



# Thinking Tools as an important ingredient to achieving the shift from a Teaching-focused to a Learning-focused Method



“If one learns from others but does not think, one will be bewildered. If, on the other hand, one thinks but does not learn from others, one will be in peril.” *Confucian Analects 11.15*

**End of Project Evaluation Report to STF by Dr Muavia Gallie (PhD)**

**September 2018**

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## Sections 1

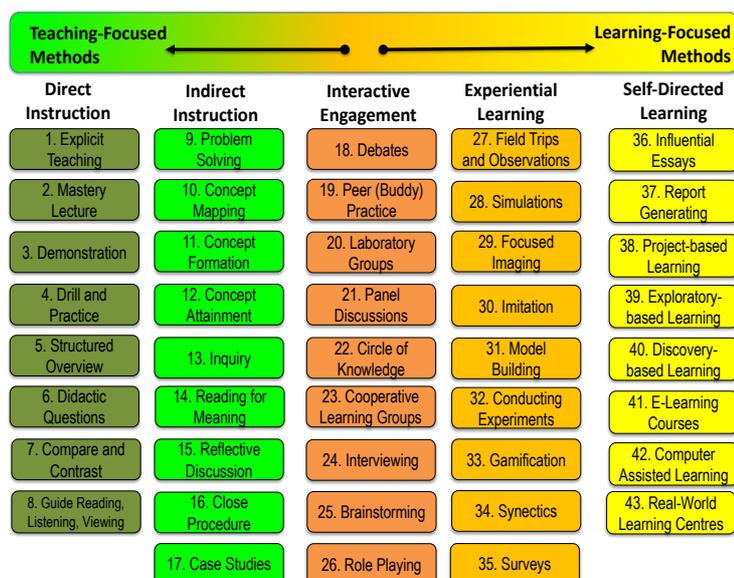
### Project description

- Thinking Tools

The 'Thinking Tools' project was a voluntary gesture by Dr Cas Olivier to schools working with the School Turnaround Foundation (STF), based on the fact that the organisation is working as a non-profit organisation within the space of education. Due to his long relationship with Dr Muavia Gallie, a director of STF, Dr Olivier's offer was to train 8 teachers from 5 schools as participants during 6 sessions of three hours each. Because he is located in Pretoria, and all the participants are based in Worcester, a teleconference technology named Zoom was utilised to ensure that Dr Olivier engages with the participants on both a team as well as an individual basis. The participants representing Slanghoek primary, Rawsonville primary, Avian Park primary and Roodewal primary schools all congregated at Zwelethemba High school for these sessions.

The overall goal of the project was to empower the teachers to shift from a teaching-focused to a learning-focused methodology of facilitating learning in our schools. The STF methodology has three main domains namely (i) managing the success of every learner from the office of the principal, (ii) managing the curriculum planning, implementation and completion through the school management team (SMT), and (iii) managing the subject as well as managing issues in the classroom of every teacher.

Most of our schools have been made aware, been orientated and have been implementing the strategies of target-setting, risk management, every day matters (regular attendance of learners), growth mindset, institutional leadership and management of the school results. Although there is room for improvement in all these strategies in our



schools, it has become important to expose and develop the awareness amongst our

teachers on how to lead a learning-focused activity where the development of the skills, rather than just rote learning of content, is inculcated in the learners.

The project had four specific objectives:

- To facilitate the shift among teachers to move from thinking about 'teaching' as their main purpose, role and responsibility, to ensuring that they focus on the 'facilitation of learning' and the 'learning' concept in their learning activities. This is a shift from focusing on 'input' to focusing on 'output, results and impact', as expressed in monitoring and evaluation terminology;
- To acquire the necessary skills and competency of 'thinking tools' during the workshop sessions, and to engage with the facilitator, Dr Olivier, and other colleagues in order to contextualise the discussion and activities within their own content knowledge and school context;
- To engage in a community of practice (COP), through a cellular phone group, to ensure that participants engage freely with one another and the facilitator, and to post relevant questions, comments and videos which capture their own efforts in their classrooms. This COP was intended to be about 'practice' rather than about 'talking' about practice, and therefore real engagement with learners became an important focus amongst participants; and ...
- To develop the confidence and competency to act as 'change agents' at their individual schools, as well as during the STF principal sessions in order to report on progress and challenges experienced by participants. Participants had to commit themselves to be representatives of the school and not just in their own interest and to their own advantage.

