

Sustainable School Improvement



A partnership between the state,
the private sector and civil society

Vision

Quality education for every child in South Africa

Our strategy seeks to fulfil our role in society as a not-for-profit organisation committed to improving the quality of education, particularly for the poor, through research and other activities.

Mission

We offer educational research and knowledge-based interventions that are innovative, cost-effective and sustainable to our clients who support disadvantaged young South Africans through education development initiatives.

Values

- Professional and knowledge-based
- Innovative and courageous
- Independent but accountable
- Effective and measurable
- Respectful and respected

Written by Godwin Khosa

Published by Jet Education Services
5th Floor Forum 1, Braampark
33 Hoofd Street, Braamfontein

Tel: +27 11 403 6401

Fax: +27 11 339 7844

info@jet.org.za

PO Box 178, WITS 2050

www.jet.org.za

JET Education Services has developed a highly successful school improvement model, based on a dynamic partnership between the state, the private, sector, and civil society

In brief

South Africa's public education system is performing very poorly, diminishing the life chances of millions of people, and hampering national growth and development. The problem is systemic; therefore, it requires systemic solutions based on partnerships between the state, the private sector, and civil society. Improving our schools is an urgent national priority.

The private sector and other non-state actors spend some R2 billion a year on education reform; however, many of these projects are designed and implemented in isolation, and are therefore less effective than they should be. International research shows that sustainable education reform requires ambitious systems and social interventions based on shared meaning among those involved in the improvement process.

JET Education Services has developed a highly successful school improvement model, based on a dynamic partnership between the state, the private, sector, and civil society, which is currently being implemented in 63 schools in North West and the Eastern Cape. It incorporates lessons learnt from JET's 17 years of involvement in school improvement. The implementation of a similar model in Limpopo – the Khanyisa Project, involving 856 schools – resulted in highly institutionalised interventions at the provincial, district and school level. An assessment conducted in 200 schools over two years found that, on average, learners' scores in maths and literacy were 5 percentage points higher than those of learners in non-project schools. Teacher and management practices were also found to have improved significantly. Moreover, the project had a notable impact on national curriculum and teacher development reforms. It informed the Foundations for Literacy Programme, and brought to light useful teacher development insights from its pioneering teacher content knowledge assessments.

Our current projects are aimed at further testing and demonstrating a viable strategy for achieving sustainable improvements in the schooling system which can be replicated elsewhere, and taken to scale by the state or other major actors. A major positive feature of these projects is that they are strongly supported by the two provincial departments of education, the officials involved, teachers' unions, and the schools themselves. JET wishes to catalyse the use of its knowledge base by a partnership of funders for a greater purpose in contributing to education's transformation. Leveraging its seed funding five to ten times would create a critical mass of well-performing schools which would provide the government with the evidence it needs to take this schooling improvement model to scale.

As of October 2010, the current partners, namely Murray & Roberts, the D G Murray Trust, the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, and the JET Board of Directors, have committed R31.8 million, about half the funding for the two projects. Additional funding is being sought from corporations and other major funders. Individual funders are invited to donate R1,2 a year, totalling R6 million over five years. The two projects are accountable to project steering committees representing the implementation partners, and subject to an annual Output-to-Purpose Review conducted by independent experts engaged by the funders.

JET believes these projects provide corporate and other funders with a unique opportunity to improve the value of their education spend.

It is widely accepted that South Africa's public education system is not performing as well as it should

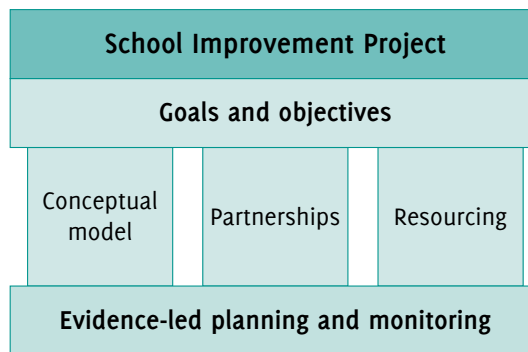
Introduction

This document presents a school improvement model developed by JET Education Services which is currently being implemented in 63 rural schools in North West and the Eastern Cape.

It is widely accepted that South Africa's public education system is not performing as well as it should, thereby constraining the production of skilled people and, ultimately, economic growth and national development. The state itself has acknowledged that no less than 80 per cent of public schools are not meeting minimum performance standards.

