy remained a serious problem in one in five schools according to SMTs, but in about two in five schools according to SGBs.
- Still only half of the schools that have RCLs had written constitutions for them.
- Although a variety of rich responses about their roles and contributions were made, a growing (and high) number of RCLs did not know what SASA was or expected from them. There was also still virtually no representation for RCLs on SGBs.

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[10] Calculated both as "drop-off" figure (comparing, within a given year, the numbers of learners in Grades 10 and 12), and as "drop-out" figure (comparing the numbers of Grade 10s in 2006 with the numbers of Grade 12s in 2008).

Deterioration in functioning

- Many more governing bodies were not discussing policy making and discipline. (Much of the former may have been attended to by 2006?)
- The physical existence of minutes in fewer cases confirmed that AGMs were held with parents.
- Fewer SGBs provided confirmation of minutes and the discussion contents of at least one parents' meeting in a year. Included is the decreasing ratification or approval of formal budgets and school fees. Also the number of other *ad hoc* parent meetings declined, as did confirmation through formal documents, such as minutes.
- Fewer SGBs reported having received training since 2006 compared to the period before that.
- The number of RCLs that did not function in terms of sub-committees doubled since 2006.

Aspects deserving special mention

- Record-keeping of management meetings may not be sufficiently structured or formal.
- All schools had functional governing bodies in place.

2.4 School development planning

Positive trends in functioning

- Timeframes for the objectives or tasks set in the action plans attached to school development plans (SDPs) were observed more frequently lately.
- A growing number of SDPs made mention of intentions around increasing learner performance.
- More schools allocated budgets to particular activities outlined in SDPs.
- SGBs more frequently participated in the development and implementation of SDPs. (They in particular increasingly attended to issues around school infrastructure and facilities, but also to ensuring the soundness of teaching and learning.)
- Progress reporting on SDP implementation became more structured, less often comprising verbal means, but rather written reports, and was directed to both the SMT and SGB.
- SGBs more often than before received quarterly feedback on SDP implementation.

Selected comments on trends that were inconsistent, static or improving/deteriorating only marginally

- Almost all schools, having continued increasing slightly over time, have SDPs.
- Implementation plans and progress reports were evidenced in an unchanged number of schools. However, increasing evidence confirmed the existence of tracking and implementation activities.
- Schools increasingly integrated SDP implementation into their year plans.
- Slight increases in observing physical evidence for reporting back on progress, taking remedial action on discovering deviations and monitoring SDPs were noted.
- Responses about the value that SDPs have for SMTs largely remained consistent.

Deterioration in functioning

- None.

Aspects deserving special mention

- School renovation, maintenance, addition of new structures and funding featured strongly in SDPs.
- Almost all indicators in this section increased either well or at least a little (i.e., no declines).

2.5   Managerial processes and functions

Positive trends in functioning

- More SMTs met on a monthly basis (and also more of them at least every two weeks).
- More HoD members reported receiving SMT meeting agendas beforehand (to enable preparation).
- More school year plans scheduled the SMT meetings.
- The value of administrative documents serving as a full school record was accepted increasingly.
- Keeping personnel files on qualifications, development needs, IQMS, leave, etc., and finding them useful especially for allocating teacher workloads and as monitoring tool for IQMS.
- Up-to-date and appropriately used leave registers exist.
- Learner records were increasingly accepted as valuable in enabling meaningful feedback to parents.
- SGBs increasingly approved financial payments and monitored / controlled all finances overall.
- Acceptance of the value of financial records for transparency and accountability purposes.
- Many more schools now had a policy on the management of learning support material (LSM), and showed evidence of regularly using the related LSM inventories and asset registers.

Selected comments on trends that were inconsistent, static or improving/deteriorating only marginally

- Slightly fewer schools than before kept attendance registers (in the minutes) of their SMT meetings.
- SMT meeting discussions kept on prioritising core teaching quality issues, and foregrounding policy.
- All schools, with one exception, and having increased over time, had access to computers for administration. These were spread more evenly across schools, and were more serviceable.
- Fewer schools received their mail regularly, although official communications from the DoE were more frequently reported to arrive on time. However, fewer schools discussed relevant official circulars with all staff.
- Schools had a greater ability to compile the documents required and prepare for the review.
- Documents related to staff development were more commonly available and covered more aspects.
- Leave monitoring appeared to be consistent over time.
- Verification levels pertaining to keeping learner performance records at school increased steadily.
- More SGBs than before had financial committees.
- The existence of income statements were observed at fewer schools, but annual budgets and audited financial statements at more.
- Updating asset records regularly was increasingly seen as the practice of choice to know what assets a school possessed and helping to manage those, and document review confirmed their greater use.

Deterioration in functioning

- Fewer schools' SMT meetings dealt with discipline. (It may be largely addressed by now?)
- Orderly file or other systems comprising invoices, accounts payable and bank statements were less frequently observed.

Aspects deserving special mention

- All SMTs now kept formal minutes of meetings, including the final two not there yet in 2006.
- Mveledzandivho support was seen to have led to improved LSM records and stock taking.

2.6   Time management

Positive trends in functioning

- Systems for catching up lost time were evidenced in more schools (surpassing the 2003 level again).
- The reported use of extra classes during weekends and holidays showed a great increase.

- The reported monitoring and curbing of interferences with teaching time by the principal and the SMT increased.
- Schools increasingly recorded all time losses, and approached the district office to clarify all such events much more as a rule.
- Keeping daily teacher attendance registers and monitoring attendance, also by the most senior school managers, now applied widely. The existence of learner attendance registers and their use showed a slightly erratic pattern, although at a reasonably high level of prevalence.
- An increased sense of awareness about preventing the erosion of teaching time is evident in teachers returning to classes speedily after break, not arriving late at school, starting lessons punctually and focusing on teaching activity, as well as learners not arriving late either.

Selected comments on trends that were inconsistent, static or improving/deteriorating only marginally

- Timetables were displayed prominently in an increasing number of schools.
- Quality of time tables (details incorporated in them) remained high or increased further.
- More Mathematics teaching time has been allocated at Grade 7 and 10 levels lately. However, the time volume for English at Grade 4 level decreased. (Without serious deviation from the norm.)
- Document verification of the existence and functional use of most of the measures related to not losing teaching time and to attendance registers and records were kept constant at a high level over all four years. This includes regulating early departure and late coming, and acting against those concerned when required (acknowledging that the extent of the problem also decreased).

Deterioration in functioning

- Union activities and labour action, as well as bereavements, memorial services and related reasons caused an increased amount of school closures lately.

Aspects deserving special mention

- All schools were able to develop and implement time tables.
- Availing learners of extra lessons during the afternoon, early morning, Saturdays and holidays was a fairly common practice, as were recovery plans after strikes, or fitting in an extra period. However, common transport made this impossible in remote areas. HoDs played an increasing part in arranging, supporting and monitoring these.
- Mveledzandivho support was seen to have led to better time use and management at a practical level.

2.7   Curriculum planning and coverage

Positive trends in functioning

- Many more schools (trebling) formulated and now had their own curriculum management policies.
- Activities such as assessment, test and examination requirements and dates, monitoring and moderation of curriculum implementation, and ensuring that work programmes and schedules are covered properly have all received increasing attention in curriculum plans over time.
- HoDs increasingly and in addition took responsibility for roles such as specifying submission dates, receiving sub-plan contributions and other suggestions to the composite plan from learning area and phase co-ordinators, and ensuring that teachers receive training and guidance as required.
- The quality of teachers' curriculum plans (i.e., the details in them) improved well over time. This conclusion also covers more detailed term plans, although the baseline level is still low, and, to a lesser extent, lesson plans.
- SMTs and HoDs increasingly monitored teachers' adherence to their curriculum planning especially through classroom visits and observations, and checking of learner books.
- Fewer teachers (although still half) indicated that they struggled to keep up with their teaching plans, with low learner ability (foundation knowledge), meetings and extramural activity being key factors.

Selected comments on trends that were inconsistent, static or improving/deteriorating only marginally

- Having operational plans for curriculum management stayed low at just below half of the schools.
- The coverage of specific activities in operational curriculum management plans fluctuated a little over time, with SMT and HoD monitoring visits and submission dates of learner workbooks to them having increased, while submission dates for mark schedules and the dates of staff, SGB, RCL and parent meetings having deteriorated.
- A constant figure of about two-thirds of teachers and SMT members, and 80% of HoDs, reportedly continued receiving training in curriculum implementation. NCS terminology, pacing and planning, and assessment were the key contents of such training.
- All principals expected teachers to produce long-term teaching plans (having slightly improved). HoD involvement in achieving this remained high. A gradually increasing proportion of teachers (now standing at about 80%) were able to produce their copies of such plans during fieldwork.
- More teachers than before adhered to the contents of their lesson plans.
- Quality assurance plans to monitor curriculum planning also existed more often, and especially HoDs and principals took an increasingly active role in this.
- The level of feedback to teachers on their curriculum plans varied, with SMTs increasingly having given qualitative feedback, and HoDs slightly less often.
- A constant number of teachers seemed able to adhere in the reality of teaching to their planning.

Deterioration in functioning

- The predominantly positive evaluation in 2006 of the value of curriculum training became tempered by a more ambivalent sense of it in 2008.

Aspects deserving special mention

- All schools and teachers had good access to NCS documents, with really minimal exception.
- Still about one in ten teachers, albeit slightly improving, received no feedback on the quality of their teaching plans.
- Mveledzandivho support was seen to have led to better overall curriculum management and the development and implementation of related policies at school among HoDs, while improved lesson plans and the inclusion of assessment in planning were seen to have done so for teachers.

2.8 Curriculum delivery

Positive trends in functioning

- In terms of the level of cognitive demand made on learners, lessons increasingly adhered to the specifications set in the NCS, especially for Grades 4 and 7.
- Lessons increasingly became learner-centred.
- Teachers increasingly made reference to everyday events and real-life contexts.