The thinking tools method flows from a book authored by Dr Olivier, namely "The DNA of great teachers" which has been pronounced to be an "inspiration and surely a benefit to both practising teachers and teachers in training" ([www.learningdesigns.co.za](http://www.learningdesigns.co.za)). Through training on the principles of great teaching, the following paradigm shift happened in their classrooms:

- They converted their curriculum into learning challenges instead of translating it directly into lessons;
- They designed learning material for learning instead of designing teaching aids;
- They linked the new topics to learners' prior knowledge instead of linking it to previous topics;

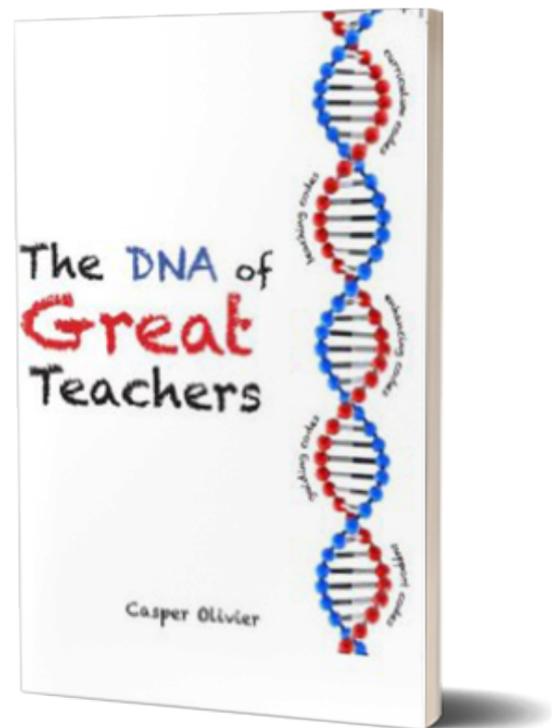
- They focused on enabling learners to learn instead of interpreting ‘teaching’ as explaining information;
- They enabled learners to discover the curriculum content instead of having the curriculum content taught to them.
- They enabled learners to solve problems, work out solutions and construct their own knowledge instead of expecting learners to master the information as explained to them;
- They became followers by guiding learners instead of being leaders and expecting learners to follow;
- They placed learners in the driving seat instead of the teachers being in the driving seat;
- They allowed learners to discuss and discover the content instead of speaking most of the time; etc.

This approach to teaching led to the following classroom management successes, which are important in the work of STF, and is linked to the school turnaround methodology;

- All learners were involved in the learning process;
- There were no disciplinary issues;
- Learners started to see themselves as “clever guys”, which is important to self-affirmation;
- The learners enjoyed their new learning experiences; etc.

In particular, the assessment results on the greater thinking method compared very favourably to the average of previous assessments on the same subjects, for example the electricity lesson results:

- Increased by 20%;
- The group’s average increased by 24%;
- The lowest score increased from 15% to 61% which is an increase of 46%; and  
...
- No learner failed.



- School Turnaround Methodology

The above-mentioned successes connect very strongly with the principles of the school turnaround methodology, namely:

- All learners were created to be successful, and therefore no learner should fail;
- The academic ability of learners is not linked to their economic, social and cultural status in society (poor learners can perform at the same level as middle-class and rich learners);
- The biggest challenges in school turnaround require adults to change (think and do things differently), and to reconnect themselves with the dreams of learners;
- The school community must move away from the deficit-thinking models, and the victim-mentality approaches, and take ownership of things under their control;
- Restructuring the current education models that result in 'dysfunctionality-by-design' activities and success-linked-to-social-status thinking (allowing un- and under-qualified and poorly-performing teachers to teach in these schools).

