

REAP IN ACTION

MIND MAP TO EFFECTIVE LEARNING, ENHANCED
TEACHER WELL-BEING AND IMPROVED
LIVELIHOODS



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





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MINDMAP TO EFFECTIVE LEARNING, ENHANCED TEACHER WELL-BEING AND IMPROVED LIVELIHOODS

Foreword by the Minister of Basic Education



On behalf of the sector, we welcome the research report and a new evidence-based draft *Framework for Effective Deployment of Education Assistants in South African Rural Schools*.

In 2016, in recognition of our rural learning landscape's unique nature, we convened a first Rural Education Roundtable to dialogue on the shape and form of rural education in South Africa. Subsequent to this dialogue, we launched the now much-vaunted pilot project intervention known as the Rural Education Assistants Project (REAP). These Education Assistants (EAs) were envisaged as paratroopers deployed to communities to improve the quality of learning and teaching and upgrade rural youth livelihoods and communities.

At a conceptual level, the EAs are supposed to improve teaching and learning, enhance teacher well-being and improve rural youth livelihoods. This report covers the lessons learnt in the REAP, in an engaging yet academically grounded narrative.

We now understand that schools in rural South Africa are perhaps seen as 'nodes of development' in a real sense. They are corridors for literacy, upward mobility and an escape route from the harsh realities known to confront a large swathe of rural South Africa. For instance, a survey in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo found that poverty and unemployment were "starkly present in the everyday realities" of people living in rural areas. Similarly, a report produced by the Nelson Mandela Foundation noted that "poverty limits the ability of families and children to engage with education", particularly among "households facing food insecurity daily". Rural life, in general, is defined by poverty and lack of service delivery, and its crucial signifier is that rural inhabitants have a disproportionately higher need of freedom from want.

Compounding the problem is a high disease burden outside the peri-urban centres that adversely affects rural learners, resulting in higher than average school dropout rates. According to the 2015/16 Stats SA survey, "in Limpopo, one out of six children in each household surveyed was out of school, ... one out of every four in KwaZulu-Natal and one out of every five in the Eastern Cape".

This REAP research report signals a paradigm policy shift from understanding rural education as part of the whole and thus already benefitting from the post-apartheid South Africa's pro-poor policies. We now consider rural education a sub-branch of basic education that requires policy-making, funding and leadership from the centre. When done right, it is now evident that rural education changes the fortunes of a rural community, village or town beyond providing teaching and learning opportunities to its learners.

Our vision now is to embed targeted social interventions in a school environment, including EAs. These EAs aren't low level, poorly trained and poor cousins of the teaching profession but critical pillars in enabling education in rural contexts, as this research report shows. The EAs provide administrative support to teachers, an essential part of realising curriculum coverage goals. They also manage and organise classrooms and, most importantly, facilitate Reading, Maths and other Clubs.

This report demonstrates lucidly that our earlier interventions weren't targeted but evinced a run-of-the-mill, one-size-fits-

all approach. There is now a clearly defined nexus or mutually beneficial symbiosis between the community, the school and its environs.

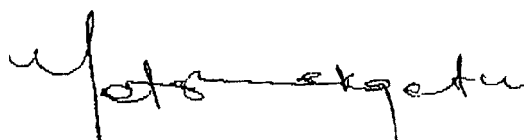
As the Executive Authority, I am pleased that the research findings on the REAP conclude that the EAs' presence in class has contributed favourably towards reducing teacher workload, stress and burnout. The EAs have contributed thereby to enhancing teacher well-being and increasing job satisfaction among the targeted teaching cohort.

An unintended and equally pleasing unintended consequence of this pilot project is that about 38% of the 900-odd youth enlisted in the EA programme have since registered for further studies due to the exposure created by the project. They now measure their worth based on knowledge acquired and the impact that they have had on their communities. The majority of those who were already studying have registered to become primary school teachers. These outcomes fortify our belief that our young people need opportunities, not hand-outs.

At the macro level, it is clear that success must be defined, not by proximity to power, but by the presence of equal opportunities. Our youth are ready to engage with prospects, grab them by the scruff of the neck and run. As the government, we have to do more to free more young people from the stranglehold of poverty, want and neglect. This report shows that it is possible.

We welcome the report and call on all the basic education stakeholders and beyond to engage with it. We will formally engage with teacher unions, SGBs and other civil society stakeholders to pilot a White Paper on rural education within the term of the Sixth Administration.

My thanks go to Dr Phumzile Langa, the indomitable woman at the helm of the Rural Education Directorate, and her team for a job well done.



Minister of Basic Education

Mrs Angie Motshekga, MP



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Q&A with Dr P Langa, Director for the Rural Education Directorate

(1) What does the REAP entail?

The Rural Education Assistant Project (REAP) is a flagship programme aimed at piloting and researching the use of Education Assistants in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases for improving the quality of education in rural schools. The project has four components: a) mobilising the youth in rural communities to participate in education initiatives; b) improving the quality of teaching and learning; c) supporting schoolbased agricultural projects; and d) conducting research and evaluation of the REAP.

