

REPORT ON THE EVALUATION OF THE RURAL BOARDING SCHOOLS' PROJECT



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Executive Council of the Mpumalanga Provincial Government made a deliberate decision to establish rural boarding schools to help address some of the challenges faced in rural/farm schools in the province. When learners are kept in boarding schools, they are exposed to a world beyond their communities. Additionally, the establishment of the boarding schools would help in eliminating the difficulties experienced with transporting learners to school over long distances with its associated costs and dangers. In the main, however, the boarding schools' project would enhance access to quality education for learners from rural areas and farming communities.

To determine if the boarding schools are fulfilling their purpose and delivering intended results that were anticipated when the idea of establishing them was conceptualised, the Office of the Premier in the province has commissioned an evaluation. The evaluation primarily seeks to determine if the boarding schools' project is being implemented as designed, if anticipated results are crystallising, if there are any unintended outcomes collateral with the intervention and if the current funding model is effective and sustainable. The focus of the evaluation was on six schools, namely Emakhazeni Boarding School, Ezakheni Boarding School, Izimbali Boarding School, Shongwe Boarding School, Steve Tshwete Boarding School and Thaba Chweu Boarding School.

To pave the way for the evaluation, a literature review was undertaken to help locate the idea of the rural boarding schools' project within the theoretical field. Furthermore, different evaluation designs were considered and the decision was made to conduct the current evaluation using a non-experimental evaluation design. In order to ensure the necessary scientific rigour attends the evaluation, informed methodological choices were made.

In summary, the decisions made meant that this would be an ex-post-facto evaluation which would take the form of a mixed method study. A survey was conducted based on the defined target population of learners, educators, management/administration staff of the schools, members of the school governing bodies, parents and staff of the Mpumalanga provincial department of education (MDoE). The survey entailed the development of a data collection instrument which was pretested among members of the steering committee of the evaluation exercise that comprised staff of MDoE, the Mpumalanga OTP and Enterprises University of Pretoria. For the purpose of the evaluation, primary data was obtained with the use of an online questionnaire tailor-made for each group of respondents that was hosted on the *Qualtrics* platform. Secondary data was obtained from the review of programme-related documents provided by the MDoE.

While the evaluation sought answers to the evaluation questions, it was also imperative to interrogate the rural boarding schools' project on the basis of the evaluation criteria prescribed by the OECD-DAC. Interestingly, some of the posed evaluation questions fitted seamlessly with the evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability recommended by the OECD-DAC.

The evaluation exercise established that the rural boarding schools' project was being implemented as conceptualised. This determination was based on the conviction that the activities outlined for the intervention in the project's theory of change were being implemented in each of the six boarding schools that were evaluated. Expectedly, the extent of implementation of the activities outlined in the ToC were not exactly the same across the schools.

The relevance of the rural boarding schools' project was emphasised by the reality that many children in the province are deprived of access to education due to poverty and even when they manage to access the education in the rural area or farm communities, the quality is not at the expected level. Additionally, given that education equips people with the requisite knowledge that gives them a fighting chance for survival and beyond that, lifelong productivity, such an intervention was deemed relevant.

Along similar lines, given the commitment of the provincial government to better the life of the residents in the province, the aim of the rural boarding school's project certainly aligns with this provincial aspiration. Additionally, the aim of the project is in harmony with the MDoE's resolve to provide quality education to all in the province. In light of this, the project was deemed to be in alignment with the thrust of the Mpumalanga provincial government and therefore coherent with other interventions that the government drives.

By addressing the evaluation criterion of effectiveness, the evaluation exercise concurrently provided answers to the questions concerned about whether the intervention is delivering intended results and whether there were unintended outcomes stemming from the implementation of the rural boarding schools' project. Findings of the evaluation signal that different levels of achievement were recorded by different schools for different results captured in the projects ToC.

In summary though, most of the desired results are being generated at the boarding schools, both at outputs and outcomes levels, but arguably not at the expected levels, in many cases. This notwithstanding, the matriculation examination performance of Izimbali combined school and Shongwe boarding school that consistently (over a 5-year period) outperformed the province with substantial margins, is very impressive and an incontrovertible testimony of the efficacy of these boarding schools, when they are properly run.

Worrisomely, while the academic achievements of the boarding schools are laudable, the living conditions in a school like Shongwe boarding school leaves a lot to be desired. This is one of the outstanding but yet unintended outcomes of the boarding schools' project. A situation where the standard in the schools in that two learners share a tiny single mattress in rooms already overcrowded by bunk beds not only impugns the dignity of the learners but is an incubator for a dangerous health hazard. Having Grade R learners in boarding facilities without making the necessary infrastructural provisions for them is grossly insensitive and perhaps, treacherous. These little ones in grade R, in Shongwe boarding school, for instance are being made to share facilities, like toilets with learners in much higher grades and this does not seem right.

It would appear that in the Thaba Chweu boarding school, for instance, most learners are not necessarily from the target population of poor households as the school empties significantly on Fridays. Learners are generally picked up by their parents, most of whom work in neighbouring mines, to spend weekends at home and this act negates the whole idea of the boarding school. Beyond this, resource constraints and infrastructural maintenance challenges, among others, are millstones on the necks of the boarding schools.

From an efficiency evaluation criterion, perspective, survey respondents generally felt that the resources are more efficiently managed at the rural boarding schools relative to the rural/farm schools. More objectively though, in the period 2019/20 to 2023/24, the schools have mostly witnessed gargantuan reductions in the funds allocated to them. The reductions in the budgets are predominantly at a 3-digit and 4-digit percentage level. If this is juxtaposed against the reality that the learner enrolment numbers at the schools are not plummeting, then the ability of the schools to continue to function is indicative of efficiency.

The evaluation also sought to establish the performance of the boarding schools with respect to the criteria of impact and sustainability. The impact framed for the project seemed technically incorrect as the sustenance of the bouquet of outcome-level results, over time, would not engender the emergence of the identified impact. Additionally, an inappropriate indicator was chosen by the MDoE for the measurement of the impact result. The chosen indicator which is supposedly a quantitative one does not stipulate that measures of performance must be specifically expressed in the form of a number, percentage, level, index etc. This is an anomaly. Perhaps, due to these, there are scarcely any meaningful performance related information provided by the MDoE for the contributions that the boarding schools have made towards the sought impact of the rural boarding school's project.

As it concerns the criterion of sustainability, the position of the evaluation exercise is that this can be dependent on the issues of demand and supply. Almost undoubtedly, due to the difficult socioeconomic conditions in the province which mirrors the situation in the country, there will continue to be a demand for enrolment in these no fees boarding schools established by the provincial government in Mpumalanga. Since demand tends to pull supply and the provincial government is sensitive to the desires of the people of Mpumalanga, there is ample encouragement for the continued supply of such schools. Ultimately however, the sustainability of the boarding schools' project will be determined by the extent of government's commitment to fund it in the years to come.

The evaluation exercise recommends that the boarding schools' project should continue to be supported by the provincial government with the requisite resources. As a matter of urgency, something has to be done to improve the residential conditions of the learners at Shongwe boarding school. The issue of maintenance of infrastructure at these boarding schools deserves more than a passing attention. On this score, the department should consider developing and adhering to an infrastructure maintenance plan that enables periodic maintenance of the facilities at the schools by the provincial government. The enrolment criteria for learners at these boarding schools may need to be revised so that they can be deliberately skewed to favour children from poor households who genuinely reside in the school's catchment area.

It does not seem like the issue of monitoring and evaluation has been accorded deserved premium in the boarding schools' project. This assertion has been encouraged by the fact that contrary to regular acceptable practice, a formally approved ToC did not seem to be in existence prior to the implementation of the project. Additionally, some of the results couched in the results have not been correctly expressed in technically acceptable M&E terms. Also, some of the indicators chosen as instruments for measurement of progress for some results are incapable of tracking desired changes. There is chance that some of those that steered the project at the schools and perhaps the MDoE have a weak understanding of basic M&E concepts and this significantly affected the quality of performance-related supplied by the MDoE for this evaluation exercise.

Finally, the uncooperative attitude of the some of the MDoE staff that were designated by the department to facilitate the current evaluation exercise lends credence to the hypothesis that scant value is accorded to M&E efforts in the department. The need to foist and embed a performance culture that values the role of M&E, in the MDoE as well as the boarding schools, is therefore imperative.

1.1 PREAMBLE

The Mpumalanga Provincial Government commits itself to enhanced service delivery in order to ensure that it improves the lives of those who reside in the province. To this end, for some developmental projects that the province executes, it is deemed important for an evaluation exercise of the performance of such projects to be undertaken. Accordingly, given the premium that the Provincial government places on education in its quest to contribute meaningfully to the human capital, productivity and overall socioeconomic conditions in the province, an evaluation of the rural boarding schools project was commissioned by the Office of the Premier.

1.2 THE RURAL BOARDING SCHOOLS PROJECT

The Mpumalanga Provincial Government recognised that boarding facilities enable learners from remote rural areas and farming communities to access education in the same way as their counterparts that may be resident in other areas that are in close proximity to schools. In essence, boarding schools act as veritable solutions for the challenges faced by learners living in areas where the state has been unable to establish schools while concurrently eliminating the thorny issues associated with transporting learners over long distances which are unlimited to high costs, road accident risks and other dangers as well as the time expended on such trips.

This is the backdrop against which the Executive Council in the Mpumalanga province decided to establish rural boarding schools as an antidote for some of the challenges experienced by farm/rural schools. In the main, the establishment of the boarding schools are driven by the intention of the government to ensure that:

- The educational needs of learners in the poorest rural areas of the province are addressed
- The pressing poverty levels in the rural areas are addressed
- Uneconomical and dysfunctional farm schools in the rural areas are closed while learners and personnel are assigned to boarding schools that are equipped to deliver quality education
- There is a firm basis for developing the schooling system in the wider province.

Though it was anticipated that as many as thirteen rural boarding schools would be established, budgeting constraints alongside other factors dictated that the project would proceed by establishing one school at a time. Currently, six boarding schools, as presented in Table 1.1 have been established and are therefore the subject of the intended evaluation to be undertaken.

Table 1.1: Rural Boarding Schools and associated farm schools

	RURAL BOARDING SCHOOL	ASSOCIATED FARM SCHOOLS
1	Emakhazeni Boarding School	Airlie Farm School, Boom Plaas Primary School, Ummeli Primary School, Thembaletu Primary School, Madova Primary School, Nhlupheko Primary School
2	Ezakheni Boarding School	Bazensele Primary School, Edelsteen Primary School, Mahlose Primary School, Mooibank Primary School, Twyfelhoek Primary School, Senethemba Primary School

3	Izimbali Boarding School	Samlee Primary School, Westoe Primary School, Lithole Primary School, Zandspruit Primary School, Brodholm Primary School, Riverband Primary School, Nsephe Primary School, Ngwempisi Primary School, Thokomala Primary School, Gedud Primary School, Nongena Primary School
4	Shongwe Boarding School	Khangela Primary School, Mabrukwane Primary School, Mkwarukwaru Primary School, Rockvale Primary School, Geelspruit Primary School, Marula Primary School, Tomahawk Primary School, Riverside/Ngonini Primary School, Malelane Estea Primary School
5	Steve Tshwete Boarding School	Bosmanspan Primary School, Elandslaagte Primary School, Hammelfontein Primary School, Imbabala Combine School, Ongesiens Primary School, Poolzee Combined School
6	Thaba Chweu Boarding School	Coromandel Primary School, Hambananathi Primary School, Shaga Primary School, Bosfontein Primary School, Spekboom Primary School, Kiwi Primary School, Enkeldoorn Primary School

The established boarding schools cater for different numbers of farm or rural schools. Emakhazeni Boarding School, Ezakheni Boarding School and Steve Tshwete Boarding School absorbed learners and personnel from six rural/farm schools each. The Thaba Chweu Boarding School catered for seven rural/farm schools. While the Shongwe Boarding School was established to absorb nine rural/farm schools, Izimbali Boarding School was established to take the place of eleven rural/farm schools.

1.3 THE EVALUATION EXERCISE

1.3.1 OVERVIEW of the EVALUATION

As part of the overall task of monitoring and evaluation of projects, the evaluation effort is essentially an assessment undertaken on a periodic or episodic basis to ascertain if interventions are achieving the levels of performance that were forecasted in line with what is expressed in the theory of change (ToC) associated with the project.

In the main, an evaluation is undertaken to determine how well a project is being or has been implemented and the extent to which it is achieving forecasted results. So, it is possible in practice to conduct interim or formative evaluations and to conduct a summative evaluation. The evaluation for which this report has been developed is a formative evaluation and sets out to ascertain, primarily, if the boarding schools project is generating intended results.

1.3.2 Focus of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to determine if the intervention of rural boarding schools has been implemented as designed while also assessing the effectiveness of the intervention. Consequently, this evaluation would strive to present information in the form of evidence-based answers to some questions related to the project including:

1. Was the intervention implemented as conceptualised?
2. Is the intervention yielding the desired results?
3. Are there any unintended outcomes?
4. Is the current funding model cost-effective and sustainable?

The answers expressed or implied, to these questions as contained in this report should enable

the Mpumalanga Provincial Government and other stakeholders realise whether performance expectations linked to the project have either been met or otherwise. Additionally, the product of the evaluation exercise would engender a better understanding of some of the results crystallising from the boarding schools' project.

It is instructive to also highlight that the evaluation exercise has been undertaken with the intent of fostering improved knowledge of the boarding schools among personnel of the Mpumalanga Provincial Government and responsible departments. Consequently, while the evaluation would synthesise and deliver information of a descriptive nature, it would also adopt an analytical approach aimed at providing valuable insights about the project, from a holistic perspective.

1.3.3 Process of the Evaluation

A process is a sequence of steps that will be followed in order to achieve desired objectives. With respect to the evaluation of the boarding schools project, the process was kick-started by an inception meeting. The meeting helped to clarify expectations and delineate responsibilities related to the evaluation exercise.

Subsequently, the steps as presented in Figure 1.1 were followed. The evaluation exercise entailed a literature review that was undertaken to establish a theoretical framework for the evaluation. Beyond this, an evaluation design and accompanying methodology that was deemed appropriate for the type of evaluation to be undertaken was developed. Additionally, the target population was defined and an approach for sampling, was considered.

The evaluation process also involved the task of presenting and explicating the ToC that underlies the intervention. All of the tasks undertaken thus far in the process, then informed the development of relevant instruments for the collection data, review as well as the analysis of the data. The process of evaluation was terminated by the task of development of drafts and final version of the evaluation report.

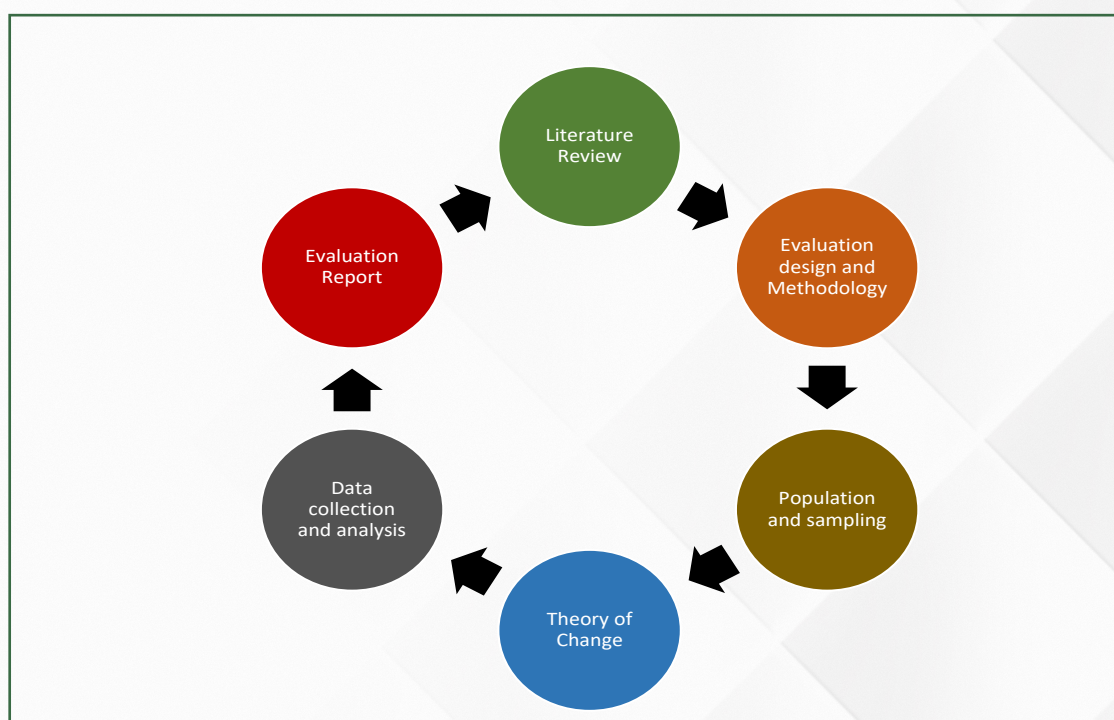


Figure 1.1: The Evaluation Process

In consideration of the tasks outlined in the evaluation process and to ensure that valid results are delivered by the exercise, the evaluation was conducted in accordance with the scientific practices in the field of evaluation. Additionally, the National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF) issued by the

Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) was relied upon as an important guiding framework for the execution of the evaluation.

Given the nature of the evaluation questions as outlined in section 1.3.2, this evaluation combines some of the features of Design, Economic and Implementation evaluations. Additionally, however, it was imperative to interrogate if the rural boarding schools project delivered intended results as forecasted in the project's ToC that underpinned the intervention. This therefore implies that the evaluation also encompassed an investigation of the outcomes, among other results, associated with the project. Accordingly, identified dependent effects were examined retrospectively, with the intention of relating such effects to the boarding schools' project. This approach is supported by Kerlinger and Rint (1986) who contend that in the context of social science research, into which the intended evaluation falls, an *ex post facto* investigation seeks to reveal possible relationships by observing an existing condition or state and searching back in time for plausible contributory factors.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

To execute the boarding schools' evaluation exercise in accordance with scientifically acceptable tenets, the importance of a purpose-fit methodology cannot be over-emphasised. The aim of this section of the report is therefore to outline the pathway that was followed to evaluate the boarding schools' project. The section is utilised to expound on some of the tasks already identified as part of the process that would be followed for the evaluation.

2.2 DESIGN FOR THE EVALUATION

There are three major designs that can be utilised when conducting an evaluation exercise. These are the:

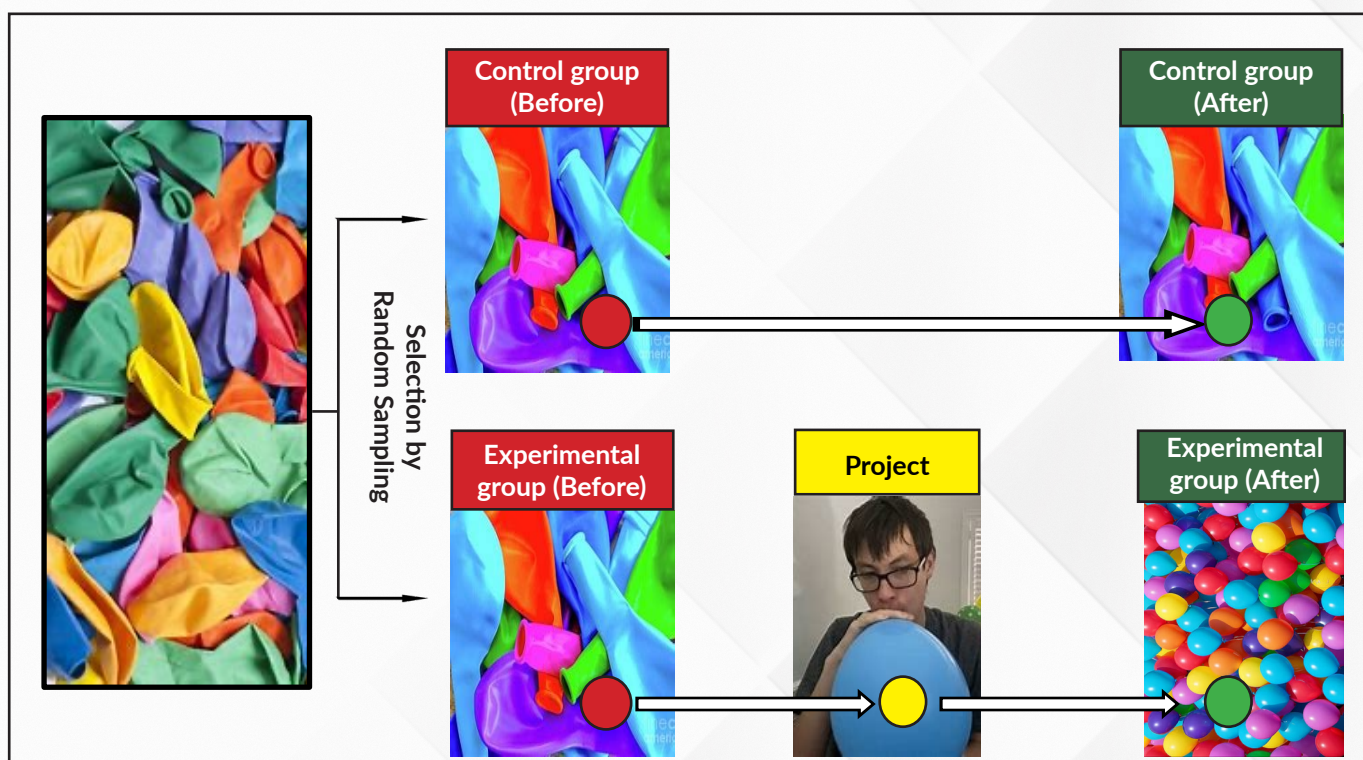
- Experimental design,
- Quasi-experimental design and
- Non-experimental design.

2.2.1 Experimental Design

A pictorial presentation of the model of an experimental design for evaluation is shown in Figure 2.1. The experimental design for evaluation is based on the use of two groups for the purpose of determining the changes that a project can be credited with. These two groups are made up of individuals that are randomly selected from an identified beneficiary population.

Owing to this, it is expected that both groups of randomly selected members will mirror each other. While one of the two groups is the experimental group, the other serves as the control group. Baseline measurements are then taken in both groups, of aspects in which the project is supposed to bring about desired changes.

Figure 2.1: Experimental Evaluation Design

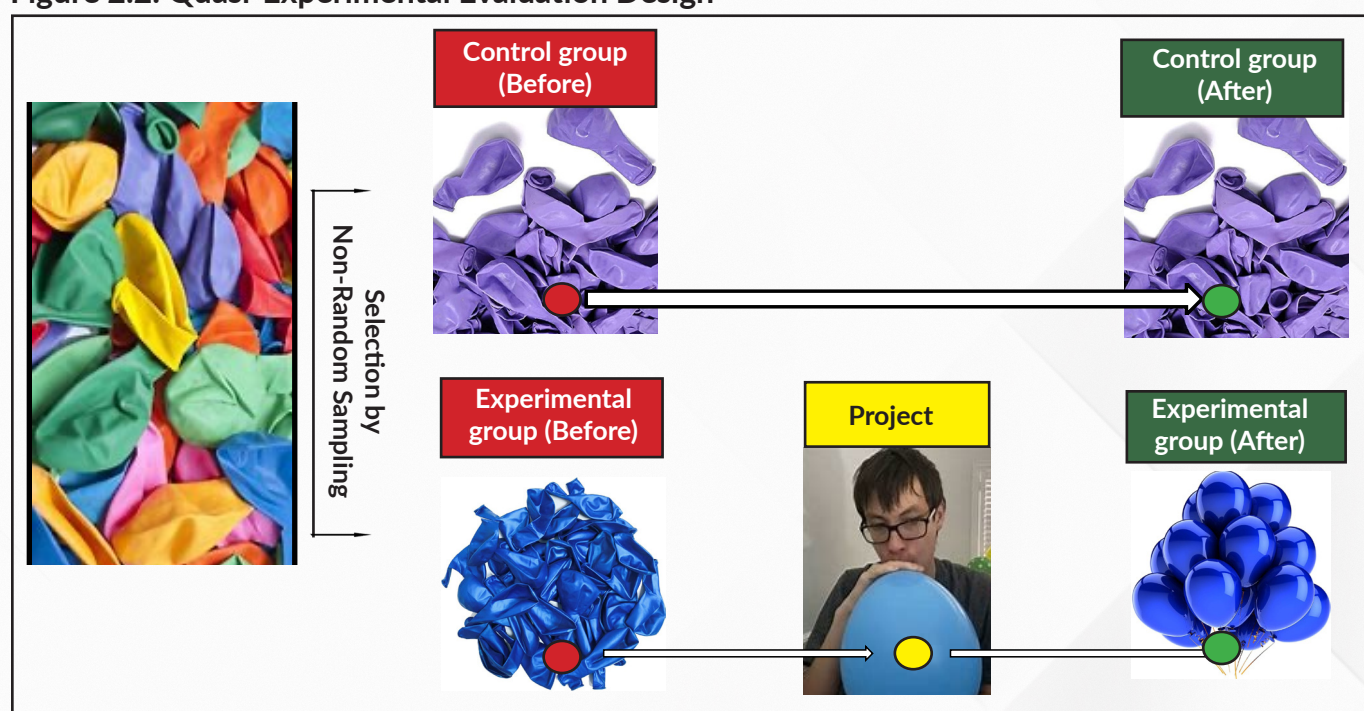


Thereafter, the experimental group is exposed to the project and once the project is complete, post-implementation measurements - using the same indicators that produced baseline data - must be taken in the experimental and the control groups. If the post-implementation measurements differ from the pre-implementation measurements, then the difference is attributed to the project. When the desire of project owners is to claim causality (attribution), this is the most appropriate design to employ because if there are any changes in the state of the two groups, then such changes would have been caused exclusively by the project.

2.2.2 Quasi-Experimental Design

The quasi-experimental design (Figure 2.2) is similar to the experimental design. It attempts to mirror a laboratory situation where all variables can be kept under control. The process of evaluation when utilising this design is therefore largely the same as that utilised for the experimental design. The only difference is that the selection of members of the two groups (Experimental and Control groups) is based on the use of a non-random sampling method.

Figure 2.2: Quasi-Experimental Evaluation Design



The use of judgemental sampling techniques reduces the reliability of this design. So, this design is certainly not as credible as the experimental design for establishing the desired causal connection between a project and the results that are manifest in the beneficiary population. However, it is permissible to employ it for evaluations that seek to establish causality.

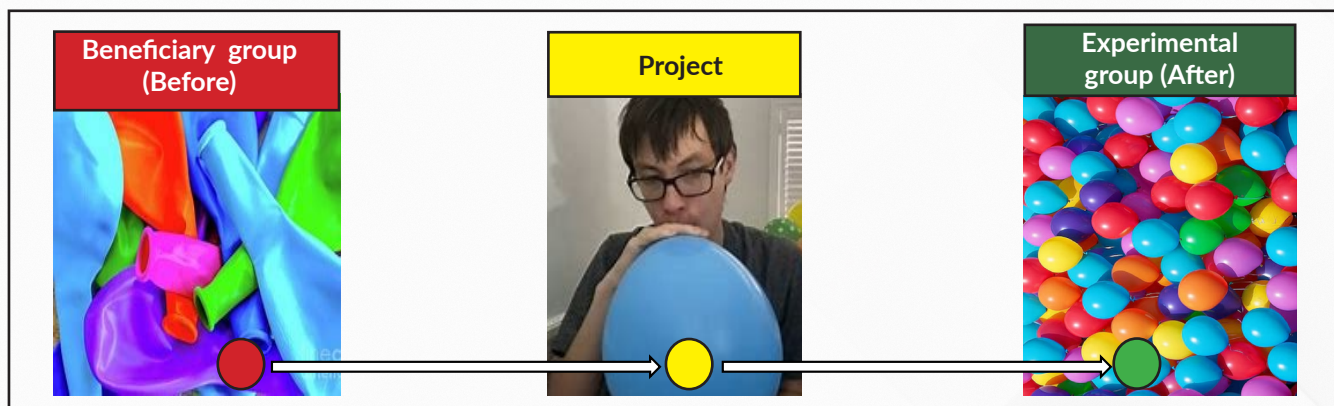
2.2.3 Non-Experimental Design

As illustrated in Figure 2.3, the non-experimental design relies on only one group. The consequence of this is that there is no group against which pre- and post-implementation measurements can be compared. Consequently, the design does not really serve the purpose of establishing causality through evaluation. Despite this shortcoming, the non-experimental design remains the most utilised design in evaluations of developmental interventions. This is not unusual in social research, especially for evaluations of projects aimed at engendering social development.

The scientific ramification of the use of a non-experimental design is that claims of improvement are tied to the contributory rather than the causal effects of the intervention being evaluated. The reason for this is that in the context of development intervention, there is a complex interplay of a kaleidoscope of societal factors, which severally and jointly influence the dependent variable of project results.