Selected comments on trends that were inconsistent, static or improving/deteriorating only marginally

- Records showing how SMT members and HoDs monitored curriculum delivery by teachers were observed at a constant number of schools, while slightly fewer schedules or programmes indicating class support visits were seen.
- Consistently across learning areas, fewer teachers struggled with lesson contents or made errors.
- The topic or conceptual focus of lessons was clear in a constantly high proportion of cases.
- Whole-class teaching became slightly more prevalent over time, although researchers deemed the approach used by the teacher at the time of observation appropriate to an increasing extent.
- More learners over time were put in a position to retain some form of individual record of the work covered during lessons.

Deterioration in functioning

- None.

Aspects deserving special mention

- At most 10% of teachers observed still seemed to battle with lesson contents.
- Mveledzandivho support was seen to have more actively than before led to improved learning programmes and lesson planning, the discovery of a wider range of teaching methods, and the integration of curriculum contents across learning areas and in assessment.

2.9   Use of learning support materials by teachers

Positive trends in functioning

- Where learning materials were used during lessons, the effectiveness with which this was done increased over time.

Selected comments on trends that were inconsistent, static or improving/deteriorating only marginally

- The range of LSM (received through Mveledzandivho) deemed most useful remained constant, with especially science kits, dictionaries, calculators, mathematics kits and readers / reading material much appreciated.
- The availability of all materials, except English readers, appeared to be less at the level of individual learners than before. However, set works, calculators and science kits became slightly more available to individual learners or at least pairs of learners.
- The percentages of lessons during which a range of learning materials were used gradually decreased over time, generally speaking.

Deterioration in functioning

- Fewer teachers than before ascribed positive changes in their use and the availability of LSM to Mveledzandivho.

Aspects deserving special mention

- The number of textbooks was deemed sufficient in only half of the lessons, having decreased slightly.
- Not even half of the learners, constant over time, could take textbooks home with them.

2.10   Assessment

Positive trends in functioning

- More SMT members than before saw their key role in assessment policy monitoring as to check the alignment between policy, year plans, test books, portfolios, teacher files, learner books and reports on learner progress.
- More HoDs than before saw their role as ensuring that teachers submit all tasks in advance for moderation and approval and as evaluating tasks against NCS requirements in general.
- More teachers than before adhered to or exceeded the assessment frequencies set in NCS policy.
- The practice of teachers asking simple recall questions in class decreased drastically over time.
- Teachers more frequently than before assessed tasks set for learners for correctness (with some variation across grades). More of these tasks were at the level of the individual, and not the group.
- The number of different kinds of tasks set in the English learning area all increased over time.

- The existence of assessment policies was verified constantly in almost two-thirds of schools. Managers, though, claimed this figure to be closer to 85%, while teachers' clear articulation of the contents of such policies, slightly increasing over time, confirmed the first figure.
- More HoDs than before ensured that assessment contents were pitched at the correct level by comparing them against specific criteria pertaining to grade progression and learning outcomes.
- High frequencies of teachers continued asking questions during lessons to gauge learners' understanding of the work. Such questions increasingly comprised higher-order types of evaluation.
- Teachers at Grades 7 to 10 more frequently than before tried to address learner misconceptions in the feedback that they gave learners. Some erratic trends pertained to correcting learners' mistakes.
- Assessment records could be produced by teachers in high percentages of cases (having increased too), although the frequency with which tasks were set dropped slightly.
- Mathematics teachers appear to have set fewer assessment tasks lately, while the pattern was erratic for Science, depending on grade level, with assessment at the lower grades having increased.
- Fewer teachers developed portfolios of learner work lately.
- Providing written feedback to learners on their work also increased over time.
- An increased number of teachers indicated using a range of means to identify individual learners struggling with their work and requiring assistance.
- On the whole, slightly more teachers could indicate the kinds of action they took to afford under-performing learners individual specialised attention, and also more general group-based intervention, or changing their own teaching approach.

Deterioration in functioning

- Fewer teachers than before could detail most of the key requirements set by assessment policies about the type and frequencies of tasks and activities.
- Fewer school managers than before monitored teachers' implementation of assessment policies.
- Fewer teachers than before indicated making a range of potential improvements and changes to their assessment practices as a result of Mveledzandivho (with greater NCS alignment about the only item that increased over time).

Aspects deserving special mention

- Teachers seem to have continued missing opportunities to use incorrect answers by learners as a tool for deepening their understanding of the work.
- Very few teachers had written records of learners experiencing difficulties with their work.

2.11   Promotion of language proficiency

Positive trends in functioning

- Almost all schools now had own policy stating the language to be used for teaching and learning.
- More schools than before promoted the use of the language of instruction through policy.
- In cases where learners were taught through the medium of a second language, school managers more than before encouraged teachers to use it frequently, also through debating and other events.
- With some variance occurring by grade level and learning area, targets set by the NCS for the frequency of completing written work were reached by more schools than before.
- School managers monitored compliance with language policy more frequently (mainly class visits).

- Just more than half of the school governing bodies constantly contributed to the promotion of the use of the language of instruction.
- More teachers used learners' home language during observations, especially to give instructions.

- Both learners and teachers were more confident and proficient than before in using English.[11]
- Learners were required more often than before to read written texts in English and Mathematics to increase their proficiency.
- In a constant half of schools their language policies stipulated the amounts of written work required. (Other informal means for doing so seemed to have increased this prevalence to around 75%.)
- However, although about 80% of teachers constantly claimed to set written tasks for learners at frequencies ranging from twice per week to daily, the actual volumes of work observed were less, and did not meet NCS or own targets in many cases.
- Over time, the volume of written work completed in Grades 9 and 10 consistently increased, as for English and Mathematics at Grade 7 level.
- More learners than before had a written record of the lesson at the end of it.

Deterioration in functioning

- The volumes of written work completed at Grade 4 level decreased, as with Grade 7 Science work.

Aspects deserving special mention

- Still only about a third to just more than half of schools met frequency targets for written work.

2.12 Delivery and reception of Mveledzandivho support

Positive trends in functioning

- Many more support events covered the theme of youth and social development in 2006 to 2008 than before, with many more hours having been spent on these and many more participants reached.
- The number of hours spent on school-support visits to individual teachers increased over time for all three learning areas. The numbers of visits and the numbers of teachers who had benefited also increased for Mathematics.
- School-support visits' usefulness was rated to have increased most in the areas of implementation of assessment policies and practices, assessing and implementing school policies, and establishing new academic, cultural, sport, youth and extra-curricular (community-based) activities.

Selected comments on trends that were inconsistent, static or improving/deteriorating only marginally

- The number of visits and the number of teachers who had benefited remained constant for Science (and Technology).
- Experience and qualification levels of management staff and teachers at schools increased steadily.
- Fewer workshops on financial and asset management, compared to school management and development, were presented. The former set of courses was also rated as good or excellent by fewer than half of the respondents, while about three-quarters of them did so for the school management and development courses.
- School-support visits maintained a constant frequency over time, as well as even ratings of their quality.
- Although the number of individual teacher-support visits remained more constant than the corresponding trends for management and teacher workshops, slightly less positive ratings of the quality of the former were observed. The extent to which various topics and areas of teachers' work got discussed and addressed gradually increased over time. Classroom observation and feedback was increasingly seen as the most beneficial aspect of teachers' school-support visits.
- A wide range of resources was received by participants over time.
- Very few respondents had been given (remembered) access to the Baseline and Mid-term evaluation reports, or the 2006 school profiles, and as a result also very little use was reportedly made of them.

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[11] Perhaps with some exceptions at Grade 10 level.

Deterioration in functioning

- The number of visits and the number of teachers who had benefited decreased for English.
- The number of management and teacher workshops reportedly attended tapered off since 2006.
- Fewer respondents than before voiced satisfaction with the number of management and teacher workshops (i.e., not being enough).

Aspects deserving special mention

- Individual teacher attendance records in the service provider reports and/or monitoring database compiled by JET have not been as complete for the 2006 to 2008 period as before, resulting in some lessened ability to make head counts of teachers benefiting from the support programme. With regard to management and governance courses, either no events took place in the recent period or no information got recorded too. The same is true to a lesser extent for curriculum-related courses.

2.13   Early childhood development programme operating in schools

Positive trends in functioning

- The numbers of learners per classroom on average decreased greatly (to about 35; still above 30:1).
- The display and completeness of timetables increased over time.
- Allocation of times per learning area came much closer in 2008 to NCS requirements.
- Participation in Foundation Phase learning programme planning increased over time.
- Long-term teaching plans for all learning areas were more frequently available, as were the individual lesson plans for the day of the visit.
- Feedback and quality assurance by HoDs or the principal were much more in evidence in 2008.
- Teachers found it easier to stick to their learning programme during delivery of the latter.
- An increasing range of activities to prepare children for literacy and numeracy was observed.
- The number of teachers attending support events frequently, as well as the number of workshops and support visits offered and attended, increased greatly over time.
- More teachers than before voiced their satisfaction with the quality of the training.

Selected comments on trends that were inconsistent, static or improving/deteriorating only marginally

- Specialised qualification levels were constant at average levels (compliance for half of the teachers).
- Well-illuminated and well-ventilated classrooms were available to learners at all schools.
- The cleanliness and tidiness of facilities were at average levels, having slightly improved, with the exception of toilets, the condition of which seems to have deteriorated.
- The conduciveness of the arrangement of classroom interiors became more ambivalent lately since the slightly more positive picture earlier in the programme (with activity areas, carpets and desk space having deteriorated and outdoor play areas having improved).
- More number freezes, toys and children's pieces were noted or displayed, but fewer word cards, educational games, pens/crayons, and "sport" equipment were in evidence.
- Safety levels and access to first-aid kits remained at high levels over time, as did safety consciousness and the range of rational and desirable actions taken to ensure children's safety.
- All teachers continued developing learning programmes for the Grade R class.
- Some of the details within long-term teaching plans were slightly less well-presented lately.
- Grade R integration with the rest of Foundation Phase declined over time, or at least stayed stable.
- Some aspects of formal assessment appear to have decreased over time.
- The evaluation of specific aspects of training workshops varied over time (small sub-sample?).
- There is some evidence that the role of districts in supporting ECD at school increased.