(2) How long has this project been in existence?

This was the new project that has been implemented over three years from 2018-2021. The official commencement date was 1 April 2018.

(3) Please elaborate why the department came up with such a project?

The Department came up with this project proposal with the aim of addressing the following:

Improving literacy and numeracy skills in primary schools; Promoting agricultural skills development in schools, these skills are crucial for economic growth; Targeting the youth in the creation of time bound work opportunities, 750 job opportunities would be created over a 3 year period; Creating work opportunities for the economically excluded rural people; and Promoting skills transfer, competences used in this job can be used somewhere and experience gained in the 3 years will make these young people employable.

(4) What did the Department hope this project will achieve?

This project afforded the youth of South Africa employment opportunities, work experience and absolutely giving direction and sharpening the youth in making good career choices.

Through this project rural schools would strengthen their viability and functionality. The development of systems to determine continuity and sustainability of this pilot project can see it being part of a recruitment scheme to assist rural schools to attract and develop young talent into the teaching

profession. Young matriculants in rural areas seeking to enter training/career paths often find it difficult to identify suitable routes. This project will expose these young people to the teaching profession. The project targeted 40% of Education Assistants to enter the teaching profession.

(5) What targets has the DBE set for the project?

The Lead Researcher will report on findings annually, and the research findings will inform the development of a Framework for Rural Education Assistants and a Strategy for Teacher Recruitment for rural schools.

(6) Which districts have benefited from this project?

Alfred Nzo East and OR Tambo Coastal District in the Eastern Cape Province; ILembe and UMzinyathi District in KwaZulu-Natal Province; and Sekhukhune and Mopani Districts in Limpopo Province.

(7) How were these six Districts identified and if you could please elaborate some of the challenges that were experienced in these Districts?

Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo are the most rural of our Provinces in the country. For the past couple of years these Provinces have been in the bottom three when it comes to performance as measured by matric results. The Districts were also chosen using the same criteria.

(8) Of these six Districts, how many schools benefited? How many teacher assistants did you recruit?

A total of 188 schools participated in this project, this number was divided amongst the 3 provinces. Each school was allocated four Education Assistants (750 Education Assistants in total).

(9) What criteria did you consider in hiring these EAs?

The following criteria guided the selection of EAs: A senior/matric certificate with a pass in Mathematics or Maths Literacy, English First Additional Language and a Home Language of participating schools.

We also expected candidate to have good verbal and written communication skills; Interest in working with young children; between 18-25 years of age, and resided within the 5 km radius of the participating school.

(10) Please elaborate on the role these EAs played in schools where they were placed?

These EAs assisted with a variety of curricular activities, particularly those aimed at improving numeracy, literacy and reading skills; and co-curricular activities, particularly coordinating Homework Clubs, Maths Clubs, Reading Clubs, Creative Arts Clubs and Agricultural Projects.

(11) How long were they going to serve as part of this project?

EAs were placed for the duration of the project which was three years starting from 2018.

(12) Besides paying the EAs, what else did the R 29.2 million cover?

The money also covered Agriculture Resources for School-Based Agricultural projects. The DBE identified one school in participating districts and provided it with Agriculture related resources including a green house. The aim was for the school to operate as a central distributor of seedlings for surrounding schools. This culminated in the mushrooming of Agricultural projects in the District. There was money allocated for the Development of Context-Sensitive Readers for Foundation and Intermediate Phases, as well as the Development and Printing of Training Manual.





Rural Education Context

As a country South Africa is considered as immensely unequal and has serious socio-economic challenges, particularly in rural areas. These include poor infrastructure, lack of services, low job opportunities, poor housing, poor family life, poverty, lack of fiscal power and high level of adult illiteracy. Similarly, schools located in these areas face similar challenges, including, poor school infrastructure, inadequate resources, access to ICT, overcrowding, and poor quality and shortage of teachers.

Teachers in rural areas also face many challenges that negatively affect their experiences, including the lack of services and amenities that make these areas unattractive to stay there and teachers travel long distances to school. Rural schools also experience disturbing teacher mobility and turnover. Teachers may be unwilling to move to rural areas where social and cultural opportunities are limited. Even when teachers are willing to work in rural areas, working conditions are likely to make them reluctant to stay for the long term. These teachers are often required to be experts in multiple subjects, do multi-grade teaching, and endure unreasonable teacher-learner ratios. Most teachers in various fields of specialisation face professional isolation because they

are, in most cases, the only teacher in their specialisations. The distance to and from these schools makes it difficult for teachers to form communities of practice. As a result, there is often poor morale and very low levels of motivation among teachers in rural schools. Consequently, it is difficult to recruit and retain teachers in these schools.