The school turnaround methodology was conceptualized and developed to establish the pursuit of excellence within all our public schools, especially within schools located in challenging and marginalized communities. Excellence to us means the provision of high quality educational opportunities, processes and outcomes for each and every learner in our care. We prepare young people for productive, rewarding and fulfilling

## BUILDING BLOCKS:

22. Digital Teaching Time		
20. Test and Exam preparation		21. Learner Empowerment
18. Learner Self-Assessment	19. Learner Action to Engagement	
17. 30% Low, 40% Middle & 30% High Questions		
15. Annual Assessment Plans		16. Manage Controllable FATs
13. Timetable Transition Time	14. Weighting Test & Exam Papers	
10. Curriculum Chunking	11. Daily Lesson Plan	12. No Homework
9. 170 Days of Teaching and Learning		
7. Instructional Leadership		8. Managing School Results
5. 'Every day Matters' - attendance		6. Extended Learning Time
4. Learner Risk Analysis		
2. Learner Target Setting		3. Learner Dreams
1. Success for All Learners – 100% Pass rate		

lives in an increasingly complex world. Our vision is improved performance in every school, for every learner, every teacher, every principal, every school governing body, every district, every year. The methodology supports all public schools in their pursuit of excellence by providing

guidance on twenty-two (22) strategies, with clear descriptions and steps as to how these strategies of high quality practice will enhance the seven domains of (i) leading,

(ii) planning, (iii) teaching, (iv) facilitation of learning, (v) feedback, (vi) learning and (vii) assessing.

Each year, schools will assess their practices against the methodology to inform their school plans and intervention strategies linked to the individual education plans of every learner. The pursuit of excellence in the methodology supports schools as they engage their stakeholders and role-players in the development of a shared vision, the identification of strategic priorities, and the ongoing tracking of progress towards these strategies.

#### *The focus is on learners*

In our schools, every learner is known at a deeper level, valued as someone who can and will succeed and therefore we care for their individual needs and challenges. In the same way as we all want the best for our own children, all our parents and/or guardians also want the very best for their children. To us this means teachers, principals and schools with a commitment to nurture, guide, inspire and challenge learners to become lifelong learners through engaging in learning joyfully, building their skills and understanding and developing a sense of the meaning of life. We therefore have confidence in each individual learner through knowing and understanding where they come from, what their contextual conditions are, understanding their dreams and developing their individual potential and skills to realise their dreams. As learners progress, it means knowing that they are well-supported as increasingly self-motivated (heutagogic) learners – confident and creative individuals, with the personal resources for future success and wellbeing.

#### *Excellence in learning*

In our schools, learners will develop basic skills in literacy and numeracy, strong content knowledge and the ability to learn, adapt and be responsible citizens. The journey to excellence for learners in public schools begins during the first important weeks of early childhood development and in the foundation phase. Every child brings a different set of experiences, knowledge and skills to school with them, and understanding these is essential to planning their individual learning paths. From the earliest school days and throughout their time at school, teachers use information about individual learners' capabilities and therefore needs to plan for learners' learning so as to engage them in rich learning experiences, developing the vital skills for flourishing – now and in future years. By sharing information about learning development, teachers work in partnership with parents as active participants in their children's education. At the end of their school years, teachers and schools support

learners to make successful transitions to future learning and employment, with the skills to make informed contributions as citizens and leaders.

*Excellence in teaching*

In our schools, teachers accept personal responsibility for improving their teaching practice in order to improve learner learning. Learner learning is underpinned in excellent schools by high quality teaching. Teaching in these schools is distinguished by 'universally-accepted' high levels of professionalism and commitment. Lessons and learning opportunities are engaging and teaching strategies are evidence-based. Individually and collaboratively, teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching practices, including sophisticated analysis of learner engagement, learning growth and outcomes, to plan for the ongoing learning of each learner in their care. Teachers take shared responsibility for learner improvement and contribute to a transparent learning culture, including through the observation of each other's practices.

*Excellence in leading*

In our schools, school leaders enable a self-sustaining and self-improving community that will continue to support the highest levels of learning as a lasting legacy of their contributions. Strong, strategic and effective leadership is the cornerstone of school excellence. Excellent leaders have a commitment to fostering a school-wide culture of high expectations and a shared sense of responsibility for learner engagement, learning development and success. Learners benefit from the school's planned and proactive engagement with parents/guardians and the broader community. Principals in excellent schools ensure that operational issues, such as resource allocation and accountability requirements, serve the overarching strategic vision of the school community.

## Methodology

- DNA of great teachers

As indicated the concept ‘thinking tools’ emanated from the book of Dr Cas Olivier,



“The DNA of Great Teachers.” He argues that “the format of the curriculum and textbooks is linear, i.e. from A to Z. The brain is not designed to think in linear ways, therefore explaining causes children’s minds to wander all the time. Thinking tools, is hyperlink-based, therefore guiding the brain to explore, discover master and

solve problems. Thinking tools is not a study method, (but rather) encapsulates ways of thinking.” (<http://www.learningdesigns.co.za>)

- Six sessions of 3 hours each

The method of delivering the project was an engagement of 6 x 3 - hour long sessions.

during which Dr Olivier facilitated a one-to-one and group discussion through the technology of Zoom conferencing, since he is based in Pretoria. It started in May 2018, and we completed session 1 – 4, where teachers sat with a desktop computer connected to the central conference conversation.



