



MARANG
EDUCATION TRUST

In Partnership with Pearson

School Support and Development Project

2020 Efficacy Report of Support
Provided during Covid-19



Supporting and developing solutions to improve teaching and learning in under-resourced and challenged schools and districts within the framework of National Education Policies

Introduction

We are pleased to report on progress made from January to November 2020. Efforts and achievements can be attributed to an ongoing commitment to address the inequality in education, as well as the dedicated partnership support Marang Education Trust has received from District Directors and colleagues based within the following education districts:

- Dr Ruth Segomotso Mompoti Education District
- Ehlanzeni Education District
- Gauteng East Education District
- Mopani Education District
- OR Tambo Inland Education District
- Umzinyathi Education District



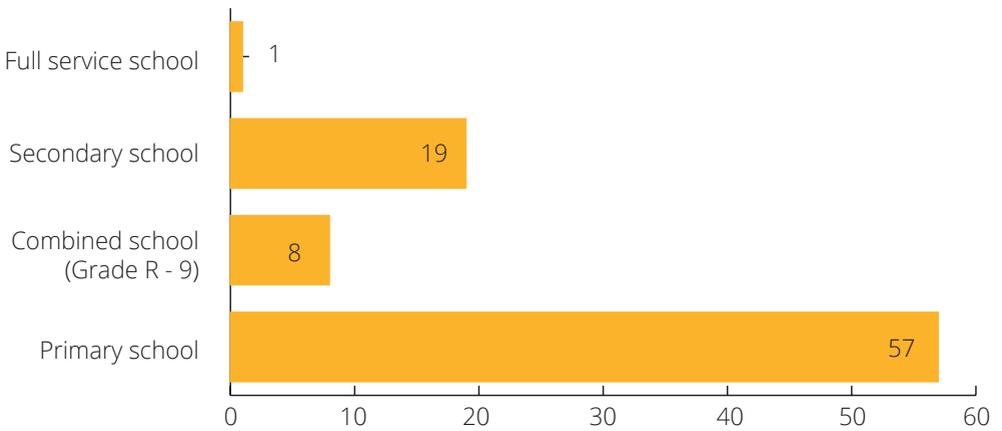
**In partnership
with 85 Schools**

Marang Education Trust worked consistently with 85 no-fee schools in 2020, a year that was plagued with challenges and uncertainty, where the Covid-19 pandemic amplified existing barriers to learning for individuals and schools as organisations. It is within such adversity that our Trust facilitators worked innovatively to continue to support schools when face-to-face contact was impossible and most schools were left feeling isolated and lost.

“The support received helped so much as I was able to understand and calm staff, decreasing anxiety about the pandemic.”

Head of Department, Eastern Cape

Number of schools across six districts



School-Based Support

- JAN - FEB**
 - Strategic planning
 - Baseline feedback
- MAR - MAY**
 - Mentorship
 - Workshops
 - Policy review
 - SMT support
- JUN - NOV**
 - Online Mentorship
 - SMT support
 - Emotional well-being

Support provision January to November 2020

As illustrated above, activities that focused on support and development varied through the year as the education context and time line usually dictates. The pandemic presented with an added demand for maximum flexibility in the nature and extent of engagement with schools.

January – May 2020

January 2020 focused on planning and preparation for entry into schools and February focused on providing feedback to schools on the baseline study that was conducted in 2019. This baseline focused on learner performance in Mathematics and Reading to Learn, as well as overall school functionality. The latter included findings on community factors, attitudes & relationships, teaching, learning & assessment and leadership & management.

The months from 1 March to end May 2020 were disrupted by an extended school holiday as a consequence of the lockdown instituted by National Government as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was in this time that Marang Education Trust strategised regarding ways in which efficient and effective support could still be provided to schools under severe restrictions.

