



20

23

INTEGRATED ANNUAL REPORT



NATIONAL EDUCATION COLLABORATION TRUST

Charting the Course Forward



Accelerating Sustainable Education Improvement



MISSION STATEMENT

Mobilising national capacity to assist Government to achieve distinctive, substantial and sustainable improvements in Education.

All South African children possess the skills, knowledge and attitudes that enable them to live economically gainful and fulfilled lives.





OUR MASSIVE TRANSFORMATION PURPOSE

Identify opportunities and create platforms for future collaborations which will benefit



13 million
Learners



500 000
Teachers

NECT Funding Partners

The NECT conveys its gratitude for the generosity and support received from our partners. This support has enabled us to drive a positive agenda for education reform in our country in service of all South African children.

GOVERNMENT



PRIVATE SECTOR





FOUNDATIONS, TRUSTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY



How to Read The Report

The NECT Annual Report is designed for different stakeholders including those interested in the educational change content and others interested in strategy and governance.

Here's a guide to help you navigate the report:

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If your interest lies in understanding the governance framework and strategic direction of NECT, please refer to the following sections:

Organisational Governance: Provides detailed insights into the governance structures within the NECT.

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Material Matters: Highlights key issues that have impacted the organisation.

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Organisational Profile: Offers an overview of NECT's mission, vision and achievements to date since inception.

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The New Strategy: Discusses the strategic initiatives and future direction of NECT.

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Financial Review: Presents a comprehensive analysis of NECT's financial performance over the past year.

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For readers keen on educational transformation and NECT's impact in this area, the following sections will be of particular interest:

Year in Review: Summarises the key achievements over the past year

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Continued Strengthening of State Capacity at School and District Level: Details the initiatives aimed at enhancing district capabilities.

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Systems Capacity Support and Advisory: Details the initiatives aimed at enhancing the state's ability to sustainably meet educational needs.

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Social Compact Building and Partnerships: Details the initiatives aimed at providing platforms for meaningful stakeholder engagement and investment coordination.

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NECT's 10th Anniversary Campaign: Reflects on the insights from the NECT's 10th anniversary, through various dialogues, events and publications.



Chairman's Foreword

With six years to the National Development Plan's target year, questions remain concerning our resolve and the extent to which we have moved towards the envisaged state of affairs. Many achievements have indeed been registered in the democratic era, yet we are still far off the target. The schooling outputs are not anywhere near where we want to see them. As international comparative studies have shown, there are still glaring challenges with reading and numeracy.

What we at the NECT have consistently pointed out is that these challenges are symptoms and reversing them requires that we attend to their causes, which relate to policy and system capacity. In this regard, we have seen a refocus in policy on how we approach the teaching of African languages. While developments in reconceptualising the teaching of mathematics lag behind those in the teaching of literacy, in both cases, achievement rates have to be improved urgently to minimise the sub-optimum impact on the current cohort of learners.

Noting the centrality of the state in driving sustainable improvement in schooling outputs, the NECT has increased its focus on building in-house state capacity to plan and implement improved school- and learner-level outcomes. It was on the basis of this reasoning that the NECT was reorganised into three divisions that focus on districts and schools, system level capacity development, and partnerships and social capacity building respectively. Increased capabilities and much tighter alignment between the national, provincial and district levels are required to unlock more efficiencies from the public spend on education. The NECT will intensify its efforts to strengthen capacity of the state in this regard.

On the governance front, the collaboration involving government and other actor groups such as teacher unions and the business sector has strengthened over time, albeit the dissipation of private sector funding of the NECT's work. As reported by Trialogue, CSI spending has plateaued over the past two decades. There have also been noticeable shifts

in funding towards employability and free higher education concerns. Whilst acknowledging the immediacy of the employment challenges, a drastic shift by the private sector from supporting the strengthening of basic education will make any downstream employability successes short term. As it is, the economy is in short supply of mathematics and numeracy skills, and an average of just 42% of over the over half a million matriculants take pure mathematics. In addition, the mathematics pass rates remain low, especially among the African and coloured population groups, extending the pre-democratic equity challenge. In contrast, the teacher unions' commitment to the collaboration and the resultant sector stability is celebrated.

The 10-year anniversary celebrations observed during the year created an opportunity for further dialogues on future education improvement needs and collaborations. At national level, the actor groups in the NECT network recommitted to a greater focus on strengthening the education system's responsibility for supporting schools and exploring the future of education.

In the coming years, the NECT will intensify engagements with the DBE and stakeholders to strengthen the system's capability to vigorously drive school-level improvements, especially in learners' mathematics and literacy proficiencies. In this way, districts should increasingly be the platform for more sustainable collaboration.



Sizwe Nxasana

Chairman: NECT Board of Trustees



CEO's Reflection

A common vision to unify education improvement collaborations

In anticipation of the 7th democratic election, the NECT carried out an analysis of democratic era education manifestos. The analysis confirmed profound differences among the political parties' proposals to transform education. However, the manifestos were all characterised by a lack of clear choices of change levers, limited use of evidence to back up the promises made and no consideration of the practicalities of resourcing the proposals. Meanwhile it is doubtful if the collective thoughts and actions of mainstream educationists that drive learning improvement would pass the standards against which the manifestos were judged. Educationists' views about education improvement are, at the moment less unified, and weaker is the energy behind the National Development Plan.

While government has worked much more closely with the teacher unions in the past decade, the private sector's focus on basic education has arguably suffered competition from the more pressing challenges of 'employability' and the accommodation of the higher education 'missing middle'. However, 'stock-and-flow' planning principles dictate that a consistent, if not increased, effort to improve the outputs of basic education be maintained, particularly in the areas of reading and mathematics, where the output patterns demonstrate a tale of racial inequity from the past. While we have seen small increases in the matric mathematics pass rates, black and coloured groups still feature poorly among higher grade passes. South Africa's repeated poor reading performance in international assessments is still a matter of concern. Nonetheless, research and proposals from the work on mother tongue-based bilingual education (MTbBE) offer a promising methodological approach to the African language reading challenge. While the approach will make the teaching of African languages more responsive to their unique structures differ from those of Germanic-based

languages such as English), a year has gone past without firm programming that reorients African language teachers to the new approach.

Strengthening the state's implementation capacity

During the reporting year, the NECT worked with 44% of the districts to strengthen their capabilities to drive reading and mathematics improvement. This involved undertaking extensive organisational reviews of the districts' operations to identify blockages and opportunities for improving learning in schools. While there has been an increase in the number of subject advisors, and more attention has been given to curriculum planning, it emerged that district planning, implementation and monitoring capabilities require improvement. In order to address this need, a select number of district officials have been taken through the second year of the district winter school, and officials from five districts are receiving on the job training on planning for and supporting schools to improve reading and numeracy. See the NECT's work on districts in section 6.