We displayed the same conversation on the data projector in order to assist others to follow the engagement on the ‘big screen’, without being directly involved in the training. All the teachers would receive 40 CPTD (continuous professional teacher development) points as endorsed by SACE (South African Council for Educators).

- Sessions from 15h00 to 18h00

The remaining two sessions were concluded in June 2018. All these teachers



attended the session at the ZHS from 15h00 to 18h00. The participants in this project have implemented some of the tools during the last few days of May 2018 despite the fact that the focus of schools was on preparing learners for the June 2018

examination. The project was designed around 20 carefully selected topics (teaching practices; thinking; classroom communication; group dynamics; surface and deep thinking; analyse and synthesize; de Bono; thinking maps; thinking methods; Bloom; thinking modes; teaching methods; clever learning activities; formative assessment; monitor learners; MacGyver toolkit; hide and seek; potential development; learning plan; and DNA coding for teaching).

The evaluation of the project was done after the course was completed at the end of the second term. It included reflection on the desk-based document review of the work of Dr Olivier, as well as partners he collaborated with, key information conversation with Dr Corvell Cranfield and Mr Vaughan Kariem, both experts in pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and institutional management and development in education, feedback from principals where participants are implementing the strategies, focus group discussion with participants in the course and engagement with the facilitator, Dr Olivier.

- Limitations

Although all efforts were made to meet and engage with participants during and beyond the course, some were not available or did not respond adequately to requested feedback. However, all participants contributed aggressively during the sessions, since they were among the voice-full teachers in the school. They were strong in character, and the 'shifters in thinking' at their own schools. In particular, some participants were replaced by other colleagues during the course of the project, despite being briefed by them before joining the session. However, the continuity of engagement was affected, and also led to the facilitator having to repeat some of the content and topics covered in the previous session.

## Section 2

### Evaluation results

- Relevance

The central question on relevance is: Did the course deliver on the expectations regarding shifting the mindset and practice of teachers from teaching to learning? The fundamental reason for taking on this project was based on the fact that the ‘thinking tools’ will empower teachers to move toward a ‘learning-focused method’ of facilitating learning, rather than the current dominant focus on teaching..

The misinterpretation and the inability to do the ‘mind-shift’ from ‘teaching to learning’ were strongly evident during the first two sessions. Some of the comments were:

“There are many learners who are educated in our schools, but only a few who can think out of the box.”

“We want the development of modern citizens who can think critically and creatively, who are able to solve problems and who have the ability to adapt themselves to an ever-changing local and international environment.”

“Thinking tools is helping us to use our minds systematically and effectively. With the use of these tools, the intended ideas will be arranged more systematically, more clearly and easier to be understood.”

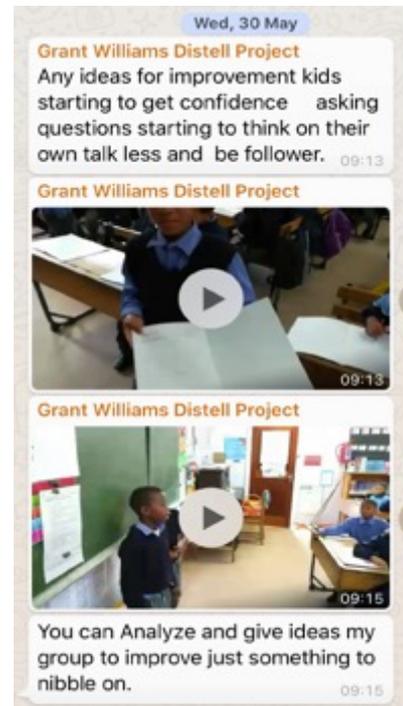
Discussions with participants suggest that the main value added by the project was rekindling the concepts of learning which they were taught during their ‘teacher training’ years, but forgot in their current practice. The project therefore raised their awareness of the importance of placing the learner at the centre of the learning process, as emphasised in the school turnaround methodology. Rather than just highlighting the importance of these concepts of ‘learning at the centre’, the course focused on the practicality of ‘doing’ in the classroom. Participants were given the opportunity to identify their own subject specialisation, and the thinking tool activities were related to their ‘day-to-day’ subject matter issues.

