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The Energy Mobility Education Trust Impact Study

2014 – 2024



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Acknowledgements

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Acronyms and abbreviations

B-BBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
CET	Community Education and Training
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
EM Education Trust	Energy Mobility Education Trust
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IT	Information technology
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MICT SETA	Media, Information and Communication Technologies Sector Education and Training Authority
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
ORT SA	ORT South Africa
PED	Provincial Education Department
PEETS	Process Energy and Environmental Technology Station
PWD	People With Disabilities
QCTO	Quality Council For Trades & Occupations
SAMBT	South African Mobility for the Blind Trust
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
SUNCEP	Stellenbosch University Centre for Pedagogy
TLL	The Living Link
TTP	Targeting Talent Programme
TVET	Technical, Vocational Education and Training
U-Prep	University Preparation Programme
WIL	Work Integrated Learning
WITS	University of the Witwatersrand
YES	Youth Employment Stimulus

Foreword

One of the many iniquitous laws enacted by the Apartheid Government was the Bantu Education Act of 1953, which created separate and unequal educational opportunities for children of different races. One of the direct consequences of this immoral act was that it denied especially children of African ancestry the opportunity to realise their full academic potential. Since the dawn of democracy in our country, South Africans of my generation and of African descent have felt a moral and ethical obligation to make any contribution we can to provide equal opportunities to young South Africans, especially from socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

Numerous academic studies worldwide have highlighted a strong correlation between learners' socioeconomic status and their educational attainment. In South Africa, a similarly strong correlation exists between socioeconomic status and race.

From the late 1980s, South African universities that opened the doors of learning to students of all races introduced foundation programmes in an attempt to redress unequal educational attainment by students of different races. Learners who had graduated from schools in poor communities, and which were disproportionately rural and of African descent, were provided with opportunities to 'close the gap.' The unintended outcome of these programmes is that students were not viewed as having the potential to excel and were expected to take longer to complete their degrees.

Our belief at Wits was that there were high-potential youth from marginalised communities who, given the opportunity early enough before coming to university, would realise their potential to enjoy success comparable to that of students from affluent backgrounds.



The work of the Energy Mobility Education Trust, whose predecessor is the BPSA Education Foundation, has focused on narrowing that divide by facilitating access to quality skills and education for the most disadvantaged young people in this country.

Over the past 10 years, we have had the privilege of working with over 3700 young people in our various programmes, with funding of nearly R250m.

Through the high school, scholarship, and youth skills development programmes including people with disabilities, we aimed to enable and empower young people to be economically active and responsible citizens. Our focus on STEM and Commerce disciplines sought to align with in-demand skills and professions, thus improving their chances of entering these areas of work.

This retrospective has surfaced important insights into the value of investment in human development. It has not been a smooth journey, nor has it been a straight-line progressive process, by virtue of the complexity of the environment in which we work.

2024 marks an important milestone in the life of the Trust, which is why reflecting at this inflective point is so significant for us. My fellow trustees, with whom I have served for 9 years, have had an indelible mark on the Trust's strategic path and

outcomes. I thank them wholeheartedly for their commitment and dedication to the cause of the organisation. The Trust management, past and present, has also led the Trust to where it is today.

As we retire, we know that in the hands of the current management team and the incoming trustees, the Trust can only grow from strength to strength.

The newly adopted strategy responds to the new megatrends such as 4IR, digital skills and renewable energy, which have emerged since the Trust's inception in 2014. These trends have a deep influence on the place and purpose of education. As such the organisation must emerge as a uniquely positioned education trust, filling specific gaps in the South African education ecosystem.



Professor G. Loyiso Nongxa

Founding Chairperson of
the Energy Mobility Education Trust

Executive summary

The Energy Mobility Education Trust (Trust) is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. It is opportune to undertake a review of the Trust's impact to date and to identify opportunities to further strengthen its programmes. The Trust contracted JET Education Services (JET) to undertake an impact study of the work supported by the Trust over the past ten years.

This impact study was undertaken using a mix of methods, including interviews, document review and beneficiary surveys. As well as interviews with Trust staff, implementing partners and trustees, case studies were undertaken of some of the beneficiaries who have participated in programmes supported by the Trust.

There were challenges in the data collection process, with low response rates to surveys due to contact information for participants prior to 2018 not being available and other participants having changed their cell phone numbers and email addresses since completing the programme. JET sought to address this limitation by increasing the number of beneficiary case studies included in the report.

The Trust was established to address the historical inequities of the past that have negatively affected the prospects of under-served Black South African youth. The Trust's intention is to address the skills gap that exists in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines and to support students to transition successfully into the workplace. It has done this through supporting four supplementary mathematics and science high school programmes,

offering university scholarships that assist with the building of students' skills and capability to succeed in university, and one work-readiness programme focused on information technology for young people who may not qualify for university. In addition, it has funded two partners to implement programmes fostering independent living skills for young people with visual impairment and youth with intellectual disabilities.

At the end of 2022, the Trust undertook a strategic review process, whereupon it was decided not to renew partnership agreements with one partner providing work-readiness training, to end funding for high school support programmes, and to shift to its focus specifically to funding postgraduate STEM qualifications, while also expanding to fund new and emerging areas of demand such as solar energy, data science and machine learning, among others. This shift was also driven by the increasing demand for innovation and the need to ensure that young people develop skills for the future and are well-prepared to contribute to the fourth industrial revolution.

The impact study found that the strategic objectives of the Trust and the programmes it has supported are highly relevant and well-aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the National Development Plan (NDP) and are contributing directly to the increase in the number of young people accessing university and completing their degree programmes on time. With the shift to focusing specifically on funding postgraduate qualifications, the Trust will

also be contributing to the NDP's goal of increasing the total number of students participating in postgraduate STEM qualifications.

The three high school support programmes implemented by universities (Targeting Talent Programme, Nine-Tenths and U-Prep) have shown success, with survey respondents indicating that the greatest areas of impact had been in academic success and personal development.

The High School Support Programmes also served as a pipeline to the University Scholarships Programmes for STEM qualifications at the University of Fort Hare (UFH), University of Johannesburg (UJ), University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and the University of Pretoria (UP). The Trust has put extensive effort into providing comprehensive wrap-around support to scholarship recipients, which was highlighted as a strength of the programme by both partners and the beneficiaries themselves.

The Trust recently added two new scholarship partners, the University of the Western Cape and the University of Limpopo. Since these two institutions are new partners, it is premature to attempt to measure the impact of these scholarships, and on this basis, they were not included in the impact study.

As the Trust has grown in size and the number of partners it is working with increased, it has become more systematic and rigorous in the way it selects and manages partners. Previously, the Trust experienced situations where partnerships

were not mutually beneficial, and where despite the effectiveness of a programme, the context in which it was implemented and structural factors beyond the Trust's control negatively affected its ability to achieve its intended outcomes. These experiences highlight the need for the Trust to undertake a detailed situational analysis before deciding to enter into a partnership.

Some challenges emerged across partners: these included a lack of timeous communication, that the requirements of the Trust can become onerous, and that as the Trust has grown in size and the number of partners it is working with increased, it has become more systematic and rigorous in the way it selects and



manages partners. The lack of ongoing communication with scholarship partners resulted in some duplication of effort in support services offered to scholarship candidates.

The scale and capability of partners was found to vary, from large tertiary institutions with existing monitoring and reporting systems in place, to smaller non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with limited organisational capacity. The Trust does not currently have the capacity to provide organisational capacity-building, though it recognises this as a need that should be considered in the future when working with smaller organisations.

There is scope to create alignment across and foster opportunities for learning between partners, given a shared focus. Although this is an area where the Trust is yet to achieve success, for example, the Trust had limited success in its efforts to build collaboration between Star Schools and Rhodes University, there is potential for such efforts to be strengthened as the Trust moves into more innovative spaces such as renewable energy, machine learning and data science, among others.

As the overall vision of the Trust is to contribute to historically disadvantaged Black youth accessing employment in STEM fields, there is a significant opportunity to strengthen links with employers, and for bpSA, the Trust's main donor, to introduce a graduate programme which would expose young people to workplace skills. This programme could also explicitly recruit from the scholarship candidate pool being supported by the Trust.

The Trust has continued to maintain a flexible approach to funding, making it well-positioned to respond to emerging needs and the rapidly evolving renewables sector. Highlights of the Scholarships Programme have included the Trust being willing to provide additional support, thereby acknowledging that a good degree is not a guarantee of employment and that many young people need a range of additional skills to be able to compete in the marketplace. Similarly, the Trust has provided an opportunity for the scholarship students to interact with bpSA to learn about the global context and the drive to achieve net zero and to be exposed to the real-life workplace. This interaction is also aligned with the aspiration of strengthening links with employers. These measures are significant strengths that have been recognised by scholarship candidates, trustees and employees of the Trust.

As the Trust shifts to working with large institutional partners, it will continue to face the challenge of how to differentiate itself from other scholarship partners and how to create and implement metrics that enable it to measure the outcomes of its programmes. There is a need for the Trust to continue to invest in individual relationships with scholarship beneficiaries.

One of the recommendations is for the Trust to consider funding initial teacher education qualifications that focus on STEM specifically, thereby producing teachers who are able to address foundational knowledge gaps and reduce learning backlogs prior to learners entering high school.

The implementation of the new strategy provides an opportune moment for the Trust to document a revised Theory of Change and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework including standard indicators, reporting templates and an evaluation plan. This will allow for monitoring performance across partners and enable the Trust to make course corrections as needed. Putting these in place from the beginning of the new strategy will allow for consistent and ongoing monitoring, providing rich data for when a similar impact study is undertaken in the future.

To date, the Trust has not had sufficient capacity to develop and implement a structured alumni engagement strategy. This should be prioritised, with the Trust having direct and ongoing engagement with beneficiaries and using social media, newsletters and mailing lists to remain in contact, collect success stories and follow the trajectory of a young person's progress towards the overall goal of improving employability and access to opportunities in STEM for historically disadvantaged Black South African youth. This strategy could include convening beneficiaries and alumni on a regular basis, building a sense of pride and accomplishment and establishing a network for these young people.



In addition to growing the pipeline of STEM graduates, the Trust has the objective of ensuring that these young people are able to access the labour market. There is an important role for bpSA to play in developing a graduate programme and offering short-term work placements for young people to gain exposure to the sector and to develop workplace skills. With work placements alongside information sharing sessions about the energy sector in South Africa, achieving the just transition and the net zero targets, scholarship graduates will develop a holistic understanding of the sector and the new opportunities available to them beyond the traditional STEM disciplines.

The shift towards focusing on renewables and clean energy is very timely, along with the recognition that there is a range of emerging skills and disciplines needed for the future. This realisation has required a culture shift, openness and appetite for risk on the part of the Trust. As it travels this journey, it will be crucial that careful attention is paid to ensuring that students supported in new and emerging skills and disciplines receive an adequate level of support and guidance to overcome any challenges they may experience.



1

The EM Education Trust Impact Study



S. Makebengu



1.1 Background

JET Education Services (JET) was commissioned by the Energy Mobility Education Trust (EM Education Trust) to undertake an impact study of the programmes supported by the Trust between 2014-2024. The purpose of the impact study is to demonstrate the value of advancing skills development and educational opportunities for young Black people in under-served and under-resourced communities and to document the impact of the programme on beneficiaries, families and communities.

This report has the following sections: Section 1 provides the background of the study, including the context of the Trust and rationale for their support; Section 2 describes the study's methodology and data collection techniques; Section 3 presents the study's findings including partner perspectives of the Trust and the impact of its support per programmes; and the concluding section presents the lessons and recommendations emerging from the findings.

1.2 Context

The bpSA Education Foundation was founded by bpSA in 2014 in response to the country's National Development Plan (NDP) goal of enhancing the skills and education of Black youth, thereby fostering a workforce capable of driving the country's development. In anticipation of the amendment to the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) Act in 2013, bpSA embarked on a project aimed at changing its Black Ownership structure to align with the new Broad-Based BEE (B-BBEE) Codes of Good Practice, especially relating to Black Economic Interest. The company

sought two new B-BBEE partners – a strategic B-BBEE investor and a Broad-Based Ownership Scheme. The 25% B-BBEE transaction was concluded in November 2014, where the bpSA Education Foundation Trust, now known as the Energy Mobility Education Trust, acquired 5% of bpSA shares, and 20% was acquired by the B-BEE strategic investor, Kapela.

The Trust is mandated to facilitate and assist historically disadvantaged young black South Africans to access education, skills development and formal educational qualifications. The Trust identified critical areas, such as youth skills development, that lacked sufficient resources and recognised them as significant and deserving of investment, in line with the overall objectives of bpSA, the Trust's main donor. It has pursued this endeavour by supporting the implementation of high school support programmes to prepare young people for university and increase their likelihood of success at university; work readiness programmes for individuals with intellectual disabilities or those who may not qualify for access to university; independence training for people who are visually impaired; and by offering scholarships to young people who are pursuing a qualification in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). From inception, the Trust has focused on assisting young people within their sphere of influence as a contribution to their own social licence to operate.

The NDP enrolment target is 1 600 000 students enrolled in higher education by 2030. By 2021, 1 300 961 students were enrolled at tertiary institutions in South Africa. This is showing a steady increase,

and there are signs that this enrolment target is likely to be met by 2030. The second NDP goal which is significant to the Trust is the total number of students enrolled for postgraduate programmes, which is set at 250 000 students by 2030. The decision by the Trust to focus specifically on postgraduate scholarships will support the achievement of this goal.

The Post School Education and Training Monitor released by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in March 2024 (DHET, 2024) confirms that while enrolments and throughput at tertiary institutions have increased, throughput remains low. Only 31.60% of students completed their undergraduate degree within three years. It is widely recognised that there are a number of barriers to students succeeding at university. These barriers include, but are not limited to, poor foundational learning, lack of social and emotional support, unmet financial needs, social isolation, poor mental health, poor nutrition and the lack of access to accommodation. These barriers also contribute to the low throughput rate in universities. The provision of additional support by the Trust in the form of additional inputs on important skills such as time management, psycho-social support, assistive devices, laptops and books and

stipends, among others, alleviate some of these challenges and assist with ensuring students can complete within the stipulated time frame.

The decision to focus on STEM-related qualifications is aligned with the focus of bpSA and the need for scarce skills which hampers South Africa's ability to pursue innovation and to improve economic performance. The PSET Monitor similarly reports that South Africa has a

high qualifications mismatch between the field people are employed in and their field of study.

The mismatch was 52% in 2022, 20% higher than that of other OECD countries (DHET, 2024). This is compounded by high numbers of people who are either under- or over-qualified for the jobs they are performing.

In the context of rapidly advancing technology and the pace of innovation, people may not yet have had the time to acquire the most advanced, recent skills and knowledge in their fields of employment. This contributes to the mismatch and individuals being under-qualified for the jobs they are performing. The Trust's decision to expand the disciplines they fund to include data science, finance and, most recently, renewables, will also contribute to addressing this mismatch. These



findings affirm the need and relevance of intervening to increase participation rates in areas with high skills shortages (such as in STEM fields) at tertiary level, which is closely linked to the need to ensure that graduates are workplace ready and have the necessary skills needed for the workplace.

The Trust has supported programmes in four main areas. These include high school support programmes focused on improving mathematics and science results and preparing students for matric and university; undergraduate scholarships in STEM-related fields; work readiness support for young people who may not have access to university; and programmes that are focused on enabling independent living for people with disabilities. Findings related to the partners in each of these areas are discussed in Section 3.

1.3 The rationale for the EM Education Trust's support

1.3.1 The barriers to accessing/ integrating into tertiary education as perceived by disadvantaged students in the South African context

Even though financial assistance and support for higher education students are seen as panaceas for improved access and progression rates in higher education, the problems of low graduation rates and high attrition rates still persist.

Mngomezulu et al. (2017), in a study of higher education students who receive financial assistance found that in spite of receiving financial assistance, they were still classified as 'at risk' of academic exclusion, which was contrary to the notion that financial assistance contributes to academic success. The negative academic outcomes, Mngomezulu et al. (2017) explained, may have been due to the channelling of the funds to address family poverty.

In a study on the pre-enrolment experiences of disadvantaged students at university, Chiramba and Ndoferapi (2023) highlighted the lack of quality education received prior to entering university, the digital expertise to navigate the learning environment, information and communication technology (ICT) literacy, familiarity with using computers and financial stability at home as challenges to these students' ability to access higher education. If National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS)-funded, then insufficient funding (students use the funding to support family back home), delayed payments, lack of financial literacy and financial management skills also contributed to the challenges faced.

The challenges of being underprepared for university, not having access to financial support for tertiary education and lack of enrolment and completion in STEM fields at tertiary level are four major constraints to increasing the pool of STEM graduates, both as a vehicle for economic growth and for promoting the growth of innovation and technology. The programmes that have been implemented by the Trust over the past decade are directed at responding to these constraints.

1.3.2 Impact of funding on academic performance

Shange (2018) found that in the South African context, financial problems influence academic success by hampering the student's ability to cope with the demands of studying and fulfilling basic needs. Though the qualitative study confirms that financial hurdles have an adverse impact on student academic performance, there is no concrete evidence of correlation between financial burden and academic performance.

However, Wildschut et al. (2020), in a study on the impact of NSFAS funding on academic performance at two universities in South Africa, could not find empirical evidence to suggest that there is a relationship between student funding and academic success in a bivariate context; however, at an aggregate level, a weak correlation between academic performance and NSFAS funding did emerge.

1.3.3 Increasing access to higher education

By increasing young South Africans' access to higher education through various programmes, the value of inclusivity is considered and realised. In the Trust's efforts to redress past imbalances and inequality experienced by participating youth, young South Africans are given various opportunities to advance their education and professional and personal development. The tools and skills gained by the beneficiaries can be used to transform their lives and communities at large. This in turn will drive the development of the country as a whole.

1.3.4 Addressing the skills gap

Over the years, the Trust has prioritised skills development focusing on improving the STEM skills workforce to address the skills gap in STEM-related fields. The Trust did this through a value chain approach, by supporting high school learners, particularly in mathematics, science and English, and also supporting students in tertiary education pursuing STEM-related qualifications. Whereas the bpSA Foundation initially focused on undergraduate STEM qualifications, over the years, bpSA has learnt that there is a need to focus strongly on supporting postgraduate qualifications and skills training, which is aligned with bpSA's goal of achieving net zero by 2050. The Trust's focus thus has shifted from school-level programmes to renewable energy-related skills development for the energy sector. Towards this end, it has shifted to support postgraduate studies with special emphasis on the energy sector, which is heavily reliant on industrial engineering and chemical engineering skills.

While partly driven by the changing landscape of higher education funding, the need to start thinking about skills for the future added impetus to this shift in focus. Graduates with traditional STEM qualifications are no longer best equipped to respond to the need for rapid innovation and the changing energy landscape, in particular, the urgency to shift towards renewable energy in South Africa.

The background features a series of concentric circles in shades of blue and purple. On the right side, there is a photograph of a young student in a grey shirt holding up a certificate. The certificate is pink and white with the text 'CERTIFICATE' and 'DARI YIRANATHI'.

2

Methodology



2.1 Objectives

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the value of advancing skills development and educational opportunities for young black South Africans in under-served and under-resourced communities and to document

the impact of the Trust 's programmes on beneficiaries, families and communities.

In addition to documenting the high impact stories, the study will:

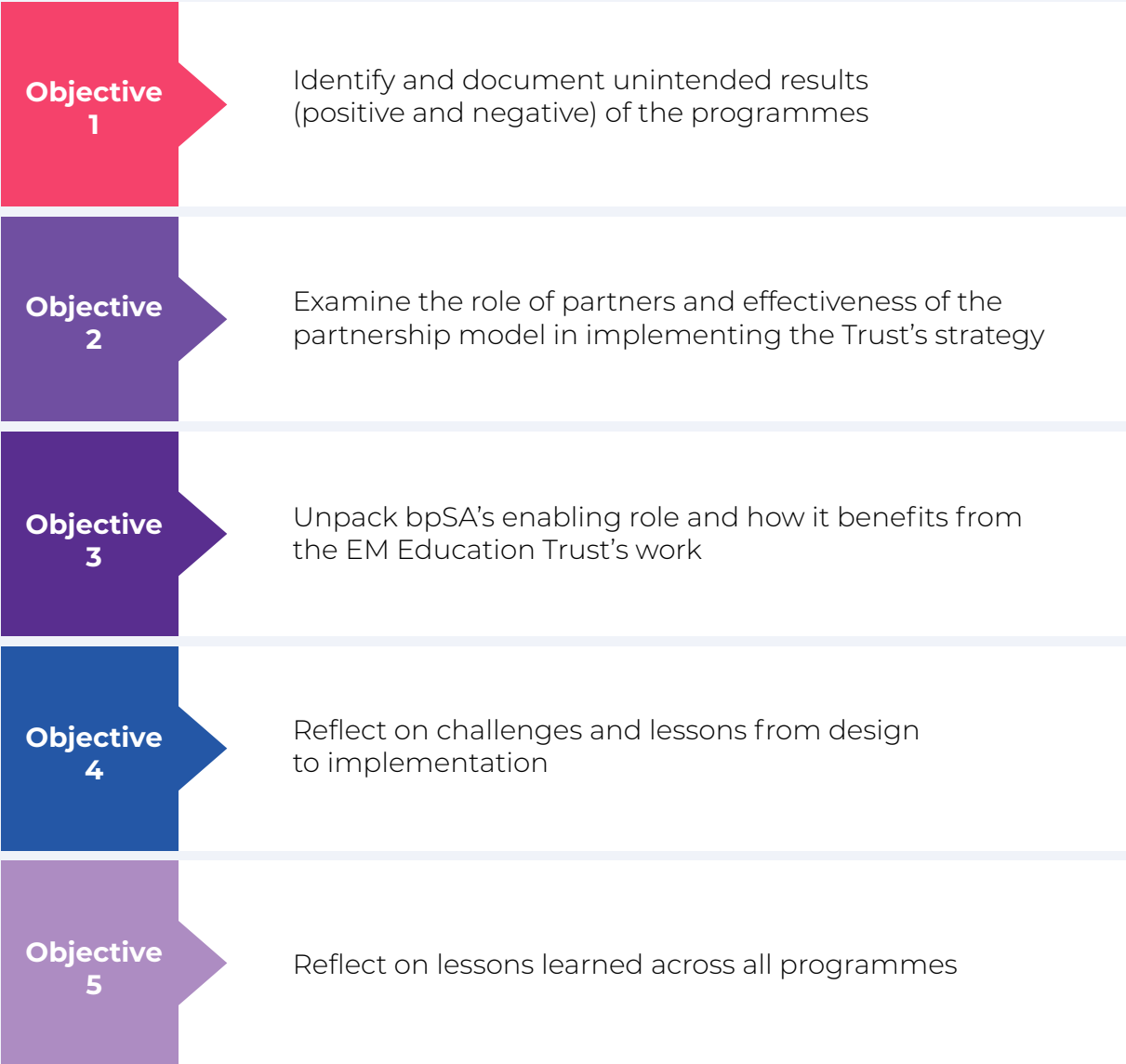


Figure 1: Objectives of the impact study

2.2 Evaluation design

In order to address the study objectives, an ex-post evaluation of the Trust programmes for the 10-year period from 2014-2024 was undertaken. An ex-post or retrospective evaluation is a summative evaluation that intends to demonstrate the achievement of programme objectives and the impacts on the intended beneficiaries, can confirm contribution to higher goals (such as the SDGs and the NDP) and documents learnings that can contribute to improving the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of future programmes.

The primary approach utilised for this evaluation was a mixed methods approach, which entailed the collection and triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data to obtain an overall view of programme implementation and impact over the last ten years. Quantitative data included beneficiary surveys. Qualitative data included a review of internal and external documents, interviews with key informants and in-depth case studies with programme participants. Document reviews were used to illuminate the evolution of the programme design and implementation, including strategic shifts, while interviews were used to attain an understanding of the programmes' design, implementation, successes and shortcomings as well as their benefits and sustainability.

2.3 Data collection

Data was collected through a range of primary and secondary data sources. This included a review of documents and data received from the Trust and implementing partners: annual, interim, quarterly and project reports; beneficiary data; evaluation reports; strategic documents, including the Theory Of Change (ToC); client lists; graduation lists; and any other documents available which could provide additional context to the work of the Trust and its achievements to date.

The document review informed the development of the data collection instruments, and the interviews provided an opportunity to verify the information contained in the supplied documents. During the interview process, key informants were also asked to share any documents that they thought relevant to the impact study.

2.3.1 Interviews

Purposive sampling was utilised to identify key informants drawn from lists of trustees and partners provided by the Trust. The initial target was 17 key informant interviews: six trustees, three Trust staff and eight implementing partners. Instruments were developed for the different stakeholder groups and interview questions were informed by the literature and document review. Cross-cutting themes were identified and included:



Figure 2: Cross-cutting themes in interviews

Overall, twenty-one interviews were conducted online with the EM Education Trust **staff (3), trustees (5), bpSA (2) and implementing partners (11)**. Additionally, **two bpSA key informants provided written responses** to interview schedules, bringing the **total number of interviews (online and written) to 23**. A codebook aligned with the evaluation matrix and evaluation questions was developed to guide the analysis of the interview responses.