Building the capacity of the state

The NECT has continued to amplify its impact on long-term education reform and transformation. A key focus of this agenda has been to strengthen the state's capacity in relation to strategy, systems, technical expertise and service delivery. Noteworthy achievements include collaborating with over 1,677 subject advisors, 130,000 teachers and school managers and 22,812 schools. Additionally, we provided Sanitation facilities, infrastructure repairs and handwashing stations to more than 693 schools across the Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal. Through our Systems Capacity and Support Division, we identified critical technical gaps and introduced essential technical skills within the DBE to enhance capacity. A significant milestone was the development of the South African Competency Framework which will usher in learning competencies of the future. The framework is a product of two years of research and consultations with over 1,000 stakeholders across the nine provinces. Refer to section 7 for the systems capacity strengthening work.

Maintaining social capital critical for education improvement

Social capital building remains central to the NECT's strategy. Partnership projects and dialogues are used to harness critical energies and social capital for the enhancement of programming in education improvement work. In this regard, teacher unions have continued to implement collaborative projects focused on strengthening assessment for learning and advocating for teacher and community support in schools. Through the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) Investment Portfolio, the NECT and the DBE continued coordinating the work of six South African universities to implement the CSTL Research Programme which is aimed at advancing knowledge and evidence of care and support initiatives within the education system. Additionally, in collaboration with the Teaching, Teacher, and Teacher Education for Equitable and Quality Education Research (TTTEQL) consortium, which includes nine South African universities, the NECT launched the first phase of a teaching pedagogics pilot study across all nine provinces. More details of this work is covered in section 8.

10-year Anniversary celebrations

In 2023, the NECT celebrated a decade of building social capital for education improvement. The celebrations were marked by provincial and national stakeholder engagements and the release of a series of publications that documented progress and future planning . The celebrations culminated in a national convention that celebrated the success of the NECT's education collaboration and the innovative model it entails. The summit confirmed the need to strengthen districts and the capacity of the education system as a whole to drive improved educational outcomes across the country. See section 9 for more details.

Resourcing and sustainability

From 2014 to 2023, the NECT raised R2.8 billion, with 59.8% from Core funds and 40.2% from Special projects. In 2023, income decreased by 27.8% to R333.2 million (from R476.4 million in 2022) due to the completion of several emergency projects (Covid-19, floods, riot response initiatives) and the near completion of the school sanitation project. In 2023, Government and SETAs contributed 66.3% of the funding, while the private sector provided the remaining 33.7%. In response, management and the Board are exploring new funding opportunities in emerging sectors such as renewable energy, technology and artificial intelligence to broaden private sector support.

The summary of the NECT's financial standing is covered in section 10, and the Annual Financial Statement can be downloaded from www.nect.org.za

NECT Performance Trend (2014 - 2023) (R' Millions)

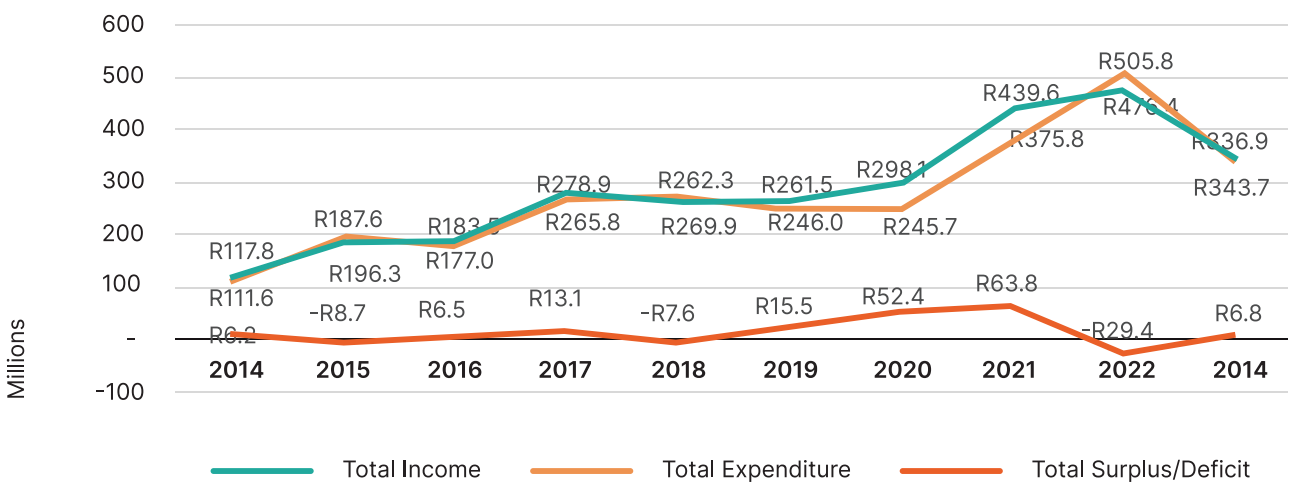


Figure 1: The NECT Financial Performance 2014-2023

Godwin Khosa



Godwin Khosa
Chief Executive Officer



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1

Organisational Governance

1. Organisational Governance

The NECT is an organisation established as a collaborative trust to change the course and pace of the transformation of South Africa's education system in support of the National Development Plan. The NECT's trustees are, by design, representatives of government, the private sector, teacher unions and civil society.

NECT TRUSTEES/Board Members



Sizwe Nxasana (Chairman)
Attendance: 3/3
Business



Minister Angie Motshekga
Attendance: 2/3
Government



Futhi Mtoba
Attendance: 1/3
Business



Basil Manuel
Attendance: 2/3
Labour



Nkosana Dolopi
Attendance: 3/3
Labour



Hubert Mathanzima Mveli
Attendance: 1/3
Government



Dr. Godwin Khosa
Attendance: 3/3
CEO (NECT)



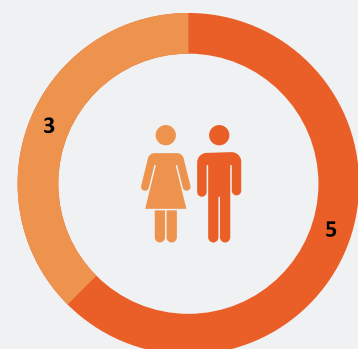
Prof. Brian Figaji
Attendance: 3/3
Civil Society



Tebele Luthuli*
Attendance: 2/3
Business

* Resigned in November 2023

NECT Trustees' Gender



Female



Male

The NECT Board is responsible for the overall oversight of the execution of the organisation's strategy and for ensuring compliance with all fiduciary responsibilities as outlined in the Companies Act, King IV, and other pertinent legislation and guidelines. The Board convenes at least quarterly, with additional meetings scheduled as necessary to address pressing issues. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the NECT's initiatives and is accountable to the Board. The CEO ensures that the organisation's activities are aligned with its strategic goals and reports regularly on progress and outcomes.