The non-experimental design, therefore, permits projects to make contributory claims, mindful of the fact that within the context of society, it is usually not scientifically feasible to isolate all possible intervening factors that may have played a part in the crystallisation of the results that a project also seeks to achieve. The non-experimental evaluation design simply attempts to establish if there is a difference in a state or condition owing to the implementation of an intervention by focussing on a single group (as there is no control group created, for group-comparison purposes) of individuals.

Figure 2.3: Non-Experimental Evaluation Design



For the purpose of the current evaluation therefore, the fundamental purpose with respect to the rural boarding schools would be to reveal any changes in conditions related to the implementation of the project. Given that there will be no attempt in the evaluation to create a counterfactual group or indeed control any conditions/variables related to the boarding schools' project, the only possible evaluation design to employ is the non-experimental design. The choice of the non-experimental evaluation design would satisfactorily serve the purpose of the evaluation and enable the deduction of answers to the evaluation questions posed.

2.3 EVALUATION CRITERIA

The intended evaluation has been undertaken principally to provide answers to the associated evaluation questions. In doing so, however, the evaluation exercise also sought to align with the expectations of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which is particularly applicable to developmental initiatives like the boarding schools' project. The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has prescribed six evaluation criteria as outlined in Figure 2.4.

The criteria dictate that in evaluations, attention should be paid to the elements of relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The OECD DAC's evaluation criteria provide a normative framework for assessing the value of interventions and a basis for making important judgments about the merits, or lack thereof, of developmental-focused endeavours such as policies, strategies, programmes, projects or activities.

Figure 2.4: The OECD Evaluation Criteria



To aid evaluation efforts, the OECD DAC provides further explanations of the criteria as presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Description of the Evaluation Criteria

	CRITERION	EXPLANATION	GUIDING QUESTION
1	Relevance	The extent to which the intervention's objectives and design respond to beneficiaries' needs and priorities and continue to do so if circumstances change.	Is the intervention doing the right things?
2	Coherence	The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.	How well does the intervention fit?
3	Efficiency	The extent to which the intervention delivers results in an economic and timely way.	How well are resources being used?
4	Effectiveness	The extent to which the intervention achieved its results	Is the intervention achieving its results?
5	Impact	The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.	What difference does the intervention make, at a broader societal level?
6	Sustainability	The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.	Will the benefits last?

Instructively, the OECD DAC also prescribes two principles for using the evaluation guidelines as follows:

1. The criteria should be applied thoughtfully to support high quality, useful evaluation. They should be contextualized – understood in the context of the individual evaluation, the intervention being evaluated, and the stakeholders involved. The evaluation questions (what you are trying to find out) and what you intend to do with the answers, should inform how the criteria are specifically interpreted and analysed.
2. The use of the criteria depends on the purpose of the evaluation. The criteria should not be applied mechanistically. Instead, they should be covered according to the needs of the relevant stakeholders and the context of the evaluation. More or less time and resources may be devoted to the evaluative analysis for each criterion depending on the evaluation purpose. Data availability, resource constraints, timing, and methodological considerations may also influence how (and whether) a particular criterion is covered.

In effect, the manner or number of components of the evaluation criteria prescribed by the OECD DAC that should guide evaluations is contingent on the specific concerns or focus of an evaluation and cannot be uniform across the board.

2.4 TARGET POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The boarding schools were set up primarily to benefit learners from farm/rural schools. In doing so, however, educators and school administrators may also enjoy some of the benefits accruing from the establishment of the rural boarding schools. The evaluation exercise would therefore seek to solicit information or perspectives of some school administrators, educators and learners in its quest to assess the effectiveness of the rural schools.

In broad terms therefore, those who constitute the target population of this evaluation would comprise these parties and other selected stakeholders such as personnel of the Mpumalanga department of education (MDoE) who might be knowledgeable about the boarding schools' project.

This target population comprises thousands of individuals. This made it impractical to attempt to reach all members of the target population and so the recourse to the use of a sample became inevitable. In order to utilise a sample, it was important to decide whether the sample should be created by using probability or non-probability techniques.

The nature of the evaluation is such that the generation of insightful findings was considered more important than the intention to generalise the findings of the evaluation. This is more so because the evaluation was not conducted with the aim of drawing inferences from it and applying these to any other boarding schools that were not studied in the course of the evaluation.

Purposive sampling, as a non-probability sampling technique was therefore utilised for the evaluation as it allowed for the identification of knowledgeable persons as key informants. In terms of composition, the pool of respondents capable of volunteering primary data for the purpose of the evaluation, as shown in Figure 2.5, have been drawn from three main sources. These sources include the schools, the provincial department of education and other parties with vested interests in the schools such as parents and members of the school governing bodies SGB).

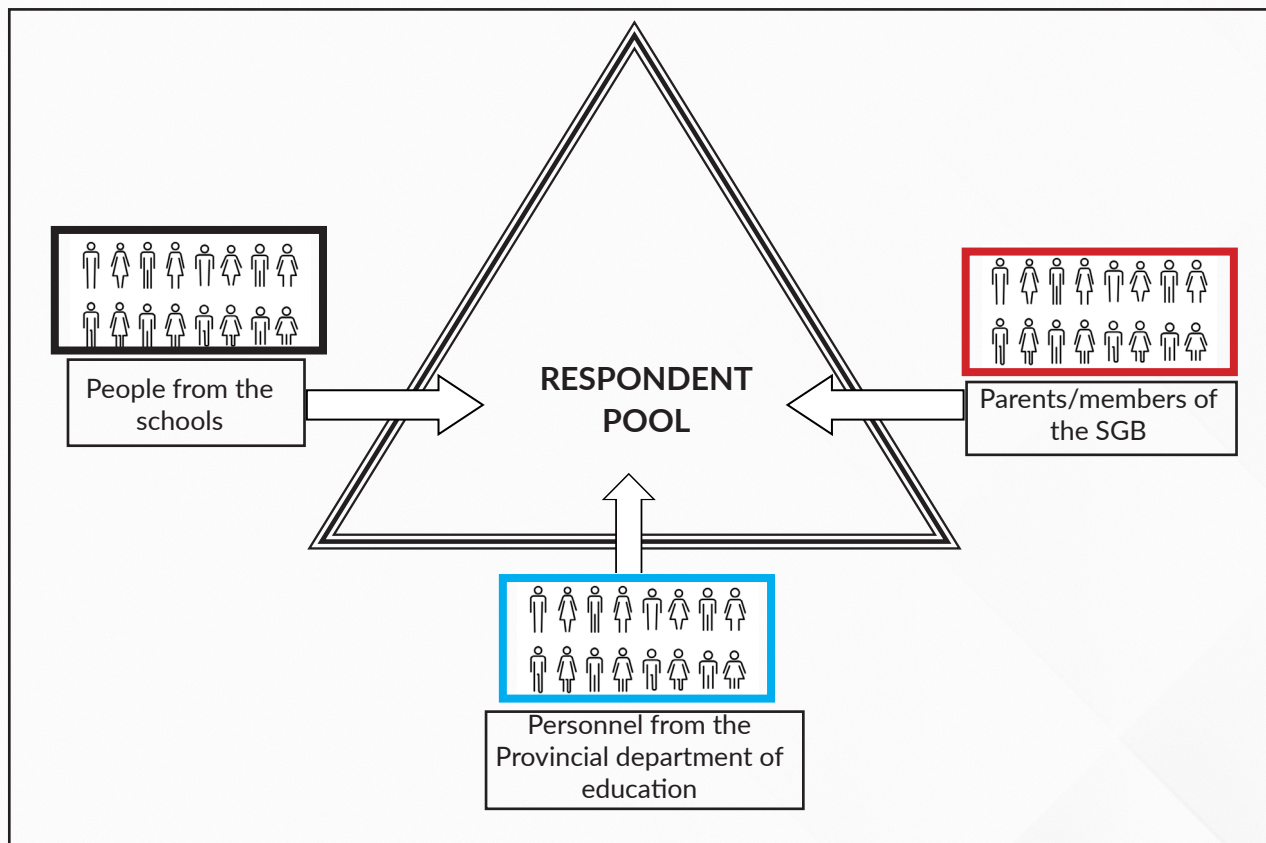


Figure 2.5: Respondent pool of the study

The proportions of those who participated in the evaluation on the basis of the three sources of respondents identified were unequal. This is because participation in the evaluation was made voluntary. Table 2.2 presents the intended distribution of respondents for the survey that was conducted as part of the evaluation exercise.

Table 2.2: Intended distribution of respondents

	SOURCES	SCHOOLS	n	%
1	Emakhazeni Boarding School	Learners	10	16.1%
		Educators	10	
		Administrators	10	
		Parents	10	
		SGB	10	
2	Ezakheni Boarding School	Learners	10	16.1%
		Educators	10	
		Administrators	10	
		Parents	10	
		SGB	10	
3	Izimbali Boarding School	Learners	10	16.1%
		Educators	10	
		Administrators	10	
		Parents	10	
		SGB	10	
4	Shongwe Boarding School	Learners	10	16.1%
		Educators	10	

		Administrators	10	
		Parents	10	
		SGB	10	
5	Steve Tshwete Boarding School	Learners	10	16.1%
		Educators	10	
		Administrators	10	
		Parents	10	
		SGB	10	
6	Thaba Chweu Boarding School	Learners	10	16.1%
		Educators	10	
		Administrators	10	
		Parents	10	
		SGB	10	
7	Provincial Department of Education		10	3.2%
TOTAL			310	100%

2.5 DATA COLLECTION

Primary and secondary data sources were utilised while undertaking the evaluation. The primary data sources were the respondents that participated in the evaluation. Secondary data sources were largely made up of the project-related documentation supplied by the MDoE for the six boarding schools that were being evaluated.

The evaluation adopted a mixed methodological research approach and so quantitative data and qualitative data were sought during the evaluation. The records review method as well as a desktop study were employed for the purpose of generating the secondary data utilised in the evaluation. For the generation of primary data, there was recourse to the use of self-observation, interviews and a questionnaire developed specifically for the evaluation exercise.

Mindful of the geographical dispersion of the schools and the need to ensure convenience for respondents, the decision was made to utilise electronic platforms for data collection. On this score, for the questionnaires, primary data from respondents were therefore collected electronically, using the *Qualtrics* platform. To enable data collection, the email addresses and cell phone numbers of prospective respondents were required.

The MDoE was therefore approached to provide the contact details of prospective respondents to whom links for the questionnaire were sent. Invariably, all of those who participated in the evaluation exercise as key informants were individuals whose names and contacts were supplied by the MDoE.

Table 2.3 is a synopsis of some of the methodological choices made for this specific evaluation exercise. Findings generated must therefore be read with due consideration of the pathway (as epitomised by the choices reflected in the table) that was followed for the conduct of the evaluation.

Table 2.3: Summary of Methodological Choices

EVALUATION ELEMENTS	CHOICES
Type of Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ex-post-facto evaluation • Mixed-method study
Sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-probability Sampling • Purposive sampling • Convenience Sampling
Data Collection Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Questionnaires • Self-Observation • Key informant interviews • Document Review
Data Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary Sources • Secondary Sources
Type of Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative • Qualitative
Unit of Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools
Unit of Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners • School Administrators • Members of the SGB • Parents • Personnel of the Provincial department of Education

3.1 INTRODUCTION

From the perspective of Results-based Management school, the importance of a theory of change (ToC) that underpins the logic behind any intervention created for developmental purposes, cannot be over-emphasised.

The Evaluation guideline No. 2.2.11 issued by the DPME asserts that:

The Theory of Change (ToC) or programme theory describes the causal mechanism of how activities and outputs (such as meals delivered to needy school children) will result in the anticipated outcomes (e.g., improved concentration in school), and impacts (e.g., improved grades) and the assumptions involved. There can be multiple ToCs that describe the programme. For example, different theories can show how the intervention works in different contexts, or at different stages of the intervention, or even for different intended impacts. The ToC should be established during the early planning stages of a policy or programme. (DPME, 2014)

This position of the DPME does not differ dramatically from that of the United Nations Development Group (2016) who in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) states that:

“a theory of change describes how we believe that change could be made to happen and outlines the main elements for that change. It also seeks to identify how we think that different factors could interact in relation to the change”.

In essence, the ToC provides a scientific explanation for how the intended intervention such as the rural boarding schools project would generate the desired changes sought primarily in the target population. To a large extent, it expresses the programme logic in a way that promotes conviction that the intervention, if implemented, will engender the changes required to transform a dissatisfactory condition/situation in a target group into a more satisfactory one.

3.2 THE RURAL BOARDING SCHOOLS THEORY OF CHANGE

For the rural boarding schools project, the MDoE, in keeping with the practice in many government establishments has employed the tool of the results chain to illustrate the project's ToC. The results chain is a five-element model that basically depicts the relationship between resources and results as a means for providing a logical explanation of how intended changes desired by a project would be realised.

In a sequential order, the five elements contained in the results chain are the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts. While the outputs, outcomes and impacts, technically represent time-phased results that the project seeks, the elements of inputs and activities represent the resources that must necessarily precede the crystallisation of the results. In a sense, therefore the results chain brings together the 'means' and the 'ends' of a project in order to express how project efforts would yield anticipated results.

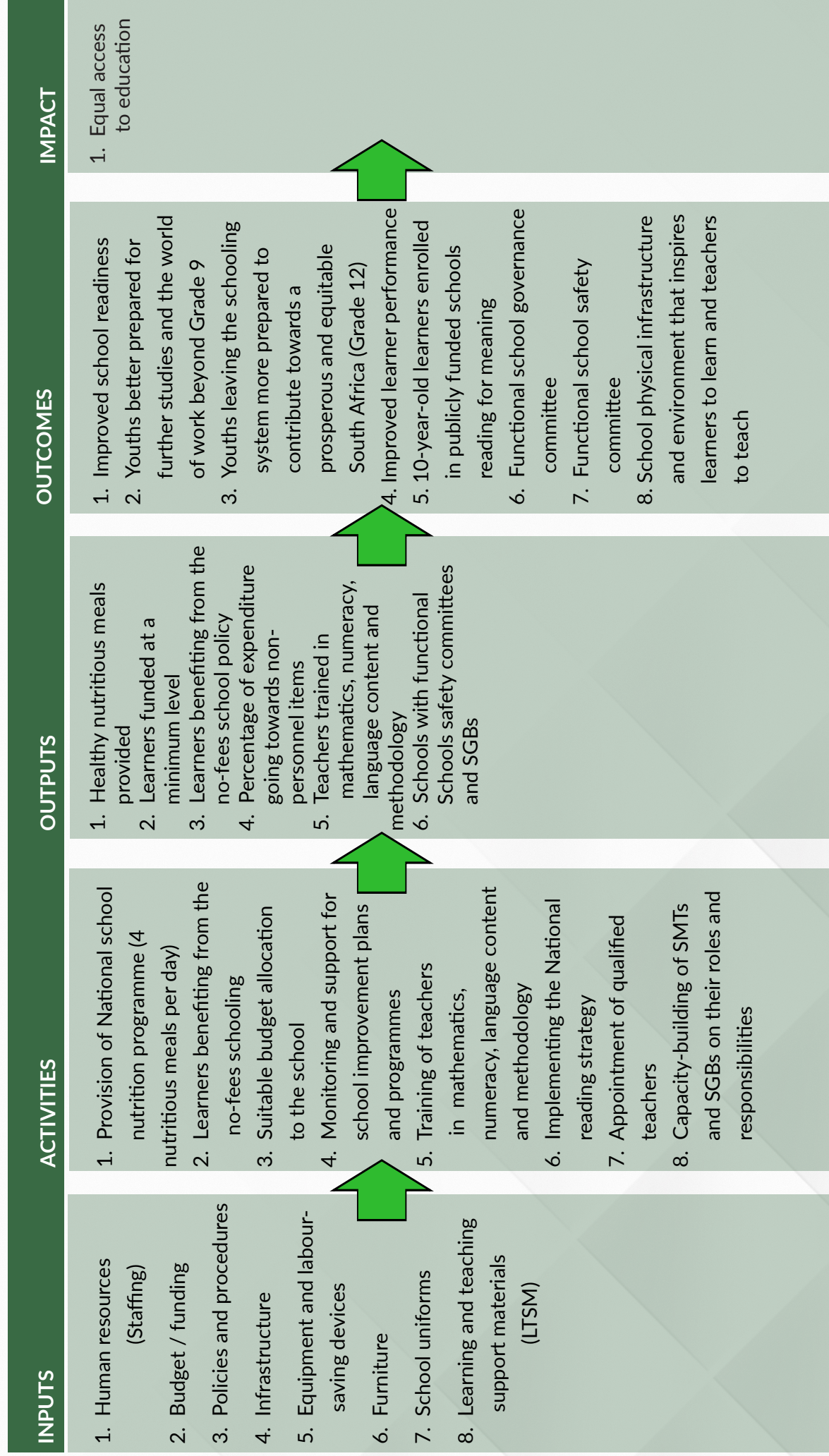
A pyramidal version of the results chain as conceptualised by the DPME is presented in Figure 3.1. Notably, the definitions/descriptions of each of the elements of the results chain that would have shaped the understanding of the MDoE in the process of developing the ToC for the boarding schools' project are also reflected in Figure 3.1.



Figure 3.1: Description of results chain elements

The rural boarding schools' project theory of change which is based on the results chain model is illustrated in Figure 3.2. The long-term result depicted at the impact level, which is conceived to be the 'development results of achieving specific outcomes' in the case of the boarding schools' project is 'equal access to education'. It is anticipated by the MDoE that this ultimate result will manifest only if the 'medium term results for specific beneficiaries' that constitute project outcomes are realised.

Figure 3.2: The Rural Boarding Schools Project Theory of change



There are eight outcome results which capture what the MDoE 'wishes to achieve' with the rural boarding schools' project. The MDoE reckons that if the project is well executed, it would enable improved school readiness, make the targeted youths better prepared for further studies and the world of work beyond Grade 9 while also ensuring that all those who leave the schooling system are more prepared to contribute towards a prosperous and equitable South Africa. Additionally, the project would pave the way for improved learner performance while collaterally enabling 10-year-old learners enrolled in publicly funded schools to read for meaning. Finally, at the outcome level of results, the rural boarding schools project would also help to bring about functional school governance committees, functional school safety committees as well as school physical infrastructure and environment that inspires learners to learn and teachers to teach.

As shown in Figure 3.2, the natural sequence of results progression suggests that these eight outcome results are dependent on the delivery of the output results which the DPME describes as the 'final products or goods and services produced for delivery'. For the rural boarding schools' project, there are six outputs that the MDoE seeks to deliver through the intervention. One of the deliverables associated with the project is 'healthy nutritious meals'. Furthermore, the outputs for the project also include 'learners funded at a minimum level' and 'learners benefiting from the no-fees school policy'.

The outputs result basket for the rural boarding schools' project also contains the 'percentage of expenditure going towards non-personnel items' and 'teachers trained in mathematics, numeracy, language content and methodology'. Finally, as part of the conviction for the project, the result of 'schools with functional safety committees and SGBs' was also identified as an output.

With respect to the activities that must be undertaken as part of the project in order to deliver expected outputs, the rural boarding schools' ToC contends that there will be eight main tasks to be executed as part of the intervention. Among other activities, the project would entail the 'provision of the National school nutrition programme (4 nutritious meals per day)' along with 'learners benefiting from the no-fees schooling'. Other critical activities include 'suitable budget allocation to the schools', 'monitoring and support for school improvement plans and programmes' as well as the 'training of teachers in mathematics, numeracy, language content and methodology'. Complementarily, the activities of 'implementing the National reading strategy', 'appointment of qualified teachers' and 'capacity-building of SMTs and SGBs' on their roles and responsibilities were also part of the project.

There is no gainsaying that the activities of the rural boarding schools project can only be executed if required inputs are available. According to the project's ToC provided by the MDoE, these inputs that are crucial for the project include 'human resources (staffing)', 'budget / funding' as well as 'policies and procedures'. Furthermore, 'infrastructure, equipment and labour-saving devices' are identified as inputs in the project's ToC. Additionally, it was anticipated that 'furniture', 'school uniforms' along with 'learning and teaching support materials (LTSM)' would also form part of the overall inputs required for the execution of the rural boarding schools' project.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As observed by Chur (2015), basic education entails imparting knowledge and skills from one generation to the other in both formal and informal settings, with a whole range of educational activities, to meet basic learning needs. In South Africa, basic education is largely structured within primary and secondary schools. Primary school begins with Grade R (the reception year) and then learners proceed from Grades 1 to Grade 7. Secondary school runs from Grade 8 to Grade 12. Therefore, basic education focuses on the stages of learning which involve fundamental knowledge needs, acquisition of rudimentary skills as well as transmission of human values which people need for a head start in life.

Recognising this, Nelson Mandela, an iconic figure and a former president of South Africa declared that *“education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. The power of education extends beyond the development of skills we need for economic success. It can contribute to nation-building and reconciliation”*. The import of this position cannot be over-emphasised particularly in the context of a developing economy like South Africa. Indeed, more so as a country in which majority of citizens had for decades been deprived of access to quality education by the apartheid government. It is therefore unsurprising that the South African government’s resolve to ensure that everyone is able to acquire basic education is unwavering.

The situation is not dissimilar in Mpumalanga, a Province with an overwhelming representation of black South Africans (Statistics South Africa, 2023), and ranks 8th position amongst the country’s nine provinces in terms of school attendance of children aged between 9 and 11 according to the Global Data Lab Area Profile Report (2022). It is against this background that basic education has been recognised by the provincial government as an aspect of the province’s social and economic development which demands urgent attention.

4.2 BASIC EDUCATION

4.2.1 Overview of the Basic Education Landscape in Mpumalanga

The planning implementation and management of basic education as a social service is best viewed through the activities of the provincial government who plays a major role in its delivery in Mpumalanga Province. The Mpumalanga Department of Education (MDoE) derives its core mandate from the constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) that states in Section 29 of the Constitution of the RSA that, *everyone has the right to basic education, including adult basic education; and to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible*.

Through a slew of legislation, the mandate of the MDoE is further elaborated. These legislations include the National Education Policy Act (No. 27 of 1996), the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996), the Mpumalanga School Education Act of 1995, the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996), the South African Qualifications Authority Act (No. 58 of 1995), The General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act (No. 58 of 2001), Further Education and Training Act (No. 98 of 1998), The Public Service Act of 1994, Public Finance Management Act of 1999, Employment of Educators Act (No. 76 of 1998), Employment Equity Act (No. 55 of 1998), and the Adults Basic Education Act (Act 52 of 2000).

Amongst many other functions, these pieces of legislation compel the department to perform specific activities such as development of provincial policies and principles that govern education; making provisions for the organization, governance and funding of schools, amendment and repeal

of certain laws to schools, provision for the redress of discriminatory laws and practices, disparities in employment occupation and income within the National Labour Market, and provision of matters connected therewith and the regulation of adult basic education and training.

In essence, the core business of the MDoE is to provide education of progressively high quality for all learners and by so doing, lay a strong foundation for the development of learners' talents and capabilities in order to advance societal transformation. Accordingly, the MDoE provides primary and secondary school education, registers and monitors independent schools, and provides education for learners with special needs.

4.2.2 Importance of Basic Education

The importance of education and its transformative potential is often reiterated whenever issues relating to development arises. Whether the desired development is social or economic in nature, education is known to be an effective mechanism for addressing issues of collective advancement and improvement of people's lives in any nation or region. According to the World Bank Group (2009), education is a human right, a powerful driver of development, and one of the strongest instruments for reducing poverty and improving health, gender equality, peace, and stability in any society.

Education delivers large, consistent returns in terms of income, and is the most important factor to ensure equity and social inclusion. As canvassed in the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015), *"education liberates the intellect, unlocks the imagination and is fundamental to self-respect. It is the key to prosperity and opens a world of opportunities, making it possible for each of us to contribute to a progressive, healthy society. Learning benefits every human being and should be available to all"*. These thoughts resonate with those captured in South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 and one of the key avenues for achieving the goals of the NDP is through improvement in education, training and innovation.

This is because education has been touted, repeatedly, as the route to maintaining competitiveness and realizing long-lasting positive changes, particularly from a human capital viewpoint. Education raises people's productivity and creativity and promotes entrepreneurship and technological advances. This point is emphasised by Nkohl (2014), who observed that endogenous growth theorists have posited that investment in education can be tacitly associated with an increase in efficiency and productivity of labour. Put simply, the boosting of cognitive skills, makes labour more productive and accelerates innovation and technological progress, thereby stimulating economic growth. With regard to its contribution to economic growth and outcomes, education can be viewed as the stock of skills, competencies, and other productivity-enhancing characteristics.

According to the World Economic Forum (2016), as a critical component of a country's human capital, education increases the efficiency of each individual worker and helps economies to move up the value chain beyond manual tasks or simple production processes. Echoing the same sentiment, Ozturk (2008), contends that education in every sense is one of the fundamental factors of economic development. The import of these assertions seems to be that no country can achieve sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital because education enriches people's understanding of themselves and the world. By doing so, it improves the quality of their lives and leads to the accrual of broad social benefits to individuals and society. In addition, it plays a very crucial role in securing economic and social progress and improving income distribution.

It is the view of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) (2017), that the resources to effect positive changes in people's standard of living in a sustainable manner are embedded in education. Indeed, education assists people to acquire knowledge and skills, which can, in turn, be used to secure gainful employment and sustainable livelihoods. As a matter of fact, households with educated people stand a better chance of lifting themselves out of poor living conditions than households without educated people in them (African Development Bank, 2015).

More specifically, with respect to basic education, there is substantial evidence of the positive economic effects of completing primary education. An elaborate analysis by Grant (2017) on the contribution of primary education to economic growth revealed that it increases labour productivity, and that the economic returns to such investment are typically high. In effect, primary education contributes significantly to decreasing poverty in household and holds the potential for social change and prospects for economic growth. Similarly, a recent study by Goczek, Witkowska and Witkowski (2021), which interrogated how educational quality affects economic growth, found that educational skills make were significant to GDP growth. Invariably, this research finding can be considered as a confirmation of the importance of quality basic education for economic development.

Also, Ngepah, Makgalemele and Saba's (2022), study on the relationship between education and vulnerability to poverty in South Africa revealed that a statistically significant negative relationship exists between these constructs, particularly for those whose consumption lies below the food poverty line. Interpreted, this provides empirical evidence that for the cohort of persons who are the poorest of the poor, education lowers their levels of vulnerability to poverty. Expressed differently, education can be and indeed is a fundamental determinant of the extent of poverty in a society. This reality was echoed by President Cyril Ramaphosa in his February 2023 State of the Nation address in which he declared that *"access to quality education for all is the most powerful instrument we have to end poverty"*.

4.2.3 Accessibility to Basic Education

The acceptance of the compulsory nature of basic education places a responsibility on government to ensure that schools are accessible and affordable for children of school age. This right to education is expressed through legislation and government policies. Amongst them are The South African Schools Act of 1996 which gives legal form to school access, seeks to ensure that all learners have access to quality education without discrimination, and specifies the conditions for school governance and funding. The Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding of 2006 which introduced a policy of no-fee schools, and school-fee exemptions, as outlined in the South African Schools Act Regulations of 2006 aims to among others, improve access to education for learners from poor communities.

On this basis, it would seem that South Africa has a strong suite of policies to support meaningful access to basic education. In fact, based on the most recent General Household Survey (GHS) Report of May 2023, the basic education sector in South Africa has made progress over the last decade and a half. The country has recorded significant strides towards transformation along six internationally acknowledged dimensions which includes access to basic education. According to the GHS Report (2023) there is now near-universal access to schooling as measured, for instance, by the attendance rate amongst learners of the compulsory school-going age (7 to 15-year-olds), which has been above 98% since about 2009. Gladly, there is no significant difference in the attendance of compulsory education when disaggregated by province, population group or gender as reported. In addition, this report attests to increased participation by learners with disabilities, decrease in incidents of violence and complaints from households which is encouraging.

Regrettably, attendance rates do not provide substantive information on how well children are engaged in schooling and are transformed through basic education (Pendlebury, 2007). Motala, Dielteins, Carrim, Kgobe, Moyo and Rembe (2007), argue that from a broad perspective, children's prospects for meaningful basic education in South Africa depend largely on who has access to what kind of schooling and on what basis. Poverty, race, gender, geography and disability may all affect school attendance and the quality of education that is obtained. Motala *et al.*, (2007) argue in favour of attainment, stating that access is meaningful if children are to progress through school till completion attaining at least grade 9. Similarly, and with regards to achievement, access is consequential if children achieve the appropriate learning outcomes at a level right for their grades.

Although the proportion of the population attaining a grade 9 level of education has increased, for the majority of children in South Africa, meaningful access remains elusive from a performance standpoint (Centre for Development and Enterprise, 2023). In fact, the United Nations International Children's and Emergency Fund (UNICEF) 2022/23 Performance in Education Budget Brief Report, states that South Africa is severely underperforming in the delivery of quality education though most children in the country now attend school. This may well be because outside of school, an environment that is conducive to learning is lacking and a possible antidote could be the introduction of boarding schools, given that such schools ensure that learners live within an enabling educational ecosystem.

