

BRIDGE Maths and Science Learner Support Programmes Community for Effective Practice

Record of the Monitoring and Evaluation Focus Group's Colloquium

18th Floor Auditorium, RMB – 1 Merchant Place, Sandton

16 October 2013, 12h00 – 14h30

Dear Community Member,

The Monitoring and Evaluation colloquium focused on the findings of the RMB Education (Maths Leaders and Development) Programme Evaluation carried out by JET Education Services. Barbara Dale-Jones facilitated the session with support from Carlene Gonzo and Zanele Twala of Bridge. This meeting was attended by a variety of stakeholders including:

Alexandra Education Committee	Tom Clarke	Rubricating Works	Tracey Butchart
FATC	P J Sabbagha	SAQA	Edcent Williams
GDE Gauteng East District	Poovan Chetty	Sasol Inzalo Foundation	Cynthia Xoli Malinga
GDE Gauteng East District	Moipone Maleka	St Stithians Foundation & Thandulwazi	Bev Johnson
HR Support Services	Marjie Harrington	St Stithians Foundation	Khumo Morolo
Joburg College of Software Engineering	Xoliswa Ngxanga	TEACH South Africa	Morne Scholtz
Jet Education Services	Pat Sullivan	The Tiger Brands Foundation	Kelvin Glen
Khulisa Management Services	Sarah Bliss	Tshikululu Social Investments	Janet Watts
Khulisa Management Services	Samantha Dube	Tshikululu Social Investments	Phillip Methula
merSETA	Camilla Smith	Ubambiswano	Annette dos Santos
MerSETA	Ester van der Linde	Ukhanyiso Ebantwini (Pty) Ltd	Catherine Fry
Renaissance Strategic Solutions	Kim Robinson	Ukuqonda	Andrew Hofmeyr
Penreach	David Wylde	Ukuqonda	Nathi Makae
Penreach	Tracy McBain	University of Johannesburg	Chris Middleton
Penreach	Bailey Nkuna	Uplands College – Outreach	Nicky De Bruyn
RMB Fund	Yvette Nowell	Zenex Foundation	Lauren Fok
RMB Fund Committee	Warrick Lee		
RMB Fund Committee	Sane Bukula		

RMB Education Programme

Ms. Yvette Nowell, Head of the RMB Fund, gave the focus group an overview of the Fund and its strategic objectives, setting the stage for JET evaluation consultant, Ms. Pat Sullivan, who shared methodology, findings and recommendations of the evaluation conducted over a six month period.

The RMB Fund, a member of the FirstRand Foundation, is Rand Merchant Bank's corporate social investment (CSI) vehicle, contributing at least 1% of net profit after tax towards selected projects within three development sectors. Since 2007, the RMB Fund has invested over R140 million in the following areas:

- Maths Leadership and Development
- Arts Culture and Heritage
- Environment and Conservation

In 2012/2013 the maths leadership and development focus was allocated 35% of the funds available, which amounts to R8, 375million.

The Maths Leadership and Development Programme funds a range of educational initiatives including university programmes, bursary and outreach programmes run by independent schools and other centres of excellence, and programmes that promote knowledge sharing and advocacy. The RMB works in conjunction with fund managers at Tshikululu Social Investments and with implementing partners. The programme:

- Aims to increase the number of school leavers with high level maths qualifications to enhance the future skills base;
- Targets learner and teacher development, and advocacy; and
- Continues to support selected education outreach programmes, run by affluent independent schools, for the benefit of less privileged schools.

Monitoring and Evaluation Methodology

Pat Sullivan was one of the consultant evaluators at JET Education Services on the RMB evaluation. She shared the methodology, findings and recommendations of this evaluation with colloquium participants.

JET Education Services were contracted by the RMB Fund, through Tshikululu Social Investments, to carry out an evaluation of 17 projects funded under the Maths Leadership Development programme. The projects evaluated received funding over a five year period. The evaluation used a developmental approach, using a mixed model with qualitative and quantitative information; it also combined both formative and summative evaluation elements.

The type of interventions run by programmes evaluated varied including bridging programmes, outreach and learner development outreach, bursaries, resource based work and teacher development outreach. The evaluators sought to answer a number of evaluation questions.

Evaluation Questions

1. How has each of the **17 projects** in the MLP programme **performed** in relation to each project's objectives and targets as detailed in the project-specific strategy?
2. What **factors** contributed to the **achievement (or not)** of each project's model's set objectives and targets?
3. Which **intervention model** delivers the most **desirable outcome** with the least investment to inform future resource allocation?
4. How can the programme be **improved** for **future project design** and effectiveness?
5. What is the **relevance** of each intervention given the **current systemic gaps** in the education landscape?
6. Given the systemic gaps in the secondary education landscape, are the **RMB Fund's programme objectives relevant** to the **current status quo**. If not, why?



In order to set the process in motion, representatives from Tshikululu and RMB were interviewed to inform objectives. Tools were developed to meet the objectives of the evaluation brief. Evaluators also considered systems challenges such as issues of quality versus quantity of passes and teachers cannot teach what they do not know.

This evaluation used a number of qualitative tools including questionnaires, interviews and observation tools. Tshikululu Social Investments programme manager, RMB Fund representative, facilitators, parents, project managers, principals, heads of departments and learners all provided information during the evaluation process.

Although there was less emphasis on quantitative data tools, the evaluators used analyses of matric results and class results to inform their findings as well.