2.3.2 Beneficiary surveys

JET developed and distributed surveys using Google Forms, specifically targeting individuals who benefited from the Trust's support between 2014 and 2024. Two surveys were developed, one for the programmes that focused on independent living and one for all the other programmes supported by the Trust. The survey questionnaires consisted of a combination of question types such as multiple-choice, Likert scale and open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were intended to capture data

on how beneficiaries experienced the Trust programmes and the outcomes and impacts perceived by them since their participation.

The target population for the surveys was the total population of approximately 2 894 beneficiaries.¹ However, reaching the target population was subject to the availability of the beneficiaries' contact information and their willingness to participate.

There were **60 responses from individuals participating in programmes focused on achieving independent living skills** (n=54 from South African Mobility for the Blind Trust [SAMBT] and n=6 from The Living Link) and **248² for the overall beneficiary survey**, with the greatest proportion of respondents (**152**) being from the **High School Support Programme**.

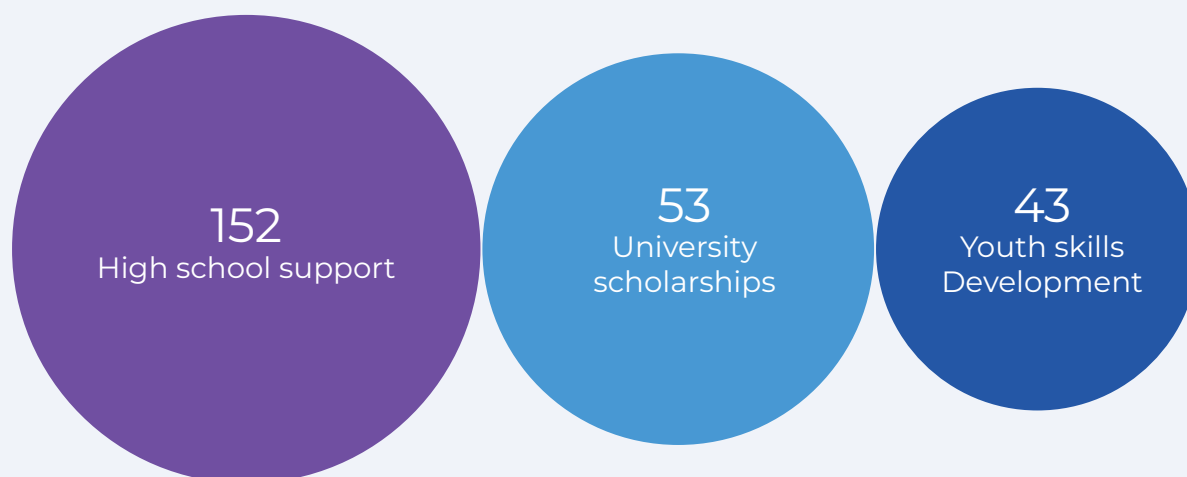


Figure 3: Survey respondents

- 1 The total beneficiary numbers were calculated based on documents provided to JET during the inception phase. Based on subsequent review, the total number of beneficiaries that could potentially participate in the study was far lower. This is due to a lack of contact information for beneficiaries prior to 2020.
- 2 The scholarships survey had a total of 279 responses; however, 5 beneficiaries refused to respond to the survey and there were 26 duplicate submissions, therefore 248 responses were analysed in total.

The survey was piloted to identify any issues with question wording, survey length or technical problems, following which, survey invitations were sent via email or SMS to all the beneficiaries. A link to the survey was shared with the Trust and implementing partners so that they could also distribute the survey and encourage participation. Responses were monitored through Google Forms, and JET staff followed up with non-respondents. In the analysis phase, the data was exported to Google Sheets for preliminary quality assurance, cleaning and preparation for statistical analysis. In the last step, the data was cleaned and analysed using STATA version 16.

2.3.3 Case studies

Case studies were undertaken with beneficiaries who were found to have had 'exceptional experiences'. Such individuals were identified via several means (i.e., document review, interviews and the beneficiary surveys), and were profiled via in-depth case studies to showcase personal stories of change and the families and communities they are embedded in. The initial target was eight case studies involving two beneficiaries per programme. The selection criteria included alignment to the objectives of the Trust, duration of engagement, individuals who participated in BOTH the High School and the Scholarship Programmes, employment in STEM, progression in employment, giving back/ uplifting others. Thirteen case studies were completed with beneficiaries from U-Prep, Nine-Tenths, Targeting Talent Programme, Star Schools, ORT SA IT Skills, SAMBT, The Living Link, and the University of Pretoria.

2.4 Data analysis

Data sources were triangulated to provide an overall assessment of programme implementation and results, informing the development of the impact study report.

The data analysis was done using the STATA statistical package version 16. The software was used to prepare, clean and analyse the survey dataset. The process involved a thorough quality assurance and data cleaning process, which included handling missing values, removing duplicate entries and verifying the skip logic. To ensure the completeness of the data, particular attention was given to ensuring that the dataset was as complete and accurate as possible before proceeding to the analysis phase. Following the cleaning process, the analysis was structured according to an analysis matrix that was developed to answer specific research questions. The matrix ensured that the analysis remained focused and aligned with the objectives of the study, providing a clear framework for evaluating key variables and patterns within the data.

JET used descriptive statistics when undertaking analysis to mitigate the low response rate. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the key characteristics of the beneficiaries, such as biographical information, programme information, economic status, impact of the programme and patterns and relationships within the data.

2.5 Data limitations and mitigation measures

2.5.1 Data quality and depth

The number of interviews initially planned for was increased to include the bpSA staff. This was done to improve the comprehensiveness of the data collected and address the need for a more holistic approach to data collection. Initially, the interviews were planned with the following stakeholders: implementing partners, the Trust Staff and Trustees. Subsequent to finalising the inception report, it was decided it would be valuable to also interview bpSA staff. This increased the number of interviews from 17 to 23. As the data collected through the surveys was not sufficient to make inferences about the programme impact, a decision was also taken to increase the total number of case studies from eight to 13.

2.5.2 Selection of long-standing implementing partners

In line with the objective of documenting impact, data collection focused on long-standing partners. The Trust has been associated with some of the implementing partners for over a decade. Considering that long-term outcomes are more directly related to a programme's impact, the programmes with which the Trust has been associated for the longest duration were selected for this impact study, namely: the High School Support Programme (Targeting Talent Programme, U-Prep, Nine-Tenths and Star Schools); the University Scholarships Programmes (University of the Witwatersrand, University of Johannesburg, University of Pretoria and University of Fort Hare); and programmes targeting people with disabilities and

focused on independent living skills (The Living Link and SAMBT). Neither the University of Limpopo nor the University of the Western Cape were interviewed as part of the study as both have only recently come on board as partners in the Postgraduate Scholarship Programme.

2.5.3 Data completeness

The impact study was intended to cover the period 2014-2024, and the assumption was that data tracking the beneficiaries who participated over the ten-year period would be available for the study. The Trust depends on the monitoring and evaluation systems of implementing partners.

While monitoring data was made available for the period prior to 2020, this data did not cover the full remit of the work of the bpSA Education Foundation. This made it difficult to assess impact of all programmes since inception of the Trust.

The lack of sufficient and necessary data hindered a comprehensive impact study, which was initially envisaged as a longitudinal trend analysis. The tracking of beneficiaries with incomplete and outdated contact information was an obstacle to the completion of beneficiary surveys. Furthermore, because the data received was quite recent, it was harder to establish the impact that various programmes have had on beneficiaries after they graduated or entered the labour market.

Moreover, the absence of standard reporting templates across the implementing partners resulted in inconsistent reporting, which presented a further barrier to using data meaningfully for the impact study.

2.5.4 Survey response rate

In order to ensure high response rates, the surveys were also circulated via the implementing partners' various platforms in addition to being sent to beneficiaries directly via email, SMS and telephone calls. Where individual contact information was provided separately, JET reached out to the specific individual to share the survey link. Considering the need for data that could be quantitatively analysed for impact, follow-up with the beneficiaries was diligently pursued to ensure that a maximum number of survey responses could be achieved.

JET administered the survey with beneficiaries from SAMBT and The Living Link telephonically after receiving feedback on which candidates would be open to participating to ensure that participants from these two programmes were not excluded due to the difficulty of completing an online survey for people who are visually impaired or have intellectual disabilities.

2.5.5 Data gaps vis-a-vis missing beneficiary data

Data gaps or missing beneficiary details can pose significant challenges, especially when the information is outdated. In cases where a database contains beneficiary details such as cell phone numbers and email addresses, gaps often emerge due to natural life transitions. The available Trust data goes as far back as 2020, when many beneficiaries were young and still in high school. As they move through different life stages such as graduating from school or university, they are likely to change their contact information, including cell phone numbers or their provided email addresses (often a student email address). As a

result, many of the cell phone numbers found in the Trust database either went to voicemail, no longer existed, were incorrect or belonged to someone else while emails frequently bounced back, indicating inactive accounts.

Additionally, the low response rate to both phone calls and emails underscores the difficulty in maintaining communication with beneficiaries over time, particularly when the contact details are outdated. The accumulation of these issues results in significant data gaps that hinder effective follow-up, outreach or programme evaluation efforts.

In an effort to mitigate the low survey response rate as well as the missing beneficiary data, JET undertook multiple methods to reach beneficiaries to maximise the survey response rate. The team resorted to telephone interviews for surveys initially meant to be administered only via SMS or email. The Trust also offered an incentive to beneficiaries to complete the survey. The request put to implementing partners to circulate the survey was another means of mitigating the data gaps and low survey response rate.

2.5.6 Impact of missing data on analysis and reporting

One of the critical implications of these data gaps is that the study reflects the impact of the programmes for only those beneficiaries who were successfully reached and participated in the survey. This introduces a potential bias in the analysis as the data will be skewed toward individuals who were still contactable, potentially leaving out key segments of the beneficiary population who had changed their contact information.

Beneficiaries who no longer had access to their emails or had changed their phone numbers were not reachable and were less likely to participate in the survey, potentially affecting the representativeness of the findings. As a result, any conclusions or insights drawn from the available responses will need to be interpreted within the context of these data limitations.

In addition, statistical power analysis was used as a method to address the survey's

low response rate. Due to the limited sample size and low statistical power, it was concluded that no significant inferences could be made from the data. Consequently, the analysis was restricted to descriptive statistics based solely on the beneficiaries who participated in the survey, without attempting to generalise the findings to the broader beneficiary population. This approach ensures that the results remain accurate and do not overstate the data's representativeness.





3

Findings



3.1 The global context in which the EM Education Trust operates

The work of the Trust is closely aligned with three of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These are SDG 4 of pursuing quality education, SDG 8 of achieving decent work and economic growth and SDG 9 of advancing industry, innovation and infrastructure. These three goals are very relevant in the context of high levels of youth unemployment, an increasing recognition that graduates are not sufficiently prepared for the world of work and that, in its current state, South Africa is not yet well-positioned to respond to the need for innovation that would enable it to participate in and benefit from the global economy.

3.2 The South African context and the EM Education Trust's response

South Africa's matric results have shown little notable improvement over the past ten years, further exacerbated by the introduction of mathematical literacy as an alternative to pure mathematics, a required subject for enrolment in any degree in a STEM-related field. This crisis has been intensified by the shortage of teachers qualified to teach mathematics and the poor achievement levels that carry through from primary school to high school. It becomes increasingly difficult to correct these backlogs sufficiently for Grade 12 students to access and succeed in STEM-related fields (Pournara & Adam, 2021). The decision by the bpSA Education

Foundation and now the Trust to fund high school support programmes has been an attempt to address these gaps and increase the likelihood of young people accessing and succeeding in STEM degree programmes. On this basis, the work of the High School Support Programme has been highly relevant and has responded to a high level of need.

It is increasingly recognised that the number of qualified graduates in STEM fields is inadequate to meet the needs of the economy and to enable South Africa to benefit and contribute to innovations in industry, engineering and other technology-related fields. This situation has, in part, been due to the inability of the education system to produce graduates that qualify for entry into STEM programmes, as mentioned above. By supporting promising high school students and providing funding for STEM programmes, the Trust has made an important contribution to overcoming this barrier. Its recent decision to focus on funding postgraduate programmes is an important shift which fills an existing gap in the funding landscape and contributes to increasing the employability of graduates in STEM-related fields. The Trust has been able to fund students from their undergraduate pipeline to complete honours degrees and to recruit new students to receive postgraduate funding as their first point of engagement with the Trust. Selection of these beneficiaries is done by universities, and the Trust intends to identify additional postgraduate recipients through its relationship with the National Research Foundation.



The Trust's decision to fund postgraduate qualifications has also been a direct response to changes in the higher education funding landscape and the ability of students to secure grants from NSFAS. Accessing funding for a first degree does not necessarily enable students to access further funding for a postgraduate qualification. Unless a student's financial circumstances have improved significantly, many continue to require financial assistance to cover the costs of higher education. By funding postgraduate STEM qualifications, the Trust is both enhancing the employability of young people in STEM programmes and able to meet a gap in the funding space which has historically focused on funding undergraduate programmes. This new funding focus is directly relevant to the needs of South African students.

The Trust's commitment extends beyond the objectives of the Trust Deed and has emerged based on the recognition that there is limited funding available to organisations working with people with disabilities, and in the absence of being able to live independently or acquire basic skills training, these young people

are unlikely to be able to participate in education and employment to best effect. On this basis, the Trust has funded two organisations that reach people with disabilities. This includes funding the provision of independence training for people who are visually impaired and funding skills training for people with intellectual disabilities, but who are capable of learning a basic skill that can be used in the workplace.

Alongside the commitment to supporting people with disabilities, the Trust has developed relationships with the Disability Units at Wits University, UJ and UFH to ensure that these students receive the support needed to be able to complete their tertiary qualifications. The Trust has increased its impact by both building the skills and capability of young people with disabilities, while also reaching those who are already in university but may not be able to achieve their best academic results due to limitations they face related to their disability.

While High School Support, Youth Skills Development and University Scholarships Programmes have contributed to improving access to and success in higher education, there remains a high number of youth who do not meet the entrance requirements for university. The emphasis on work readiness and the recent shift to including training in solar energy and installation in partnership with UJ is a direct response to the high number of young people who are not employed, in education or training (NEETs).

In the past four years, the Trust has continued to broaden its focus on STEM to include data science, machine learning and information systems. It has done this through funding higher education qualifications, skills training and programmes accredited by the Media, Information and Communication Technologies Sector Education and Training Authority (MICT SETA). These programmes are strongly aligned with the need for skills and capability in technology to foster innovation among young people.

The Living Link, an organisation working with youth who have intellectual disabilities is also currently hosting a beneficiary with funding from the Presidential Youth Employment Stimulus (also known as the YES! Programme). This affiliation takes the form of hosting young people as interns and paying them a stipend to enable them to gain work experience.

3.3 Who was supported by the EM Education Trust

The survey results show the distribution of beneficiaries across the various Trust-supported programmes as well as the beneficiaries' demographic characteristics.

3.3.1 Distribution across programmes

The survey had a total of 308 respondents. Of these, 248 were from the High School Support, Youth Skills Development and University Scholarships Programmes, and 60 respondents came from the programmes supporting people with disabilities to achieve independent living skills. The High School Support/University Preparation Programmes had the highest number of respondents, with 152, representing 49.35% of the total number of survey respondents. Of these 152, the highest number were from U-Prep, with 103 respondents, making up 67.80% of the total number of respondents. Star Schools followed with 20 beneficiaries (13.20%) responding to the survey, while the Nine-Tenths Programme had 15 respondents (9.90%). The Targeting Talent Programme had seven beneficiaries participating in the survey, accounting for 4.60% of the total number of survey respondents. Another seven (4.60%) beneficiaries indicated that they had participated in 'other' programmes. The University Scholarships Programme followed with 53 respondents, accounting for 17.20%; and there were 43 respondents from the Youth Skills Development Programmes, making up 13.96% of respondents. In terms of the two programmes reaching people with disabilities, the majority of the beneficiaries who responded to the survey came from the SAMBT programme,

with 54 respondents representing 17.53%. The six respondents from the Living Link accounted for 1.95% of beneficiary survey respondents.

3.3.2 Age distribution

In terms of age group, the majority of respondents (201 or 73.80%) were between 18 and 24 years old. The second-largest age group (52 respondents or 17.30%) was between 25 and 29 years old. There were 31 respondents making up 12.50% in the 30 to 34 age range, and 20 (24.40%) in the 35- to 39-year age group. Representation for ages 45 to 49 and older than 50 years was minimal, with one beneficiary each (0.40%). The distribution of age group analysis shows that the majority of respondents were younger individuals, particularly those aged 18 to 24 years.

3.3.3 Gender distribution

In terms of gender distribution, among the 308 survey respondents, 133 identified as male, representing 43.20% of the overall group. A higher number, 172, identified as female, making up 55.80%. Additionally, three respondents (1.00%) preferred not to disclose their gender. The data shows that the majority of beneficiaries who responded to the survey were female.

3.3.4 Racial distribution

The survey data shows that the majority of respondents (290 or 94.20%) identified as African. A smaller proportion identified as Coloured (7, 2.30%) and Indian (5, 1.60%). There was minimal representation of Asian and White individuals, with only one beneficiary from each of these groups (0.30%). Additionally, three beneficiaries (1.00%) identified as 'Other,' and one beneficiary (0.30%) preferred not to disclose their race.

3.3.5 Provincial distribution

The survey data reflects the province of residence for the 308 beneficiaries who responded to the survey. The largest group (90 or 29.20%) lived in Gauteng, followed by 60 (19.50%) who lived in the Eastern Cape and 53 (17.20%) in KwaZulu-Natal. Other provinces with notable representation include the Western Cape with 28 (9.10%) respondents, the Free State with 31 (10.10%), and Limpopo with 16 (5.20%). Smaller numbers of respondents were from Mpumalanga (8 or 2.60%) and the North West (19 or 6.20%). The Northern Cape and those living outside of South Africa were the least represented, with only two respondents (0.60%) and one respondent (0.30%), respectively.

3.3.6 Level of education

The survey data shows the highest level of education completed by respondents. The majority 201 (65.30%) had completed high school, making this the largest group. This group was followed by those with a university degree, comprising 44 respondents or 14.30%, and those with a postgraduate degree, comprising 24 respondents or 7.80%. A smaller number of respondents (16 beneficiaries or 5.20%) had completed vocational or skills training, and 13 (4.20%) had completed other types of education. A minority (nine or 2.90%) had only completed primary school (the majority being from the disability programmes), and one beneficiary (0.30%) preferred not to disclose their educational level.

3.3.7 Household income

The data from the survey reflects the household income distribution for beneficiaries who participated in the survey. The majority (202 or 65.60%) reported a combined annual household income of less than R350 000, indicating that most beneficiaries were from low-income households. A smaller proportion (20 respondents or 6.50%) had a household income between R350 001 and R450 000. Other income brackets (R450 001 to R850 000) had very minimal representation, with only one beneficiary (0.30%) in these categories. A significant portion (73 respondents or 23.70%) either did not know their household income or preferred not to answer.

3.3.8 Economic status

The survey data shows the current economic status of beneficiaries who participated in the survey. The largest group is made up of those who were studying, with 169 respondents making up 54.90% of the total. The second-largest group (87 or 28.20%) consisted of unemployed beneficiaries. Of the 87 unemployed beneficiaries who participated in the survey, 32 (36.78%) were from the programmes targeting people with disabilities, and 55 (63.22%) from the Scholarships Programme. Among them, 32 beneficiaries (36.78%) had participated in skills development programmes, while a significant majority, 55 beneficiaries (63.22%), had not participated in skills

training. In terms of educational attainment, 49 beneficiaries (56.32%) had completed high school, 16 beneficiaries (18.39%) held a university degree, and only two beneficiaries (2.30%) had a postgraduate qualification. Additionally, nine beneficiaries (10.34%) had completed vocational or skills training, and five beneficiaries (5.75%) had only finished primary school (all from programmes targeting people with disabilities). A small group of six respondents (6.90%) reported “other” forms of education. These findings indicate that despite a relatively high level of secondary and tertiary education, there is a significant gap in participation in skills development programmes, which may be contributing to the persistent unemployment. Addressing these gaps through targeted educational and vocational training initiatives could help improve employability and job market readiness. A smaller proportion (23 or 7.50%) were employed, with 23 (7.50%) being in an internship or work-based learning experiences. Only two respondents (0.65%) were running a business or were self-employed, both from the programmes targeting people with disabilities, and four (1.30%) respondents were engaged in other economic activities. The data shows that the majority of the surveyed beneficiaries were still pursuing education, while unemployment was also relatively high, highlighting the need for job placement or further training programmes.

Snapshot of respondents

308

Total number
of respondents

248

from High School Support,
Youth Skills Development
and Scholarships
Programmes

60

from programmes supporting
people with disabilities
to achieve independent
living skills



Age Distribution

Majority age group

18 to 24 years old: 201 (73.80%)

Second largest age group

25 to 29 years old: 52 (17.30%)



Provincial Distribution

Largest province

Gauteng: 90 (29.20%)

Notable others

Eastern Cape: 60 (19.50%)

KwaZulu-Natal: 53 (17.20%)



Racial Distribution

Majority race

identified as African: 290 (94.20%)

Minimal representation

White: 1 (0.30%)

Asian: 1 (0.30%)



Level of Education

High School completion: 201 (65.30%)

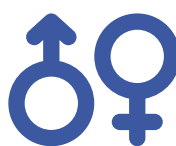
University Degree holders: 44 (14.30%)



Household Income

Low-Income households: 202 (65.60%)

Uncertain income: 73 (23.70%)



Gender Distribution

Female: 172 (55.80%)

Male: 133 (43.20%)



Economic Status

Studying: 169 (54.90%)

Unemployed: 87 (28.20%)

3.3.9 Summary of survey findings

The programmes supported by the Trust target Black South African youth from historically disadvantaged and underserved communities. These beneficiaries typically face significant socio-economic challenges, including limited access to quality education, financial constraints and a lack of academic support.

For instance, the Nine-Tenths Mentoring Programme targets matriculants from under-resourced public schools, pairing them with university mentors to improve their chances of accessing higher education. The Star Schools Incubator Programme supports Grades 10-12 maths and science learners, offering support to those who have fallen behind academically. The Targeting Talent Programme and U-Prep programmes also assist learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their results in mathematics, science and English.

In addition, the Trust supported individuals with disabilities through initiatives like The Living Link, which provide training and employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities, and the South African Mobility for the Blind Trust (SAMBT), which equips visually impaired individuals with essential mobility skills.

The scholarships funded by the Trust, such as those at Wits University, UJ, UP and UFH, are aimed at students from marginalised communities who demonstrate academic potential but lack the financial means to pursue higher education.

Across all these initiatives, the common characteristic of beneficiaries is their need for financial, academic, or personal support to overcome barriers to accessing education, employment and independence. The Trust's focus is on empowering these individuals to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

3.4 Support provided by the EM Education Trust

The Trust has implemented its education programmes through a range of partners. These include tertiary institutions implementing high school support programmes and administering tertiary scholarships in STEM and Commerce, NGOs implementing work readiness programmes, and independent living training for people who are visually or intellectually impaired. Through the High School Support Programme, remote districts in the Eastern Cape (Dimbaza, Buffalo City and Amathole, Alice) were reached and beneficiaries from as far as Limpopo (Giyani) participated in the Targeting Talent Programme.

Table 1: Timeline of partners joining the EM Education Trust

Organisation name	Date joined	Date exited
UJ Scholarship	2016	Active ³
Targeting Talent Programme, Wits	2007	2020
U-Prep	2021	2023
Nine-Tenths Mentoring Programme	2021	2024
Star Schools Incubator Programme	2020	2023
South African Mobility for the Blind Trust (SAMBT)	2022	Active
ORT SA IT Skills	2020	2023
The Living Link	2018	Active
WITS Scholarship	2015	Active
UP Scholarship	2022	Active
UFH Scholarship	2019	Active

3.4.1 High School Support Programme

The Trust has implemented four high school support programmes. These are the Targeting Talent Programme (TTP) in collaboration with the University of Witwatersrand, Star Schools, the University Preparation initiative (U-Prep) in partnership

with Stellenbosch University, and the Nine-Tenths programme hosted by Rhodes University. These partners focused on university preparedness and mathematics, science, and English catch-up programmes.

³ There was uncertainty from UJ's end as to whether the partnership was still active as they had not received mentees in the current year and the reason for this was not communicated by the EM Education Trust to them.

