An Evaluation of an After-school Programme for High School Learners in Cape Town, South Africa

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy (Programme Evaluation)

Faculty of Commerce

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2016

COMPULSORY DECLARATION:

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works of other people has been attributed, cited and referenced.

Signature: Signed by candidate **Date: 08 February 2017**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Johann Louw, for his patience and his understanding of the challenges entailed in completing a thesis while engaged in full time work. Thank you also to my wife, for gracefully accepting all the weekends at the office and evenings behind the books.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Poor quality education and other barriers to learning faced by children from poor backgrounds represent a fundamental challenge to social mobility. In South Africa this is one of the key channels through which the socially engineered, racially based inequality of Apartheid continues to be reproduced, more than twenty years after the establishment of a fully inclusive democracy. The linkage between improved education outcomes and social justice therefore has both an individual and a societal aspect. Although poor quality schooling is a significant factor in explaining poor educational outcomes, there are a range of other challenges that children from poor backgrounds face, including a lack of access to resources such as home computers and the internet, as well as home and community environments that may not be conducive to learning due to overcrowding, noise or violence. Interventions during out-of-school time (OST) may attempt to address some of these challenges, thereby supporting positive educational outcomes and, ultimately, enhanced social mobility.

This study represents an evaluation of the EduCentre, an OST programme implemented in the suburb of Vrygrond near Cape Town, South Africa. The EduCentre is implemented by the Sozo Foundation, a local non-governmental organization (NGO) that implements a range of programmes in the Vrygrond community, but considers the EduCentre its flagship initiative. The programme aims to support high school youth by providing tutoring, psycho-social support and access to facilities such as computers and the internet.

A pre-experimental research design was employed, utilizing both primary and secondary data. Two cohorts, consisting of those programme participants who had joined the programme in June 2015 and February 2016, participated in a survey designed to gauge perceptions of participants' school environment, their home environment, and the programme's design and implementation. The survey also assessed the participants' social and emotional skills. Follow up interviews were subsequently conducted with ten participants, and the findings of these interviews were corroborated through interviews with programme staff and tutors.

The study sought to address three questions, namely, does the programme design reflect best practice insights from the literature on OST programmes?; have EduCentre participants' academic performance improved in the course of their participation in the programme?; and, have EduCentre participants' social and emotional skills improved in the course of their participation in the programme?

The research design does not attempt to ascribe causality in gauging observed outcomes. The limitations of the study must be taken into consideration in the interpretation of the results. However, the study does make a contribution to the evidence base for the programme. Results show that the programme design reflects many of the key best practice insights from the literature on OST programmes. Moreover, there is evidence that programme participants' academic performance has improved in the course of their participation in the programme, in some cases significantly. The evidence for an improvement in participants' social and emotional skills is less strong, though there is some indication that such changes have occurred. The study concludes with a series of recommendations relating both to programme design and monitoring practices to support more comprehensive future evaluations.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ECD	Early Childhood Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OST	Out of School Time
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

It is widely acknowledged that the quality of education in South Africa is poor. South African learners underperform on standardized assessments of education outcomes, particularly mathematics, science and literacy, even against other African countries (Van der Berg, 2007). In 2014 an assessment of 144 countries ranked South Africa last in terms of the quality of mathematics and science education (Bilbao-Osorio, Dutta, & Lanvin, 2014). These rankings reflect the prevalence of significant learning deficits among a large proportion of South African learners. Learning deficits are generally acquired very early in school, and tend to deteriorate over time. A recent study found that only 16% of Grade 3 students in South Africa are able to perform at a Grade 3 level in mathematics (Spaull & Kotze, 2015). The same study found that the poorest 60% of students are three years behind the wealthiest 20% of Grade 3 students, a gap which widens to four years by Grade 9. A series of studies commissioned by the President's Education Initiative, found that the "conceptual knowledge of students is well below that expected at the respective Grades. Furthermore, because students are infrequently required to engage with tasks at any but the most elementary cognitive level, the development of higher order skills is stunted" (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999, p. 231). Subsequent studies have corroborated this conclusion (Reeves, 2005; Schollar, 2008; Spaull & Kotze, 2015).

These results, together with a range of other issues such as violence in schools, high drop-out rates and high teenage pregnancy rates, contribute to the perception of a crisis in South African education (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). Paradoxically, South Africa invests significant public funds in education. Education accounted for almost 20% of total government expenditure, equivalent to 6.5% of gross domestic product (GDP), in 2013/14 (National Treasury of the Republic of South Africa, 2015). In 2016 a total of R204 billion in public spending was allocated to basic education alone (Gordhan, 2016). Research has shown that, in relation to GDP,

South Africa spends amongst the most on education in relation to its developing country peers, yet achieves amongst the very lowest educational outcomes, as illustrated in Figure 1.

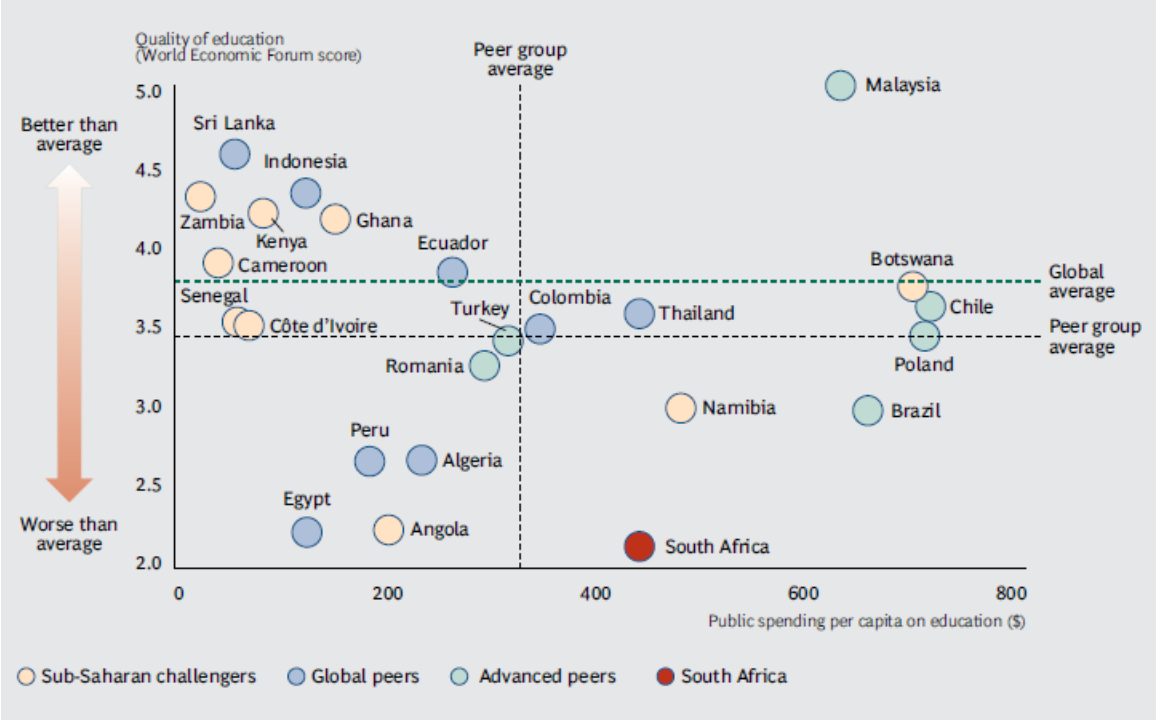


Figure 1. South Africa's educational outcomes against public investment in relation to its peers. (Sourced from Ikdal et al., 2015).

The causes underlying South Africa's poor educational outcomes are multifaceted, but undeniably have their roots in the country's history of discrimination and underinvestment in social and physical infrastructure within Black communities during (and preceding) the apartheid era (Fedderke, De Kadt, & Luiz, 2000). Following the end of apartheid the South African government has dramatically expanded investments in South Africa's poor and underserved communities; however, spatial and racial fault lines remain in evidence. South Africa's General Household Survey of 2014 revealed that only 48% of Black African

and Coloured people in the 22 -25 year age group had completed Grade 12, while the equivalent figures for Indian and White youth were 81% and 88% respectively (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2014). South African learners also have a very high drop-out rate: in 2014 only 49% of the total cohort that had started school twelve years previously wrote their final Grade 12 exams (with only 37% of the total cohort passing these exams). Unsurprisingly, it has been found that "falling behind at school is strongly correlated with socioeconomic status and school quality in South Africa" (Branson, Hofmeyr, & Lam, 2014, p. 107). The failure to address inequalities in education undermines opportunities for social mobility and thereby entrench existing patterns of inequality, as argued by Spaull (2015, pp. 8-9):

> *Despite 20 years of democratic rule, most Black children continue to receive a low-quality education, which condemns them to the underclass of South African society where poverty and unemployment are the norm. This substandard education does not develop their capabilities or expand their economic opportunities, but instead denies them dignified employment and undermines their own sense of self-worth.*

A further element of this poor education/poverty trap is the high level of exposure to violence experienced by learners in poor communities, often related to gang violence (Maphalala & Mabunda, 2014). Clarke (2012, p. 81) argues that a direct link can be drawn between the high level of physical violence in South Africa and high levels of "structural violence", which stems from "inequality, above all in the distribution of power". Poverty, unemployment and other socio-economic issues are therefore fundamental to the context of youth violence (Clarke, 2012). School-based violence, particularly where it is associated with gangsterism, contributes to high drop-out rates, reluctance to attend school, an increased risk of teenage pregnancy, community disintegration and academic underperformance (Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2014). It is widely acknowledged that gangsterism is the most prevalent in the Western Cape among South Africa's provinces, with gangsterism

activities concentrated in the urban areas of the greater Cape Town region. It has been estimated that there are 80,000 to 120,000 gang members operating in the greater Cape Town region, and 70% of crime in the Western Cape is gang-related (Owen & Greef, 2015). Gangsterism is particularly prevalent in poor communities and has been linked to the social dislocation brought about through apartheid era forced removals and issues such as deteriorating social structure and bonds, low economic status, inequality of opportunity and status frustration (Wood & Alleyne, 2010).

Civil society has long been active in supporting education in South Africa, particularly in response to racially discriminatory policies of "Bantu education" that saw significant underinvestment in education within Black communities during the apartheid era. The politicization of education policies in the anti-apartheid struggle and the effective establishment of a police state during the 1950-1980s undermined the ability of civil society to act directly within South Africa towards supporting education, and efforts were therefore generally focused on securing access for Black South Africans to school and tertiary education facilities in foreign countries (Mazibuko, 2000). Yet during the 1970s and 1980s local education NGOs emerged that "attempted to compensate for the many failures of the state in providing education for all South Africans" (Morrow & Chisholm, 2004, p. 317). Educational NGOs have maintained a strong presence in South Africa following the transition to democracy in the mid-1990s. Government has recognized the potential contribution of broader civil society, including education NGOs, to contribute to enhancing education outcomes in South Africa. The relationship between government and education NGOs, however, has at times been fractious: government has been welcoming of NGOs that position themselves essentially as implementing partners of government education policy, but have had a more difficult relationship with NGOs that seek to shape education policy or advocate for alternative education models (Morrow & Chisholm, 2004). Nevertheless, at the 2016 Education NGO Leadership Summit, South African Minister of Education Angie Motshekga called for civil society and government to work together to improve education in South Africa, noting that

the achievement of the education components of South Africa's National Development Plan will require "teamwork, partnerships and collaboration" (Motshekga, 2016, p. 1).