Deterioration in functioning

- Owing to recent staff turnover, the average experience level of teachers/facilitators has decreased.

- Learner attendance registers were not kept as up-to-date as before.

Aspects deserving special mention

- A wide range of benefits was said to have accrued to teachers because of Mveledzandivho.

2.14 Youth development, sport and culture

Positive trends in functioning

- Sporting codes benefiting much over time were soccer, netball, cricket, volleyball and table tennis.
- Chess got introduced very strongly over the last two years of the project.
- Drama, traditional dances, debating and indigenous games (as cultural events) benefited over time.
- Inter-school competitions and collaboration increased over time.
- HIV/AIDS awareness programmes continued to be expanded over time.
- Increased integration of life-skills activities into the curriculum was reported.
- The districts' role in fostering youth development seemed to have increased well over time, as visible in particular in helping to establish functional RCLs, and related policies, plans and registers.

Selected comments on trends that were inconsistent, static or improving/deteriorating only marginally

- Still very little water-sport participation was possible.
- The benefits to learners from sport and cultural activity were acknowledged as substantive.
- A varying range of changes and benefits reportedly accrued to RCLs through Mveledzandivho.

Deterioration in functioning

- RCLs were decreasingly consulted or asked to participate in the introduction of new youth activities.
- Fewer RCLs received training for their roles and responsibilities than before.

Aspects deserving special mention

- The lack of suitable sports amenities, grounds and facilities remained a big stumbling block.
- RCLs are selected anew every year and as a result require training annually.

2.15 Learner performance

Positive trends in functioning

- The number of learners writing and passing matriculation examinations were highest in 2007.
- Grade 10 learner performance in the language tests pertaining to the aspects of inferential comprehension and creative writing improved strongly over time.

Selected comments on trends that were inconsistent, static or improving/deteriorating only marginally

- Pass, exemption and distinction rates varied over time (none increased; exemption rates dropped).
- Trends in these rates also differed widely between schools.
- Likewise, learner performance trends on the Grade 4, 7 and 10 testing were erratic, with no consistency simultaneously across schools, grades and learning areas. Most of the little consistency that there were existed within a grade, across learning areas, with about three schools each either improving or deteriorating for both Language and Numeracy/Mathematics over time.
- Literacy scores at Grade 4 level went down, while Numeracy increased first and then dropped a bit.
- Grade 7 Mathematics scores have increased slightly, while Literacy maintained initial improvement.
- Grade 10 Mathematics scores were erratic, while literal comprehension decreased somewhat.

Deterioration in functioning

- Mathematics (Higher and Standard Grade) pass rates declined and fail rates increased over time.
- The same applied to Science Higher Grade (with Standard Grade more erratic).

Aspects deserving special mention

- None.

2.16 Link between the support interventions, school functioning and learner performance

Positive trends in functioning

- Within-schools trends in only a very few cases started showing some consistency across years, grades and/or learning areas. To give an indication, in three schools only, once each at the level of Grade 4, 7 and 10, did learner performance consistently improve over time for both learning areas (Language and Numeracy/Mathematics). In two combined schools learners' language performance improved at the levels of both Grade 7 and 10. The latter two cases may signal either solid contributions by the service providers, or a strong role from the side of the schools' language department. In the former three cases, it is plausible that something that phase organisers had been doing well may have played a strong role.

Selected comments on trends that were inconsistent, static or improving/deteriorating only marginally

- The kind of distribution related immediately above and below removes almost all hope that identifiable patterns would be found across learning areas, service providers, or schools, especially in such a small group as had been the case in the current project. The remaining patterns were all erratic, i.e., not consistently improving or deteriorating over time, or isolated, i.e., occurring within single learning areas or grades without repetition in other learning areas or grades in the same schools.

Deterioration in functioning

- At the negative end of the scale, where learner performance dropped consistently over time, in the case of two schools at Grade 4 level, both Language and Mathematics performance was at stake. This could signal school factors related to learning phase management. This factor, and even broader school management and functioning issues, may also explain the case of a third school where Grade 4 and 7 Mathematics performance, as well as Grade 7 Language performance, decreased consistently over time.

Aspects deserving special mention

- Special attempts will be made in the near future, as an attempt at the more technical and academic level, to analyse links between service provision, school/teacher functioning and learner performance, although the indications above warn against being too optimistic in terms of isolating consistent sets of factors. Such results may be submitted for publication in an academic journal.

3. INTEGRATION AND EVALUATION – THE EFFECT AND SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAMME

In this concluding chapter an attempt is made to come to final conclusions about the value and effect of the Mveledzandivho school-support programme spanning the previous four to five years.

The various sections below are used to make an argument for the value, successes and shortcomings that Mveledzandivho had.

In the first section (3.1) an overall conclusion is formulated up-front. This is done by referring first to a brief interview that the research team had with the service providers on their sense of their role and achievements, and second by drawing upon the key findings from two sources. The first source is the technical report and its summary in Chapter 2 above, while the second is an overview of what happened in terms of the indicators and the various targets set for them all. These key observations are clustered according to the six sub-sections in Section 3.1 and cover the broad areas of support, functioning and performance in the project schools. (That part of the discussion is structured around: project delivery; school infrastructure and school-based efficiency; management and governance; curriculum planning and delivery; special project elements; and learner performance.)

The second section (3.2) comprises a discussion of the implications of the findings with special reference to sustaining the benefits achieved thus far.

The third and final section (3.3) is devoted to making some recommendations, not only in terms of satisfying any remaining needs and completing unfinished business in terms of consolidating the Mveledzandivho activities and their benefits properly, but also in terms of lessons to be learned by similar projects and evaluations in future.

3.1 Concluding perspective – Value added and contribution made

The long timeframes that exist for national school systems pertaining to transformation and observing the long-awaited improvement of learner performance have to be acknowledged. Given the dire straits that our country's education system had been in, it is impossible to expect pervasive and dramatic results overnight, so to speak. The rationale behind this argument is that it takes a cohort of learners 12 years to progress through the school system. Should they have started off on a sound footing, without any backlogs developing, an optimal outcome could be expected. For South Africa, this would then mean that the 1995 Grade R or Grade 1 group would barely have finished their matriculation examinations by now. However, we also know that teacher qualifications, competencies and experience are still today not what they should and could be, an aspect that in itself takes years to improve. Also, lots of infrastructural, governance and managerial processes and elements also still continue making life difficult for our schools, teachers and learners. Then, learners do on a year-by-year basis still incur baggage in terms of not mastering foundational knowledge properly, with severe cumulative (exponential?) effects on all their future mastery or non-mastery of the prescribed learning contents. An added complication is the challenges and detrimental outcomes related to underperformance and inabilities to achieve successes right-away as a result of the many pitfalls and hindrances associated with South Africa's unique demands pertaining to our bilingual and multilingual teaching context.

Given what has just been said, the general sense is that the programme has been very valuable. It meant and contributed a lot to by far most of the schools, even though some of the effects would not be measurable in quantitative terms, or though learner performance results may not (yet) show consistent and large impacts.

It was considered appropriate to start with a brief report on the viewpoints gained through short exit interviews held with key persons from the service provider organisations. These respondents were asked about five key aspects, namely: their own sense and evaluation of what they achieved in the end at schools; the nature of the interactions they had with their client and the schools (managers and teachers); the clarity

they had about their assignment; their sense of any remaining future actions (and needs) pertaining to Mveledzandivho; and steps required to ensure that any achieved benefits are sustained.[12]

One particularly moot point that was raised concerns the proposition that unless school-support and school-improvement programmes, like Mveledzandivho, are holistically integrated into broad community development and upliftment and poverty alleviation strategies and actions, the school-improvement part would never be optimal. The illustrative argument proposed is that job creation, adult literacy, transport arrangements, and many more related entities all have to be remedied in unison to ensure that the need for school learning and teaching development is located and addressed appropriately and optimally, and also based on coherent rationales and value perspectives.

A second key matter that was raised frequently is the issue of continuity. This pertains to both teachers/staff at schools (resulting in a perpetual re-training need and mode), and also service providers (for optimal rapport with the recipients and beneficiaries). As much more is said at various places about this in the rest of the chapter, the point is dropped for now.

A third matter, related to the first above, concerns the "sampling" of schools to participate in the programme. The opinion was voiced that if schools were not volunteers, or put differently, were in the programme against their will, like it applied in Mveledzandivho in a number of senses, the outcomes would be largely small and even not successful. Training would be forced on recipients, and there would be a lack of buy-in.[13] A point linked to this concerns the length of the bureaucratic channel (perceived as too many layers) that would, from the perspective of the recipients and intended beneficiaries, create confusion all along.

The service providers were in agreement that the support and interventions had been very valuable for the schools and resulted in fundamental changes in the wider sense. There had always been about two schools, depending on the area of support, which were said to not have been able to absorb and benefit from the support, because of low levels of functionality that applied in their cases, which, when also considering management failures or simply problems of "attitude", prevented any meaningful transfer of benefits. The areas highlighted in terms of successful support and improvement were: policy development (assessment, reducing loss of teaching time, curriculum management, homework, language of learning and teaching, and reading and writing activity for learners); record-keeping; and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of SMTs (actively becoming managers, especially of curriculum planning and delivery). Time frames were considered to have been extremely tight in the cases where new service providers had to replace one that had left earlier. Also, pertaining to ECD, the lead or start-up time was considered to have been very long in the early years in an attempt to sort out many of the programme implementation dynamics (see earlier footnote) before coherent and integrated delivery could commence. In terms of teacher development, it was considered that implementation and greater successes were hindered by staff content knowledge gaps in as many as 60% of the cases. Learners were said to give their very best, given such teacher ceiling effects capping learner gains as a result.

