

Annual report launch speech by Godwin Khosa, CEO of JET Education Services

30 June 2011

Minister of Basic Education, the Honourable Angie Motshekga
Colleagues from the education sector in your various categories
Officials of the Department
Staff from Trusts and Foundations which have become very active in the education sector
CSI practitioners
University academics and
Representatives of Teacher Associations

Thank you for finding the time in your busy schedules to attend our AGM.

I am certain that the release of the Annual National Assessment (ANA) results by the Minister this week caused a further surge in the levels of anxiety within the collective gathered here today. That we are facing the challenge boldly and committing to do so in the future should be the silver lining in this dark cloud.

However, the reality is that the road ahead is not going to be an easy one to travel. It is certainly one that should not be travelled in isolation. It requires increased boldness in our actions, much deeper commitment, individually and collectively; openness to new ways of doing things together and individually; an increased measure of humility in terms of how we cooperate around this agenda; and importantly, a sense of urgency.

The most appropriate solutions to the challenge will be those that combine technical and social transformation interventions involving all four sectors of the economy: government, business, labour and the NGOs. Whether there is consensus or not within and among the sectors on how we are moving forward remains a question. Based on our 17 years' work in school improvement, I make an observation that it is not criticisms that we have been short of in the past years, but tangible proposals on how to move forward.

JET Education Services has elected for itself to focus on collaborating with key players in the four sectors in search for effective and sustainable solutions to the education challenges.

It also important to point out, though, that it isn't all doom and gloom. For example, following the many years of school improvement work by civil society, NGO's, and business in particular, government is starting to fund and manage large scale improvement projects that were traditionally funded and implemented from outside of government. The implementation of comprehensive literacy and numeracy programmes in the Western Cape and Gauteng provinces involving scores of schools over a number of years, and the establishment of the Maths and Science Training Institute in Limpopo which trains teachers for 100 days a year (initiatives that all have clear targets and evaluation agendas) is a signal that government is heeding the lessons of the past 20 years drawn from projects spearheaded by the NGO sector.

What is worrying, though, is that these positive developments are limited to a few provinces. Such a trend has the potential to perpetuate the two states-in-one phenomenon. The national government

has an obligation to intervene and replicate the good practices in the rest of the provinces and thereby bridge the growing gap.

We have learnt over the years that multi-year programmatic interventions increase the education sector's focus, instil a sense of urgency, and provide effective capacity building ground for officials. Needless to say, such programmes provide an avenue for win-win partnerships involving government, NGOs and higher education institutions.

These development ideals are enshrined in JET's strategic objectives and programmes. JET's strategic objectives are to-

- Demonstrate replicable systemic education change models that can be replicated by government
- Make meaningful contribution to the education knowledge base and find solutions to national education challenges
- Support government in the implementation of its programmes
- Run sustainable organisational operations

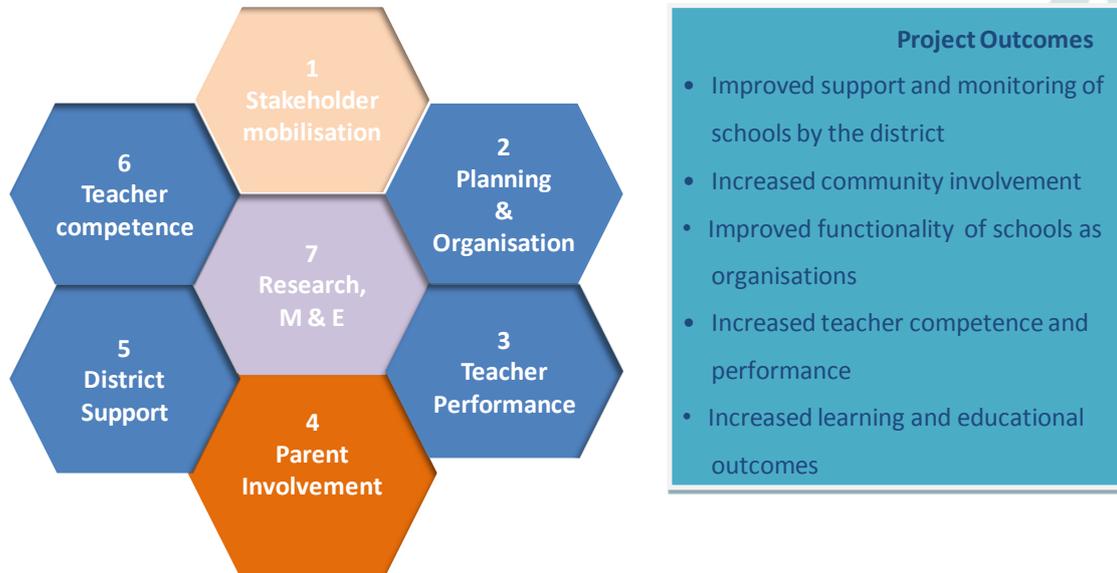
JET works towards these objectives through three divisions focusing on Education Research, Monitoring and Evaluation; School Improvement, and Youth and Community Development. As presented in detail in the annual report, the divisions have carried out a range of activities in line with these strategic objectives.