The purpose of JET's school improvement model is to test and demonstrate a systemic approach to improving the functioning and educational performance of schools which could be replicated at scale by the state or other major educational actors.

Figure 1: JET's school improvement model



It is based on three pillars: a sound conceptual framework, effective partnerships among major stakeholders in education; and adequate resourcing, with evidence-led planning and monitoring also playing a prominent role. The fundamental change philosophy informing / underpinning the model is that:

Given a clear improvement concept, evidence-led intervention, the effective involvement of stakeholders, and adequate resourcing, sustainable improvements can be achieved both in schools and the education system as a whole.

School reform versus school improvement: parallel agendas

Since 1994, the national effort to improve South Africa's schooling system has largely consisted of two parallel initiatives: a reform agenda, led by government; and a school improvement agenda, implemented by non-state agencies and funded by the private sector and civil society.

Major international funders contributed significant amounts of money to South African education both before and after 1994. However, since then most have diverted their funding away from South Africa to even needier countries. In 2005, 18 international funders were active in education; by 2008, this had dropped to five. Support included grants to NGOs, technical assistance to government, funding public-private partnerships,

It soon became evident that the reform agenda was not producing the intended outcomes

and direct government budget support. Given their gradual withdrawal from South Africa, any future partnership for improving the South African schooling system will have to be forged by the South African government, private sector, and civil society. This document analyses the roles of these three role players, and sets out their roles in JET's school improvement model.

Government schooling reform

Public service reform, and education reform in particular, are largely the responsibility of government. However, any public reform programme should be well-designed and effectively implemented, and should enjoy the participation and support of all major role players.

In the first five years after the transition to democracy, the government's education reform programme was aimed at reconstituting the system – reconfiguring educational institutions (schools, colleges and education departments); introducing new teaching and learning content; and mapping out new roles for teachers and governors. Following this, the government and its partners began to concentrate on improving the quality of education provided by public institutions.

However, it soon became evident that the reform agenda was not producing the intended outcomes. As a result, the government shifted its focus to improving the schools curricula – which was reviewed a number of times and enhanced once through the Foundations for Learning Programme; improving monitoring and evaluation systems; and improving the resourcing of classrooms. Since 2001, assessment systems have been established in all provinces, and a new national education evaluation unit is being set up.

Education receives about 20 per cent of the national budget. Besides this, a resource targeting programme – the Quality Improvement, Development, Support and Upliftment Programme (QIDS UP) - has been introduced to improve the poorest three categories of schools. From 2006 to 2009 the programme resulted in the additional expenditure of R2 billion on schools in the three worst-performing quintiles, comprising about 70 per cent of public schools.



Partnerships can be forged in four areas that have dominated the government's reform agenda over the past decade

Some provinces are not taking full advantage of this opportunity. In the past four years, per capita QIDS UP expenditure varied very widely, from R558 million in the Western Cape to about R43 million in the Eastern Cape. Several other provinces spent far less than R100 million. This form of ring-fenced government funding creates an opportunity for school improvement partnerships with civil society, particularly if the allocations are standardised across provinces.

Besides funding, partnerships can be forged in four areas that have dominated the government's reform agenda over the past decade:

- creating more structured curriculae and learning materials;
- teacher development programmes, including the formulation of teacher competency frameworks and a teacher training;
- school resourcing;
- evidence to provide a base for planning and accountability (research, monitoring and evaluation); and
- management development.

These four areas present non-government partners with an opportunity to focus their support for the government's reform agenda. Such support should ideally be provided across the entire value chain, including policy analysis, policy programming, implementation, and monitoring and evaluating the reform programme as a whole.

The role of state and non-state partners in school improvement

In the 2008/09 financial year government spent about R150 billion on education. Seventy-one percent (about R107 billion) was spent on basic education and FET colleges. The private sector, foundations, trusts, and international development agencies spent about R2 billion, amounting to 1,4 per cent of the national education spend, or 5,5 per cent of the non-personnel portion of the education budget.

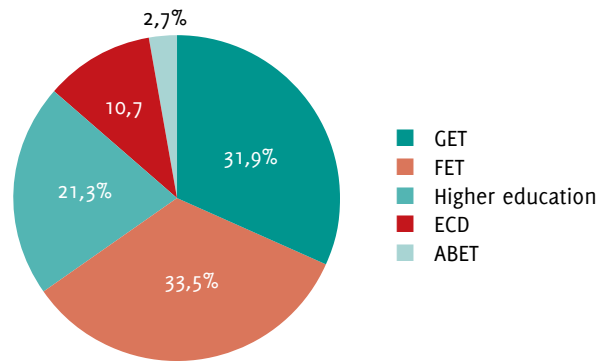
Table 1 compares CSI and government spend on various components of the national education system.