This dissertation presents an evaluation of the EduCentre programme, an after-school support programme targeted at high school youth. The EduCentre is one of several programmes implemented the Sozo Foundation. The Sozo Foundation is an NGO that operates in Vrygrond, a low-income community situated 25km south of Cape Town's central business district near the suburb of Muizenburg, as shown in Figure 2. The remainder of the chapter provides a programme description of the EduCentre, an outline of the programme theory, and a review of the literature on out-of-school time (OST) programmes. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the research questions that guide the study.

Programme Description

The Vrygrond community consists of about 40,000 – 50,000 residents utilizing both formal and informal housing. While Vrygrond is one of the oldest informal settlements in the greater Cape Town area, it has expanded significantly around the turn of the century with the development of 1 500 formal houses from 1999-2002 through a housing subsidy scheme. While expanding access to formal housing, this scheme also attracted large numbers of people who made use of informal housing, and competition for access to formal housing also contributed to conflict in the community (Davies, 2014). Similar to other low-income settlements in South Africa, the area is poorly supported with regards to basic public services relating to safety, sanitation, energy and water. As discussed above, such socio-economic challenges present important barriers to educational achievement and therefore social mobility. While there is little data on income levels, poverty levels are high. A survey conducted in 2011 found that 35% of residents had expenses of R500 per month (Jensen, Polatin, & Naidoo, 2011). The survey further established that 82% of

respondents considered violence to be the key problem in the community, with 75% stating that violence had remained the same or increased over the past year. Common forms of criminal activities highlighted by survey participants were housebreaking, robbery and domestic violence, while the primary causes of violence were seen to be alcoholism, drug abuse, unemployment and poverty (Jensen et al., 2011).

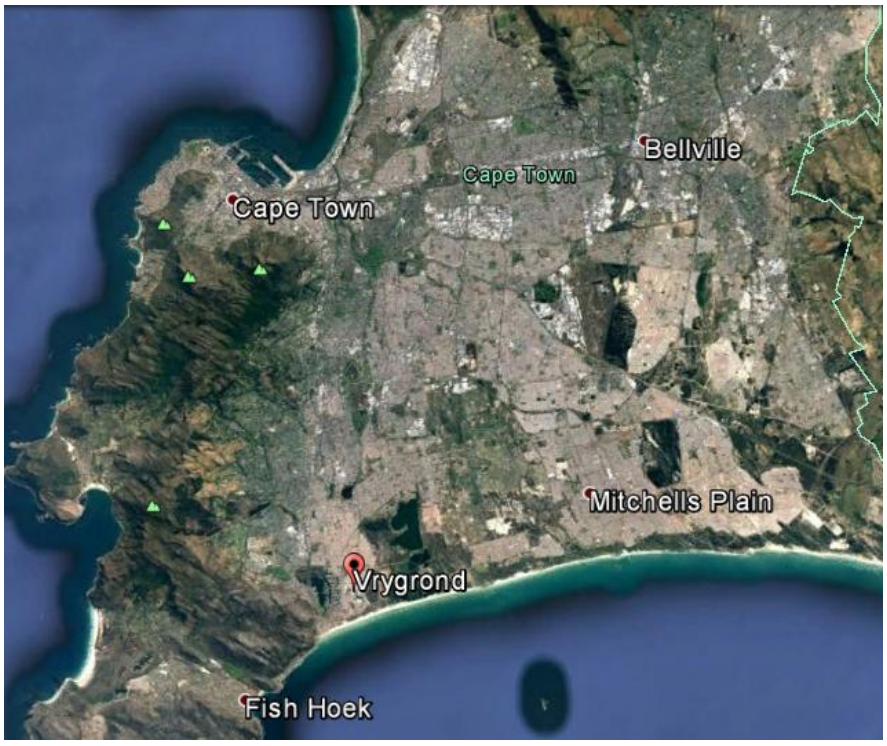


Figure 2. Vrygrond in relation to the City of Cape Town. Source: Google Earth. Map data: SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO. DigitalGlobe 2016, AfriGIS 2016.

One of the key challenges in the Vrygrond community is the lack of services targeted at young people, particularly teenagers and young adults. While several early childhood development (ECD) centres and a primary school have been established in the community in recent years, there is currently no high school in Vrygrond. Education outcomes for learners living in the Vrygrond community are

poor. Some of the nearby high schools attended by learners who live in Vrygrond include Crestway High School, Heathfield High School, Sibelius High School, Steenberg High School, Muizenberg High School, and Lavender Hill High School.

Underlying the numerous challenges faced in the Vrygrond community is poverty, which stems from high unemployment and a reliance on low income jobs. Common challenges for school children in such low-income settings include limited or no access to information technology resources and the internet, as well as the lack of a safe, quiet place to study in the context of gangsterism, poor security and crowded and poorly resourced home environments.

The Sozo Foundation was established in 2011 in an effort to address some of the challenges outlined above, particularly related to education. Initially operating out of the Vrygrond Community Library, the Sozo Foundation developed a series of programmes which currently includes the Sozo EduCentre, Sozo Design, Sozo Care, Sozo Eden and the Sozo Youth Cafe. The Foundation now has a staff complement of 39 people, three-quarters of which are drawn from the Vrygrond community (Sozo Foundation, 2016). In September 2015 the Sozo Foundation inaugurated a new centre – a two-storey youth and education facility situated in Vrygrond that was developed specifically to house the Foundation's offices and its core programmes, including the EduCentre.

The EduCentre is described as the Sozo Foundation's flagship initiative. Its mission is "to see every child finish high school successfully and to assist each learner to secure post schooling opportunities that will lead to a dignified job" (Sozo Foundation, 2016). In essence, the programme provides after-school tutoring and academic assistance for high school learners between the ages of 13-18 years in grades 8-12. More broadly, seven intervention areas can be identified, as illustrated in Figure 3. *Supplementary tutoring* is provided on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. These sessions are learner-driven with regards to focus areas, and may range from homework support to more specialised tutoring. *Core tutoring* is provided on Saturdays, where there is a particular focus on mathematics and science. Learners

request support on particular topics through the course of the week, which allows tutors to present a prepared and demand-driven programme during the core tutoring sessions. The new Sozo Centre has allowed for more focused interventions by providing four classrooms to support the tutoring services. Each of these four classrooms have been provided with eight computers, with relevant software, in order to provide support with regards to *information technology*. The EduCentre's *mentorship programme* plays a central role in delivering the programme's services and in developing relationships to support the development of programme participants. The EduCentre also provides *career inspiring initiatives*, which include excursions, short courses and career guidance. The EduCentre team includes two social workers to provide *psycho-social support* to participating learners. Finally, recognising the important role between adequate *nutrition* and academic performance, meals are provided to learners who participate in the programme.

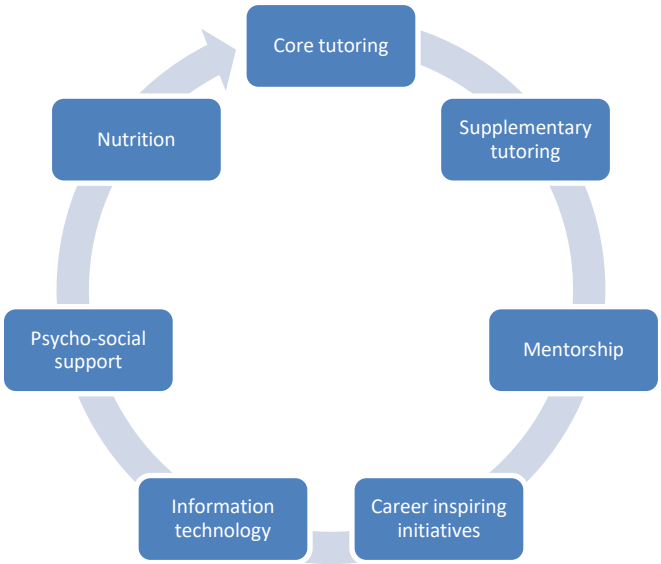


Figure 3. EduCentre Intervention Areas. Source: Author.

In addition to the core intervention areas outlined above, the EduCentre provides a series of ancillary interventions through short courses. These short courses are generally delivered on Monday and Wednesday afternoons, as well as

school holidays, so that the core tutoring sessions on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays are not interrupted.

Information technology support has been provided on an ad-hoc basis as required by learners. However, in 2016 the EduCentre partnered with Vrygrond Community Labs to deliver a course on computer literacy. Since 2015 the EduCentre has partnered with one of the Sozo Foundation's other programmes, the Sozo Design Project, to deliver a twelve-week course on graphic design. In 2015 seven learners participated in the course, which included training on basic design theory as well as design software such as Adobe Illustrator, InDesign and Photoshop.

Short courses are also delivered on life orientation and empowerment for young women through the *Dignity Campaign* (a similar programme is planned for launch in 2017 to be called *Courage for Boys*), learning skills (*Learn Effectively*), nutrition (*Live Life Well*), and psychosocial support for teenagers and their parents (*Strengthening Families*).

A recent development at the EduCentre has been the establishment of the Winter Hub, a winter school that was delivered for the first time in the 2015 June/July holidays. The two week programme focused on specialized tutoring in the mornings and life skills activities in the afternoons. Partnerships were established with the South African Police Service, the Western Cape Department of Community Safety, the Sisanda Foundation and Childline to provide a range of life skills support and training to participants.

EduCentre learners participate on a volunteer basis, however, all prospective candidates must secure parental consent and an interview with both the candidate and his/her parents or guardians is conducted before acceptance. Participating learners are required to attend a minimum of 75% of the support sessions and can be expelled from the programme if this requirement is not met. Students are provided the opportunity to make up for missed classes by attending sessions on Monday afternoons. EduCentre staff also emphasise that they engage with the

student and his/her parents when attendance drops so that students are not expelled for issues beyond their control.

The first intake of learners into the EduCentre programme in 2011 was twelve learners. The following year participation jumped to 40 learners, increasing steadily year on year to 57 learners in 2015. As the programme has grown it has also expanded and improved its services. While computers were available to learners in the Vrygrond Community Library, the new Sozo Foundation Centre has allowed for greater access to computers as well as relevant software. The move to the new building has also permitted the division of programme participants into separate classrooms, which has allowed for more focused and targeted support to learners. Grade 8 and 9 learners are supported as a single group, while grade 10, 11 and 12 learners are supported in separate classrooms.