The Education Evaluation and Research Division (EERD) has, in the main, provided technical expertise to service providers, funders, education institutions, and government. It pioneered the testing of randomised control trials (RCTs) as a research method in education, completed a cohort panel study involving 216 schools from eight provinces, and demonstrated the feasibility of conducting teacher subject knowledge assessments which have now become part of the government's Integrated Strategy for Teacher Development. The unit continues to conduct learner assessments which are relevant for programme and project evaluations, and which serve as a useful basis for cross checking national assessment systems such as the ANAs and the National Systemic Evaluations. During this year, the unit will start a research project on Initial Teacher Education in partnership with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) with funding being raised from a number of funders.

The work of the Education Development Division (EDD), which in January this year was renamed the School Improvement Division, revolved around the implementation of JET's systemic improvement project in two circuits in the Northwest and Eastern Cape provinces respectively. (Refer to the diagram below). The projects are being implemented over a five year period with the involvement of the provincial departments of education, teacher unions and the funders. The Northwest project is part funded by the Murray and Roberts Group's Corporate Social Investment Unit, the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, and the JET Board. The Eastern Cape sister project is funded by the DG Murray Trust, the National Lotteries Board, and the JET Board. While an additional R26 million still needs to be raised towards the completion of both projects, the multi-funder model has made the funding burden considerably lighter on the individual funders. To make sure that the projects stay on course to achieve the set outcomes, they are evaluated by an external team annually. So far, these

projects have served as a very useful research laboratory for the benefit of the provincial and national government levels of the DBE, JET, the funders, and education community.

Systemic School improvement model



The Youth and Community Development Division (which last year was a sub-division of EDD before being established as a fully fledged division in January this year) ran three parallel programmes aimed at -

- Supporting the DHET in planning the Further Education and Training (FET) landscape and stabilising the sector
- Strengthening the FET college's functionality in order for them to meet the new output and quality challenges being set out by the DHET
- Contributing to an increased youth employability rate through increasing workplace access for FET learners, and establishing a livelihoods programme linked to FET colleges, particularly in rural contexts where there are no industries.

On the operations front, I am happy to present that the organisational restructuring of JET initiated in 2009 has been successfully implemented and the financial position of the organisation is stabilising following the changes in the funding environment. The funds available for projects have decreased as reported in the previous period from R60 million in 2007 to R34 million 2009 and R35 million in 2010. The drop is largely due to the decline in longer term grant funding. During 2010, JET invested R6 million of its own revenue to co-fund some of its development and research projects. Management is working towards increasing project funding to enable JET to again further build up

its reserves after reinvesting some in the education sector to help to improve the quality of education.

In conclusion, chairperson, I need to reiterate that we are convinced that the reforms of the past years, as led by government, are moving in the right direction. What we need to improve is the programming of the reforms and the fidelity with which the programmes are being implemented. We need more doses of focused, comprehensive, deep, and sustained interventions in order to see tangible improvements.

Light touch, compliance driven interventions do not and will not work and partnership agendas involving government, business, labour, NGOs and HEIs are an inevitable way to go. Honourable Minister, you can count on JET to play an active role in such a partnership, as we have done since the 90's.

A warning needs to be sounded, though, that all done well will amount to nothing without speed. Therefore it is imperative to inject a sense of urgency into the actions meant to improve the quality of education.

Lastly, I truly believe that "what comes of this moment will be determined not by whether we can sit together tonight, but whether we can work together tomorrow" (President Obama).