Activities thus included:

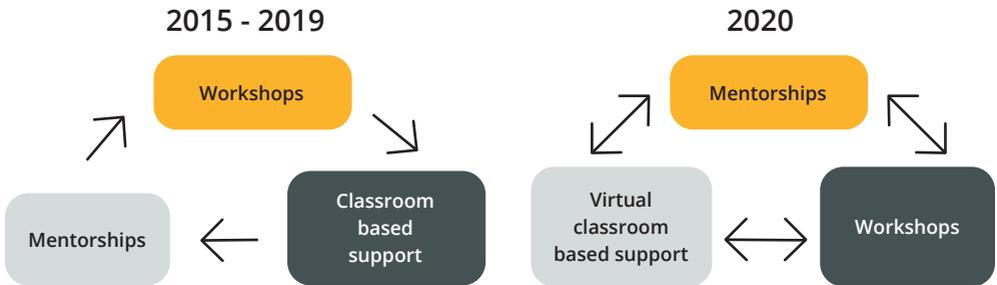
- Workshops focused on understanding what the DBE expects of educators and the teaching and learning process
- Support for Maths teachers on topics identified as gaps
- Development of lesson plans with a focus on a reading-centred method
- Review of internal policies as well as curriculum management processes
- Classroom-based support with a focus on learner-centred teaching
- Assisting SMTs with facilitating the implementation of year plans
- Mentorship of SMTs and principals with a particular focus on managing the re-opening of schools under Covid-19 protocols
- Developing resources to support SMTs within the context of Covid-19
- Engagement with individuals and groups via WhatsApp providing personal and professional support
- Mediating guideline documents and templates developed by the DBE and various provincial education departments

June – November 2020

As a consequence of the ongoing Covid-19 lockdown, Marang Education Trust had to review the nature and focus of support provided to schools given the inability to work on-site and the challenge regarding safety and health issues.

The graphic below illustrates how online mentorship was prioritised as a support intervention from June to November 2020. Support was provided to Principals, Deputy Principals, Heads of Department, Teachers and District officials via cell phone calls, emails and WhatsApp messages. Marang Education Trust returned to schools to provide on-site support where this was possible in October 2020. This is expounded upon further in the sections that follow.

Nature of support



Schools were generally pleased to have Marang Education Trust back on site in October 2020 when face-to-face engagements were once again reasonably safe. Although levels of anxiety remained high, schools felt held and guided at a time when most staff members were feeling vulnerable, both physically and emotionally.

The findings presented below emerged from a rigorous monitoring evaluation, and research process implemented in the second half of the year. The challenge of Covid-19 and the inability to engage on-site with SMTs and teachers demanded a review of and adjustments to monitoring and evaluation procedures within the organisation. Data collected from 1 June to 30 November generated the findings presented below.