Open and cordial relationship were the order of the day between service providers and both JET and the schools (managers and teachers included). The service providers were as a rule received very well. Such relationships were premised upon continuity of staff in all institutions, and changes did from time to time break continuity and rapport. One respondent emphasised that the value and success of the support delivery often rested on process (empowerment through participation), and that pressures of time created by replacing service providers late in the cycle could have resulted in force feeding some schools in a top-down manner towards the end, which may not have been ideal. In the exceptional cases of about two schools the lack of leadership and team functioning was said to have jeopardised the success of delivery to a great extent.

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[12] Ellen Nkosi Consulting and Dishumeleni Professional Services were responsible for management and governance training and support (since early in 2007 when Ukukhula's services ended), Protec for teacher development and support, and Woz'obona for early childhood development training and support.

[13] This was a particular concern in terms of ECD, where the integration of support into broader strategies was seen as paramount. The alignment of the expectations of various stakeholders, from the funding organisation, to the programme manager, to the service providers, and the recipient schools and their managers and teachers, not forgetting the employing department (DoE), and even the evaluation organization, should be tight and well-integrated.

The respondents were unanimous about having been very clear about their assignment and what was expected of them. Deliverables were well specified, and target dates, recipients and related elements were all contractually agreed on. Another element was that service providers had been expected to develop a management or action plan, which after vetting by JET, became part of the assignment. In addition, many informal and other guidelines, or briefings, and supporting documents were also given about how to go about their assignment. The field of application also fell right within service providers' field of expertise, which implied that they were in any case in a good position to act from their professional understanding of the work required. In cases where a service provider may have disagreed about some approaches or contents, these could be re-negotiated and aligned upfront before commencing with the work.

There was some consensus that a tie-over period or second phase of about six months may make sense in terms of ensuring that structures and mechanisms are put into place to wind down formal support and hand over responsibility to schools for the continued implementation of what they had learnt thus far. The lack of school administrators, other facilities / infrastructure, computers and team functionality in some provinces may imply that schools would not be in a position to stand alone and retain any benefits that they had gained. As a consequence, some ongoing monitoring, of the implementation of objectives at least, may also be beneficial. Once left alone, the experience of many service providers is that schools would regress to their old ways. Schools are expected to need some continuation of support to now implement the policies they had developed, but especially to keep records of such implementation, to be able to review and adjust delivery on these. The same applies to the SDPs, and in particular cases management teams would not be strong enough to do this on their own. No more physical resources should be issued unless firm proof of benefiting teaching and learning could be provided, but effort should rather be concentrated on ensuring that classroom practice be developed further, especially by means of six-monthly teacher / classroom visits and observations, followed by constructive feedback. (The matter of high teacher turnover was again mentioned here, as this would require re-training on a continuous basis to ensure ongoing development.)

Last, the matter of sustaining any acquired benefits was interrogated. One suggestion, should ongoing involvement of some kind be required, was that the current service providers would have to be involved, for reasons of rapport and existing/prior knowledge. Gains made would depend on continuing to practice what had been learnt and documenting progress and functioning precisely in order to be able to monitor developments. A proposed brief exit phase could be used to great effect to draw up a sustainability action plan that would identify and prioritise contents and process that should be attended to in order to optimise retention of the benefits from Mveledzandivho. A monitoring programme and instrument should be left at schools to assist in this, and to ensure that a balance is maintained between the roles and tasks pertaining to management and governance, on the one hand, and the core activities pertaining to teaching and learning, on the other hand, with an eye firmly on improving and making progress in terms of learner achievement. One respondent highlighted the potential anomaly and confusion that may have arisen regarding the language and terminology used within the support programme and the Department. A specific case in point was the matter of school development and school improvement planning/plans (SDP and SIP). The latter is a more comprehensive term. A perspective offered by one respondent was that BHP Billiton should feature more strongly through more direct engagement with stakeholders (especially service providers) and recipients. This would lend further credibility to community support and development, and support the success of a programme such as this. Service providers were also alert to the fact that no quick-fixes existed to remedy all the challenges once and for all in one go. This would also serve as warning against isolated training and support outside context and without continuity measures. Depth, quality and sustainability should be key features of all support. The matter of staff changes was flagged as a serious risk for sustaining any benefits. One solution could be to make subject advisors formally responsible at this point for the kind of support that Mveledzandivho had given over the previous few years. The Department should also try not to allow lateral teachers transfers too frequently, and consider appointing temporary teachers in permanent positions (provided a good fit exists between expertise and learning area needs) to reduce staff discontinuities.

The attention next shifts to highlighting key gains made in the various support components. Two conclusions made at the time of the Mid-term evaluation remain valid, and can be expanded on. In the first instance a strong sense exists that the evaluation research in the field went well, measured against the completeness and quality of the bulk of the returned information, and having addressed potential logistical and other practical challenges properly. Second, a vast volume of substantive support to the project schools took place, and there are indications that widespread benefits have materialised.

The foregoing also implies that remaining needs and gaps have to be contextualised in the light of these two positive outcomes. As already alluded to, such gaps may signify system failure of elements of infrastructure and management, and staff discontinuities.

Conclusions are broken down into six main categories, being[14]:
- general observations on project delivery,
- school infrastructure and school-based efficiency,
- management and governance elements,
- curriculum policies and practices,
- the remaining related special elements such as ECD and RCL, and
- learner performance.

Care has been taken in each section to first emphasise areas of school functioning that have developed very well over the last two years, and then some reference is made to trends causing great concern.[15]

3.1.1 Project delivery

The coordinating role of the district has become much more prominent over the recent two years. The districts have taken more charge of key elements through dedicating specific offices or officials to supporting Mveledzandivho, and the functions that the support programme intended to develop. Particular elements that have been well supported include training, guidance and support to SGBs and even SMTs, and a growing emphasis on time management and not compromising teaching time.

The detrimental effect of staff changes, also at district level, is worrying, and created many disjunctures and discontinuities in terms of coordinating project delivery. This still applied, as in 2006, to a number of new teachers who have not been brought on board through some orientation programme on arriving at schools. Also, teacher mobility within and between schools will keep on threatening project delivery and attribution of the achievement of deliverables to the support programme, retention of an "institutional memory" of the inputs made and materials provided by the project, and sustaining any benefits as such.

A vast amount of effort has been spent on management and teacher/curriculum support and training. It is unfortunate that the monitoring system information for the period from 2006 to 2008 has not been kept as detailed as it existed for the period before that, with teacher attendance records, and governance and management workshops, training and support information particular casualties.

3.1.2 School infrastructure and school-based efficiency

A gain that stood out and attracted the evaluator's attention is the fact that there has been many staff appointments over the last two years, in addition to securing some extra facilities both for extra classrooms and to serve as storage and other space. This was done without compromising teacher:learner ratios.

However, the phenomenon of losing learners between the end of Grade 9 or Grade 10 up to Grade 12 kept on unabated and even increased greatly at many schools, which does not bode well for curbing drop-off rates, or entrenching high throughput rates. In addition, two schools respectively lost their Grade R/1 and Grade 12 year groups. Hygiene and usable learner toilet facilities have also deteriorated much of late.

3.1.3 Management and governance

The role of the district is discussed as part of Section 3.1.1. (In addition to single references to pertinent improvements or otherwise in that section, many other aspects of district functioning have continued at

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[14] The contents presented in a corresponding section at the time of the Mid-term report still provide highly relevant material about progress up to 2006, but are, for lack of space, not repeated here in full, outside some specific selections.
[15] The templates used for producing individual school profiles on their performance on the indicators and targets set for management / governance and teacher development and support are appended at the end of this report, as they contain the trends aggregated for all schools over time (2003, 2006, 2008) pertaining to the 100 or so programme indicators.

broadly the same levels as noted in 2006, particularly pertaining to monitoring the implementation of financial, administrative and human resources policies, and keeping important documents related to this.)

School Governing Bodies and School Management Teams

Areas in which gains were very high over time include: schools keeping comprehensive systems, documents, records, files and registers, including budgets and learner performance data; developing a learning support material policy; progress reports, also to SGBs, related to the implementation of SDPs; meetings and documents pertaining to SMT functioning; and SGBs increasingly approving financial expenditures.

However, the quality of the broader functioning of SGBs, especially holding AGMs and keeping minutes of these, could not be confirmed as well as before. Training volumes to them seem to have reduced too. RCLs function through sub-committees less than before (having reduced even further from relatively low levels). Schools also are not as disciplined as before in keeping and being able to produce financial documents, systems and files reflecting all transactions.

(Staff records and asset management were kept on a par with 2006 gains.)

Time management

Systems underpinning sound time management developed strongly over time. There has been much more evidence of schools making use of extra classes to increase tuition time to learners in key learning areas.

On the opposite side, it seems as if labour and union activities, as well as bereavement-related events such as memorial services, were more often than before able to disrupt teaching time again.

3.1.4 Curriculum planning and delivery

To simplify the presentation of the relevant contents, the section has been broken down into three parts, namely: curriculum planning, curriculum delivery, and assessment.

Curriculum planning

Policy development to ensure proper curriculum planning gained much recently. Heads of department are clearer than before about their roles in curriculum planning, and teachers are more geared to develop detailed work plans and schedules. The articulation of various important elements within such curriculum plans has also advanced, and assessment, monitoring and moderation, and working schedules have all become even better integrated. The broader policy development and planning roles of SMT members and HoDs have also been concretised increasingly.