Justification for possible remedies to improve learner performance may also be derived from the fact that learners in South Africa tend to be less competitive within the international arena relative to their counterparts. Indeed, South Africa consistently ranks close to the bottom in international tests such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading and Literacy (PIRLs), and even performs below average when compared to other countries in Southern Africa (UNICEF, 2023).

Similarly, in a review of mathematics, science and reading at primary level and mathematics and science at secondary level, the Centre for Development and Enterprise (2023) identified key weaknesses that lend themselves to poor academic performance. Some of these include poor curriculum coverage; slow curriculum pacing; little progress in cognitive demand; insufficient written work; inadequate reading practice; and poor feedback to learners. There is no gainsaying that boarding schools are imbued with potential to help ameliorate some of these issues.

Notably, the report by UNICEF (2023) reiterates the disparity in educational performance along racial and class lines within South Africa. It asserts, unequivocally, that learners' performance continues to differ substantially between the schools serving poor and overwhelmingly black communities and those serving white and black learners from better-off families. These disparities are bound to be pronounced in the Mpumalanga province that has a 95.3% black population (Statistics South Africa, 2023). Glaringly, inequality continues to characterize South Africa's educational system, three decades after apartheid was abolished. Unequal access to quality education persists in the country, so much so that the flagrant inequalities in the country and its growing wealth-gap has resulted in two different education systems. There are 20% of privileged people who send their children to a well-resourced functioning schooling system while the larger pool of 80% of the children in South Africa are located within a struggling education system (Right to Education Initiative, 2023).

Owing to this, alongside other issues, South Africa can present satisfactory achievement data for only very few of the SDGs education quality related indicators. As indicated on the quality of education in South Africa in the 2023 SDG Country Report, significant challenges persist with participation rate in pre-primary organized learning, secondary completion rates and net primary enrolment rate. Perhaps, this reinforces the contention that access is meaningful only when schools ensure epistemological access, and support children's systematic learning of basic skills, knowledge, values and practices, and do so in a manner that respects children's dignity and background (Pendlebury 2008/2009).

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2021), observes that the reasons for poor academic achievements are complex and relate to children's socioeconomic background amongst other factors. The socioeconomic background of learners can affect their access to and success in basic education. This is unsurprising as studies have shown that a child's educational achievements are based on multiple factors, including their family, their family's behaviour, socioeconomic status, and their behaviour toward their parents (Vadivel, Alan, Nikpoo & Ajanil, 2023). This is an important point to consider given that the current reality in South Africa, is that many households are poor and have such little income that they cannot reasonably afford to provide the requisite support for their children to access and acquire basic education.

To illustrate the extent of poverty in society, as of 2023, around 18.2 million people in South Africa are living in extreme poverty based on the poverty threshold at 1.90 U.S. dollars per day. This means that 162,859 more people were pushed into poverty compared to 2022 (World Bank, 2023). As a result of poverty, many school children across South Africa are undernourished and this impedes their learning capabilities. Due to poverty, many households find it difficult to transport their children to school regularly which impacts directly on attendance and engagement with schooling.

With the litany of distractions and household chores that they are faced with, children from poor households find it difficult to concentrate on their studies. In some cases, finding a means of immediate survival for themselves and their families pushes them toward searching for any form of employment to the detriment of acquiring good education. This leads to increase dropout rates among adolescents of school age in South Africa and makes it crucial for effective remedies that can address the unpalatable situation to be sought by government.

4.3 ENHANCING ACCESS TO BASIC EDUCATION

4.3.1 Selected Intervention Programmes

To ameliorate some of the challenges that encumber education and consequently enhance school access, learner retention and educational outcomes, the government has come up with programmes and interventions such as the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) and Scholar Transport Policy (STP). The NSNP is intended to address barriers to learning associated with hunger and malnutrition by providing nutritious meals to learners on all school days. This is done with the expectation that these meals would enhance learning capacity and promote healthy lifestyles through nutrition education (Department of Basic Education, 2014). The Scholar Transport Policy came about as a response of the Departments of Transport and Basic Education to the problems of the long distances that scholars, especially those residing in remote and rural areas, had to travel to get to the nearest suitable public school. Although laudable, these programmes have not been without challenges.

Regarding the STP, an evaluation done by the Parliament's Standing Committee on Appropriations in 2018 revealed that *"challenges experienced in the implementation of the policy included no services at all, unsafe and insecure methods that were used, uncoordinated services, unscrupulous operations and non-standardised operations"* (Government of the Republic of South Africa, 2018). With the NSNP a recent study by Mafugu (2021), outlines major drawbacks which continually impact on the programme such as late payment of service providers, delays in feeding, food preferences and cultural differences, and the lack of sufficient training for stakeholders. All of these adversely affect the learners.

Although the STP, NSNP and other government programmes have been effective in increasing participation in schooling, it is uncertain how impactful these interventions have been in the attainment of learning outcomes amongst learners across South Africa. Implicitly, the overall impact on access to education, to a consequential extent, is limited as basic education has remained in crisis. The Department of Basic Education (2023), in its recent presentation to the portfolio committee on basic education confirms that the NSNP is a key poverty alleviation programme of the government to address hunger, malnutrition, and micronutrient deficiencies in learners. Though strange, it would seem like government programmes such as these are not primarily designed to improve learners' performance, neither have they been effective in making South Africa competitive in terms educational outcomes.

In alignment with this opinion, the Centre for Development and Enterprise (2023), notes that South Africa as a country gets extremely poor education outcomes despite high levels of public expenditure. In essence while they may have indisputable benefits, programmes such as NSNP and STP have not created a sufficiently conducive environment for learning to thrive neither are they transformative in terms of accessibility to quality education and the collective development of South Africa's learners.

4.3.2 The Option of Boarding Schools

Empirical evidence has shown that the physical, social and cultural environment to which a learner is constantly exposed plays a role in learning and can affect academic performance (Duruji, Azuh & Oviasogie, 2014; Usman & Madudili, 2019; Baafi 2020). This understanding is perceptible in the educational practice of boarding schools where learners live within the premises of the school with their fellow students and possibly teachers or supervisors while receiving formal instruction.

As compared to day schools, where students are given educational instructions during the day after which they return to their homes, boarding schools are an attractive educational option for students living in remote areas, and whose parents are working far away or overseas (Martin, Burns, Kennette, Pearson & Munro-Smith, 2021). The benefits associated with boarding school education as compared to day schooling have been widely discussed amongst researchers and one of the stand-out gains of the boarding school system is that it delivers superior academic performance (Mengistu & Alemayehu, 2021; Dickson, 2019; Martin *et al*, 2015).

This is understandable because in a boarding school environment, learners are less distracted and can focus better on their academic work. Alternatively, when students reside at home, they are exposed to many more activities that may not be pro-education in nature and these, invariably, interfere with their studies. Interruptions to studies are reduced when learners live within the school and function under the regulations of the institution. Moreover, schooling as boarders saves students the time and energy spent commuting to and from school. This, inevitably, increases the hours that students can devote towards studying and other developmental activities.

Markedly, Dickson's (2019) comparative study of school type on students' academic achievement showed that boarding school students significantly performed better than day school students. This may be because, in boarding schools, students are more exposed to support from teachers and peers (Martin *et al*, 2015). Furthermore, since some schools have educators living on campus with students, accessibility to educators is easier. This is a factor that could contribute to learners' academic outcomes.

In addition, the boarding school environment often demands discipline and punctuality from learners, and as observed in a recent study by Hakizayezu and Andala (2022), this impacts on students' academic performance. Since they follow a timetable for every activity, boarding schools teach punctuality and inculcate discipline in students, and this makes learning more efficacious and learners more responsible. This sense of responsibility inspires confidence and helps learners become largely independent. Indeed, the structured and regimented approach to daily living offered within a boarding school environment makes it preferable to day schooling.

The boarding school environment uniquely contributes towards and fast-tracks students' personal development largely because of increased engagement with learning and the structured challenges that it presents. By exposing learners to routine and challenging tasks in an early stage of life, they develop the confidence to take on tasks and resolve issues, a characteristic that is useful all lifelong. As stipulated by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in the guidelines for provision of boarding facilities, extra-curricular and sports activities are required to be part of the training in a boarding school environment.

Hence, many boarding schools create an environment of learning beyond the classroom. Students are often required to participate in extra-curricular activities such as Painting, Drama, and Debate, or sporting activities such as Football, Cricket, Rugby, and Athletics. This leads to the discovery and development of talents amongst learners and contribute to learners' physical mental and emotional wellbeing.

It is also noteworthy that the boarding school environment enhances motivation toward academic and non-academic aspirations through interaction of learners with their peers, and the opportunity for students to engage with their counterparts from various socio-economic backgrounds (Kharn & Chahal, 2023; Suwitno & Daniawan, 2023). Also, boarding schools tend to decrease learners' dropout rate and involvement in social ills such as drug abuse, crime and incidences of teenage pregnancy within local communities. By doing so, boarding schools improve the chances of academic success of learners from areas of low socioeconomic status (Foliano, Green, Sartarelli, 2019).

However, there are downsides to the boarding school option because majority of boarding schools in South Africa are private independent institutions funded through students' fees (BusinessTech, 2023). These schools could cost as high as R300 000 per year per student in South Africa, and many families cannot afford these fees. In fact, boarding schools are certainly beyond the reach of poor households (Spaull, 2013; Dieltiens & Meny-Gibert, 2012). Although there are government boarding schools that are open to students of all backgrounds, they are very few. This makes boarding schools, more or less, a privilege of the middle and upper class of society and exacerbates the social problem of inequality.

Another drawback is the tendency for children to be separated from their parents, too quickly. While boarding schools may increase students' focus on formal academic education, there are less opportunities for transfer of informal education and traditional cultural or family values from parents to their children. Dieltiens (2015) observed that, boarding schools sever children from their communities and culture which then limits the propensity for inculcating community-based norms and values on learners.

4.3.3 Boarding Schools and Academic Outcomes

The inquiry into the role of boarding schools in ensuring academic success is extensive in educational research. In fact, research on this subject has been carried out in different countries across educational levels, gender and academic subjects. For example, a study in Ghana by Anim-Addo (2014), sought to determine how students' residential status influences their academic performance. Through a comparative analysis of boarding and day schools in Accra this study investigated the relationship between the two constructs. This study discovered that problems such as absenteeism and lateness to school are better managed at boarding schools than in day schools.

Accordingly, a higher level of discipline was observed amongst boarding school students which influenced their responses to academic challenges. In addition, the ease of accessibility to learners beyond the normal school hours made implementation of remedial interventions more effective with boarding school students as compared to day students. In this study, a higher level of discipline and increased engagement with the learners were identified as the cause of the outperformance of boarding school students.

A similar study was carried out in Nigeria by Efosa-Ehioghiren (2014) which sought to analyse the academic performance of boarding and day students in Benin-City. Likewise, the study intended to investigate whether academic performance was higher among boarders relative to day students but went further to explore gender differences as well with respect to performances in English and Mathematics. It was found that boarding students performed better in English language and mathematics than day students.

Furthermore, female boarding students performed better than their male counterparts in both English language and mathematics. Additionally, male students in boarding schools performed better in both English language and mathematics than male day students and the case was exactly the same for the female students. Evidently, in this study boarders had better academic outcomes than day students irrespective of their gender and subject of study. Essentially, this study underscores the significance of students' residential status as a predictor of academic performance.

Another study in France investigated a similar phenomenon by substituting boarding school students with day students, to determine the effect of transitioning on students. In this experimental study by Behaghel, De Chaisemartin and Gurgand, (2017), it was found that new boarders (day students who had been admitted into the boarding school environment) responded better to the studying conditions than the older boarders. However, these new boarders started outperforming older boarders in mathematics only two years after admission, and this effect mostly came from strong students. The new boarders initially experienced lower levels of academic well-being but they adjusted afterwards.

This study suggests that introducing day students into boarding school environment is disruptive but academically beneficial in the long-term once they have adapted to their new boarding environment. Another study with the same objective, by Foliano, *et al.* (2019) conducted in a boarding school that admits a high share of pupils with low socio-economic status in the United Kingdom resulted in a similar finding. It was found that the probability of being in the top decile of achievement in the exams increased by about 18% for boarding school students who had transitioned from day schooling.

Boarding is a common feature in rural communities in China (Chang, Huo, Zheng, Zeng & Tang, 2023), and this can be attributed to the Chinese government's policy to improve education equity through investing in boarding programs of public schools in rural and less-developed areas. A study by Tan and Bodovski (2020) investigated whether boarding schools compensate for children's family disadvantages in terms of mathematics and reading achievement. This study found that students from low-socioeconomic status families and from rural areas are highly inclined towards boarding at schools. In addition, boarding students performed better than day students in 8th-grade mathematics tests.

A large-scale multilevel investigation of academic outcomes among students and classrooms in Australia also compared boarding and day students (See Martin *et al.*, 2021). This study explored the motivation, engagement, and achievement of boarding and day students who are educated in the same classrooms, received the same syllabus and instruction from the same teachers. This study entailed 2,803 students from six Australian high schools of which 481 were boarders and 2322 day-students. Controlling for background attributes and personality, this study found predominant parity between boarding and day students in their motivation, engagement, and achievement. It also found that the average motivation, engagement, and achievement was not significantly affected by the boarder-to-day student ratio in the classroom.

Furthermore, it was found that the effects of boarding were generally not moderated by students' background or personality attributes. This study concluded that boarders achieve academic outcomes that are comparable to their day student counterparts. Although this finding is contrary to the widely held perception that boarders tend to display better academic outcomes, which has been predominantly confirmed through empirical studies, it is noteworthy that this study was conducted within the context of a high-income and developed country with a social structure and challenges that contrast with the South African situation and those of many other nations.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This section presents the findings of the evaluation. Relying on information supplied by the MDoE, this section interrogates the performance of each of the six boarding schools based on the results that were canvassed in the ToC that underpinned the boarding schools project intervention. The objective measurements provided by the MDoE primarily relate to targets and actual achievements realised which were measured with indicators specifically selected by the department for tracking progress being made in the boarding schools' project. To complement the performance-related information framed by the results chain, discussions of demographics of the population that responded to the evaluation survey as well as aggregate positions about selected issues that pivot around the boarding schools' project are also contained in this section of the evaluation report.

5.2 PERFORMANCE-RELATED INFORMATION

The program logic that underpins the boarding schools' intervention in Mpumalanga is aptly captured by the results chain developed by the MDoE. The results chain developed by the MDoE is illustrated in Figure 3.2 and also explicated in section 3.2 of this report.

Against this backdrop, the performance of the boarding schools is invariably dependent on the extent to which the changes expressed at the impact, outcomes and outputs levels have been realised by each of the six boarding schools. Information provided by the MDoE for purposes of this evaluation are presented on a school-by-school basis in this section of the report.

5.2.1 ToC PERFORMANCE-BASED INFORMATION FOR EZAKHENI COMBINED BOARDING SCHOOL

For the impact of equal access to education, it would appear that the MDoE did not prescribe a specific indicator for all boarding schools. Consequently, what is reported by the MDoE for the schools' contribution to this impact is not exactly uniform. As reflected in Table 5.1, the indicator utilised for the impact in the context of Ezakheni combined boarding school does not qualify as an indicator. The baseline and target provided for the sought impact, are also technically faulty. This notwithstanding, the MDoE claims that the school achieved 74.5%. What this percentage represents is unclear and therefore it will be unwise to attempt to interpret it.

At the outcomes level, the information received, testifies to the fact that progress has been made towards realising the outcome of improved school readiness. In this regard, for Ezakheni combined boarding school a target of enrolling 70 learners in Grade R was set but the school achieved 57 which equates to an 81% performance rate. Impressively, the school has realised a 100% achievement as it concerns '*grade R educators or practitioners with NQF level 6 and above qualification*' as well as '*grade R practitioners employed in boarding schools per quarter*'. No performance information, whatsoever, was supplied in respect to the desired outcome of '*youths better prepared for further studies and the world of work beyond Grade 9*'.

For the outcome of '*youths leaving the schooling system more prepared to contribute towards a prosperous and equitable South Africa (Grade 12)*', 74.5% of the learners passed NSC but this is notably worse than the original situation shown as the baseline measurement that suggests that 80% of the learners passed NSC. Translated, this implies that the boarding school has made matters worse as it pertains to this specific performance measurement. Contrarily, improvements relative to the baselines were evident for the indicators of '*percentage of grade 12 learners passing at the bachelor*'

pass' and *'percentage of learners achieving 60% in Physical Sciences'* where positive changes of 20% to 31.4% and 10% to 53%, respectively, were reported.

For the outcome of *'Improved learner performance'*, though a target of 40% bachelors was set, the school's current achievement level is 31.4%. For outcome 5 which was stated as *'10-year-old learners enrolled in publicly funded schools reading for meaning'*, the associated indicator of *'number foundation phase teachers trained in numeracy content and methodology'* and its counterpart of *'number foundation phase teachers trained in reading content and methodology'* showed a baseline of three teachers trained in each case but the level of achievement recorded reveals that the numbers have risen to 6.

However, this is 25% short of the targeted figure of 8 teachers trained in reading content as well as those trained in numeracy. Information provided also indicates that the outcome of a *'Functional school governance committee'* has been realised owing to the fact that the school has a function SGB. With respect to infrastructure, it is deducible from the supplied information that the Ezakheni combined boarding school has ample provisions for water, electricity and sanitation.

Table 5.1: Performance-related information for Ezakheni combined boarding school

	RESULTS AND ACTIVITIES	INDICATORS	BASELINE	TARGET	CURRENT ACHIEVEMENT
	IMPACT				
1	Equal access to education	Admission of learners from disadvantaged communities	Admission of all learners	Rural and farm dwelling learners	74.5%
	OUTCOMES				
1	Improved school readiness	Number of schools that offer grade R	All	All schools	All grade R learners progressed to the next grade
		Number of learners enrolled in grade R in boarding schools	92	70	57
		Number of grade R educators or practitioners with NQF level 6 and above qualification	03	03	03
		Number of grade R practitioners employed in boarding schools per quarter	03	03	03
2	Youths better prepared for further studies and the world of work beyond Grade 9				

3	Youths leaving the schooling system more prepared to contribute towards a prosperous and equitable South Africa (Grade 12)	Percentage of learners who passed NSC	80%	100%	74.5%
		Percentage of grade 12 learners passing at the bachelor pass	20%	40%	31.4%
		Percentage of learners achieving 60% in Physical Sciences	10%	50%	53%
		Number of boarding schools with NSC pass rate of 60% and above	Ezakheni		
4	Improved learner performance	40% bachelors	20%	40%	31.4%
5	10-year-old learners enrolled in publicly funded schools reading for meaning	Number of boarding schools using grade 1-3 lesson plans for literacy in home language	Ezakheni		
		Number of schools provided with grade R African language materials	Ezakheni		
		Number of foundation phase teachers trained in numeracy content and methodology	3	8	6
		Number of foundation phase teachers trained in reading content and methodology	3	8	6
		Number of boarding schools monitored for implementing reading strategy	Ezakheni		
6	Functional school governance committee	Percentage of SGB's in sampled schools	Functional SGB	SGB holding monthly meetings	SGB holding monthly meetings
7	School physical infrastructure and environment that inspires learners to learn and teachers to teach	Number of boarding schools provided with water	Ezakheni		
		Number of boarding schools provided with electricity	Ezakheni		
		Number of boarding schools provided with sanitation	Ezakheni		
	OUTPUTS				

1	Healthy nutritious meals provided	Number of quintile 1-3 schools benefitting	Ezakheni		
2	Learners funded at a minimum level	Percentage of learners funded at minimum level	100%	100%	100%
3	Learners benefiting from the no-fees school policy	Percentage of learners funded at minimum level	1005	100%	100%
4	Percentage of expenditure going towards non-personnel items	Percentage of learners funded at minimum level	80%	80%	80%
5	Teachers trained in mathematics, numeracy, language content and methodology	Number of teachers trained in mathematics content and methodology	8	15	10
6	Schools with functional Schools safety committees and SGBs	Percentage of schools with functional school safety policy	Ezakheni		
ACTIVITIES					
1	Provision of National school nutrition programme (4 nutritious meals per day)	Healthy food for learners	All	All	All
2	Learners benefiting from the no-fees schooling	Learners benefitting from no -fees schooling	900	1300	1166
3	Suitable budget allocation to the school	Number of schools	Ezakheni		
4	Monitoring and support for school improvement plans and programmes	Percentage of learners funded at minimum level	district		District

5	Training of teachers in mathematics, numeracy, language content and methodology	All math and science teachers to receive training	All	All	All
6	Implementing the National reading strategy	Intermediate phase	All	All	All
7	Appointment of qualified teachers	All appropriately qualified	92%	100%	99%
8	Capacity-building of SMTs and SGBs of their roles and responsibilities	Workshops	All	All	All

For the output of '*healthy nutritious meals*', there is no indication of the school's baseline, target or current achievement but the information provided signals an admission that healthy nutritious meals are provided to learners. The school also signals that 100% of learners are funded at a minimum level. Outputs 3 and 4, as shown in the table, share the same indicator as output 2 and this is unusual.

Though a target of 15 was set for 'number of teachers trained in mathematics content and methodology', the school was only able to train 10. Information provided with respect to output 6, affirms that the school is one of those with a functional school safety policy. Concerning the catalogue of activities in the table, only two acceptable indicators are identifiable as all other items listed in the indicators' column are not indicators. Besides, for the two activities for which indicators were provided, no measurements of the baseline, target or achievement are provided and so performance related to activities cannot be determined.

5.2.2 ToC PERFORMANCE-BASED INFORMATION FOR STEVE TSHWETE BOARDING SCHOOL

There are no measurements provided by the MDoE at the impact level for the Steve Tshwete boarding school and understandably so, because the impact is an aggregate measure that cannot necessarily be attributed to a single boarding school. Notably, across all levels, MDoE has also provided no baseline measurements of any kind for the school. The import of this is that the original conditions, as measured by the indicators, are indeterminate and so no changes as may have been professed by the project's ToC can be inferred or claimed. Furthermore, no indicators were included on the results measurement template submitted by the MDoE for the school.

This notwithstanding, a strange target of 'good' was linked to the outcome of '*improved school readiness*' and what this qualitative measure means is certainly subject to individual interpretation. For the outcome of '*youths better prepared for further studies and the world of work beyond grade 9*', different yearly targets as shown in Table 5.2, were set but the current achievement, arguably linked to the year 2023, is stated as 58. The same pattern of stating targets according to years is repeated for outcomes 3, 4 and 5 though the preferred unit of measurement in these cases is a percentage.

Even though targets and current achievement percentages are reflected in the table, without an indicator that defines precisely what is being measured, the current achievements of 92.6%, 95% and 85% associated with outcomes 3, 4 and 5 respectively, can only be a matter of personal conjecture. It is deducible from the information provided that as it pertains to the outcome of a '*functional school*

governance committee, currently the school purportedly, has a 'full complement'. For outcome 7 which is focussed on infrastructure, the school targeted 28 furnished classrooms, computer and science laboratories. Its current achievement in this regard is '*well-furnished classrooms and still intact*'. This type of performance reporting that disregards selected indicators for measurement, is strange and making sense of it is a herculean, if not an impossible proposition.

Table 5.2: Performance-related information for Steve Tshwete boarding school

	RESULTS AND ACTIVITIES	INDICATORS	BASELINE	TARGET	CURRENT ACHIEVEMENT
	IMPACT				
1	Equal access to education		2016		
	OUTCOMES				
1	Improved school readiness		2017	Good	
2	Youths better prepared for further studies and the world of work beyond Grade 9		2016	Gr 9 2016 =34, 2017 = 56, 2018= 62. 2019 = 65, 2020 = 69, 2021= 68, 2022= 56	58
3	Youths leaving the schooling system more prepared to contribute towards a prosperous and equitable South Africa (Grade 12)		2019	2019 = 75%, 2020 = 92.7%,2021 = 86%, 2022 = 70. 4%	92,6%
4	Improved learner performance		2016	Gr9 2016= 71%, 2017= 73%, , 2018=85%,2019=76%, 2020= 99% , 2021= 81%, 2022=96%	95%
5	10-year-old learners enrolled in publicly funded schools reading for meaning		2016	Gr 4 2016 = 68%, 2017= 70%, 2018= 79%, 2019 =69%, 2020= 94%, 2021 = 82%, 2022= 80%,	85%
6	Functional school governance committee		2016	2018, 2021 fully functional	Full compliment
7	School physical infrastructure and environment that inspires learners to learn and teachers to teach		2016	28 furnished classrooms, computer and science laboratories, Math Laboratory	Well-furnished classrooms and still intact
	OUTPUTS				

1	Healthy nutritious meals provided		2016	Four nutritious meals per day provided by service providers appointed by the department	Four nutritious meals per day provided by DARDLEA
2	Learners funded at a minimum level		2016	2016 = 1030, 2017=932 , 2018= 961, 2019= 947, 2020= 983, 2021= 982, 2022 = 942	820
3	Learners benefiting from the no-fees school policy		2016	2016 = 1030, 2017=932 , 2018= 961 2019= 947, 2020= 983, 2021= 982, 2022 = 942	820
4	Percentage of expenditure going towards non-personnel items		2016		
5	Teachers trained in mathematics, numeracy, language content and methodology		2017	2016= 24 2017= 27 2018= 27 2019= 28 2020=28 2021=28 2022=28 2023=27	
6	Schools with functional Schools safety committees and SGBs		2017		
ACTIVITIES					
1	Provision of National school nutrition programme (4 nutritious meals per day)		2016		
2	Learners benefiting from the no-fees schooling		2016	2016 = 1030, 2017= 932 , 2018= 961, 2019= 947, 2020= 983, 2021= 982, 2022 = 942	820

3	Suitable budget allocation to the school		2016	2016= R214 401 2017= R1 752 500 & R549 884 2018= R611 807 2019= R587 500 & R794 289 2020= R1 561 000 & R864 151 2021= R789 499 & R949 411 2022= R766 001 2023 = R1 089 000 & R744 609	
4	Monitoring and support for school improvement plans and programmes		2016	The school conducted SSE last year and uses the data to develop SIP, which was submitted to circuit on 31 January.	The SMT monitors and support educators for the implementation of the SIP. The SGB provides resources.
5	Training of teachers in mathematics, numeracy, language content and methodology		2017	The district conducts quarterly content workshop for teachers	One content workshop had already taken place.
6	Implementing the National reading strategy		2017	The school is implementing drop all and read in all the grades	Learners in different grades read at the assembly weekly.
7	Appointment of qualified teachers		2016	Principal and SGB advertise and make recommendation to the HOD when posts are available	The school has vacant posts for deputy principal and two departmental heads. Only the post for the deputy principal and one departmental head had been advertised.
8	Capacity-building of SMTs and SGBs of their roles and responsibilities		2016	Principal invite district official annually to train SGB members. Principal conducts in-house training to SMT	Principal and district will train SGB after elections. District train newly elected SMT after appointment.

For output 1, the Steve Tshwete boarding school's target of 4 nutritious meals per day per learner is matched by its current achievement. Concerning output 2 which is stated as '*learners funded at a minimum level*' between 2016 and 2022, the target ranged from 942 to 1030 learners. Curiously, the current achievement, which is stated as 820 learners, is approximately 12.95% less than the target of 2022 and is the lowest ever since the school was established.

Interestingly, the measurements provided for output 3 captured as '*learners benefiting from the no-fees school policy*' are a mirror image of those for output 2. No performance tracking information was provided with respect to the output of '*percentage of expenditure going towards non-personnel items*' and the situation is similar for the output concerned with '*functional schools safety committees and SGBs*'. For the '*teachers trained in mathematics, numeracy, language content and methodology*' output, over the period 2016-2023, it would seem that an average of 27 teachers were trained, annually.

For majority of the activities that appear in Table 5.2, different narratives were provided in cases where only measurements determined by indicators were required. These narratives do not constitute performance measurements and so their value is questionable. Activity 2 is an exact copy of Output 3 and so from an M&E perspective, one of them is incorrect as activities are supposed to be different from outputs. The only other activity for which some measurements are provided is the one phrased as '*suitable budget allocation to the school*'. By MDoE's own admission, the lowest budget allocated to the school is R214 401 (2016) and the highest budget of R2 425 151 is linked to the year 2020. Based on the provided financial figures, on the average, the school's annual budget is R1 409 256.50.

5.2.3 ToC PERFORMANCE-BASED INFORMATION FOR EMAKHAZENI BOARDING SCHOOL

The performance measurement information provided for Emakhazeni boarding school, reflected the results chain elements of impact, outcomes, outputs and activities as originally conceptualised in the ToC developed for the boarding schools' project. Indicators, chosen by the MDoE as the tools of measurement appear alongside specific results as shown in Table 5.3. Alarmingly, Emakhazeni boarding school failed to provide any information related to baselines or targets for all the results that are of paramount importance, given that they appear in the project's ToC.