Number of Contacts with schools

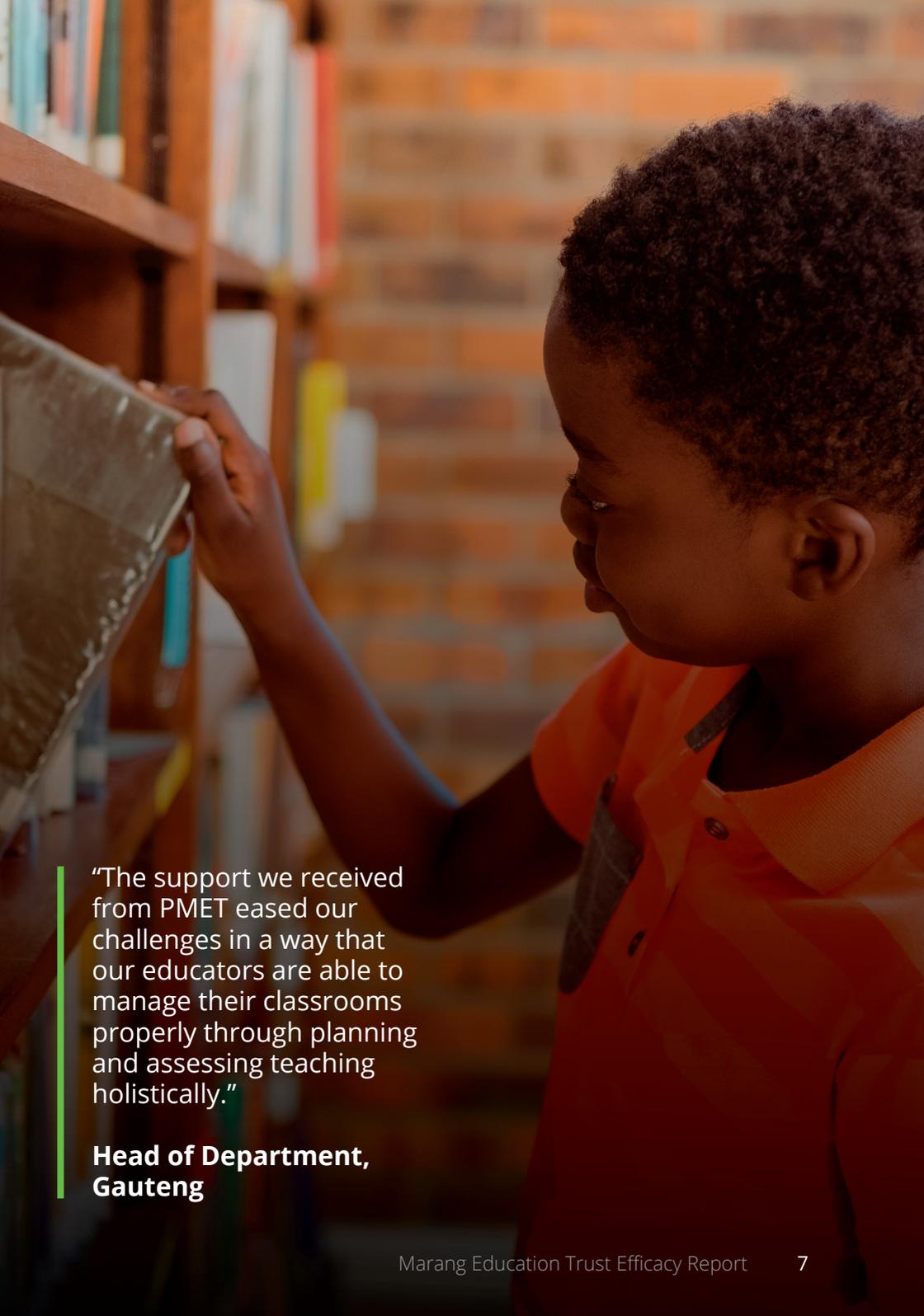
Mentorship support was provided to the 85 schools that Marang Education Trust has been partnering with since 2019. The number of contacts made with schools over the six months is captured below. Schools received telephonic or on-line support in the form of calls and WhatsApp conversations at least once every fortnight. Some schools received more support than others, based on requests that were made as well as emerging challenges that our Trust facilitators became aware of.

June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
652	454	474	441	269	344

Number of contacts with 85 schools from June-November

The variation in the number of contacts across the six months illustrated above is as a consequence of the large number of text messages that were sent in June when Marang Education Trust shared a number of resources to assist schools to adapt to Covid-19 protocols. These included policy documents released by the National DBE, various provincial education departments and NGOs in the education sector.

Once the Trust returned to on-site support provision in October, the number of contacts across schools decreased, given that longer periods of time were spent on-site and fewer calls could be made to various participants. Arguably, the quality of support was certainly maintained.

A young child with dark, curly hair, wearing an orange polo shirt, is shown in profile, looking intently at a book held in their hands. The child is standing in a library or classroom, with wooden bookshelves filled with books visible in the background. The lighting is warm and focused on the child, creating a soft glow. The background is slightly blurred, emphasizing the child's concentration.

“The support we received from PMET eased our challenges in a way that our educators are able to manage their classrooms properly through planning and assessing teaching holistically.”