Throughout the reporting period, the Board concentrated on several critical areas to safeguard the effective governance and strategic direction of the NECT. The primary areas of focus included:

- **Reorientation and reorganisation:** Overseeing the reorientation of the organisation and the change management process.
- **Strategic transition:** Managing the 2023 transitioning period as the NECT transitioned from past programming to the new strategy. This included the handover of some of the existing programming to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and gathering district information to assist with the development of the new programming.
- **Financial sustainability:** Evaluating and refining the NECT's fundraising strategy to enhance financial sustainability. The Board also approved the establishment of the Resourcing Committee to this end.
- **Board Sub-Committee Reports:** Reviewing the deliberations and recommendations of Board Sub-Committee meetings.
- **Planning and strategy for 2024:** Reviewing and endorsing the NECT's plans for 2024 to guide future initiatives.
- **Stakeholder management:** Spearheading communication about the new strategy and approach seeking buy-in from NECT stakeholders, including funders, districts, parents and the DBE.

Sub-Committees

Board Executive Committee:

Board Composition and attendance for the year to December 2023	Attendance
Mr Sizwe Nxasana (Chair)	2/2
Minister Angie Motshekga	1/2
Ms Futhi Mtoba	1/2
Mr Nkosana Dolopi	2/2

The Board Executive Committee (EXCO) plays a crucial role in supporting the Board by addressing more immediate and strategic matters that may arise between full Board meetings.

The EXCO focused overseeing the following key activities in 2023:

- Reorganisation and change management.
- Alignment of the NECT'S budgets and strategy.
- Resourcing.
- Stakeholder management and advocacy on extending the NECT's mandate.
- Providing guidance on the new strategy and supporting management on initiatives to be scaled down and up.

Audit and Risk Committee:

Board Composition and attendance for the year to December 2023	Attendance
Mr Sizwe Nxasana	2/2
Ms Futhi Mtoba (Chair)	2/2
Prof Brian Figaji	2/2
Dr Godwin Khosa (By Invitation)	2/2
Mr Sandile Mkhonto (By Invitation)	2/2
Mr Roshan Randhany, PwC (By Invitation)	2/2
Mr Mantsho Matoane, PwC (By Invitation)	2/2

The Audit and Risk Committee plays a pivotal role in the governance of the NECT, ensuring the integrity of financial reporting and the effectiveness of risk management processes.

Focus areas for 2023:

- **Financial Reporting & Oversight:** Ensured the accuracy and reliability of financial statements in accordance with accounting standards and regulatory requirements. Reviewed and recommended the approval of the annual financial statements to board of Trustees.
- **Internal Controls:** Evaluated and recommended improvements to internal control systems to safeguard assets and ensure operational efficiency.
- **Risk Management:** Identified and assessed major risks, implementing appropriate mitigation strategies.
- **Compliance:** Oversaw adherence to laws, regulations, and internal policies, maintaining high standards of legal and ethical conduct.
- **Internal and External Audits:** Reviewed external audit report and recommendations for the year ended 31st December 2022. Furthermore, appointed PwC as the external auditors for the financial year ended 31st December 2024.
- **Audit Feedback:** Assessed feedback from audit reports to ensure necessary improvements were made.



2

Material Matters



2. Material Matters

The NECT's material matters are those that have the most significant impact on our strategic delivery and ability to create value over the short, medium, and long term. These material matters have been identified through a thorough scanning of the education funding environment and relevant policies. The identified matters are then discussed with the Education Forum, comprising internal and external experts who provide advisory input. Subsequently, these matters are reviewed with the board and presented at the annual DBE-NECT strategy session. They are also shared with stakeholders to ensure informed decision-making.

2023 Material Matters



Reorientation & Reorganisation

(fit for purpose)



Sustainability

(Resourcing)



Impact

- Effective capacity to identify opportunities and create platforms which will benefit:
 - Over **500 000 Teachers**
 - Over **13 million learners**
- Ability to meet the NECT's operational needs in the next 10 years.

2.1.1. Reorientation and reorganisation

In 2022, to ensure the NECT's sustainability going forward, a reorientation in strategy was initiated. This reorientation was coupled with a structural reorganisation in 2023. The year 2023 was designated as a transitional period for implementing the new strategy and structure. Consequently, our operations were divided between maintaining ongoing activities and executing the reorganisation process. From a programming perspective, this transition resulted in the scaling down of some initiatives, while some new initiatives were conceptualised and introduced (*Refer to section 4 for more details*).

2.1.2. Sustainability (Resourcing)

Noting the constrained fiscus and the envisaged reduction of funding, the Board established the Resourcing Committee, which will support management in exploring new funding avenues to ensure the NECT's sustainability and increase its impact.



3

Organisational Profile

3. Organisational Profile

Since its establishment in 2013, the NECT has been a driving force in transforming South Africa's education landscape.

A leading National Education Improvement Initiative, the NECT was created with a clear purpose:



To provide unwavering support to the government in achieving the ambitious education goals outlined in **Chapter 9 of the National Development Plan (NDP)**.

Through its collaborative efforts, the NECT has made significant contributions to operations of the education system through its capacity to design and implement strategic education improvement policies and the necessary social capital comprising a network of partners with a strong vision of education improvement.

Dialogues, knowledge sharing, and programme partnerships have been used to coordinate the education improvement efforts of government departments, civil society organisations, schools, private sector organisations, teacher unions, universities, philanthropies and multilateral entities such as UNICEF and the European Union. This collaborative approach has led to innovative solutions and improved educational outcomes.

At the core of the NECT's mission lies a profound commitment to mobilising the nation's capacity for substantial and sustainable advancements in education. Through a comprehensive and systemic approach, the NECT has **since 2013:**

mobilised investment of **R2.7 billion** in successful education improvement projects. Its reach extends to over **90% of the schooling system**, making significant capacity development strides in the following areas since inception:

A

TEACHER PROFESSIONALISATION:

- Over **130 000 teachers and school managers reached** across all provinces.
- Over **22 812 (90%) schools reached** across all provinces



B

COURAGEOUS AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

- A total of **16 511 school managers** capacitated on curriculum and learning management

C

BUILDING STATE CAPACITY:

- Over **3 348 District, provincial and national level officials** reached through the District Winter School and District Fundamentals of Performance (FoPs) Workshops

D

RESOURCING

- **35.2 million teacher and learner support materials printed and distributed** across the country
- Provided sanitation facilities, infrastructure repairs and handwashing stations to **693 schools** across three provinces.



COMMUNITY AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT

E

- **173 dialogues and stakeholder engagements** hosted, reaching over **33 292 people**.
- 7 additional District Steering Committees (DSCs) were established in 2023, bringing the total to **28 DSCs** supporting programme implementation in the provinces.

F

LEARNER SUPPORT AND WELL-BEING

- **5 998 community and school-based beneficiaries** capacitated to provide psychosocial support to learners and teachers.
- **A total of 4 873 learners reached** through the Ubuntu Youth Leaders Programme.



4

The New Strategy



4. The New Strategy

In 2022 following an evaluation report carried out by FirstRand and consultations with key stakeholders, the Board of Trustees decided that the NECT should extend its operations beyond its initial 10-year mandate. This decision was motivated by three key factors:

- I. The acknowledgment that the original mandate of supporting the DBE in achieving the goals of the 2030 NDP remains pertinent, given that the term of the NDP is ongoing;
- II. The realisation that, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the education system requires ongoing assistance for its recovery. Thus, the NECT is deemed essential in supporting the DBE to facilitate the education system's recuperation from the adverse effects of the pandemic, which resulted in setbacks and losses in progress made prior to the pandemic;
- III. The appreciation of the significance of the social capital built in support of education. The collaboration and social capital fostered by the NECT among various stakeholders supporting the education system underscore the value of the NECT's continued involvement.