The absence of baselines means that no information is available to ascertain what the original state of affairs was with respect to issues such as access to education, school readiness, and preparedness of learners for further studies or work, among others. In the absence of any baselines, change cannot be deduced and so any claim to an improvement engendered by the project at this school can only be spurious. The situation is made more problematic by the fact that for the Emakhazeni boarding school, there were also no target measurements provided. Translated, this means that there were no aspirations or desired achievements expected by the MDoE of the Emakhazeni boarding school.

Table 5.3: Performance-related information for Emakhazeni boarding school

	RESULTS AND ACTIVITIES	INDICATORS	BASELINE	TARGET	CURRENT ACHIEVEMENT
	IMPACT				
1	Equal access to education				
	OUTCOMES				
1	Improved school readiness (Access/ quality)	Number of boarding schools that offer grade R			YES
		Number of learners enrolled in Grade R in boarding schools			35

		Number of grade R educators or practitioners with NQF level 6 and above qualification			1
		Number of Grade R practitioners employed in boarding schools per quarter			1
2	Youths better prepared for further studies and the world of work beyond Grade 9	Number of learners in boarding schools benefitting from the No fee school policy			905
3	Youths leaving the schooling system more prepared to contribute towards a prosperous and equitable South Africa (Grade 12)	Percentage of learners who passed NSC examination at boarding schools			46
		Percentage of grade 12 learners who passing at the bachelor pass level at boarding schools			20%
		Percentage of grade 12 learners achieving 60% and above in mathematics at boarding schools			14%
		Percentage of grade 12 learners achieving 60% and above in Physical Science at boarding schools			14%
		Number of boarding schools with NSC pass rate of 60% and above			
4	Improved learner performance				
5	10-year-old learners enrolled in publicly funded schools reading for meaning	Number of boarding schools using grades 1-3 lesson plans for literacy in home language			YES
		Number of schools provided with grade R African languages reading material			NO

		Number of foundation phase teachers trained in numeracy content and methodology			8
		Number of foundation phase teachers trained in reading methodology			8
		Number of boarding schools monitored for implementing reading strategy			YES
6	Functional school governance committee	Percentage of SGB's in sampled schools that meet the minimum criteria in terms of effectiveness every year			YES
7	School physical infrastructure and environment that inspires learners to learn and teachers to teach	Number of boarding schools provided with water infrastructure			YES
		Number of boarding schools provided with electricity infrastructural (incl. upgrading of electricity)			YES
		Number of boarding schools provided with sanitation facilities			YES
	OUTPUTS				
1	Healthy nutritious meals provided	Number of quintile 1-3 schools benefiting from the National school nutrition program			Boarding school meals
2	Learners funded at a minimum level	Percentage of Learners funded at a minimum level			
3	Learners benefiting from the no-fees school policy	Number of learners in boarding schools benefiting from the no fees policy			905
4	Percentage of expenditure going towards non-personnel items	Percentage of expenditure going towards non personnel items			

5	Teachers trained in mathematics, numeracy, language content and methodology	Number of teachers trained in Mathematics content and methodology			5
		Number of teachers trained in literacy / language content and methodology			5
6	Schools with functional Schools safety committees and SGBs	Percentage of schools with functional school safety committees			50%
ACTIVITIES					
1	Provision of National school nutrition programme (4 nutritious meals per day)				YES
2	Learners benefiting from the no-fees schooling				905
3	Suitable budget allocation to the school				
4	Monitoring and support for school improvement plans and programmes	Number of schools that are implementing improvement plans based on monitoring findings of district officials			YES
5	Training of teachers in mathematics, numeracy, language content and methodology				YES
6	Implementing the National reading strategy				YES
7	Appointment of qualified teachers	Specific Percentage of Funza Lushaka and MP bursary holders placed in schools within six months upon completion of studies or upon confirmation that the bursar has completed studies.			22%

		Number of therapist / specialist staff in public special schools			
		Number of teachers employed in public special schools			
		Qualified grade R12 teachers aged 30 and below entering the public service			23%
		Number of grade R teachers or practioners with NQF level six and above qualification			1

Interestingly, some information to portray current achievements realised by Emakhazeni boarding school were provided, though there were no targets set. The word 'Yes' was utilised to signal current achievements for many activities and outcomes. It is unclear how the word 'Yes' can be a current achievement. Nonetheless, information provided shows that the school has 35 grade R learners enrolled and one grade R educator/practitioner who has an NQF level 6 and above qualification, is employed by the school. These measurements are supposed to provide an indication of the extent to which the school readiness outcome has been realised.

On the outcome that touts the preparedness of youth for further studies or the workplace, performance information provided in accordance with the MDoE selected indicator reveals that currently, 905 learners are benefiting from the no fees policy through the boarding school. In relation to the desired outcome of learner preparedness, the current achievements are that 46% of learners passed the NSC examinations, 20% achieved a bachelors pass, 14% of grade 12 learners achieved 60% and above in mathematics as well as in physical sciences. For the critical outcome of '*improved learner performance*', *no measurements were provided. In pursuit of the outcome of '10-year-old learners enrolled in publicly funded schools reading for meaning'* it was volunteered that 8 foundation phase teachers have been trained in reading methodology.

At the outputs level, there was an indication that 5 teachers had been trained in Mathematics content and methodology while the same number was also trained in literacy/language content and methodology. As it concerns the output of '*functional schools safety committee and SGBs*' at the school, the reported current achievement is 50%.

5.2.4 ToC PERFORMANCE-BASED INFORMATION FOR IZIMBALI BOARDING SCHOOL

The performance-related information for Izimbali boarding school based on MDoE's self-chosen results and indicators are presented in Table 5.4. Based on the information contained in the table, the current achievement associated with the desired impact of '*equal access to education*' has been reported for Izimbali boarding school as '*96% pass rate at grade 12*'. This current achievement reported is out of synchrony with the stated impact, the indicator that was chosen for its measurement and the target linked to the impact. To emphasise, while the impact is concerned with the issue of access to education, the current achievement reported is about learner performance at the grade 12 level.

At the outcomes level, the reported current achievement of 100% grade R learners progressing to grade 1, is reflective of the realisation of outcome 1, which is '*improved school readiness*'. For other

indicators associated with the same outcome, 57 out of a target of 60 learners were enrolled for grade R. Furthermore, the current achievement levels matched the targets that were set for '*number of grade R educators or practitioners with NQF level 6 and above qualification*' as well as '*number of grade R practitioners employed in boarding schools per quarter*'. In both instances, the applicable number is 2. No performance measurements whatsoever, were provided for Izimbali boarding school as it concerns its contribution towards the outcome of '*youths better prepared for further studies and the world of work beyond Grade 9*'.

Of the five indicators selected by the MDoE for the measurement of outcome 3, performance-related information was provided for only three of them. It was reported that there were 95.7% of learners who passed their NSC examinations, 66% of learners that achieved the bachelor pass level and 66% of grade 12 learners who achieved 60% and above in mathematics. For these reported current performance levels, the associated targets were 100%, 70% and 40% respectively. Though the current achievements fell short of the pre-set targets for two of this trio of performance measurements, in each case, improvements relative to the pre-existing baselines are evident.

For the outcome of improved learner performance with a baseline of 24%, a target of 40% was set but the school's current achievement is 66%. No performance-related measurements were provided by the MDoE for Izimbali with respect to the five indicators that the department chose for tracking the outcome of '*10-year-old learners enrolled in publicly funded schools reading for meaning*'. Similarly, no current achievements were provided to signal any form of progress towards realising the outcomes of '*functional school governance committee*' and '*school physical infrastructure and environment that inspires learners to learn and teachers to teach*'.

Table 5.4: Performance-related information for Izimbali boarding school

	RESULTS AND ACTIVITIES	INDICATORS	BASELINE	TARGET	CURRENT ACHIEVEMENT
	IMPACT				
1	Equal access to education	Admission of learners from Disadvantage communities	All feeder zones learners admitted	Target learners from poor black communities to pursue careers based on sciences	96% pass rate at Gr 12
	OUTCOMES				
1	Improved school readiness	Number of schools that offer grade R	Are all boarding schools offer grade R	All boarding schools having grade R	100% grade R learners progressing to grade 1
		Number of learners enrolled in grade R in boarding schools	Izimbali 57 learners	To enrol 60 grade R learners	57 learners enrolled

		Number of grade R educators or practioners with NQL level 6 and above qualification	02	02	02
		Number of grade R practioners employed in boarding schools per quarter	02	02	02
2	Youths better prepared for further studies and the world of work beyond Grade 9	Number of learners in boarding schools benefiting from the No fee school policy			
3	Youths leaving the schooling system more prepared to contribute towards a prosperous and equitable South Africa (Grade 12)	Percentage of learners who passed NSC examination at boarding schools	84%	100%	95.7
		Percentage of grade 12 learners who passing at the bachelor pass level at boarding schools	60%	70%	66%
		Percentage of grade 12 learners achieving 60% and above in mathematics at boarding schools	24%	40%	66%

		Percentage of grade 12 learners achieving 60% and above in physical sciences at boarding schools			
		Number of boarding schools with NSC pass rate of 60% and above			
4	Improved learner performance	40% bachelors	24%	40%	66%
5	10-year-old learners enrolled in publicly funded schools reading for meaning	Number of boarding schools using grade 1-3 lesson plans for literacy in home language			
		Number of schools provided with grade R African language reading material			
		Number of foundation phase teachers trained in numeracy content and methodology			
		Number of foundation phase teachers trained in reading methodology			

		Number of boarding schools monitored for implementing reading strategy			
6	Functional school governance committee	Percentage of SGB 's in sampled schools that meet the minimum criteria in terms of effectiveness every year	Functional SGM	SGB that sits on Monthly basis	
7	School physical infrastructure and environment that inspires learners to learn and teachers to teach	Number of boarding schools provided with water infrastructure	Environment conducive	Clean environment	
		Number of boarding schools provided with electricity infrastructural (including upgrading of electricity)			
		Number of boarding schools provided with sanitation facilities			
	OUTPUTS				
1	Healthy nutritious meals provided	Number of quintile 1-3 schools benefiting from the national school nutrition program	Balanced and Nutritious food	Healthy and balanced food	

2	Learners funded at a minimum level	Percentage of learners funded at a minimum level	100% Coverage	100% Coverage	
3	Learners benefiting from the no-fees school policy	Number of learners in boarding schools benefiting from no fees policy	100% coverage	100% coverage	
4	Percentage of expenditure going towards non-personnel items	Percentage of expenditure going towards non personnel items			
5	Teachers trained in mathematics, numeracy, language content and methodology	Number of teachers trained in mathematics content and methodology	6 Teachers	7 Teachers	
6	Schools with functional Schools safety committees and SGBs	Percentage of schools with functional school safety committees	SGB in place	Functional SGB	
ACTIVITIES					
1	Provision of National school nutrition programme (4 nutritious meals per day)	Healthy food for learners	Continuous supply of food	No shortage of food	
2	Learners benefiting from the no-fees schooling	1024	1065	1065	
3	Suitable budget allocation to the school	Have working school budget	Financial Clark	Adopted	

4	Monitoring and support for school improvement plans and programmes	Number of schools that are implementing improvement plans based on monitoring findings of district officials	Both by District and school managers	Done at all levels	
5	Training of teachers in mathematics, numeracy, language content and methodology	All Maths and Science educators to receive continuous training	All Maths and Science teachers	All attended	
6	Implementing the National reading strategy	Intermediate phase	Reading with understanding	Reading ability with understanding increasing	
7	Appointment of qualified teachers	All appropriately qualified educators	100% Professionally qualified educators	All educators professionally qualified	
8	Capacity-building of SMTs and SGBs of their roles and responsibilities	Workshops	Increased attendance	Only 3 SMT members attending	

At the output results level, baselines and targets were provided for five of the six indicators that were chosen to measure progress towards the six outputs that were expected to be delivered by the boarding schools' project. Notably, however, no current achievements were provided for any of the six identified outputs. The situation of non-provision of performance-related information also characterises the ten activities outlined to be undertaken in the boarding schools' project as shown in Table 5.4.

5.2.5 ToC PERFORMANCE-BASED INFORMATION FOR SHONGWE BOARDING SCHOOL

The information obtained from the MDoE and presented in Table 5.5, aims to communicate the extent of performance attributable to Shongwe boarding school as dictated by the ToC framework for the boarding schools' project. The reported current achievement of 95.4% pass rate in Gr12 is in disharmony, performance measurement wise, with the impact of 'equal access to education' that it is associated with.

Progress towards outcome 1 (improved school readiness) has been measured in terms of learner enrolments in grade R and subsequent progression to grade 1. Information depicting actual achievement shows that the 22 Learners that were admitted into Grade R progressed to Grade 1. Furthermore, the

same outcome is also measured from an educator's perspective by relying on number of employed grade R educators and grade R educators with a minimum of NQF level 6 qualifications. For both of these indicators, the associated baselines, targets and current achievements were exactly 2 which translates into an achievement of targets. For the outcome of *'youths better prepared for further studies and the world of work beyond Grade 9'*, a 100% current level of achievement was reported which is misaligned with the indicator chosen which was *'number of learners in boarding schools benefitting from the No fee school policy'*.

Outcome 3 was stated as *'youths leaving the schooling system more prepared to contribute towards a prosperous and equitable South Africa (Grade 12)'*. Five indicators were utilised for tracking this outcome. From the information presented in table 5.5, 95.4% of learners passed NSC examination and 52.7% successfully obtained a bachelors pass relative to the respective targets of 90% and 80% set for both indicators. Though the current achievement with respect to the bachelors' pass was less than the target, it nonetheless marked an improvement when compared to the 2022 baseline of 40%.

For the indicators of *'percentage of grade 12 learners achieving 60% and above in mathematics'* and *'percentage of grade 12 learners achieving 60% and above in physical sciences'*, Shongwe boarding school's current achievement levels are 46% and 21% respectively relative to the target of 50% desired in each case. For the outcome of *'improved learner performance'*, though no indicator was shown, a current achievement level of 52.7% was claimed, relative to a baseline of 40% and a target of 80%.

With reference to the outcome of *'10-year-old learners enrolled in publicly funded schools reading for meaning'*, the performance information obtained shows that lesson plans for literacy in home language are being utilised in grades 1-3 though the school has not been provided with grade R African languages reading materials. In addition, two foundation phase teachers each, have been trained in numeracy content and methodology as well as in reading methodology.

It is unclear what the 90% current achievement level connected to the *'functional school governance committee'* actually means and the same challenge attends the 100% current level of achievement claimed for two of the three indicators selected to track progress towards the outcome of *'school physical infrastructure and environment that inspire learners to learn and teachers to teach'*. Plausible interpretations could be that the school's governance committee is 90% functional and that the school's physical infrastructure is 100% adequate, particularly as it concerns water and electricity provisions.

Table 5.5: Performance-related information for Shongwe boarding school

	RESULTS AND ACTIVITIES	INDICATORS	BASELINE	TARGET	CURRENT ACHIEVEMENT
	IMPACT				
1	Equal access to education	<p>The farm school that was closed are prioritised in case of admission as our Primary feeder zones. The farms schools are as follows: Khangela, Mabrukwane, Mkwarukwaru, Rockvale, Geelspruit, Marula, Tomahawk, Riverside, Malelane Estate, Mohlakwane, Inala farm.</p> <p>Our Secondary feeder zones are Schoemansdal New Village, Buffelspruit New Village, and Middleplaas New Village as there is no school near these villages.</p>	All feeder zone learners are admitted (2022)	Targeted learners from the farms because they are come from disadvantaged and poor backgrounds.	95.4% pass rate in Gr12 with 57 Bachelors 26 Diplomas and 20 Higher Certificates
	OUTCOMES				
1	Improved school readiness	Number of boarding schools that offer grade R	The school offers enrolment in Grade R	Admitted a total of 22 learners in 2023	All 22 Learners in Grade R progressed to Grade 1
		Number of learners enrolled in Grade R in boarding schools	15 learners were enrolled in the year 2022	Admitted a total of 22 Grade R learners in 2023	100% pass rate. All 22 Learners in Grade R progressed to Grade 1
		Number of grade R educators or practioners with NQF level 6 and above qualification	02	02	02
		Number of Grade R practioners employed in boarding schools per quarter	02	02	02

2	Youths better prepared for further studies and the world of work beyond Grade 9	Number of learners in boarding schools benefitting from the No fee school policy	2022 784	827	100%
3	Youths leaving the schooling system more prepared to contribute towards a prosperous and equitable South Africa (Grade 12)	Percentage of learners who passed NSC examination at boarding schools	2022 92.4 %	90%	95.4%
		Percentage of grade 12 learners who passing at the bachelor pass level at boarding schools	2022 40%	80%	52.7%
		Percentage of grade 12 learners achieving 60% and above in mathematics at boarding schools	2022 19,23%	50%	46%
		Percentage of grade 12 learners achieving 60% and above in Physical Science at boarding schools	2022 20%	50%	21%
		Number of boarding schools with NSC pass rate of 60% and above	2022 40%	80%	52.7%
4	Improved learner performance		2022 40%	80%	52.7%
5	10-year-old learners enrolled in publicly funded schools reading for meaning	Number of boarding schools using grades 1-3 lesson plans for literacy in home language	In 2022 Gr1 – 32 Gr2 – 30 Gr3 – 24	In 2023 Gr1 – 19 Gr2 – 28 Gr3 – 24	100%
		Number of schools provided with grade R African languages reading material	0	0	0

		Number of foundation phase teachers trained in numeracy content and methodology	02	02	02
		Number of foundation phase teachers trained in reading methodology	02	02	02
		Number of boarding schools monitored for implementing reading strategy	Monitored	Monitored	
6	Functional school governance committee	Percentage of SGB's in sampled schools that meet the minimum criteria in terms of effectiveness every year	Functional SGB	90%	90%
7	School physical infrastructure and environment that inspires learners to learn and teachers to teach	Number of boarding schools provided with water infrastructure	Municipality supplied water and 15 backup tanks	Municipality supplied water 15 backup tanks	100%
		Number of boarding schools provided with electricity infrastructural (incl. upgrading of electricity)	Electricity and backup generator	Electricity and backup generator	100%
		Number of boarding schools provided with sanitation facilities	27 toiletries are supplied in all classrooms and 6 toiletries in the admin	27 toiletries are supplied in all classrooms and 6 toiletries in the admin	
	OUTPUTS				
1	Healthy nutritious meals provided	Number of quintile 1-3 schools benefiting from the National school nutrition program	2022 Primary 207 Secondary 503 Total =710	2023 Primary 211 Secondary 383 Total =594	
2	Learners funded at a minimum level	Percentage of Learners funded at a minimum level	0	0	0

3	Learners benefiting from the no-fees school policy	Number of learners in boarding schools benefiting from the no fees policy	784 learners in the year 2022	827	827
4	Percentage of expenditure going towards non-personnel items	Percentage of expenditure going towards non personnel items	0	0	0
5	Teachers trained in mathematics, numeracy, language content and methodology	Number of teachers trained in Mathematics content and methodology	6	6	6
		Number of teachers trained in literacy / language content and methodology	6	6	6
6	Schools with functional Schools safety committees and SGBs	Percentage of schools with functional school safety committees	Functional, there are also two clinical nurses at the school and 6 Security guards in the afternoon and 8 in the evening	Functional, there are also two clinical nurses at the school and 6 Security guards in the afternoon and 8 in the evening	
ACTIVITIES					
1	Provision of National school nutrition programme (4 nutritious meals per day)		2	2	2
2	Learners benefiting from the no-fees schooling		784 learners in the year 2022	827	827
3	Suitable budget allocation to the school		2022 White paper 592 945 Hostel 1 066 00	2023 White paper 577 190 Hostel 985 000	Amount was decreased while learner's enrolment increased
4	Monitoring and support for school improvement plans and programmes	Number of schools that are implementing improvement plans based on monitoring findings of district officials			

5	Training of teachers in mathematics, numeracy, language content and methodology		Primary 6 Secondary 4 Total = 10	Primary 6 Secondary 4 Total = 10	All teachers are well trained
6	Implementing the National reading strategy		Reading days are observed and honoured	Reading is done every Fridays at the assembly	Vocabulary of learners have improved and they have learnt to be more spoken
7	Appointment of qualified teachers	Specific Percentage of Funza Lushaka and MP bursary holders placed in schools within six months upon completion of studies or upon confirmation that the bursar has completed studies.	0	0	0
		Number of therapist / specialist staff in public special schools	0	0	0
		Number of teachers employed in public special schools	0	0	0
		Qualified grade R12 teachers aged 30 and below entering the public service	0	0	0
		Number of grade R teachers or practioners with NQF level six and above qualification	1	1	1

As is the case with the five other schools covered in this evaluation, six outputs were supposed to be delivered by the boarding schools' project. For the output of '*healthy nutritious meals provided*', according to the MDoE, Shongwe boarding school's baseline, arguably of number of learners catered for across primary and secondary levels is 710 while its target is 594. No current level of achievement has been supplied.

Curiously, for output 2 (Learners funded at a minimum level) and output 4 (Percentage of expenditure going towards non personnel items), the baselines, targets and current achievements premised on the chosen indicators are zero, in all cases. Based on the indicator of '*number of learners in boarding schools benefiting from the no fees policy*', the school's current achievement level of 827 matches the set target linked to output 3.

Concerning the outcome of *'teachers trained in mathematics, numeracy, language content and methodology'*, measurements inspired by the chosen indicators and reflecting current achievements show that six educators each have been trained in Mathematics content and methodology as well as literacy / language content and methodology. For the last output that is concerned with functional schools' safety committees, the information supplied by the MDoE signals that though a target was set for the functional safety committee output, but no level of current achievement is reported. Markedly, at the activities level, there are no indicators shown in some cases and a number of baselines, targets and current achievements have also been reported as zero.

5.2.6 ToC PERFORMANCE-BASED INFORMATION FOR THABA CHWEU BOARDING SCHOOL

Framed in accordance with the ToC that underpinned the boarding schools' project, the performance-related information specific to Thaba Chweu boarding school is presented in Table 5.6. At the impact level, no information was supplied to indicate the extent to which the school is contributing to the result of *'equal access to education'*. At the outcomes level, the pursuit of the *'improved school readiness'* outcome was evidence by the fact that though the school set itself a target of enrolling 254 learners in grade R, it was only able to enrol 51 which is a mere 20% of its target. On a more positive note, the target of retaining three grade R educators or practitioners with a minimum NQF level 6 qualification was matched by the actual achievement attained in this regard.

For the outcome of *'Youths better prepared for further studies and the world of work beyond Grade 9'*, the MDoE volunteered that relative to a target of 1230, based on the indicator of *'number of learners in the boarding school benefitting from the No fee school policy'*, the actual achievement was 1163 learners. For the indicator of *'percentage of learners who passed the NSC examination'*, that was utilised for measuring performance related to the outcome of preparedness of *'youth to contribute towards a prosperous and equitable South Africa'*, the school achieved 63.2% which portrays that its set target in this regard was met. Instructively, though there was no target set for the school, an actual achievement of 9% was reported for the percentage of grade 12 learners that obtained a bachelor pass.

Curiously, for the other indicators associated with outcome 3, the school achieved a 0% for both *'percentage of grade 12 learners achieving 60% and above in mathematics'* as well as *'percentage of grade 12 learners achieving 60% and above in physical sciences'*. For the critical outcome of *'improved learner performance'*, no baseline, target or actual achievement information was provided. To indicate progress towards the outcome of *'10-year-old learners enrolled in publicly funded schools reading for meaning'*, the MDoE's claim is that at this school, 9 out of 10 foundation phase teachers have been trained in numeracy content and methodology and the achievement is the same with respect to foundation phase teachers trained in reading methodology.

The performance-related information contained in Table 5.6, specifically concerning outcome 6 seems to suggest that a functional school governance committee is in existence at Thaba Chweu boarding school. Similarly, provided information with respect to outcome 7, attests to the school having the requisite physical infrastructure and environment that inspire learners to learn and teachers to teach. This deduction stems from the position deduced from the supplied performance information that the school has water, electricity and sanitation provisions.

Table 5.6: Performance-related information for Thaba Chweu boarding school

	RESULTS AND ACTIVITIES	INDICATORS	BASELINE	TARGET	CURRENT ACHIEVEMENT
IMPACT					
1	Equal access to education				
7 OUTCOMES					
1	Improved school readiness (Access/ quality)	Number of boarding schools that offer grade R			
		Number of learners enrolled in Grade R in boarding schools	2021 to 2023	254	51
		Number of grade R educators or practioners with NQF level 6 and above qualification	2021 to 2023	3	3
		Number of Grade R practioners employed in boarding schools per quarter		none	
2	Youths better prepared for further studies and the world of work beyond Grade 9	Number of learners in boarding schools benefitting from the No fee school policy		1230	1163
3	Youths leaving the schooling system more prepared to contribute towards a prosperous and equitable South Africa (Grade 12)	Percentage of learners who passed NSC examination at boarding schools		63,6%	63,6%
		Percentage of grade 12 learners who passing at the bachelor pass level at boarding schools		-	9%
		Percentage of grade 12 learners achieving 60% and above in mathematics at boarding schools		-	0%
		Percentage of grade 12 learners achieving 60% and above in Physical Science at boarding schools		-	0%
		Number of boarding schools with NSC pass rate of 60% and above		-	YES

4	Improved learner performance				
5	10-year-old learners enrolled in publicly funded schools reading for meaning	Number of boarding schools using grades 1-3 lesson plans for literacy in home language		NO	NO
		Number of schools provided with grade R African languages reading material		NO	NO
		Number of foundation phase teachers trained in numeracy content and methodology		10	9
		Number of foundation phase teachers trained in reading methodology		10	9
		Number of boarding schools monitored for implementing reading strategy		NO	NO
6	Functional school governance committee	Percentage of SGB's in sampled schools that meet the minimum criteria in terms of effectiveness every year		100%	100%
7	School physical infrastructure and environment that inspires learners to learn and teachers to teach	Number of boarding schools provided with water infrastructure		YES	YES
		Number of boarding schools provided with electricity infrastructural (incl. upgrading of electricity)		YES	YES
		Number of boarding schools provided with sanitation facilities		YES	YES
OUTPUTS					
1	Healthy nutritious meals provided	Number of quintile 1-3 schools benefiting from the National school nutrition program		YES	YES
2	Learners funded at a minimum level	Percentage of Learners funded at a minimum level		100%	100%

3	Learners benefiting from the no-fees school policy	Number of learners in boarding schools benefiting from the no fees policy		100%	100%
4	Percentage of expenditure going towards non-personnel items	Percentage of expenditure going towards non personnel items		90%	90%
5	Teachers trained in mathematics, numeracy, language content and methodology	Number of teachers trained in Mathematics content and methodology		3	4
		Number of teachers trained in literacy / language content and methodology		6	8
6	Schools with functional Schools safety committees and SGBs	Percentage of schools with functional school safety committees		NO	NO

ACTIVITIES

1	Provision of National school nutrition programme (4 nutritious meals per day)			YES	YES
2	Learners benefiting from the no-fees schooling			YES	YES
3	Suitable budget allocation to the school	R2 500 000		+ - R 4 850 000	R822 000
4	Monitoring and support for school improvement plans and programmes	Number of schools that are implementing improvement plans based on monitoring findings of district officials		YES	YES
5	Training of teachers in mathematics, numeracy, language content and methodology				12

6	Implementing the National reading strategy			NO	NO
7	Appointment of qualified teachers	Specific Percentage of Funza Lushaka and MP bursary holders placed in schools within six months upon completion of studies or upon confirmation that the bursar has completed studies.		18%	18%
		Number of therapist / specialist staff in public special schools		0	0
		Number of teachers employed in public special schools		35	34
		Qualified grade R12 teachers aged 30 and below entering the public service		12	5
		Number of grade R teachers or practioners with NQF level six and above qualification		3	3

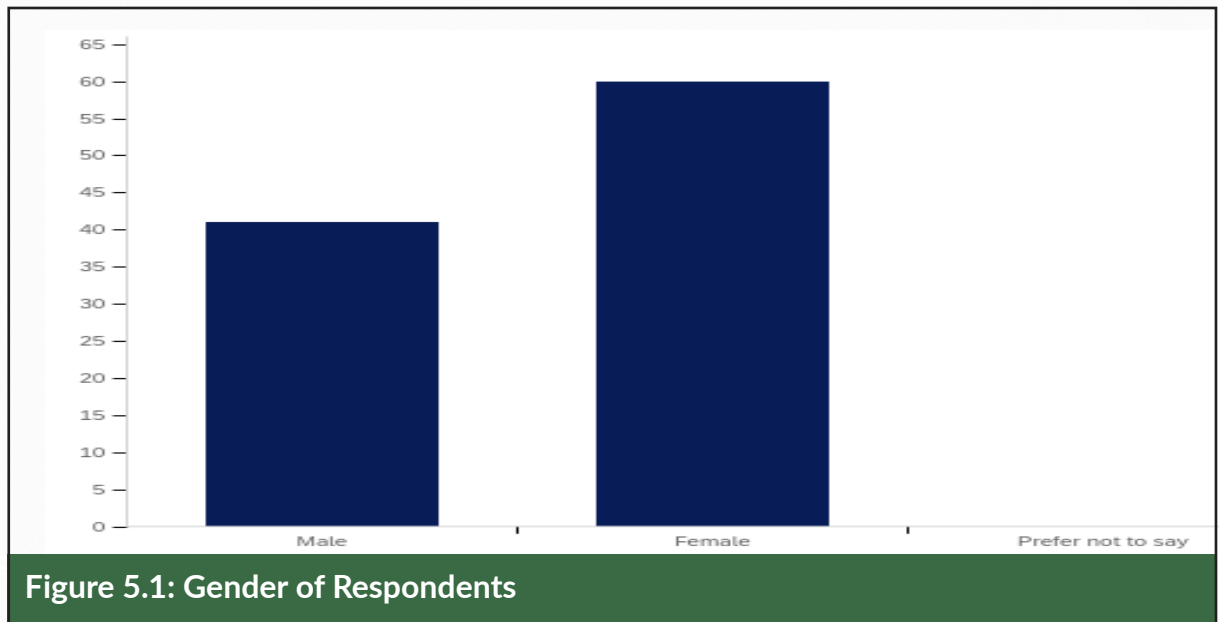
Output-wise, the performance-information presented in Table 5.6, shows that healthy nutritious meals are provided for learners. For the outputs of '*learners funded at a minimum level*' and '*learners benefiting from the no-fees school policy*', the target of 100% was achieved. With respect to '*percentage of expenditure going towards non-personnel items*', the target of 90% was also realised.