Table 1: Government and CSI spend on various levels of the system

	Size of Subsystem	Budgets		Comments
		Voted	CSI	
National system	1	R145bn	R2 bn	Inclusive of FET colleges, universities, and the national Department of Education
Provincial system	9	R107bn	Nil	Average budget per province is R11.8bn
District system	80	Unknown	Indirect	School professional support services located at this level
Circuits	860 est.	Unknown	Indirect	Largely administrative level with no education staff other than the circuit manager
Schools	26 000		R1,6 bn	Infrastructure, teachers, management, learners and SGBs

Figure 2 breaks down CSI spend on various components of the education system.

Figure 2: The distribution of CSI in education



It shows that two thirds of the CSI is spent on the GET and FET phases.

Moreover, FET receives 42% of the R1,6 billion of CSI spend on the schooling sector (inclusive of ECD, GET and FET), although it accounts for less than 25% of learner numbers. It is therefore clear that FET receives greater attention from CSI than other schooling sectors. This bias reflects a commitment by the private sector to address schooling challenges later in children’s lives.

However, this distribution also reflects a lack of co-ordination in CSI spend. For example, a cohort of children may benefits from CSI in the ECD phase, lose CSI support in the GET phase, and benefit from it again in FET. In this way, the value chain of sustained support is interrupted, compromising the value of CSI spend.

Table 2 reflects CSI spending patterns across the provinces.

Table 2: CSI per province by learners and number of SC passes

	Learners	SC Passes	Proportion % of the system	CSI Spend R(m)	% of CSI Spend	Diff to size	% of passes	Diff to results
KwaZulu–Natal	2.84	94 421	23.8	185	13.5	–10.3	25.0	–11.5
Eastern Cape	2.13	39 358	17.9	144	10.5	–7.4	10.4	–0.1
Gauteng	1.88	63 287	15.8	596	43.3	27.5	16.7	–26.6
Limpopo	1.81	55 880	15.2	102	7.4	–7.8	14.8	7.4
Mpumalanga	1.05	31 449	8.8	61	4.4	–4.4	8.3	3.9
Western Cape	0.98	33 787	8.2	122	8.9	0.7	8.9	0.0
North West	0.75	21 372	6.3	42	4.6	–1.7	5.7	1.1
Free State	0.68	31 522	2.5	61	4.4	1.9	8.3	3.9
Northern Cape	0.27	7 141	2.3	41	3.0	0.7	1.9	–1.1
National	11.91	378 217	100	1354	100	–0.8	100	0.0

Data sources: NBI CSI in Schooling in South Africa, and Department of Education (a)

Table 2 reveals a geographic bias in favour of urban provinces and against the larger and more rural provincial education systems.

It is clear that FET receives greater attention from CSI than other schooling sectors

Both government and CSI units continue to allocate funding to schools without co-ordinating their strategies

This is confirmed in table 3, which contrasts CSI spend in Gauteng with those in three rural provinces.

Table 3: CSI spend – Gauteng vs KwaZulu Natal, Eastern Cape, and Limpopo

	CSI (%)	Learners (%)	SC passes
Gauteng	43,3	15,8	16,7
Rural provinces (KZN, EC, LP)	31,4	59,6	50,2

Research conducted by the National Business Initiative and Trialogue shows that more and more corporations are realising that school improvement projects are social development processes that take at least three years to produce discernible results. Research also shows that CSI tends to target learners, teachers and managers, and generally disregards the roles played by parents, communities, and circuits and districts in school improvement.

Most CSI projects are not based on rigorous research, and lack robust monitoring and evaluation systems. Also many CSI units and foundations design their own interventions in isolation of others, which detracts from the value of CSI spend.

These stand-alone interventions are partial, unco-ordinated, and present weak systemic impacts. They also do not take account of the public education system and therefore run the risk of being rejected by public sector actors, thus eroding any sustainable gains.

Both government and CSI units continue to allocate funding to schools without co-ordinating their strategies. By contrast, education reform requires a concerted effort,



The value of CSI could be greatly improved by linking it more effectively with government interventions and activities

Successful strategies for improving public education systems

- Focus on a small number of ambitious goals
- Link capacity-building to results;
- Share meaning among those involved in the improvement process;
- Develop the improvement strategy out of the country's history and experiences;
- Pursue education reform through partnerships among the school, the community, the local authority, and the state;
- Set high standards, and measure if they are achieved;
- Work towards 'deep pedagogic' change;
- Having few but better teachers;
- Encourage a strong political and cultural commitment to education among participating schools.