In response to the extension of its mandate, the NECT underwent a comprehensive reorganisation process, which involved the development of a new strategy informed by the lessons learned and evaluations carried out over its lifespan.

While the new strategy remains centred on the NECT's founding mission - to mobilise national capacity to support the South African government in achieving substantial

and sustainable improvements in education - the focus of the reorganisation process has been on refining the operational approach to delivering on this mandate.

Strategically, the NECT aims to:

- Strengthen district capacity in terms of systems, processes and culture for effective education improvement through the Integrated District Improvement Programme (IDIP);
- Enhance the state's ability to sustainably meet educational needs by procuring tailored technical expertise and integrating vital technical skills into the DBE;
- Design and provide platforms and initiatives for meaningful stakeholder engagement and investment coordination.

Sub-divisions within each of the NECT's divisions (see An improved organisational structure), such as the IDIP, Education Technical Assistance Office (ETAO), and Education DialogueSA, facilitate targeted actions to achieve these strategic goals and drive tangible and scalable improvements in the system.

Success will be measured by several key indicators:

- Improved curriculum delivery and learner outcomes
- Enhanced implementation and monitoring practices by districts, provinces and national government
- High-functioning districts with increased integration of technical expertise
- Institutionalisation of technical expertise
- Financially viable initiatives
- Insights generated on the Futures of Education.



An improved organisational structure

The improved organisational structure has been designed to enhance operational efficiency, streamline decision-making processes and align with the organisation’s new strategic objectives. Additionally, the new structure reflects the organisation’s unwavering commitment to optimising resources and fostering collaboration across divisions. The key change brought about by the restructuring effort is a shift from eight programmes to three divisions.

The figure below provides a detailed outline of each division’s areas of focus and its sub-divisions.

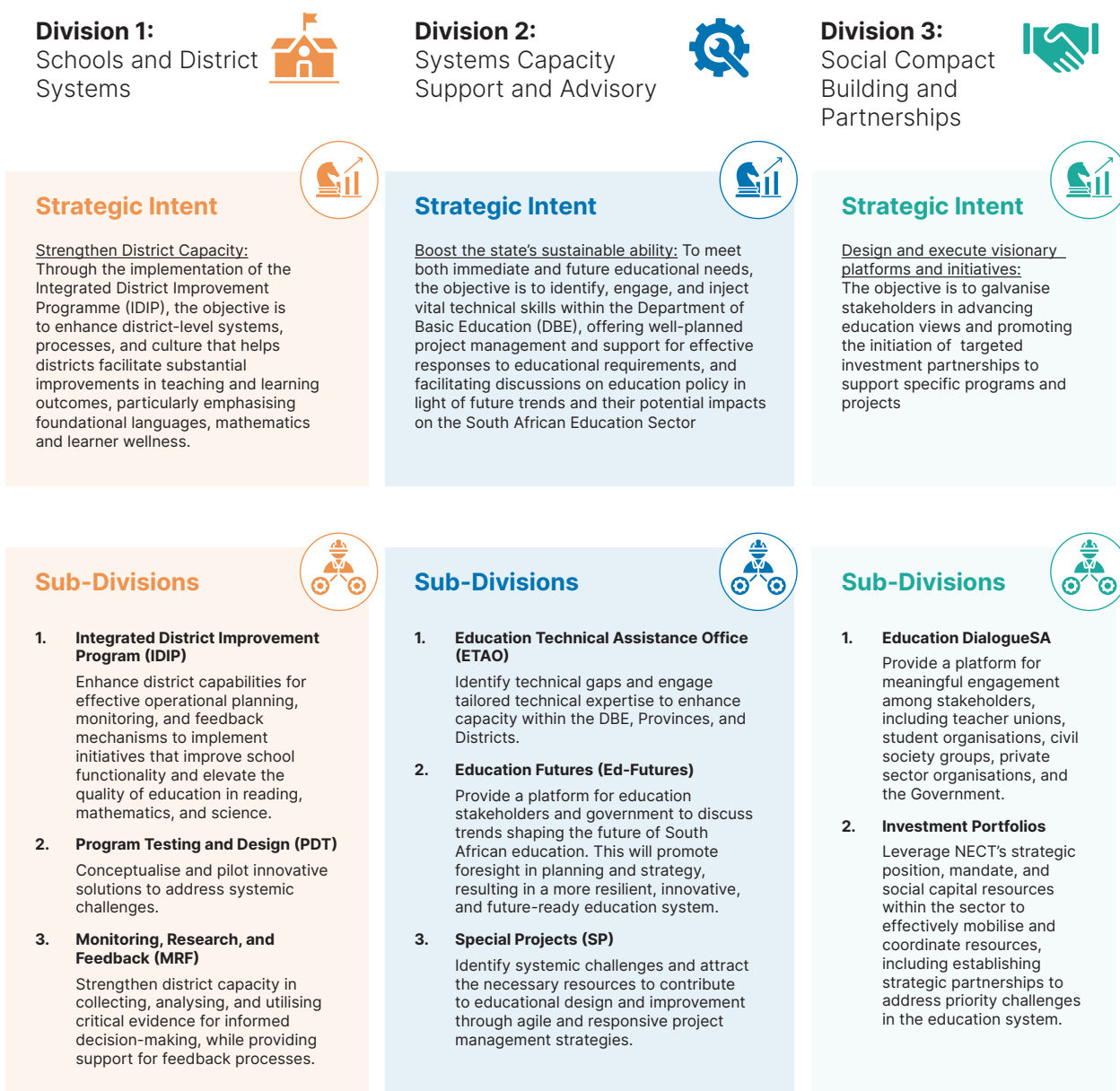


Figure 1: Divisions and sub-divisions



5

The Year in Review

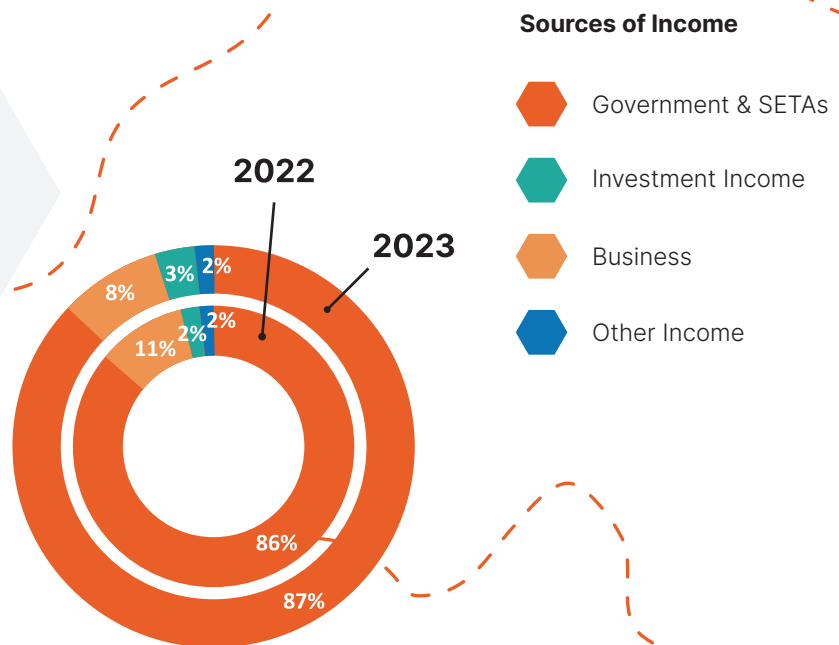


5. The Year In Review

In 2023, the NECT continued to create value within the education sector. The following achievements – and in many instances, also improvements – are noteworthy:



Mobilised investment of
R332.7 million
 in successful education
 improvement projects.