As it concerns output 5, though a target of 3 was set, 4 teachers were trained in Mathematics content and methodology. Similarly, though the target was to train 6 teachers in literacy/language content, the actual achievement was 8. For output 6 that is concerned with a functional safety committee and SGB, the performance information supplied is the word 'No', both for the target and actual achievement linked to the chosen indicator for the output. What this word means in the context of the desired performance information is unknown.

5.3 PRESENTATION OF SURVEY RESULTS

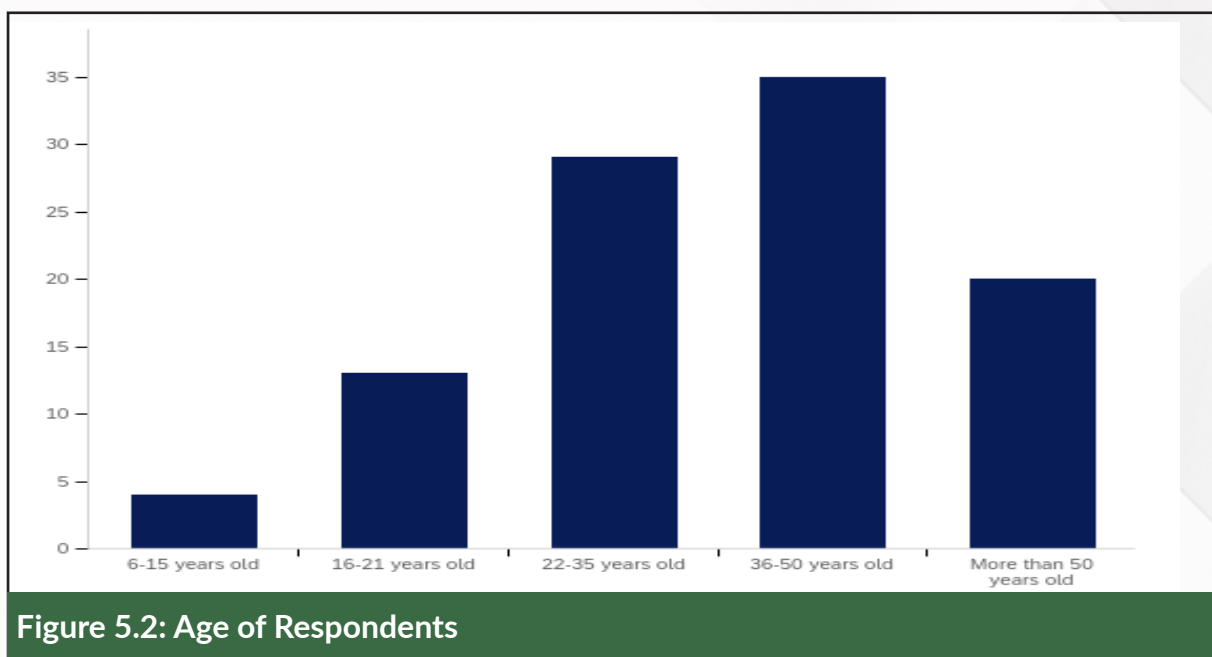
For the purpose of this evaluation exercise, it was deemed necessary to solicit the opinions of learners, educators, members of the school governing body, administration/management staff at the schools, parents as well as some employees of the MDoE. This was necessary in order to figuratively 'hear from the horse's mouth', as it relates to certain aspects of the boarding schools' project.

From demographic point of view, the respondent population comprised males and females. In terms of proportions, 59.41% of those who responded to the survey were females while the remaining 40.59% were males. This gender distribution of the survey respondents is illustrated in Figure 5.1

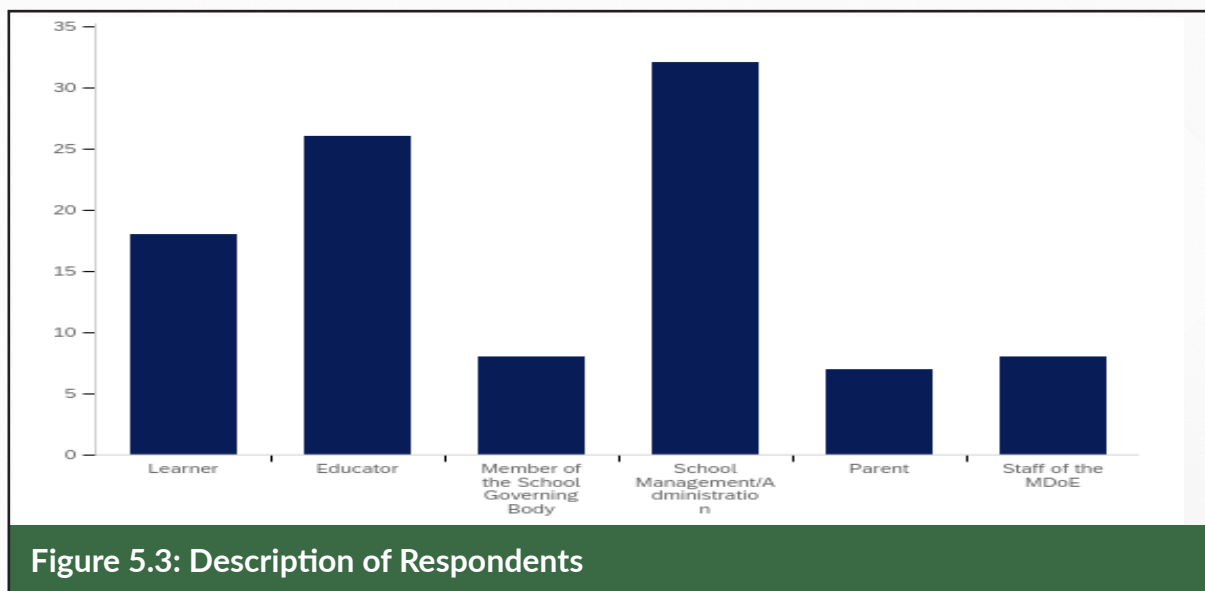


Given the diverse nature of the targeted pool of respondents, it was expected that individuals in the pool will fall within different age brackets. Consequently, the survey sought to determine the distribution of respondents based on five age categories created for the survey and the results are illustrated in Figure 5.2.

As depicted, the majority of those who responded to the survey were in the 36-50 years bracket. The proportion of this cohort of respondents equates to 34.65% of the entire respondent pool. The least represented age category was for those between 6 and 15 years old who accounted for 3.96% of the respondent population of the survey. Between these extremes, those in the 16-21 years and 22 – 35 years brackets constituted 12.87% and 28.71%, respectively, of the entire respondent group. The cohort of respondents who were over 50 years of age accounted for 19.8% of the respondents of the survey.



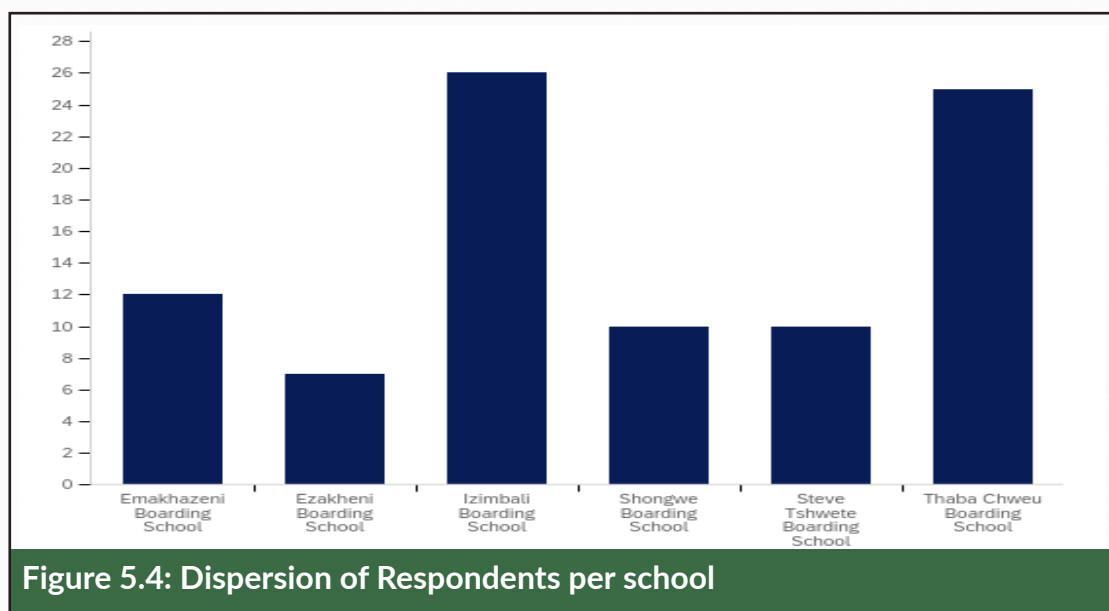
The survey targeted different groups of respondents with different cocktails of questions. There were six groups of possible respondents that were targeted and these include Learners, Educators, Members of the SGB, School Management/Administration staff, Parents and MDoE employees. Figure 5.3 shows the levels of representation of each of these categories of persons in the respondent pool. While Learners made up 18.18% of those that responded to the survey, Educators constituted 26.26% and members of the SGB accounted for 8.08%. Furthermore, 32.32%, 7.07% and 8.08% of the respondent group were drawn from School Management/Administration, Parents and Staff of the MDoE, respectively.



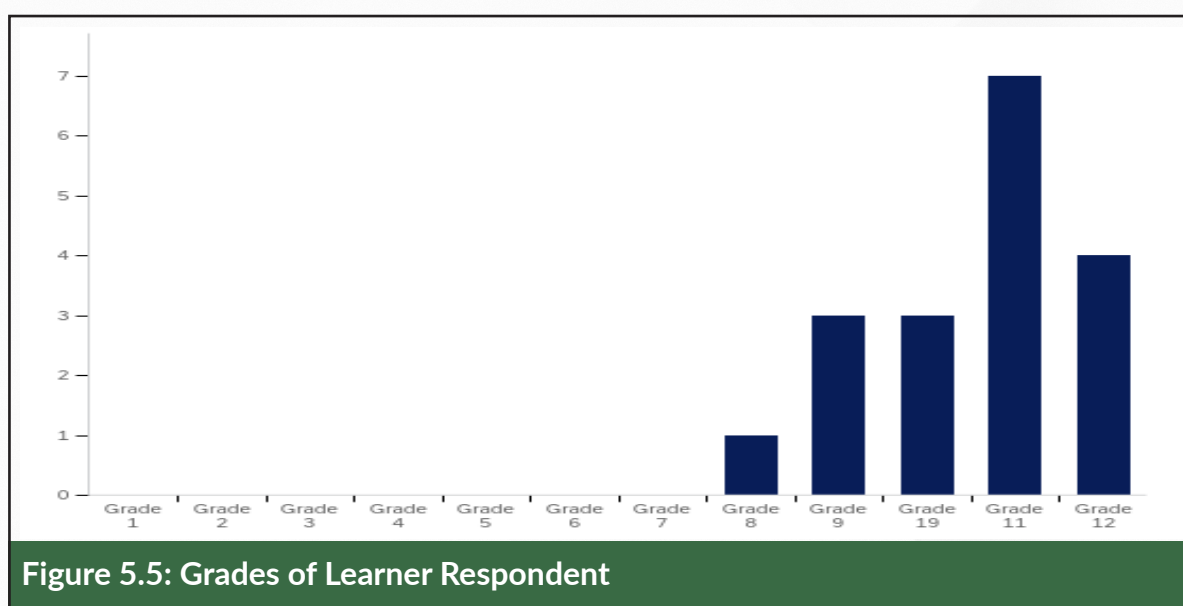
The evaluation exercise was focussed on six schools and to different extents, individuals from each school participated in the survey exercise. While Izimbali Boarding School contributed the highest number of respondents, Ezakheni Boarding School was responsible for the lowest level of participation in the survey.

More specifically, the survey results indicate that 13.33%, 7.78% and 28.89% of the respondents, respectively, came from Emakhazeni Boarding School, Ezakheni Boarding School and Izimbali Boarding School. While Shongwe Boarding School and Steve Tshwete Boarding School were equally represented as they were responsible for 11.11% of the respondents each. Thaba Chweu Boarding School is credited with contributing 27.78% of those that partook in the survey. The dispersion of respondents according to each of the six schools that were part of the evaluation is presented in Figure 5.4.

The composition of learners that participated in the survey was skewed in favour of Learners in high school. This is understandable as a self-administered online questionnaire was employed for data collection in the survey and those in high school may have been better equipped with electronic devices that enabled them to interact with the platform that was utilised to host the survey instrument.



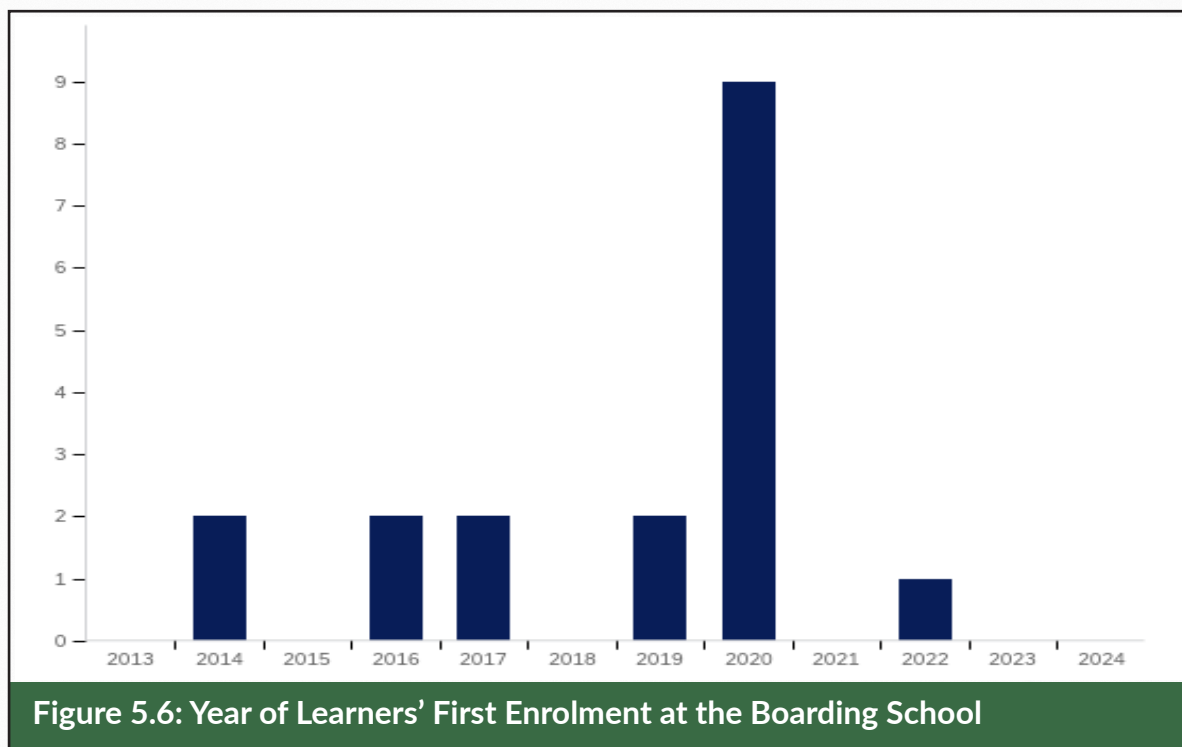
As shown in Figure 5.5, the least and most represented grade of learners in the respondent pool were those from grade 8 and grade 11, respectively. In terms of proportions, 5.56% and 16.67% of the learners that responded to the survey were in grades 8 and 9, respectively. Similarly, 16.67% of the learners that participated in the survey were from grade 10, 38.89% of them were from grade 11 while 22.22% were from grade 12.



The survey was interested in knowing for how long each learner respondent had been enrolled at the boarding schools as a direct indicator of the extent to which they had experienced the school and were therefore duly qualified to present informed observations.

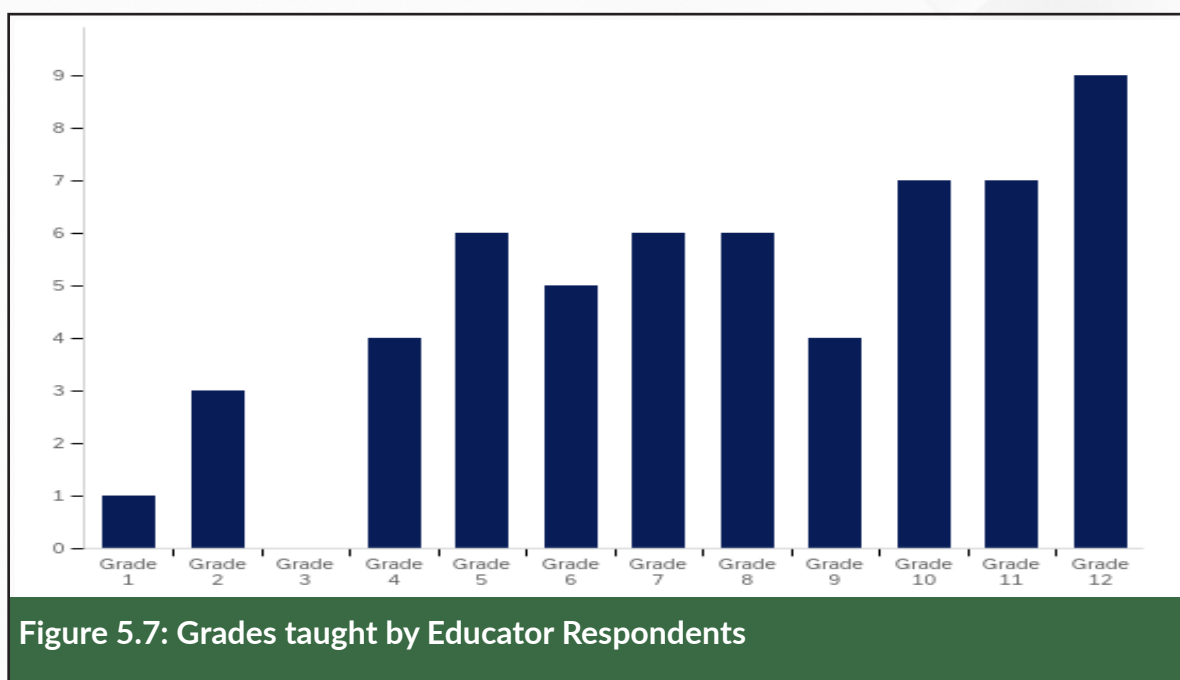
According to the results of the survey as shown in Figure 5.6, most of the learners that responded were first enrolled in their respective boarding schools in the year 2020. This group of learners accounted for 50% of all learners in the respondent pool. Interestingly, 11.11% of the learners that responded to the survey were first enrolled in their boarding schools either in 2014, 2016, 2017 or 2019.

Learners who first enrolled in the boarding school in 2022, accounted for 5.56% of the learner-respondent cohort. No learner that participated in the survey was first enrolled in the boarding schools in 2013, 2015, 2018, 2021, 2023 or 2024. The fact that over 94% of the learners who responded to the survey had experienced the boarding schools' environment for about three years or more signals that the views that they may tender will be well informed.



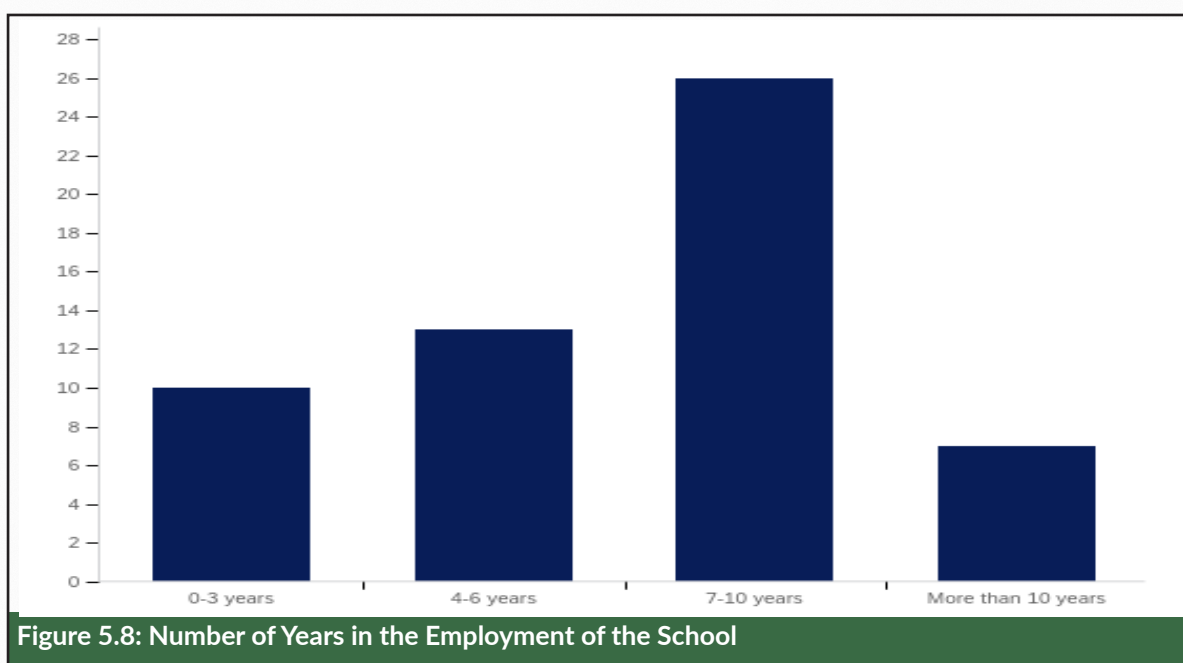
As it concerns the educators who responded to the survey, results show that collectively, they had taught basically all grades at the boarding schools from grade 1 to 12 except for grade 3. As was the case with learners, educators that participated in the survey were more involved with the high school grades. Survey results indicate that approximately 67.24% of educators that responded to the survey had taught at least one of the grades between 7 and 12.

As shown in Figure 5.7, the survey seemed to have interested educators who taught grade 12 learners, the most. Conversely the survey that was conducted did not appear attractive to educators who were responsible for teaching grade 1 learners as they participated the least in the survey. Specifically, while 15.52% of the educators had taught grade 12 learners, only 1.72% of the educators in the respondent population had taught grade 1 learners. Inevitably, the perspectives of the educators gleaned through their responses to the survey would, arguably, have been coloured more by their experiences of learners in the high school.



As part of the effort to comprehensively paint a demographic picture of those that participated in the survey, the educators and other employees of the boarding schools were requested to indicate the length of time that they may have been in employment at the school. The need for this stems from the conviction that a direct correlation exists between number of years spent as an employee of the school and the degree of experience/knowledge that one may have about the school.

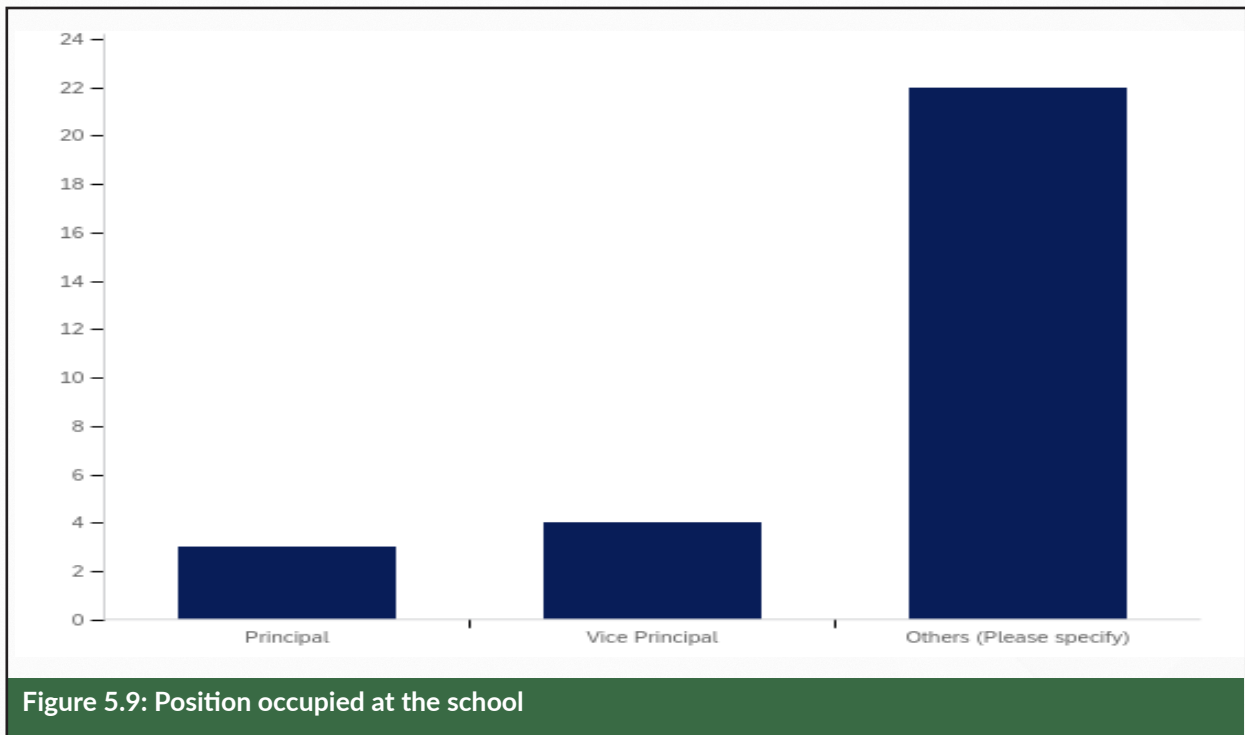
As illustrated in Figure 5.8, most of those who participated in the survey had been in the employment of the boarding schools for about 7-10 years. Precisely, 46.43% of survey participants who work for the boarding schools had been in the school's employment for 7-10 years. About half of this percentage was linked to school staff that had been working for their respective schools for about 4-6 years. Combined, these two groups of school employees, account for 69.64% of all of the schools' employees that participated in the survey. While 12.50% of the school staff cohort of respondents had worked for their schools for more than 10 years, 17.86% indicated that they had been employed by the school for 0-3 years.



The respondents to the survey who were currently employed by the schools occupied different positions, as depicted in Figure 5.9. Beside the Principals and Vice Principals who made up 24.13% of school staff that participated in the survey, there were a number of others playing different roles at the schools.