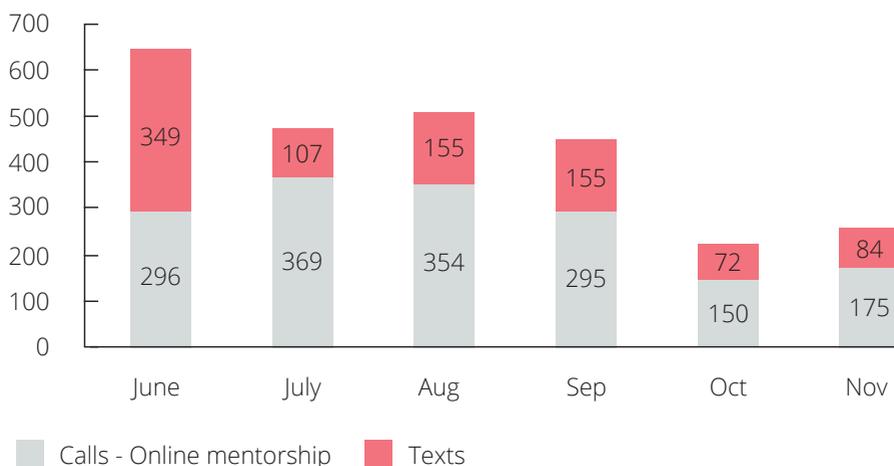
**Head of Department,
Gauteng**

Nature of Support

The graphs below capture the quantitative data collected from June to November 2020 regarding the nature of support that was provided to schools and the districts.

Mentorship took place remotely mostly via cell phone calls. Text messages via WhatsApp were sent to obtain information and to touch base with participants in schools and district offices. WhatsApp and emails also worked effectively to share resources developed by Marang Education Trust, the DBE, Pearson and other NGOs.

Mentorship support via calls and text messages June - November 2010



Where possible, Trust staff also used video call options via WhatsApp, Ms Teams and Zoom in order to conduct mentorship sessions and workshops in September, October and November as illustrated overleaf. Although these were deemed to be the more effective mode of support provision under Covid-19 conditions, the option was limited to only a few schools given the lack of technological infrastructure, equipment, data and poor internet connectivity in deep rural areas.

Workshops and on-site mentorship support September - November 2020



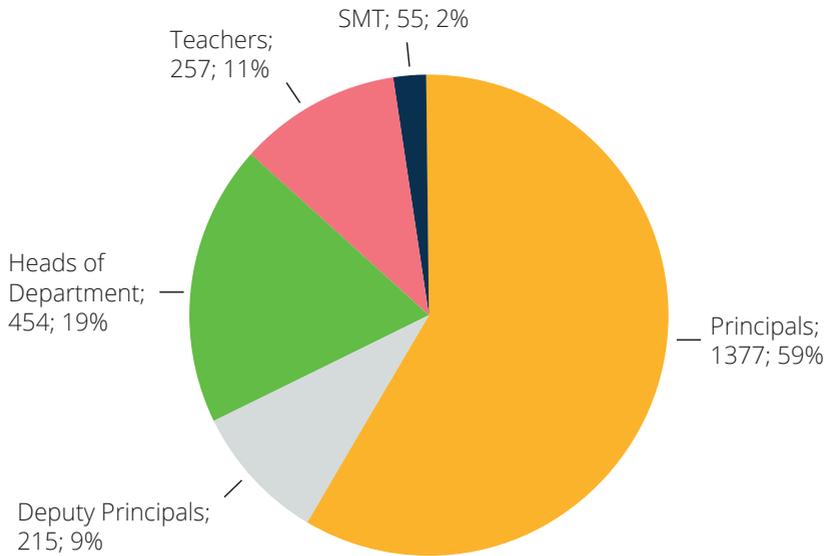
The mentorship support took the form of:

- Offering advice on strategies to address challenges
- Providing guidance on developing and implementing plans to ensure school functionality
- Sharing resources
- Training on pre- and post-moderation
- Mediating policy documents, guidelines and templates that schools were expected to understand and implement in their unique context
- Facilitating sharing as a form of 'lay counselling' to enhance emotional well-being
- Referring to relevant contacts who would be able to provide additional support, or resolve a difficulty being experienced
- Acting as a liaison between the school and the district

The key themes that emerged as priority focus areas in the mentorship sessions are discussed in a section that follows later.