However, monitoring and ensuring the implementation of such policies were evidenced less frequently than before. In particular, decreasing activity by SMT members in monitoring assessment policy and the practical implementation of curriculum plans was noted. Ratings of the value of curriculum planning training have also decreased over time.

(Lesson planning and related activities at teacher level continued at good levels.)

Curriculum delivery

A range of teaching activities has improved much over time, and includes delivering more learner-centred lessons, understanding and sticking to the NCS, teaching at levels appropriate to the cognitive needs of learners, and relating learning contents to everyday life and reality. Learning support materials have also been used more effectively than before.

However, ratings of the role of Mveledzandivho in improving curriculum delivery have become less positive over time. (It has to be noted that in cases where the bulk of such work may have been done very well and acknowledged as such during the period up to 2006, recent ratings may be expected to drop again.)

(Teaching methods, teacher knowledge and lesson focus were all elements of teaching that have continued at constant and acceptable levels over time.)

Assessment

The frequency, quality and variety of assessment events were all aspects that have improved well over time.

In contrast, teacher knowledge about assessment policies seems to have decreased quite a bit lately (from relatively low levels formerly). Also, ratings of the role of Mveledzandivho in improving assessment practices have become less positive too.

3.1.5 Special project elements

Promotion of fluency in the language(s) of learning and teaching

Most schools switch from teaching in the mother tongue to the medium of English by the end of Grade 3. It is therefore important that special efforts be made by schools to promote proficiency in the relevant language of instruction as this is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for improving academic performance.

The number of schools having policies promoting the language of instruction has increased strongly. So has the number of schools monitoring compliance with such policies. In addition, practical mechanisms for encouraging the use of English at senior grades, and pursuing NCS targets set for volumes of written work required from learners have all increased much.

In contrast, the volumes of written work observed in the books of Grade 4 learners and Grade 7 Science learners have markedly decreased.

(The previous point is also related to learners' engagement in writing and reading having remained rather low over time, regardless of calls at the Mid-term that such activity has to be increased rapidly as it is pivotal for literacy development. Teachers remained fairly competent in the languages of learning and teaching.)

Early Childhood Development

The following facets pertaining to ECD (and/or Grade R classrooms) have all improved well over time: learner:teacher ratios; timetabling; pursuing and adhering to NCS requirements; integration into the rest of the Foundation Phase activities at schools (Grades 1 to 3); quality assurance and feedback to teachers; developing long-term teaching plans; specific activities fostering literacy and numeracy development among learners; and satisfaction levels with Mveledzandivho training and support. Their sheer number testifies to large gains in this regard.

At the opposite end, only the issues of increasing staff turnover and keeping learner attendance registers were logged as having deteriorated much over time.

(Outside and other facilities, facilitator qualification levels, formal assessment and sourcing or producing specialised learning support materials remained constant at somewhat insufficient levels over time.)

Youth Development, Sport and Culture

The introduction of chess, cultural activities and inter-school competitions all increased strongly over time. There has also been an increase in the integration of life-skills related topics and activities into the normal curriculum. The role of the district in supporting RCL training and functioning has also increased. HIV/AIDS awareness programmes also got emphasised increasingly.

However, the participation level of RCL members on an annual basis, given their re-election every year, has decreased over time.

(Schools continued to be hampered by the lack of sports and related facilities.)

3.1.6 Learner performance

The absolute number of learners writing and passing matriculation examinations increased over time. In as far as the external learner performance assessment is concerned, consistent improvements have been observed only at the level of Grade 10 for some language aspects (inferential comprehension and creative writing).

The remainder of trends across learning areas and grades, and even sub-sections within learning areas, were erratic. Three schools each showed some consistency across learning areas, but within grade only, in respectively having either improved or deteriorated performance levels over time.

(Pass, exemption and distinction rates remained a concern at very low levels.)

General contribution of the Mveledzandivho project to changing teaching and management practices

Many more Mathematics and Science teachers than before were recorded to have received school support visits. The reported ratings of the satisfaction of managers with governance and management training workshops increased over time too. More ECD facilitators reported receiving support visits and attending workshops in the second half of the programme compared to the first half. Satisfaction ratings also improved over time.

However, the volume of both teacher and management workshops attended seems to have tapered off since 2007, especially towards 2008 (compared to the same time of the year in 2006).

(The number of management and teacher school-support visits remained rather constant over time, as did the ratings of satisfaction pertaining to them, as well as to teacher workshops.)

A large volume of resources were received through Mveledzandivho and these had been looked after reasonably well, it appears. However, the Baseline and Mid-term benchmarking and evaluation reports, as well as the school profiles (against indicators), that had been produced during 2006, were reportedly used (and/or remembered) by a range of respondents from only a very few schools.

The benefits (improvements) that respondents increasingly attributed to Mveledzandivho include: policy development; curriculum management; SGB and SMT functioning and clarity about roles and responsibilities; time management; curriculum delivery (especially moving on from theoretical understandings to practical implementation; expanding the range of teaching and assessment methods; lesson planning; and the effective use of LSMs during lessons.

One increasingly / repeatedly voiced concern is that some NCS and Departmental jargon and related approaches are contradicted by how Mveledzandivho dealt with those.

3.2   Implications – Sustainability, continuation and expansion

In order to get a sense of what the perceptions of the recipients and intended beneficiaries of the Mveledzandivho were with regard to the support programme as it drew to a close at the time of the Summative evaluation visits during May 2008, an open question was put to every SMT, HoD, teacher, ECD facilitator, SGB and RCL interviewed at the time. This item, given the previous five years of involvement by Mveledzandivho, enquired about what should be done from this point onwards to make sure that the benefits of the support programme were continued. Fieldworkers were also prepared for when and how to probe some additional aspects, if required, through three questions that focused on:

- How to sustain, expand and follow-up on the management and curriculum support work done thus far?
- How to eradicate any remaining weaknesses?; and
- How to build on any gained and existing strengths?

In some very specific senses, this item was about the sustainability of any achievements and outcomes, as well as generalising them further to a next layer of beneficiaries. In the reporting that follows below, the original formulations by respondents and fieldworkers were retained as far as possible to get a good sense of the depth and extent of responses, as well as nuances underpinning them. The findings are also presented by progressing from specific teacher and learner responses, that is, the practical side of things, towards the responses received from school managers in their respective roles, in order to note shifting emphases.

Responses received from <u>ECD facilitators</u> mainly focused on two elements. These were continued or expanded training, and improved facilities and equipment.

In terms of expanded training, it was argued that more and thorough training was still required as not everyone in need of it got trained thus far. There were direct calls for more workshops, but also for mentoring visits during which good peer teachers from other ECD sites would come and help the resident teacher. A specific area of need was how to structure and set up the class arrangement to optimise engagement with young learners. ECD training should also be increased to an NQF Level-5 event, according to one opinion. In summary, ECD facilitators strongly voiced the need for more training and support.

In terms of the provision of improved facilities, some specific facets were detailed. These included both infrastructure and learning materials. ECD classrooms and learners, to name items specifically noted, were said to deserve improvement in terms of: toilets; shelves for toys, bags and books; chairs and tables; equipment for a fantasy area; carpets; safer playgrounds (with stones removed); more playground resources; outside play equipment; reparation of broken and replacement of damaged items in the open play area; puzzles; classroom resources; readers; different charts; and more materials in general. All in all, a serious shortage of teaching and learning resources was voiced.

In one case the link between ECD/Grade R and the rest of the school was said to deserve further attention.

One ECD facilitator was not able to produce an answer to the question posed.

During the <u>focus-group interviews with teachers</u> the responses and feedback focused on four main issues, being the need for continued training, the need for ongoing support, the role of facilitation and facilitators, and monitoring.

Many respondents, in fact, about 60% of them, voiced the need for teacher training and workshops to be continued and made mention of various elements in support of their need. An important matter was training new teachers (and SMT members) as they joined the school team, which would be especially prevalent in the form of mentoring or induction at the beginning of a year. One school was concerned about not having received any visits yet by May 2008 from the service providers. Training should be expanded in a number of ways, according to the respondents, and should: include computer training; comprise more training on assessment or assessment workshops; involve Technology learning area teachers more in teaching demonstrations; target managers who are sorely in need of training in people skills; comprise more SMT workshops; include more workshops focusing on curriculum and management support; become more regular; be more in number overall; include week-long workshops; and be converted to also include a life-long learning approach or mode. Some of the logistical and practical issues noted for attention included: selecting closer workshop venues or holding workshops locally; alerting participants well ahead of time, especially for weekend workshops; avoiding poor/unhealthy accommodation; and ensuring punctuality at training events.

Ongoing support would be a next objective, according to the respondents. This mainly comprised indications that more learning support materials are needed in classrooms. At the outset, it may be necessary to prioritise the various existing needs for such LSM. In the process, one may also have to attend to the procedures according to which this is done and LSM is obtained, as well as identifying the sources of supply. Funding for laboratory facilities and storage space was raised as a particular challenge. The improvement of facilities in general was also emphasised. Specific items listed in the feedback by respondents included: the provision and/or improvement of lesson-plan formats (templates); compiling teacher assessment databases;

and copies of the NCS materials related to Home Language (L1) and First Additional Language (L2) teaching. A possible mode for such support was suggested to be monthly visits. A specific appeal was also made that all learning areas should be included in future teacher support, and not only English, Mathematics and Science. Whenever the Department of Education provides any support materials, teachers would appreciate receiving more detailed explanations and instructions pertaining to their use.

The role of facilitation and facilitators was addressed too. The general sense was that the arrangement of receiving facilitation should proceed. One point raised was that facilitators should be kept constant over longer periods, as discontinuities become particularly disruptive, not only in terms of achieving rapport between individuals, but also with regard to shifts of emphasis pertaining to approaches and even contents. In some cases, it was expected that facilitators should put in more effort. Once the benefits of facilitation have been shared, more ways and means should be found for those teachers trained to implement and share their new knowledge and skills.