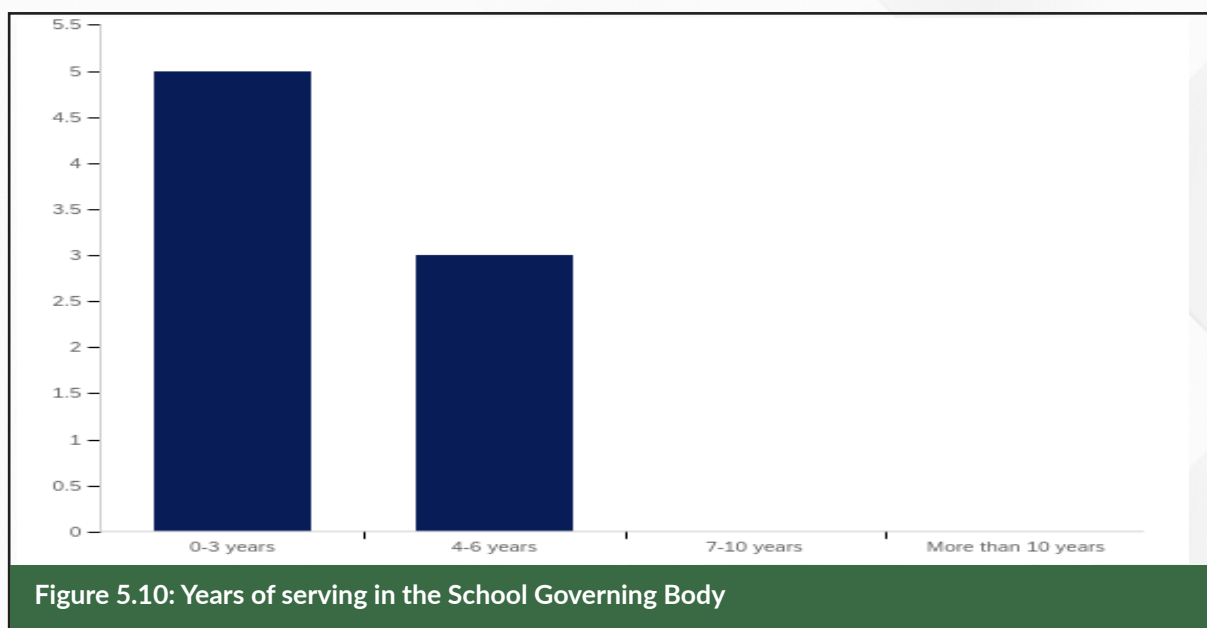
These roles were those of Heads of Departments, Subject Heads, Administrators, Matrons, Hostel Superintendent, Principal Housekeeping Supervisor etc. The variety of positions occupied by the survey respondents drawn from the schools might provide insights about issues of interest to the evaluation, from different perspectives.

As for the respondents who were part of school governing bodies, most of them had only served in the SGBs for between 0-3 years as illustrated in Figure 5.10. Those in this category made up 62.50% of SGB members that partook in the survey while the remaining 37.50% had been in the SGB for between 4-6 years. No one that participated in the survey had served in their respective SGBs for more than 6 years. The SGB members who participated in the survey were predominantly Deputy Chairpersons and Treasurers.



As has been earlier noted, staff of the MDoE were also given the opportunity to ventilate their opinions with respect to issues of interest to the evaluation in the specific context of the six boarding schools. Interestingly, only eight employees of the MDoE embraced the opportunity. In this group, 37.50% and 12.50% had been in the employment of the department for 0-5 years and 16-20 years respectively. Those who had been employed by the department for 6-10 years and 11-15 years were each represented by 25% of the respondents that indicated that they work for the MDoE.

The survey was interested in determining if respondents, regardless of whether they were learners, educators, parents, SGB members, school administrators or MDoE staff, thought it was necessary for the boarding schools to be established by the Mpumalanga Provincial Government. The results of the survey as presented in Figure 5.11, show that majority of the respondents (94.87%) were convinced that it was necessary. A much smaller percentage which equates to 2.56% were not exactly sure whether it was necessary to do so or not. Similarly, 2.56% of the respondent pool did not think that it was.



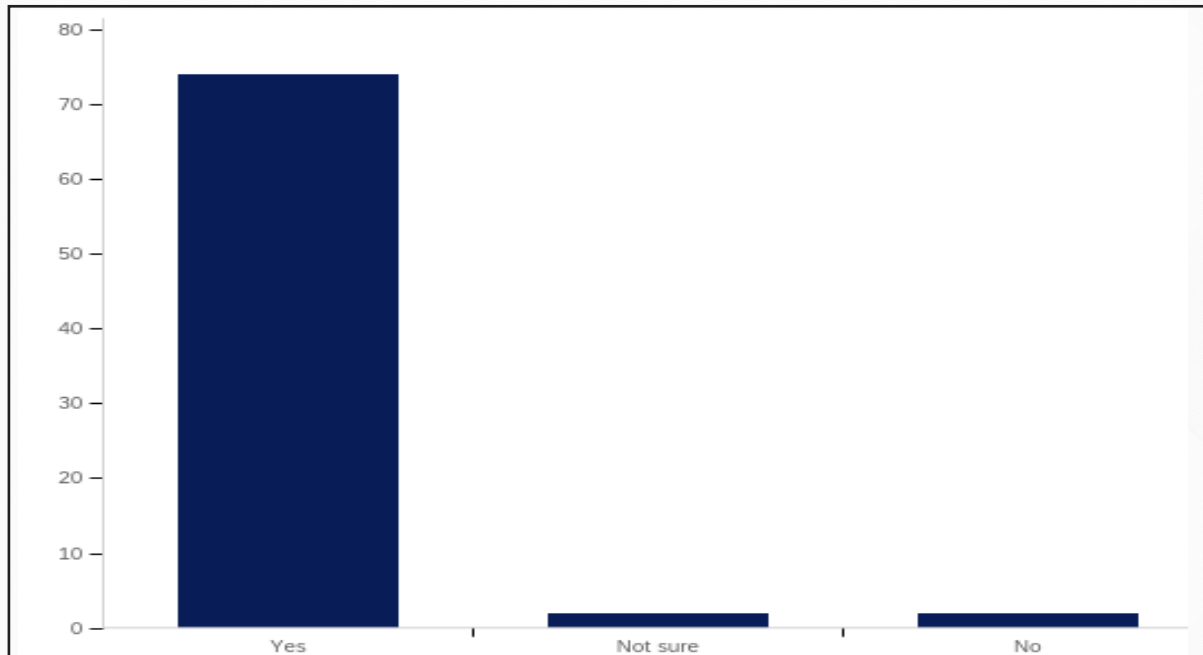


Figure 5.11: Respondents' Perceptions regarding the necessity to establish the Boarding School

The survey sought to determine from the learners, exclusively, if they preferred their current boarding schools to the rural/farm schools that they were attending, previously. Based on the responses obtained and expressed in Figure 5.12, 88.89% of the learners unequivocally declared that they preferred the boarding schools while 11.11% of the learners signalled that they liked the rural/far schools more. Based on these results, it seems obvious that in the group of learners that responded to the survey, their current boarding schools were preferred to their previous farm/rural schools.

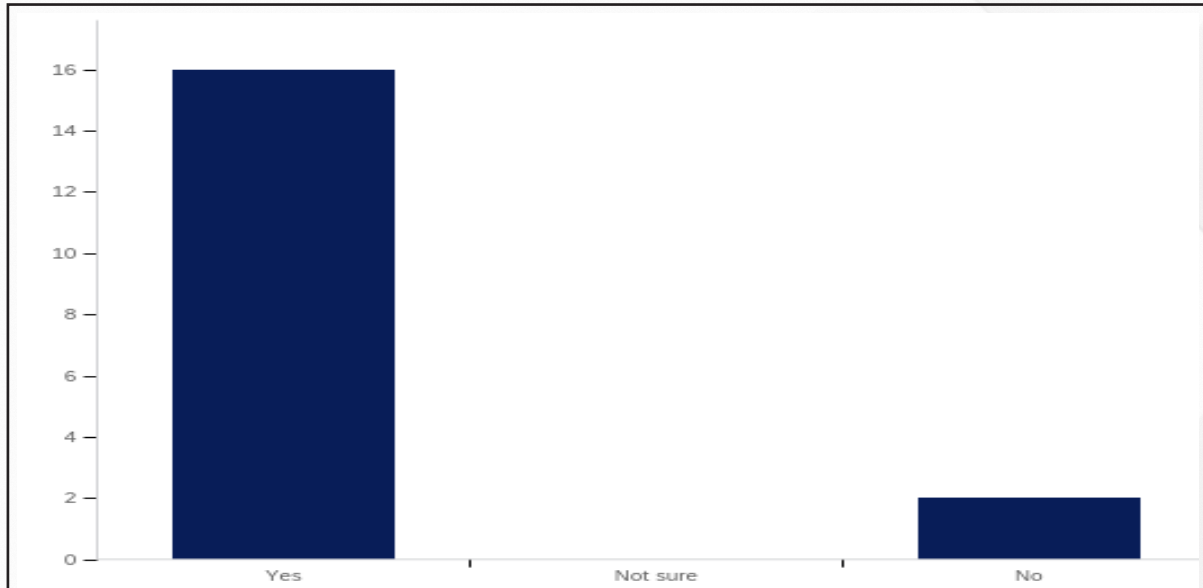


Figure 5.12: Learners' preference of Boarding Schools over the Rural/Farm Day School

A variety of opinions were tendered by the learners in an effort to explain why they preferred their current boarding schools. Some of the thoughts expressed - in the words of the learners - were:

"I love the way our teachers and our staff members treat us".

"They prioritise education and they understand our background".

"I learn many things, and right now I have my own time to study my books in boarding school".

"Staying with teachers 24hours".

"The fact that our teachers stick consistently towards our education and in ensuring that our education and talents are being nourished and recognised".

"We have time to study".

In response to a questionnaire item that asked if the boarding schools have helped to overcome some of the challenges that may have been experienced in the farm/rural schools, overwhelmingly, most of the survey respondents answered in the affirmative (see Figure 5.13). More specifically, 96.10% of the respondents affirmed that the boarding school had helped overcome some of the challenges faced in the rural/farm schools.

Conversely, 2.60% of those who responded to the question did not think so. The rest of the group which amounts to a 1.30% portion, expressed that they were not sure about whether the challenges faced in the farm/rural schools had been overcome with the establishment of the boarding schools.

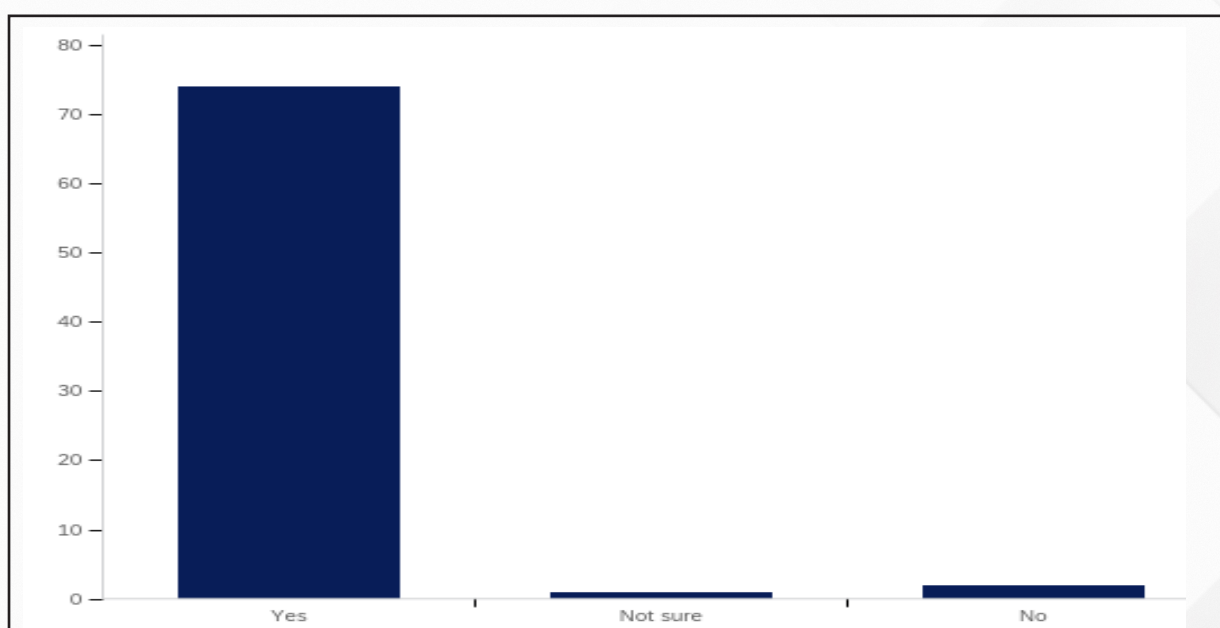


Figure 5.13: Perceptions related to Boarding Schools' having helped to overcome some of the Challenges faced in the Rural/ Farm Schools

Invariably, one of the prime challenges associated with Day schools revolves around attendance and this is sometimes exacerbated by the prevalent poverty in the households of children that attend farm/rural schools. This position is reflected in the thoughts of some the learners who responded to the survey as presented in Figure 5.14.

In this group, 61.11% of the learners confirmed that school attendance was difficult before they came to the boarding school. This opinion was countered by 33.33% of the learners who did not indicate that they had any difficulties with class attendance while they were at their previous schools. Additionally, 5.56% of learners were not sure if they actually experienced any difficulties with class attendance prior to their enrolment at the boarding schools.

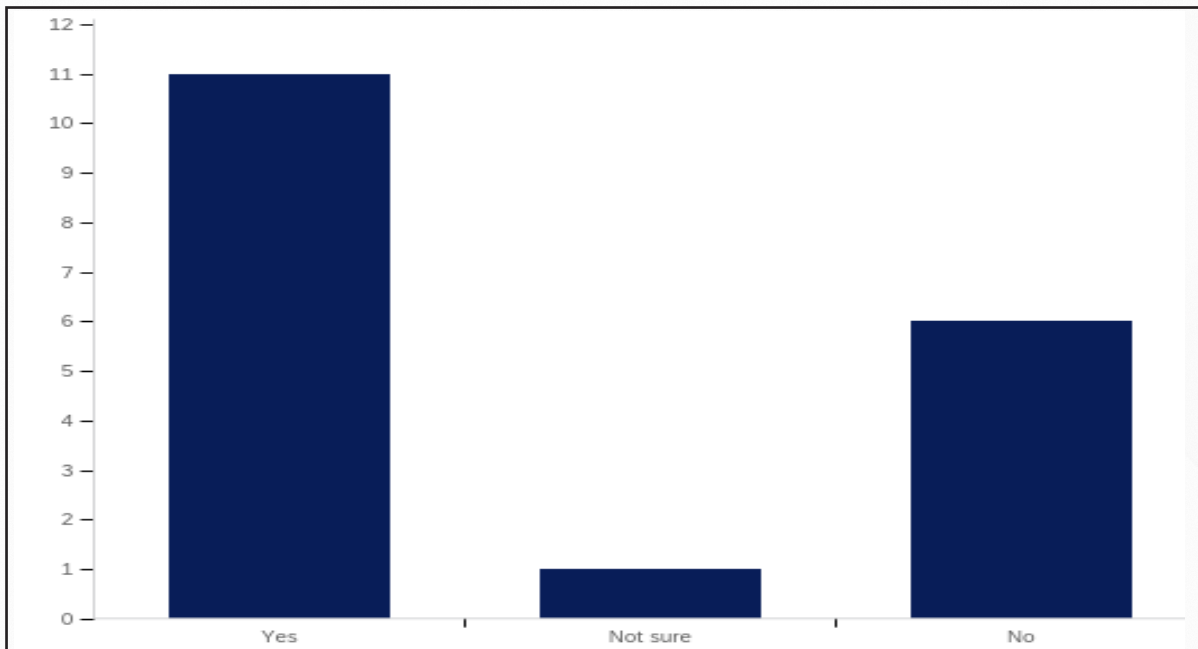


Figure 5.14: Learners' previous experience of difficulty in attending school regularly

In an attempt to establish the position of other stakeholders (parents, members of the SGB, educators, school administrators and staff of MDoE) with respect to the role of the boarding schools in improving class attendance, their views were sought. The thoughts of these stakeholders with respect to whether the boarding schools have aided class attendance are presented in Figure 5.15.

When the survey enquired if the boarding schools had improved learners' class attendance, 90.79% of the respondents (parents, members of the SGB, educators, school administrators and staff of MDoE) suggested that this was indeed the case. While 3.95% of the respondents were not sure that class attendance had been improved by the boarding schools, 5.26% were definite that no improvement in class attendance could be credited to the boarding schools.

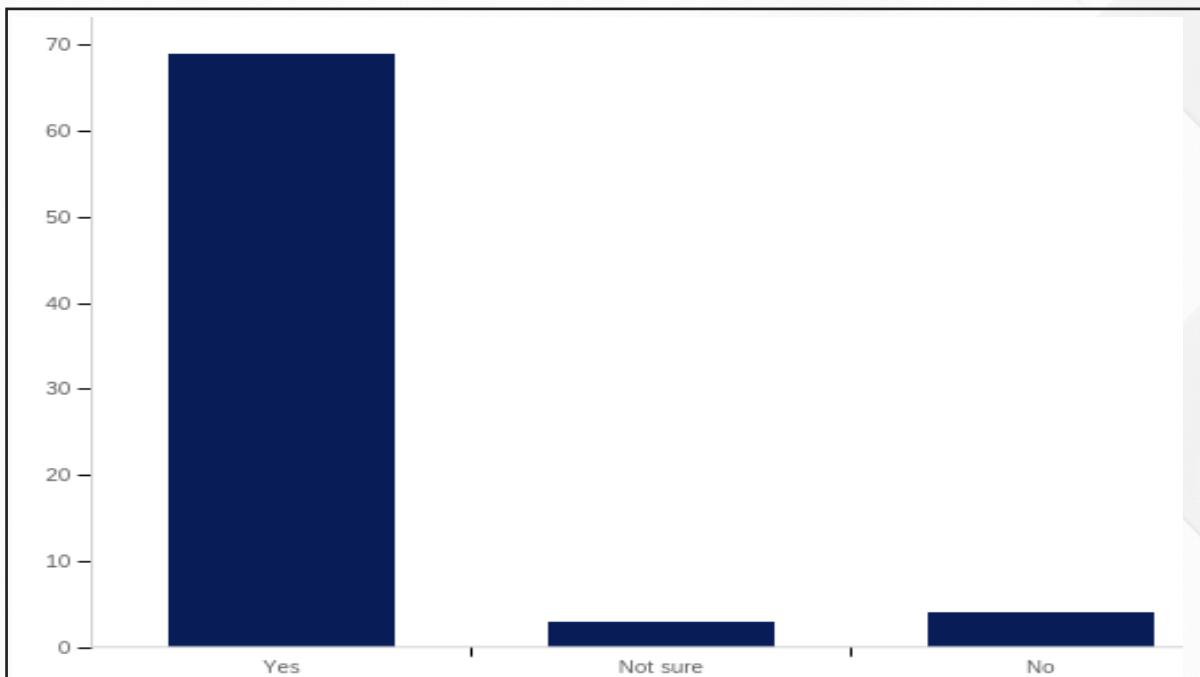
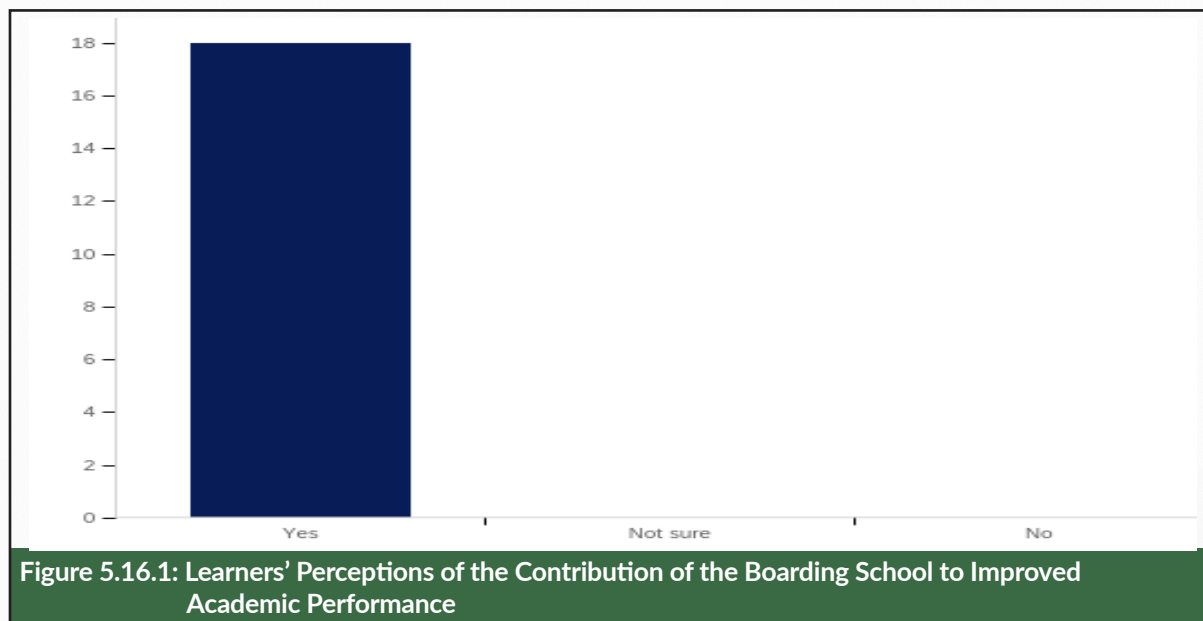


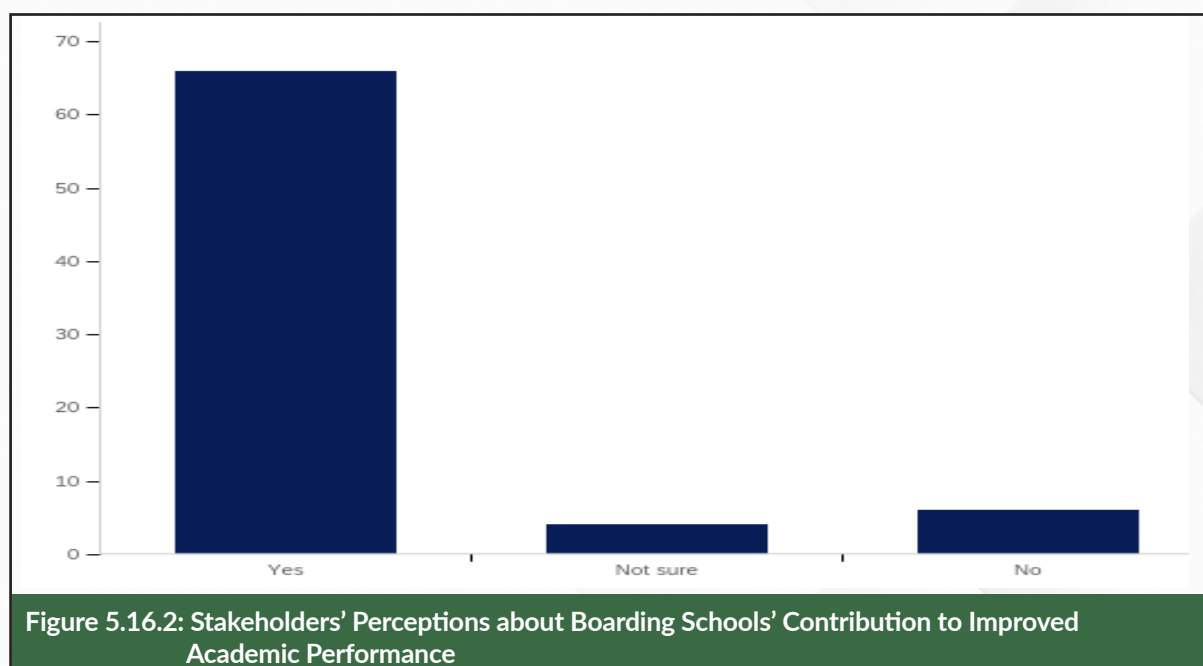
Figure 5.15: Stakeholders' perceptions in relation to whether the Boarding School has improved attendance of learners

Using the survey, the evaluation exercise attempted to gauge the perceptions of respondents as it pertains to the contribution, or lack thereof, of the boarding schools to improved academic performance. The distribution of the opinion of the learners, in this regard, is presented in Figure 5.16.1. All the learners who responded to the survey were unequivocal in their declaration that being in the boarding schools had helped them improve their academic performance.

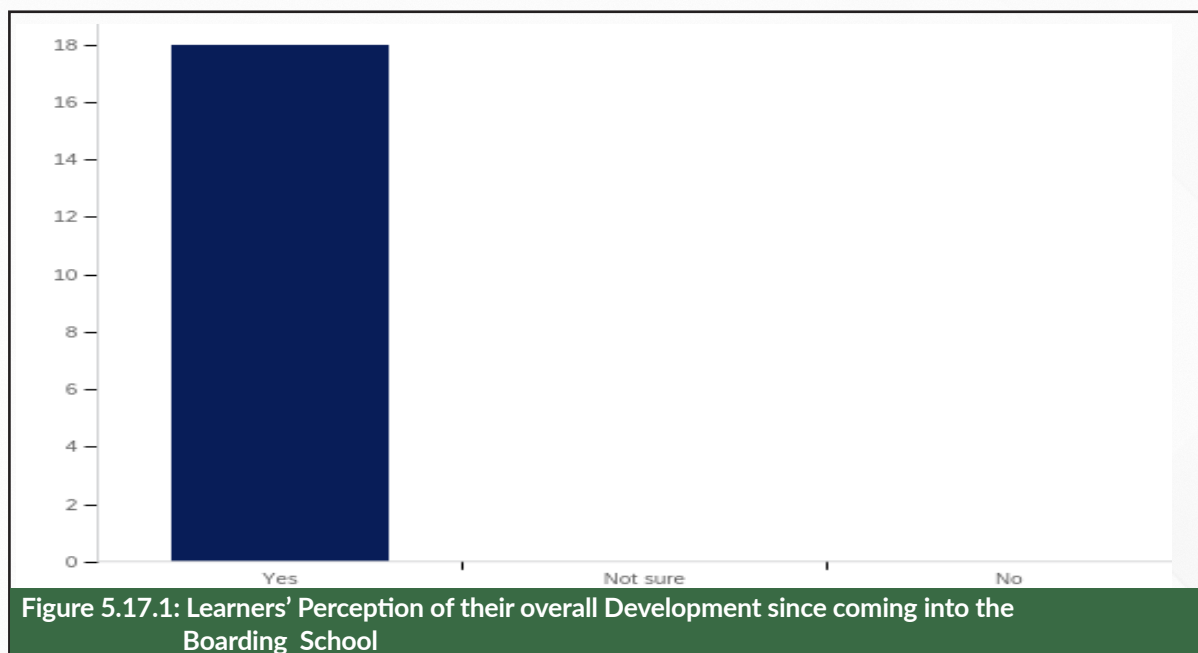


In keeping with this specific enquiry, the other stakeholders which comprised educators, parents, SGB members, school administrators and MDoE staff were asked if they thought that the boarding schools had contributed to the improved academic performance of the learners enrolled in the schools. The results obtained, as illustrated in Figure 5.16.2 showed that the majority of these stakeholders felt that the boarding schools had definitely contributed to improved academic performance of the learners.

The results suggest that 86.84% of stakeholders who responded felt that the boarding schools had helped the learners perform better in their studies. While 5.26% of the respondents were not sure of this, a 7.89% proportion of the stakeholders in this cohort were of the opinion that the boarding schools had not necessarily been responsible for improved performance academic performance of the learners.

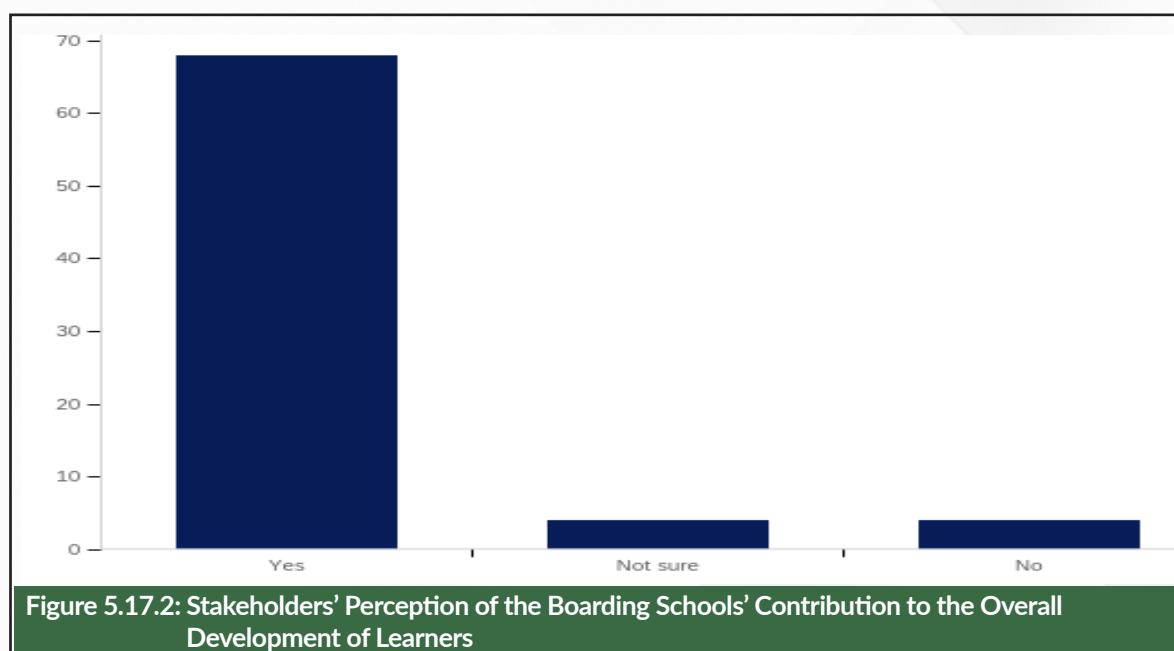


The survey was interested in determining if the boarding schools were contributing to the overall development of learners even beyond the academic space. The opinions of the learners were sought and the thoughts of other stakeholders, beside the learners were also solicited. The results of the survey pertaining to this are presented in Figures 5.17.1 and 5.17.2. Strictly from the learners' perspective, as shown in Figure 5.17.1, 100% of those who responded to the concerned questionnaire item were convinced that the boarding schools had helped them develop better as individuals.