Rural Education Assistant Project Launched

The new dawn has come for the unemployed youth in rural provinces such as Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo where 750 Education Assistants (EAs) were appointed to work with teachers in improving learning outcomes. Chief Director for MST and Curriculum Enhancement Programmes, Mr Seliki Tlhabane, joined by the KwaZulu-Natal HOD for Education, Dr Nzama, officially launched the Rural Education Assistants Project at Carter High School in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal on 27 September 2018.

Approximately 250 EAs from Umzinyathi and Ilembe Districts in KwaZulu-Natal Province attended the launch.

Provincial Chairperson for the South African Democratic Teachers Union, Mr Phumlani Duma endorsed the project, saying that it would make those poor performing districts to rise to the top. “The EAs should not be used as substitute to teachers, but work with learners to contextualise the syllabus that was covered in class,” said Mr Duma. He called upon EAs to use REAP employment opportunity to pursue their studies and become qualified teachers in the near future.

The REAP was aimed at piloting and researching the use of Education Assistants in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases (Grades 1-4) for improving the quality of education in rural schools. The REAP would, undoubtedly assist the DBE in improving quality of education and subsequently learner performance in these schools. It further played a crucial role in empowering unemployed youth with skills that was required in securing permanent employment; pursuing teaching qualifications; pursuing other qualifications including those linked to agriculture; or becoming entrepreneurs.

In his address, Mr Tlhabane said that the EAs must use the opportunity to advance their academic success, particularly in the field of teaching. “In terms of unqualified and under-qualified teachers, we have a bursary scheme known as Funza Lushaka Bursary that helps to finance higher education costs of new teachers. I am happy to report that the impact of this initiative is beginning to have the desired results,” said Mr Tlhabane.

“According to the 2015 Centre for Development and Enterprise, we would be able to produce sufficient teachers overall to meet the demand of our schools for the next 10 years 2015 to 2025. The report indicates that between 2009 and 2012, initial teacher education enrolments rose from 35 937 to 94 237, a 16% increase. The number of new teacher graduates per year nearly doubled from 6 978 to 13 708. State funding for Funza Lushaka bursaries rose dramatically from R100m in 2014 to over R900m in 2017. Despite this noteworthy success there are still critical vacancies in rural schools especially in Mathematics and Physical Sciences,” explained the Chief Director.

Director for the Rural Education, Dr Phumzile Langa, said: “Through the project the identified unemployed youth with a minimum of matric were recruited from the rural communities to assist with a variety of curricular activities, particularly in improving numeracy, literacy and reading skills; and further support co-curricular activities. EAs have been mandated to coordinate Homework Clubs, Maths Clubs, Reading Clubs, Creative Arts Clubs and Agricultural Projects to ensure holistic development of learners in the early grades of schooling”.



School Management Teams (SMTs) acknowledge the significant contribution made by the REAP in participating schools



The REAP project was well received by various members of SMTs and commented as follows:

The REAP has helped us to transform our school for the better because the EAs are supportive and very helpful. I enjoy working with the EAs. They are willing to explore knowledge in the Teaching Profession. Through the REAP, our learners have developed passion for reading. We can now confirm that since we started participating in this programme, the level of literacy and numeracy has been showing a significant improvement. In the previous years, our teachers have been swamped with a lot of work. In fact, teachers had to mark attendance registers, capture mark, plan lessons and facilitate classes. All these tasks required sufficient time. However, the REAP had made teachers' tasks much easier, following the EAs' contribution towards improving the level of literacy in the Foundation Phase. The REAP is very essential and more applicable in a rural setting. (Ms Kgatla, Mentor Teacher for the EAs at Letseku Primary School).

During the pandemic, EAs played a crucial role in schools as Covid-19 Ambassadors. The EAs took responsibility to promote the COVID-19 protocols by making sure that learners complied with regulations such as physical distancing, handwashing and sanitizing. Our school is built near main road and over the years, the level of accidents have been rising in an alarming rate. But our EAs came to our learner's rescue because they made it a point that learners are fully supported. Mr Lawrence Maake, Principal of Letseku Primary school.

The REAP has made a significant contribution to our school because our learners are now performing well in both literacy and numeracy. Our learners are considered reading champions in terms of reading proficiency hence they are always leading a pack of avid readers in various reading competitions held at the Circuit level. The REAP must be continued because it assist young people to lead a better life. The most interesting aspect of the programme is that it gives the EAs the practical

experience in the Teaching Profession. We have some of the EAs here who are currently busy with BED in various institutions of higher learning, isn't that great? As a result, they would be well equipped to work within the school environment once there are qualified teachers (Mr M Masuku, Acting School Principal for Dudumeni Comprehensive School).

I found it enjoyable to work with the Education Assistants. These young people are very creative and they helped our school to perform better in Mathematics and Languages. I recommend that the DBE pays more attention to the REAP whilst ensuring that it is more sustainable to address under performance in



primary schools. The EAs have gained necessary skills to become Foundation Phase Teachers, hence most of them are pursuing a career in BED. Thanks to the Department of Basic Education for having identified our school to form part of this project (Ms S.P Thusi, Mentor Teacher for Mzomusha Combined School in KwaZulu-Natal Province).