According to researchers, successful schools in South Africa are characterised by strong aspirations, strong leadership, quality teaching, and longer school hours. A notable example is Bukulani High School in Soweto, which achieves a 100% matric pass rate every year. It normally completes the curriculum in June, as it has found that more time committed earlier in the year produces good results.

designed in line with the broader reform agenda and focused on achieving critical mass in the system.

In general, then, the investment in education by the private sector and civil society appears to be skewed towards the urban provinces and the senior schooling phase, and is poorly linked to the government's reform agenda.

The value of CSI could be greatly improved by linking it more effectively with government interventions and activities. Ideally, CSI units and government should identify geographic areas amenable to co-ordinated and intensive interventions which could eventually be taken to scale.

What has worked elsewhere in the world?

It is common cause that education plays a vital role in emancipating people from poverty and its associated social ills.

Michael Barber has observed that 'successful countries are moving from a series of ad hoc initiatives to a coherent, dynamic set of aligned strategies which combine three big components: the professionalization of the teaching force, citizenship empowerment, and strategic leadership at all levels of the system' (quoted in Whelan 2008:6).

Educationists have listed strategies that have succeeded in improving education systems in various countries (see box: 'Successful strategies for improving public education systems', this page).

In general, over the previous four decades, countries have adopted two broad approaches to education reform:

- a systems development approach, aimed at improving schools as organisations situated in a district and regional system; and

Improving teachers' content knowledge will not necessarily improve educational outcomes if the functioning of schools is not improved as well

- a social development approach, aimed at involving communities in schools, and eliciting a greater commitment from teachers and managers

Challenges to school quality in South Africa

JET's research shows that schooling reform needs to address challenges in three broad areas: activities in the classroom (learners and teachers), school management and governance, and the administration of the education system. The problems underpinning these challenges are summarised in the box below. They comprise a mix of systems development issues, largely managerial issues within schools; and social development issues, largely social issues involving their surrounding communities.

Common problems in South African schools

- Many schools are dysfunctional, and are not transforming time, teaching, physical and financial resources into learning outcomes.
- Curriculum delivery is poor; teachers do not complete the curriculum, and pitch their teaching at levels lower than those demanded by the curriculum (Khanyisa 2006).
- Teacher content knowledge is poor (Taylor and Moyana 2005).
- Teacher professionalism and work ethos are poor.
- District support and monitoring functions are inadequate and ineffective.
- Community support of schools and household involvement in children's learning are practically non-existent.

Many actors have attempted to improve South African schools in recent years. Most have focused on improving teachers' subject knowledge and teaching skills, as well as school management and governance. However, research conducted by JET has shown that improving teachers' content knowledge will not necessarily improve educational outcomes if the functioning of schools is not improved as well.

Evidence from former model C schools – which consistently outperform other public schools – shows that the participation of parents and their efforts to reinforce learning at home (through homework, their expression of the value they attach to education, and role modelling) play a significant role in determining the quality of the education provided by these schools.

The role of the household in schooling is particularly significant in the context of the 'broader view' of education as essential for imparting the knowledge, qualities, skills, attitudes and capacities that enable individuals to become active and responsible citizens.

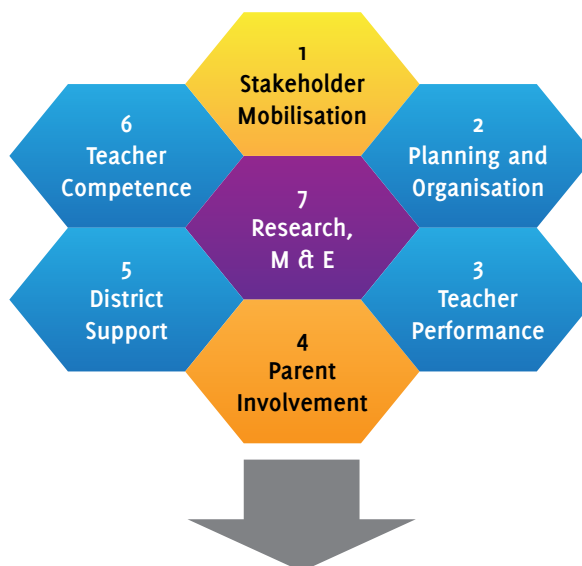
Flowing from this, effective education reform requires interventions aimed at addressing technical challenges as well as the social behaviours of key players: district and circuit officials, school management, teachers, learners, the community and parents.