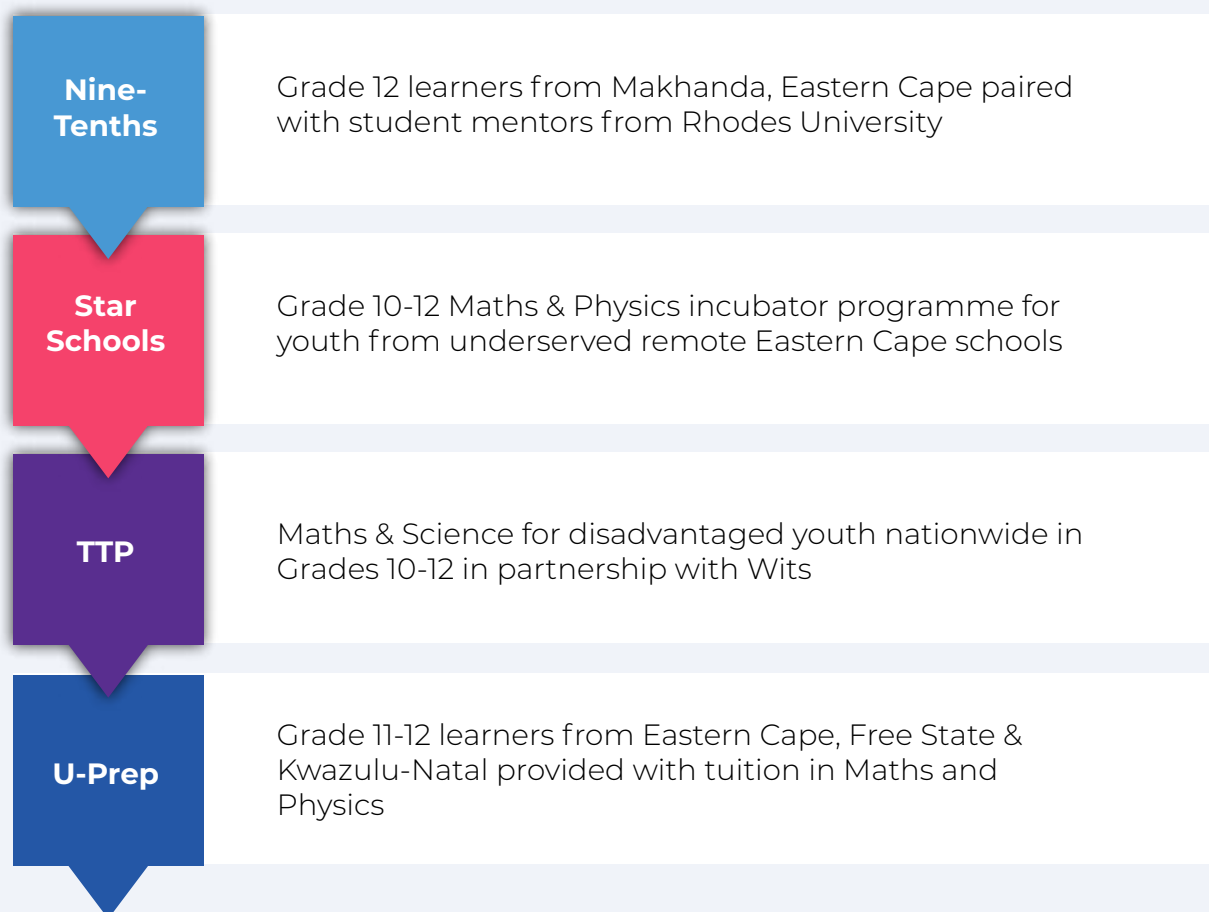


Figure 4: High school support programmes

3.4.1.1 Targeting Talent Programme

The Targeting Talent Programme was the first programme, and the Trust's flagship programme. It was launched in 2007, with a focus on academically gifted learners from disadvantaged backgrounds who performed excellently in mathematics and science subjects in Grades 10, 11 and 12. The programme was implemented in Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Limpopo. The programme applied stringent criteria when selecting the schools and the learners, which was a major contributor to the programme's success.

The programme was a response to the key issues of skills gaps among young people that may negatively affect their ability to access and succeed at university. The Targeting Talent Programme aimed to equip the beneficiaries with the skills, knowledge and tools needed when they transition from high school to university. This was done through provision of mathematics and science support as well as psycho-social support to prepare the beneficiaries for their final exams and entry into university life. The programme design thus encompassed both supplementation and enrichment.

Components of the programme that ensured preparation of the learners for a smooth transition into university included community engagement, psycho-social support and team projects. A group of university students was recruited and trained as mentors for the beneficiaries.

The Targeting Talent Programme's association with bpSA started in 2010 and initially ran for two years. The association with bpSA started with realising the need for resources to reach out to a wider student population. bpSA jointly funded the Targeting Talent Programme with the South African National Roads Agency Ltd (SANRAL), supporting 200 students from 2010 to 2012. bpSA reinvested in the programme in 2013, supporting 564 students. Over a period of five years, bpSA invested R105 million, with R15 million spent in 2014 supporting 1 000 learners.

The Targeting Talent Programme had a strong commitment to adaptive management and review, and undertook a range of evaluation and research studies internally to inform future programme implementation. The Targeting Talent Programme was the only Trust partner to systematically document programme impact, and these reports were shared with the Trust for the purposes of shared learning. These studies have also been valuable in informing the implementation of other high school support programmes beyond the work of the Trust itself.

The Trust was instrumental in influencing the Targeting Talent Programme to change its model from conducting three face-to-face sessions, which was a costly exercise. The Trust required that its resources should rather be used to fund more students, which resulted in Targeting Talent approaching funding from a new perspective.

Shared gains in the alliance

Alumni who revisit the university to share their experiences are evidence that the Trust's support for Targeting Talent's 'proof of concept' model for a student support programme was worthwhile. The Targeting Talent Programme is a replicable model that has been widely adopted by different universities in South Africa and abroad. Targeting Talent Programme's role in perfecting the model in the South African context and the Trust's contribution in bringing it to fruition is the result of a successful partnership.

The Targeting Talent Programme was a flagship programme with a long legacy of success, due to the calibre of candidates supported and the scale of its implementation. Students received extensive wraparound support which set them up for success in Grade 12 and provided the coping skills for when they entered university. Over its ten years of implementation, the programme was able to grow and expand to reach more students, thereby increasing its impact.

Case Study

Salma Chan's Academic Journey and Support with the help of an EM Education Trust Scholarship

● Introduction and background

Salma Chan, a 22-year-old student at the University of Johannesburg (UJ), is currently in her final year of study pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Information Technology, Computer Science and Informatics. She has been supported by the Trust Scholarship throughout her four years of university. With a background in Wits TTP, Salma's academic journey has been shaped by this early exposure to various career fields and academic experiences.

● Managing disability and academic success

Salma has been managing Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) since grade 2, and while it poses challenges such as difficulties with concentration, she has developed effective coping strategies over time. Her strong support network, including her long-standing relationship with her doctor and her

My parents don't have the funds to pay for one year of university, let alone four. Through the scholarship that provides textbooks, tuition and additional support I have managed to get through my whole degree without having to go work or having my family struggle.

family (with both her father and sister also having ADHD), has helped her navigate her academic challenges effectively. She was exposed to extracurricular activities during her time on the TTP and her participation in sports, such as playing squash and attending the gym, along with her medication, has also helped her concentrate during long days of classes. This combination of support structures has allowed her to succeed academically despite her condition.

● High school programme and influence on career choices

Salma's participation in the Wits TTP during her high school years played an essential role in exposing her to various academic and career opportunities. The programme laid a foundation of confidence and familiarity with STEM subjects, particularly in maths and science. Her interest in programming was sparked by an earlier experience in a UJ Robotics programme during grades 8 and 9, which led her to choose her current area of study.

● Support from the Trust and its impact on academic progression

The financial support provided by the Trust has been instrumental in Salma's educational journey. As her family could not afford



university fees, the scholarship covered her tuition, textbooks, and provided a stipend. This support allowed her to focus fully on her studies without the need for part-time employment, significantly reducing financial strain on her family. The Trust's additional support, such as access to job interview training and practice sessions, has enabled Salma to prepare for when she needs to begin looking for employment after graduating. This additional wraparound support and financial assistance from the Trust, allowed her to focus on achieving high academic results. Furthermore, the scholarship allowed her to pursue the idea of completing her Honours, a Master's, and eventually a PhD – something she had not initially considered feasible.

● Personal and family transformation

The support from the Trust has had a big influence on Salma's personal life and family. For her father, the financial relief brought by the scholarship gave him some “breathing space,” reducing the burden of funding her education. She is also able to purchase her chronic medication using her stipend which reduces the pressure on her parents to fund this. Salma also highlighted a significant personal achievement: her growing social abilities. Being an introvert, she had initially struggled with interacting with others. However, through mentorship programmes associated with her scholarship, she gained confidence and developed her interpersonal skills. These mentorship sessions, where she had to share weekly experiences with peers in similar fields, helped her come out of her shell, something she attributes as a very important skill that she has developed during her time at university.

● Community involvement and volunteering

In addition to her academic and personal growth, Salma has been actively involved in community support activities. She volunteers with the Sultan Bahu mosque in Johannesburg, helping with food distribution to the less fortunate. While this volunteering

is independent of the University Scholarships Programme, it underscores her commitment to giving back to the community. Though she has reservations about becoming a formal mentor, Salma's experience with mentorship programmes at UJ, where she was mentored during her first three years, illustrates her understanding of the importance of guidance for personal and academic success.

● Key achievements

Salma's consistent academic performance, despite the challenges she has faced, stands as a key achievement. She has been able to progress through each year of university successfully, staying on track to graduate. In addition, she has achieved personal milestones such as increased confidence in social settings, and she looks forward to another major personal achievement: getting married at the end of the year.

● Conclusion

Salma Chan's journey is an example of how financial and academic support from funders such as the Trust can open up new opportunities for young people, that they may not have thought possible. The scholarship has enabled her to excel in her studies, manage her ADHD effectively, and explore future opportunities in both education and employment. Her story highlights the importance of holistic support—academic, financial, and personal—for students facing unique challenges.



I couldn't speak to people, I was scared of people actually. I still have a bubble but it allows people to come in; before it was a "Please don't enter. I have more social abilities [since the programme]."

Case Study

The Impact of TTP and the Wits Scholarship Programme - the story of Theophilus Mathebula

● Introduction and background

Theophilus Mathebula is a 22-year-old student at Wits University, currently completing his Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering. His journey began in Giyani, Limpopo, where he schooled and was selected to participate in the Wits Targeting Talent Programme (TTP) during grades 11 and 12 (2018-2019). Since 2020, Theophilus has been supported by an Trust Scholarship, which has provided financial assistance throughout his university career.

● Support received from the EM Education Trust

Theophilus's participation in TTP was a turning point in his life. Through the programme, he was exposed to various academic disciplines such as engineering, law, ethics, and biochemistry, among others. He also learned about the Wits Scholarship and other bursary opportunities he had not previously considered. This exposure broadened his horizons and inspired him to pursue mechanical engineering. Since being awarded the Wits Scholarship, Theophilus has received comprehensive support from the Trust, including financial assistance, access to psychological services, and career development resources. He also gained practical skills like obtaining a

driver's licence and acquiring a laptop for his studies. He noted that the scholarship provides additional services such as therapy and mentorship, which he found particularly valuable.

● Influence on career choices and studies

Before participating in TTP, Theophilus was considering a career in medicine. However, after being exposed to various fields through the TTP programme, he discovered a passion for mechanical engineering. This realisation, he notes, was a direct result of the opportunities offered by TTP to explore different career paths before making a final decision. Without the programme, Theophilus believes he might have chosen medicine, a field he would not have enjoyed as much as engineering. The scholarship's support throughout his university years has allowed Theophilus to focus on his studies without the financial pressures that many of his peers face. This has contributed significantly to his academic success, as he has been able to complete his degree without interruptions. He acknowledges that some of his friends, lacking similar support, have faced exclusion from university or extended their studies over several years.

By participating in TTP, Theophilus was able to make more informed decisions about his future, avoiding the common pitfall of choosing a career path without full understanding or awareness of the possibilities.

● Holistic development through the EM Education Trust

The support provided by the Trust has enabled Theophilus to achieve more than academic success. He has gained access to various developmental resources, including CV development, interview preparation, and networking skills through the ejoobi initiative.

In African households there is sometimes an expectation that you should study medicine or another particular field when you start showing potential. I feel like I would've made the wrong decision if I hadn't gone through the TTP programme.

I think it would have been very difficult to succeed in my studies without EM Education Trust's support because I have seen some of my friends now in their final year and they have done the degree for over seven years, some eight. They've been excluded at some point in their life.

● Impact on family and finances

Theophilus's academic journey has also had a significant impact on his family. With his father absent, his mother, a social auxiliary worker, is the primary breadwinner for their household of five children. The financial support from the Trust, including a stipend, has alleviated much of the family's financial burden. Theophilus is able to contribute to household expenses and cover his own educational needs without placing additional stress on his mother.

● Career progression

As Theophilus approaches graduation, he is now focused on securing a seat in a graduate programme. He thought it would be a wonderful opportunity for beneficiaries if the Trust or bpSA had their own graduate programme. The uncertainty he is faced with in terms of securing a graduate position in his preferred field of mining has led him to consider alternative paths, such as data analysis or data engineering, although they do not align with his original vision of working in the engineering industry.

● Contributing to the community

Theophilus's involvement with the Trust has also inspired him to give back to his community. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, he has been offering free virtual lessons in mathematics and physics to students from his former high school in Giyani. His online tutoring sessions, particularly during exam

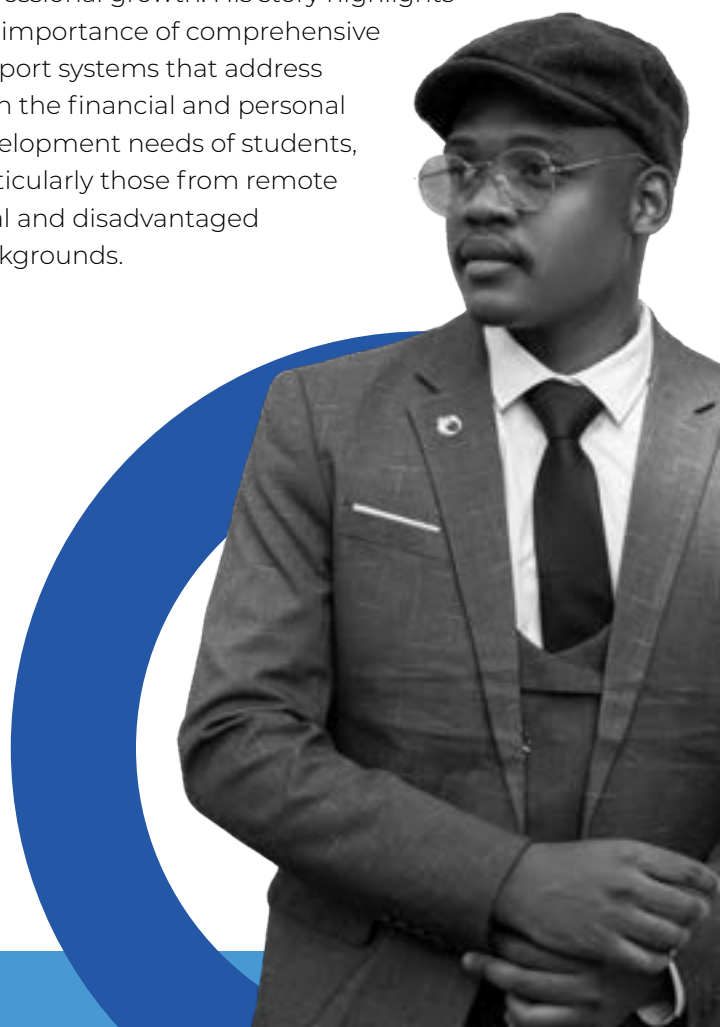
preparation, have helped many students improve their academic performance and transition to university.

● Personal growth and achievements

One of the most significant personal developments Theophilus attributes to the Trust is his growth in self-confidence and communication skills. Coming from a rural background where he was taught in his home language, Theophilus struggled with self-expression and feared speaking up in academic settings. Through the TTP and a scholarship from the Trust, he has gained the confidence to voice his ideas and actively participate in discussions. Additionally, the Trust's emphasis on financial literacy has been an invaluable lesson for Theophilus. He has learned to manage his stipend responsibly, saving money and ensuring that his financial needs are met.

● Conclusion

The scholarship has enabled Theophilus to pursue his academic goals and has also equipped him with the skills, confidence, and resources necessary for personal and professional growth. His story highlights the importance of comprehensive support systems that address both the financial and personal development needs of students, particularly those from remote rural and disadvantaged backgrounds.





3.4.1.2 Star Schools

The Star Schools Programme focused on funding learners from underserved remote areas in the Eastern Cape to participate in the Grade 10 to 12 Maths and Physics Incubator Programme.

In 2020, about 200 learners from Grades 10 and 11 participated. By the end of the programme, Star Schools had reached 1 200 learners across 14 schools located in Buffalo City Metropolitan, King Williams Town, Dimbaza, and Amathole West regions in the Eastern Cape. These students were split across centres and divided by grade.

The programme's main aim was to empower the beneficiaries with STEM

skills and create opportunities that would help them with their future careers and in turn help in the development of their communities.

The objectives of the incubator programme included: increasing the number of learners who passed their matric with quality results in mathematics and science subjects, enabling them to access Bachelor and Diploma STEM-related courses in universities; increasing the learners' interest in STEM subjects; broadening the beneficiaries' career pathways to foster equal opportunities; and addressing educational disparities by providing the beneficiaries with quality mathematics and science education.

The Trust established a partnership with Star Schools to address the crisis in mathematics and science in the identified districts in the Eastern Cape. Schools in these districts were plagued by shortages of teachers, lack of resources and poor curriculum coverage. These challenges contributed to poor mathematics, science and English results. The structural challenges of teacher shortages, poor infrastructure and foundational conceptual gaps in mathematics were major constraints to achieving progress and overshadowed the gains that could be made through the supplementary education classes.

The Star Schools Programme was designed as a three-year programme whereby students were enrolled and supported from Grade 10 until Grade 12. During implementation, it emerged that

there was learner attrition, with some new learners joining in Grades 11 and 12, diluting the potential impact of the extra support provided.

Other structural challenges in the Eastern Cape included high levels of poverty, poorly trained teachers, lack of textbooks, teacher absenteeism and fluctuating attendance. Combined, these challenges meant that the programme was not implemented as intended and the gap between students' achievement and the results required to qualify for admission to STEM degrees was too vast. In addition to the Trust's strategic decision to exit high school programmes, the complexity and depth of the systemic challenges facing the programme meant the Trust would not be able to make a sustainable impact.



Case Study

Goodwill Kazhanje's Journey with Star Schools

● Introduction

Goodwill Kazhanje is a 19-year-old first-year student at the University of Fort Hare, where he is pursuing a degree in Computer Science. Originally from Alice in the Eastern Cape, his academic journey was significantly influenced by his participation in the Star Schools programme from Grade 10 to Grade 11 (2021 and 2022).

● Objectives and support

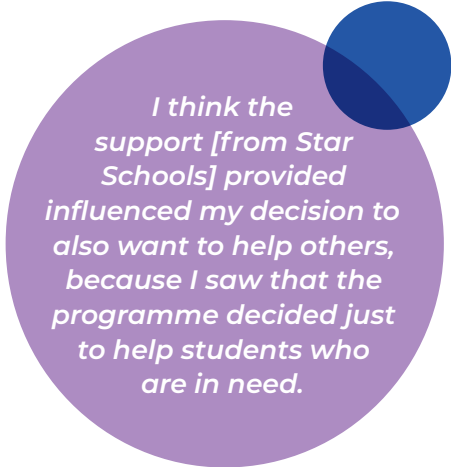
From Goodwill's perspective, the main objective of the Star Schools programme was to help high school students improve their academic performance, particularly in science. The programme also extended its focus to English, ensuring that students received comprehensive support in key subjects that could shape their academic future. Saturday classes were a key feature of the support, where students engaged in more focused revision. Goodwill emphasised how the programme taught him effective study techniques, which he was able to implement on his own, leading to improved academic results.

● Influence on career choices

While Goodwill had always been interested in studying Computer Science, the Star Schools programme played a crucial role in confirming his passion for problem-solving, which aligns with the skills needed in his chosen field. The programme helped him realise his potential and sharpen his abilities, contributing to his confidence in pursuing a career in technology.

● Impact on academic success

Goodwill firmly believes that his participation in Star Schools was pivotal in achieving the high marks required for university admission. The skills he learned through the programme, particularly in studying effectively and problem-solving, were directly responsible for his success in matric.



I think the support [from Star Schools] provided influenced my decision to also want to help others, because I saw that the programme decided just to help students who are in need.

Without Star Schools, Goodwill acknowledges that his academic journey would have been much more difficult, and his results might not have been adequate to secure admission into the Computer Science programme at the University of Fort Hare.

● Personal and social changes

Beyond academics, Star Schools also had a significant impact on Goodwill's personal development. Prior to joining the programme, Goodwill described himself as an average student. However, through his participation he became the highest-performing student at his school, which increased his visibility and social interactions. As a result, he formed study groups and made new friends, many of whom sought him out for academic support.

● Family and community impact

Goodwill's family, particularly his mother, was deeply supportive of his participation in the Star Schools programme. His mother, who had always encouraged him to engage in educational activities, was thrilled when he was accepted into the programme. Star Schools not only provided academic support but also created a sense of pride and fulfillment within his family.

Goodwill has also carried forward the spirit of support into his own community. At university, he volunteers with a chess club where he teaches primary school students how to play chess. He attributes his desire to give back to the support he received from Star Schools, which instilled in him the value of helping others and providing guidance where needed.

● Challenges and career concerns

As Goodwill looks towards the future, he recognises the growing competition in the field of Computer Science. He is aware that many students are pursuing this field due to its high demand, which makes him concerned about future job prospects. However, he remains focused on excelling in his studies and his problem-solving abilities, honed through Star Schools, will likely serve him well as he navigates these concerns in the coming years.

● Key achievements and highlights

The most significant achievement in Goodwill's academic life thus far has been his acceptance into university. He attributes this milestone to the support he received from Star Schools, which provided him with the skills and discipline needed to excel. Goodwill also highlighted how the programme gave structure to his weekends, keeping him focused on academic activities rather than being on the streets. The provision of meals during these sessions further alleviated some of the challenges students faced, ensuring they could concentrate on their studies.

● Conclusion

Goodwill Kazhanje's experience with Star Schools demonstrates the transformative power of educational support programmes. From improving academic performance to fostering personal growth and social connections, Star Schools played a pivotal role in shaping Goodwill's journey to university. The programme not only helped him achieve his goal of studying Computer Science but also inspired him to give back to his community.

There were some changes because before the programme, I used to be a very average student at my school and wasn't really noticeable that much but while participating in the programme, I became a very good student and at my school I became the highest scoring student.



Case Study

Kamvalethu Mgwantashe – A Journey Through the Star Schools Programme

● Background and participation in Star Schools

Kamvalethu Mgwantashe is from Alice, a town in the Eastern Cape, where he attended primary and high school. In 2020 during his Grade 11 year, Kamvalethu became part of the Star Schools Programme which was designed to support students who needed additional help in maths and science. While Kamvalethu was not originally selected, he was able to join due to vacancies in the programme. He continued with the programme until the end of Grade 12 in 2021.

● The impact of Star Schools on academic performance

Kamvalethu credits the Star Schools Programme with significantly influencing his academic results, particularly in Mathematics. During his matric year, Kamvalethu fell ill during the trial exams, which affected his performance. However, the strategies and tips he learned from the Star Schools teachers helped him catch up on lost work and improve his results.

I have taken these skills forward in my university life. And they have built me and contributed so much to me having leadership skills. I am proud to call myself a leader today. Because I am currently chairing a Nursing Student Society where I get to deal with various attitudes, various behaviours and the pressure and all that, but I get to manage at the end of the day.

The teachers at Star Schools were highly skilled, and Kamvalethu found their teaching methods more effective than those at his high school. He appreciated the different problem-solving approaches, especially in Mathematics, where he learned alternative methods that helped him persist and succeed. These methods were also faster than what he had learnt at school, ensuring he did not lose time in his exams.

● Influence on career choices

Although Kamvalethu is now studying for a Bachelor of Nursing at the University of Fort Hare, he acknowledges that the Star Schools Programme played a role in shaping his career decisions. The English sessions in particular, which focused on writing essays and case studies, encouraged students to reflect on their future aspirations. The programme's emphasis on planning for the future motivated Kamvalethu to think critically about his career path and reinforced his interest in nursing.



● Personal growth and social skills

Attending Star Schools also impacted Kamvalethu's personal development. The programme exposed him to a diverse group of students from different schools, languages, and backgrounds. This experience helped him develop his social skills, particularly in interacting with people who had different attitudes and approaches to learning. Kamvalethu attributes his ability to engage with others and understand diverse perspectives to his time in the programme, which has been invaluable in his nursing career, where communication and understanding are key. These students from other environments had also learnt different methods for solving problems which helped him in approaching maths.

● Continued influence in university life

Kamvalethu continues to apply the skills he gained from Star Schools in his university life. He has become an informal tutor to his peers, assisting other students in areas where they struggle. This role brings him a sense of fulfillment, knowing that he is making a positive impact on others' academic journeys, just as Star Schools did for him. One of the most significant lessons Kamvalethu learned from the Star Schools Programme was the importance of decision-making and problem-solving. His Mathematics teacher at Star Schools emphasised finding the quickest and most efficient methods to solve problems, which Kamvalethu has carried into his university studies. These skills have not only helped him academically but have also contributed to his leadership abilities. He is currently the chairperson of the Nursing Student Society at the University of Fort Hare, where he manages various responsibilities and interacts with students from diverse backgrounds.