- Impact

Did the project respond to the real needs of STF and participants in the intervention area of teaching and learning? Achieving the shift from ‘teaching-focused methods’

to 'learning-focused methods' during the month of May, just before the mid-year June examination, was a challenge. However, the limited display of impact on the nature and practice of different teachers will be extracted from the Whatsapp group and the engagement that took place between members of the team.

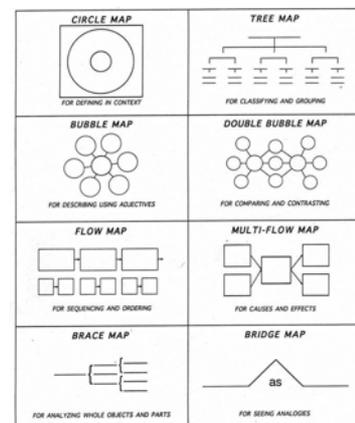
It started on 30 May 2018, when Grant Williams asked a question to the team related to the improved confidence of his learners through the nature of their questions. He then shared two video clips showing the nature of their engagement with him, and the questions they began to ask. His own 'openness' to asking the group to 'analyse and give ideas', was new and uncommon in his previous style of engagement. Although he is a senior teacher at Slanghoek primary school, he is only one of two male teachers on the staff. He has limited years of experience within the profession, but always displayed openness to learning, within a controlled space and during small group discussions. His principal was particular impressed by the video clips, and the confidence displayed by both his teacher and the learners. These learners are from the adjacent farms around the schools, but have developed strong and focused dreams of where they want to be after completing their schooling.



The following day, 31 May 2018, a first year teacher at Zwelethemba High, Wendy Selekwa, posted her interview with two learners in her class, as feedback, when they finished the brace map.



The learners related in the video that they found the 'giving of notes through PowerPoint slides' not exciting, but



rather 'boring'. But when their teacher exposed them to the brace map, and gave them the responsibility of 'fetching' their own learning through engagement with their text, they were all quiet in the class

and had no need to make a noise. In fact, they urged her not to go back to her previous style of teaching, and were confident that they would not need to memorise the work which they analysed through the brace map, since the process of analysis needed them to understand the content, They will definitely remember through their understanding of the work if asked in the test and/or examination, because “we did it ourselves”.

On Friday 1 June 2018, Elmarica Pekeur also shared two video clips where she asked her learners to engage in the section in their textbook which will be covered in term 3. They were tasked to make their own thinking tool and to summarise and analyse the work. This happened during a ‘rain storm’ close to the Rawsonville primary school, rather than to cover a lesson with a few learners. In particular, she notes that “my most challenging learner is in class, and he is absorbed in his brace map.” Teachers who have been in the profession for years, and have been struggling with ‘discipline problems’ for most of their careers, realised that they have been the cause of the problem. They have not allowed learners to take responsibility for their own learnings, and not given them time to utilise their energy and effort to facilitate their learning.



The same Friday, the colleague of Wendy Selekwa, Ms Salome October, at



Zwelethemba High school, shared an engagement where learners were given the responsibility of explaining to their fellow learners the lesson, with concepts and ideas. However, these learners were given the task in advance to prepare themselves, and the teacher was seriously concerned that ‘kids’ would not be able to do her ‘adult’ work. However, these learners managed to work together during the Mathematics lesson, and got disciplined responses from their fellow learners, who asked and responded to tough questions during the session. In particular, the less ‘clever’ learner was very comfortable to engage and present the lesson, while the stronger learner acted

as a support to her. After engaging with the learners, it was discovered that the two

of them worked out their different roles and responsibilities, and they did not see it as problematic and strange, since they trusted their capabilities to facilitate the lesson.

All these action by all female teachers, gave Grant Williams the confidence to attempt the brace map analysis in his class too, in order to see whether his experience would be similar to that of his colleagues at the other two schools. In the process of implementing the brace map, he noted that the activity of empowering them with the responsibility has helped his learners to be more



disciplined. When he shared his video clip, the facilitator, Dr Olivier was extremely excited by his first effort, and the success of learners taking up the learning process which he displayed in the video. Despite his silence throughout the engagement period, Dr Corvell Cranfield also expressed his appreciation for the work done by both participants and the facilitator, in cementing 'early

steps' in the process of quality teaching and learning for all our learners, particularly in challenging and marginalised communities like our farm schools. He noted that "I am extremely proud of this team. Well done everyone for the passion to implement and do something powerfully different in your classrooms."