Who received support

Number of contacts with various participants
June - November 2020

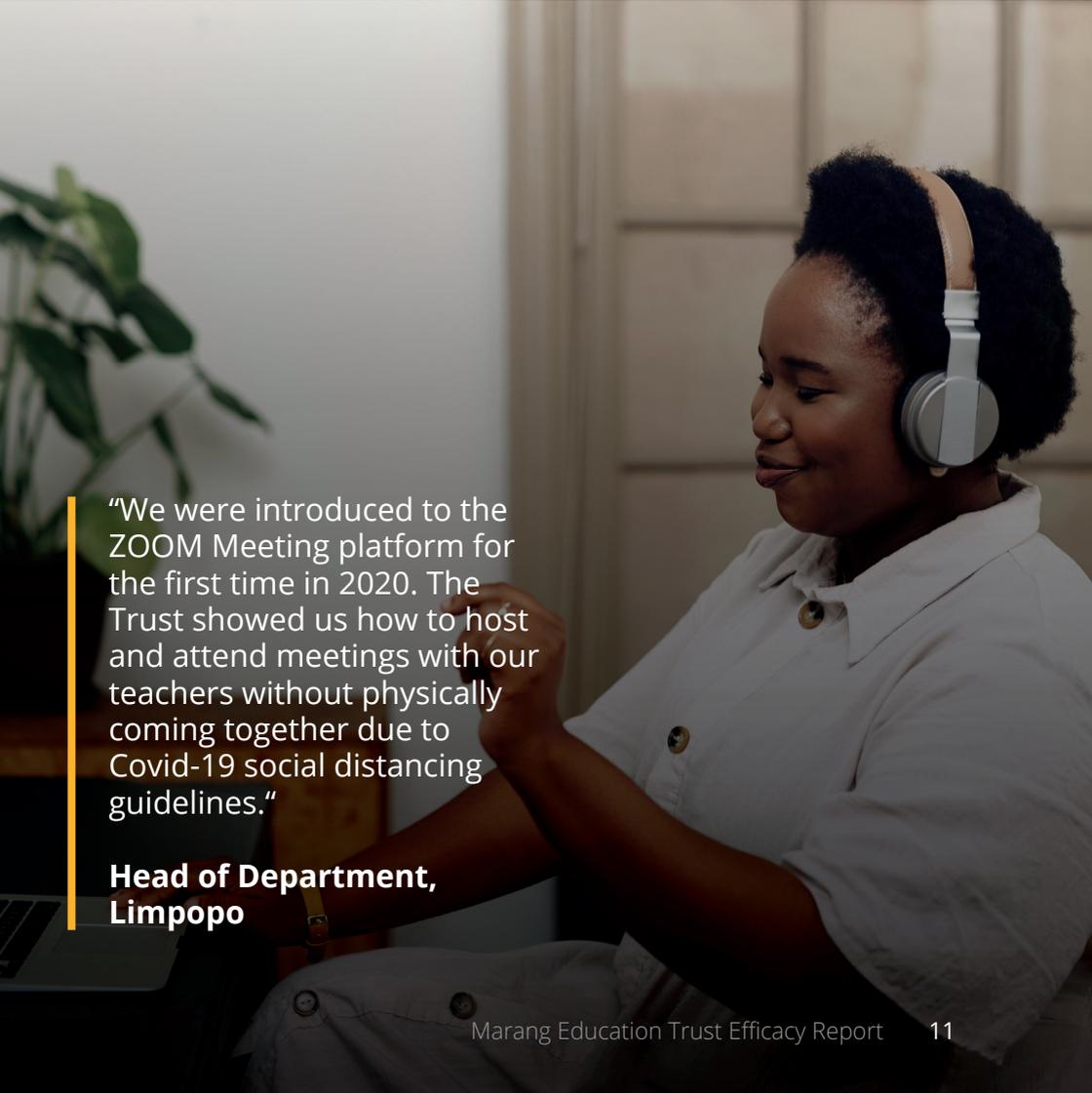


As illustrated in the graph above, Principals were the primary contact for the period June-November. The role of the principal in addressing the multiple challenges of Covid-19 within the school, given the high level of planning, implementation and monitoring required, cannot be overemphasised. Principals found themselves navigating territory that was new and uncharted, which impacted sharply on levels of confidence and competence as school managers.