● Challenges and missed opportunities

While Kamvalethu benefited greatly from the Star Schools Programme, he faced some challenges in accessing further opportunities. After matriculating, he learned about potential funding from the Trust, which supported students who were part of the Star Schools Programme. Unfortunately, by the time he found out about the funding, the application process had already closed. Although he attempted to apply later, his field of study, nursing, did not fit within the bursary's criteria.

● Conclusion

Kamvalethu's journey through the Star Schools Programme highlights the influence that catch-up academic programmes and mentoring can have on students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The programme not only helped him improve his academic performance but also equipped him with critical life skills, such as decision-making, problem-solving, and leadership. As Kamvalethu approaches the final year of his Nursing Degree, the lessons he learned from Star Schools continue to influence his academic and personal growth.

They were more like driving you into drafting your future because there were kind of topics that would say, where do I see myself in the upcoming 10 years? And those motivations from our teacher. So, I believe it also played some part in shaping what I want to become in the near future.

3.4.1.3 University Preparation Programme (U-Prep)

The University Preparation Programme (U-Prep) is a programme initiated under the management of the Stellenbosch University Centre for Pedagogy (SUNCEP) in collaboration with provincial departments of education (PEDs) and the Trust in 2021. The objectives of U-Prep included enhancing academic performance of learners in mathematics and science subjects in the National Senior Certificate exams, increasing the number of historically disadvantaged learners that gain access to university for STEM-related courses and increasing the number of learners who choose to take mathematics and science with a better understanding of the importance of these subjects in navigating their career opportunities. The programme provided challenging mathematics and science programmes to beneficiaries to increase their chances of accessing tertiary education in STEM-related disciplines. The programme targeted learners in Quintile 1, 2, and 3 schools located in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and the Free State. Learners were identified through partnerships established with the PEDs.

U-Prep had several engagements with the Trust prior to formalising the partnership in 2020. SUNCEP had already developed a 'proof of concept' based on its prior experience with implementing university preparation programmes.

The programme design was the culmination of a collective effort, with the Trust identifying the specific geographical areas for implementation. The programme was implemented in the Eastern Cape, Free State and Kwazulu-Natal.

As part of this programme, the Trust was able to support 297 learners. Of these learners, 147 were in Grade 11 and 150 were in Grade 12.

The programme design required established partnerships with PEDs to assist U-Prep with identifying the schools and the learners for participation and engaging with the district offices. Establishing positive relationships with PEDs, with smooth coordination to ensure the right schools and learners are targeted, is an indispensable programmatic component of U-Prep. Strong and high-level engagements with the provincial officials also contributed to knowledge of the diverse ways the provinces function and assisted with customising the programme. These existing relationships and SUNCEP's credibility with the PEDs made for a smoother implementation process.

The willingness of the Trust to be open to the changes in the programme design necessitated by additional support for language or for training of tutors is indicative of the Trust's intentions to achieve a positive programme impact by ensuring that implementation barriers are tackled in a positive way.

The partnership was also characterised by frequent engagements during the transition phase from the bpSA Foundation to the Trust, during which U-Prep diligently followed a process of relationship building. This included smooth onboarding of U-Prep management to the Trust and efforts to develop a common understanding of the programme in alignment with the Trust's vision. The partnership entailed a high-touch funding arrangement, and joint

prioritisation by partners contributed to a healthy relationship between the Trust and SUNCEP.

Frequent and open communication by sharing insights, mutual respect for open questioning and programme enhancements based on dialogue and discussions proved to be the enablers in the partnership. Though the change in management brought about some teething issues with administrative processes, this did not adversely affect the programmatic outcomes.

Shared gains in the alliance

Both U-Prep and the Trust benefitted from this partnership. Whereas U-Prep received funding from the Trust to implement the programme, the Trust was able to contribute to the vocational journey of the matriculants. The funding from the Trust enabled SUNCEP to implement a 'proof of concept' university preparation programme. For the Trust, this proved to be a strategic programme serving as a feeder for the University Scholarships programme.



Case Study

The Impact of U-Prep and the Energy Mobility Education Trust on Phila's Academic Journey

This case study explores the influence of the University Preparation (U-Prep) programme on Phila's academic achievements, career choice, and overall educational journey.

Phila, now a third-year medical student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), reflects on his experiences as a beneficiary of U-Prep, highlighting how the programme has shaped his academic performance and personal development.

● Background

In 2021, during his matric year, Phila was selected to participate in U-Prep based on his Grade 11 results. Phila was the top performing student in Maths and Science in uMkhanyakude district, a rural community in Kwa Zulu Natal. He lived with his mother growing up who was not working and could not afford to pay for him to attend university.

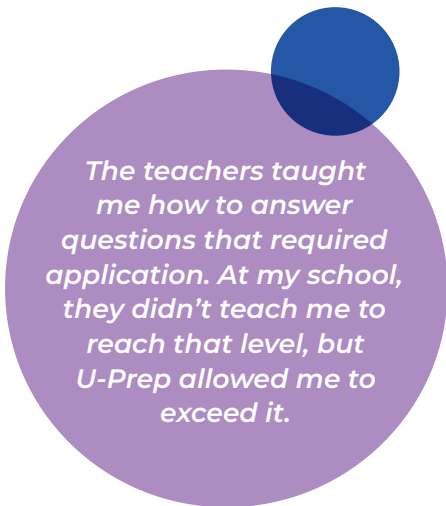
● Academic growth and achievement through U-Prep

Phila's involvement with U-Prep began in the second term of his matric year when his physics teacher informed him about the selection. Initially unsure of what the programme entailed, Phila quickly realised its value during the introductory session on May 30, 2021. U-Prep provided him and other learners with resources like tablets, monthly data, textbooks, and access to online classes.

U-Prep's influence extended beyond simply providing resources. The programme focused on helping students develop problem-solving skills, especially in tackling higher-order questions that were included in matric examinations. This level of preparation was something Phila noted was missing in his school, where teaching focused on average learners. The programme gave him the edge he needed to excel.

The online lessons, tailored to challenging topics, enabled Phila to achieve results beyond his expectations.

This level of preparation was evident when Phila scored 100% in both maths and physical science during his final exams. The exposure to competition from other high-performing learners attending other schools also motivated him to push himself further, realising that even his exceptional results could be improved upon.



The teachers taught me how to answer questions that required application. At my school, they didn't teach me to reach that level, but U-Prep allowed me to exceed it.

U-Prep allowed me to reach my full potential. I was doing well academically, but not reaching the heights I could. The programme pushed me beyond my limits, and I achieved distinctions in both maths and physical science. In my finals, I even managed to get 100% in maths and physics, which I did not expect.

● The role of U-Prep in Phila's personal development

While U-Prep primarily focused on academic performance, it also provided Phila with a sense of external competition and exposure to people from different backgrounds.

● Conclusion

Phila's journey from a high-achieving matric student to a medical student at UKZN showcases the profound impact U-Prep and the Trust can have on a learner's academic and personal development. Through structured academic support, exposure to external competition, and access to resources, Phila was able to unlock his full potential. His story highlights the importance of programmes like U-Prep in shaping the futures of young learners, particularly those from under-resourced schools, and offers valuable insights for further programme enhancement.



3.4.1.4 Nine-Tenths Programme

The Nine-Tenths Programme, initiated in 2016 as part of Rhodes University's commitment to community development, has significantly transformed education in Makhanda since its inception. The programme was established to assist Grade 12 students from underserved public schools to enhance their educational outcomes through the provision of mentorship and academic support. The objectives of the programme included beneficiaries obtaining Bachelor passes for their matric examination results, gaining admission to Rhodes University and increasing the overall pass rates of the participating schools.

The Trust, which was introduced to Rhodes University through an existing relationship with bpSA, has contributed significantly to the programme's success. The Trust not only provides financial support but also engages deeply with the programme through strategic input, site visits, and a collaborative monitoring and evaluation process. This approach fosters mutual trust and accountability, allowing for continuous feedback and dynamic development, ultimately ensuring the programme remains effective and impactful. With funding from the Trust starting in 2021, the programme has seen a remarkable increase in Bachelor passes among students participating in the programme, with enrolment at Rhodes University from participating schools increasing from just 11 students in 2012 to nearly 170 by 2024.

This programme relies on the dedication of Rhodes students who are trained as mentors, alongside the involvement of key partners such as GADRA Matric School, the PED and community organisations. The mentors selected to work with Grade 12 learners often share similar backgrounds

to those of the participants, creating the basis for positive relationships that extend beyond the classroom.

Each year, mentors engage in ten data-driven sessions that focus on goal-setting, effective learning techniques and career guidance, ensuring that students are well-prepared for the future after matriculation. The programme emphasises collaboration among school stakeholders, including principals, teachers and student leaders, through quarterly analysis meetings to assess progress and address challenges. Volunteers are required to attend at least 85% of their sessions, reflecting the programme's commitment to consistency and accountability. Additionally, mentees receive valuable resources, such as a Secure Digital Memory card filled with educational content tailored to their subjects, and a final event is held before exams to ensure the mentees have applied for further education opportunities.

This systemic approach not only aims to improve individual student outcomes but also seeks to enhance the overall public education system in the region through a data-centric methodology that supports effective research and scholarship production. The significant impact on learners has extended beyond individuals to also improving the overall morale of learners, with schools seeing an improvement in results and an elevated respect from the community.

By promoting community engagement and the concept of Ubuntu, the programme emphasises the importance of social responsibility, which has resulted in notable improvements in local schools, including higher matric pass rates and increased numbers of students achieving

Bachelor passes. The initiative has also prompted some Rhodes students to re-evaluate their career choices, with a shift from fields like law to education.

The Trust's commitment and supportive approach have fostered a productive partnership, greatly benefiting Rhodes University and participating schools, even as the programme approaches its conclusion. The mentorship programme thrives on the dedication of volunteers who see their involvement as a vital contribution to fostering socially responsible citizenship among students.

Sustainability of the partnership

The Trust, which has been funding this transformative educational programme since 2021, will cease its support after 2024 due to changes in its funding strategy. The programme has successfully scaled to five schools, demonstrating potential for replication at other universities. Rhodes University is open to expanding its successful educational model to other universities, but stresses the importance of full immersion in the programme's culture and commitment to ensure similar success.

Attempts to expand to another institution highlighted the necessity of a strong culture of volunteerism and the need for a programme coordinator with community development experience.

Although the partnership with the Trust is ending, the university has extended funding for an additional year in the hope of securing new donors and is actively seeking alternative funding sources to continue the positive initiatives started through Nine-Tenths.

Shared gains in the alliance

The Nine-Tenths programme has significantly boosted local student enrollment and transformed Makhanda into a hub of educational excellence. Notably, one school experienced a remarkable increase in its matric pass rate from 50% in 2019 to 96% in 2023, alongside a rise in Bachelor passes. This initiative has fostered socially responsible students who engage with their community, while the partnership with the Trust has facilitated open discussions about challenges, allowing for continued focus on students who are high-achievers despite the setbacks they face. The Nine-Tenths Programme has positively impacted nearly 900 students, many of whom have successfully transitioned to higher education, and it earned Rhodes University the MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship, a first for a South African institution.

Overall, the partnership has enriched both mentees and mentors, strengthened community ties and contributed to improved school reputations and the creation of alternative educational pathways.

The way forward

Makhanda is striving to establish itself as a nationally recognised hub for educational excellence, with the local education system, supported by its strong schools, university and technical college, seen as a key driver of the economy. Community and educational leaders recently convened at a summit to outline future goals, focusing on leveraging education for economic revitalisation. Mentoring will remain a fundamental aspect of Rhodes University's approach across various programmes, given the proven effectiveness of mentoring in fostering educational success.

Case Study

Jody-Ann Rooi's Journey Through the Nine-Tenths Programme

● Background and involvement

Jody-Ann Rooi was involved in the Nine-Tenths mentorship programme for nearly five years, participating as a mentee, mentor, and eventually a student leader. Her journey began in high school when she first encountered the programme through a mentor who left a profound impact on her life, both academically and personally.

● Role of mentorship

Jody-Ann's mentor, Tibade, played a crucial role in her first year of high school. They developed a strong bond that extended beyond schoolwork. Tibade not only monitored Jody-Ann's academic progress but also provided emotional support, checking in on her well-being and home environment. This comprehensive approach helped Jody-Ann feel more secure and motivated, and it encouraged her to explore different career paths and opportunities.

As Jody-Ann progressed in the programme, her role shifted from mentee to mentor, and eventually to student leader. This progression gave her a deep understanding of the programme's structure and allowed her to experience it from all perspectives. As a student leader, she supported and guided new mentors, helping them navigate the challenges of mentoring and encouraging them to build strong relationships with their mentees.

● Impact on personal and academic growth

Jody-Ann credits the programme with helping her achieve goals she hadn't originally thought possible. With the support of her mentor and others involved in the programme, she exceeded her own academic expectations, achieving results

10% higher than her initial goals by the end of the year. This was a direct result of the consistent encouragement, guidance, and check-ins from her mentor and programme leaders, who believed in her abilities and kept her focused. The programme didn't just impact her academics; it also shaped her broader outlook on life. Before joining, Jody-Ann found it easy to give up on challenges, but her mentor showed her that there are multiple pathways to success and that failure in one area doesn't mean the end of the road.

● Transition to university and continued involvement

When Jody-Ann transitioned to university at Rhodes, she remained actively involved in the Nine-Tenths programme. She applied to become a mentor herself, encouraged by her former mentor. Her role as a mentor was not only about helping students set academic goals but also building personal relationships with mentees, offering holistic support, and creating a comfortable space for them to

Before meeting my mentor and having the guidance that she gave me, it was so easy for me to just give up and to think that there's no hope and not to realise there are actually, different paths. There are just these very specific paths in life that I need to follow and she really opened that up, showing me that there are different things in life that I can try out and if this doesn't work out and obviously I can try something else.

All in all, it's been an incredible experience. It's been an experience of self-growth because when you are in this programme, the reason as to why we are calling it community engagement is because we are also engaging and also learning, so it's not just us giving but it's receiving back as well.

discuss challenges, whether academic or personal. As a student leader, Jody-Ann was responsible for encouraging and supporting the mentors, ensuring they felt confident and prepared to guide their mentees. This leadership role allowed her to develop skills in motivation, facilitation, and peer support, further contributing to her personal growth.

● **Influence of the programme on career and life choices**

Jody-Ann acknowledges that the Nine-Tenths programme had a significant influence on her career trajectory. Before joining, she wasn't entirely sure of what path to follow after high school, but the programme helped her clarify her options and provided the encouragement she

needed to pursue higher education. Now pursuing a Masters degree, Jody-Ann reflects on how the mentorship programme helped her stay focused, driven, and motivated through challenges she faced in both her academic and personal life.

● **Community impact and leadership**

Beyond the one-on-one mentor-mentee relationships, Jody-Ann believes that the Nine-Tenths programme has a ripple effect on the broader school environment. Grade 11 students, for example, observe the impact the programme has on Grade 12s and are motivated to perform well in the hopes of joining the programme themselves. This creates a positive culture of ambition and goal-setting within the school.

● **Conclusion**

Jody-Ann Rooi's experience in the Nine-Tenths mentorship programme is a testament to the power of structured, supportive mentorship. From a mentee to a student leader, the programme provided her with a sense of direction, motivation, and community, while also helping her surpass her own academic and personal expectations. Today, Jody-Ann continues to give back to the programme that gave her so much, embodying the full cycle of growth, learning, and leadership that the Nine-Tenths programme aims to foster.



Case Study

Nine-Tenths Mentorship Programme and Its Role in Transforming Education

● Background

Mr. Mcuba, also known as “Radio,” is the principal of Kutliso Daniels, a secondary school established during Nelson Mandela’s Back to School campaign in the early 1990s. The school, initially struggling with underperformance and lack of resources, was located in a tin structure and faced several challenges in its early years. However, Mr. Mcuba remained dedicated to his vision of transforming the institution into a school of excellence.

Despite initial setbacks such as understaffing, low pass rates, and limited infrastructure, a major turning point came in 2016 when the school joined Rhodes University’s Nine-Tenths Mentorship Programme. This initiative was designed to pair Grade 12 students with mentors from the university, creating a unique learning and motivational opportunity for learners, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

● Challenges Faced

Underperformance: For several years, the school struggled with achieving satisfactory matriculation results. Low pass rates and unfilled staff positions hampered its progress.

Lack of Resources: The school lacked basic infrastructure, such as adequate water supply, leading to frequent disruptions and early closures.

Community Disengagement: Local students faced challenges with limited role models, a factor that impacted their motivation and outlook on education.

Limited Opportunities for Students: Many students lacked exposure to higher education and professional careers, which reduced their ambition to succeed beyond matric.

● Intervention: Nine-Tenths Mentorship Programme

In 2016, the school became involved with the Nine-Tenths Programme, facilitated by Rhodes University’s Community Engagement Office. The programme pairs Rhodes students as mentors with Grade 12 learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to help them improve their academic performance and self-confidence.

Key elements of the programme include:

One-on-One Mentoring: University students, who recently completed matric, work directly with high school learners, providing guidance, support, and mentorship on academic subjects as well as university life.

Study Skills Training: Mentors help students develop effective study habits, from essay writing to exam preparation.



Exposure to University Life: Learners are taken on campus tours and exposed to university experiences, creating a bridge between high school and higher education.

Motivational Support: Mentors often come from similar socio-economic backgrounds, making them relatable role models for learners who might not have had such figures in their lives.

● Outcomes

Academic Improvement: Since joining the Nine-Tenths Programme, the school's matric results have improved dramatically. From underperformance in earlier years, the school achieved an 89.9% matric pass rate in 2022 and a 96.4% pass rate in 2023, just narrowly missing 100%.

Increased Learner Motivation: Students who previously struggled with self-confidence and lacked ambition were motivated by their mentors' stories of success. Many now see university education as a realistic and attainable goal. Mr. Mcuba noted that the mentees saw their mentors not only as guides but as role models who helped them believe in their own potential.

School-wide Impact: The benefits of the programme extended beyond just the Grade 12 students. Younger students are inspired by the achievements of their predecessors, creating a culture of academic excellence throughout the school. The visible success of the matriculants has inspired learners from all grades to aspire to be part of the programme when they reach their final year.

Community Engagement and Support:

The positive results and growing reputation of the school have attracted more support from the community, including donations from local NGOs like the Rotary Club, which contributed to infrastructure improvements like water supply solutions. The school's success has led to greater community pride and involvement in its growth.

The Nine Tenths programme has been a game changer for our school. It's not just about improving pass rates. It's about showing these learners that their background doesn't determine their future. They can achieve greatness, and I am proud to be a part of that journey.

● Personal Reflection from Mr. Mcuba

Mr. Mcuba attributes much of the school's recent success to the Nine-Tenths Programme, which he describes as a critical component in transforming the academic culture. His commitment to leadership and mentorship has been key to fostering a positive environment, allowing students to thrive. He believes that the programme's approach—providing learners with relatable role models—has not only improved academic outcomes but also empowered students with the confidence to dream big.

● Conclusion

The Nine-Tenths Mentorship Programme has had a profound impact on both the school and its learners. By providing mentorship, motivation, and academic support, the programme has helped the school transition from struggling with low pass rates to becoming a School of Excellence. More importantly, it has instilled a sense of self-belief and ambition in learners, giving them the tools to succeed academically and in life.

Through strategic leadership, community collaboration, and the power of mentorship, Mr. Mcuba's school has become a beacon of hope and transformation in the community, proving that with the right support, success breeds success.

3.4.2 Overall performance of high school programmes

The Targeting Talent, Nine-Tenths and U-Prep Programmes had a multi-pronged focus on equipping learners to access and succeed at university. This multi-pronged focus included teaching a range of life skills to young students to cope with the increased demands of university. This has been identified as one of the strengths of these programmes. In all three programmes, there were unanticipated outcomes of increased self-confidence and improved motivation, and in Nine-Tenths, young people who had been through the programme had gone on to study at Rhodes University and decided to join the programme as mentors. This is captured in a case study included in this report.

Both U-Prep and Nine-Tenths have reported similar successes, where ongoing mentoring and guidance has contributed to improved learner outcomes and student wellbeing. The mentorship model in place in the Nine-Tenths Programme has been found to have extended beyond its initial intention, where mentors have been able to support mentees beyond their academic needs by building a trusting, nurturing environment. This has also had spillover effects in the schools that are participating in the programme, with teachers and school leaders reporting improved self-confidence and motivation among learners who meet with their mentors on a regular basis. The peer-to-peer mentoring has been particularly valuable as students reported feeling more comfortable interacting with someone closer to their age. This has led to mentees becoming involved in the programme as mentors.

Star Schools was successful in improving mathematics results and in teaching new problem solving skills which were greatly valued by participants in low resource environments, contributing to improving overall self-confidence among participants.

3.4.2.1 Next steps/way forward

The Trust has closed out the High School Support Programme, with the last partner, Rhodes University, concluding implementation at the end of 2024. It is a decision that has been informed by a change in the strategic direction of the Trust.

3.4.3 University Scholarships Programme

The University Scholarships Programme was implemented in 2015. The programme offered financial, academic, psycho-social and other forms of support to young black South Africans pursuing STEM and commerce-related courses in four partner-universities. This included support with tuition, accommodation, a laptop, textbooks, stationery, a meal allowance and a stipend. The Trust programme was more comprehensive than many of the other publicly available scholarship programmes provided by a range of government agencies and departments, making it particularly attractive for students.

“The students are not lacking in the smarts - that is the one thing that is not their problem. It is everything else, so what you do is build the confidence, the peer community and everything seems to fall in line. So, when you see the students that become a

metallurgical engineer at Implats or a Science teacher or an actuarial scientist, when you see that, you see it is worth everything. This young person's life is different. It is changed forever.



3.4.3.1 Implementing partners and areas of operation

The first university to offer scholarships on behalf of the Trust was Wits University in 2015, followed by UJ in 2016. The third was UFH, which joined in 2020. The last institution to join was UP, which joined in 2022. With the exception of UFH, all the universities received scholarship funding for candidates enrolled in undergraduate programmes. The total number of beneficiaries for the 2022 cohort was 108 students, with 36 students from UJ, 30 Wits students, 21 students from UP and 21 students from UFH respectively.

In 2022, Wits recorded a progression rate of 80% with 10 graduates, UJ 78% with 14 graduates, UP a 67% progression rate and UFH a 100% progression rate. In 2023, Wits recorded a progression rate of 80% with 13 graduates, UJ 82% with 23 graduates, UP 93% with 14 graduates, and UFH recorded a 78% progression rate with 18 graduates.

The Trust continues to work with these four institutions to date. The Trust used the high school support programmes as a recruitment channel for its University Scholarships Programme, and in other instances, has funded students identified by the respective universities subject to an interview with the Trust. There are no geographical criteria as to the provinces from which scholarship students are identified. In 2022, the Trust pivoted to

funding postgraduate students through its University Scholarships Programme. This decision was taken based on the multiple funding opportunities available to undergraduate students through a range of stakeholders operating in the post school education and training (PSET) sector and the recognition that funding for postgraduate studies is much more limited. While the Trust continues to fund STEM-related postgraduate qualifications, it has also begun to fund new and emerging areas such as data science, and there is a stronger emphasis on renewable energy within the STEM field. This allows for the development of a postgraduate talent pool that has the potential to not only transform the renewable energy sector in the country but also provide new narratives in terms of research for the sector.

Most recently, the Trust has begun to offer scholarships for students enrolled in STEM-related postgraduate qualifications at the University of the Western Cape and the University of Limpopo.

3.4.3.2 Strengths

Pipeline approach

The Trust had the advantage of developing a pipeline approach for the selection of its university scholarship beneficiaries by using the High School Support Programme beneficiaries as a selection pool. This was based on the assumption that students who had gone through a high school programme prior to being awarded a university scholarship would be more likely to succeed in their university studies as they possessed good foundational learning.

Of the 248 beneficiaries who responded to the survey, 24 beneficiaries had participated in both the high school support and university scholarships programme. Most Targeting Talent Programme students (5 or 83.3%) were enrolled at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, while U-Prep saw more diverse enrolment across multiple universities, with the largest share of its students enrolled in 'other universities' (5 or 35.7%). Of those who completed the beneficiary survey, two were from the Nine-Tenths Programme. Both were enrolled at Rhodes University, and two students had come from the Star Schools Incubator Programme, split evenly between UJ and other universities.

Comprehensive scholarships

One of the strengths of the Trust funding is that it provides comprehensive

scholarships to university students, covering not only tuition fees, but also textbooks, stationery, laptops, accommodation costs, mentorship and career guidance as well as providing a stipend to students. The comprehensive wraparound support that the Trust enables through its funding was highlighted by a number of interviewees. Students funded through UJ scholarships had access to mentors in higher years of study who provided them with assistance with academic work in addition to psycho-social assistance. Students at UFH were also provided with mentorship from the Fort Hare Foundation team as well as heads of departments. One interviewee attributed the success of the programme's design to the wrap-around support received.