As EduCentre participation has grown, so have the human resource requirements for successful programme delivery. The core team consists of a project manager, two social workers, two coordinators (for grades 8-9 and grades 10-12 respectively) and a team of grade mentors and volunteer tutors. Mentors support learners during the Supplementary Tutoring sessions on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and the Core Tutoring sessions on Saturday mornings together with volunteer tutors drawn primarily from nearby universities. The mentors remain with learners from year to year as they progress through high school and this relationship is considered central to developing an environment for effective learning and psycho-social support. The EduCentre also has a full time catering manager with a part-time assistant.

Funding for the EduCentre is drawn from a diverse range of sources, including trusts, corporate donors, foreign and local churches, local businesses and individuals. Many of the learners at the EduCentre are sponsored on a monthly basis through a donation programme called “TAG” (“Transform a Generation”). In 2016 the major sources of funding included South Africa’s National Lottery, charities based in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Australia (The Learning Trust, Care and Relief

for the Young, Stichting Projecten Zuid-Afrika, and HeartStyles respectively), as well as substantial funds secured through individual donations.

The construction of the new Sozo Foundation Centre was funded with an initial donation of over R1 million, which was gathered at the New Wine Festival in England. Other churches, businesses and organisations based locally and internatonally that contributed significantly to funding included Macneil, GMS Systems, Cisa, Connection Telecom, Comtel, ClayTile Jacks Paint, GSE Products, Lumber City/PG Bison, Old Mutual, Atlantic Forwarding, Community Chest Donations in Kind, H20 Somerset West, Delphis Eco, Vrygrond Community Lab (Sozo Foundation, 2015a).

Programme Theory

Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman (2004, p. 134), provide a simple definition of programme theory as an explicit or implicit explanation of "why the programme does what it does", while also providing "the rationale for expecting that doing so will achieve the desired results". The EduCentre's programme theory is outlined in Figure 5 below. The programme theory reflects an integrated 'whole child' approach (Miller, 2010), recognizing the importance of nutrition and psychosocial development in addition to academic support in contributing to the long-term outcome of improving the future earning potential of Vrygrond youth. The programme recognizes, however, that the primary requirement is for academic support, in the context of poorly-resourced high schools in adjoining suburbs and home environments that are often not conducive to study. The programme provides both resources (such as a quiet and safe place to study and access to information technology, the internet and printing facilities), as well as targeted support through the efforts of the programme team, which includes social workers, grade coordinators, a mentoring team and a tutoring team. These interventions aim to achieve a range of short term outcomes, including improved computer literacy,

increased concentration levels, improved learner attendance and academic results, the establishment of supportive partnerships between tutors and learners, engagement by learners and participation in decision-making, achieving effective responses to learners' psycho-social needs, increasing the 'future focus' of learners and their awareness of post-school opportunities and financing options, and the submission of relevant applications to take advantage of post-school opportunities and financing options. These short term outcomes lead to a set of four medium term outcomes, namely that learners successfully complete Grade 12 (or the equivalent), programme alumni return to support the programme as tutors, learners are actively engaged and self-aware, and learners access quality post schooling opportunities. Finally, the envisioned long term impact is that youth in Vrygrond access the labour market in a way that changes their current circumstances, and Vrygrond youth become leaders and positive change agents in their community.

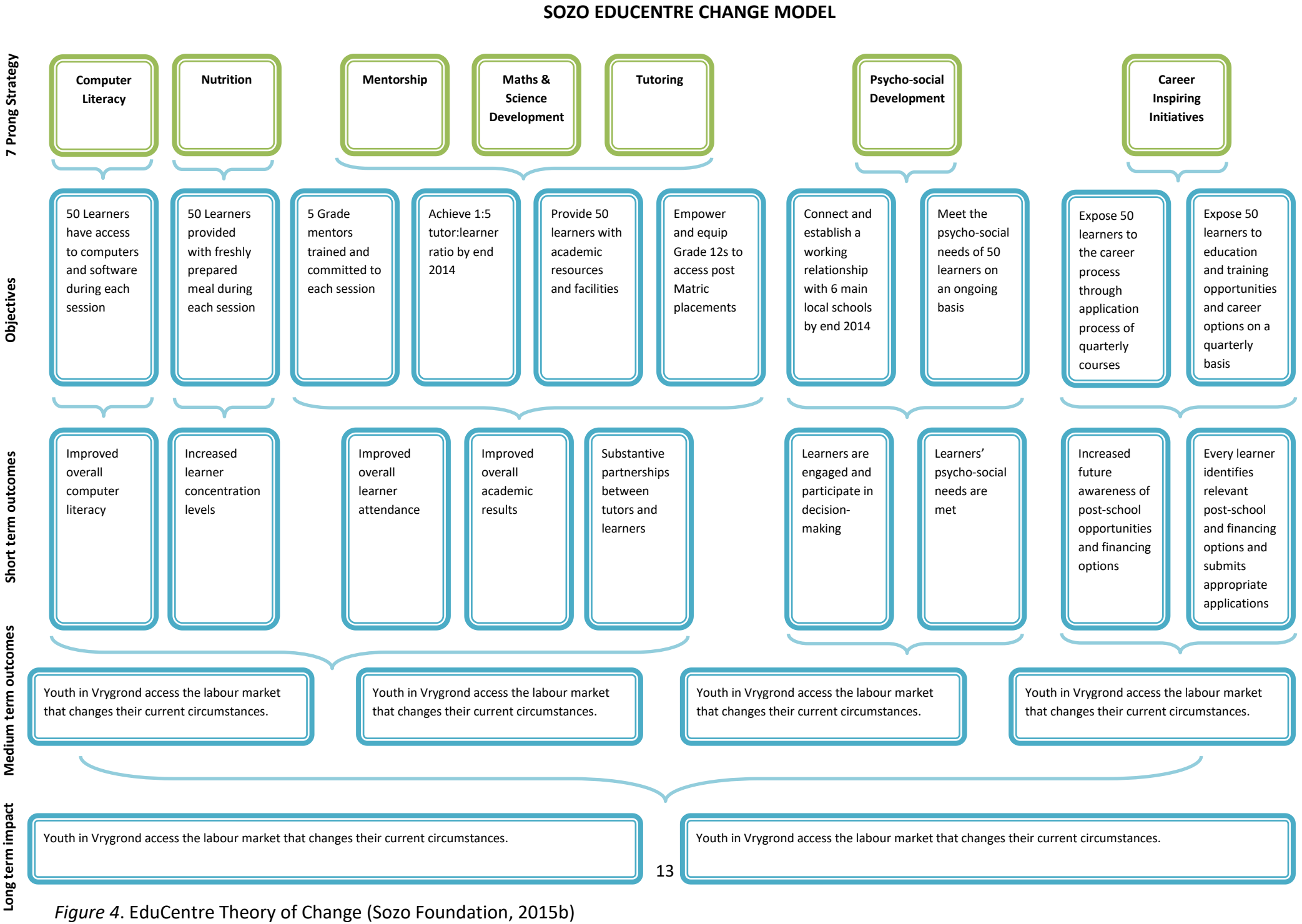


Figure 4. EduCentre Theory of Change (Sozo Foundation, 2015b)

Plausibility of Programme Theory

Programmes targeted at school-age youth during out-of-school time are increasingly prevalent and are considered to have a range of potential benefits. However, such programmes vary considerably in their setting, structure, duration and delivery methods. Moreover, important data that would support effective evaluation of these programmes, for example attendance levels, socio-economic indicators of participants and detailed programme descriptions, are often not available. Attempts at methodologically rigorous evaluations of OST programmes have therefore faced important challenges. Nevertheless, given the significant resources allocated to such programmes and the potential impacts on participants, it is imperative that funders, implementers and other stakeholders understand whether OST programmes are effective and, if so, what the key elements are which determine the success of these programmes.

In order to assess the plausibility of the Sozo EduCentre's programme theory, a literature review of the current state of knowledge on the effectiveness of OST programmes was conducted, with a particular emphasis on programmes targeted at high school youth in low income contexts.

The studies that form part of this review were identified through a search of academic peer-reviewed journal articles using the Google Scholar search engine. Key search terms were "after school", "out of school time" (OST), "high school", and "programmes/programs". The search results were refined through additional terms applied both individually and concurrently, including "mentoring", "meta-analysis", "low-income", "impact" and "evaluation". Results for "sport" were excluded as the EduCentre programme does not include a sport element. Results were also selected for relevance and date, with emphasis placed on publications produced from 2005-2016. Publications produced by education institutions, rather than academic peer reviewed journal articles, were also considered, for example, reports by the William T. Grant Foundation, Child Trends, and the Nellie Mae Education Foundation.

The great majority of OST programme evaluations, as well as meta-analyses of these evaluations, have been conducted in the United States of America. This reflects the prevalence of OST programmes in the United States of America, supported both by legislation (No Child Left Behind Act of 2002) and government funding support – the 21st Century Community Learning Centers programme provides funding exclusively to after-school programmes, with an allocation which averaged $1.9 billion annually from 2002-2007. In an effort to locate studies focused specifically on South Africa, results from the initial document search were refined with the term "South Africa". Although initial results were encouraging, results showed a high prevalence for studies of HIV & Aids education initiatives and other health-related programmes. After results for "HIV" were excluded, no relevant studies could be identified focusing on South Africa. However, the findings emerging from the extensive literature on OST programmes in the United States of America are relevant to the South African context, because the interventions are often directly comparable in design and address similar socio-economic challenges.

OST programmes may serve a number of objectives. Clarifying these objectives is crucial to inform any assessment of programme effectiveness. The context in which OST programmes first developed was an increase in maternal employment, a trend that first became apparent in developed economies during the 1940s but has accelerated significantly since the 1980s (Halpern, 2002). Maternal employment and single-parent households are also common in low income contexts (Gennetian, Lopoo, & London, 2008). An important objective of OST programmes may therefore be to avoid children spending significant time without adult supervision (the "latchkey child" phenomenon) and ensure that children are in a safe environment during times when parents are at work. Beyond the immediate issue of the child's safety, OST programmes may also be targeted at preventing maladaptive behaviour such as involvement in crime, drugs, gangsterism and violence. Some OST programmes may include elements of health education or emphasise physical activities. Finally, OST programmes may be focused to a greater or lesser extent on improving academic achievement. In most cases OST programmes will pursue a

number of the objectives outlined above, differing widely on the relative emphasis placed on these objectives.