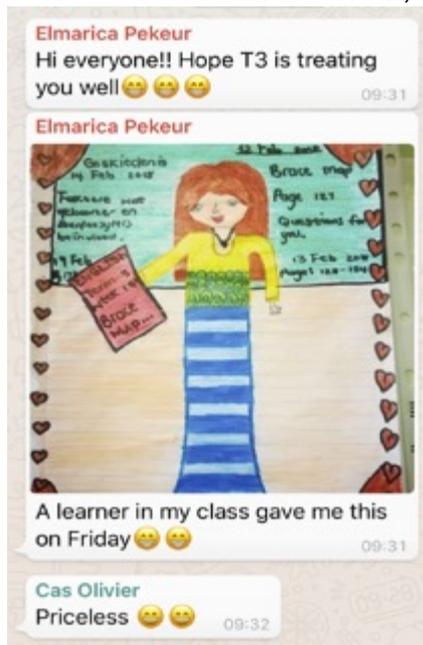
On Wednesday 6 June 2018, Grant Williams noted that "learners are bothering me for the maps and trying to analyse a story using a tree map." He requested the bubble map as a thinking tool, and was reminded by Dr Olivier that this type of tool is useful for 'comparison and contrast'.



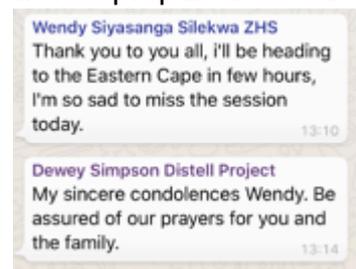
Grant continued to stress the eagerness of his learners to engage actively with the text and content, without the need for the teacher to explain to them in his normal lessons. And without explaining to them, the learners were able to ‘figure out’ what they needed to do on their own. This was certainly proof of Dr Olivier’s statement that “the brain loves thinking”.

- Partnership

Elmarica concluded the group communication session by sharing a card given to her learners at the end of term 2, where she made reference particularly to the brace map



work which they did during the term. Elmarica also wished every member of the team a positive and successful term 3. Noting that most of these teachers only met each other during the Thinking Tools sessions, and that they started to build a community of practice where they were prepared to be ‘vulnerable’ through making mistakes and asking for help, is really heart-warming. And this included the event when



Wendy lost her brother, and had to attend the funeral in the Eastern Cape during a scheduled session. The entire group wished her well and promised to brief and support her on her return.

#### *Locally-based team*

However, the project envisaged that the eight trained teachers, who are spread across 5 schools, would put together a programme of sharing their skills with their colleagues. This second step in building stronger partnerships whereby all schools would reap the benefits of trained teachers, is still outstanding.

#### *Strategic national partner*

Although it might be awkward when the facilitator is based in Pretoria, and the work has to be done in the Western Cape, there is the possibility of working together when our work extends beyond the Western Cape province. Dr Olivier is then well-placed to assist in Gauteng and the surrounding provinces.

- Achieving value for money

It has been noted earlier that Dr Olivier offered the training to our teachers free of charge. However, we are convinced that the current costing, as shared in the quotations we requested from Dr Olivier, is well worth schools engaging in fund-raising activities in order to empower and train more or even all the teachers in our thirteen schools in the Western Cape. To this end, redirecting budget items to Thinking Tools will become a priority for the STF schools in 2019.

The success of this concept was also aptly demonstrated when our teachers were willing to travel from their farm schools, after a full day's work, to engage from 15h00 to 18h00 in a professional development programme, which will not just benefit them, but their entire school community through their willingness to act as change agents in their schools.

- Sustainability

This concept is defined within the school turnaround methodology as 'ensuring ownership and lasting change'. There is some evidence that individual teachers started to work with colleagues in their grades and phases to share the awareness and vision of this shift to a learning-focused method. However, for long-term sustainability to become a reality, it will need a shift in the thinking and practice at systems level, especially at district level.