In 2017, the level of the school performance in Grade R was very low. But, things were turned around when the EAs joined our school as part of the REAP. Our school is currently performing at an average of 77%. I therefore would like to share my gratitude to the Department of Basic Education for having chosen our school (School Principal at Mmaswi-A-NAPE Primary School, Mr Reuben Mampuru).

I view the REAP as a game changer in our school because it afforded teachers more time to concentrate on quality learning and teaching. The EAs play a crucial role on our day to day basis because they assist our learners in mastering reading and counting. They also assist our learners with homework during free periods. In the past, a teacher was required to teach and

do admin work. Now the EAs are able to mark register, handle filing and further assist in maintaining discipline in class. Thumps up to the DBE for affording our school an opportunity to benefit from this project. (Mentor Teacher for the REAP at Lupapasi Primary School, Ms Nokuzola Mqeni).

I am very happy to talk about the REAP. The Programme has instilled confidence in our learners, particularly in reading. The EAs recruited as part of the Programme help the school to promote extra-mural activities. It gives me pleasure to inform you that, since we participated in this programme, our learners have scooped couple of trophies in reading competitions. I

can confirm that, through the assistance of the REAP, our learners can speak confidently in public because they have been exposed to reading activities in class (Ms Nomfundiso Mqungqutho, Mentor Teacher for Dudumeni Combined High School).

The EAs are champions in promoting literacy and numeracy in our school. We are proud to announce that our school is firmly conducting Reading and Mathematics Clubs running throughout the year. Honestly speaking, our learners are very excited about these initiatives (Mr Ngubane SGB of Mzomusha).

A SGB representative from Lupapasi JSS in the Eastern Cape also lauded the role of EAs as the schools reopened amid the pandemic. As the school adopted rotation system during the national lockdown following the inevitable return of learners to school, the EAs were always on standby to assist in maintaining social distancing whilst ensuring that learners were compliant to all other COVID-19 Protocols.

Rural Education Research Findings Outlined

In accordance with the aim of the research, the summary of the findings highlights key themes that emerged from the analysis of data. These are organised according to the two key questions posed in the study: ***How does the use of EAs improve the quality of education in rural schools?*** Three findings emerge from the research in response to this question:

Firstly, the minimum criteria used for recruiting the EAs contributed to their successful use in the schools. For example,

- **Requiring a matric and a good pass in Maths and language** assisted in ensuring that the EAs were able to execute the roles and responsibilities they are entrusted with.
- **Safety screening:** The screening of the youth deployed to schools to ensure that children were not exposed to people with criminal pasts was also of crucial importance.
- **In school supervision and support:** The supervision of the work of EAs, as well as ongoing training, were found to be significant aspects in the deployment of EAs.

Secondly, the activities that the EAs undertook once placed in schools were important contributors to improving the quality of learning and teaching. These included:

- Providing administrative support to teachers;
- Classroom management; and
- Additional tutoring through facilitating various clubs.

EAs were also found to participate in the overall life of schools, including running extracurricular activities that are important for the holistic development of children; as well as being a link between the school and the community.

Thirdly, in terms of their overall contribution, the presence of EAs in class contributed to the reduction of teacher workload, stress and burnout, thereby contributing to enhanced teacher well-being and increased job satisfaction.

How does the use of EAs contribute to promoting the livelihoods of rural youths?

Approximately 900 youths benefitted from the time-bound jobs that were created during the three-year implementation period of the project. This contributed to improving the livelihoods of the participating youth and their families in several ways.

- **Better subsistence for EAs and their families:** The stipend enabled the EAs to pay for necessities and contribute to the upkeep of their families.
- **Access to better employment opportunities:** As a result of work experience gained, a number of EAs left for permanent (better) employment.
- **Access to further education:** Some EAs saved enough money to leave and study full time. About 38% of the EAs registered for further studies as a result of the project, in most cases utilising the stipend they received to register for qualifications of their choice and pay for other study-related expenses. Significantly, the majority of those pursuing their studies had registered to become primary school teachers.
- **Skilling:** EAs who were placed in the Agricultural high school gained various skills related to agriculture, including general principles of farming and agripreneurship skills.
- **Benefits for the participating schools and surrounding communities:** The Agricultural school also provided seedlings to partner primary schools and this improved implementation of food gardens. The school also sold produce to the community. The community thus has had access to fresh produce from the school for domestic consumption, contributing to improving food security for some of the households in the villages. In addition, the school also extended some of its services to community members by equipping them with basic agricultural skills, resulting in some of the community members becoming smallholder 'farmers' in their yards.

These findings contribute to a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of EAs; factors that contribute to their effective use; and how they contributed to improved



Sentiments Shared By EAs In Various Provinces



The project had a significant impact on youth involved. The youth themselves have been vocal about the benefits of the project as the following quotations reveal.