All meta-analyses of OST programmes have highlighted the difficulty of assessing the effectiveness of such programmes in light of their diversity and the methodological shortcomings of a great number of published programme reviews. One of the first significant meta-analyses of OST programmes reviewed 38 such programmes and related evaluations, concluding that a number of promising models exist, many of which have "encouraging but methodologically flawed evidence of effectiveness" (Fashola, 1998, p. 55). However, the study did allow for the preliminary identification of key elements of successful OST programmes, namely that they require consistent structure, active community involvement, extensive training for staff and volunteers, and responsiveness to participants' needs and interests. For programmes focused particularly on academic achievement the author identified clear structure, a strong link to the school-day curriculum, well-qualified and well-trained staff, and opportunities for one-to-one tutoring as important factors, but conceded that these conclusions "depend more on inferences from other research than from well-designed studies of the after-school programmes themselves" (Fashola, 1998, p. 55).

Two important meta-analyses of OST programmes were published in 2006, both of which attempted to address some of the methodological challenges highlighted by Fashola (1998). The first study conducted a meta-analysis of 35 OST programme reviews, selecting studies on the basis of a set of rigorous criteria, including the use of control groups (Lauer et al., 2006). The study focused specifically on assessing the effectiveness of OST programmes in assisting at-risk students in reading and mathematics. Results suggested that OST programmes have positive effects on the achievement of at-risk students in reading and mathematics. Importantly, these programmes can be diverse; solely academic programmes did not outperform programmes that also included non-academic enrichment activities in producing positive academic outcomes. Positive outcomes were also found to be

more prevalent where one-on-one or small group instruction is provided (Lauer et al., 2006).

The second meta-analysis (Zief, Lauver, & Maynard, 2006) considered five studies on the effectiveness of OST programmes that combine recreation and/or youth development programming with academic support services. Again, only studies with well-implemented experimental designs were included. In contrast to the review by Lauer et al. (2006), this meta-analysis found that across a range of social, emotional and academic measures OST programmes did not show significant impacts. The authors are careful to note that their study faced a number of methodological constraints and that the evidence they present is not sufficient to make any policy or programming recommendations, however, they argue that the review suggests that initial optimism about programme impacts may be unfounded and would certainly require rigorous evaluation. This is not the only study that has found little or no impact by OST programmes, indeed, two large-scale evaluations of the 21st Century Community Learning Centres programme (Dynarski et al., 2004; James-Burdumy et al., 2005) could not establish any significant gains in academic achievement. It should be noted, however, that several studies have highlighted important methodological concerns related to these studies (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010; Kane, 2004).

A meta-analysis conducted by Durlak et al. (2010), based on 75 reports from 69 different programmes, provided insight into why some studies may suggest that OST programmes have limited impact. The study found that OST programmes were associated with significantly increased positive feelings and attitudes by participants about themselves and their schools, as well as positive social behaviours. Problem behaviours were also significantly reduced. There was also a significant improvement in students' performance on achievement tests and in their school grades. The authors emphasise, however, that not all OSP programmes were effective; only programmes that could be classified as SAFE (Sequenced, Active, Focused and Explicit) "yielded significant results on any outcomes" (Durlak et al., 2010, p. 302).

Studies such as those by Durlak et al. (2010) have shifted the line of enquiry in an important way; increasingly, researchers have gone from asking *whether* OST programmes work, to asking *what kind* of OST programmes work. A major review commissioned by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation (Miller, 2003) succinctly captures some of these elements: caring staff, activities that provide structure and challenge, choices, leadership opportunities for youth, and pro-social cooperative group activities. These elements are summarised as the "3 V's" – voice, vote and voluntary activities. The report further supports mixed programmes that include elements of non-academic enrichment, citing a study conducted in Taiwan (Su, 2001), which found that students who participated in strongly academic focused programmes had higher levels of anxiety and depression than those who participated in mixed programmes and, counter intuitively, these strongly academic focused programmes did not produce positive effects on children's academic achievement. Effective OST programmes should therefore not simply be approached as "more school", but rather present something qualitatively different. As Halpern (2000, p. 186) has argued:

> *...children need times and places in their lives where the adult agenda is modest, if not held at bay; where the emotional temperature is low, and acceptance is generous; where learning is self-directed, experiential, and structured to be enjoyable; where talents can be identified and nurtured; and where possible identities can be explored without risk of failure or ridicule.*

Such views place greater emphasis on the experience of the student while participating in OST programmes, rather than finding the right mix of programme activities. They also emphasize psycho-social benefits as opposed to an exclusive focus on academic improvement. Studies have suggested, for example, that programmes that promote high levels of engagement and flow among participants – their ability to combine "concentrated focus with positive emotions" – increase

social competence in areas such as goal setting, planning, conflict resolution and teamwork (Shernoff, 2010, p. 334).

A study conducted on the outcomes of "high-quality" OST programmes is revealing, not only in its assessment of outcomes, but also in how the elements of high-quality programmes were described (Vandell, 2007). Programmes selected showed consistent evidence of supportive relationships between staff and participants, as well as among participants themselves, while providing rich and varied academic support and non-academic enrichment activities. Activities were facilitated by programme implementers without imposing controls that may limit learning opportunities, and students were highly engaged with each other and the programme activities. Programme staff were trained and satisfied with their work environment, while programmes emphasised low youth-to-staff ratios and maintained strong connections with partner schools and parents (Vandell, 2007). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the evaluation of such high-quality programmes showed positive academic and social outcomes, as well as a reduction in problematic behaviours (Vandell, 2007). However, there is another element that may have contributed to the significant positive outcomes observed by Vandell (2007), and that is the fact that the review focused specifically on programmes targeted at low-income students. Research suggests that students who are low-income, or have low school attendance, limited English proficiency or poor test scores benefit most from OST programmes (Miller, 2003). These are the children that have greater need for the support provided by these programmes, and they are also unlikely to find this support elsewhere in the community. This is an encouraging finding, as it indicates that, in relation to OST programmes, "those who need the most, benefit the most" (Miller, 2003, p. 57).

The literature on OST programmes contains numerous studies with apparently contradictory results – a significant number of reviews and meta-analyses show little or no positive outcomes, but there are also numerous studies that do show positive outcomes. This review has provided some insight into how these

differences can be understood. Reviews of OST programmes face a number of constraints related to the diversity of OST programmes, the lack of information on the fidelity of programme implementation and the availability of data. Many studies that have shown limited or no impacts by OST programmes have been challenged on methodological grounds, but even if these are overlooked, it is too simplistic to ask whether OST programmes are effective or not without giving consideration to the numerous objectives that OST programmes may seek to achieve. Moreover, changes in these areas are not driven by OST programme participation alone. Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1992) emphasises that a student's development must be considered within the broader context of families, social institutions, society and culture. With regards to academic achievement, OST programmes can supplement school education, but will never be able to fully compensate for poor learning conditions at school. These issues must be kept in mind with regards to our expectations of what OST programmes can deliver.

Despite the constrains outlined above, there is a large and growing body of literature which supports the view that OST programmes can deliver positive outcomes, particularly for low-income students. Such positive outcomes, however, are far more likely to be observed with high quality programmes. "Quality", as it applies to OST programmes, can be understood in a number of ways, but common elements include programmes that focus on both academic and non-academic enrichment activities, that balance structure with choice and a sense of agency, that can both challenge and engage participants, and that include low youth-to-staff ratios. The environment in which programmes are delivered also matters a great deal, particularly the need to promote positive relationships among staff and participants as well as among participants themselves. Staff should be well trained, but it is equally important that they are caring and supportive. Ideally, there is a clear link between the programmes and schools (as an institution and in relation to the school curriculum) as well as linkages to the wider community, but an approach to OST programmes as simply "more school" is not conducive to positive outcomes.

In summary, we may state with confidence that OST programmes are effective, but only if they are high-quality programmes.

Evaluation Questions

The EduCentre was established in 2011 and currently has 80 learners participating in the programme. Given that the EduCentre programme is now in its sixth year of implementation, an evaluation is warranted. The need for an evaluation at this point in the programme's existence is further supported by the fact that enrolment has increased significantly in recent years, while donor support has commensurably grown. While donors have to date not required comprehensive reporting on impact, an evaluation, if it indeed shows evidence of good practice, strong implementation and an indication of positive change, would support continued engagement by current donors as well as supporting expanded fundraising activities. The current evaluation would also support the strengthening of existing monitoring and evaluation methods and procedures within the Sozo Foundation.

The evaluation questions are:

Does the programme design reflect best practice insights from the literature on OST programmes?

Have EduCentre participants' academic performance improved in the course of their participation in the programme?

Have EduCentre participants' social and emotional skills improved in the course of their participation in the programme?

CHAPTER 2: METHOD

This chapter presents an assessment of the evaluability of the EduCentre programme, followed by a description of the research design, including an overview of the approach to identifying participants for the study and the measures and procedure employed.

Evaluability

Evaluation practitioners have long been aware of the need to undertake evaluability assessments as a precursor to initiating an evaluation proper (Wholey, 1987). Too often, evaluators had embarked on evaluations of programmes only to find the evaluations difficult or impossible to complete. Numerous factors can undermine the successful completion of an evaluation, for example, poor data availability, a programme that is too recently established, has recently undergone fundamental change or is too poorly defined, and a lack of buy-in or irreconcilable divergence in stakeholder demands/expectations relating to the proposed evaluation. As evaluations may require a substantial commitment of financial and human resources, and may also make significant demands on the time of programme staff, participants and other relevant stakeholders, proceeding with an evaluation process without first determining whether a programme is suitable for such an evaluation risks great inefficiency (Meeres & Gerrard, 1995). Rossi et al. (2004) highlight three primary activities to be undertaken as part of an evaluability assessment, namely a detailed description of the programme model, an assessment of how well defined and evaluable that model is, and an assessment of stakeholder buy-in regarding the assessment as well as the likely use of the findings.

The Sozo EduCentre programme has been implemented since 2011. Although the programme has developed in significant ways during the intervening years, the essential structure of the programme as well as its targeted beneficiaries have remained relatively constant. Participation has escalated from just 12 learners in

2011 to 80 in 2016, but the programme may still fundamentally be described as an after-school support programme for high school learners from the Vrygrond area designed around mentorship, tutoring and ancillary support services. The programme is clearly defined in terms of eligibility, being focused exclusively on high school learners (grades 8 – 12) who live in Vrygrond. Although the seven core intervention areas are similarly clearly defined (cf. pp. 7-8), they are not highly structured, in that allowance is made for learner-driven support that is responsive to the priorities and needs of individual participants. So, for example, tutoring sessions on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons may involve homework support, exam preparation or any number of academic support activities. While the core tutoring sessions on Saturdays have a stronger focus on mathematics and science, these sessions are also structured to respond to issues that learners have raised during the week, or may be related to particular problematic areas in the curriculum. Likewise, while students have access to computers linked to the internet to assist them with completing school assignments and conducting research, structured information technology and software training has only recently been introduced.