To ensure that the district starts adopting some of the thinking processes, we are enhancing the preparatory process of learners in grades 3, 6 and 9, who will be subjected to a systemic test conducted under the auspices of the province and monitored by the district. Because these external examinations are based on evaluating skills and understanding, rather than just remembering and low-level questions, we will put in dedicated efforts to demonstrate to the district that the shift from teaching to learning-focused methods will yield the success which they are looking for in external examinations, including the TIMSS and PIRLS.

Conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations

### *Conclusions*

This six-session project served as an opportunity to experiment with the idea of shifting the focus and practice of teachers among a selected group within these 5 schools. These schools and participants exposed the organisers, at both educational and logistical level, to lessons we could learn in order to promote a more extensive roll-out of these methods and tools in future. On balance, despite the relatively short

implementation period, and the time of the year when exams were imminent, it is clear that the Thinking Tools approach can benefit the learning processes, the delivery of quality teaching and learning, and the positive learning climate in our schools.

Although pre-determined, the focus areas of the project were largely considered to be relevant at all levels of schooling, and progress was made in all the five schools in terms of the achievement of the four project objectives. Overall some of the project's main areas of achievements were felt to have been in the areas of raising awareness of the shift from teaching to learning-focused methods and the related empowerment and development of learning ownership among learners. We are still a long way away from establishing a learner-driven classroom atmosphere, given the 'victim mentality' and 'deficit thinking processes' in our communities, but the early signs are there that it is worth embarking on this path in order to strengthen the ownership, growth-mindset and self-worth approaches within our schools.

To consolidate gains and to promote wider impact and sustainability, more remains to be done in areas of advocacy, primarily by building on initial successes achieved and displayed through the group engagement processes and the utilisation of technology to capture the voices of teachers and learners on video clips and other mechanisms.

For future work it is essential that the project team strengthens its approach to Monitoring and Evaluation, by using clear outcomes, results and impact indicators and developing simple tools to collect data and track progress towards objectives on a regular basis.

Longer-term sustainability should be promoted by continuing to encourage buy-in from key beneficiaries at local, district, provincial and national level, and the emphasising of collaborative advocacy work both internally in the education department system as well as externally with teachers and principals.

#### *Lessons learned*

The following are regarded as the key lessons learned during the project:

Technical processes: Since it was impossible to get the facilitator down to the Western Cape Province for every session, the Zoom conferencing technology was used to ensure both group and individual engagement. However, we only discovered that the designers of the technology and software only thought about a situation where the participants are not all in the same room, and therefore the sound system caused some problems during the first two sessions. But this problem was detected and solved for the remainder of the project.

Futuristic practice: It is difficult for teachers to imagine a practice when they have to go back to their old practice after the sessions, since the dominant practice at their schools, is still the out-dated method. One needs to consult with the principal to allow the participants the space and time to test some of their ideas and practices during 'real world' activities in the classroom, without causing curriculum contradictions and affecting learners negatively. In particular, the pattern of language teaching has not shifted over many years, while the speakers of English for example, as a second or a foreign language have multiplied bringing their own 'slang and pronunciation to the classrooms.

Monitoring and evaluation as well as baseline data: This is viewed to be as important as the outcomes, results and impact, and constitutes a key factor in delivering and ensuring capacity to bring about quality education in our schools. However, to assess the impact, we need a robust M&E system to allow a realistic set of indicators to be measured in a systemic way. This should include indicators that will measure the overall changes in the quality of education including retention, pass rates and acquisition of key skills, knowledge and values amongst learners. We also need to add indicators to measure the shift in learning abilities at school level.

Stakeholder engagement: It might be useful to have the principal or a representative present in the training sessions, in order to experience the training and to take it back to the broader SMT. Some of the strategies might be new to both participants and principals, and therefore an engagement with a decision-making stakeholder at school level, will ensure that participants are not compromised and embarrassed when they attempt to implement the learnings from the sessions. Furthermore, it will also ensure that the participants don't see their privileged position as participants of new learning, to be used in a negative way at school level. Principals, who are not mature enough to deal with 'empowered' teachers, could see the new-found confidence in participants to be intimidating. By having the principal in the sessions, leadership balance at school level will be ensured.