JET has also learnt that short-term, free-standing school improvement projects which do not involve and aim to improve the district system tend to be less effective and less sustainable.

JET's systemic school improvement model

Flowing from these lessons and experiences, JET has devised a systemic school improvement model which has been implemented in 856 schools in Limpopo, and is currently being implemented in 63 schools in North West and the Eastern Cape.

Figure 3: The JET School Improvement Model



Project outcomes

- Improved support and monitoring of schools by districts
- Increased community involvement
- Improved functionality of schools as organisations
- Increased teacher competence and performance
- Increased learning and educational outcomes

The key assumption underlying the model is that educational outcomes will improve if teachers are effective and the teaching and learning environments are supported by effective school organisation, community involvement, and district support and monitoring. It has seven components, which are discussed in detail below.

Stakeholder mobilisation

According to the Development Bank of Southern Africa (2009), it is vital to forge a coalition of community and development practitioners in order to shift development processes from planning *for* people to planning *with* people. To this end, it advocates a participatory process involving all stakeholders in planning and implementing projects.

Short-term, free-standing school improvement projects which do not involve and aim to improve the district system are ineffective and unsustainable

A successful social compact process greatly improves the chances of a successful and sustainable project

Flowing from this, the model employs a Development Charter (DC) developed by the DBSA to identify school improvement challenges through the eyes of the relevant communities, and mobilise community stakeholders into supporting the improvement programme. The DC process is based on the notion of risk divestment, i.e., passing the responsibility for development from government to the signatories of the development agreement, and committing leaders of various participating organisations and groupings to binding agreements (Baskin 1994:9).

The DC incorporates a set of project-aligned agreements and commitments over and above the traditional tenets of community participation. The benefits and characteristics of DCs are presented in the box below.

The envisaged outcomes of the Development Charter process are:

- Educational Social Compacts among the various stakeholders;
- A Development Charter for each school community (teachers, management, parents, local authorities, shop stewards and learners);
- A Circuit Development Charter developed and adopted by the education officials (circuit, district and the province), representatives of school communities, councilors and teachers' unions; and
- Implementation and monitoring of the Social Compact process by Social Compact forums.

A successful social compact process greatly improves the chances of a successful and sustainable project.

Benefits and characteristics of a Development Charter

- It legitimises the development process;
- It necessitates the acquisition of good information to inform the planning process;
- It requires building a human resource capacity necessary for project sustainability;
- It contributes to development facilitation, acting as the interface between the community, programme officials and authorities;
- It binds diverse parties to its development vision and principles;
- The DC is the first expression of full community consensus on a vision of the future;
- It is not budget-driven, and is based more strongly on vision;
- It covers all the concerns and possibilities raised by the community (DBSA 2009)

Planning and organisation

This component seeks to improve the functioning of schools as organisations. In dysfunctional school environments, effective teachers and talented learners have no chance of engaging in meaningful learning. This component targets the school management team, which is viewed as the hub of curriculum delivery activities in the school and the broader social developmental elements outside the school. It is thus concerned with the technical operation of the school.

The school strategic planning subcomponent is concerned with crafting a clear improvement plan for the school



In the JET intervention model, this component is further divided into three subcomponents: curriculum management, strategic planning, and financial management.

The curriculum management subcomponent is designed around the following outcomes:

- regular monitoring of curriculum delivery by school management teams (SMTs);
- building an SMT educator development and support mechanism;
- identifying the gaps and deficits in schools, and providing support by the districts and SMTs;
- curriculum delivery targets formulated by districts and SMTs, based on common assessments.

The school strategic planning subcomponent is concerned with crafting a clear improvement plan for the school. It also starts by auditing challenges in the schools, but is restricted to internal stakeholders (teachers, heads of department, and principals). The anticipated outcomes of this subcomponent are:

- Individual school improvement profiles outlining successes, challenges, and proposed solutions;
- Individual school improvement plans, including targets, monitoring plans, and agreements between the schools and the district;
- Cluster-level support systems for implementing the school improvement plans, with SMTs helping to compile school-specific progress reports with a view to taking advantage of peer and expert support, provided by the district and JET;
- School monitoring reviews by district and circuit officials which monitor implementation of the strategic plans; and

Teacher performance is a complex issue, influenced by a wide range of factors

- education dialogue programmes, including seminars at cluster level, newsletters and action research by teachers among project and non-project schools

The financial management component of the programme is aimed at improving budgeting, expenditure controls, and reporting. Schools are gradually gaining spending authority either by becoming Section 21 schools or no-fee schools. Project schools typically have annual budgets of about R1,8 million, and cash budgets of about R61 000 per school. Given that they are likely to receive more money, their capacity to record expenditure and to budget and spend prudently must be improved.