Table 2: Distribution of students who benefitted from High School Support and University Scholarships

Programme	University											
	Wits		UJ		UP		Rhodes		Other		Total	
Targeting Talent Programme	5	83.3%	1	16.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6	100.0%
U-Prep	4	28.6%	0	0.0%	4	28.6%	1	7.1%	5	35.7%	14	100.0%
Nine-Tenths	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	100.0%	0	0.0%	2	100.0%
Star Schools	0	0.0%	1	50.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	50.0%	2	100.0%
Total	9	37.5%	2	8.3%	4	16.7%	3	12.5%	6	25.0%	24	100.0%

Source: Beneficiary survey

“The most crucial aspect of the programme is the wraparound services — the extra support provided to the students. While it may seem like a single component, these services encompass various activities that collectively contribute to the programme's success. The additional support is essential because students genuinely need it to thrive.”



When the Trust focused on funding undergraduate students, the scholarships were provided to students for each year of study until they completed their qualification, provided that they met the scholarship criteria each successive year. The Trust held mid-year check-in meetings with students to discuss results and to address any concerns. Where required, a risk assessment was done and the necessary support identified for the student. The Trust has taken a flexible approach to determining whether funding should be stopped and the student exited from the programme, or whether the poor results were an outlier in relation to the students' general academic performance. If the latter, the Trust identified a bespoke solution to assist the student to get back on track. This has ensured a very low level of attrition from the scholarships programme.

Feedback from one scholarship candidate indicated that the support provided to engineering students to overcome specific barriers was more comprehensive than that available to other programmes. This is something which the Trust will need to be mindful of as it moves into new and emerging STEM-related disciplines such as solar energy and data science.

Linking with universities' disability units

The Trust's focus on assisting youth with disabilities was not confined to its Disability Programme. It has mainstreamed its response to disability by extending its work beyond organisations working to address disabilities to reaching out and working with disability units at higher education institutions such as Wits and the UFH. The Trust recognised that students with disabilities faced barriers to access and mobility. In order to overcome these barriers, the Trust tried to ensure that students had access to specialised equipment, other resources and support to assist with their studies.

3.4.3.3 Challenges

Late selection

One partner university stated that during the implementation phase of the programme, beneficiary selection took place later in the year, after students had registered and, in some instances, had been allocated funding from other bursars. A similar delay in assigning mentees to beneficiary students in other programmes was raised as another challenge in programme implementation.

Case Study

Leo Mthembu's Journey through university with a EM Education Trust Scholarship

● Background and initial challenges

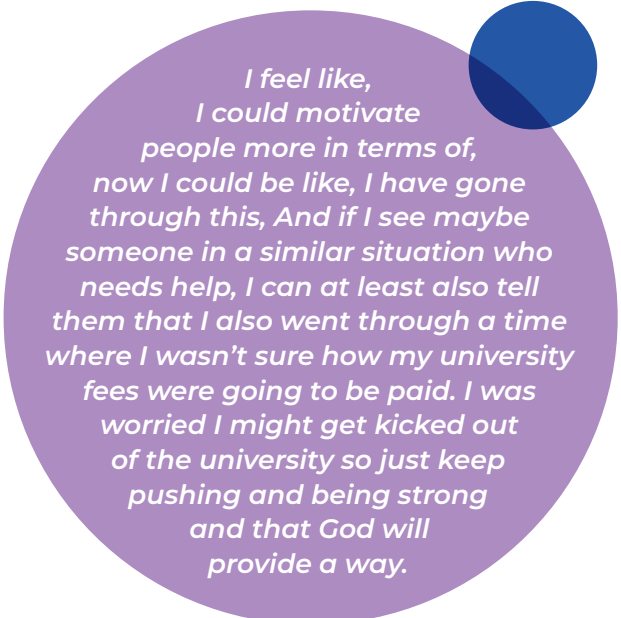
Leo Mthembu, a 23-year-old Information Science student at the University of Pretoria, began his academic journey in 2022. Like many students from underprivileged backgrounds, Leo faced the daunting task of self-funding his education. His family, especially his mother, struggled to gather enough money for his tuition fees, relying on loans and contributions from others. This financial strain added significant stress to his first year at university, especially as he transitioned from high school to the more demanding university environment.

● Introduction of the EM Education Trust scholarship

In September 2022, while navigating the challenges of his first year, Leo was introduced to the Trust University Scholarship Programme. Initially unfamiliar with the programme, Leo was interviewed by two of the Trust representatives and shortly afterward was accepted into the scholarship. This acceptance marked significant milestones in his academic journey, as it provided him with funding for tuition, accommodation, a laptop, and additional supplies such as stationery. The scholarship alleviated the financial burden on his family, particularly his mother, who no longer had to worry about how to pay for his education.

● Scholarship benefits: Beyond financial support

The Trust scholarship provided more than just financial relief. It opened up opportunities for Leo in other areas, including access to career resources such as ejoobi, a recruitment service that helps students prepare for post-graduation employment. Leo was able to attend meetings and interviews through the platform, which broadened his career prospects and prepared him for life after



I feel like, I could motivate people more in terms of, now I could be like, I have gone through this, And if I see maybe someone in a similar situation who needs help, I can at least also tell them that I also went through a time where I wasn't sure how my university fees were going to be paid. I was worried I might get kicked out of the university so just keep pushing and being strong and that God will provide a way.

university. The scholarship has also offered access to counseling and life skills training, helping Leo navigate the emotional and psychological challenges of university life. These services, combined with the financial security provided by the Trust, have given Leo a sense of stability and motivation to succeed.

● Academic progress and motivation

Leo attributes much of his academic success to the scholarship, which has motivated him to work harder and maintain his academic performance. The programme's merit-based nature, requiring good academic standing to continue receiving funding, serve as a source of inspiration for Leo. He feels a sense of responsibility to make the most of the opportunity, recognising that not many people have the same privilege. Through his hard work and dedication, Leo has managed to keep up with his studies, balancing his academic responsibilities with extracurricular activities. He has been involved in mentorship programmes at university, where he guides first-year students in navigating university life. Leo has also participated in

volunteer programmes, such as painting orphanages, as part of a community service module.

● **Personal growth and development**

Beyond academic success, the Trust scholarship has significantly impacted Leo's personal development. He notes that the programme has helped him become more proactive and confident. Prior to receiving the scholarship, Leo describes himself as timid and shy, and hesitant to pursue opportunities. However, with the support and encouragement from the Trust, he now feels more inclined to take on new challenges and seize opportunities that come his way. Leo's self-esteem has grown, and he now sees himself as someone who can inspire and motivate others. His journey has equipped him with the ability to encourage peers who face similar financial and academic challenges, offering them hope and guidance based on his own experiences.

● **Impact on family and community**

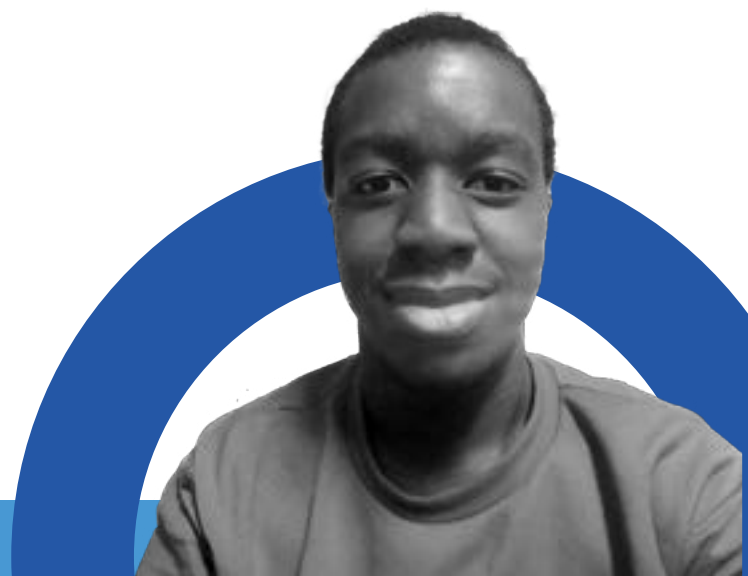
The Trust scholarship has had a mixed impact on Leo's family. While it has eased the financial burden, it has not completely transformed the family's economic situation. However, the peace of mind that comes with knowing Leo's education is secure has had a positive influence on the family's overall wellbeing. They no longer need to worry about sending money for his tuition or living expenses, allowing them to focus on supporting his academic journey in other ways. Leo's experience as a scholarship recipient has also influenced his outlook on life. Having grown up in Boksburg after moving from KwaZulu-Natal, Leo has already experienced significant shifts in his environment and opportunities. The transition to university further expanded his worldview, making him more aware of the possibilities that education can offer.

● **Future aspirations**

As Leo approaches his final year of undergraduate studies, he is already thinking about the future. He hopes to pursue an Honours degree, and he has received confirmation from the Trust that they will continue to fund him if he meets the academic requirements. This assurance has further motivated Leo to maintain his academic performance and continue striving for excellence. In addition to his core studies, Leo has shown interest in taking short courses that could enhance his skills and career prospects. He has already been able to apply for some of these courses, thanks to the financial support from the Trust. These courses, along with his main degree, are part of his broader plan to secure a position in his field of study after graduation.

● **Conclusion**

Leo Mthembu's journey through university with the support of an Trust scholarship highlights how scholarship programmes are able to change the trajectory of a young person's future. More than just a funding mechanism, the Trust scholarship has provided Leo with the tools, resources, and encouragement needed to succeed academically, grow personally, and plan for a promising future. As he continues his studies and prepares for life after university, Leo's experience demonstrates the potential of scholarship programmes, such as those funded by the Trust, to contribute to increasing the pipeline of STEM graduates to be able to respond to the demands of the fourth industrial revolution.



Transition period

When the bpSA Education Foundation was reconstituted as a new entity in the form of the Trust, one partner mentioned that the transition did not take place as quickly as they had expected:

“We did not get as integrated as quickly as we would have liked. But we understand that they were building their team from the bottom and we had to give them the time to get this right.”



Another partner stated that when they joined a particular foundation in 2019, the state of the relationship between the Trust and the foundation had to be mended, although since then there have been no challenges.

“The only challenge was with the state of their relationship when I joined the foundation, which I had to mend, so since then, there has never been any issues from the Trust’s [the EM Education Trust] side.”



3.4.3.4 Suggestions for improving the effectiveness of the programmes

Enhancing links with employers

The Trust has engaged with bpSA, its major donor, regarding the business hosting and, where possible, recruiting their scholarship candidates for employment in the company. This has happened on a small scale, with five graduates receiving work placements in 2023, and others that are studying engineering participating in vacation work at the bpSA head office.

The Trust reports that linking scholarship candidates with bpSA has not been an explicit objective, and there are limitations on the number of opportunities within the business. Where possible, bpSA has met with students to share information about the energy sector and careers in the energy space.

In an effort to bolster graduates’ employability, bpSA might consider developing its own bespoke graduate programme in line with the focus areas of the scholarships awarded. Many global corporations such as Deloitte, Anglo American and Rand Merchant Bank offer such programmes for graduates with STEM-related qualifications in particular. Graduate programmes also provide extension opportunities, such as beneficiaries being placed abroad and experiencing work environments and cultures outside of South Africa.

Alignment between the education system and labour market

There is a need for alignment between the education system and labour market in South Africa. The Trust can play an important role in this by supporting programmes that not only align to the development needs of the country but also focus on areas of future demand by the labour market that result in employable graduates. This would include expanding the focus on TVET and vocational programmes.

Scholarships for mathematics and science teaching qualifications

To address the shortage of qualified STEM teachers, the teaching profession has to be made more attractive to graduates, particularly in mathematics and science. This can be achieved by offering

scholarships for teaching qualifications with a specialisation in mathematics or science. Ensuring that teachers are properly trained and qualified will improve the quality of education, ultimately producing students with stronger competencies in STEM fields.

3.4.4 Skills Development Programmes

ORT South Africa (ORT SA) is affiliated to World ORT which was established in 1880. ORT SA provides skills and training to South African youth in the fields of mathematics, science, technology and information technology (IT) as well as business development. The Trust partnered with ORT SA in 2019 in a youth skills development programme. The programme was launched in 2020 and offered IT bridging courses and coding skills to South African youth from Umlazi district in the Kwazulu-Natal province. The programme initially started in the North West Province for two years and later moved to Kwazulu-Natal. This initiative was aimed at bridging the gap for youth who cannot access universities and assisting the beneficiaries to use the gained IT skills for employment in the IT sector and entrepreneurship.

The programme design included a blend of IT training and entrepreneurship support, addressing key skill gaps in the digital and business landscape. ORT SA's IT bridging course incorporated Cisco IT Essentials, digital skills training (Microsoft Office, computer literacy), and entrepreneurship and included a business plan competition. This combination aimed to upskill unemployed youth with both technical and entrepreneurial capabilities, providing them with career options in

the IT field and the tools to start their own businesses. The selection process for participants was guided by the Trust, with a focus on change to young, unemployed Black South Africans.. ORT SA worked with community leaders, education departments and other stakeholders to promote and select beneficiaries. Additionally, ORT SA introduced an online training component to adapt to the COVID-19 challenges, offering a broader range of digital skills training remotely.

In 2020, the ORT SA IT Programme reached about 88 unemployed youth from Phokeng (the Royal Bafokeng nation), and 32 of them received workplace experience through the YES programme. In 2021, the ORT SA programme moved to a different area of the North-West Province, thereby reaching 100 unemployed youth in rural Lebotlwane, within the Baphuting ba Nawa community. In 2022 and 2023 respectively, 100 and 102 unemployed Umlazi youth were trained and certified in IT skills by ORT SA. Despite a low number of ORT SA youth finding employment, one of the strengths of the programme is its work integrated learning (WIL) component. Exposure to the working environment whilst studying is beneficial to the individual as it provides a means of practical training. This positions youth better to find work as they have already developed some experience in the field. For ORT SA, the partnership provided financial support, credibility, and a structured feedback mechanism which allowed for continuous improvement in programme delivery.

Case Study

Sanele Sibeko – Path from Setback to Thriving Entrepreneur

● Background

Sanele Sibeko, a 24-year-old from Umlazi, KwaZulu-Natal experienced significant life changes following the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to his withdrawal from his third-year BCom Accounting studies at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. Despite this setback, Sanele's determination to further his education and carve out a career path never faded.

● Introduction to ORT SA

Sanele's journey with ORT SA began in 2023 after a friend introduced him to the organisation, which offers IT skills training. He joined ORT SA's IT Essentials course, which ran from May to July 2023. The course provided a theoretical foundation in information technology, with some practical work.

● Business proposal challenge

In November 2023, Sanele participated in and won a business proposal challenge organised by the Trust. His success in the competition marked a turning point in his life, helping him re-establish his entrepreneurial spirit and renew his focus on personal and professional growth.

● Support from the EM Education Trust and ORT SA

The Trust's support for Sanele extended beyond the competition. They provided online sessions focusing on business skills, ensuring that participants were well-prepared to launch and manage their own business. Through the Trust, Sanele learned the fundamentals of running a business, which he applied to his own endeavours. Meanwhile, ORT SA's IT training expanded Sanele's understanding of the field, helping him realise the connection between IT and accounting. This prompted Sanele to pivot toward a new field of study: a BCom in



I am creating a need for myself in the future as I added value to their business so they will consider employing me full time. I always want to bring value where I am at.

Business Informatics at UNISA, a programme that integrates both accounting and IT.

● Entrepreneurial ventures

Sanele used part of his winnings from the business proposal challenge to invest in a baking business, focusing on small-scale baking operations. Though initially intended for a bedding business, Sanele recognised that the baking industry offered greater potential in his local market. His entrepreneurial ventures have allowed him to fund his own education and support his family. Sanele's entrepreneurial spirit runs in his family. His grandmother and mother are seamstresses, and this background fueled his drive to succeed in business.

● Career progression and aspirations

Sanele's long-term career goal is to work in the corporate sector, particularly in a role that combines his interests in accounting and IT. He is currently gaining practical experience at Three at One, a media printing company in Hillcrest, KwaZulu-Natal where he has implemented a financial tracking system using Excel to help manage VAT and other accounting needs. His initiative has added value to the company, positioning him for potential full-time employment in the future.

While Sanele enjoys his entrepreneurial work, he sees corporate work as the next step in his career progression. He is confident in his ability to add value wherever he goes and is eager to explore opportunities that allow him to leverage both his IT and accounting skills.

● Impact of the Trust and ORT SA

Sanele attributes much of his success to the support he received from the Trust and ORT SA. Through their programmes, he was able to re-register in university, grow his business, and regain a sense of purpose and direction. Sanele also notes the personal growth he has experienced since becoming involved with the Trust and ORT SA. His family has recognised his hard work and determination, and he feels a sense of pride in being able to provide for them, even in small ways.

● Challenges and outlook

Though Sanele has made significant strides, balancing his business, studies, and family responsibilities has not been without challenges. However, he remains optimistic about his future and is committed to continuing his education and entrepreneurial efforts. He understands the importance of adding value in every environment and looks forward to further growth in both his personal and professional life.

With meeting EM Education Trust and ORT SA, I want to combine IT and accounting. You pay for not knowing - Ignorance comes at a price - the fact that I did not know how much IT is the life of accounting still puzzles me to this day. Accountants use IT to master their craft. I did not know that. Now I do. This is why I am pursuing this route.

● Conclusion

Sanele's journey is an example of resilience, adaptability, and the power of support systems to influence a young person's future. Through their guidance, Sanele has transformed a period of uncertainty and financial struggle into one of opportunity and growth. His entrepreneurial ventures, combined with his evolving academic focus, are paving the way for a promising future in both business and technology.

I think I can safely say that I would not be where I am without EM Education Trust.



The Trust provided funding to ORT SA to offer a range of IT courses to young people who may not have qualified to attend university and were not employed or in education and training programmes, with the intention that the courses would improve employability for these young people and they would become employed.

Of the 43 young people who had attended IT training with ORT SA and responded to the survey, seven of them had found a job in IT. Five of the seven found this job within six months of completing the training. Three young people were employed at the time of undertaking the impact study. Despite the low levels of employment among the youth who had attended the training, 70% indicated that the impact of the training was very positive.

3.4.4.1 Salient features of the partnership

A key feature of the ORT SA-EM Education Trust partnership was the close collaboration and constant feedback loop between the two organisations. The Trust took a hands-on approach, requiring regular reporting and providing feedback that shaped the programme's evolution. The introduction of a business plan competition, for instance, emerged from the Trust's input, highlighting the dynamic and responsive nature of the collaboration. Moreover, the Trust's involvement extended beyond financial support to active participation in events like the business competition, where the Trust staff served as judges and keynote speakers. The Trust's commitment to ensuring that the programme supported the acquisition of formal qualifications that met market needs was evident throughout the partnership.

3.4.4.2 Way forward

In line with the change in the strategic direction of the Trust, a decision was taken to explore a different approach to digital skills training. For future collaborations to be more sustainable, training content should be quality assured by the Trust from the onset. This would ensure that the programmes are fully aligned with the Trust's objectives and industry requirements. Additionally, ORT SA plans to further refine the programme to focus on specific IT specialties, potentially enhancing the effectiveness of the training.

The Trust has recently extended its partnership with UJ to include Process Energy and Environmental Technology Station (PEETS) which currently offers short courses in solar installations and maintenance to identified candidates, responding to a direct need in the labour market.

3.4.5 Programmes to Support Independent Living

The Trust has partnered with two organisations, SAMBT and The Living Link, focused on assisting youth with disabilities so that marginalised and neglected populations are supported to gain skills that enable them to live and sustain themselves independently.

3.4.5.1 SAMBT

The SAMBT programme was designed in 1998 when the organisation began its operations. SAMBT is underpinned by a human rights approach in line with South Africa being a signatory to the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The organisation has a singular focus on independence training, which it regards as a basic human right. These

values and focus areas have remained in place since inception, and the partnership with the Trust has facilitated the scaling up of the programme and expanding the number of beneficiaries.

The Trust began working with SAMBT in 2022. The partnership is currently in its third year. The decision to include disability programmes that focus on upskilling and employing people with disabilities is aligned to bpSA's B-BBEE imperatives and enables the Trust to have a broader impact on the livelihoods and wellbeing of people affected by disabilities such as vision impairment.

When the Trust partnered with SAMBT, the organisation was given a grant to train youth clients between 15 and 35 years of age in 23 schools for the blind as well as in universities and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and community education and training (CET) colleges. The target was to train 46 youth clients. Programme beneficiaries typically included blind or partially sighted individuals across various age groups residing in both peri-urban and rural areas.

Interviewees from the Trust highlighted several concerns associated with existing disability programmes, reporting that organisations assisting people with disabilities that have all of the correct due diligence requirements in place are few, and funding is a major challenge. This has made identifying credible and reliable partners a major priority.

“Partnerships are so important, and it has been difficult to find quality partners in this space. The sustainability of the partnership is crucial. We want people who know what they are doing. It is not a place to play around in. There are so many sensitivities to working in this space.”



Moreover, people with disabilities are marginalised, with very few programmes targeting this area. This made it challenging to identify appropriate implementing partners. In narrating this challenge, a respondent from the Trust had this to say:

“There has been an issue with the quality of partners in disability. The need is there but finding quality partners has been difficult. Quality and sustainability are key issues. People need to know what they are doing, and need to respect what you don't know (EM Education Trust staff interview)”



Based on survey responses, 81% of SAMBT respondents were affected by vision impairment later in life. While this means that these young people had an awareness of the broader environment, it also meant that substantive support was required to enable these young people to come to terms with their loss of sight and adjust to their new reality.⁴

⁴ This question was added after the first few surveys had been administered and it was identified as a priority, thus the number of beneficiaries born with a disability may change by up to 5%.

The programme has two major components:

- The first is independence training over a period of three months focused on deep practices to learn certain skills of independence.
- The second, geared towards awareness and advocacy efforts, is implementing workshops to educate communities about the rights and abilities of blind people to eradicate the social stigma associated with blindness and facilitate the social inclusion of blind people in their communities.

The independence training component encompasses two parts: orientation and mobility training and daily living activities. The ultimate goal is to equip programme beneficiaries with the necessary skills and equipment so that they achieve independence. As a first step, a training needs analysis is done. Based on the needs analysis, clients are orientated and trained to move from point A to point B using a customised approach which takes into account the client's profile and environment. The second part of the training focuses on the activities of daily living. Each part of the training goes hand in hand with the provision of assistive devices. Another key feature of the programme is capacity building of trainers so that they are able to train all categories of beneficiaries; these trainings are facilitated online and have been incentivised by making them eligible for continuing professional development (CPD) points.

SAMBT, as the implementing partner, is well equipped and has the infrastructure and mechanisms in place to effectively implement the Trust programme.

The most prominent mechanism is a good referral system, which is used by SAMBT clients, clinics and hospitals for the selection of beneficiaries. Another key feature of SAMBT is its stakeholder relationships with key personnel in schools, universities and TVET colleges where clients are trained. One respondent pointed out that in the beginning, the 23 beneficiary schools of the Trust programme were characterised by an absence of critical human resources such as mobility and independence practitioners; SAMBT overcame this hurdle by drawing on its own staff to ensure the training of youth clients.

Salient features of the partnership

Both the Trust and SAMBT play substantive roles in this partnership. For instance, the Trust's role transcends that of funder to being that of strategic partner, assisting with the generation of ideas and the scaling up of the training component. Overall, the Trust adopted a hands-on approach, and the partnership is founded on principles of mutual trust and co-learning. SAMBT has been able to use this partnership as an opportunity to raise awareness about vision impairment and the needs of those affected. An SAMBT interviewee stated the following:

“I would go back to learning. In the beginning what we so appreciated about the EM Education Trust is that they are no experts in independence training for the blind. In the first year, [name withheld] said we are learning from you and we so appreciated that it is a mutual learning and mutual building of confidence and trust in each other. So learning, I don't think, was one sided. So that speaks to

the gratitude of the partnership. (SAMBT interview)



The continued engagements and supportive conversations have further influenced SAMBT's relationships and conversations with other stakeholders including key leaders in schools, TVET and CET and colleges. One respondent described the benefits of this partnership:

“I said to you earlier, sometimes we learn from them and we ask questions that really make us think, which enables us to have different conversations with school principals or CET colleges, TVET head offices in Pretoria, so ongoing learning is evident in how we work and how we work with the EM Education Trust. (SAMBT interview)”



In addition to this, SAMBT has established a well functioning monitoring and evaluation system equipped with qualified staff. One staff member has obtained specialised training and operates as both the monitoring and evaluation consultant for the organisation as well as an Independence Training Practitioner. Over the years, this particular relationship has further facilitated SAMBT's capacity building efforts, and the relationship was further cemented with the appointment of the monitoring and evaluation consultant.