Some mention was also made of the need to have regular monitoring of teachers' functioning, but particularly their implementation of newly gained training and support benefits. Such monitoring should be strict and continuous to be effective, according to some opinion.

Although the matter of continuation, or otherwise, of Mveledzandivho was not discussed in every focus-group, by far more respondents were in favour of its continuation. Part of the rationale behind such an appeal would be to sustain the new culture that had been ignited. Particular pointers related to: continuing to train Science and English Teachers; continuing support to the implementation of school policies; developing teachers in other learning areas hitherto not involved in the same way; and distributing copies of all Mveledzandivho feedback to all teachers. One instance occurred where the opinion given was to discontinue the programme, without further elaboration. In another case, the group considered the school and its teachers not to be in further need of support as they had achieved some level of autonomous functioning.[16]

Individual teacher interviews solicited more feedback about sustaining the benefits of the support programme. The three main topics or themes that occurred most widely across the 154 completed instruments were the need for (ongoing) support, the provision of LSM, and challenges pertaining to coordination and communication to ensure coherent support and service delivery.

With regard to ongoing support, specific emphasis was put on general workshops and training (in 67 cases), individual support visits (37), assistance in the classroom (15), and the provision of demonstration lessons (5). In very few cases, respondents indicated some topics that still needed attention during such a process. For (future) workshops these would include: management support; control by school management; teaching and learning skills; and assessment. Individual support visits would focus on: topics that teachers struggle with; planning; and assessment. Classroom visits, observation and feedback would provide guidance about learner projects, also through ensuring that learning outcomes and assessment standards are aligned. Demonstration lesson contents and support were not specified further. One teacher called for formal assistance to improve qualifications through tertiary training. Some teachers specifically mentioned the need for thorough feedback after support visits. With regard to administrative and logistical aspects pertaining to such ongoing support, the main suggestions made were that: the support should be extended to all or more learning areas and teachers in a school; more events should be held (events should be held more frequently); more time should be allocated to events; events during weekends and on Sundays should be avoided; advanced notice should be given; and different or more appropriate venues (e.g., more local) should be arranged.

Pertaining to the lack and provision of LSM, just more than a quarter (40) of the teachers indicated a need for ongoing assistance. In the few cases where specific items were noted, these included: textbooks; other learner books; readers; dictionaries; science or laboratory kits (including instructions for their use); calculators; mathematics kits; and the replacement of science apparatus. Some respondents requested that

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[16] From 9 of the 25 teacher focus-groups no responses were recorded. The instrument did not expect teacher focus-groups to respond to this part of the evaluation, and as a result, one should look for more authentic information in the next section reflecting teachers' contributions as part of completion of individual teacher interviews. Nevertheless, the contents mentioned during those focus groups that did discuss the topic, were considered informative enough to report.

provision should only follow a needs analysis. In addition, a few respondents indicated the need to attend to infrastructural and related challenges and gaps. These would focus on: more classrooms (to reduce overcrowding); science and computer laboratories; a whole new school; sports fields; playground; gardening equipment; and sponsorships or bursaries for learners excelling in sport or for tertiary education.

Another set of challenges pertained to coordination and communication processes to ensure coherent support and service delivery. The nature of the feedback discussed below suggests that incoherence in terms of liaison and contents may have threatened the efficiency and success of some parts of the support programme and may hinder similar success in future. Continuous and regular communication between all parties is key. This would also serve to ensure that teachers already benefiting from any support could share these with colleagues. Facilitators should motivate learning area heads to pass on some of their leadership skills. Teachers and HoDs have to liaise well in order to guide teachers further and assist them to obtain maximum stakeholder involvement. Schools that have attended workshops would/should in this way be enabled to help neighbouring schools so that skills can be shared more widely. A programme such as Mveledzandivho should at all time collaborate well with the Department, and agree on curriculum issues and expectations. Continuous monitoring and intervention should go some way in ensuring a minimum level of alignment between teachers and schools to synchronise progression and development. Teachers become demotivated when departmental officials' expectations differ from those put forward by service providers. Continuity and rapport also benefit from having a dedicated (single or consistent) support facilitator from a programme at the school or among the benefiting teachers. Early identification of individual training needs would avoid large gaps in any training plans. Regular feedback discussions and a follow-up programme should be an automatic part of the approach. A few respondents also felt strongly about quality-control and monitoring procedures forming an integral part of service delivery to ensure the optimal implementation of interventions such as this one. This could take the form of monitoring how LSM and the other benefits provided through a programme is taken up, distributed and used, teachers progress on achieving programme objectives, programme advice and inputs are concretised, and the programme is managed appropriately in general terms.

Some specific mention was made about the process of ensuring that new teachers at any school are brought on board effectively with regard to interventions underway. Such teachers should be involved in induction workshops at the earliest occasion. The onus rests on support-programme managers to establish if schools have new teachers that need training. Existing (participating) teachers could be made responsible, under supervision of intervention-programme officials, to familiarise such new staff with an intervention project. These matters arose during the evaluation during May 2008 because at least eight such teachers could not respond meaningfully, because they had recently joined their new school and/or replaced former "Mveledzandivho" teachers. A comment was also made, irrespective of specific interventions taking place or not, that education changes very regularly, including the occurrence of staff and teacher movement between schools, which would necessitate ongoing training and development. Where necessary, teaching could even continue in school holidays. An isolated voice, in contrast, mentioned that structuring this may not be all that important, since teachers would select and attend workshops and update themselves.

In summary, eight respondents specifically pleaded for the continuation of Mveledzandivho, while for four it was not necessarily indicated. From the latter four, one mentioned that no benefits had accrued through the intervention, while another stated that school functioning had reached acceptable levels. In 37 cases, teachers did not provide any inputs. In one such non-response case, the teacher was not in a position to provide meaningful information, as only the principal had attended the workshops.

(Some very diverse, and sometimes not immediately relevant, responses were observed. These included references to: making available as much training documents as possible; clarifying SMT job descriptions better; the difficulties experienced in terms of passing on the intervention benefits because learners cannot be given and deal with too much homework; covering curriculum year planning more completely; the phenomenon of teachers being able to "window-dress" as soon as external visits and evaluations take place; school support visits be extended to include sports governance for SGBs; for workshops to be relevant and effective, they must not be conducted whenever it suits the intervention programme managers or in response to grievances, but be pro-actively and widely based on school and teacher needs; high staff turnover, especially having developed much through the interventions, jeopardises the success of programmes such as this (benefits and continuity are lost at school level); teacher commitment and hard work would produce good results, and ensure that an intervention programme does not abandon the intended recipients;

acknowledgement of involvement in and achievement after undergoing an intervention should/could take the shape of awarding certificates, or even salary increases; and the fact that some learners are still considered not being able to read or write in Grade 10 is a great concern. "Viva, Mvele, Viva!")

Discussions with <u>RCL members</u> during a focus-group interview at each school mainly focused on two topics, being training and facilities/resources. In addition, a range of individual comments were also made about additional opportunities that would expand their contribution at schools.

With regard to training, two-thirds of the focus-groups referred to the need of RCLs for continuation of training of their members. It has to be remembered that a new RCL is elected every year, necessitating a well-structured approach in this regard. In addition to the obvious demand for training on their roles and responsibilities, two additional needs were also voiced, namely in the areas of leadership and first aid. It was also mentioned that every new RCL in a given year would have benefited from being given enough knowledge about Mveledzandivho itself. Useful tools in support of such an objective would be the provision of a set of manuals or booklets about Mveledzandivho. In two cases RCLs felt that ongoing support, of the nature provided hitherto as part of the intervention, would be required.

RCLs also suggested that ongoing contributions to schools be made in as far as facilities and related resources are concerned. Facilities identified by them included: upgrading of existing grounds and buildings; fencing; new classrooms; furniture; a school hall; a playground area; a computer laboratory or centre and computers (also in support of other learning); science laboratories; electricity; resources (in general); books/textbooks; library books; sports equipment / gear; and chess sets.

A few miscellaneous inputs were made next. In a number of cases, introducing more sporting codes was pleaded for, without neglecting recently initiated new sports. Related to this was the suggestion to establish an inter-school sports league. It was also proposed that rewards, trophies, and certificates be awarded for appropriate learner achievements. A meaningful way to enhance the capacity of RCLs to function properly would be to establish a system whereby RCLs could interact with other RCLs. Assistance in applying for entry into tertiary institutions and bursaries would also be welcomed.

In three cases the RCL group was not in a position to provide any substantive response. Although providing some useful input, an additional RCL was not too sure about the contents of what Mveledzandivho did.

In terms of being the other important part of the governance system at schools, <u>SGB interview</u> responses are reported next. Much as with RCLs, the bulk of the responses centred on ongoing training needs, and facilities / infrastructure. This section again ends with a few references to miscellaneous individual inputs.

Pertaining to training, SGB responses not only included opportunities for themselves, but also for teachers and RCLs. About a third of the SGBs mentioned that they themselves were in need of training, workshops or related capacity development sessions. Specific mention was made not to lose sight of the need every third year to train new SGB members after elections, not to mention any retraining needs in between. In addition to the regular training content concerning roles and responsibilities, particular topics considered important for SGBs were noted to be collaboration with the SMT, financial management, and management in general. Part of the objectives of formal training and other interactions with school management and the Department would also have to include empowerment on governance issues, being enabled to participate in their staff recruitment responsibilities, and taking initiative for strategic matters, even without relying on SMTs and Teachers. A special point was also made about the need to ensure that everything that had been learnt during training was implemented. Also, training should be based on the identification of needs and gaps.