The envisaged outcomes of this component are:

- Proper financial management;
- Adequate budgets that cover the key programmes in the schools;
- Acceptable financial reporting;
- More schools acquiring Section 21 status; and
- Increasing the number of schools with unqualified audited financial statements.

Teacher performance

Teacher performance is a complex issue. It is influenced by a wide range of factors, including teacher characteristics (knowledge, skills, ethos and motivation), classroom characteristics, learner characteristics, and school features. This component of the intervention model seeks to ensure that teachers:

- are aware of the teaching goals which they need to pursue;
- embrace their agency in the learning process;
- focus teaching on learning outcomes;



Maths, science and English teachers are provided with curriculum planning and delivery materials, school support visits and cluster-level activities



- have access to efficient curriculum delivery systems and resources; and
- are excited about teaching.

Maths, science and English teachers are provided with curriculum planning and delivery materials, school support visits and cluster-level activities. The curriculum materials include learning programmes, work schedules, lesson plans and assessment tasks. The envisaged outcomes are that:

- All teachers implement an effective curriculum delivery system including the full implementation of annual work schedules and common assessments;
- All schools cover the curriculum for each year as well as the required amount and quality of written work;
- Teachers reflect daily on the effectiveness of their teaching; and
- Teachers monitor and assess learner performance as per the curriculum policy.

Teacher competence

Teacher competence refers to teachers' subject knowledge and teaching skills. Without these attributes, teachers cannot teach effectively, even if all the required school, classroom and learner factors are in place. A series of seminal studies conducted in the United States found that students taught by an effective teacher make three times as much progress than students taught by ineffective teachers (Whelan 2008:31) .

These effects are cumulative, with learners taught by effective teachers moving further and further ahead while those taught by ineffective teachers lag further and further behind.

In South Africa, not much research has been done on teacher competence, particularly content knowledge. Sample studies indicate that the subject knowledge of many teachers is deficient.

Our project model requires teachers to play an active role in monitoring, planning and facilitating their own professional development. In line with this goal, the envisaged outcomes of this subcomponent are to:

Our project model requires teachers to play an active role in monitoring, planning and facilitating their own professional development

- Compile subject knowledge profiles of teachers and subject advisors in maths, science and languages;
- Compile teacher allocation plans for all schools;
- Develop circuit-level teacher development plans;
- Devise a long-term teacher development strategy for the circuit; and
- Design and implement responsive teacher development projects.

District support

The role of districts in provincial education systems is to support schools with resources, systems, and professional development, and monitor their utilisation of inputs and achievement of targets. However, the understanding of this role and how to discharge it differs from one province to the other, and among various districts within the same province. There is no common framework for staffing, resourcing and programming districts. However, despite these variances, districts have a vital role to play in sustainable systemic school improvement programmes.

District support is provided at two levels: the district office, and the circuit involved in the project. It is aimed at providing additional capacity for planning and programming school support and monitoring activities, and co-ordinating and integrating project activities with those of the district. The support also enables district directors to devote more time to the projects.

To achieve these objectives, the projects engage full-time education development facilitators who:

- Serve as a counterpart to district director in implementing the project;
- Plan and oversee the implementation of the project;



Parent involvement has diminished since the introduction of school governing bodies and the consolidation of 'community schools' into state schools



- Work with the District Director to co-ordinate the inputs of district officials, teachers' unions, and technical assistants;
- Conduct research and manage knowledge relevant to the project, and provide educational inputs to the schools;
- Work with the DD to report back to funders and stakeholders;
- Work with provincial departments to raise additional funds.

The anticipated outcomes of the district intervention are:

- Improved school support and monitoring;
- Improved communication and co-operation among stakeholders in the circuit;
- Effective implementation of the project;
- Mobilisation of additional financial and non-financial resources from the project partners; and
- Achievement of the project outcomes.

Parental involvement

Parent involvement has diminished since the introduction of school governing bodies and the consolidation of 'community schools' into state schools. Before the passing of the Schools Act in 1996, parents used to help build schools and provide other resources which reinforced their involvement. In the new democratic era, there has been much talk about parents' inability to contribute to their children's education due to high levels of illiteracy.