I was raised and bread in Mashoga Village in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. In my upbringing, I receive full support from both parents, who always encouraged me to study hard. They had wished that I studied further up to a tertiary level. However, a journey to success became more difficult when they both passed on, leaving me with a huge responsibility of raising my siblings. I matriculated at Mabizela High School in 2016, but I had to stay home for couple of years due to lack of financial support. The REAP brought changes in my life when I was recruited as an EA. As a result, I was able to enrol for BED with UNISA. I chose the Teaching Profession because it had always been my wish to work within the schooling environment. Therefore, the Programme exposed me to a practicality of the Teaching Profession at the primary school level. I am definitely sure that one day I will become a qualified teacher to assist learners in improving literacy and numeracy. I advise Government to consider extending this programme so

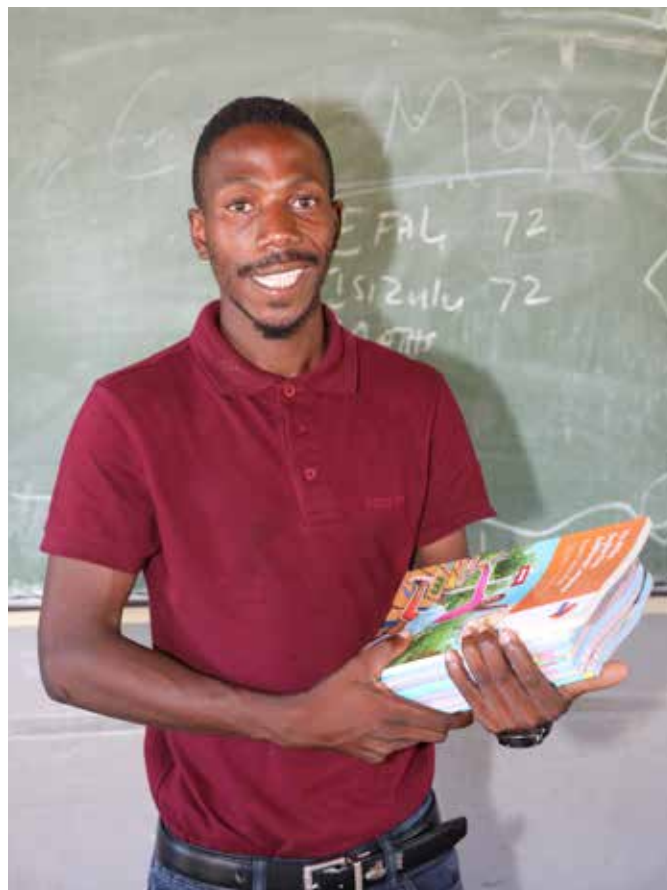
that it can reach out to as many young people as possible. My message to young South Africans out there is quite simple. Be patient, especially during the difficult times. Remember education is a key to success (Mr Senzosenkosi Dladla EA at Mashunka Primary).

Another EA in Limpopo had the following to say about the project:

I grew up in Lenokwe village and was raised by a single parent. I am the last of the seven (7) children in my family. After completing matric in 2015, I could not go to University because I did not have the money although I got a bachelor pass. I went to a TVET college but dropped out when my sister lost her job. I started working at my uncle's business until I joined the REAP. Since then, I never looked back as I was able to support myself and my family. I registered for Bed and use the money for photocopying and travelling to Giyani to submit my assignments (Solomon Maluleke, EA at Letseku Primary School, Limpopo).

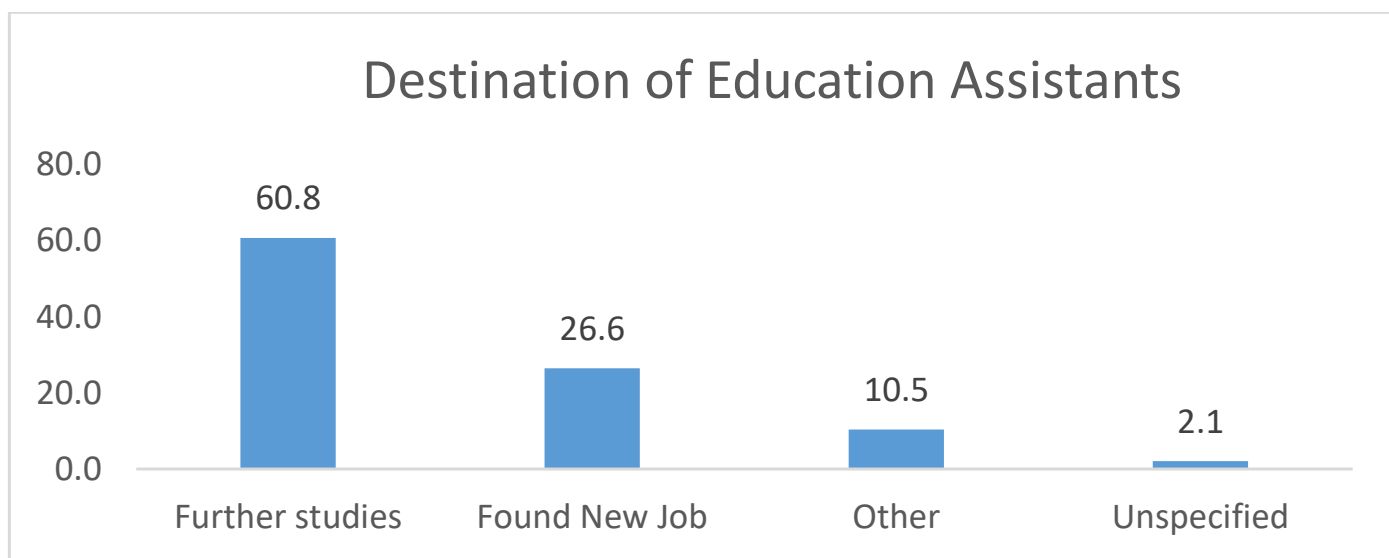
An EA from the Eastern Cape also highlighted the benefit of the project as follows:

I grew up in the OR Tambo District. Both my sister and I were raised by a single parent, our mother. I completed Grade 12 a while ago, but I couldn't further my studies due to lack of financial support. When my sister got a job, I attempt to enrol for a plumbing course at Bizana TVET College. But I had to drop out because my sister lost her job. I then worked as a domestic worker for few months until I was recruited as an EA. The REAP gave me strength to aim high in life. Through the REAP stipend, I supported my family and I am planning to use some of the money to fund my studies from this year onwards. I really enjoy working with children. Seemingly, I will be well suitable to work as a teacher (Ms Thembelihle Ndluzonke, Education Assistant at Lupapasi Primary School).



THE REAP INDICATORS

As part of the impact of the project on EAs, a significant proportion of EAs have gone for further studies or found employment



Most of the EAs were studying at various institutions as shown in the table below:

Table 1: No of EAs studying

District	Total No of EAs	No. of EAs who were studying	EAs studying as % of total EA for each district
Alfred Nzo	116	26	22.40%
OR Tambo	101	23	22.70%
Mopani	117	41	35.00%
Sekhukhune	114	59	51.70%
UMzinyathi	125	57	45.60%
Ilembe	124	56	40.10%
Total	697	262	37.50%

Project Coordinators behind the effective implementation of the REAP in Provinces

Mr Nkanyiso Langa, uMzinyathi District



I found the programme as a beacon of hope for me as an individual. After I completed my matric in 2012, I went to the University of KwaZulu-Natal to enrol for Bachelor of Commerce (Bcom Degree). I then continued with Honours in the fourth year. After completing Honours, I was then employed as an intern for 12 months. I then remained jobless until I joined the REAP as a coordinator. The REAP gave me a real start in life hence the stipend enabled me to earn a living and support my family financially. Through the REAP, I was exposed to holistic schooling context and acquired more knowledge in managing people. I further gained reporting skills, which is quite useful in performing project coordination duties. The biggest achievement for me since I joined the Programme should be the fact that I managed to further my studies beyond Honours Degree hence are currently busy with my Masters Degree in Commerce at the same University. It will be great if Government could sustain the Programme because many schools are benefiting a lot from the work done by the EAs. Majority of the teachers and school principals where I frequently monitored, they shared a lot of accolades about the EAs, saying that they assisted schools to concentrate more on the aspect of learning and teaching. The EAs assisted teachers in several duties including marking registers, filling and facilitating class activities where necessary.

Ms Nomvelo Maxwili, OR Tambo District



Being part of a project that aims to improve a black child education, to create job opportunities for youth, to encourage a black child that nothing is impossible has been a great experience/ journey.

The project deployed 6 Project Coordinators across three provinces (Eastern Cape, Limpopo, and KZN) I was amongst those who were selected. I was a fresher with no work experience, yet I was given a chance, an opportunity to work alongside a phenomenal team (REAP Team). I was assigned to be a Project Coordinator, the bridge between the EAs, Principals, and the Senior stakeholders/ REAP team. Through that position, I have learned a great deal about dealing with various personalities and how to handle different problems/ issues. I learned that keeping a cool head during a confrontation is a must and that arguing back with anyone in a professional setting doesn't solve anything. In the end, it's just a matter of keeping a clear mind and professional demeanor and helping people to the best of your ability despite your mood and the mood they might be in. I have also learned how to prioritize various tasks and multitask.

There were times when we would visit schools and seeing so much positive energy of individuals because of something you are a part of or rather because of the impact the project has on the receiver, rubs off also to you and you began to view the world in a positive way also. Your attitude changes and you start being grateful.

It is everyone's dream to be financially independent and being able to take care of yourself and your family. Being part of REAP helped me to accomplish that and I even learned to manage my finances. Through this project, I meet different people and I even made friends.