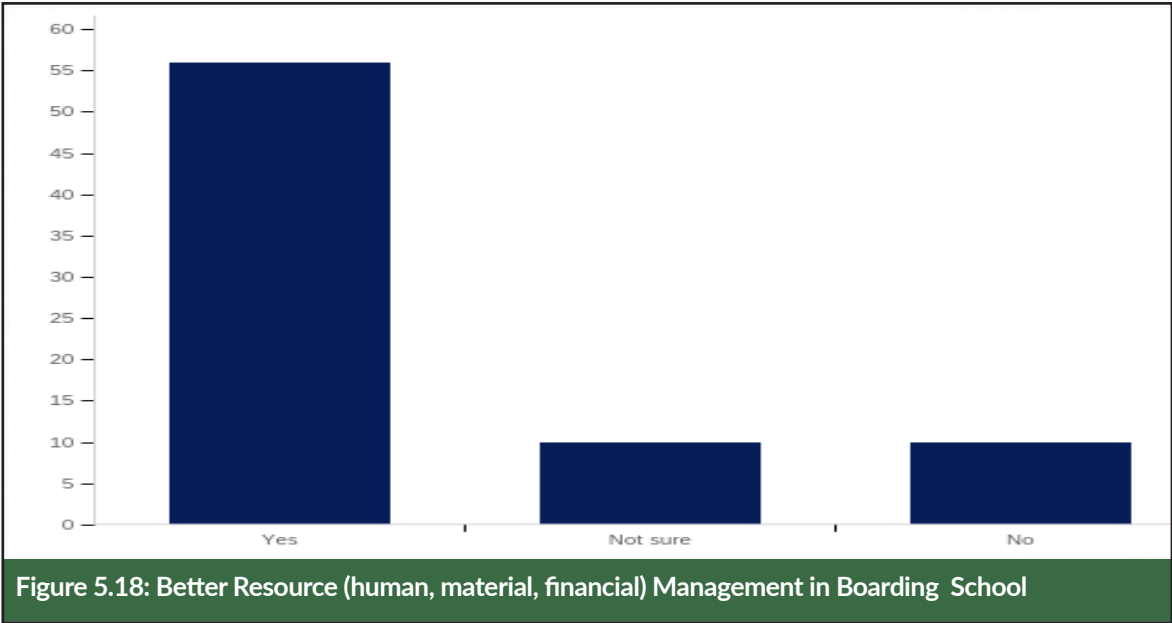


The position of the learners is not dramatically different from that of the other stakeholders. As illustrated in Figure 5.17.2, majority of stakeholders were convinced that the boarding schools were definitely contributing to the overall development of the learners. In particular, 89.47% opined that the boarding schools had certainly helped the overall development of learners. In the same group of respondents, 5.26% thought differently and volunteered that the boarding schools had not helped the overall development of learners. In consideration of the same issue, there were respondents who were not exactly sure if the boarding schools had helped.

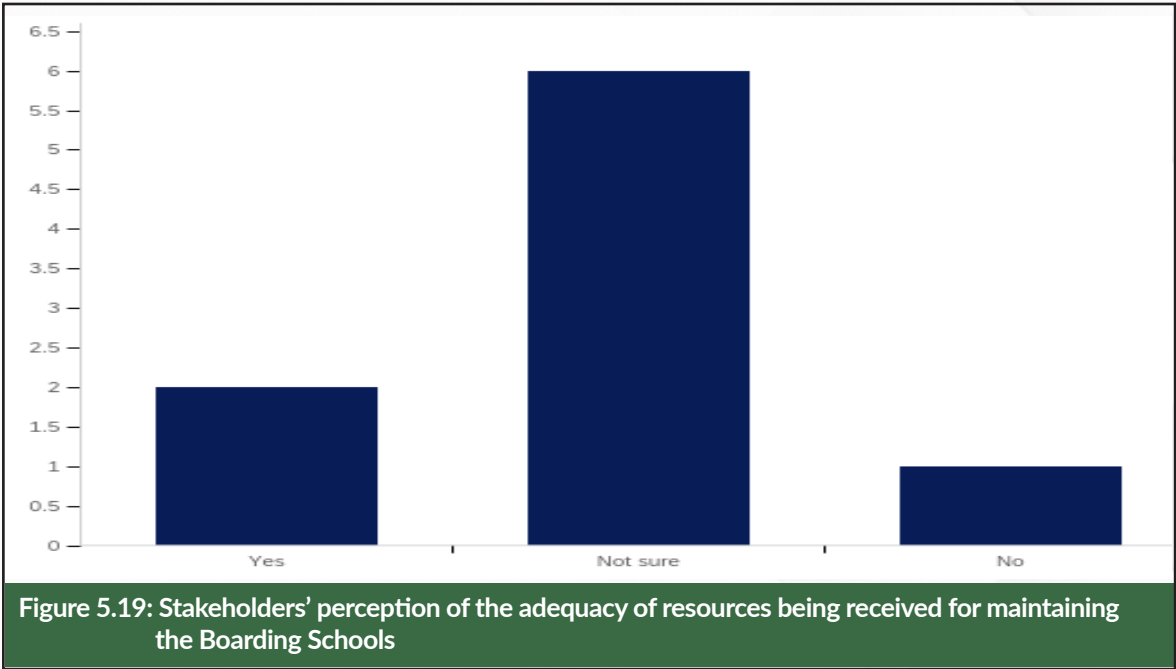
When quizzed about whether they felt that there was better management of human, material and financial resources associated with boarding schools alternative relative to the farm/rural schools, respondents generally thought that this was the case.



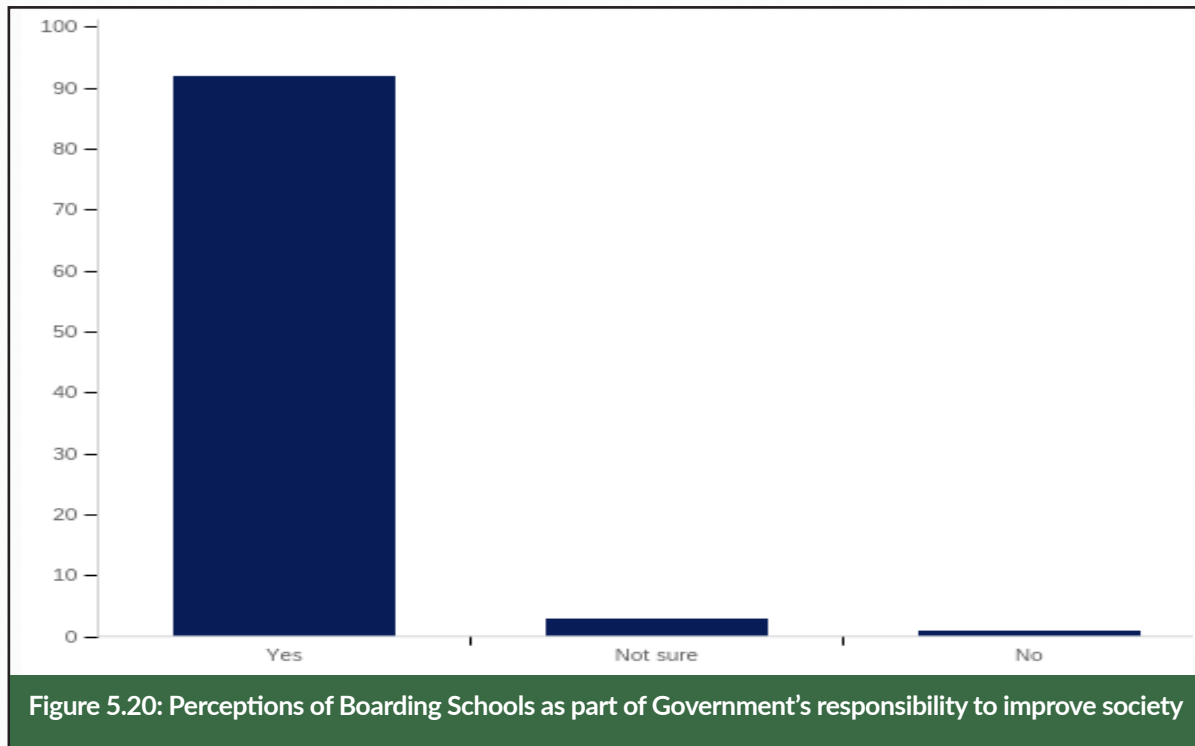
As shown in Figure 5.18, the majority of the respondents (73.68%) felt that there was better management of resources in the boarding schools. A different position was taken by 13.16% of respondents who were not sure about this and a similar proportion who opined that the management of resources could not be said to be better in the boarding schools.



In keeping with the theme of resources, respondents were asked if they felt that the resources received by the boarding schools were adequate for the maintenance of the schools. Results of the survey pertaining to this are illustrated in Figure 5.19. Interestingly, 66.67% or two-thirds of the respondents (excluding learners), that replied to this item in the questionnaire were not sure if this was the case. A 22.22% proportion of this group of respondents felt that the resources were adequate while 11.11% canvassed a contrary opinion.

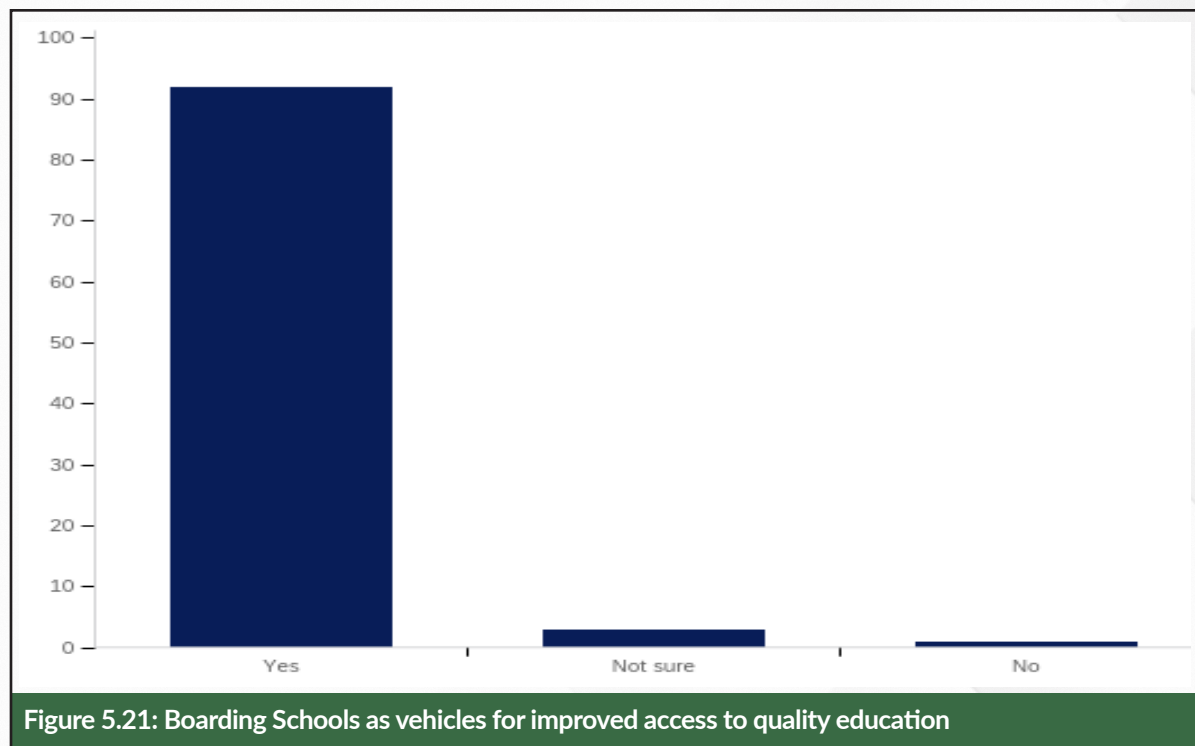


In Figure 5.20, the views of respondents with respect to whether the boarding schools can be considered to be in line with the government's responsibility to bring about societal improvement. Out of the 96 responses obtained for this specific enquiry, 95.83% were indicative of the fact the boarding schools are definitely part of what the government should provide and support in order to improve society. Additionally, 3.13% of the responses obtained showed that those who volunteered them were not sure while 1.04% indicated with certainty that the establishment of boarding schools is not exactly part of the responsibilities of government, aimed at improving the society.



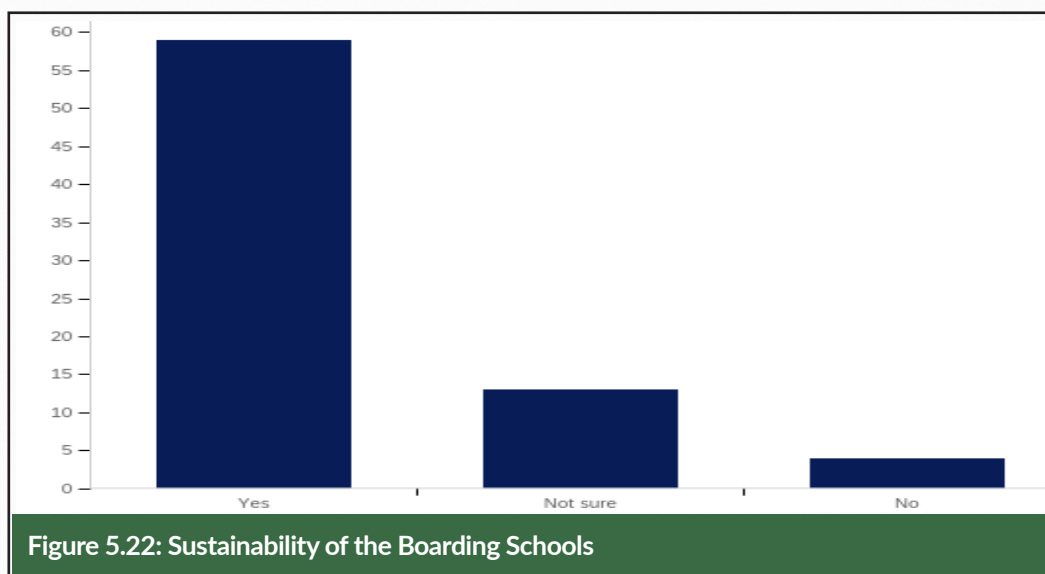
As illustrated in Figure 5.21, there was indubitable conviction among the respondents that boarding schools serve as vehicles for improved access to quality education. Indeed, 93.42% of respondents averred that the boarding schools have enabled more people access quality education compared to farm/rural schools.

At the other extreme, 1.32% of the respondents opposed this assertion by suggesting that the boarding schools have not improved access to quality education for more people relative to the farm/rural schools. The remaining 5.26% of the respondent group were unsure about the role of the boarding schools with respect to improving access to quality education for more people.



Concerned about the longevity of the boarding schools' project of the Mpumalanga Provincial Government, respondents were asked what they felt with respect to the sustainability of the boarding schools. A distribution of the responses obtained is presented in Figure 5.22. The results indicate that 77.63% of the survey participants opined that the boarding schools can be sustained going into the future.

A much smaller proportion of respondents (5.26%) were of the view that the boarding schools cannot be sustained. In the same pool of respondents, 17.11% were not sure about whether the boarding schools will be sustained or not.



6.1 INTRODUCTION

This section of the evaluation report provides an opportunity to leverage some of the findings of the evaluation to respond to the research questions that instigated the evaluation exercise. In doing so, it was deemed pertinent to consider some of the research questions alongside the specific OECD-DAC's evaluation criterion that they must align with. By responding to the pre-determined research questions posed in the RFQ that birthed this evaluation exercise, the aim of the evaluation would have been realised.

Primarily, the evaluation was undertaken to distil relevant performance-related information and present them. Additionally, the discussions in this section would help to address the concerns couched in the evaluation questions while simultaneously catalysing improved understanding of the overall performance of the boarding schools' project. Mindful of the fact that the evaluation should engender learning and enhancement of institutional knowledge, beyond the concluding discourse harboured in this section of the report, recommendations that could lead to better performance of the boarding schools' project have also been provided.

6.2 REVISITING RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

In part, the evaluation sought to determine if the boarding schools' project was implemented as conceptualised. To respond to this question, the evaluation relied upon the ToC that was developed for the boarding schools' project with specific attention to the activities that were proposed to be undertaken as part of the project.

The said activities, as reflected in the ToC included the *'provision of National school nutrition programme (4 nutritious meals per day)'*, *'learners benefiting from the no-fees schooling'*, *'suitable budget allocation to the school'*, as well as *'monitoring and support for school improvement plans and programmes'*. Additionally, according to the ToC, the boarding schools' project also entailed *'training of teachers in mathematics, numeracy, language content and methodology'*, *'implementing the National reading strategy'*, *'appointment of qualified teachers'* as well as *'capacity-building of SMTs and SGBs of their roles and responsibilities'*.

Markedly, across the schools the activities identified as part of the boarding schools' project are being undertaken. It is however noteworthy, for instance, that for Ezakheni, there was no indication as to whether a suitable budget is being provided for the school and whether monitoring and support for school improvement plans and programmes is taking place.

For Steve Tshwete boarding school, while no indication as to whether the National school nutrition programme was being implemented as expected. However, performance-related information supplied by the MDoE suggests, at the outputs level of results, that learners receive *'four nutritious meals per day provided by DARDLEA'*. This signals that the National school nutrition programme may be running satisfactorily at the school. With respect to the appointment of qualified teachers at Steve Tshwete, it was noted that *'the school has vacant posts for deputy principal and two departmental heads. Only the post for the deputy principal and one departmental head had been advertised'*.

In Emakhazeni boarding school, no information was supplied in relation to whether there has been suitable budget allocation to the school. At Shongwe boarding school, with reference to the issue of suitable budget allocation, strangely, according to the acting Principal, the *'amount was decreased while learner's enrolment increased'*. A rational expectation would have been that a direct positive correlation would exist between learner enrolment numbers and budget but this has clearly not been

reflected in the Shongwe boarding school case. Regardless, to a large extent, most of the activities outlined as part of the boarding schools' project are being undertaken at each of the six schools, which is a testament to the fact that the intervention is being implemented as conceptualised.

Having responded to the first evaluation question posed in the RFQ, it was necessary to also source answers to the three other questions posed. In doing so, it was deemed appropriate to follow the standard trajectory of most evaluations, by leveraging the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria that are tailor-made for developmental interventions.

In essence, the criteria served as a veritable framework for the assessment of the overall performance of the boarding schools' project while concurrently responding to the three other evaluation questions. In line with this disposition, the concluding discussions of the evaluation exercise pivot around its relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

6.2.1 Relevance of the Boarding Schools Project

The boarding schools project served to merge a number of different farm/rural schools. The project has been positioned as an intervention that would enable learners from poor households (that were previously in farm/rural schools) to access better quality education by being accommodated in boarding schools. Given the high levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment that are endemic in the rural areas that house the target population of the boarding schools, their relevance seems rather obvious.

Echoing this conviction, as shown in Table 6.1, 74 out of 78 people who responded to the survey were unequivocal in asserting that it was necessary to establish the boarding schools. In this cohort of respondents that excluded learners, every parent, every member of the SGB and every staff of the MDoE contended that it was necessary to establish the boarding schools. Among the educators, 24 out of 25 of them believed that it was necessary to establish the boarding schools while 28 of 31 people who belong in the category of School Management/Administration nursed the same sentiment.

Table 6.1: Cross tabulation of respondents' category and perception of the necessity for boarding schools

	Was it necessary to establish this boarding school?			
	Total	Yes	Not sure	No
Total Count	78.0	74.0	2.0	2.0
Educator	25.0	24.0	0.0	1.0
	32.1%	32.4%	0.0%	50.0%
Member of the School Governing Body	7.0	7.0	0.0	0.0
	9.0%	9.5%	0.0%	0.0%
School Management/Administration	31.0	28.0	2.0	1.0
	39.7%	37.8%	100.0%	50.0%
Parent	7.0	7.0	0.0	0.0
	9.0%	9.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Staff of the MDoE	8.0	8.0	0.0	0.0
	10.3%	10.8%	0.0%	0.0%

In the exact words of some of the respondents:

Boarding schools are beneficial to the communities because learners invest more time in studies than walking a distance of 2km to school



Monday to Friday”.

“The boarding has helped the poor of the poorest to attend school to change the lives of their community and nation at large”.



“Boarding school is good in a sense that it helps children develop independence and self-reliance. For the learners to be away from home, it teaches them to take care of themselves, manage their time, develop sense of responsibility and how to work in a team”.



“It is a good initiative. It promotes quality teaching and learning. It eliminates chances of drop out. It also curbs teenage pregnancy”.



“They help disadvantaged community to take their children to school without paying a cent”.



I think it was a good idea to establish them as, firstly these boarding schools are homes to many of the learners. Remember some come from very poor families, so the boarding schools provide them with good nutrition, accommodation and they are also kept from engaging themselves in dangerous activities outside the school premises (community) as they spent most of their time under supervision”.



“It’s a fantastic idea it will come with a very fruitful result, and it should be further implemented across the whole province and the nation”

6.2.2 Coherence of the Boarding Schools Project

There were no evaluation questions that sought to interrogate the coherence of the boarding schools’ project with the overarching aim of the provincial government. Regardless of this, it was deemed appropriate to try and ascertain how coherent the programme is with the mandate of the government. In other words, the coherence of the boarding schools could only be established against the backdrop of the knowledge of what the Mpumalanga Provincial Government and MDoE stand for.

The mission of the Mpumalanga Provincial Government is to “*ensure equitable transformation and enhancement of the image of the Mpumalanga Provincial Government*”. As an arm of the provincial government, the vision of MDoE is “*providing quality education and training towards a better life for all*”. Against this backdrop, it is apparent that the aims of the boarding schools’ project are in harmony with the aspiration of the Mpumalanga Provincial Government. The boarding schools project appears to be one of the veritable vehicles that the government could employ to create a better life for its people, by ensuring access to quality education.

This position is reinforced by the finding of this evaluation that the establishment of boarding schools is part of what the government should provide and support in order to improve society. According to the results of the survey, this position was canvassed by 95.83% of the 92 respondents that tendered their opinions in relation to this specific enquiry in the questionnaire. In light of the discussion in this section, the stance of the evaluation is that there is coherence between the boarding schools project and the overall aspiration of the Mpumalanga Provincial Government as well as the Provincial department of education.

6.2.3 Effectiveness of the Boarding Schools Project

Effectiveness is a measure of the extent to which intended results were realised. In accordance with the ToC of the project, the results that are expected to be delivered are identified at the levels of outputs, outcomes and impacts. Notably, the evaluation criterion of effectiveness aligns with two evaluation questions posed in the RFQ for this evaluation exercise. While the first question asks if the intervention is yielding the desired results, the second question is concerned with whether there are any unintended outcomes crystallising from the project. From a strict monitoring and evaluation perspective, since effectiveness typically relates to outputs and outcomes, these two levels of results will be focused on in this section. Moreover, the issue of the impact result is discussed in the section concerned with the evaluation criterion of impact.

Table 6.2 is an outcomes-performance rating matrix. It presents the outcome level results desired by the boarding schools’ project and the levels of performance of the schools in relation to each of the seven outcomes crafted by the MDoE. In the case of each outcome, performance-wise, a boarding school is either deemed to have realised under-achievement, achievement or over-achievement. Under-achievement is associated with cases where a set target for the school was not met, achievement relates to a situation where the set targets of the school were met and over-achievement implies that targets set for the school with respect to an outcome were duly met.

In terms of ratings, under-achievement, achievement and over-achievement are assigned ratings of 1, 2 and 3 respectively. In cases where multiple targets/indicators exist for a single outcome, the determination of achievement will be cognisant of the number of targets for that specific outcome that were met or not met. A school will not be mentioned in the outcomes-performance rating matrix if no performance information was provided for a particular outcome. The same decision will apply when no targets were provided for a school as the preset target is the basis upon which achievement or lack of it, can be objectively determined.

The ratings for an outcome are calculated by multiplying the number of schools in each performance level cell for a specific outcome by the associated rating and adding them all up. For instance, for the outcome of improved school readiness, the outcome performance rating will be 7 which has been determined by mathematically calculating $((1 \times 1) + (3 \times 2) + (0 \times 3))$. Given that only performance related information for 4 schools were provided by the MDoE for this outcome, the expected maximum possible score would have been 12. The mean performance score for this outcome is however $7/4 = 1.75$. This score is below 2 (achievement) and so amounts to an underperformance, overall.

Table 6.2: Outcomes-performance rating matrix

Outcomes	Performance Levels		
	Under-achievement (Rating = 1)	Achievement (Rating = 2)	Over-achievement (Rating = 3)
1. Improved school readiness	Thaba Chweu	Ezakheni Izimbali Shongwe	
Ratings (Maximum 4x3) = 12	1	6	0
2. Youths better prepared for further studies and the world of work beyond Grade 9	Thaba Chweu	Shongwe	Steve Tshwete
Ratings (Maximum 3x3) = 12	1	2	3
3. Youths leaving the schooling system more prepared to contribute towards a prosperous and equitable South Africa (Grade 12)	Ezakheni Izimbali Shongwe	Thaba Chweu	Steve Tshwete
Ratings (Maximum 5x3) = 15	3	2	3
4. Improved learner performance	Ezakheni Steve Tshwete Shongwe Thaba Chweu		Izimbali
Ratings (Maximum 5x3) = 15	4	0	3
5. 10-year-old learners enrolled in publicly funded schools reading for meaning	Ezakheni	Shongwe	Steve Tshwete
Ratings (Maximum 3x3) = 9	1	2	3
6. Functional school governance committee		Ezakheni Steve Tshwete Shongwe Thaba Chweu	
Ratings (Maximum 4x3) = 12	0	8	0
7. School physical infrastructure and environment that inspires learners to learn and teachers to teach		Steve Tshwete Shongwe Thaba Chweu	
Ratings (Maximum 3x3) = 9	0	6	0
Outcomes	Performance Levels		
	Under achievement (Rating = 1)	Achievement (Rating = 2)	Over-achievement (Rating = 3)
Ratings (Maximum 3X3) = 9	0	6	0

The mean score for the second outcome is $6/3 = 2$. This represents achievement and so the project can be deemed to have performed in this regard. The mean score for the third outcome is $8/5 = 1.6$. This score is less than 2 and so the interpretation is that the project did not achieve as expected with reference to this outcome. The mean score for the fourth outcome is $7/5 = 1.4$. As this score is below the rating of 2, the project has not met the performance expectations linked to this outcome.

The mean score for the fifth outcome is $6/3 = 2$ and this implies that performance expectations linked to this outcome were met. Given that the same mean score of 2 was linked to outcome 6 ($8/4$) and outcome 7 ($6/3$), the project performance can be considered as satisfactory in the context of these two outcomes. All outcomes considered, the overall mean score for the project is $48 / 27 = 1.78$. This overall mean score for outcomes sought by the project, falls short of the achievement rating score of 2.

Similar to what was done for outcomes, the evaluation also sought to ascertain if desired output level results had been delivered by the boarding schools' project. The relevant outputs-performance rating matrix is presented in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Outputs-performance rating matrix

Outputs	Performance Levels		
	Under-achievement (Rating = 1)	Achievement (Rating = 2)	Over-achievement (Rating = 3)
1. Healthy nutritious meals provided		Thaba Chweu Steve Tshwete	
Ratings (Maximum 4x3) = 12	0	4	0
2. Learners funded at a minimum level	Steve Tshwete	Thaba Chweu Ezakheni	
Ratings (Maximum 3x3) = 12	1	4	0
3. Learners benefiting from the no-fees school policy	Steve Tshwete	Thaba Chweu Shongwe Ezakheni	
Ratings (Maximum 5x3) = 15	1	6	0
4. Percentage of expenditure going towards non-personnel items		Thaba Chweu Ezakheni	
Ratings (Maximum 5x3) = 15	0	4	0
5. Teachers trained in mathematics, numeracy, language content and methodology	Ezakheni	Shongwe	Thaba Chweu
Ratings (Maximum 3x3) = 9	1	2	3
6. Schools with functional Schools safety committees and SGBs	Thaba Chweu		
Ratings (Maximum 4x3) = 12	1	0	0

Performance information supplied for each of the boarding schools by the MDoE was relied upon to populate the outputs-performance rating matrix. The matrix shows that except for the output of 'Teachers trained in mathematics, numeracy, language content and methodology', no case of over-achievement was recorded at any of the schools in relation to the output results.