Monitoring and reporting remains a key feature of the SAMBT programme, and one of the duties and responsibilities of the monitoring and evaluation consultant has been to compile reports on client outcomes, particularly capturing the client's progress in achieving the independence goals. The presence of this

consultant has ensured that SAMBT is able to provide detailed narrative reports and testimonies to the Trust on the results obtained with clients. In addition to this, SAMBT makes use of specific technology such as e-work, a web-based platform used to facilitate monitoring and reporting of key activities. This also serves as an accountability mechanism for donor reporting. e-work was described as follows by the SAMBT respondent:

“We have a wonderful tool called e-work; it is a web-based platform our practitioners use to report what they are doing, so if they are doing a training needs analysis, it gets uploaded on to e-work, if they are doing a lesson or a route from the home to the shops, it gets uploaded into e-work where [name withheld] can see that in real time and she is able to monitor the training. She is also in weekly contact with our practitioners and we also do field trips as management with practitioners with [name withheld] doing [the] majority of them, so there is [a] lot of communication, lot of interaction, with our work and monitoring and evaluation...we keep it of the highest standard and our donors can pull these reports and get those reports at any time. (SAMBT interview)”



Strengths

The Trust staff have narrated the challenges encountered in finding qualified partners to deliver disability support programmes. SAMBT has been providing independence training since 1998 under a well-functioning

programme. This longevity has garnered the confidence that SAMBT was able to deliver on the mandate outlined by the Trust. SAMBT provided beneficiaries with assistive devices and at the same time, the independent living programme is relevant and addresses a common challenge faced by people with sight impairments, which is how to complete activities of daily living. The personalised approach ensured that training was responsive to each client's needs. The organisation had the required human resources and the facilitators of this programme were sufficiently trained to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. This can be attributed to the organisation's continuous capacity building efforts which in turn ensured that it is able to cater to the different categories of beneficiaries, from young children to youth and elderly clients. The presence of a well-functioning referral system assisted with ensuring that the organisation was able to identify and reach the targeted beneficiaries. SAMBT's monitoring and evaluation system ensured that up-to-date information on the training and outcomes of the beneficiaries was recorded.

Shared gains in the alliance

The Trust's programmes focus on issues of diversity, equity and inclusivity, and the selection of partners encompasses these values. Given its focus area and the smooth operation of its programmes and its alignment with the Trust's values, SAMBT was viewed as an appropriate partner. Beneficiaries trained by the SAMBT were from Mossel Bay in the Western Cape, Mtubatuba in KwaZulu-Natal and Mthatha in the Eastern Cape, Zebediela and Polokwane in Limpopo and Soweto and Soshanguve in Gauteng. This partnership has been very positive for the Trust and

has also contributed to the objectives of bpSA to support individuals to thrive in their own communities.

SAMBT commended the Trust's 'farsightedness' in funding the SAMBT programme. This can be interpreted as a metaphor given SAMBT's focus on people with visual impairment, who have received little attention in the past. An SAMBT respondent expressed gratitude for this partnership:

“Our gratitude specifically for the EM Education Trust. The person who is blind is often not seen...we were talking about this teenage child with one of our practitioners and the child was hidden from the community from shame or the child will be bewitched, and also if you are not independent you are not out and about and not seen, and you are talking about the niche and we are so grateful of the farsightedness of the visual link here of the EM Education Trust to see the young person who is blind. (SAMBT interview)



The Trust can be described as an invested donor with an intentional commitment to make an impact. Respondents from among the SAMBT participants narrated several benefits gained during the implementation of the Trust programme and revealed that because this component is implemented in the schools and not in the client's home, the SAMBT has been able to expand the number of young people trained over a three-month period. One respondent stated:

“What is wonderful about the partnership with the EM Education Trust is that they help us to think. Yes, it is a funding relationship, and we really liked the thinking part of it. You can see how [name withheld] has grown our organisation’s reach. From currently training 350 people a year nationally, and previously 200 people a year, so that is a vast growth, and it is in part thanks to the EM Education Trust and in their commitment to a three-year journey with us for the benefit of young people’s independence that gave us the confidence to grow and consolidate our growth. (SAMBT interview)



“Yes! There are over 1 million blind people in the country – specific stats of these young people 15-35, I don’t have on the top of my head but the need is vast – so there is scope for more growth. Right now, we are in a consolidation phase, having grown tremendously in the past 18 months. (SAMBT interview)



The way forward

As it stands, the current training model remains unchanged, and there has been no request from the Trust to change or modify the programme. Additionally, implementation of the SAMBT programme is currently in its consolidation phase after having experienced a significant growth in the past 18 months, with training capacity increasing by up to 75%. Opportunities for further growth are plentiful given the number of people living with blindness and the unmet need for such training services. In response to the question: ‘Is there scope for further growth?’ the interviewee stated:



Case Study

Leah Mphale's journey of mobility with SAMBT

● Introduction and background

Leah Mphale, 34, has been partially sighted for the past four years. For the last three years, she has been a member of the Lesedi Blind Association, which connected her with vital resources and support. In 2023, Leah met Tsholofelo Modikoe from the South African Mobility for the Blind Trust (SAMBT), who introduced her to several opportunities, including mobility assistance.

● Support received from SAMBT

Leah's life changed significantly after receiving support from SAMBT. One of the key forms of assistance was access to mobility devices, particularly a walking stick. Before connecting with SAMBT, Leah faced challenges acquiring a walking stick through the public sector and had been on a waiting list for four years. As a result, she had struggled to navigate her surroundings, with many people unaware of her partial blindness. With the walking stick provided by SAMBT, Leah has gained newfound independence and mobility. Leah also received emotional support from Tsholofelo, her mobility trainer. Tsholofelo's regular visits and emotional encouragement gave Leah hope and a sense of belonging during a challenging period. Leah expressed deep gratitude for this support, crediting Tsholofelo for helping her maintain a positive outlook and providing ongoing motivation.

● Career opportunities and challenges

Leah is currently completing a two-year learnership at a contact centre, where her employer provides screen-reader laptops and other resources to accommodate her partial blindness. Despite the support from SAMBT, Leah has encountered barriers to employment. She expressed concerns about the limited opportunities available for blind individuals and the reluctance

of large companies to hire people with disabilities due to the perceived high cost of accommodating them. These barriers have left her worried about her future career prospects, as she feels that opportunities for blind individuals are rare in South Africa. Through SAMBT's influence, Leah has also completed a qualification in end-user computing, which has opened doors to new career possibilities.

● Empowerment through training and networking

SAMBT and Tsholofelo have been instrumental in helping Leah build valuable networks. Tsholofelo introduced Leah to a parent network that provides training to volunteers responsible for conducting door-to-door campaigns to assist parents with children who have disabilities. Leah's connection to the Lesedi Blind Association, which offers computer training and vocational skills like manufacturing cleaning detergents, has also provided her with additional resources and support.

Since I joined this training mobility that made them [family] see that I have a future, I still have things to do and I cannot always depend on someone to do things for me because people get tired, even from the family they get tired. I have to depend on myself.

Blindness is the same as any disability around the world; most people see blindness as a big issue; but I can see any disability has its own challenges. You have to accept yourself and live a better life and teach other people how to accept.

● Impact on family dynamics and independence

SAMBT's support has not only empowered Leah but has also influenced her family's understanding of her condition. Before receiving support, Leah's family was overly protective, fearing that she would hurt herself if she engaged in everyday tasks like cooking or going out alone. Since receiving mobility training and a walking stick, Leah has gained greater independence, and her family has grown to understand her capabilities better.

● Social impact and community involvement

Leah's involvement with SAMBT and the Lesedi Blind Association has enabled her to make a difference in her community. Through her volunteer work, she raises awareness about disability and educates others on how to better support people with disabilities. She has become a role model, using her platform to motivate others to embrace their challenges and pursue opportunities for personal growth.

● Personal growth and key achievements

One of the most significant highlights of Leah's journey has been her participation in a radio interview, where she discussed the challenges and misconceptions surrounding

blindness. The feedback from listeners was overwhelmingly positive, with many people reaching out to thank her for her motivational message. Leah's journey has also been marked by personal growth in terms of self-confidence and independence. She has learned to navigate her blindness with dignity and pride, proving to herself and others that she is capable of achieving great things.

● Conclusion

Through the provision of mobility devices, emotional support, and access to training opportunities, SAMBT has empowered Leah to regain her independence and pursue her personal and professional goals. Despite ongoing challenges in the job market, Leah remains hopeful, using her platform to inspire others and advocate for greater inclusion and support for people with disabilities.



Case Study

Sanelisiwe Ndziweni's Journey with SAMBT

● Introduction and background

Sanelisiwe Ndziweni, a 24-year-old single mother, lost her sight in 2021 and currently resides in Meadowlands, Johannesburg. After two years of navigating her new reality, she joined the South African Mobility for the Blind Trust (SAMBT) in February 2024. Sanelisiwe learned about SAMBT through a WhatsApp group from the National Organisation of the Blind in South Africa (NOBSA).

● Support received from SAMBT

The support Sanelisiwe has received from SAMBT has been instrumental in her journey toward independence. SAMBT conducts home visits in her neighbourhood, providing her with essential assistive devices, including:

A walking cane: This has been crucial in helping her regain mobility

Liquid indicator: Helps her measure liquids when cooking or making tea

Money stick: Assists in identifying and counting money

Talking watch: Allows her to keep track of time without sight

Signature guide: Helps her sign documents correctly

Beyond these tools, SAMBT also played a pivotal role in securing new accommodation for Sanelisiwe. Before joining SAMBT, she lived with a guardian who mistreated her. When Sanelisiwe confided in her mobility trainer, SAMBT intervened and helped her find a safer living situation.

● Impact on independence and mobility

Sanelisiwe explains that before joining SAMBT, she was unable to walk independently because she did not have a walking cane and struggled with mobility. After participating in SAMBT's three-month training programme, she is now able to walk confidently and move around on her own. This has been a significant change in her daily life, allowing her to regain independence and freedom of movement.

● Influence on career choices and education

Before joining SAMBT, Sanelisiwe was neither employed nor studying. However, after gaining independence and learning about new opportunities for blind individuals, she initiated the process of applying to a local college to further her studies in marketing. Although she is still unemployed, this step toward education represents a significant shift in her outlook and future aspirations. She has applied for funding through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and is hopeful to begin her studies in the coming year. Sanelisiwe shared that before joining SAMBT, she was unaware that blind people could study or walk independently. The programme has not only provided her with practical tools but also expanded her understanding of the opportunities available to her.

● Career concerns and future outlook

Sanelisiwe remains uncertain about her career prospects and is worried about her future. As a single mother, she feels the pressure of needing to provide for her child while also advancing her education. She expressed concern about the financial constraints she faces, particularly if she is unable to secure funding for her studies. This uncertainty has created anxiety about her ability to support herself and her family in the long term.

● Changes experienced since interacting with SAMBT

While Sanelisiwe's career trajectory remains uncertain, the support from SAMBT has positively impacted other aspects of her life. She has gained confidence in herself and now feels capable of pursuing opportunities that she once thought were out of reach. Her self-esteem has improved, and she feels empowered to make decisions that enhance her independence. Moreover, the SAMBT programme has helped shift the attitudes of those around her. By demonstrating that she can walk independently and take care of herself, Sanelisiwe has challenged preconceived ideas about blindness within her community and family.



3.4.5.2 The Living Link

The Living Link (TLL) trains young adults with various intellectual disabilities between the ages of 18 and 35 years in work readiness and independent living.

It was founded in 2000 in order to assist young people with intellectual disabilities to live independently and become involved in skills training. The programme started as a Saturday afternoon programme which then grew into a three-month programme. The need for Work Integrated Learning opportunities for beneficiaries was identified. This led to the decision to extend the programme to twelve months. This adaptation of The Living Link's offerings ensured that barriers to independence for youth with intellectual disabilities were minimised as far as possible.

The partnership between The Living Link and the Trust started in 2018 with six beneficiaries from Johannesburg (Gauteng) and Cape Town (Western Cape) for the duration of a year during which they were offered theoretical training for six months and job sampling WIL for the other six months. Since the inception of the partnership, the Trust has sponsored a total of 30 students in the programme.

The Living Link offers an NQF level 1 cleaning and hygiene qualification, currently accredited by the Services SETA. The programme is 12 months long, consisting of six months of training followed by six months of WIL. They assist the young adults who have completed the SETA-accredited qualification to secure employment in the labour market. From 2025, the organisation will be offering an NQF level 1 commercial cleaner course registered with the Quality Council For Trades & Occupations (QCTO).

Experiential learning takes place at WIL sites, which are usually companies, and the students are given an opportunity to rotate between the different departments in the company, after which permanent employment is sought for the individual. After the students have completed the qualification and met the necessary assessment requirements, an external verification is done and certificates of competence and statement of achievements are issued.

A strength in The Living Link's programme is its links with employers, which further enhanced beneficiaries' employability by linking them with suitable workplaces for WIL for six months of the year. In some instances, beneficiaries were awarded long-term employment by the companies with which they carried out their WIL experience.

Shared gains in the alliance

The partnership has provided an opportunity for students who cannot afford fees to complete the programme and find employment. The Living Link also refers students to other organisations that run higher NQF level programmes. Through the Trust's funding, The Living Link is able to continually serve a larger group of people. In some instances where beneficiaries start earning over the threshold amount, they no longer qualify for disability grants and become tax-paying citizens who can contribute to society. Funding from the Trust has also enabled The Living Link to develop internally as an organisation. It is able to offer additional accredited qualifications and relevant course material in their programmes. The Living Link team states that the partnership with the Trust allows them to remain a unique organisation that focuses specifically on people with intellectual disabilities.

Sustainability of the partnership

The Living Link has been funded by the Trust since 2018 and was using an external fundraising organisation to manage the partnership at the time. In 2022/2023, the organisation was not funded by the Trust due to challenges with the external fundraising organisation. Subsequent to the pause in the partnership, the organisation acquired an internal Client Relationship Manager. The Trust provided funding during 2024.

The way forward

The Living Link is currently seeking partnerships with larger organisations that will enable them to run their programmes at scale in other provinces.



Case Study

Journey of empowerment through The Living Link and the EM Education Trust

● Introduction

This case study explores the journey of a beneficiary who, despite initial uncertainty and challenges related to her disability, found empowerment and growth through her involvement with The Living Link and the broader support system provided by the Trust. Her experience highlights the transformative impact of targeted support programmes for individuals with disabilities.

● Background

The interviewee initially enrolled in a work readiness course offered by The Living Link. This course included job sampling opportunities and was designed to prepare participants for the workforce over the span of one year. Despite the lack of initial awareness of the Trust, the interviewee's experiences through The Living Link set the foundation for her professional and personal development.

● Work readiness training and employment at Liberty

After completing the work readiness course at The Living Link, the interviewee secured a job at Liberty, a financial services company, where she worked in the Human Resources (HR) department from 2017 to 2021. Her role involved administrative tasks such as filing, assisting with onboarding new staff, and other HR-related duties. She attributes her ability to perform these tasks to the confidence and skills she gained through the training at The Living Link.

The interviewee mentioned that before attending The Living Link, her confidence was very low however the training she received helped her transform into a confident individual capable of thriving in

a corporate environment. Her time at Liberty allowed her to gain valuable experience, and she successfully maintained her role until her contract ended in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

● Post-Liberty experience and return to The Living Link

Following the end of her contract at Liberty, the interviewee experienced a period of unemployment. Despite actively seeking work, she was unable to secure a position until she reconnected with The Living Link in April 2024 through the YES intervention. During the time she was unemployed, she also attended a jewellery-making course, which was recommended by her cousin.

Upon her return to The Living Link, she took on a new role as a teaching assistant, where she assisted with administrative tasks and supported learners in the classroom. Although this role was different from her previous work in HR at Liberty, she adapted to the changes and quickly became proficient in her new responsibilities.

It was definitely, definitely the course here at The Living Link that helped me [to be placed at Liberty]. Because truth is, honestly, I didn't think it was possible. Also my confidence was very low, and I got here, and then it built up. Then I was a complete different person. So when I got to Liberty, I wasn't in that panic mode.

So I think it changed in a sense that you know, when they didn't also think it's actually possible for someone like me who has a disability to actually achieve as far as I've come now. They were also supportive, and they were congratulating me and telling me that I can actually overcome more and that it's possible.

● Impact of the EM Education Trust Support

While the interviewee was not directly aware of the Trust's involvement, the support she received indirectly through The Living Link played a significant role in her personal and professional development. She experienced several key changes as a result of this support:

Increased confidence and self-esteem:

The interviewee noted a significant improvement in her ability to voice her opinions and interact with others. This newfound confidence extended to her family and community, where she became a source of positive influence and encouragement.

Career progression: The training and experience she gained through The Living Link and Liberty equipped her with skills that she believes will be valuable in future job opportunities. While she expressed some uncertainty about her ability to fully control her career trajectory, she remains optimistic about leveraging her experience to pursue new opportunities.

Social and family impact: The support she received also had a ripple effect on her family, who became more supportive

and encouraging as they witnessed her achievements. Her success challenged preconceived notions about the limitations of individuals with disabilities and inspired those around her to adopt a more positive outlook.

● Conclusion

The interviewee's journey illustrates the profound impact that targeted support programmes like those offered by The Living Link can have on individuals with disabilities. Through training, employment, and continued support, she was able to overcome significant barriers, build her confidence, and positively influence those around her. Her story serves as a testament to the importance of empowerment in helping individuals achieve their full potential, regardless of the challenges they face.



3.5 Processes and systems that supported implementation

3.5.1 Implementing partner selection

The Trust did not implement any of the programmes directly. In such a scenario, it became imperative to have certain guidelines in place to select the implementing partner for a programme. A key criterion applied by the Trust in all its partnerships is the alignment of objectives. This ensured that the particular programme was geared towards addressing the priority issues facing the country and the Trust's own priorities. The Trust also engaged only with partners with impeccable track records in implementing interventions in a focused and sustainable manner over time and systems in place to create impact on scale. Partners were also expected to have intervention models with 'proof of concept' and 'proven models' that have been tested and found to be successful.

While many relationships have worked well, there are others where the expected outcomes have not been achieved. For example, some organisations did not have the capacity to monitor beneficiaries after implementation. In another instance, systemic issues in the education system meant that the supplementary education programme could not be implemented as planned.

Star Schools did implement the programmes as planned but they faced systemic challenges. These situations have resulted in these partnerships being closed out.

These decisions demonstrate the Trust's responsiveness to the changing context and a recognition that some projects will not be able to achieve their desired outcomes due to the context in which they are implemented. This has produced a major learning for the Trust as to the importance of conducting thorough due diligence of potential partners and a situational analysis of the contexts in which partners are working so as to ensure that programmes are likely to produce maximum impact.

3.5.2 Implementing partner reporting

Implementing partners had direct responsibility for monitoring and reporting on programme activities. They reported on the progress of the programmes through semester, quarterly and annual reports.

The capacity among organisations to undertake monitoring and evaluation varied across partners, with some partners not providing detailed monitoring data to the Trust. This has negatively affected the ability of the Trust to document the impact of the programme and to implement longitudinal tracking of beneficiaries to establish how the programmes may have contributed to improved outcomes for the beneficiaries. This included understanding whether beneficiaries had been able to find employment, whether they were working in their field of study, had been promoted in the workplace or taken on leadership roles. With the overall objective of ensuring young people can transition into employment and recognising that scholarships are a means to achieving that goal (rather than the end goal), it will be crucial to ensure monitoring and tracking of scholarship beneficiaries is done in a systematic, timely and routine manner.

3.5.3 Organisational capacity of implementing partners

The levels of organisational capacity varied between partners. Larger tertiary institutions were working within existing administrative systems and had been able to meet the requirements of the Trust. Smaller NGOs such as ORT SA had some challenges with being able to submit the required monitoring and evaluation data to the Trust.

Both trustees and the Trust staff agreed that the work of the Trust would be strengthened if it were possible to provide explicit, structured organisational capacity-building to NGOs, both in terms of assisting the organisations to document impact and to increase sustainability of the respective organisations. This is currently articulated as a priority in the Trust Deed. Currently, the small size of the Trust team means that this has not been possible, but should be prioritised for the future.

3.5.4 The EM Education Trust relationship building with partners

The Trust is perceived as actively engaged in the programmes they fund, with a strong focus on developing open and collaborative relationships with implementing partners and, wherever possible, the young people supported by the Trust. The engagement of the Trust through open communication and a strengths-based approach has enabled partners to reflect on their programmes and be innovative in carrying out the programme activities. In being intentional to achieve impact, the Trust has been perceived as open to funding requirements of implementing partners,

and should the need arise, willing to provide additional support to partners to enhance impact.

The strategic priorities of the Trust have created an opportunity for alignment across programmes. This was evidenced in the High School Support Programme being able to provide candidates who achieved results qualifying them for admission into a STEM-related field. These candidates were thus eligible to be supported through the provision of scholarships for tertiary under-graduate qualifications. However, the impact study did not find evidence of collaboration across partners. The Trust had tried to foster collaboration between Star Schools and Rhodes University, but found that there was a mismatch in the priorities of the two organisations, making collaboration difficult. This is a missed opportunity for sharing best practices and lessons learned in the implementation of high school support, work readiness and tertiary scholarship programmes.

The Trust reported undertaking comprehensive due diligence and assessment when considering new partners. This due diligence has been strengthened over time as the Trust has begun to work with more partners in the delivery of its programmes. It has supported smaller organisations in both the work readiness programmes and the programmes focused on overcoming disability. These small organisations have had some gaps in capacity which have negatively affected the partnership, resulting in two partnerships being ended and a third being paused. The Trust's small staff complement has meant that it is not in a position to provide structured capacity-building to smaller organisations

at this point in time.

3.5.5 Adaptive management and responsiveness to the changing context

The programmes and focus areas of the Trust were stipulated in the Trust Deed, and changes in these aspects would require changes to the Trust Deed. The Trust has continued to respond to emerging needs while maintaining a flexible approach to funding. This has included providing supplementary support to students where needed. This was identified as one of the strengths of the Scholarships Programmes, with an example given where the Trust provided assistance with presentation and business skills, acknowledging that academic success alone is not a sufficient predictor of long-term success.

Other efforts have included linking students with employers and other stakeholders in the energy sector to expose the students to the current work environment and the imperative to move towards net zero and, specifically, what these changes mean for their own future as engineers or related STEM professionals in the years to come.

The Trust has also made efforts to actively engage with bpSA as the major donor to ensure that the students are sufficiently informed about the global context, and specifically, the current priorities to achieve net zero targets and ensure a just transition to renewable energy. It has pursued this after recognising that their own scholarship beneficiaries may find employment with bpSA's competitors because of the perception that alternative employers are more aware of and familiar with the current landscape in respect of energy provision and the urgency of achieving net zero emission targets.

The open engagement between the Trust and scholarship beneficiaries has been one of the main contributors to the Trust's success.

“We need to walk the person to the door, and help them knock.

(EM Education Trust staff interview)



3.5.6 Sustainability

The approach of building a pipeline of students from the high school support programme to be considered for scholarship enables the Trust to maximise its investment at high school level. This approach also contributes to ensuring that improvements in maths, physical science and English at high school level can be maintained.

To date, alumni engagement has not been a strong emphasis of the Trust, making it difficult to establish the trajectory of young people benefitting from the Trust support and the extent to which this support has improved the prospects of young people. Though the Trust does have the contact information for some beneficiaries, this does not extend back beyond five years for all programmes. This means a comprehensive assessment of sustainability is difficult to make. An alumni network can also enable sustainability by instilling in beneficiaries the importance of doing the same for the next generation of STEM graduates.

The sustainability of programmes would be enhanced through developing partnerships with other like-minded funders to understand other models of support and engagement that would enable more detailed assessment of impact.

3.6 Partners' views on collaborating with EM Education Trust

Partners considered the Trust relationship as valuable in fulfilling the needs of young people in terms of addressing disabilities, providing funding for further studies, improving graduate employability, and producing well-rounded students who not only perform well academically but become active citizens who give back to their communities. The Trust team has had contact with beneficiaries of all programmes through convening sessions and workshops with candidates on, at least, a bi-annual basis. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, these have now predominantly been conducted online.

“The EM Education Trust’s objective is to provide the funding but also develop the pipeline of graduates who go out and create change and are also academically excellent. We want to be able to tell this is an the EM Education Trust student over and above a Wits student. This is a student who is emotionally intelligent and has strong leadership skills. (Name withheld)”



Currently, the Trust team manages the relationships with partners, and partner institutions and organisations engage directly with beneficiaries. They have been able to successfully build relationships with individual students receiving scholarships. Given the small size of the team, the Trust does not have the capacity to interact individually with beneficiaries in larger programmes with a high number of participants, such as the High School Support Programme.

The Trust has had very positive relationships with the partners implementing programmes focused on achieving independent living skills, and partners recognised that the Trust’s funding has also helped to strengthen them as organisations in a funding climate where it is often difficult for smaller NGOs to obtain funding.

For larger institutions, in particular those participating in the the Scholarships Programmes, the Trust was one of many organisations providing scholarships managed by the institution. The relationship was predominantly administrative and procedural in nature, in line with the requirements of the Trust.

Communication has not always been timeous, with one university partner reporting that they had not been informed that the focus of the scholarships programme was going to change. A concern was raised by another university partner who stated that there was duplication of the wraparound support provided by the university and that provided to scholarship recipients by the Trust directly, and this negatively affected participation in the university's offering. Planning in this regard could be improved to avoid duplication of effort.