STRENGTHENING SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS

154



district officials have participated in the District Capacity Building Holiday School

(98 ↑)

16 477 708

units of teacher resources provided to over **22 812 Schools** across all provinces

(4 200 000 ↑)



131 548

teachers, school managers and subject advisors upskilled and resourced in Reading, Maths and Assessment for Learning

(15 465 ↑)

The NECT's **Integrated District Improvement Programme Model** adopted by DBE, was endorsed by the Heads of Education Departments Committee (HEDCOM) and Council of Education Ministers (CEM)

- Onboarding **57 districts**
- Organisational Profiling of **33 districts**
- Developed a National Data Repository for collecting, organising and sharing key planning and reporting documents across all districts in the country

2 505 000

Foundation Phase reading resources distributed to **8 842 primary schools** across nine provinces

(1 185 000 ↑)



26 673

Reading Champions were supported as part of the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative, in collaboration with **10 NGOs**

(676 ↑)

*↑ (symbol) shows year-on-year increase.

SYSTEMS CAPACITY SUPPORT & ADVISORY

15

Technical Assistants were injected into the Department of Basic Education



Sanitation facilities and infrastructure repairs were provided to **693 schools** across three provinces



(149 ↑)



Developed **372 learner lessons** and

17 annual teaching plan teacher support videos through the Remote and Digital Learning Campaign

User acceptance testing was completed with about **2 400 (50%)** identified schools successfully testing the modules

Phase one of the Online School Administration System Modernisation Project successfully concluded with the development of **three core modules**

SOCIAL COMPACT BUILDING & PARTNERSHIPS

4 873



youth reached
through the Ubuntu
Youth Leaders
Programme

(2 881 ↑)

173 dialogues
(28 ↑)

hosted,
reaching over

33 292
people



(4 096 ↑)

873



district officials
trained on teacher
and learner wellness

(533 ↑)

Partnered with
six universities
in South Africa
to support
teacher and
learner well
being

Successfully
completed the first
phase of research
into teaching
pedagogics across
all provinces in
partnership with
nine universities



*↑ (symbol) shows year-on-year increase.



6

**Continued
Strengthening
of State
Capacity at
District and
School level**



6. Continued Strengthening of State Capacity at School and District Level

In 2022 we reported shifting gear from supporting schools directly to strengthening districts to drive learning improvement. This end was pursued through the IDIP, which aims to build district operational systems by focusing more closely on district functionality to drive improvement in schools and classrooms.

6.1. The Integrated District Improvement Programme

The IDIP, established through collaboration between the NECT and the DBE, aims to build district capacity by enhancing systems, processes and culture that will facilitate teaching and learning outcomes at school level. The IDIP model comprises two parts:

- Evidence building about district organisational dynamics: Collect, analyse and report data to profile districts.
- District development and support: Leverage district profiles to develop initiatives that strengthen systems, processes and culture, leading to significant increases in teaching and learning results.

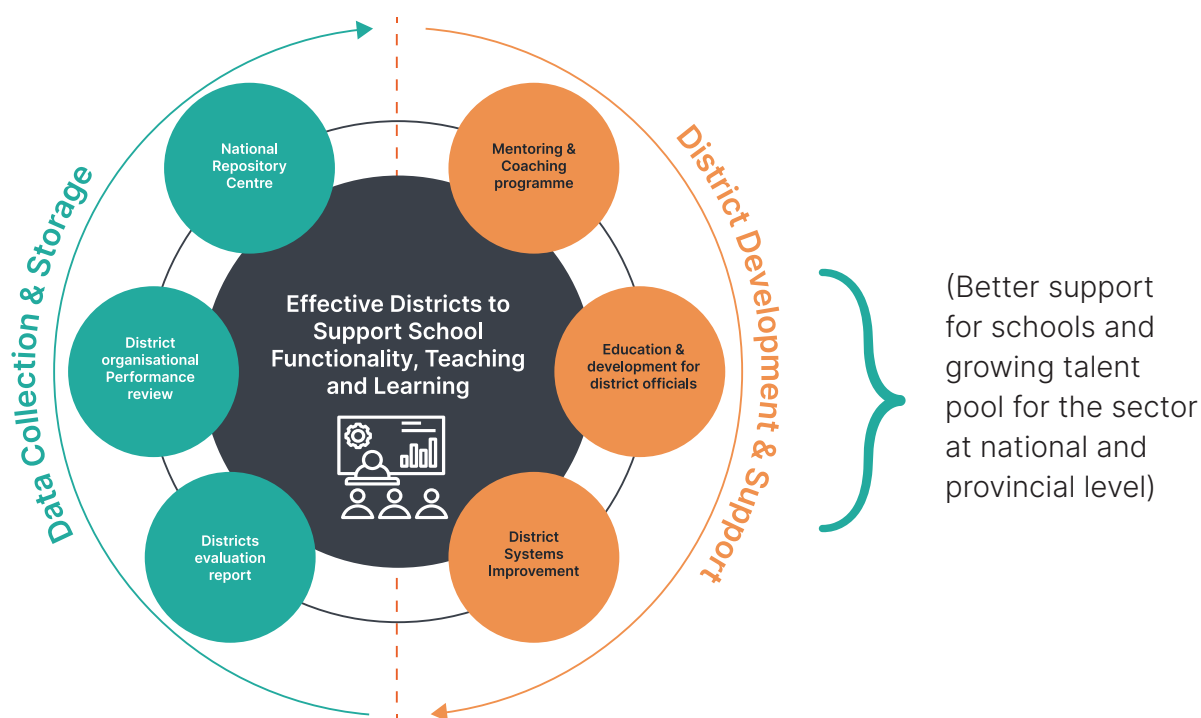


Figure 2: Integrated District Improvement Programme Model

6.1.1. Launching the IDIP

The IDIP set out to support all of the education districts in the country. It does, however, prioritise six provinces, with all 50 of their districts being included. The IDIP began making inroads in the other three provinces (Free State, Gauteng and Western Cape) with the inclusion of one district from each. In 2023, we collected key documents from each target district and analysed the organisational profiles of the districts to establish their readiness to drive school improvement. The following targets were achieved as part of assessing the status of planning, operations and reporting in the targeted districts:

- Approval of the IDIP and the approach by Heads of Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) and the CEM;
- Onboarding of 57 districts altogether (seven additional districts in Gauteng and Free State Provinces expressed interest in the IDIP);
- Profiling of 33 districts to plan for bespoke support;
- Review of five reading plans and five mathematics plans to establish how districts are implementing the national strategies.