Non-profit organizations, particularly relatively small operations such as the Sozo Foundation, frequently have poor data capturing and reporting practices. Relative to comparable programmes, the Sozo EduCentre's data availability and reporting is fairly good, although not excellent. At the programme level, EduCentre programme staff has captured data on the number of participants in each year of the programme's existence as well as records of any participants who may have dropped out and the reason for dropping out. Attendance records are also available. An important deficiency in the data is the lack of an adequate baseline. The application forms elicit some information of the learner and their parent/guardian, but many questions in the application form are general in nature. Reporting on academic achievement and progress reflect only whether participants have successfully passed their current grade or matriculated; this information is insufficient to assess whether participants are making progress through the course of their participation in the programme.

Despite the limitations outlined above, the EduCentre may be considered evaluable in the context of its current level of institutional development, the needs of the programme and buy-in from key stakeholders. Though an outcome evaluation is desirable, due to time and resource constraints the present study presents a more limited evaluation focused on identifying positive changes experienced by programme participants and an assessment of programme theory.

Research Design

There is an increasing emphasis on methodologically rigorous experimental and quasi-experimental designs in the literature on out-of-school-time programme evaluation (Lauer et al., 2006; Zief et al., 2006). However, it is recognized that pre-experimental designs can provide useful insights that may guide programme design and inform subsequent, more comprehensive programme evaluations (Slavin, 2002). The debate on the value of non- or pre-experimental designs in relation to experimental designs is reflected in the broader evaluation literature. Campbell and Stanley (2015) identify three primary types of pre-experimental designs, the one-shot case study, the one-group pretest-posttest design, and the static-group comparison.

The success case method is a form of case study evaluation (Rabie & Cloete, 2009). While Campbell and Stanley (2015, p.6) argue that one-shot case studies are of "almost no scientific value", the proponents of such approaches tend to emphasize the practical value of these methods for guiding decision-making (Brinkerhoff, 2003) and further argue that pre-experimental evaluation designs are still better than no evaluation at all, as long as the limitations of these approaches are explicitly acknowledged (Sacket & Mullen, 1993). The success case method positions itself between, on the one hand, comprehensive experimental or quasi-experimental designs, which may be impractical due to cost or time constraints or not suited to the immediate needs of programme stakeholders and, at the other extreme, "casual hearsay evidence and gut reactions," which are not sufficiently

rigorous to provide meaningful input that may guide improved programme implementation (Brinkerhoff, 2003, p.viii).

The research design of the present study has been informed by an assessment of the available resources and the needs of the programme. The research design is based on the Success Case Method (SCM) (Brinkerhoff, 2003) and is pre-experimental in that a counterfactual is not developed either through an experimental (randomly assigned) or quasi-experimental (matching) approach. While it is recognised that the research design does not allow the evaluation to support conclusions on causality in relation to programme impacts on participants, the design nevertheless does allow formative insights regarding observed changes with regard to key variables, namely, academic results and social and emotional skills, thereby contributing to the evidence base of the programme.

The evaluation focuses specifically on academic results, as this lies at the core of the EduCentre's focus, although social and emotional skills are also considered (cf. p.28). Ancillary services, such as nutrition support and computer skills training are not evaluated. While undoubtedly important in the context of a whole child approach, a detailed evaluation of the full set of intervention areas falls beyond the scope of this study. The focus of the study is also informed by the fact that the EduCentre model places particular emphasis on improving academic results as a pathway to enhanced future earning potential.

The results of the research design are intended both to serve as an initial assessment of changes undergone by participants, as well as providing methodological tools and insights to guide future, more comprehensive evaluations and baseline assessments. The SCM approach lends itself to contexts in which data and resources are limited, and where indicative, though not conclusive, insights are adequate.

Participants

The SCM relies on purposive sampling to identify high- and low success cases for more detailed investigation. The evaluation was focused on two cohorts who have recently enrolled in the programme (19 participants beginning in June 2015 and 12 participants beginning in February 2016). All thirty-one participants forming part of these two cohorts completed the survey, representing 39% of the total programme participants (*N* = 80).

Insights gained through assessment of programme participants were also compared to inputs by programme staff (mentors and tutors). This follows established practice in research and evaluation in education broadly and also in the more particular case of out-of-school-time programmes (Geiger & Britsch, 2003; Vandell, Reisner, & Pierce, 2007). The interviews with staff were aimed not at assessing the training needs of the staff (recommended for a more comprehensive evaluation), but rather to confirm and seek elaboration on elements of the programme design and implementation that emerged from the participant interviews.

Measures and procedure

The SCM consists of a five-step process leading from the establishment of the evaluation's goals to the dissemination of findings, as shown in Figure 5. In this standardised approach a survey is often conducted with the primary aim of identifying individuals at the extremes of performance outcomes (best and worst levels of improvement).

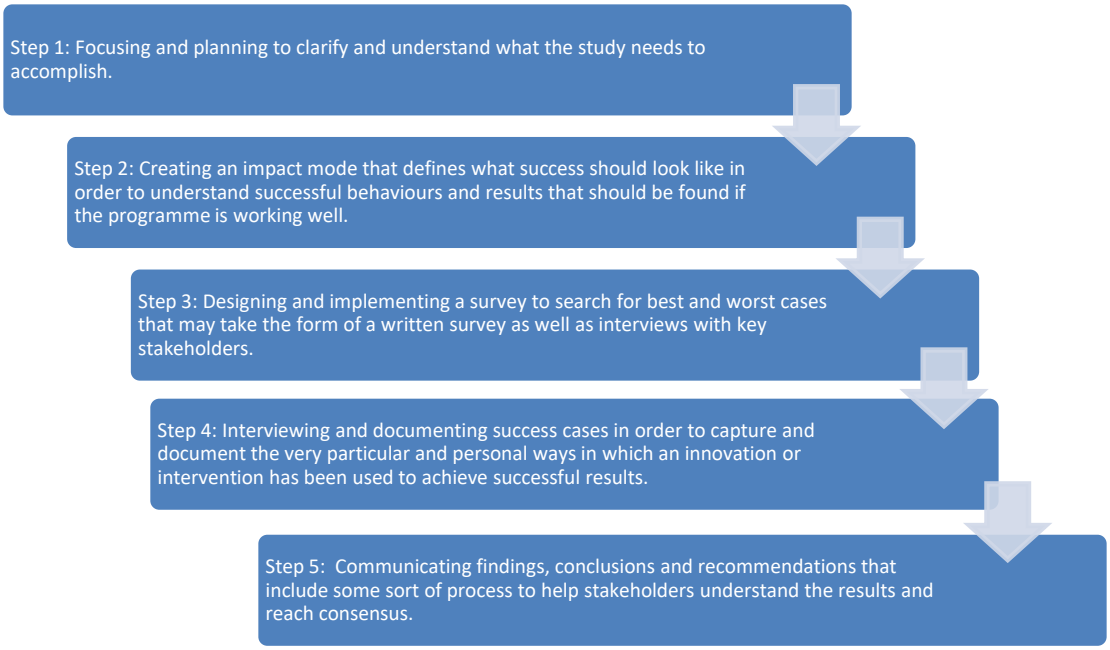


Figure 5. Success Case Method Steps. (Brinkerhoff, 2003, p. 29).

In the current study, however, the survey plays a more central role, in that the survey itself is intended to provide indicative results of change among programme participants (without making causal claims in relation to programme impact). In this regard, two survey instruments are employed in the development of the survey used in this study. The survey incorporated questions from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) Out-of-School Time Program Evaluation Student Participant Survey (Geiger & Britsch, 2006), as well as a survey instrument developed by Child Trends, a leading child development and education research centre based in the United States (Child Trends, 2014). The NWREL survey instrument has been developed based on the organization's extensive experience working with OST programmes, including the completion of several hundred evaluations at school, district, state and national levels in the United States. The NWREL survey instrument was adapted to provide an opportunity for students to reflect their own assessment of why their academic results have improved, remained constant or deteriorated.

The Child Trends Survey was incorporated in order to assess social and emotional skills. The inclusion of questions on social and emotional skills is based on the growing literature on the role of such skills in contributing to student success in school and beyond. Such skills include both intra-personal skills (such as the ability to regulate one's behaviour and persevere toward goals) and inter-personal skills (such as the ability to collaborate with others) (West, 2016). While intelligence as measured through standardised IQ tests is the most commonly used predictor of achievement, it has long been recognized that there are other factors that determine success, and that the link between academic achievement at school level and achievement in later life is tenuous at best (Cox, 1926; Latham & Pinder, 2005). Duckworth, Peterson, Mathews and Kelly (2007), for example, have explored the important role of grit in shaping long term achievement. The researchers define grit as "perseverance and passion for long-term goals" (Duckworth et al., 2007, p. 1087). Grit, however, is one component of a broader set of social and emotional learning (SEL). SEL has a range of positive attitudinal, behavioural and performance outcomes, and research supporting the effectiveness of SEL interventions has become increasingly rigorous over recent years (Zins & Elias, 2007). As interest in the role of social and emotional skills in achievement has grown, so has interest in the reliability and validity of survey instruments developed to assess such skills.

West (2014) confirmed that social and emotional skills related to important behavioural and academic outcomes can indeed be measured, but also found evidence of reference bias. Essentially, differing academic and disciplinary environments at schools mean that the students at these schools may set different levels of comparison in assessing their social and emotional skills. West (2014) therefore concludes that existing survey-based measures of social and emotional skills can be useful for making comparisons among students within the same educational environment, but that such instruments should not be used to measure the effectiveness of schools, teachers or interventions in developing social and emotional skills. West's insights are important for the current study, as learners at the Sozo EduCentre are drawn from a variety of schools in surrounding suburbs, with

differing academic and disciplinary environments. The focus of the current study with regard to social and emotional skills is therefore on establishing a baseline in order to inform subsequent assessments of individual students' progress with regard to social and emotional skills, rather than drawing comparisons between students. The survey is provided as Appendix A.

The key screening question in the survey used to select the success and non-success cases for subsequent interviews was "are you doing better in school since you started coming to the after-school programme?" Ideally, academic results from school reports would be used to select success and non-success cases. While the Sozo Foundation does request students to submit their academic results, these are not consistently made available. Due to the incomplete records, therefore, the study relied on a self-report assessment of academic progress with Likert Scale response options (No, not at all; Probably not; Probably; Yes, definitely; I don't know).

The screening question was used to select five success and five non-success cases, who were subsequently interviewed. These interviews are aimed at understanding the actual scope and value of the results claimed from the survey phase, as well as understanding the relative contribution of resources and assistance in achieving these results (Brinkerhoff, 2003).

Finally, follow up interviews were conducted with selected programme staff. This allowed for clarification and fact-checking of issues raised during the interviews with the success and non-success students, as well as providing insight into the development of the programme in the six years since its establishment.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the two key data gathering components of the study methodology, namely the screening survey and the interviews. The survey results are further divided into a first section which addressed responses on the survey participants' home and school environment, as well as their perceptions of the programme and its impact; the second component of the survey explored participants' social and emotional skills.