#### *Recommendations*

Relevance: We need to deepen the focus on issues already identified in the report, such as proactively identifying the subject areas and grades represented by the participants in order to assist the facilitator to prepare in advance. Furthermore, a profile of participants sent in advance to the facilitator, could assist relationship building;

Impact: Ensuring consistency in attendance by participants, in order to prevent delays in rolling-out the 20 topics, as well as assisting participants with space and time to ensure implementation at school level. The sessions are spread over a two-month period to ensure that participants have the opportunity to test the practice and to give feedback to the facilitator. And when ‘homework’ is given, it could be embarrassing to have a conversation with teachers who don’t do their homework. Therefore there might be a need to facilitate an orientation session with participants on how to utilise tables and how to engage with text and homework.

Partnership: Ensure technical capacity development for participants at school level to ensure quality programme implementation and orientation of colleagues. Seek stronger engagement with heads of subjects and phases in order to facilitate conversations with participants during the training period.

Value for money: To identify a budget within the projects currently under the auspices of STF, and to ensure that the ‘Thinking Tools.’ training becomes an integral part of shifting teachers from teaching-focused to learning-focused methods. Turnaround strategies must include both the office and classroom practices, in order to reconstruct an education intended to ensure the success of every learner. Participants should commit themselves to sharing the learning both internally with colleagues of the school, but also to be prepared to share with colleagues from other schools and with district officials.

Sustainability: Ensuring that the implementation of this work is owned by the principal and teachers, beyond the life-span of the project. Inviting senior personnel to the sessions, whereby specific contributions from their side could make them feel part of the project and to encourage them to incorporate the new learnings into their work.



## Section 3

### Management response to project evaluation report

The project team agrees that the end of the project evaluation report captures the progress made so far and agrees with the majority of the findings and recommendations. This response serves to outline the team's reaction to specific points raised in the report and highlights commitments to undertaking specific recommendations to improve the 'Thinking Tools' project.

- Progress towards outcomes

Above all it is encouraging to note that, although the project was only implemented over a period of two months, the evaluation found that, to a large extent, what was planned was achieved. While it has been difficult to measure results due to the lack of a comprehensive M&E system at school level, the majority of activities were implemented at all schools represented.

Feedback from principals during our principal support sessions affirmed the project narratives that a high proportion of targets, as captured within the four objectives, has been reached. Although the facilitator thought that we'd need an additional session, the progress made by the participants created the confidence that the allocated sessions would be enough to finish the project work. Unfortunately the late finalisation of this evaluation report, challenges with the complexity of the analysis and the limited time to respond to and integrate findings with school-based comments, could be improved on during the second phase.

Even though a lot of awareness on the 'Thinking Tools', with specific reference to the brace map, has been created, the team agrees that there still remains the issue of implementation and developing the capacity of participants to act as change agents.. The STF change agents have to work hard to ensure that there is space and time for the participants to attempt strategies which are not currently part of the school practice. Subsequent activities should target the leadership in the schools.

The project team agrees with the notion that lesson plans must reflect this shift in method, and therefore the SMT and senior leadership teams (SLT) must be part of the sessions as observers or even as participants.

The evaluation assessment revealed that it was more difficult for some schools to ensure the consistency in attendance, and therefore could not ensure the completion of all planned activities as indicated in the schedule. Principals must play a more

active role in ensuring that their school participants attend the sessions as expected, since the work in the project is developmental and accumulative.

- Way forward

Taking it forward, the project team must work urgently to secure funding and a budget for schools in need of the training and development. In particular, this process will be led by the STF Head of Education and Learning Coach. Ensuring the building of capacity and the development of skills related to learning-focused methods, is crucial in achieving quality teaching and learning in the classroom.

Although the report commends the significant progress made in terms of all four objectives, and in particular the unintended benefits and experiences related to classroom management in our schools, more data should be collected before the end of 2018. Our first challenge therefore has to do with collection of accurate data during the baseline survey using participatory approaches. Part of the training programme should be the empowering of participants to develop and collect relevant and appropriate data close to 'real time' in order to ensure validity and quality of data items. Data collected must be used to produce an action plan for a strategic process and engagement for change.

Finally, even though an M&E framework of quality was in place, there was not sufficient time to pull data into the framework in order to evaluate it against the indicators of outcomes, results and impact. Accurate data collection and analysis is key to tracking progress towards impact. It is important that data is collected from all schools in the project, so that it is possible to obtain a complete picture of what is happening and the changes that the project is helping to bring about in the classrooms. The project team must therefore ensure that participants are familiar with the M&E framework and can use it to provide accurate reports that can give a clearer indication of the progress in the fields, both at workshop training and implementation level.