The SGBs also voiced concern about the training and development needs of other members of the school system. SMT members were considered to need computer training. Teachers would require an increased number of workshops, with special mention of Grade 12 teachers (assumedly with a view to preparing learners to leave school), and teachers in the areas of Mathematics, Science and English). Training of teachers should deliberately be designed to benefit learners. General team building activities for all staff were also noted as important. Staff responsible for learning areas involving computer work or for science would also require special training in the fields of information technology and the use of laboratory

equipment. Another group of recipients mentioned by SGB members was the members of the RCL. A call was also made to have training event on site or locally. Finally, continued support visits to SGBs and their members, and the schools in general, were also flagged in terms of follow-up activity.

Many of the inputs of SGBs (in fact, from more than half of them) focused on improving facilities, infrastructure and resources. The list of items that was mentioned includes: refurbishing, renovating and maintaining grounds, all infrastructure in general, buildings and equipment; installing electricity; fencing; toilets; school hall; furniture; library; resource centre (for improving learner performance, also through Internet access for the sake of reference works); Science laboratories and equipment; computer room and computers (or upgrading these) for learners; printers; photocopiers; related security arrangements and store rooms; sports facilities and funding (for example, a soccer field, or funds to support soccer players identified within the PSL development programme); more resources for teaching and learning; and dictionaries.

A few miscellaneous inputs were also noted. Two specific mentions were made that the Mveledzandivho programme as such should be continued, as it had been very helpful / fruitful. A plea was made that SGB concerns about the quality of Mathematics performance, especially at the level of Grade 8, should be addressed. Some SGBs acknowledged that policies were improving, but that much more needed to be done to improve learner performance further. Continued support to the youth and social development programme was also requested. One SGB noted that the social upliftment of parents who are in very mobile and fast growing communities on mines should be prioritised by the project and its service providers.

One SGB voiced concern about many unfulfilled Mveledzandivho promises.

The SGB respondent groups in only two cases did not provide any inputs at all.

Four themes became particularly evident when analysing the contents from the SMT interviews. These were: the mode through which service delivery and support had been rendered to schools; remaining needs at schools for tangible support and aid; the need for continued training, workshops and support, including the areas in which such needs fall; and some evaluative comments, of both positive and negative nature. It has to be noted that experiences at individual schools seem to have varied quite a bit, and as a consequence each school's unique circumstances dictated the nature of feedback to a large extent. What this also means is that the evaluative comments normally do not reflect single commonly felt thoughts or considerations across all 27 schools, but are limited to one, two or three schools at most.

Starting with the few inputs made about the mode of delivery and directly related issues, a number of informative comments highlighted salient matters. It was recommended that service provision should avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. As a result of such an approach, it was mentioned that service providers sometimes addressed "non-problems", and actually skipped burning problems, e.g. related to infrastructure and teacher transfers. A matter raised with some sense of urgency was an appeal for continuity within service provision, especially in the area of management support. Continuity of service providers would go a long way to reduce confusion or contradictions in terms of approach or content of input. Changing any service providers mid-way was considered to be disruptive. A related continuity issue that was raised concerns the higher likelihood and actual event of teachers being transferred to bigger schools or schools closer to bigger towns or cities once they have been capacitated through Mveledzandivho training.[17] In a related fashion, interventions were sometimes perceived as lacking comprehensive or regular feedback or follow-up mechanisms. This would also result from some service-provision events being dealt with as one-off occasions and not as coherent programmes throughout the year. At a more concrete or logistical level, some respondents would have preferred some changes in how workshops got run, or being informed about workshops sooner, to avoid disruption of their programmes.

In a second group of responses, many needs at schools and in classrooms were voiced, with the request that ongoing support address these. The first inputs centred on infrastructure and facilities, also by mentioning

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[17] It has to be noted that any benefits accruing to the larger teaching system and not specific schools only, and also the dynamic that either teachers could initiate a move or other schools could recruit such teachers by virtue of their enhanced proficiency and exposure, all play a part in such staff mobility, making it hard to conclude that what happens is necessarily good or bad, or caused by (even being the mistake of) any particular failure in the school system.

funding for these. Typical needs or items voiced included: general renovation and maintenance; improved toilet facilities; consistent water supply; a school hall; furniture (tables/chairs); a library (including upgrading its contents and operations, where it already existed); (more functional) laboratories; a computer centre, including the appropriate venues, computers and software; and more classrooms (one school pointed out how unworkable it was to try and accommodate 1 140 learners in only 12 classrooms).

Resourcing teaching and learning activity would reportedly benefit from continued assistance with additional resources, e.g. textbooks, more LSM, especially for the Science and Technology learning area, and the provision of previous examination papers. Rectifying record-keeping problems and looking after resources better would also be included here.

Among schools' needs also counted ongoing support and capacity to improve: school management in general; strategic planning; governance; income generation; SGB functioning; curriculum management and an improved skills basis; IQMS; staff development; sports development; youth and social development; policy development, in particular pertaining to assessment; school development planning; and how best to follow up on useful new policies and systems.

Some respondents also recommended the extension of currently achieved benefits and roll-out of support. Such activities would include involving other learning areas (such as Commerce subjects, and Technology – especially organising an Expo), enabling schools to help their neighbour schools hitherto not involved (for example in terms of getting them to participate in chess and debating events); addressing the socio-economic conditions caused by the mining industry; and awarding bursaries to deserving FET learners.

A third broad category of inputs addressed the need for ongoing and more frequent (continuous) training, workshops and support visits as identified by schools. A particular motivation for this would be the fact that staff in general, SMT members and teachers continuously change. Some topics that had been suggested included discipline, new developments in education, management, and curriculum management. Of particular relevance would be training/support for RCLs and SGBs. Connected to classroom and teacher support would be enhanced training for teacher coaches. A related element would be teacher development opportunities. Mention was also made about teachers' need to receive some form of certification after any training (including Mveledzandivho).

In the final instance respondents made some evaluative comments about the success or outcomes of Mveledzandivho. Critical feedback covered the following topics (according to respondents from one school only in each case): Mveledzandivho was said to not have been visible enough; more visibility of BHP Billiton at schools would also be appreciated (not only as funding transfer or work through service providers); Mveledzandivho service providers have not revealed management weaknesses to the Principal clearly enough (and the HSRC evaluation instruments were even considered to have been more helpful in this regard); the Masifunde programme impacted better on learner performance than Mveledzandivho has done; and the curriculum support service providers have produced nothing tangible thus far. One comment also referred to the HSRC's contact or visibility (which was considered intermittent – they have just "come and disappeared" from time to time).[18] Another comment or request concerned schools' need to receive the school profiles that got mentioned in an item during the current HSRC evaluation about report dissemination.[19]

In a positive vein, a number of other judgements and recommendations were made about the service provision and support, and included: new teachers keep on benefiting from improved filing and other systems that had been established as a result of Mveledzandivho before their time, and without themselves having been trained directly; teacher training, curriculum management support (mentioned twice), and interventions designed to assist with planning activities at school in particular were said to have helped the school to progress; the JET-driven Mveledzandivho support programme was considered to have helped the school much more than any inputs from the Department had done in terms of policy formulation at the

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[18] The HSRC was only contracted for the Mid-term evaluation in 2006 and the Summative evaluation in 2008, and visited schools during May of the given years only for one to two days, as announced and arranged in detail in advance through letters and personal phone calls to school principals and other related officials.

[19] These profiles are compiled along with the Summative evaluation report and are intended to be provided again, just like in 2006, to every school principal.

school level; the initial sense that Mveledzandivho would be a "fault-finding" endeavour quickly changed into acceptance of their constructive support role; and the Mveledzandivho project should be continued much in its present form for another two to three years, once motivated by mentioning that it has been helping learners to improve their performance.

Two SMT interviews did not provide any inputs regarding programme benefits and follow-up notions.

The heads of department at schools were also given the opportunity through the HoD interviews to provide their contributions on the matter of follow-up actions that remain on completion of the Mvedzandivho programme. As expected, their viewpoints showed very large overlap with those provided during the SMT interviews, given that the HoDs comprise the bulk of SMT membership. As a result, the details of their inputs are not repeated. These cover the same four areas reported above, and largely the same contents. (Included were: comments about the mode of service delivery and support; remaining needs for tangible support and aid; the need for continued training, workshops and support, and the contents of these; and some evaluative comments.) The few unique additional perspectives discussed immediately below were provided.

In terms of mode of delivery of interventions and support, the HoDs felt that it was the role of school management to ensure that programme benefits are sustained. At the level of logistics, workshops and other related training should be delivered at local venues, which are sufficiently comfortable in terms of temperature, seating and accommodation.

With regard to the details of remaining needs at schools, HoDs also emphasised that: facilities such as photocopiers and other machines should be maintained; provision of teaching or classroom resources should include Science kits, English textbooks and readers, and dictionaries; existing programme benefits should be extended to all other teachers in a school, not favouring any learning area (e.g. Science) above another (e.g. language); Mveledzandivho schools should share their training materials and knowledge with other schools; and, when involving additional schools, they should be organised into clusters within the same area.

With regard to ongoing training, workshops and school support, class visits and demonstration lessons should form an integral part of these. Quarterly and even monthly support opportunities were considered an optimal frequency. A large part of such visits or training should occur early in the year to accommodate staff who newly joined a school. Events should not be held in school holidays, and could even stretch over more than four days. Specific training contents or topics should include teacher commitment, management styles, how to set up a library system, information technology, and preparing teachers for how to teach reading skills. Mini-refresher courses could also be an ideal way to proceed.

In terms of providing critical evaluation feedback, HoDs indicated that teachers lose confidence when not engaging with facilitators enough in between training or support events. Schools should also ensure that the benefits that teachers derive from support events at the individual level are cascaded down properly to the school at large. Finally, it has often been forgotten that teachers get promoted to management positions, and that their initial curriculum support and training would not have included school management and governance, which situation would require additional training as well.