Following the completion of the survey, five success and five non-success cases were selected using the survey screening question related to self-reported assessment of academic progress since joining the programme. These success- and non-success cases were interviewed in order to explore issues around programme design and impact in more depth.

Survey Results – Home Environment, School Environment and Programme Design

The survey (*N* = 31) elicited responses on survey participants' home and school environment, their perceptions of the programme and its impact, as well as the participants' social and emotional skills. It will be recalled that the survey participants consisted of those programme participants who had started the programme in June 2015 (*N* = 19) and February 2016 (*N* = 12), based on the assumption that those participants who had joined the programme relatively recently would better be able to gauge any changes that may have occurred since joining the programme. These two cohorts together represent 39% of the total programme participants (*N* = 80).

In reporting the results of the first part of the survey relating to the participants' home and school environment and their perceptions of the programme and its impact, the two cohorts are treated as a single group. However, the results of the survey section addressing social and emotional skills are reported separately for the two cohorts, in order to explore whether participants who had spent a year in the programme (starting in June 2015) may have a higher level of social and

emotional skills than those who had spent just five months in the programme (starting February 2016). If programme participants who had spent longer in the programme had higher levels of social and emotional skills, this may be taken as a preliminary indication of potential programme impact on social and emotional skills. The results are reported below.

Regarding their home and school environment, the majority of respondents indicated that they like going to school (77%), and are comfortable talking to their teachers and other school staff (58%). The majority also reported that they study hard for tests (51%), get their homework done on time (52%) and rarely get into trouble at school (58%). Parents are also relatively engaged with participants regarding their schoolwork, with 23% respondents reporting that their parents talk to them about school work most times and 39% indicating that such discussion takes place almost always.

Table 1

School Environment and Study Practices

	No, hardly ever	Sometimes	Most times	Yes, almost always
Q1 - Do you like going to school?	3,23%	19,35%	48,39%	29,03%
Q2 - Do you study hard for tests?	3,23%	45,16%	32,26%	19,35%
Q3 - Are your classes interesting?	0,00%	51,61%	25,81%	22,58%
Q4 - Do you get in trouble at school?	58,06%	25,81%	12,90%	3,23%
Q5 - Do your parents talk to you about school or homework?	6,45%	32,26%	22,58%	38,71%
Q6 - Do you feel comfortable talking to teachers or other school staff?	9,68%	32,26%	22,58%	35,48%
Q7 - Do you get your homework done on time?	3,23%	45,16%	38,71%	12,90%

Regarding perceptions of the after-school programme, the majority of respondents report that they feel safe at the after-school programme (100%), feel comfortable talking to programme staff (51%), feel that they have friends at the programme (97%), and enjoy their time at the programme (90%).

Programme staff are perceived as helpful, with 83% of respondents indicating that programme staff assist them with homework most times or almost always, and 77% indicating that programme staff take time to assist learners or talk with them when they need it.

Respondents were asked a set of questions relating to the design of the programme. The largest group of respondents felt that the current three-day structure should be retained. Most also felt that the current structure provided sufficient quiet time to complete homework during the programme (61%). Almost three-quarters of respondents indicated that they would like more time for activities, other than homework, in the after-school programme (74%).

Table 2

Programme Design: Sessions Per Week

	Once a week	2 days per week	3 days per week	4 days per week	Every day
Q9 - How many days each week would you like to attend the after-school programme?	0,00%	19,35%	45,16%	19,35%	16,13%

In response to questions on perceived programme outcomes, 88% of respondents reported that they feel happier or less stressed since attending the after-school programme. The majority of respondents (58%) reported that they are definitely doing better in school since starting the programme, while a further 35% indicated that this was probably the case.

Table 3

Perceptions of the Programme

	No, hardly ever	Sometimes	Most times	Yes, almost always
Q8 - Do you enjoy the after-school programme?	3,23%	6,45%	29,03%	61,29%
Q10 - Do you feel safe in the after-school programme?	0,00%	0,00%	12,90%	87,10%
Q11 - Do after-school staff help you with your homework?	0,00%	16,13%	35,48%	48,39%

Survey Results – Social and Emotional Skills

The results of the social and emotional skills section of the survey are presented in Figure 6. This graph presents the combined results for the two cohorts; differences in the results of the two cohorts will be explored below. The combined results show high levels of academic self-efficacy, persistence and mastery orientation. Results for self-control showed that almost half of respondents had a moderate level of self-control.

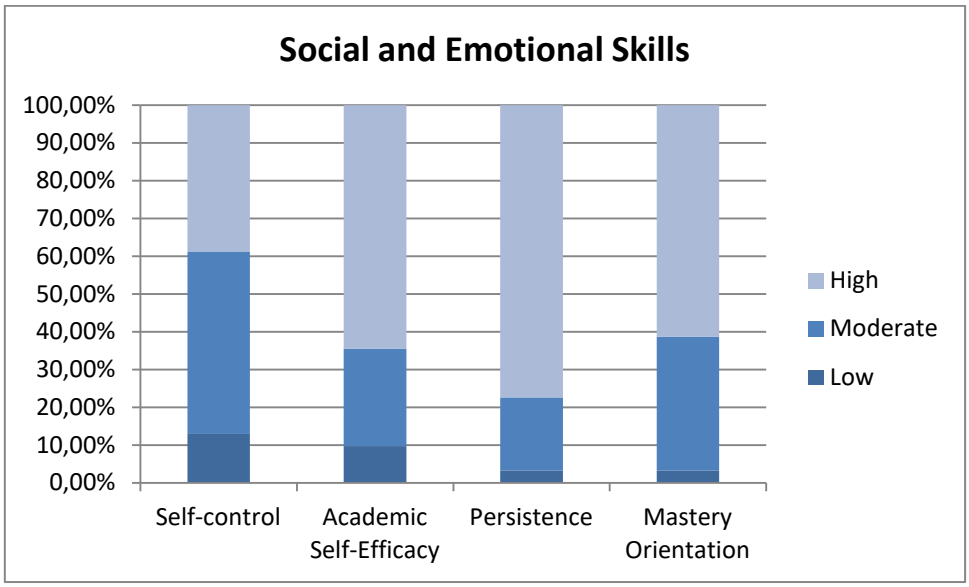
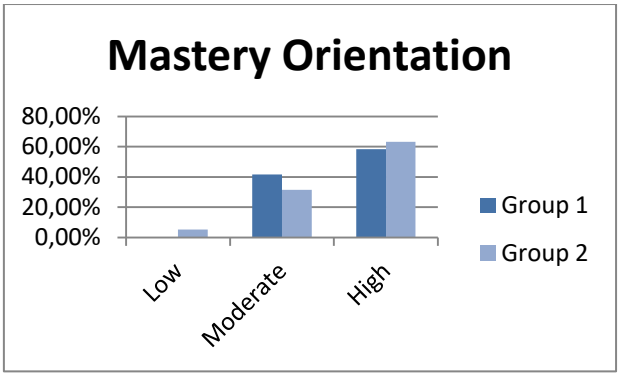
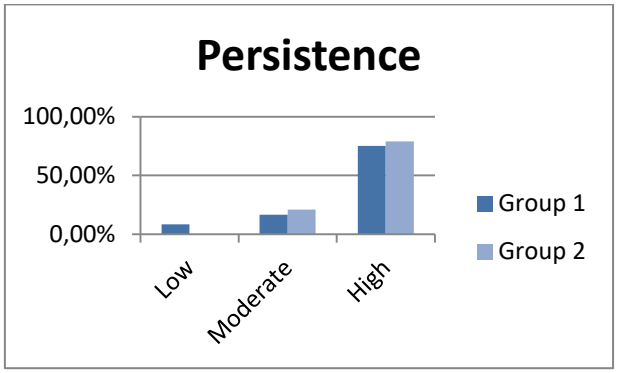


Figure 6. Self-control, Academic Self-efficacy, Persistence and Mastery Orientation for All Survey Participants

A comparison of the first cohort (those who joined the programme in June 2015, *N* = 12) and the second cohort (joining in January 2016, *N* = 19) is presented in Figure 7. It would be expected that levels of self-control, academic self-efficacy, persistence and mastery orientation would be higher for the first cohort, as this group has had a longer exposure to the programme. As the graphs show, there is an indication that this may be the case for self-control and mastery orientation, but not for academic self-efficacy and persistence. Given the small sample size, however, these results should be treated with caution. Tracking social and emotional skills of individual programme participants over time would provide a clearer and more meaningful indication of programme impact in these areas, however, such an approach falls outside the scope of the current study.





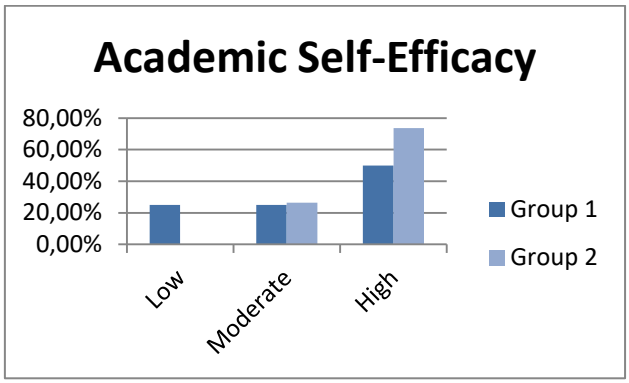


Figure 7. Self-Control, Mastery Orientation, Persistence and Academic Self-Efficacy of Two Participant Cohorts

Interview Results

Interviews with five success and five non-success cases allowed for a more detailed exploration of learners' perceptions of the programme's functioning and impact. Given the emphasis of the EduCentre programme on supporting improved academic results, the survey question asking respondents to indicate whether they were doing better in school since they started attending the after-school programme was employed as a screening question to identify success- and non-success cases. It is important to note that no respondents indicated that their school results had not improved at all since attending the programme, and only one respondent indicated that his/her results had "probably not" improved. This meant that the remaining four non-success case studies were selected from those respondents who had indicated that they were "probably" doing better at school since they started attending the programme. This is an important limitation of the current study, as it did not allow for effective comparison between success and non-success cases, with the result that the SCM approach could not be exploited to its full potential.

Analysis of the interview results showed strong parallels in the issues raised by both success and non-success cases, an intuitive outcome as the "non-success" cases mostly had to be drawn from participants who had indicated that they were "probably" doing better at school since starting the programme, and were therefore not non-success cases in the proper sense. For this reason, the analysis focuses on identifying common themes that emerged from the interview group as a whole.

An important line of enquiry was the question of which elements of the programme interviewees found most useful in supporting positive outcomes. Responses to this question may have implications for programme design and emphasis. The most common themes raised were the provision of direct academic support through the availability of tutors and the availability of computers with internet access. Further enquiries highlighted that it was both the availability of the computers and internet access, as well as training and support in the use of computers and online research, which was valued by interviewees. A number of

interviewees highlighted the constraints they face through limited access to computers and the internet in their home environment and even in some schools. Learners pointed out that completing online research for assignments at internet cafes was expensive and logistically problematic. Simply the ability to type and print assignments, rather than submitting handwritten assignments, was considered an important benefit ("*My tasks are handed in on time, and they are neat. I don't have money for internet cafes")*.