3.7 Impact for beneficiaries per programme

These findings are derived from survey responses as well as the case study interviews.

3.7.1 High School Support Programme

Across the four high school support programmes, the impact was the greatest in the areas of education (78.9% of respondents) and personal development (12.5% of respondents). This is consistent with the objectives and structure of the high school support programmes funded by the Trust.

3.7.1.1 Targeting Talent Programme

Impact on learners

The Targeting Talent Programme was able, through a very stringent selection process, to attract high calibre students with a strong interest in STEM. It offered a wide expanse of activities which were able to equip learners with skills that would assist them in their own personal lives, in

completing high school successfully and in coping once they attended university.

The programme was large in scale and provided the opportunity for participants to interact with other students from different contexts. As with the other high school support programmes, this exposure made students more motivated to succeed and enabled them to develop skills required to work in groups more effectively. Participants reported that the opportunity to participate in the programme helped them to become more confident and outgoing and able to share their opinions and ideas more easily.

The students were also exposed to a wide range of careers in STEM and found value in spending time on campus to understand how university differed from school. This enabled a successful transition to university. Two beneficiaries who had participated in the Targeting Talent Programme and received Wits scholarships for their tertiary education stated that their career pathways were influenced by their participation in the Targeting Talent Programme, and they were pursuing tertiary qualifications that they had not initially anticipated but in which they were both thriving now.

The biggest impact of the programme reported in the survey was the ability to think critically for academic success, followed by improved coping skills and improved self-esteem.⁵

⁵ The sample size from the TTP Programme is too small to be able to state the impact in percentage terms.

Table 3: Beneficiaries reached across programmes

Programme Category	Name of the programme	Year	Probable no. of beneficiaries	Source Document
High School Scholarships	Targeting Talent Programme	Since 2014	1 328 (12 cohorts)	EM Education Trust Annual Report 2023
	Rhodes University Nine-Tenths Programme	2020 to date	120	EM Education Trust Annual Report 2023
	Stellenbosch University U-Prep	2021 to date	300	EM Education Trust Annual Report 2023
	Star Schools	2020: Grades 10 & 11 2021: Grades 10,11 & 12	604 (200+404)	EM Education Trust Annual Report 2023
University Scholarships	Wits	2014-2023	130	EM Education Trust Annual Report 2023
	UJ	2020-2023	44	EM Education Trust Annual Report 2023
	University of Fort Hare	2020-2023	16	EM Education Trust Annual Report 2023
	UP	2022-2023	60 (incl. 5 with disabilities)	EM Education Trust Annual Report 2023
Youth Skills Development	ORT SA IT Bridging Course	2020 - 2023	188 (4 cohorts)	EM Education Trust Annual Report 2023
	SAMBT	2022 & 2023	92 (46+46)	EM Education Trust Annual Report 2022
	Tribe Impact Consulting with Living Link	2023	12	EM Education Trust Annual Report 2023

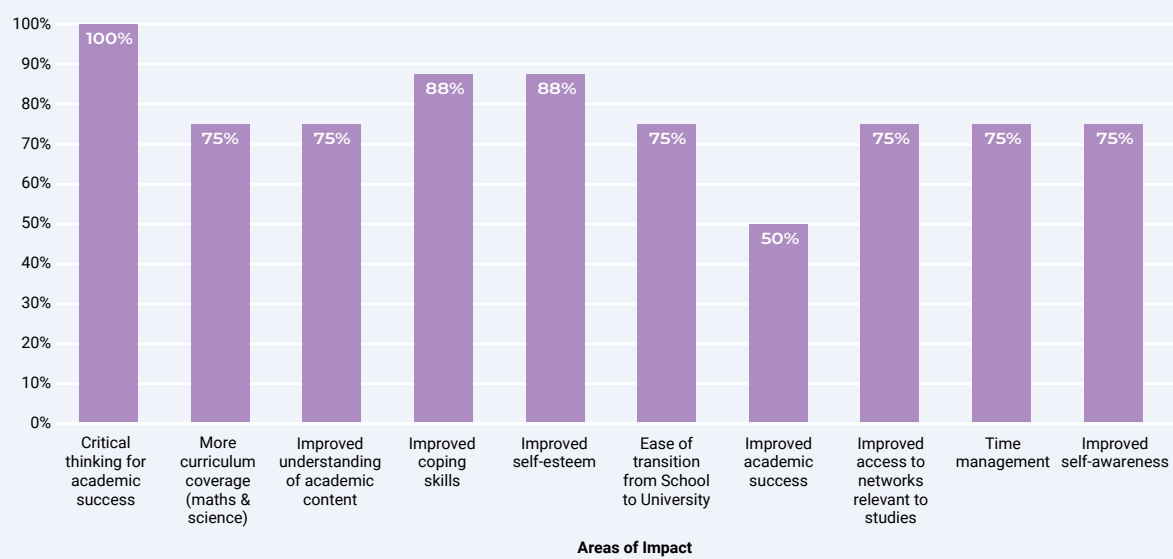


Figure 5: Areas most impacted by Targeting Talent Programme

Impact on families and communities

Beneficiaries reported that they became a source of encouragement for their peers in their hometowns and were involved in tutoring students from their old high schools on a voluntary basis. Families were also made aware of the focus time required by matriculants and the importance of lightening their household responsibilities during this time.

3.7.1.2 Star Schools

Impact for learners

The Star Schools programme had a profound impact on both case study beneficiaries interviewed as part of the impact study. The two beneficiaries highlighted that the programme enhanced their academic performance through structured lessons and supportive tutoring. For one beneficiary, the programme helped him catch up

after illness disrupted his matric year, particularly improving his mathematics performance. He credits the programme for his broadened social and decision-making skills, teaching him how to interact with diverse people, approach problems critically and make effective decisions. These skills have been instrumental in his university life, where he now chairs a Nursing Student Society, applying the leadership and problem-solving abilities he developed through the programme. The other beneficiary stated that the programme transformed him from an average student to the top performer at his school which enabled him to pursue a degree in Computer Science at the UFH. The programme also boosted his social life and self-esteem and the change in academic performance earned him more recognition among his peers, leading to the formation of study groups and increased social connections.

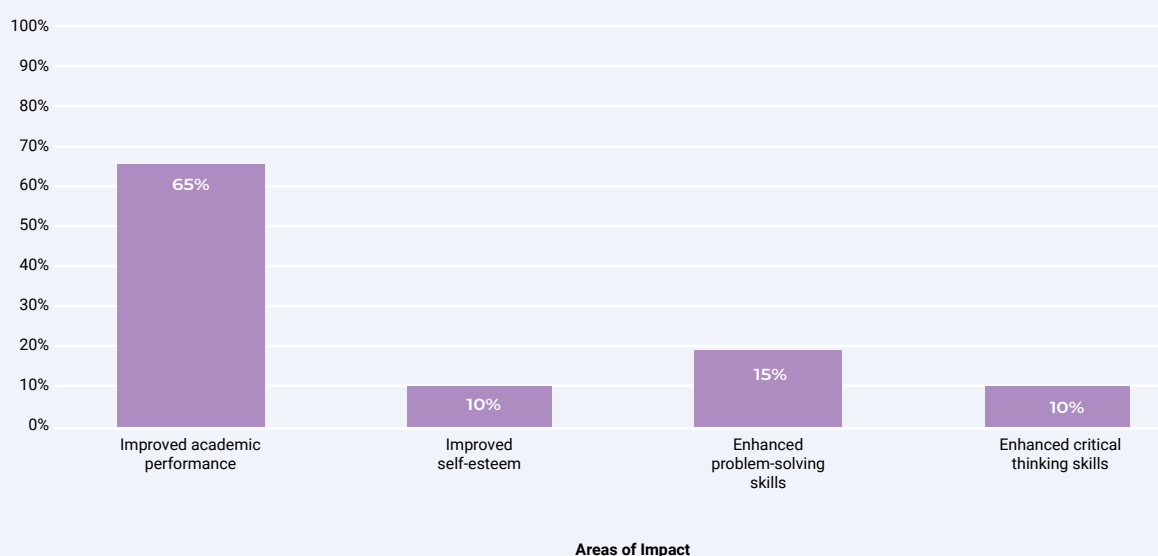


Figure 6: Areas most impacted by Star Schools Programme

The most commonly reported area of impact according to the Star Schools beneficiaries who responded to the survey was improved academic performance. Among the respondents, 65% or 13 of the 20 respondents noted this impact on their lives as a result of the programme. This was followed by enhanced problem-solving skills in which 15% of respondents noted an impact.

Impact for communities

The programme inspired the beneficiary to give back to the community by volunteering to teach primary school students how to play chess — a decision influenced by the support he received during his high school years. It also resulted in capacity building for the project manager of Star Schools as related below:

“As an individual I felt the process that we followed developed me as a person to another level. Especially when it comes to being more accountable, communicating well, how to report and customer satisfaction. I have learned a lot from the process. The whole process between us and the EM Education Trust was easy and simple. We were doing it in a collegial relationship. We were a service provider to them but we almost worked as one company or colleagues. I find this makes things easy when we are working with them. They are always available and supportive. When they needed reports etc., they gave us time to produce these. I wish the relationship could have continued. The whole process empowered me as an individual, the teachers I worked with and the learners we were working with. It helped to

develop learner confidence and self-empowered students. When I look at the impact, this programme we only had 3 cohorts. We did some tracking on the whereabouts of these learners - some are at HEIs now and are doing well. They have taken career pathways in line with STEM - this showcases the objectives of the EM Education Trust and the DoE's objectives. The mere fact that we have learners doing well at different HEIs can mean that we fostered a culture of lifelong learning - they know how to work hard, they know how to study or work alone because at university they don't have the luxury of being spoon fed. They are scattered all over SA and not just near the Eastern Cape. This means we produced a competent student who can fit into any community or university. (Star Schools interview)



Of the U-Prep beneficiaries who completed the survey, 93% said the greatest impact was in succeeding academically, and 64% said the greatest impact was in being well-prepared for tertiary education, both of which relate directly to the strategic objectives of the Trust.⁶ It was also reported that participation in U-Prep assisted with developing confidence and resilience to navigate the complexities of tertiary education.

In 2021, 140 Grade 11 learners and 150 Grade 12 learners from three provinces - the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and the Free State - participated in the U-Prep Smart Class. The major achievement was that more than 91% of the U-Prep class of 2021 registered for STEM-based courses in 2022. The total intake for 2022 was 300, with 290 who completed the year, and 87% of the learners registered for STEM-based courses in 2023.

3.7.1.3 U-Prep

Impact for learners

At the learner level, exposure to an improved educational experience for learners from Quintile 1 to 3 schools enabled participating learners to realise their full potential and acquire problem-solving skills and higher-order thinking skills, thus improving their academic performance. The exposure to learners from other provinces also encouraged competition and motivated learners to perform well. Learners also reported that exposure to quality support contributed to both their academic success and personal development.

⁶ This is a multiple response question, and so the percentages will sum to more than 100%.

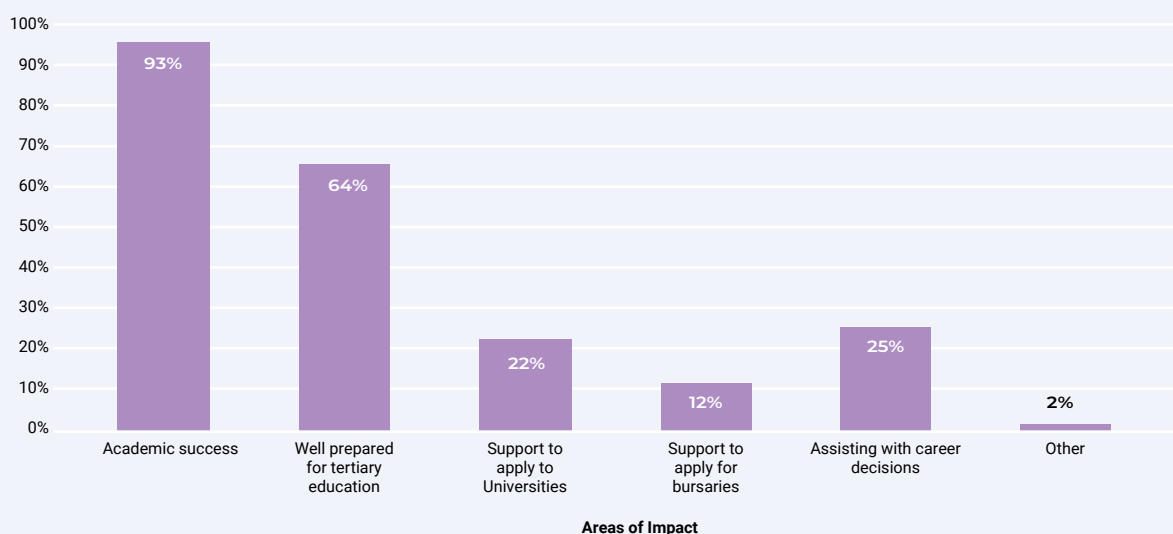


Figure 7: Areas most impacted by U-Prep Programme

3.7.1.4 Nine-Tenths

Impact for learners

Over the past four years, the Nine-Tenths Programme has had a direct influence on approximately 900 students, assisting many of them in successfully transitioning to higher education and greater professional possibilities. The programme's organised mentorship and academic support have dramatically improved matric outcomes, with a notable increase in Bachelor passes. Furthermore, Rhodes University students who served as mentors benefited from their involvement in terms of personal growth and character development. The programme helped not just mentees, but also mentors by instilling leadership qualities and a sense of civic responsibility.

Kutliso Daniels, one of the secondary schools participating in the programme went from a 50% pass rate with no Bachelor passes to a 96% pass rate with

a significant increase in Bachelor passes, demonstrating a direct positive influence on learners' educational trajectories. Of the 15 people who completed the survey, 11 reported that the most effective part of the programme was learning to summarise content, and 10 that they had developed improved study skills. Eight respondents indicated that the biggest impact was study skills taught by mentors.

The programme has impacted 240 Grade 12 learners, of which 120 were funded by the Trust in 2021 in the four partner schools in Makhanda, namely Mary Waters, Ntsika, Nombulelo and Khutliso Daniels. In 2022, 196 mentees were supported by 98 volunteer mentors across the four schools in Makhanda participating in the programme. Of the 196 mentees, 150 were supported by the Trust. In 2023, 220 mentees were supported in the partner schools in Makhanda.

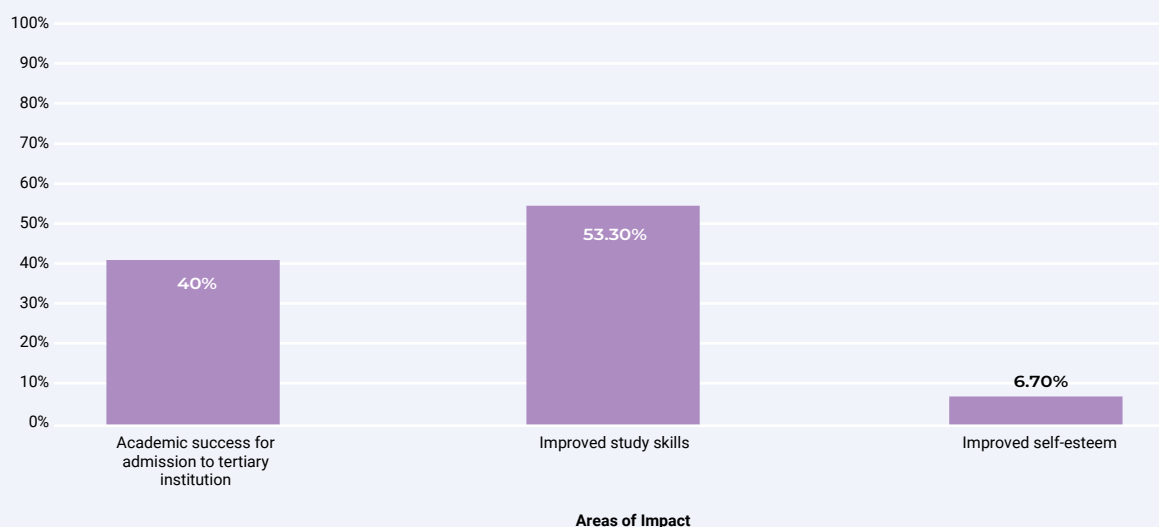


Figure 8: Areas most impacted by Nine-Tenths Programme

Of the 15 Nine-Tenths beneficiaries who completed the survey, eight respondents (53.3%) stated that the area most impacted by the programme was improvement in study skills, followed by academic success for admission to tertiary institutions (40% or six respondents), and lastly, one student noted an improvement in self-esteem.

Impact for families

Families are likely to feel more proud and hopeful as more students complete their Bachelors degrees. Access to higher education provides students with a path to higher-paying professions, which can help break the cycle of poverty and improve their families' overall socioeconomic status. This is especially important in communities with no-fee schools, since such educational achievements provide a road out of poverty and likely greater financial security for families.

Impact for communities

Nine-Tenth's influence goes beyond individuals and families; it has greatly improved educational outcomes in Makhandha's public schools. The success of the public schools benefiting from the programme has drawn students from beyond the city, resulting in a rebirth of local education. It has also tackled youth unemployment by encouraging young people to pursue educational opportunities, including alternative possibilities such as second chance schools.

The Nine-Tenths Programme is a model that drives community development. It involved leadership from the university, the Community Engagement team, students within the university and Grade 12 students in Makhandha. This holistic approach was a major factor in the overall success of the programme that had a far-reaching impact for the schools participating and the learners

that benefited from the mentoring. This impact can be seen in examples where students who had received mentoring volunteered as mentors when they enrolled at Rhodes University. The programme has also successfully engaged with GADRA Education, a non-governmental organisation that will continue components of the programme once the programme in its current iteration ends.

“Prospects are always so bleak for Black kids. If you just educate a young person and put them in university, or just open their world to possibilities for themselves, they can see it is not right to live in squalor, it is not their natural outcome and there is the potential to change a young person’s life through a mentorship programme. And there you are not pointing at graduates, this person has just made it out of a system that used to be the worst performing in the country and is now in the top three. The change is unintended in the depth of the wave...the scale of it. (Interview with the EM Education Trust staff members)



Nine-Tenth’s success has led to the programme expanding to five schools and contributing valuable insights to the national educational discourse through research and publications. The positive outcomes extend beyond academics, as 50 former mentees were accepted to Rhodes University in 2022, with ongoing support for their university

journeys. The mentorship approach has proven transformative, benefiting mentees’ families and inspiring broader application at Rhodes University. The programme’s achievements, including a significant increase in Bachelor passes, have been recognised with the award of the prestigious MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship in 2022. This international attention boosted pride and support for local schools. This honour also brought awareness of Makhanda’s educational accomplishments to a worldwide audience, drawing additional resources and chances for collaboration. Celebrations of success, such as in local newspaper publications, have further motivated schools to continue their efforts.

3.7.2 University Scholarships Programme

3.7.2.1 WITS Scholarship

Impact for individuals

The Trust university scholarship awarded the two case study beneficiaries⁷ an opportunity to grow as individuals and young professionals. One beneficiary mentioned that through the scholarship and receiving a stipend, they had learned financial literacy and managing their money in a way that enabled them to save money. It was further mentioned that without the scholarship and the full wraparound support it offered, they would have likely been excluded from studying due to financial and academic constraints. Both beneficiaries went on to become lead mentors at Wits, enabling them to assist other students academically and

⁷ Both beneficiaries had also benefited from the Targeting Talent Programme programme and were awarded Wits scholarships to further their tertiary education.

otherwise. One of the beneficiaries was a postgraduate representative on the Wits Student Representative Council, a role which was made possible through their involvement in the Targeting Talent Programme as the programme had provided them with leadership skills as well. Further to this, beneficiaries noted that their confidence and life skills, particularly resilience and self-expression, had been boosted during the Targeting Talent Programme. These life lessons were crucial as they navigated university challenges, including adapting to the new environment at Wits University. Another interviewee noted that a particular beneficiary found herself oversubscribed to volunteer activities and she lost her Trust scholarship in her third year

“...she was so focused on helping everyone else - mentoring, tutoring, helping struggling students and forgetting about herself and this left her thin and empty.



She was subsequently awarded the Trust scholarship the following year and learned to prioritise her own development before that of others.

“She began to apply herself and adjust and exercise a level of self-awareness about drawing boundaries - yes you can give back but you need to take care of yourself too.



Impact on families

One beneficiary was from a single-parent household and had four siblings, so the financial burden on the beneficiary's mother would have been more severe without the Trust scholarship.

“I think if I didn't have this funding I'd be in a different situation. My mother doesn't have to stress now from my stipend to registration fees and stationery. From the stipend I get, I can contribute financially to my household as well. There's been a great help in terms of finances.



The financial support from the Trust covering tuition, accommodation and other essentials, alleviated the financial strain on another beneficiary's family after her father, who was the sole breadwinner in the family, passed away.

Impact on communities

The beneficiaries give back to their communities through volunteering activities, including working with NGOs and offering free mathematics and physics tuition for scholars from their old high school. It was noted that some of the individuals who were provided with tuition went on to further their studies at university.

Stereotypes were also challenged by beneficiaries and they successfully indicated to their communities that youth from rural and remote parts of South Africa can be successful in sought-after careers.

3.7.2.2 University of Pretoria Scholarship Programme

Impact for individuals

The Trust -funded scholarship programme has proven to be highly effective at the individual level, particularly in reducing dropout rates. Since the programme's inception, there has been a notable improvement in student retention. Out of more than 30 participants in 2022, only four students were not able to continue due to poor academic performance. However, this number becomes even more meaningful when we consider the initial academic standing of these students upon joining the programme. Many students entered the programme with low grades, but the services provided – such as mentoring, academic support, and personalised learning plans – have helped the majority achieve substantial improvement. This is evident in the programme's success rate, which exceeds 90%.

“To be honest, it's challenging for me to highlight specific individual students off the top of my head. This isn't because I don't care, but rather because I manage a large portfolio of donors. For instance, the EM Education Trust is funding a substantial number of students, and I have other donors with similar numbers. As a result, it becomes difficult to isolate or highlight particular students. However, we do ensure that students express their gratitude to donors for the funding they receive. In their thank-you letters, students often share their personal stories and challenges. We can certainly provide examples of these thank-you letters to

illustrate the impact of the funding. These letters serve as a highlight of the students' experiences, and I'm sure the EM Education Trust finds value in reading them.



Impact on families

The benefits of the Trust-funded scholarship programme extended beyond individual students to their families. Access to education and improved academic performance can lead to enhanced opportunities for students, which has significant potential to improve the socio-economic conditions of their families. Families of participating students have expressed pride and relief as they witness their children succeed academically, knowing that the scholarships provided by the Trust helped alleviate financial barriers to accessing higher education. This not only provided hope for future economic mobility but also relieved families of the financial burden that might otherwise come from academic failure or dropping out. The programme has, in effect, created a ripple of positive change that enhances family stability and optimism for the future.

“There hasn't been a lot of dropouts, and this is the result of the services offered to the students funded by the EM Education Trust.



Impact on communities

At the community level, the Trust-funded scholarship programme has helped foster a culture of educational aspiration and achievement. By maintaining a dropout rate that is remarkably low, the programme contributed to the broader goal of creating an educated and skilled society. As students succeed, they serve as role models for their peers, inspiring others within their communities to pursue education as a pathway to a better future. As the programme entered its third year of funding, its continuous success was evident in the sustained progress of its participants. The positive outcomes reflected not only the effectiveness of the services provided but also the resilience and dedication of the students themselves.

3.7.2.3 UFH Scholarship

Impact for individuals

The Trust has a historical relationship with the UFH. The partnership was ended and has now been reconstituted under the Fort Hare Foundation which is responsible for identifying and supporting scholarship recipients. The university is well known for its degrees in STEM-related fields, with specific expertise in applied mathematics and computer science. Providing funding at postgraduate level, the Trust is ensuring that these skills do not go to waste. The programme's ability to produce employable graduates directly benefits individuals, ensuring that students gain relevant skills and secure jobs in their chosen field. Maximising the impact of the partnership will also mean expanding the necessary wraparound support for

learners.

3.7.2.4 UJ Scholarship

Impact for individuals

This particular Trust scholarship programme has provided financially disadvantaged students who were not eligible to receive funding from other bursars an opportunity to access university education. The scholarship has achieved a high throughput rate with a large number of students progressing through their qualifications and eventually graduating. This particular scholarship has put in place a mentorship component in which fourth year students are appointed as mentors to first year students. This aspect has also contributed towards students' improved performance and socialisation. The case study beneficiary noted that through the mentorship programme, their social abilities improved and they gained confidence in sharing their experiences and opinions with others. It was further noted that as a Targeting Talent Programme beneficiary, the respondent was exposed to sports during high school and this has enabled them to find complementary techniques to better manage their attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Impact on families

One beneficiary stated that their parents would not have been able to afford one year of university fees, so being awarded an Trust scholarship alleviated the financial strain on their family. The stipend also allowed them a certain amount of independence as they were able to purchase their chronic medication through it without having to rely on their parents.