On-boarding of Education Districts on the IDIP

The following table shows the breakdown of the progress made in each province to date.







	EC	KZN	LP	NW	MP	FS	NC	GP	WC	Actual Total	Target	% Total
Target Districts	12	12	10	4	4	1	5	1	1	50	50	100%
Profiled Districts	7	12	10	4	0	0	0	0	0	33	50	66%
Onboarded Districts	12	12	10	4	4	5	5	4	1	57	50	114%
Reading Plans Reviewed	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	5	50	10%
Numeracy Plans Reviewed	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	5	50	10%

6.1.2. Some positive highlights from the district profiling

- From the analysis of 10 districts in Limpopo, 12 districts in KwaZulu-Natal and one in the North-West Province, a set of interim findings was shared with the DBE. These findings highlight emerging strengths and areas for improvement in the districts.
- By December 2023, successful onboarding and briefing meetings were held with 57 districts across all







nine provinces, involving PED senior management, district directors and NECT senior management, to share these findings and to advocate for the IDIP model.

- District offices were encouraged to revisit their business processes with the aim of achieving higher levels of performance in their operations. Some positive starting points emerged from the analysis and engagements. These include:

 High levels of professional experience in the district offices	 Increased numbers of subject advisor appointments in understaffed districts
 More attention given to curriculum planning	 More emphasis on supporting teachers in the classroom
 More utilisation of data in the planning process	 Greater awareness of issues relating to school infrastructure

6.1.3. Opportunities to strengthen district operations

Additionally, we identified areas that require strengthening. These are summarised in the table below and ranked according to the level of complexity:

Category	Areas for Strengthening
<p>Lower order:</p> <p>Availability of calendars, training schedules and assessment plans, management meetings scheduled, agendas, follow-up activities and records</p>	 <p>Improve basic administration and business processes</p>
<p>Mid-level technical capabilities:</p> <p>Meaningful strategic and operational planning is characterised by prioritising explicit objectives and theories of change and linkages between operational plans on the one hand and district management teams' (DMTs) agendas and provincial priorities on the other. Balanced focus between high and primary schools, budgeting that is aligned to strategies and effective risk management systems.</p>	 <p>Increase strategic focus on priority areas</p>
	 <p>Strengthen the instructional core through curriculum management and implementation</p>
	 <p>Maximise stakeholder engagement, including the use of the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC)</p>
	 <p>Make budget information and financial management more transparent</p>
<p>Higher order systemic issues:</p> <p>High performance culture characterised by a shared professional identity, well- developed and shared sets of approaches, tools and instruments, and ability to innovate, stress-test policies and systematically feedback insights to the provincial and national levels. Effective monitoring, evaluation and feedback practices.</p>	 <p>Integrate monitoring and evaluation into all functions and prioritise the use of data in decision making</p>

6.1.4. NECT collects and organises district operational documents from 50 districts

Alongside the district profiling, analysis and onboarding we gathered documents (including policies, plans and process documents) from 50 districts. A shared data repository has been built for collecting, organising and sharing key planning and reporting documents across all districts in the country. The repository will serve as the basis for the better management of district operations by provincial and national departments.

The shared portal will improve:

- The management of key operational and reporting documents
- Development of district and operational plans
- Overall accountability and productivity
- Inter and intra provincial communication
- District-level monitoring of schools
- Preparation for external audits

6.2. IDIP Support Activities

6.2.1. District learning and development programme

To ensure district-level progress, we trained 98 district officials from 10 districts at our annual District Winter School. Districts from the Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal took part in the three-day training in July 2023.

The winter school is a vital component of the IDIP's learning and development strategy and aims to:



Upskill managers, practitioners and administrators in the country's poorest performing districts



Build a critical skills base for implementing holistic district and school operational plans that lead to improved learning and teaching



Promote a culture of excellence in district-level education administration to improve education quality and performance



Winter School Venue - Premier Hotel Roodevalley



2023 Winter School Reading Pack



Winter School Materials Being Distributed to District Delegates



District Delegates Engaged in Discussions to Provide Innovative Ideas for District Improvement



Group Discussions Held Between District Officials



Feedback Sessions from the District Officials



Dr Q Mloi Presenting Evidence for Education Improvement



District Officials Convening During Breaks to Further Discuss District Improvement

6.2.2. Professional development by teacher unions increases reach

In 2023, we continued to work with three teacher unions, namely NAPTOSA, PEU and NATU, to train teachers according to the priorities of each union's teacher development programme.

Education unions continue to distinguish themselves by demonstrating keen interest in the professional development of their members. A total of 515 teachers were trained during 2023, bringing the total number of teachers trained through this partnership to 12 053 since the collaboration commenced with four teacher unions in 2017.

During 2023, training initiatives focused on Assessment for Learning (AfL) to improve assessment and feedback in teaching and learning, with AfL training delivered to 433 teachers from NAPTOSA and 60 lead teachers from NATU. Additionally, Positive School Culture training was delivered to 22 PEU school management team members to improve their skills in fostering a supportive educational environment in their schools.



In addition to the **5 190** teachers trained through the Teacher Union Collaboration, our labour partnerships have upskilled the teachers affiliated with these four teacher unions:

- **SADTU: 3 656**
- **NAPTOSA: 2 595**
- **NATU: 549**
- **PEU: 63**



SGB Associations we collaborate with:

- **FEDSAS:** Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools
- **GA:** Governance Alliance
- **UF4SGBs:** United Front for School Governing Bodies
- **GBF:** Governing Body Foundation
- **NASGB:** National Association of School Governing Bodies
- **SANASE:** South African National Association for Special Education

6.2.3. Parent involvement through School Governing Body Associations

To improve the limited engagement of parents and communities in education, the NECT continues to foster a constructive partnership with six national school governing body (SGB) associations with the objective of optimising the collaborative work of the associations to support education improvement.

- In 2023, 16 representatives from the six SGB associations participated in data collection activities to establish SGB functionality criteria.

6.2.4. Promoting community participation

In 2023, seven District Steering Committees (DSCs) were established, bringing the total number of DSCs established since 2017 to 28. Four DSCs were established in Limpopo, and three were established in the Eastern Cape. In Limpopo, some districts had previously been merged, and the launch of four additional DSCs in the province ensures that each district has its own DSC to support education improvement. Through the DSC structures, districts engage stakeholders such as SGB associations, unions, and religious, social and community-based organisations to increase participation and engagement in education. This collaborative effort aims to proactively address localised barriers to education delivery.



513

community members were mobilised across **four provinces** (Limpopo, Eastern Cape, North West, Mpumalanga).