An increasing number of HoDs were contacted once schools settled after August when Covid-19 protocols, infrastructure and resource needs were, to a large extent, resolved. HoDs became central to foregrounding the teaching

and learning focus within schools and the Trust therefore ensured that support to SMTs regarding curriculum implementation was prioritised.

Similarly, support to individuals and small groups of teachers was also regarded as fundamental. Where possible, teachers were coached, with a specific focus on content (given the revised ATPs) and teaching methodologies (to address the barriers to learning that learners were presenting with).

A woman with dark hair, wearing a white short-sleeved button-down shirt and large white headphones, is seated and looking towards a laptop screen. She has a slight smile on her face. The background is a softly blurred indoor setting with a plant on the left and a door or wall paneling on the right.

“We were introduced to the ZOOM Meeting platform for the first time in 2020. The Trust showed us how to host and attend meetings with our teachers without physically coming together due to Covid-19 social distancing guidelines.”

**Head of Department,
Limpopo**

Focus of support

The table below outlines the top 5 themes which emerged as focus areas of support from June to November. The themes are listed in order of frequency, with those issues that were discussed most appearing first in the column for each month.

June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Covid-19	Curriculum	Curriculum	Curriculum	Curriculum	Curriculum
Returns to Schools	Emotional well-being	Emotional well-being	Teaching methodology	Teaching methodology	Emotional well-being
Curriculum	Covid-19	Attendance	Roles and responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities
Resources	Resources	Resources	Emotional well-being	Emotional well-being	Covid-19
Infrastructure	Attendance	Teaching methodology	Covid-19	Covid-19	Resources

Priority focus areas of support June-November 2020

It is evident that the themes seem to be fairly consistent across the last six months of 2020, even though they tended to shift in terms of priority focus. Covid-19, for example, was new to all schools, where the focus for Marang Education Trust was on assisting SMTs and teachers with knowledge and awareness of the virus and supporting schools with how best to develop and implement protocols to maximise safety at school.

The emerging needs expressed by teachers and SMT members were anxiety, stress, depression and bereavement as a consequence of Covid-19. Emotional well-being was therefore foregrounded by Trust facilitators who emphasised that the psycho-social aspects needed to take priority over technical curriculum matters, even actual teaching and learning.

It is important to note that the remaining themes in the previous table are not new challenges to schools. Themes such as curriculum, teaching methodology, roles and responsibilities, infrastructure and resources have always been matters of concern for under-resourced and challenged schools. The difference, however, lies in the way in which these challenges presented, because each of them was influenced by Covid-19, which required creativity and high levels of innovation as Trust facilitators endeavoured to support schools.

In Closing

Covid-19 has thrown our country and the world into a state of uncertainty and despair. Education has in no way been spared, where inequality and vulnerability has been exposed and magnified. Schools, SMTs, teachers and learners have had to navigate through very challenging circumstances, and continue to do so. Marang Education Trust remains committed to supporting schools as best we can, to focus on finding solutions in order to be able to ensure that young people are provided with quality education, even in trying times. We look forward, as we continue to collaborate with various stakeholders in education, to ensure that schools receive quality support that empowers principals, SMTs and teachers to fulfil their mandate as compassionate, confident, competent professionals.

“ The support we received enabled under-performing schools to become steadily, achieving schools capable of sustainable development and helped to implement their roles and responsibilities (within their schools) with accountability.”

Head of Department, Mpumalanga



It is through the provision of support to schools in low income communities that Marang Education Trust endeavours to help teachers and learners to access opportunities to learn in spaces where quality education is provided.

Dr Nadeen Moolla
Research and Development Manager
Cell: 079 491 2805
nadeen.moolla@pearson.com

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