Impact on communities

An interviewee noted that mentees who were awarded a UJ scholarship through the Trust eventually became mentors themselves and took on the social responsibility of assisting fellow students, even those outside of the Trust programme.

“I think the EM Education Trust students really do well in their communities and workplaces once they complete their studies. The students really wanted to give back and others wanted to provide mentorship even outside of the EM Education Trust. (UJ interview)



3.7.3 Programmes Supporting Independent Living

3.7.3.1 South African Mobility for the Blind Trust

Impact for individuals

Case study participants were individuals who had recently lost their sight and narrated the challenges they experienced adjusting to this ‘new normal’. These respondents indicated that they had been immobilised by their blindness and struggled to perform daily activities.

Their plight had been worsened by the limited access to assistive devices due to the absence of disability support programmes in their communities. The experience with SAMBT has been nothing short of life changing for these individuals, enabling them to access assistive devices and teaching them how to walk and perform basic tasks. Their new-found independence has served as a stepping stone and has provided them with a renewed sense of confidence to explore education and training opportunities.

Beyond this, one particular respondent expressed gratitude for the emotional support she had received from a SAMBT employee and stated that this relationship further enhanced her access to opportunities which would not have been possible; this included access to other organisations involved in disability awareness and advocacy and access to a radio interview where she had been able to champion issues of disability; both opportunities enabled her to establish meaningful relationships with other affected individuals.

When asked about the greatest area of impact from participating in the programme, 25 (46.2%) of 54 respondents indicated that the greatest area of impact was their own personal development, followed by 13 (24%) who indicated the greatest area of impact was their education. This was also likely due to the fact that SAMBT implemented the independence training in schools and colleges.

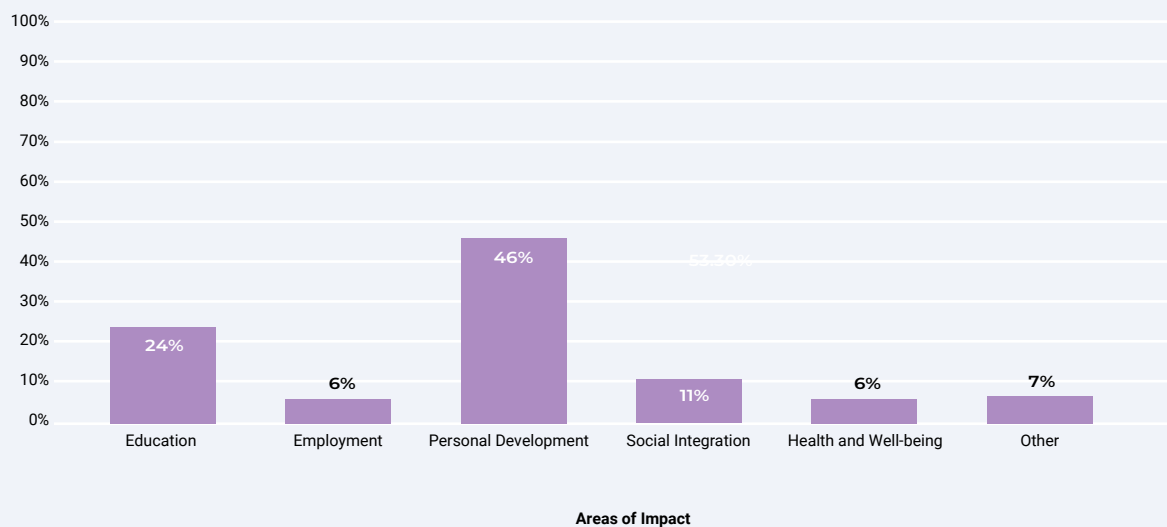


Figure 9: SAMBT participant rating on impact of support programmes on their life

Of those who completed the survey, 53.7% of respondents were unemployed. This was consistent with the difficulties faced by blind people in finding employment. The remainder were studying (25.9%), involved in an internship (9.2%) or running a business (3%). Only one of the 54 people who responded to the survey was employed. The beneficiary was working in the non-profit sector, and in an area that was not related to prior training or the qualifications she had.

Overall, interview respondents reported that although independence training was important for everybody with blindness, the Trust's unique focus on youth was especially relevant given that the education system, in its current state, did not cater for people with disabilities. As a result, poor educational outcomes were more pronounced in this subgroup and access to training and education was limited. The impact of the SAMBT programme has been that participating young people were able to pursue educational opportunities and gain

employment following the independence training.

“What I would like to say is that the focus of the EM Education Trust allows us to... really makes such a difference, because those blind people go on to do wonderful things. They go into university because they are independent, get nice jobs because they are independent. We are really helping these people to create futures with skills they are going to use for the rest of their lives. (SAMBT interview)”



Of the 7% of survey respondents who selected 'other' as an area of impact, some of them indicated the following as areas that were impacted by the programme:

- **Self-confidence and acceptance:** It was noted that some beneficiaries initially felt ashamed but gained self-confidence, and consequently were able to walk around without shame and believe in their personal

capabilities. They have accepted being blind and learned to embrace and love themselves without shying away from challenges or fears. They also developed the confidence to ask for help. The training also empowered them to assist others with disabilities and share knowledge, reflecting a desire to give back to the community.

- **Independence and life skills:** Beneficiaries noted that they learned essential tools and techniques such as using liquid indicators, ATMs, signature guides, telling time, walking independently, and using taxis without assistance. This gave them greater self-sufficiency and enabled them to navigate environments, both familiar and unfamiliar, independently, including undertaking trips to town and distant places. They were also able to engage in home tasks such as cooking, cleaning and caring for children with more ease.
- **Social interaction and communication:** Beneficiaries' communication skills were developed and they learned how to interact confidently with others, including meeting new people and socialising more freely. This gave them the confidence to be more active in social settings.
- **Empowerment and new perspectives:** The training helped beneficiaries to see possibilities in life despite their disability and encouraged them to explore and develop a positive mindset for the future.
- **Practical training:** Beneficiaries gained experience from working in big companies, learning data capturing and computer skills.

Impact for families

Beneficiaries reported changes in family attitude towards blindness, which can be attributed to the education provided by SAMBT. One respondent revealed that her family witnessed the positive changes in her ability to perform daily activities and have allowed her greater independence to participate in house chores.

Impact for communities

The SAMBT programme has raised awareness of disability issues within the community, which has facilitated social acceptance.

3.7.3.2 The Living Link

Impact on individuals

By funding young adults with various intellectual disabilities, the Trust has raised the visibility of this marginalised group and enabled beneficiaries to be independent (though with some assistance) and economically active. Stats SA says about 6.5-7% of the population is disabled, which according to The Living Link, is an underestimate because many people do not disclose that they are disabled, as they do not want to be marginalised by society.

The greatest area of impact from participating in the programme was reported to be education, with three out of six respondents stating that education was most impacted, followed by personal development (2 out of 6 respondents) and one out of six respondents indicated that employment was most impacted. It is likely that education was rated the highest due to the accredited qualification that a beneficiary receives once completing the The Living Link programme.



Figure 10: The Living Link participants' rating of the impact of support programmes on areas of their lives

3.7.4 Skills training programmes

3.7.4.1 ORT SA IT Skills

Impact on individuals

The ORT SA IT Programme had an impact on individual beneficiaries by enabling them to acquire certified qualifications to embark on a career in IT. It also provided an opportunity for youth in rural areas where finding employment was difficult to be supported in entrepreneurship development. The beneficiaries acquired digital skills, the most sought-after skills in the changing world of work. One beneficiary mentioned that they were able to establish their own small business in Umlazi, Kwazulu-Natal after having pursued the IT Essentials Programme with ORT SA and having won the business challenge through the EM Education

Trust. The winnings allowed him to establish a flourishing baking business and he was using the profits made through this to pay for his current B.Com Business Informatics degree through UNISA.

“I think I can safely say that I would not be where I am without the EM Education Trust. (ORT SA case study beneficiary interview)



In the survey, beneficiaries most commonly reported gaining problem-solving skills (86% of respondents), followed by technical and communication skills.

Impact on family

The case study beneficiary noted that he was able to provide financial support towards household expenses and described feeling like an adult since the Trust came through, giving him an added sense of responsibility.

“I can say I see a difference from my family. They have seen that I am a young man who does so much because it's in me to always do something new and progressive so my family have always been acknowledging that. (ORT SA case study beneficiary interview)



3.8 Overarching impact

Each of the high school programmes has shown high levels of impact for learners and families, with the Nine-Tenths programme demonstrating the greatest impact for communities. Learner impact includes that learners improved their mathematics and science results, developed greater self-confidence and skills to do group work effectively and were motivated through meeting people from different backgrounds and cultures. The exposure to university provided through the Targeting Talent Programme was regarded as having a very strong impact, with students able to see different STEM careers in practice, the reality of studying at university and how it differed from school. Impacts identified by Star Schools beneficiaries included improved academic performance and problem-solving skills. For U-Prep, some of the impacts reported included academic success and being well-prepared for university.

The Nine-Tenths Programme focused on university preparation and increasing enrolments at Rhodes University through applying a mentorship model. This programme demonstrated a range of unanticipated outcomes where there were improvements in community morale, school reputation and learner engagement at school. While the programme did not have a STEM emphasis, it was strongly focused on creating a pipeline for university admission by improving the number of Bachelors passes. This programme provides the best demonstration of the value of a mentorship model, in particular, where mentors come from very similar backgrounds to their mentees and are able to provide role models and hope for learners that they too will be able to succeed and obtain admission to university.

The impact of scholarship programmes on beneficiaries did not differ significantly across institutions. For the majority of students, alleviating the financial burden for their families was a major impact; another was that with the comprehensive nature of funding, some students were also able to use their stipend to contribute to their families. Students studying at Wits and UP both reported a greater social consciousness and were giving back to their communities by teaching mathematics and science at their previous schools and teaching chess to children in the community. The mentorship component was highlighted as major strength for students benefitting from scholarships. The shift to funding postgraduate STEM programmes will be a game changer for many students who have been unable to study beyond an

undergraduate programme and will also contribute to building more advanced skills in STEM.

The areas of impact for young people participating in the independent living training provided by SAMBT were noted as greater independence and confidence and a change in the communities' attitudes towards beneficiaries. This is particularly noteworthy as the majority of young people who completed the survey had been born sighted and so had needed to adjust to losing their sight. The greatest area of impact identified by beneficiaries from this programme was their own personal development, followed by education. The latter is likely due to the fact that the programme was implemented in schools and included the provision of assistive devices to learners. The significance of this impact is amplified further when considering the limited number of schools which cater for the needs of young people with vision impairments. Other areas of personal development included being able to use a range of devices and skills to perform day-to-day tasks such as telling the time, handling money, using liquid indicators and signature guides. Personal skills included being able to socialise and interact with others and to support others with disabilities. Some participants benefitted from workplace experience which positioned them better for employment. Families have become less fearful, and young people have also been able to participate in activities to raise awareness about disability within their own communities.

The Living Link Programme is the second programme focused on independent living for children and adults with various

intellectual disabilities. The areas of impact reported were in education, personal development and employment.

ORT South Africa, one of the partners focusing on skills development and work readiness, taught various information technology courses to individuals in Umlazi district in Kwazulu-Natal. Though levels of employment were low, beneficiaries reported their overall experiences as positive. Low levels of employment in the specific skills area may also be due to the isolated rural area in which the programme was implemented. This partnership ended due to the Trust's strategic shift. The Trust has initiated a new partnership with UJ focused on teaching solar maintenance, a skill that is in high demand in the current economic context.

In addition to these efforts, there is a need to strengthen work readiness. This could include funding accredited courses and workplace skills for young people who may not meet entrance criteria for university.

3.9 Opportunities for synergy among partners

Attempts were made to build collaboration between Star Schools and Rhodes University to strengthen mathematics and science catch-up programmes. This was an ideal opportunity for collaboration across partners and to address the major challenge of teacher shortages and poor curriculum coverage. With the emergence of COVID-19, students were unable to meet face-to face. Sessions were offered online, and it was not possible to bring the students together in a way that would leverage the skills and experience that Star Schools and Rhodes University could offer.

With the Trust's shift of focus to funding postgraduate students and exiting high school programmes, there is less opportunity for alignment between partners in the manner described above. The Trust should look for opportunities to align itself with other donors working in the STEM space and can do so by joining donor groups focusing on tertiary access and STEM education.

Given the small size of philanthropic funding for programmes to assist people with disabilities, the Trust has an opportunity to share its knowledge with other like-minded donors as to the nature of support that can be provided to smaller organisations and to address an unmet need for support to such organisations.



The background features a series of concentric circles in shades of blue and purple. On the right side, there is a partial view of a photograph showing people in a meeting or workshop setting.

4

Conclusion, Lessons Learnt and Recommendations



The impact study found that over the past ten years, the strategic direction of the Trust has been responsive to the needs of society and remains well-aligned with the objectives of the NDP and the SDGs. The Trust operates in a highly dynamic environment and has endeavoured to respond to some of these changes through the recent strategic review and subsequent decisions related to funding priorities.

The impact study also found that the high school support programmes focused on preparation for university and building STEM capability in students have been broadly successful. The Targeting Talent Programme, while costly, has produced enduring outcomes for graduates and provided a blueprint for other programmes setting out to improve STEM capability and to prepare young people to adjust to the tertiary education system. The mentor model has proven powerful across all of the programmes, but is of great significance in the Nine-Tenths Programme in Makhanda. Impact has extended beyond the individual learner to impacting on broader school functionality and on the overall perception of surrounding communities towards the reputation and credibility of participating schools.

It is premature to determine the impact of the University Scholarships Programmes as the majority of students who had benefited from scholarships were still completing their studies and had not yet entered the world of work. It is clear that a scholarship opportunity removes a significant financial burden from families. It is widely recognised that there is a gap in funding available for postgraduate studies, and the shift to funding postgraduate qualifications,

along with a more expansive approach to the understanding of what STEM skills are needed to accelerate innovation in South Africa are two important decision points that will ensure the continued relevance of the Trust in the field of STEM education.

The third pillar of support which is focused on achieving independent living has been especially successful, both in terms of supporting an often marginalised and isolated group, but also in building the organisational capability of smaller organisations. The Trust has been successful in accompanying these organisations to expand their programming and to extend their geographical presence. In both instances, the impact on personal development is noteworthy, as well as the important outcome of ensuring that children still enrolled in school or college are able to function in an educational environment which is not always responsive to the specific needs of people who are visually impaired.

The Trust faces a dilemma in how it will continue to maintain and demonstrate how it is different to other scholarship providers and the impact it is able to achieve. By choosing to expand scholarships working with large institutional partners, the Trust is able to reduce its risk of poor governance, lack of capacity and diversion of interests between themselves and their implementing partners, but it will become more difficult to track the impact of these scholarships by collecting routine data that is different to the standard reporting metrics used by higher education institutions. On this basis, expanding in newer areas on a smaller scale, such as the work with PEETS, presents a significant opportunity to shape a new intervention

and to begin collecting data to be able to track and monitor impact from the outset.

Despite its best efforts, the Trust continues to face barriers to achieving gender parity in its programmes. This is not uncommon across scholarship programmes in STEM, but will need to be something that it continues to monitor and respond to moving forward.

As it continues to expand its support into new and emerging areas in STEM, and renewables in particular, the Trust will need to continue to remain open to considering new and revised programmes for support. These kinds of decisions will be strengthened if the Trust engages actively and seeks feedback on the results of the projects it supports, and where there is scope for improvement.

4.9.1 Lessons Learned

- The Trust has worked with a range of partners with varying levels of organisational capacity. This has meant that some organisations have not been able to meet the administrative and reporting requirements of the Trust at the expected standard. It has started to address this by ending these partnerships and putting more formalised assessment and due diligence processes in place. This will need to continue to receive priority attention if the Trust is to engage additional partners beyond its current portfolio.
- In a highly mobile society, many of the young people that completed programmes supported by the Trust have changed their email addresses and cell phone numbers. Should the Trust wish to do an evaluation of this

nature in the future to understand the long-term trajectory of beneficiaries, it will be crucial that communication is maintained and details are kept updated as much as possible.

- The success of programmes is influenced by the context in which they are implemented. The Nine-Tenths Programme demonstrated itself as being highly effective at fostering social cohesion and community engagement in Makhanda (formerly Grahamstown). The Trust sought to replicate the model at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) without success, demonstrating the importance of doing a detailed situational analysis to understand the implementing context before replicating existing models in new geographies.
- It is crucial to partner with organisations that are well-established, credible and have expertise in the area of work for which they are being funded. Monitoring and reporting requirements need to be explicitly agreed during contracting to ensure that organisations are able to do longitudinal monitoring that enables them to follow a student's trajectory from the point of participating in an Trust funded programme to the point of becoming employed or involved in any other gainful activity. This includes ensuring that partners offering skills development programmes also have the market linkages for participating young people to apply for and secure employment.

4.9.2 Recommendations

4.9.2.1 Programme Design

- Consideration should be given as to whether the Trust can make a meaningful contribution to improving the quality of mathematics and science by funding scholarships for teaching qualifications at Further Education and Training Level (Grades 10-12). This would contribute to alleviating the scarcity in teachers that are well equipped to teach these subjects.
- The Trust has scope and opportunity to significantly strengthen its work readiness interventions for youth by engaging more actively with employers. While increasing enrolment in tertiary programmes is a good signal, there are also high numbers of young people who are not employed, in education or in training (NEET) and would benefit from accredited courses or certificates along with workplace skills to improve their own prospects of finding employment. This would require careful partner selection and ensuring partners are accredited to provide suitable training programmes and well-placed to provide the necessary workplace skills for young people.
- The Trust should formalise and strengthen collaboration with its various partners which can be in the form of regular, structured meetings, including monthly roundtables and an annual strategic summit that bring various ecosystem stakeholders together. The Trust can serve as the convener, ensuring clear communication, shared goals, and a coordinated approach to scholarship initiatives, ultimately enhancing the impact and student support offerings.

4.9.2.2 Programme Implementation

- With the revised strategy, it is an opportune time to document a revised Theory of Change which articulates the rationale for the change in direction of the Trust, accompanied by a detailed monitoring and evaluation framework including indicators, reporting processes and an evaluation plan. The latter will enable the Trust to compare performance across partners using common metrics, as well as establishing where course corrections may be required.
- The extent of monitoring data collected and reported varied between partners, making it difficult to provide an overall assessment of the impact of each specific pillar of support. It is recommended that the Trust develop a set of standard indicators that can be applied by all partners, using standardised templates for reporting.
- There is a need to strengthen the communication and coordination between the Trust and its implementing partners. The recent shift to stronger results-based reporting has gone some way to strengthening monitoring for accountability, but is not yet at a point where it is possible to establish the impact of the Trust support.
- Implementing partners have indicated that communication related to key decisions has not always been timely, and coordination in the University Scholarships Programme needs to be improved, avoiding duplication of effort by institutions. As the Trust moves to strengthen its relationship with the National Research Foundation to facilitate recruitment of postgraduate

students, it will also need to identify how best to provide additional wraparound support in the form of psycho-social support, seminars and other general assistance with academic and workplace skills.

- There is a strong need to build the capacity of smaller partners through providing organisational development support. This has not been possible with the current team being so small, and consideration should be given to increasing the team to be able to do this effectively. This will be an important contribution to the NPO sector and will also likely have upstream effects in the quality of programme delivery.
- The Trust should strengthen alumni engagement across all programmes to be able to better establish impact. This engagement will require additional human resources and should include increasing direct communication and engagement with beneficiaries without relying on communication through partners. This would include establishing an Trust alumni network and could include using social media and other communication channels to regularly gather impact stories and establish how beneficiaries are progressing towards the overall goal of improving employability and employment among historically disadvantaged Black South African youth.
- Being able to measure longitudinal impact for beneficiaries requires the ability to track and monitor the trajectory of individual beneficiaries. In its current form, there is insufficient

capacity within the Trust to take on the longitudinal monitoring needed and to build the alumni engagement. It is recommended that the Trust consider employing an additional person focused specifically on communications with beneficiaries, outward messaging and ongoing alumni engagement. This could avoid a situation where the Trust loses contact with beneficiaries if an implementing partner is no longer actively engaged in the programme.

- With bpSA as the major donor of the Trust, the relationship should be leveraged to provide structured opportunities for scholarship candidates to obtain workplace experience. This would assist with acquiring the disciplines and skills required in a workplace environment, while also providing the opportunity for bpSA to meet with the candidates funded by the Trust. Linking scholarship beneficiaries with bpSA graduate programme opportunities would be one possible avenue for doing so.
- with the Trust diversifying its funding into new programmes, a deliberate effort will need to be made to manage the perception that some programmes are more important than others, and that scholarship recipients receive different levels of support across programmes.. This will address any perceived imbalance between the support provided to engineering students to cope with the challenges of being at university, and that available to students in other STEM fields, as reported in case study interviews.

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Annexure: Research team profile

Ms Rebecca Pursell-Gotz is an evaluation specialist who has been working in the field of education and youth employment for the past 18 years. During this time she has designed, implemented, and led monitoring, evaluation and research projects of local and multi-country programmes funded by multilateral donors, Foundations, local and international NGOs and government. Her work has focused on South Africa, with project experience in East and West Africa. She has specific expertise working with mixed methods and has a strong interest in qualitative methods. Rebecca has demonstrated expertise and experience in public health, education, governance and youth employment with specific skills in social research, monitoring, programme evaluation and providing strategic input on how to strengthen programme design and implementation. Rebecca has a BA Hons, MA, and Masters in Public Health from the University of the Witwatersrand.

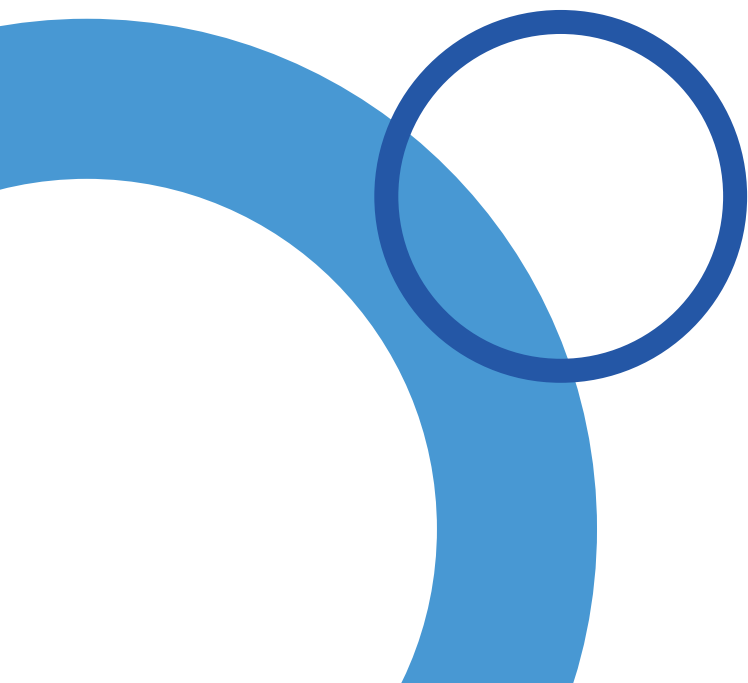
Ms Zaahedah Valley holds an undergraduate degree in International Relations and Diplomacy, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Management with specialisation in Monitoring and Evaluation. She is currently studying towards a Master's Degree in Management with specialisation in Development and Economics and has a keen interest in innovative financing in education. Zaahedah has developed specific technical and professional skills in data analysis, report writing, fieldwork, budgeting, overall project management, and people management. She is also often involved in Theory of Change development as well as developing monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Ms Jaya Sojen is an experienced researcher with a strong background in research and monitoring and evaluation projects. She holds a Master's Degree in Management with a focus on monitoring and evaluation, as well as a Postgraduate Diploma in Development Management. Additionally, she has a Master's Degree in Agricultural Sciences. Ms Sojen has extensive experience in conducting impact evaluations using both quantitative and qualitative methods, specifically in development projects. Ms Sojen is skilled in Results-Based Management Systems and has expertise in data collection, analysis, and indicator development in multiple sectors, including agriculture and education.

Ms Moloko Mashabathakga is a Development Studies graduate (Hons) with more than eight years of working experience in monitoring, evaluation, research and learning. Furthermore, she acquired a Certificate in Programme Management in Monitoring and Evaluation from the University of Cape Town. She has worked on several research projects that have instilled in her the culture of hard work and the ability to produce quality work and pay attention to detail. She is skilled in data management, designing data collection tools, collecting and analysing data, verifying data, reporting and presenting.

Ms Dineo Madiba is an early career professional and has a degree in Public Health from Monash University and a Postgraduate Diploma in Public and Development Sector Monitoring. She has recently completed her Master's degree at Wits University, specialising in governance and management. Dineo is passionate about healthcare and education, with a keen interest in the use of partnerships, research and monitoring and evaluation to design and implement sustainable and impactful projects.

Mr Morris Phundulu currently holds a Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Economics. He will be assigned to this project as a junior analyst. Morris has three years of data collection, management and analysis experience. He is competent in various statistical packages including STATA, R, SPSS and Eviews.





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