New ways have to be found of increasing parents' involvement in schools, particularly in rural areas. There is no doubt that effective parental involvement in Model C and private schools makes a major contribution to their children's educational performance. Rural and township parents need to become as interested and involved in their children's education.

To this end, the JET schooling improvement model includes a parent mobilisation programme, which includes setting up home study groups monitored by parents and

New ways have to be found of increasing parents' involvement in schools, particularly in rural areas

developing a practical guide on how parents should support their children's learning. The envisaged outcomes of this component are:

- An evidence-based improvement in the involvement of parents in their children's education, demonstrated by increased monitoring of home study, number of completed homework exercises, school visits by parents, and parents' interest in school reports; and
- Improved learner behaviour at school and after school, including their management of after-school time, homework, study, and reading for enjoyment.

Monitoring and evaluation

This is a vital component of our project model. It serves as the compass and gauge of the programme, and therefore a major lever for change. It has two main imperatives: learning from the implementation of the project, and accounting for progress made towards achieving the project outcomes. The learning imperative is achieved through ongoing monitoring conducted by the project schools and district officials. The accountability imperative is achieved through rigorous project monitoring by project staff; technical evaluation by JET's Research and Evaluation division; and an Output-to-Purpose Review (OPR) conducted by an external team of experts engaged by the funders. The OPR is designed to establish whether each project is making progress towards its stated outcomes. It therefore independently identifies implementation and sustainability issues, and advises the project steering committee and funders on changes and adjustments required from year to year.



Monitoring and evaluation is undertaken in three phases: baseline, mid-term and summative

JET's School Improvement Programmes

The Khanyisa Education Support Programme

JET's school improvement model was first implemented in Limpopo. Entitled the Khanyisa Education Support Programme, the project was implemented by the Limpopo Department of Education in partnership with the British Department of International Development (DfID), and managed by JET Education Services and Cambridge Education.

The focus of the programme was to improve the efficiency of the educational system in the province; transform 856 schools in selected circuits in all districts; and support FET Colleges. The programme ran for seven years, from 2003 to 2009. When it ended, new practices had been deeply embedded in the provincial administration, districts, circuits, and schools. Following an intensive evaluation process, DfID gave the project an 'excellent' rating both for impact and for sustainability.

Specifically, the DFID evaluation team found the Khanyisa Project to have:

- Been instrumental in developing a culture of information and accountability throughout the system;
- Improved the curriculum management practices of more than 60 per cent of teachers;
- Resulted in an increase in the quality of exercises given to learners, which rose by 49 per cent
- Improved the maths and literacy performance of learners at project schools by 5 percentage points compared with those at non-project schools. In fact, the scores of learners at 59 per cent of project schools improved margins by ranging from 5 to 42 per cent.

The Bojanala and Centres of Excellence Programmes

Following the success of the Khanyisa Project, the project model was further refined and is now being implemented in two predominantly rural provinces: North West, and the Eastern Cape.

The Bojanala Systemic Development Programme is being implemented in the 29 schools of Circuit B of the Moses Kotane West District in North West. The Centres of Excellence Programme is being implemented in the 34 schools of the Mthawelanga Circuit in the Confimvaba District in the Eastern Cape.

Both projects are aimed at further testing and demonstrating a comprehensive school improvement model that can be adopted by the public education service and taken to scale.

The Bojanala Project began in 2009, and will run over five years until 2014. The Centres of Excellence Project began in 2007, and will run until 2014. While these projects are still at an early stage, early results are very promising. Among other things, the departments of education in both provinces are strongly committed to the projects, which greatly improve their chances of success.

Funding partnerships reduce the burden on individual funders, and enable the funding collective to enjoy economies of scale

Forging new partnerships

As stated earlier, partnerships comprise the second pillar of our school improvement model. In line with this, our projects are built on the insight that sustainable education improvement requires the involvement of all the key stakeholders – the state, parents, communities, teacher associations, NGOs, universities, and the private sector.

Thus the projects also provide a forum for social change, with the various partners contributing a range of inputs needed to improve the institutional capacity of the schools and the system, including knowledge, governance expertise, funding, and resources. Key partners in these projects and their responsibilities are listed in Table 4.