I completed BA Degree in development studies from the University of Venda. I also pursued BA Honours and Masters in Development Studies with the University of Western Cape. I am currently waiting for the final results of BA Honours in Public Management, Governance and Policing from the University of Johannesburg. Honestly speaking, I have achieved some of these qualifications due to the stipend I received from the REAP. The programme has been very instrumental in supporting me to study further. The REAP has changed my life drastically. I am now able to earn a living and support my family. There are few critical skills that I acquired through this programme. These include team work, ability to manage time and supervisory skills. I further managed to develop excellent communication and research skills. Wow! If I would have to talk about REAP and its impact in the lives of the South African Youth, I will end up producing a “novel”.

REAP made us to be more economically active, in the sense that some of us managed to pay for our tuition fees at varsity. I recommend that the REAP is extended, with couple of bursaries and scholarship considered for EAs to further their studies in Education. Furthermore, more workshops should be conducted to educate EAs about their duties and responsibilities to perform better. Moreover, project coordinators need to be allowed to hire Government cars, to conduct an effective monitoring of the EAs in schools.



The REAP has been very helpful for me as a coordinator. My life after Grade 12 was not really challenging hence I had finically support to further my studies. I only experienced financial challenges when I completed my studies because it took me long to secure a job. Ever since I was employed to serve as a REAP Coordinator, I was able to earn a living. The stipend I receive from the REAP monthly assist me to fund my brother’s studies and I manage to support my father financially because he has been unemployed for years. The project support schools in rural areas to excel in Mathematics and Language. In other words, the EAs spent quality time assisting learners with homework and class activities. I recommend that the REAP is continued to sustain the learning outcomes at the primary school level. Most of our EAs are currently enrolled with various institutions of higher learning. Therefore, it will unprecedented crisis if the programme is discontinued because they rely on their monthly stipend to fund their studies.



Ms Bathabile Mabaso, Ilembe District



At the beginning of the project we went to a project management course where I learned a lot about project management which helped me even on my personal life because I am now able to manage my own finance and manage my life as a whole because of the training I got from REAP.

I gained an experience in Education field because the project allowed us to work hand in hand with people who have different experience and people who are holding a higher position in the Department.

We used to have workshops where we learned about respect, good ethics and professional behaviour in a work place. we worked with different people who have different background as well so respect, humbleness, and good professional behaviour those are the key in the project to run smooth.

Mr Kagiso Makwana, Sekhukhune District



Being part of the REAP Project has inspired me a lot, to such an extent that I even became more passionate about the Teaching Profession. After Grade 12, I went to the University of Limpopo to study Communication Studies. I then went to Cape Town to do an internship as Communication Officer for the Parliament of South Africa. Things turned sower when my internship ended. I stayed several years without a job until I was recruited as the REAP Coordinator to date. REAP stabilised my financial status because with the stipend I received monthly I managed to take care of myself and my family. The REAP should be carried on because it assists school in improving learning and teaching.



Strong Focus on Agricultural Education

An agricultural high school in Limpopo was identified and supported with equipment and resources to stimulate local agriculture and enhance livelihoods. The intention was that this school would work with surrounding primary schools to encourage school-based food gardens, as well as sell the produce from the different enterprises, thereby enhancing the notion of a self-sufficient agricultural school model.

The research findings indicate that the Agricultural high school partnered with four primary schools in the surrounding villages to establish food gardens. EAs attached to the school visited the partner primary schools on an ongoing basis to assist them with planting vegetables and to ensure that they followed the basic principles of agriculture.

Further, the Agricultural High School has been selling surplus produce to members of the community, largely for domestic consumption, contributing to improving food security for some

of the households in the villages. In addition, the school has also extended some of its services to community members by equipping them with basic agricultural skills, resulting in some of the community members becoming smallholder 'farmers' in their yards.

The EAs attached to the school also highlighted important farming skills that they have developed since joining the project:

- Agricultural skills, by growing different vegetables in the garden.
- Marketing skills, by marketing eggs for sale to the community members.
- Teamwork skills, for example, are practiced when they work together as a group to prepare the eggs for sale.



Outstanding best practices inferred from the Limpopo Province

The implementation of the REAP in Limpopo provides a model for the possible replication of the REAP project, and a model for school-based teacher training. Director for Rural Education Directorate, Dr Phumzile Langa, added: “Being Implemented in 2 districts like in other provinces, the REAP saw the Limpopo province recruiting additional EAs over and above the 250 provided as part the project. The district hosted ongoing workshops as part of capacitating the EAs to be able to work in the Foundation Phase, with a particular focus on strengthening reading comprehension amongst learners. During the second year of implementation, the province provided more than 50 EAS with bursaries to register for a formal programme in the Foundation Phase teaching through the University of the North West. Additional bursaries were once again made available during 2021 school calendar, thereby increasing the number of youth registered for Foundation phase teaching programme at the various institutions of higher learning in South Africa”.

“Following the conclusion of the REAP in 2021, the Limpopo Province recruited youth as EAS under the Department of Public Work’s programme. This was intended to broaden the impact of the project in addressing issues of unemployment

in several communities. It is envisaged that upon graduation, these bursars would be absorbed as Foundation phase teachers in schools through entire province,” remarked Dr Langa.