The value of support by tutors was highlighted by almost all interviewees. A number of interviewees, however, raised concerns about the availability of tutors for specific subjects, particularly accounting and economics.

> *"They need more tutors, especially for the higher grades. There are too few tutors to help with everyone."*
> *"There are not enough tutors, especially for accounting and economics."*
> *"The only problem is that they don't always have a tutor to help with a particular subject, like economics."*

There was also some indication that interviewees benefited from the environment and structure provided by the programme to support learning and the completion of school assignments. This benefit is particularly important given that families in Vrygrond tend to be large, with an average family size of five (Jensen et al., 2011). Furthermore, formal residential plots include an average of three households (which may take the form of shared lodgings or backyard shacks and makeshift cottages), while informal structures are built in close proximity to each other, contributing to overcrowding (Jensen et al., 2011). An interview noted, for example, that *"at home everyone is running around, but here [at the EduCentre] it is quiet and peaceful",* while a second interviewee highlighted that *"there's too much noise at home...we live in a noisy neighbourhood and it's hard to concentrate".*

A number of interviewees indicated that the short courses and workshops provided through the EduCentre were highly valued. This included both courses

aimed at academic skills (*Learn Effectively* workshops and computer courses), as well as courses aimed at social and emotional skills (*Dignity* and *Strengthening Families*).

In addition to difficult home environments, interviewees also noted that school environment presented challenges. It has already been noted that learners at the EduCentre attend a range of high schools in adjoining suburbs, with differing pedagogical and social challenges. An interviewee noted, for example, that there were no functioning computers accessible to learners at his school. Violence, some of which is gang-related, also contributed to challenges for learning in certain school environments.

> *"There are a lot of fights at school. Then teachers have to go out to stop the fights and we don't get our lessons."*
> *"At school the kids are disruptive. The teachers can't control the kids."*
> *"I live in Lavender Hill; when they are shooting there everyone is very concerned. The last time was while we were writing exams, so we had to go to school even though they were shooting."*
> *"School is crazy mad – they shoot a lot where I live."*

When prompted to discuss their views of the programme's impact, most interviewees focused on academic results. In this respect, most interviewees, including the "non-success" cases, noted at least some improvement in academic results (*"Last year I was one of the top twenty in my grade – nothing like that had happened before."; "My marks improved a lot; I'm now consistently in the top five").* Even the single respondent who had indicated that her school results had probably not improved since joining the programme later clarified that there had been some improvement (*"I am doing better in school but the only problem I have is that I don't listen in my accounting class; I don't find it interesting anymore and I don't do any accounting homework"*).

While most interviewees focused on academic outcomes, there was also some reference to mediating beneficial outcomes such as social and learning skills

(*Before, I didn't have a way of managing my time. I wasn't very self-disciplined; that has changed")*.

It has been noted that 45% of the survey respondents indicated that the current three-day structure should be retained, while 36% suggested increasing the programme sessions to four days per week or every day. However, a number of interviewees indicated that the three-day structure presented significant challenges, despite the fact that Monday sessions have been instituted as a "catch-up" opportunity. It is apparent that many programme participants face significant demands on their after-school time, not only for sport and social activities, but also domestic and cultural demands.

> *"My mom wanted to take me out because we are looking after our three-year old nephew and I have to take care for him."*
> *"Saturday attendance is difficult because that's when we have church activities. I'm not at home all week, so Saturdays are our cleaning day. My mom calls Sozo a 'second school'. I'm hardly ever at home."*
> *"Sport is a problem, because most matches are on Saturdays. I ended up stopping netball."*
> *"My friend dropped out because of the Saturday classes...it took too much time".*

Finally, interviewees were asked whether they had any suggestions related to the design or implementation of the EduCentre progamme. Suggestions focused primarily on expanding existing facilities (to accommodate more learners and to separate the combined class for grades eight and nine into separate classes) and securing more computers. A number of respondents suggested that more tutors are secured, particularly for subjects such as economics and accounting. A number of interviewees also indicated that they would like to see the inclusion of more cultural activities such as dance, drama or music in the EduCentre programme.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

This chapter considers the evaluation of the programme in light of the three evaluation questions, namely: Does the programme design reflect best practice insights from the literature on OST programmes? Have EduCentre participants' academic performance improved in the course of their participation in the programme? Have EduCentre participants' social and emotional skills improved in the course of their participation in the programme?

Testing Programme Assumptions

Rossi et al. (2004) highlight the need for programme theory to be based on a detailed understanding of the social context and needs which the programme is attempting to address. The authors caution that "a programme theory that does not relate in an appropriate manner to the actual nature and circumstances of the social conditions at issue will result in an ineffective programme no matter how well the programme is implemented" (Rossi et al., 2004, p. 153). In this regard, the poor outcomes achieved by South Africa's education system generally, and specifically the underperformance of Black learners in the context of the legacy impacts of South Africa's past racially discriminatory policies, has been well documented (Branson et al., 2014; Spaull & Kotze, 2015). Spaul (2015) has highlighted the implications of uneven education standards for poor, primarily Black communities in South Africa in undermining opportunities for social mobility.

Furthermore, there is evidence that violence, both within the broader community and within schools, contributes towards poor educational achievement (Clarke, 2012; Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2014). While heeding Poets' (2015) admonition that conceiving of informal settlements as "spaces of crime" may veil broader socio-political realities and prejudices, the high level of crime within Cape Town's informal settlements is well documented (Achmat, 2014). Furthermore, as emphasised by the United Nations Human Settlement Programme, residents of informal settlements are particularly vulnerable to crime and violence given their

exclusion from the city's opportunities and the physical, political and economic marginalisation which they face (United Nations, 2007).

Studies of the Vrygrond area have documented many of the socio-economic challenges confronted by residents of informal settlements, including high levels of crime, poverty, and a lack of access to municipal services (Davies, 2014; Dinan, McCall, & Gibson, 2004; Jensen et al., 2011). While the current evaluation did not include a detailed needs assessment, comments provided through the interview process support the Sozo Foundation's assertion that crime, a lack of service provision and the wider socio-economic conditions within Vrygrond present significant barriers to educational achievement. This is reflected in references made by programme participants to violence both within schools and the direct environment where learners live. The challenge of studying in a home environment that is often noisy and crowded was also noted. The barriers to educational achievement faced by learners living in Vrygrond are not limited to the environment in which learners receive education or are expected to complete homework and study – it also relates to access to technology and other learning tools. Learners noted that some schools had inadequate or no school computers and internet access. When not at school, in the absence of the facilities provided through the EduCentre, most learners would have had to rely on internet cafes and other facilities to do research or print assignments, with associated cost and logistical barriers.

It has been noted that OST programmes may seek to achieve a number of objectives, and that clarifying these objectives is crucial to inform any assessment of programme effectiveness (Miller, 2001). OST programmes, for example, may prioritize the direct benefits of providing a safe environment for children who would otherwise be unsupervised while their parents are away at work, with relatively little focus on facilitating positive behavioural, educational or psycho-social outcomes. Alternatively OST programmes may be focused to a greater or lesser extent on addressing maladaptive behaviour, providing health education, achieving social

and/or physical developmental outcomes through sport, or supporting enhanced educational achievement.

The Sozo Foundation's approach has been to focus on educational achievement as a key factor in shaping social mobility and, ultimately, an improvement in life circumstances. This is encapsulated in the EduCentre's mission statement, "to see every child finish high school successfully and to assist each learner to cure post-schooling opportunities that will lead to a dignified job," (Sozo Foundation, 2016) as well as the programme logic model's envisioned long term impact, namely that youth in Vrygrond access the labour market such that their current circumstances change, and that Vrygrond youth become leaders and positive change agents in their community.

However, the academic focus of the EduCentre is not so narrow that the programme is simply approached as "more school" (cf. p.20), a method that the literature on OST programmes suggests is ineffective (Halpern, 2000). The EduCentre's programme design, developed around seven core intervention areas (core tutoring; supplementary tutoring; mentorship; career-inspiring initiatives; information technology; psycho-social support; and nutrition), combined with an approach that allows for learners to shape their activities, corresponds well to the existing literature on key elements of successful OST programmes. Whether defined as SAFE (Sequenced, Active, Focused and Explicit) (Durlak et al., 2010), or the three V's (voice, vote and voluntary activities) (Miller, 2003), an essential element is that OST programmes, even where there is a strong focus on academic outcomes, seek to strike a balance between providing structure and allowing learners to express their own interests and priorities, so that learning is "self-directed, experiential, and structured to be enjoyable" (Halpern, 2000, p.186). This sense of agency was remarked upon by some interviewees ("*The fact that we can decide what we want to focus on makes a big difference"; "...especially on Tuesdays and Thursdays we do whatever is important for us"*).

The question of dosage in relation to attendance requirements and programme structure is an issue that has received significant consideration in the design of the EduCentre programme. The literature on OST is clear that "reaching some minimum threshold of tutoring hours appears to be critical to producing measureable effects on students' achievement" (Good et al., 2014, p.6). Conversely, students face a range of demands on their time during out-of-school hours, relating not only to cultural, social and physical development (e.g. sport activities), but also responsibilities in the home environment, including assisting in cleaning, meal preparation and minding younger siblings. Research has shown that South Africans of school-going age are engaged in a range of activities that may extend from participation in formal economic activities to domestic chores (Clacherty, 2002). Such demands on the time of school-age youth are greater for Black youth, likely a reflection of the racial fault lines in socio-economic status still in evidence in South Africa. For example, the 2010 Survey of Activities of Young People found that 83.9% of Black and 75.6% of Coloured South African children aged 7 – 17 years were involved in household chores, whereas the corresponding figure for White children in this age group was 45.6% (Statistics South Africa, 2010).

The interviews conducted as part of this study revealed that EduCentre participants face a range of demands on their time during out-of-school hours, as noted in the results section. Furthermore, participants referred to learners who had either decided against joining the programme or dropped out of the programme due to the time demands. Worryingly for a programme that attempts to pursue a whole child approach, at least one of the interviewees noted that she had stopped participating in organized sport (netball) due to the time demands of the EduCentre programme (cf. p.39). Despite the frequent references during interviews to the difficulty of meeting the time demands of the programme, it should be noted that only 19% of respondents indicated that they would prefer the programme to be delivered less than three days per week, while the largest group (45%) indicated that the current three-day structure should be retained, and 36% suggested a four or even five-day structure.