Table 4: Key partners

Category	Partner	Roles and responsibilities
Implementers	Provincial departments of education	Provides human and other resources, and leads the partnership.
	JET Education Services	Manages the project, and provides technical capacity to design and implement the project.
	Teachers' associations (SADTU and NAPTOA)	Enter into memoranda of understanding with JET and the provincial departments of education play active roles in designing and implementing the programmes Allocate provincial/district level officials to serve on the project steering committees Assist in monitoring and reporting on the non-negotiables.
Funders		Provide funding and other resources.
Clients	Participating schools	Commit to the non-negotiables. Allocate and spend their budgets on project-related overhead costs (printing, travel, catering etc).

Project funding

The funding model for these projects involves funding from various sources, and in different forms. Funders are being asked to provide 95 per cent of the project budgets. Schools are expected to contribute 7 per cent of their government transfers to project-related activities. These involve carrying project-related overheads such as printing, travelling to workshops and meetings, and catering. Teachers' unions and universities have been asked to contribute in kind through research and training.

The funding model projects expenditure of R1 million per participating school over a five-year period, totalling about R30 million in the case of each project. To this end it envisages funding from five agencies of R1,2 million a year over five years, totalling R6 million per funder per project.

The current projects were initiated with funding from the DG Murray Trust, the Claude Leon Foundation, the Murray & Roberts Group, and the JET Board of Directors. R19.4 million has been sourced for the Bojanala Project, leaving a shortfall of R11.6 million. R12.4 million has been committed for the Centres of Excellence Project, leaving a shortfall of R17.6 million.

JET believes these projects present CSI units and other funding agencies with a unique opportunity to maximise the value of their education spend

In compiling the project budgets, the following lessons from past experience have been borne in mind:

- Underbudgeting tends to have unpredictable effects on these sorts of projects, and should be avoided.
- Adequately financed and longer-term interventions ensure that projects are effectively institutionalised.
- Funding partnerships reduce the burden on individual funders, and enable the funding collective to enjoy economies of scale.
- Contributions by schools ensures that they take the project seriously.

JET believes these projects present CSI units and other funding agencies with a unique opportunity to maximise the value of their education spend.

More detailed budgets and funding models are available upon request from JET Educational Services.

JET's commitment to its school improvement models

On the 25 March 2010 the JET Board announced that it would be the catalyst for new models of school and college development, and commit in principle R 24 million of its carefully husbanded resources to partly fund its designated projects individually approved by the Board after applying best funding criteria over the next five to seven years.

In essence, JET is backing its belief in its people and their knowledge base built over 17 years and now being used with greater purpose in contributing to education's transformation.

Through leveraging this funding five to ten times, a critical mass of good performing schools could be created which would provide the government with the evidence it needs to take the JET initiative to scale.

Engagement

We invite comments, questions and suggestions, and would be delighted to engage interested parties in further discussions.

List of references

- Anderson, L W (2004) Fundamentals of Education Planning: Increasing teacher effectiveness. UNESCO. Paris.
- Chapman, D W, L O Mahlck, A E M Smulders (eds) (1997) From planning to action: government initiatives for improving school-level practice. Pergamon. Paris.
- Development Bank of Southern Africa (2009) Best practice framework for the formulation of development charters. Midrand.
- Hargreaves, A (2003) Teaching in the knowledge society: education in the age of insecurity. Teachers College Press. New York
- Kasemir, B, J Jager, C C Jaeger, M T Gardner (eds) (2003) Public participation in sustainable science. Cambridge University Press.
- Khanyisa (2006) Khanyisa Case Study reports on the factors influencing learner performance. Limpopo Department of Education.
- Pickering, J, C Daly, N Pachler (eds) (2007) New Designs for Teachers' Professional Learning. London: University of London.
- Taylor, N and J Moyana (2005) Khanyisa Baseline Evaluation. Limpopo Department of Education.
- Triologue (2009) The CSI Handbook 2009. 12th edition. Cape Town.
- Whelan, F (2009) Lessons Learned: How Good Policies Produce Better Schools. London: Fenton Whelan.

Acronyms

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
COEP	Centres of Excellence Project
CSI	Corporate Social Investment
DBSA	Development Bank of South Africa
DC	Development Charter
DD	District Director
ECD	Early Childhood Development
FET	Further Education and Training
FLP	Family Literacy Project
GET	General Education and Training
HoDs	Heads of Department
IQMS	Independent Quality Management System
JET	JET Education Services
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
NBI	National Business Initiative
NWDoE	North West Department of Education
QIDS UP	Quality Improvement, Development, Support and Upliftment Programme
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SMT	School Management Team