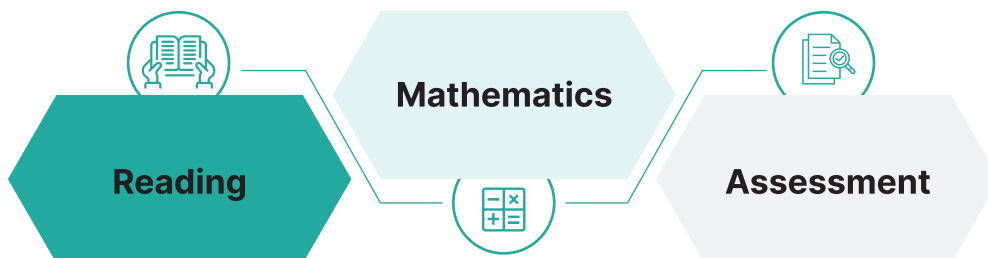
6.2.5. Care and support for teaching and learning

In collaboration with MIET Africa, 31 master trainers were prepared in the Foundations of the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) framework. Additionally, 320 district-based support team (DBST) members from eight districts in the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Northern Cape received training on the Psychosocial Support (PSS) Model for South African Schools. The training equipped district officials with the necessary knowledge and skills to implement PSS programmes in their districts.

6.3. Supporting Foundations for Learning





The IDIP supports foundational learning within the schooling system. During 2023, much of our activity focused on working directly with schools, with district officials being centrally placed in these initiatives so that they can take the lead in 2024 when we shift our focus to district support.

The Foundations for Learning (FFL) initiative was delivered in three main areas:



6.3.1. Improving district capacity to address South Africa's reading crisis

In 2023, we delivered four main initiatives that focused on enhancing reading:

<p>African Languages: Subject Advisor Resourcing and Orientation</p> 	<p>English First Additional Language: Subject Advisor and Teacher Resourcing and Training</p> 
<p>Second Additional Language: Subject Advisor and Teacher Resourcing and Training</p> 	<p>Online Teacher Training in Reading</p> 

6.3.1.1. African Languages: Subject Advisor Resourcing and Orientation

During 2023, Structured Learning Programmes (SLPs) that comprise daily teaching plans, reading books and texts and associated resources were developed in all 11 official home languages for use in the Foundation Phase. These SLPs have been designed to:

- Incorporate national international research about home language reading;
- Align with national reading benchmarks;
- Focus on the morphology of African languages to deepen understanding of word structure;
- Enhance teaching methods to match the unique features of African languages.

232

Foundation Phase subject advisors from **all nine provinces** were resourced and orientated to the programme.



6.3.1.2. English First Additional Language: Subject Advisor and Teacher Resourcing and Training

The Primary School Reading Improvement Programme (PSRIP) has been operational since 2016. The programme, implemented in partnership with the DBE across all nine provinces, is funded by the Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP SETA). The PSRIP upskills subject advisors and teachers responsible for teaching and learning English First Additional Language (EFAL) from Grades 1 to 7.

During 2023 the programme upskilled:

- 224 subject advisors; and
- 2 322 teachers

These officials were drawn from 721 schools. All beneficiaries received the full SLP EFAL resource pack and were trained in the programme and its supporting reading methodologies.



Since 2016, **39 844 teachers** and **1 277 subject advisors** have been trained and resourced in the English reading improvement programme.



6.3.1.3. Second Additional Language: Subject Advisor and Teacher Resourcing and Training

The Second Additional Language (SAL) strategy aims to introduce African languages incrementally in pursuit of advancing language diversity within South African schools. During 2023, 229 teachers, including 36 subject advisors, were trained on how to effectively support teaching in SAL across the 11 official languages, and also in Kiswahili. Additionally, SAL materials were also developed in Nama.

6.3.1.4. Online Teacher Training in Reading

The Comprehension Across the Curriculum (CATC) programme was conceived during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The programme, the first South African Council for Educators (SACE)-accredited online training initiative, is funded by the ETDPSETA and aims to enhance reading comprehension across all subjects from Grades 1 to 12.

- During 2023, 8 049 participants from all nine provinces participated in 10 544 courses.

6.3.2. Advancing Mathematics Education

In addition to the reading programmes, we have supported the DBE with the testing and scaling of a mathematics improvement programme:

6.3.2.1. Teaching Mathematics for Understanding

Since 2019, the NECT has been collaborating with the DBE and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to support the testing and scaling of the Teaching Mathematics for Understanding (TMU) framework for Grades 1 to 7 in KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Limpopo.

Since 2019, 27 subject advisors and 414 teachers have benefitted from the programme, demonstrating improvements in curriculum, assessment practices, teacher training, and the utilisation of teaching materials.

In 2023, the TMU pilot:

- Resourced and upskilled 19 subject advisors in programme methodology
- Resourced, trained and supported 342 teachers



The TMU framework strives to promote **critical thinking** and **problem-solving skills** to enhance the understanding of mathematics concepts.

The TMU advocates for:

- Conceptual understanding
- Procedural fluency
- Strategic competence and
- Reasoning

6.3.3. Assessment

6.3.3.1. Assessment for Learning

The AfL pilot programme introduced a teaching and learning approach that utilises assessment feedback to personalise instruction, with the aim of bridging the gap between learners' current achievement levels and their expected proficiency.

The programme enhances the capacity of subject advisors, and subsequently teachers, to support the integration of AfL approaches into teaching and learning practices, focusing particularly on learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

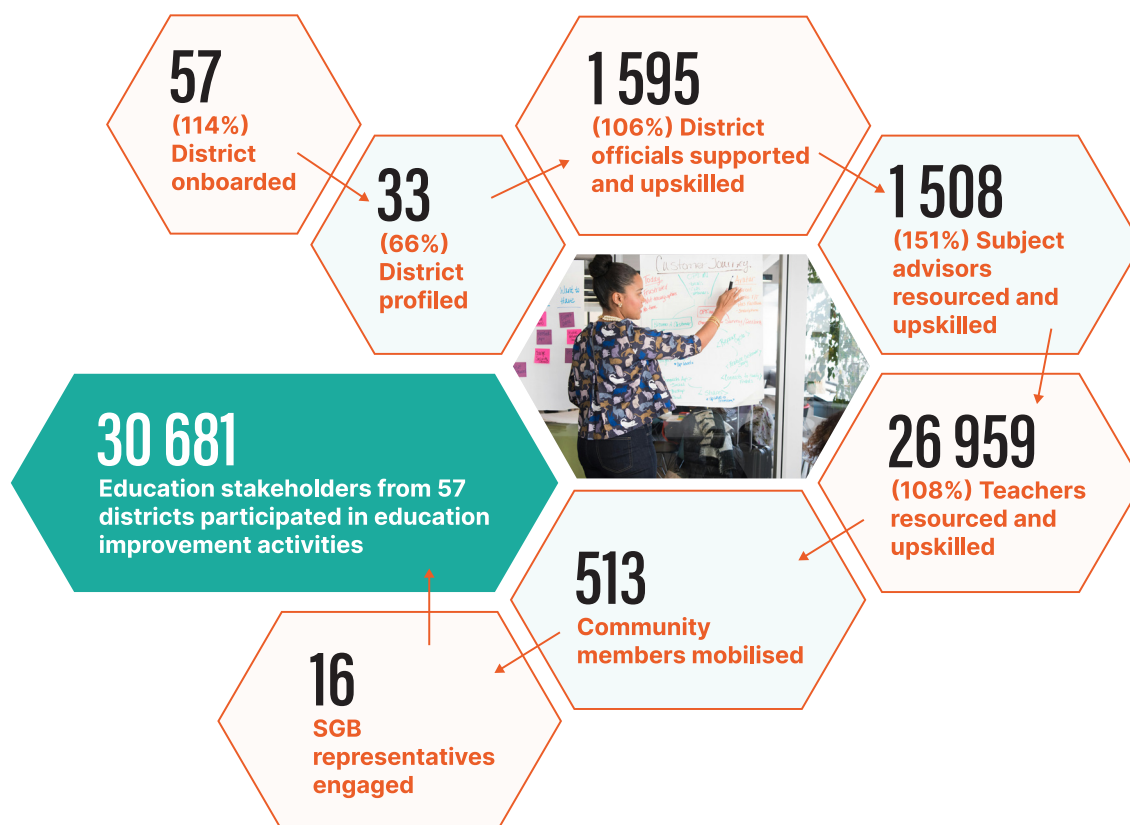
Nationwide implementation across all nine provinces is planned for 2024.