While the mean performance score for the output of '*Healthy nutritious meals provided*' was 2, the same score as it concerns the output of '*Learners funded at a minimum level*' was 1.67. These scores signal an acceptable level of achievement for the first output but the case is the opposite for output 2. The mean score for output 3 (Learners benefiting from the no-fees school policy) was 1.75 and that

for output 4 (Percentage of expenditure going towards non-personnel items) was 2. Therefore, while a desirable level of achievement was recorded for output 4, the performance in relation to output 3 fell below expectations.

The 5th and 6th outputs were associated with performance mean scores of 2 and 1, respectively. This implies that for output 5, the desired level of achievement was attained but the performance in relation to output 6 did not meet expectations. Overall, the mean performance score at the outputs result level for the project is 1.8 and this is shy of the rating of 2 linked to the project's expected level of achievement.

This notwithstanding, undoubtedly, the most important gauge of whether the boarding schools project has been effective or not has to be the extent of educational performance being attained by the boarding schools, particular in examinations that are standardised country wide at the exit point of the boarding schools. Specifically, this relates to achieving the academic requirements for the award of the National Senior certificate by Umalusi. Table 6.4 presents Grade 12 performance Information per school for the 2019 – 2023 period as obtained from the MDoE.

In this period the success rates attained at the Izimbali Combined School in a chronological order were 97.3%, 92.6%, 82.1%, 84.3% and 95.7%. For Shongwe boarding school, the pass rates obtained were 90.7%, 93.6%, 88.2%, 92.4% and 95.4%. Similarly, the pass rates attained by the Steve Tshwete boarding school were 75%, 91.7%, 86.4%, 70.4% and 92.6%. In the context of Thaba Chweu boarding school, the records show that the school only participated in the examinations in 2023 and a 63.6% pass rate was achieved. For the Emakhazeni boarding school, associated pass rates were 67.9%, 83.3%, 66.7%, 55.9% and 46.4%. Lastly, with respect to the Ezakheni combined school, pass rates of 73.3%, 67%, 47%, 56% and 74.5% were obtained in the 2019 to 2023 period. In the same period, across the Mpumalanga province, the average pass rates were 80.3%, 73.7%, 73.6%, 76.8% and 76.95% respectively for the years 2019 to 2023.

Table 6.4: NSC, Grade 12 performance Information per school for the 2019 – 2023 period

BOARDING SCHOOLS - NSC, GRADE 12 RESULTS RANKED PER CENTRE 2018 TO 2023																					
	2019				2020				2022				2023								
School	Entered 20219	Wrote 20219	Achieved 2019	Pass %2019	Entered 2020	Wrote 2020	Achieved 2020	Pass % 2020	Entered 2021	Wrote 2021	Achiev 2021	Pass 2021	Entered 2022	Wrote 2022	aChIved 2022	Pass % 2022	Entered 2023	Wrote 2023	Achived 2023		Pass % 2023
Izimbali Combined School	37	37	36	97.3	27	27	25	92.6	39	39	32	82.1	51	51	43	84.3	47	47	45		95.7
Shongwe Boarding School50	50	43	39	90.7	50	47	44	93.6	75	68	60	88.2	105	105	97	92.4	108	108	103		95.4
Steve Tshwete Boarding School	8	8	6	75.0	24	24	22	91.7	22	22	19	86.4	28	27	19	70.4	28	27	25		92.6
Thaba Chweu Boarding School																	11	11	7		63.6
Emakhazeni Boarding School	59	56	38	67.9	42	42	35	83.3	60	60	40	66.7	59	59	33	55.9	56	56	26		46.4
Ezakheni Combined School	43	15	11	73.3	27	27	18	67	76	72	34	47	70	70	39	56	52	51	38		74.5

* Performance is below the provincial average

Grade 12	Pass% 2019	Pass% 2020	Pass% 2021	Pass% 2022	Pass% 2023
Mpumalanga (Provincial Average)	80.3	73.7	73.6	76.8	76.95

Impressively, across the 5-year period, Izimbali combined school and Shongwe boarding school consistently outperformed the province with substantial margins. Disappointingly, Ezakheni combined school consistently underperformed relative to the average pass rate in Mpumalanga. The performance of Emakhazeni boarding school mirrors that of Ezakheni, save for the year 2020. For the Steve Tshwete boarding school, performances in 2019 and 2022 were below the provincial average but for the other years in the period, the school's pass rate exceeded the provincial pass rate. In the single year (2023) that Thaba Chweu boarding school participated, its performance was below the provincial average.

In conclusion, with respect to the first question which was concerned with whether the intervention is yielding the desired results, the picture is different per school, for the different outputs and outcomes contained in the ToC as is also the case with the 2019 – 2023 Grade 12 performance results. Overall, however, the evaluation's position, buoyed by its findings and the discussions presented earlier in this section, is that the desired results are being generated at the boarding schools, both at outputs and outcomes levels, but arguably not at the expected levels.

For the all-important exit level examination leading to the award of the NSC, the achievements of Izimbali and Shongwe are laudable, especially because they have been consistent over the years. The poor performances of Emakhazeni and clearly more so, for Ezakheni are of grave concern. Everything considered, there is ample room for improvement that would stem from more concerted efforts invested in the focussed pursuit of the project's outputs and outcomes alongside improved performances at the matriculation examinations.

The second evaluation question was concerned with whether there any unintended outcomes crystallising from the boarding schools' project. Using the Shongwe and Thaba Chweu boarding schools, a few unintended outcomes were noticeable. A prominent one is the case of the living condition of the learners in the dormitories at Shongwe boarding school.

The dormitories are visibly overcrowded with beds. The provided beds are in turn over-crowded as well given that two learners sleep on each single-sized mattress. It is doubtful that such a situation exists in the country's correctional facilities where people are serving court-imposed legal sentences. Beyond, the discomfort that the sleeping arrangement foists among the learners, it poses a serious health hazard. Plausibly, there might be a major disaster lurking at the Shongwe boarding school due to infrastructure inadequacy.

There is really no gainsaying that the situation, infrastructure-wise at the Shongwe boarding schools leaves a lot to be desired. There are incessant cases of water leakage, sometime through the walls of the dormitory and this can easily weaken the strength of such walls. Grade R learners share facilities, like toilets and others, with learners in much higher grades because there are no dedicated provisions for the little ones at Shongwe boarding school. Certainly, the Mpumalanga provincial government cannot be proud of the conditions under which the learners at Shongwe boarding school reside.

On a different note, while the Shongwe boarding school has close to 900 learners enrolled, less than one-third of them are accommodated in the boarding houses. Indeed, across the grades from R to 11, many learners still shuttle between home and school, typically using the provided scholar transport. Only learners in Grade 12 are fully accommodated at the Shongwe boarding school to improve their chances of performing well at their matriculation examinations. All these considered, it is curious that the MDoE touts the Shongwe school as a boarding school when approximately two-thirds of the learners are day students.

The poor residential conditions associated with the Shongwe boarding schools become emphasised when compared against the conditions under which learners from Thaba Chweu boarding school reside. Basically, all facilities are impressive at the Thaba Chweu school. For instance, the learners

in grade R have a separate area equipped with purpose-fit facilities including appropriately-sized toilets. The dormitories are not overcrowded and each single mattress on the beds, accommodates one learner only.

At Thaba Chweu boarding school, despite the impressive boarding facilities, dormitories are almost empty over the weekends. This is because the parents of the learners typically send vehicles to pick up their children so that they can spend the weekends at home. This is the anti-thesis of what a boarding school should typically be. This habit of picking up the learners for the weekend may be happening because the homes of the learners are more comfortable than what obtains at the school. Invariably, it means that the Thaba Chweu boarding school may not necessarily be serving the poor that it was intended to serve. Indeed, a good number of the learners have parents working in the nearby mines, who cannot be considered poor and so that partially explains why the learners go home at the weekends.

To some extent, the sense of the connection to the mine and the influence that the mine-worker parents have on the functioning of the school may be deduced from Figure 6.1. The sign located on the way to the school almost, deceptively, pronounces to those who may be driving past that the school is funded or possibly owned by Anglo-American thereby giving the mine undeserved public relations mileage .



Figure 6.1: Signboard for the Thaba Chweu boarding school

There is a string of other unintended outcomes which are not uncommon with boarding schools, generally. Vandalism of property is rife and this is why in Shongwe boarding school, for instance, the largest chunk of their budget is spent on maintenance. Learner indiscipline is manifest and this sometimes finds expression in the use of drugs and sexual misbehaviour. There have also been cases of educators being sexually involved with learners. Issues of insufficient resources plague some of the schools. Indeed, these unintended outcomes may be a replica of the challenges that confront the schools. When asked to ventilate their thoughts in this regard, the most common words utilised by the respondents are captured in the word cloud presented in Figure 6.2.



Figure 6.2: Common challenges faced at the Boarding Schools

The notion of efficiency concerns itself with the extent to which resources were optimally utilised while undertaking work. One of the evaluation questions was concerned about whether the current funding model is cost-effective and sustainable. This enquiry largely aligns with the evaluation criteria of efficiency.

The dominant position of those who responded to the survey, was an affirmation of the proposition that resources (human, material, financial) are better managed in the boarding school compared to the previous rural/farm schools. This is an endorsement, from a stakeholder perspective, of the level of efficiency with which the boarding schools' project is being implemented.

Table 6.5 shows the funds allocated to the boarding schools in the period between 2019/20 and 2023/24. Across the period there was no positive change in the total funds' allocation per school for subsequent years except in 2022/23 where all the schools except Shongwe received increases and 2020/21 allocation where Thaba Chweu and Shongwe got increases.

While the minimum increase in total allocation was 5%, the maximum was 19%. Comparatively, in all instances across the period where there were reductions in allocated funds, these were enormous. As shown in Table 6.5, the reductions were 3-digit or 4-digit percentage reductions in allocated funds. The lowest reduction amounted to -573% and the highest was -5479%.

These reductions are jarringly steep and for the boarding schools to continue to function with the severely depleted funds requires efficient management of financial resources. This position is strengthened by the fact that learner enrolments at the schools did not plummet by 3 or 4-digit percentages neither did the range of educational and other services provided by the school reduce by such sizeable proportions.

In terms of the funding model, the MDoE cognisant of the idiosyncrasies of each of the boarding schools, reviewed different types of funding models for the implementation in the boarding schools' project. According to the MDoE, there were four funding models considered: personnel employed by the school governing bodies, outsourced services, expanded public works Programme (EPWP) and personnel employed by the State.

Table 6.5: Total fund allocation per boarding school in the 2019 – 2024 period

Boarding School	2023/24 % Change	2022/23 % Change	2021/22 % Change	2020/21 % Change
Emakhazeni	-2%	10%	-3870%	-8%
Ezakheni	-747%	19%	-3362%	-17%
Izimbali	-703%	19%	-3666%	-4%
Shongwe	0%	-8%	-2452%	7%
Steve Tshwete	0%	16%	-3565%	-10%
Thaba Chweu	-573%	18%	-5479%	5%
Percentage	-1013%	13%	-3715%	-4%

It would seem that depending on the situation, a combination of these considered models is applied. There was no information piece volunteered by respondents that suggested dissatisfaction with the funding model currently being applied in the boarding schools project by the MDoE. The flexibility of the funding models being utilised that allows them to be sufficiently sensitive to each boarding school's nuances lends itself to the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the funding models.

6.2.5 Impact of the Boarding Schools Project

The impact of the boarding schools project was stated as '*equal access to education*'. The MDoE provided no performance-related information in this regard, for Thaba Chweu, Steve Tshwete and Emakhazeni boarding schools. The information supplied by the department as it pertains to the other schools (Ezakheni, Inzimbali and Shongwe) provided no indication of the extent to which the impact level result has been realised by the project.

This may have been because of the inappropriate indicator chosen by the department for the measurement of the result. The chosen indicator which is supposedly a quantitative one does not stipulate that measures of performance must be specifically expressed in the form of a number, percentage, level, index etc. An equity indicator ought to have been employed for the measurement of impact given that they are macro-level results but this was clearly not the case.

The absence of a technically acceptable baseline at the impact level means that no change, positive or negative, in the situation of access to education can be claimed by the boarding schools' project. Also, it is noteworthy that the boarding schools primarily took in learners who were already at the farm/rural schools which means that these learners already had access to education. The result of equal access to education chosen by the MDoE may therefore not be an appropriate impact for the boarding schools' project, thereby compounding efforts at estimating performance at the impact level.

To be sure, an impact manifests when outcomes are sustained for a long period of time. If this is applied in the context of the boarding schools' project, beside the outcome of improved school readiness associated with Grade R learners, no other outcomes, if sustained can lead to the stated impact. In light of the discussions in this section, there is no basis to conclude that the desired impact of the boarding schools project has been realised.

6.2.6 Sustainability of the Boarding Schools Project

Infrastructure is critical to the continued functioning of the boarding schools. The maintenance of the infrastructure of the boarding schools is therefore a paramount issue. The high level of vandalism at the schools and the collateral high maintenance costs at the boarding schools poses a major threat to the sustainability of the intervention. Table 6.6 presents the perspectives of different groups of stakeholders as it concerns the issue of sustainability of the boarding schools' project.

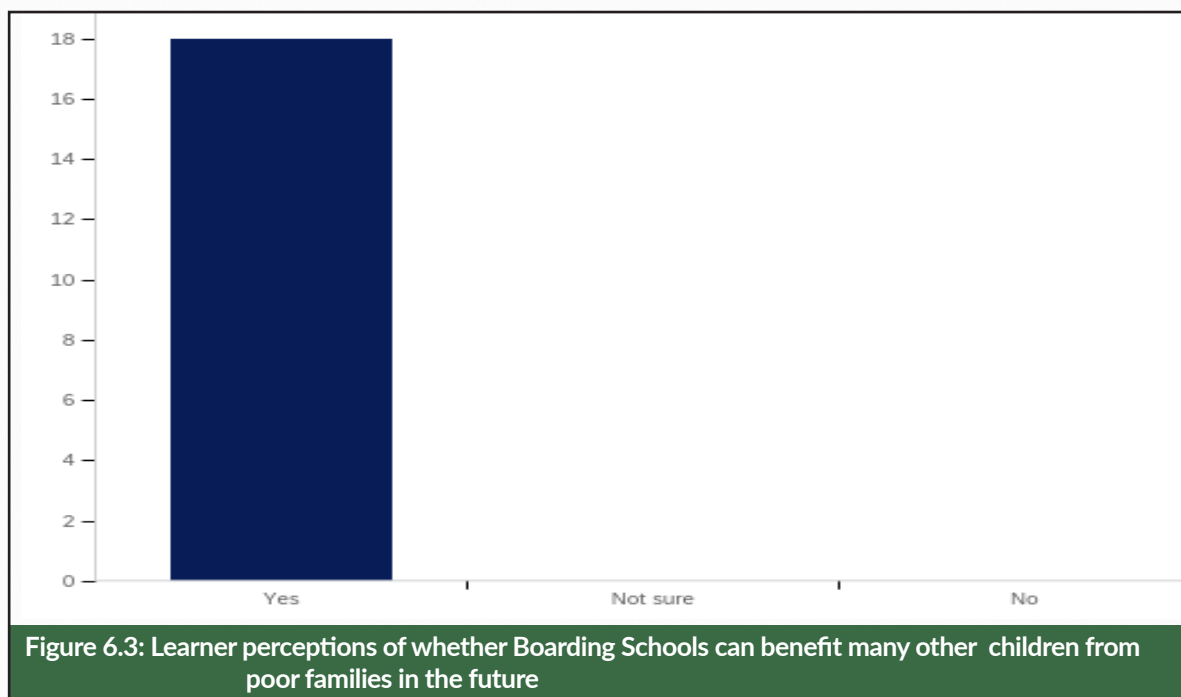
The entire group of parents and employees of the MDoE were convinced that the boarding schools' project is a sustainable one. Among the three other groups of respondents (educators, members of the SGB and School Management) an overwhelming proportion of respondents also shared the opinion that the boarding schools' project is sustainable. The opinions of these important groups of stakeholders emboldens the stance of the evaluation that the project is sustainable.

Table 6.6: Cross tabulation of respondents' category and perception of the sustainability of the boarding schools' project

	Do you think the boarding school can be sustained going into the future?			
	Total	Yes	Not sure	No
Total Count	76.0	59.0	13.0	4.0
Educator	25.0	20.0	4.0	1.0
	32.9%	33.9%	30.8%	25.0%
Member of the School Governing Body	7.0	4.0	2.0	1.0
	9.2%	6.8%	15.4%	25.0%
School Management/Administration	31.0	22.0	7.0	2.0
	40.8%	37.3%	53.8%	50.0%
Parent	5.0	5.0	0.0	0.0
	6.6%	8.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Staff of the MDoE	8.0	8.0	0.0	0.0
	10.5%	13.6%	0.0%	0.0%

Apart from this, issues of supply and demand can substantially influence the sustainability of the boarding schools' project. From the demand side, the high levels of poverty in society and the conviction that education can pave the way for a better life will only mean that the pool of people desirous of enrolment in such schools is unlikely to diminish. When learners who participated in the survey were asked if they thought that boarding schools can benefit many other children from poor families in the future, they were unanimous with their answer. The responses provided are depicted in Figure 6.3.

On this note, it can be inferred that the demand for enrolment in boarding schools will continue to exist in the Mpumalanga province. Given that demand typically pulls supply, this will help the sustainability of the boarding schools' project.



From a supply viewpoint, resource availability has to be considered a major determinant of the sustainability of the Boarding Schools Project. The critical resources that would engender or endanger the sustainability of the project would be human resources as well as financial resources. The Shongwe boarding school, for instance, indicated that they have vacancies that have remained unfilled for a while. Also, survey responses indicate that the boarding schools face the challenge of insufficient resources. Inevitably, with the demand for enrolment in boarding schools guaranteed, the sustainability of the project will be dependent on the provincial governments capacity to continue funding it.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Part of the inspiration for the boarding schools project was to enable children in rural/farm schools, arguably from poor households, access the same quality of education as their counterparts who are born into wealthier homes or who live in the urban areas. The situation with Thaba Chweu seems dramatically different. It is believed that most of the children who attend the schools come from well-to-do homes or indeed are from areas outside of the catchment zone of the school.

It seems that some of the mineworkers who have their children at the school, have disguised their temporary places of abode from where they go to work in the mines as their permanent home addresses, just so that their children can qualify to enrol at Thaba Chweu. The satisfactory socio-economic status of the parents of some of these learners explains why majority of the learners depart the school every Friday to go and spend their weekends at home. It is recommended that the MDoE investigates this and develops an enrolment mechanism which ensures that children from poor households and those that are genuinely resident in the catchment area of the school are prioritised.

The issue of insufficient resources was recurrent when stakeholders were asked to indicate the challenges that confront the boarding schools' project. This is not unexpected given the economic difficulties that the country as a whole is grappling with. Nonetheless, the issue needs to be given some attention by the MDoE. According to some respondents:

"The schools need more funding from the department and they need not be compared to other local schools".



"The government must increase the funds for boarding schools"



"They should be given enough financial muscle to run the school every financial year because boarding school requires a lot compared to normal public schools".

It was curious to learn that for the Shongwe boarding school, there was a budget cut collateral with increased student enrolment. It is unclear what the formula for budget allocation is for the boarding schools but it would be strange if student numbers are not part of the consideration. It is therefore recommended that in the spirit of transparency, a formula for budget allocation to the six boarding schools be worked out and communicated to the management teams of the schools. This way, none of the schools would feel unfairly treated as may the case, currently.

The importance of infrastructure to the functioning of boarding schools cannot be over-emphasised. For instance, the inadequate capacity of the dining hall and insufficient chairs and tables means that the eating times for learners for all provided meals must be staggered and this can have implications for class schedules. The situation also means that the serving of breakfast may begin around 5am, just so that learners can make it to class in time for the commencement of the first teaching period.

An observation of this evaluation is that though learners in the boarding schools are exposed to the same curriculum, in some cases, the infrastructural provisions made for the delivery of expected educational services are miles apart. Therefore, it may be necessary for the MDoE to attempt to standardise, to some extent, the infrastructural provisions made at the boarding schools. Additionally, the issue of maintenance of buildings and other facilities must be prioritised by the MDoE. This may require for the department to undertake more regular inspections of the state of infrastructure at the schools. Concurrently, the development and implementation of a maintenance plan for school infrastructure could be considered by the department. To emphasise the importance of the issue of resources, some respondents opined that:

"All boarding schools must be provided with same facilities".



"The schools must be maintained by the department at least once in 10 years to keep them in good conditions".



"Boarding schools in Mpumalanga need to be standardized in terms of structure /facilities and resources. For example, some boarding schools have cottages for staff, specifically hostel staff who must look after the boarders while other boarding schools have no proper or enough accommodation for hostel staff. Shongwe boarding school is the poorest boarding school in terms of structure and resources. No house/cottage for the Hostel Superintendent and this makes the Superintendent to drive very late at night when attending hostel issues. All boarding schools must be provided with same facilities".



"Improvement in the infrastructure is required, especially in the toilets".



"I suggest that the schools should be maintained quarterly or should be renovated because some were not renovated since they were opened and there are a lot of damages".

As it concerns project execution, it would appear that the boarding schools' project was initiated and implemented without a properly articulated ToC that encapsulates results sought at the levels of outputs, outcomes and impacts. Indubitably, this is not in alignment with some of the requirements in the Policy Framework for the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System. These requirements, particularly those in the boxes numbered 1 and 2, in Figure 6.4 highlight that the development of a programme logic showing the interconnectedness of activities and results is of critical importance for government interventions like the boarding schools' project.

Additionally, the policy framework is emphatic about the choice of indicators for performance measurement being made in the conceptual phase of any project or programme. Obviously, judging the sequence of tasks as guided by the arrows in the flow chart (Figure 6.4), these monitoring and evaluation tasks (labelled 1 and 2), precede the provision of funds for programme implementation.

Instructively, without a definitive ToC that embodies a logical explanation of how the boarding schools would improve education, it becomes tedious if not impossible to undertake credible monitoring and evaluation efforts that are aimed at ascertaining progress. Furthermore, in the absence of indicators for performance tracking, from the onset, reporting of progress in the programme will invariably take a shotgun rather than a rifle approach.

While the rifle approach for reporting is laser-focussed on the things that matter the most for demonstrating performance, the shotgun approach indiscriminately attempts to report on anything and everything, many of which may be inconsequential.

In essence, the application of the shotgun approach in performance information gathering and reporting dilutes the attention that should have been paid to the all-important results as reflected in the ToC. Indeed, it is doubtful that critical role players at the MDoE as well as Principals and other high-ranking employees at the boarding schools were duly conversant with the ToC of the boarding schools' project. As a matter of fact, even for the current evaluation exercise, the MDoE, at different times, tendered two different versions of the ToC for the boarding schools' project.

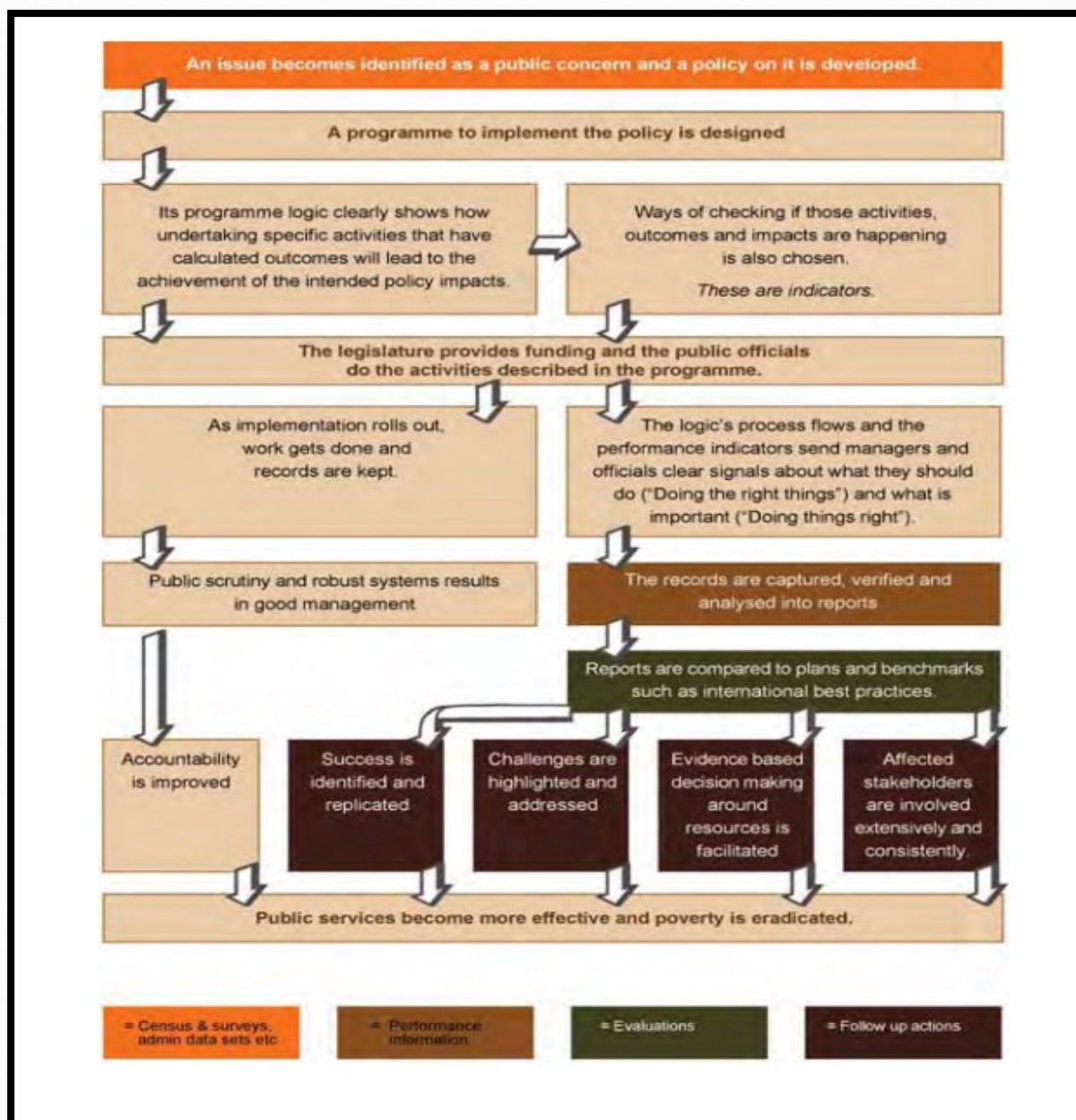


Figure 6.4: Flow chart of how intended outcomes should be achieved

This, incontrovertibly, proves that an officially endorsed ToC was non-existent before the commencement of the project. The two versions of the ToC presented were after-thoughts and seem to have been developed only after the boarding schools' project had already been implemented. More disturbingly, they may have been developed simply because they were required for the conduct of the current evaluation. Unfortunately, due to this, any M&E efforts for the project could not have been as systematic and guided as they ought to be.

It is therefore recommended that M&E provisions and efforts must be accorded higher premiums in the conceptualisation and implementation of projects of this nature. At a minimum, a ToC must be developed and technically suitable performance tracking indicators should be selected, prior to the commencement of project as this is in harmony with the expectations elucidated in the Policy Framework for the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation.

Beyond that, the ToC information and chosen indicators must be properly and timeously communicated to parties considered as critical role players in the project, unlimited to MDoE staff, School Principals and Educators, among others. Furthermore, it would be beneficial for standard templates that are purpose-fit for indicator-based performance reporting to be developed and subsequently disseminated to all government-funded boarding schools. This would help to ensure uniformity in performance

reporting and simultaneously ease the task of aggregating the data in such performance reports at the district or provincial level.

From an evaluation limitations perspective, the experience in the course of undertaking this evaluation seemed to signal that staff of the MDoE were not favourably disposed towards the exercise. This position was brazenly demonstrated by employees designated by the MDoE as conduits of information between the department and the evaluation team. The designated officials were mostly non-responsive to requests for information made by the OTP on behalf of the evaluation team. On some occasions, the designated officials at the MDoE simply played an unpalatable game of *responsibility tennis*, by consistently shifting responsibilities to other parties and ultimately not responding to the information requests. This was troubling.

It would appear that scant value was attached to the current evaluation by the designated contact persons at the MDoE. Given that an evaluation like the current one is largely dependent on the information that it can access, it is recommended that the MDoE heightens the premium attached to M&E efforts while emphasising the need for cooperation and accountability among its officials who have been designated as liaisons for evaluation exercises. It may be that what has informed the uncooperative stance of some of the contact persons at the MDoE is an erroneous negative perception of M&E actions, which is not unusual. Owing to this, it is imperative that within the MDoE, this possible negative perception should be addressed by repositioning M&E as an aid for performance so that they are viewed as allies not foes, by decision makers.

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