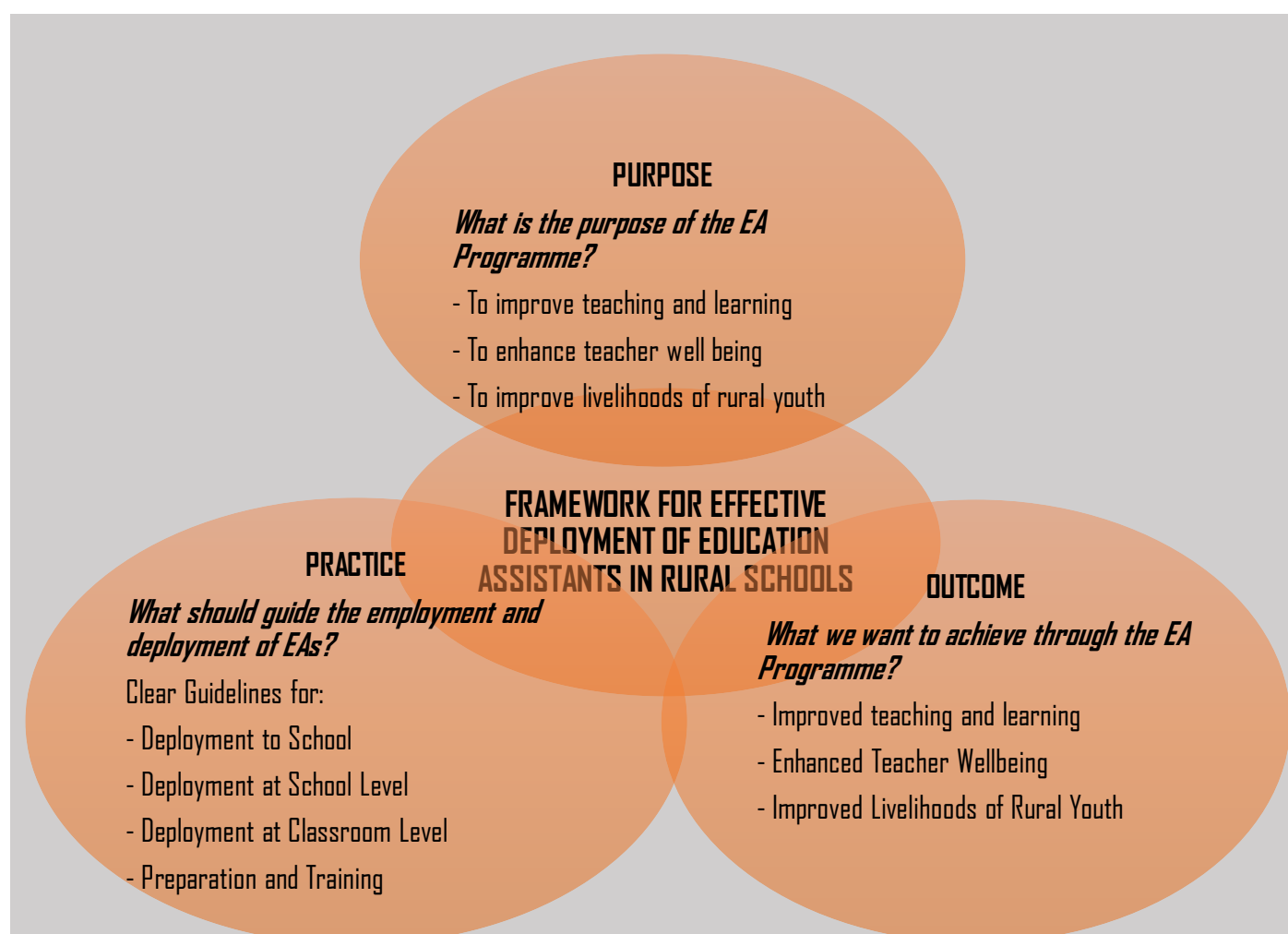


Towards A Framework For Effective Deployment Of EAs In Rural Schools

The following recommendations were highlighted.

- The guidelines regarding the deployment of EAs in schools should be sensitive to the contexts and circumstances of individual schools.
- Context-sensitive screening methods of EAs to be deployed to the schools should be undertaken, especially at the level of recruitment.
- Allocation of one official for the management and supervision of Education Assistants at school level.
- The guidelines for the activities of EAs should be carefully crafted, with sufficient flexibility for the education and experience levels of Education Assistant
- EAs should be given room for innovation within a scope of work.
- More strategies need to be examined for deploying EAs in a manner that maximises teacher well-being and reduce their workload, burnout and stress.
- Opportunities should be created for these youths to further their studies whilst they are working as Education Assistants.
- The DBE should collaborate with Higher Education Institutions to develop School-based teacher training courses and EAs can enrol for teacher qualifications.

REAP Framework Illustration



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NOTES

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