Quite a few HoDs (9) explicitly appealed that Mveledzandivho should be continued. One respondent said that "it is sad that Mvele is leaving 'cos we're just getting geared up". In one case, it was advised to take the form of a follow-up project. In another, it should be converted to slot into a life-long learning approach (professional development?). Another respondent suggested that schools keep contact directly with their former Mveledzandivho facilitators. In the two cases where no continuation was recommended for Mveldzandivho, it was because schools reached acceptable functioning levels.

In an overall sense, much as indicated by respondents during the teacher interviews, proper communication between parties, especially from the Department of Education and programme coordinators, should be the order of the day. One proposed mechanism that schools may find helpful would comprise having a dedicated representative person within the school for each learning area (English, Science and Mathematics in this case).

An important mechanism to ensure that the benefits of Mveledzandivho would be sustained for as long as possible, would be to institute a formal monitoring process to supersede current interventions (to regularly "inspect" ongoing implementation).

Slightly irrelevant to the contents of the current section, but nevertheless insightful, one HoD wanted to alert the authorities to the detrimental effect of not appointing appropriately qualified and experienced staff in every existing post (per designated learning area and grade), but rather just filling posts without applying sufficient consideration until overall number targets are satisfied.

Only four non-responses were noted among HoDs, and entailed two missing responses, one "no comment" and one HoD being unable to provide a meaningful input for reasons of being new in his/her post.

During the <u>interviews with district</u> officials, ways in which the benefits from Mveledzandivho could be sustained in future were also discussed along with any related comments made at the time. The key topics that were introduced included: continuity and communication issues; expansion to more schools; a few evaluative comments; and some indication of outstanding needs.

A matter raised during half of the interviews with district officials was the one of consistency. Two specific elements of this that were referred to included changes of personnel and communication gaps. Changes to key personnel within districts (presumably those designated to be coordinators from the side of the Department) and within the Mveledzandivho programme are perceived to have occurred frequently.[20] Changes in the ranks of service providers could refer to replacements of staff, but also sending different staff members for consecutive support events, but also suspending the services of a service provider midway and resuming through another organisation. Two results deriving from such changes were reported, namely great losses in continuity and much frustration. In one district the staff person concerned voiced uncertainty (even now towards the final stages) about the role of the district in Mveledzandivho. Such uncertainty could also be related to staff turnover, because in a particular district the coordinating official was new in his/her post, to be precise, not even for a year yet. This in itself would not be a problem, had it not been for the fact that in this particular case there had been a rather long period of vacancy, thus losing the benefit of a proper handing-over of history, objectives and other relevant knowledge about and materials for the support programme. Optimal liaison and synchronisation between staff in the district offices and from the Mveledzandivho support programme was seen as paramount for the success of an intervention like this. At a concrete level, curriculum advisors at circuit level and the support teams visiting schools and presenting workshops should collaborate very closely. Where this would not have happened, implementation deficiencies would result. In one district the official that was interviewed regarded proper coordination with the Department (from the side of the support programme) as the most important dynamic, with some suggestion that it had been lacking at some points.

A proposed way of prolonging or sustaining the benefits of the programme was to depart from the lessons gained thus far and use those as springboard to assist the rest of the schools in the participating districts. In some cases, respondents were not specific about starting from the existing districts and their remaining schools, but just advised that more or other schools be involved next. Some prioritisation was also suggested, in that the focus should be on individual support to schools lagging behind (furthest).

There was a sense in at least three of the eight districts that it would be good to continue the Mveledzandivho support programme and to try and sustain the benefits that have accrued hitherto, especially by having the programme continue its assistance in rolling out a next phase to more schools. The excellent curriculum support provided to recipients and beneficiaries was in one case considered to be the highlight of the programme. In another case the particular respondent was not aware of having received any reports thus far, and considered it a serious drawback. Only one district did not provide any inputs regarding this topic.

A final few more specific suggestions were made in terms of addressing remaining needs. Service providers should consider opening opportunities to learners by offering bursaries to the best-performing ones. Orphans and vulnerable children should be supported in particular, for example through provision of food parcels. It

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[20] One respondent noted that there was "no continuity in terms of the service providers (who kept) changing every few months".

was also suggested that subject choices should receive urgent attention in schools, especially in as far as Mathematics and Science are concerned. Too many learners were said to select these learning areas without the ability to master them, hence resulting in high matriculation examination failure rates as a result of having ended up in a wrong stream. Parents should be addressed in this regard, and the potential value and use of psychometric testing for Grade 9 learners also be investigated.

As can be derived from the presentation in this section, an astonishing breadth and depth of responses have been solicited on the topic of sustainability, all pointing to the need for ongoing training and support of some kind, coupled with some monitoring activity to ensure that any benefits and gains that had accumulated, are sustained, and also premised on some indications that facilities and learning support material may from time to time have to form part of the equation. One should also remember the comment related earlier about the need to incorporate school-support programmes of this nature into a much wider approach to community development and upliftment, including poverty alleviation strategies. In this process, communication lines between the various stakeholders should be "shortened", and this would include more joint conceptualisation, implementation and monitoring activities ion such an intervention programme than before.

3.3   Recommendations

In the Mid-term report, a plea was made to strengthen the participation of and communication with the district as pivotal element in the monitoring and support received by schools. Suggestions further focused on district improvement in terms of: its contribution to curriculum management, implementation and monitoring; assistance with language policy development; improving the use made of teaching and learning time; and managing and implementing LSM. This greater district involvement seems to have been accomplished to a large extent. Some coordination matters and continuity aspects remain and those would have to be addressed in any remaining, follow-up or similar new project activities.

Key to all similar and future projects, also in terms of any hand-over and follow-up actions, would be to address the matter of staff turnover pertaining to teachers, school managers, subject advisors, service providers and programme managers. The sacrifices in momentum through loss of continuity have been experienced as very confusing and even debilitating by most recipients or beneficiaries. It can be assumed that large parts of any project gains are nullified or severely hampered in cases where due care is not given to re-train new incumbents within the school system, as well as to replace and re-align any new project staff efficiently. Consistency of participation is a key feature in school-support programmes of this kind. Key bodies within the school system to which this pertain in particular are SGBs and RCLs.

A structured debate (between at least the funding organisation, the programme managers, the service providers, and the intended beneficiaries, and not forgetting the evaluation team when appropriate) should commence soon to discuss how to formalise the phasing out of activities in such a way that benefits are most likely to remain. It is likely that some ongoing training and support mechanism has to be part of the outcomes of this discussion. (The details reported and discussed in Section 2 give ample indications of the nature and contents of such potential ongoing support.)

Ongoing or future programme aspects should take due care to structure training contents and support programmes on the basis of a needs assessment with teachers and school managers to avoid imposing contents and approaches on them that are only assumed to be relevant.

Detailed, regular and up-to-date monitoring information is required for all the targets set for an intervention programme (and the indicators derived from them). This would also apply for the remainder of the current programme, in its wrapping-up stages, and any other follow-up work that may be conceptualised.

Some of the large-scale dynamics, such as the conditions and factors leading to high drop-off trends between Grade 10 and 12, are in the domain of the national education department, with whom solutions should be found.

Having instituted policies and various other planning and operational mechanisms and records is no guarantee for their successful implementation. Ongoing mentoring and advice are needed in this regard too.

The central aim of improving the teaching and learning process, and benefiting individual learners, should never be lost sight of.

More has to be done to ensure that teachers consistently and jealously safeguard their teaching time in order to achieve the requirements set in curriculum policy. There should especially be no compromises with regard to senior grades and the more complex learning areas, as well as the ECD phase when learners irrevocably gain or lose the ability to become literate and numerate, thus acquiring, or not doing so, the toolkit to unlock all future learning, employment and life opportunities. Curriculum related training should focus on the following key issues: ensuring curriculum coverage by teachers; promoting regular and meaningful written work; providing regular, meaningful feedback on learners' work – both verbal and written; and promoting higher-order thinking skills.

The lack of more substantive change in learner performance remains disappointing, but could in part be expected due to the huge conceptual backlogs that develop with the repeated failure of teachers to adequately cover the prescribed curriculum. It is strongly recommended that projects such as this one focus on those practices associated with teaching and learning that are most likely to have an effect on raising learner performance, including: curriculum coverage; extending and deepening practice on grade-appropriate examples and tasks; extending learners' opportunities to learn by increasing the pace of lessons and ensuring greater completion of practice examples; promoting the completion of individual written work; increasing the frequency of tests and meaningful feedback to learners; and promoting consistent use of textbooks to promote curriculum coverage and the completion of tasks that are on the correct grade level.

ECD facilitators or Grade R teachers need a lot of support in terms of the work they do, as they are often the only such dedicated staff member in a school. Such additional or special mentoring would include assistance in obtaining and producing relevant LSM, assessing their learners appropriately, improved curriculum and lesson planning and management, and improving their formal qualifications.

Only the Department of Education can provide the necessary accountability to support, sustain and insist on changes in practice. There is an important role for district officials in supporting the changes sought by projects such as this. Given that district officials play a role also in project management through mechanisms such as Area Working Groups, this ought to be possible and should contribute to the general sustainability of a/the project. Some specific sub-recommendations pertaining to any remaining work or follow-up actions are that: district officials should attend training sessions conducted by Mveledzandivho in order to assist in aligning the instructions and guidance provided by the Department of Education and the project (as this has been a source of contention amongst participants); service providers should work closely with district officials to model any further effective school-support techniques; and accountability measures should be actively promoted through the project in order to promote and ensure that meaningful change is seen in participating schools as a result of the investment made by BHP Billiton.

A final recommendation is that the current set of outputs, including this short version of the report, the complete technical report, and the two sets of school profiles relating each school's growth curve to that of the schools at large, should be disseminated and discussed appropriately and widely.