The key aspects of evaluation focus touched on:

1. **Dosage versus Reach:** can the project reach many learners and if so what is the intensity of support, in hours/days per annum?
2. **Value for money:** what does it cost per learner? Which learners pass matric maths with 60% or more?
3. **Mass delivery or targeted delivery:** is it better to have few with excellent results or many passes with a range of results?

4. ***Sustainability without RMB Fund finance***: will the project be able to 'go it alone', and when? Can the government 'take it over'?
5. ***Listen to what is not said, as well as what is said, and follow up***: the qualitative evaluation leads.

RMB Education Programme Findings

Pat shared the findings of the evaluation which included the following:

- Logic models are often not clearly defined and this can lead to project scope creep;
- Internal monitoring and self-reflection can be weak;
- Trainer/facilitator competency assumed but not verified;
- Lack of human and physical resources is common;
- Lack of needs analysis and baselines was evident;
- School external training projects cannot influence subject choice at school;
- Volunteer teaching is not sustainable;
- The system cannot accurately identify learners who would benefit from additional support as the marks in schools are unreliable and often learners with potential are lost. Projects lower entrance requirements or test themselves;
- Lots of educationalists working in projects are 'mature' (at least 45 years old) – knowledge gained will be lost in the future;
- Projects which have a separate fundraising arm seem to be more sustainable;
- Donor synergy is important – risks are that different donors make different demands and so projects can change direction;
- The longer the outreach programme the more there is risk of project fatigue.

Evaluation Recommendations for Education Programmes

The recommendations of the evaluations into elements that educational innovators and donors should start continue or stop doing.

The following points emphasize what innovators should start doing:

- Projects meeting to share stories;
- Mentoring successful learners at university;
- Projects should incorporate IT solutions;
- Projects should use effective formative assessment techniques to improve teaching and learning with rubrics that are needs based and have defined selection criteria;
- Work with other donors to align interventions;
- Clarify roles of all involved.

Education sectors should continue doing the following:

- Supporting data-driven projects;
- Support middle income initiatives;
- Projects that can demonstrate excellence in a practical and measurable way;
- Projects that factor language into the delivery process;
- Projects that have identified real needs.

The following points highlight things that should stop:

- Projects that are only workshop or holiday-based;
- Projects with volunteer staff;
- Projects where the dosage is low (once or twice a term);
- Projects where most of the budget goes on travel and direct costs;
- Projects that cannot demonstrate change in practice.

Discussion

Beyond the evaluation, the RMB Fund is seriously considering where this programme should focus going forward. Should the programme support learners or teachers or both?

Another key question is whether to include grade 8 and 9 focus in the Fund's programme given the understanding that many interventions working in grades 10 and 12 show that at that stage it is too late for most students. This is one of the areas Yvette was able to give clear indications of future focus. She explained that given the information gathered in the evaluation, the RMB Fund would be looking at grade 8 and 9 interventions.

South Africa is a large country; the Fund is looking at its geographic focus i.e. whether it should be focused on specific schools, districts and provinces. In terms of subject focus, questions have been raised about integrating science and language for more holistic and strategic programme design. The depth and breadth of work is also under the microscope following the evaluation. Yvette highlighted two potential avenues: Invest in a large variety of somewhat successful models, or back highly effective programmes for scaling? She explained this could lead to a reduction in the number of partners and an increase in the size of grants.

The JET evaluation has also presented the RMB Fund with reflection points around the overall programme approach. Yvette summarized some of the key issues as follows:

- Balancing quantity versus quality. Do the Fund invest larger amounts in individuals or groups of individuals (e.g. all of the teachers at one school) to ensure quality?
- Continue to support micro-level initiatives, or look at ways of having a systemic impact on the education system as a whole? Or both?
- Promote the use of technology? (How, if at all?)
- Grant time period? Stick to our current three-year cycle, or is a longer funding cycle necessary?
- How can the maths leadership and development programme are integrated more effectively with the Arts, Culture and Heritage and Environment and Conservation programmes?
- Partner with other entities to increase impact of programmes? What would such partnership look like?

This discussion posed a lot of reflection questions for funders and programme managers alike.

Community of practice outcomes

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) focus group aims to learn about and apply findings of M&E processes in the development sector. It is also interested in unearthing working practice in learner assessment. In working with communities for effective practice, Bridge has the following objectives:

- The contribution of the community to the whole system;
- Creating common purpose, peer support and trust among stakeholders;
- The maximising of resources by the community;
- The spread of effective practice within the community and its associated stakeholders (horizontal integration); and
- The vertical integration of policy and practice.

Some of the participants in this colloquium are from the arts and dance sector. They joined the meeting to see a community of practice meeting in action and consider the potential value such groups in the work. In this way this community has also begun spreading thinking about communities of practice work beyond the education sector.

The RMB Fund contributed to the creation of common purpose, peer support and trust among stakeholders in this meeting by openly sharing both the high and low points of a recent evaluation of its work. This colloquium was conducted in such a way that the Maths and Science community could learn from the projects reviewed without compromising the confidential elements of the evaluation.

The findings and recommendations were shared in a clear and concise manner. JET's presentation highlighted the successful and unsuccessful practices occurring in the sector. Dissemination of this information going forward represents a contribution to the whole system and instances of spreading effective practice within the community and its associated stakeholders.

Best wishes,

The BRIDGE Team

November 2013