Interviews with programme staff provided further clarity on the programme's approach to attendance and dosage. While attendance is carefully monitored, Monday afternoons have been set aside for participants to catch up on missed sessions, and participants are not summarily expelled from the programme should they fall under the minimum threshold of a 75% attendance rate. Programme staff emphasise that warning letters are issued to participants' parents and the underlying causes of the drop in attendance is explored and taken into consideration. This study corroborated the importance of such a flexible and considered approach.

A further element emphasised by the literature on successful OST programmes is the importance of establishing positive relationships among tutors/programme staff and programme participants (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Vandell et al., 2007). The results of the survey suggest that EduCentre tutors and staff have indeed created an environment of such supporting, positive relationships. The majority of students report feeling comfortable to talk to programme staff most times or almost always, and a further 35% indicate that this is sometimes the case. Furthermore, 77% of respondents indicate that programme staff take the time to assist them when they require it most times or almost always, while a further 23% of respondents indicate that this is sometimes the case. Encouragingly, the vast majority of respondents indicate that, most times or almost always, they enjoy the programme, feel safe at the programme, and receive assistance with homework.

A central element of success case method (Brinkerhoff, 2003) is the question of which elements of the programme were most useful. As noted in the previous chapter, interviewees placed a strong emphasis on the role of tutor support and information technology in assisting them achieve improved results. Responses clearly suggest that it was not only access to computers, printers and free internet, but also training in the effective use of information technology, which was valued by the participants. Given the central role of tutor support, as well as the emphasis that OST literature places on low staff/tutor-learner ratios (Good, Burch, Stewart, Acosta, & Heinrich, 2014), it is noteworthy that a large number of interviewees felt that

there were too few tutors generally, and particularly tutors with subject knowledge of certain key areas such as economics and accounting. Improving tutor ratios and strengthening participation will be a key area of growth for the programme.

Have EduCentre participants' academic performance improved in the course of their participation in the programme?

It has been noted that the methodological approach of this study does not allow for causal inferences regarding programme impact. With regard to academic achievement, therefore, the focus has been on ascertaining to what degree participants' academic performance has improved over the course of their participation in the programme. Though limited in scope, this approach nevertheless does assist in providing preliminary evaluation insights; if programme participants' academic results had not improved, it may point to shortcomings in programme design and/or fidelity.

Ideally, the programme would track school results or used standardised tests to assess changes over time in academic achievement. Programme staff indicated that they do attempt to monitor school results over time, however, records were not sufficiently complete to be employed in the current study. Programme records include the number of learners who pass or fail each academic year, as well as whether Grade 12 learners go on to pursue tertiary education. This data is insufficiently granular to draw clear conclusions on learner progress. As outlined previously, the current study relies on programme participants' self reporting on improvement in academic achievement since starting the programme.

Despite the recognized shortcomings in using self-reported data in assessing academic achievement over time (Bowman & Brandenberger, 2010; Sitzmann, Ely, Brown, & Bauer, 2010), it is noteworthy that no respondents indicated that their school results had not improved at all since attending the programme, and only one respondent indicated that his/her results had "probably not" improved; 58% of respondents indicated that their school results had "definitely" improved since

joining the programme, while a further 35% indicated that this was probably the case. Furthermore, it was clear that in assessing academic progress since joining the programme many learners were referencing objective measures such as peer rankings and test results. Interviews suggest that in best case examples such gains could be considerable ("*Out of 177 learners I came 4th"; "My accounting marks are much better...I was not doing well at all in accounting before"; "Last year I was one of the top twenty in my Grade – nothing like that had happened before"*).

Within the limitations of the study methodology, therefore, we may conclude that there is evidence that most participants' academic results have improved since participation in the programme, without ascribing a direct causal relationship between programme participation and these improved results.

Have EduCentre participants' social and emotional skills improved in the course of their participation in the programme?

The results of the social and emotional skills section of the social and emotional skills section of the survey were presented in the preceding chapter, specifically related to academic self-efficacy, persistence, mastery orientation and self-control. While the limitations of the study methodology must again be taken into consideration, there does appear to be some evidence that levels of self control and mastery orientation are higher among participants who have participated in the programme for a full year in comparison with those who have participated for five months. The interview process allowed these themes to be explored in more detail. When queried on the positive outcomes of programme participation, most students focused almost exclusively on improvements in academic results. Some respondents, however, elaborated on potential attitudinal and behavioural changes, suggesting improvements in academic self-efficacy, persistence, mastery orientation and self-control.

"Before, I didn't have a way of managing my time...I wasn't very self-disciplined. That has changed."

"I understand my work better and complete my homework more often rather than procrastinating."

"...my attitude towards my schoolwork is changing."

"I am doing better because I work harder."

"...I'm more focused."

These results, though tentative, are important in the context of the growing research on the importance of social and emotional skills, not only for academic achievement, but broader achievement later in life (Duckworth et al., 2007; West, 2016).

Limitations

The limitations of the current study have been noted earlier. Primarily they relate to the limitations of the evaluation design, which is pre-experimental and therefore does not permit inferences to be drawn regarding causality in the relationship between programme participation and observed changes. A further significant limitation was that the screening of success and non-success cases was not sufficiently granular, which resulted in the fact that key differences in success and non-success cases could not be explored. It is recommended that future studies employ formal academic records to identify success and non-success cases. Interviews with participants who had dropped out of the programme may also provide useful insights into factors contributing to non-success.

Recommendations

Funders increasingly demand evidence of impact from grant recipients. The literature on OST programmes underscores the fact that evaluation is often difficult due to the fact that many OST programmes have poorly articulated programme theories and limited available data. The EduCentre programme, by contrast, does possess a clearly articulated programme theory, which corresponds to many of the

elements that the OST literature suggests are key to securing effective outcomes. The primary constraint in terms of developing evidence of positive outcomes is the lack of an adequate baseline and shortcomings in monitoring. While participants currently do answer a standardised set of questions on joining the programme, this is insufficient to allow for effective tracking of individual progress. The assessment of new programme entrants should be strengthened, including the addition of questions related specifically to social and emotional skills such as academic self-efficacy, persistence, mastery orientation and self-control. Assessment of social and emotional skills should also be incorporated into the monitoring framework of the programme so that progress in this regard can be measured and individual interventions implemented where required.

Capturing and systematically reviewing formal academic results should also be strengthened significantly, particularly as an improved in academic achievement is a key outcome pursued by the programme. Data on the number of programme participants who have passed a given academic year is not sufficiently granular to give a full account of academic progress achieved across the programme, nor is it sufficient to guide intervention in individual cases where academic progress may have stalled or regressed.

A further key area that has emerged from the current study is the need to increase the number of tutors in order to reduce the staff:learner ratio and ensure that participants can receive support in key subjects such as economics and accounting. While the challenges of ensuring adequate and consistent participation by tutors in a volunteer setting is acknowledged, the importance of low staff:learner ratios is emphasised by the literature on OST programmes and has been highlighted through interviews with programme participants.

Conclusion

Poor quality school education and other barriers to educational achievement is a fundamental barrier to social mobility and certainly among the most perfidious legacies of South Africa's apartheid past. Research suggests that OST interventions can support improvements in academic achievement and social and emotional skills, but this is in no way guaranteed. OST programmes must be well designed and implemented in order to achieve results. Pre-experimental evaluations of the type presented in this study, though limited in scope, can provide insights that may guide the further refining of programme design and implementation, as well as providing insights of value to funders and other stakeholders.

The EduCentre has grown considerably since its inception in 2011, growing from 12 participants in its first year to 80 in 2016. The move to a new facility in 2015 has permitted the expansion of support, and the introduction of a variety of supplementary courses reflect the efforts of programme staff to continue exploring new methods to support positive outcomes among participants. This study has provided recommendations related to both programme design and monitoring to support implementation and reporting. Noting the limitations specified earlier, it may nevertheless be concluded that there is evidence of positive outcomes among participants since joining the programme, particularly in the area of academic achievement.

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Annex 1 – Student Survey

Student Survey

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. This is NOT A TEST. There are no right or wrong answers. Please be honest when answering the questions. Your honest answers will help your programme do a better job to help you learn!

Check only one box per question.

		No, hardly ever	Sometimes	Most times	Yes, almost always
1	Do you like going to school?				
2	Do you study hard for tests?				
3	Are your classes interesting?				
4	Do you get in trouble at school?				
5	Do your parents talk to you about school or homework				
6	Do you feel comfortable talking to teachers or other school staff?				
7	Do you get your homework done on time				

Check only one box per question

		No, hardly ever	Sometimes	Most times	Yes, almost always
8	Do you enjoy the after-school programme				

		Once a week	2 days a week	3 days a week	4 days a week	Every day
9	How many days each week would you like to attend the after-school programme					

		No, hardly ever	Sometimes	Most times	Yes, almost always
10	Do you feel safe in the after-school programme				
11	Do after-school staff help you with your homework?				
12	Do you have enough quiet time to complete homework at the after-school programme?				

		No, not at all	Probably not	Yes	Yes, definitely	I don't know
13	Would you like more time for activities, other than homework, in the after-school programme?					

		Not good	Okay	Good	Excellent
14	How are your grades				

		No, not at all	Probably not	Probably	Yes, definitely	I don't know
15	Are you doing better in school since you started coming to the after-school programme?					

16. Please explain your answer in questions 15. Why are you doing better in school, or not doing better?

.....

.....

.....

		No, not at all	Probably not	Probably	Yes, definitely	I don't know
17	Do you feel happier or less stressed since attending the after school programme?					

		No, not at all	Sometimes	Most times	Yes, definitely
18	Do you have friends, or someone you like, in the after-school programme?				

		No, hardly ever	Sometimes	Most times	Yes, almost always
19	Do you feel comfortable talking to the after-school staff?				
20	Do the after school staff take time to help you or talk with you when you need it?				

These questions are about different ways students may behave in school. Please mark the box that best describes you.

		Not at all like me	A little like me	Somewhat like me	A lot like me
21	I can wait in line patiently.				
22	I sit still when I'm supposed to.				
23	I can wait for my turn to talk in class.				
24	I can easily calm down when excited.				
25	I calm down quickly when I get upset.				

These next questions are about how well you feel you can do your schoolwork. Mark the box that best describes you.

		Not at all like me	A little like me	Somewhat like me	A lot like me

26	I can do even the hardest homework if I try.				
27	I can learn the things taught in school.				
28	I can figure out difficult homework.				

These next questions are about how you get your schoolwork done. Mark the box that best describes you.

		Not at all like me	A little like me	Somewhat like me	A lot like me
29	If I solve a problem wrong the first time, I just keep trying until I get it right.				
30	When I do badly on a test, I work harder the next time.				
31	I always work hard to complete my school work.				

The last set of questions will ask you how you feel about school. Please mark the box that best describes you.

		Not at all like me	A little like me	Somewhat like me	A lot like me
32	I do my schoolwork because I like to learn new things.				
33	I do my schoolwork because I'm interested in it.				
34	I do my schoolwork because I enjoy it.				

You're done!

Thank you!