In 2023, the NECT collaborated with Provincial Education Departments in North West and Mpumalanga to pilot **the AfL programme** in one district in each province.

80 subject advisors from these districts were trained in the approach.


Integrated District Improvement Programme Impact Map




“% of the total targeted reach”

6.4. Community Outreach

In addition to the activities within districts and schools, we supplemented the potential for learning improvement by supporting activities that are rooted in but extend beyond the formal education system. In 2023, these included:



The National Reading Coalition



The Household Planner Project

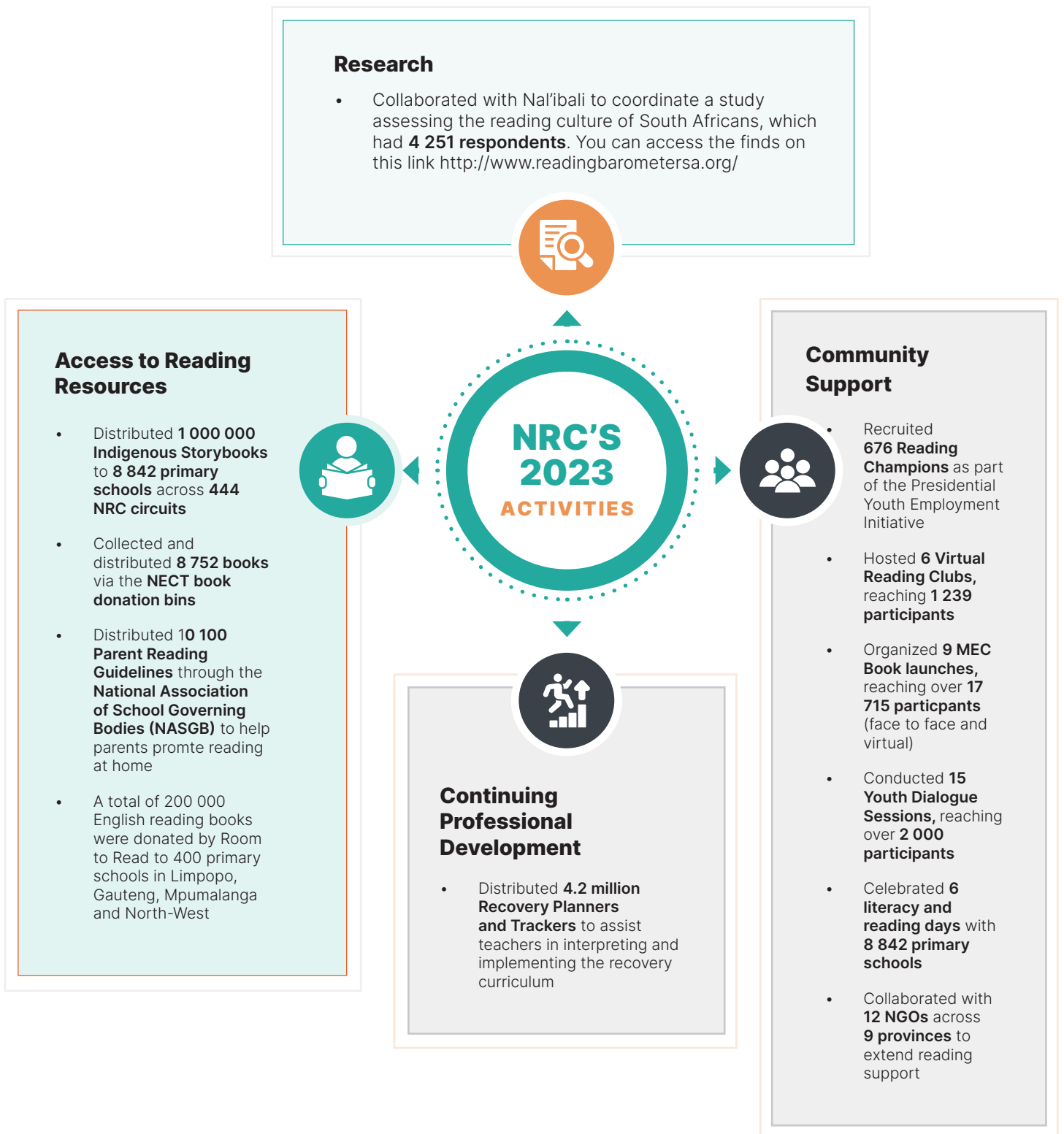
6.4.1. The National Reading Coalition

Maintaining our commitment to advancing literacy, we continued to prioritise reading as a key area of focus. Collaborating closely with the Foundations for Learning Directorate and the Curriculum Branch of the DBE, we strategically planned and executed various reading activities that extended into schools and communities.

Throughout 2023, numerous reading initiatives were successfully delivered, with the following scope and reach:



NECT reading improvement achievements in 2023 include:



6.4.2. How to connect households to schools

We collaborated with the DBE to pilot Household Planners (HHP) in 92 primary schools across six districts in four provinces (Limpopo, North West, Mpumalanga and Eastern Cape).

- 28 200 HHP mathematics resources were distributed to 92 pilot schools.
- Foundation Phase resources were made available in five African languages: Xitsonga, Tshivenda, Sepedi, Setswana, and IsiXhosa.

This pilot aimed to assess the programme's effectiveness and the feasibility of the HHPs in improving learning outcomes and encouraging parental involvement in education. The main benefits of the programme included:

- Improved parental involvement in homework activities
- Increased attendance at parent meetings
- Better communication between parents and teachers



The HHPs were developed to aid **parents and guardians** to:

- Follow weekly and termly topics
- Monitor daily learning progress
- Support homework and study time

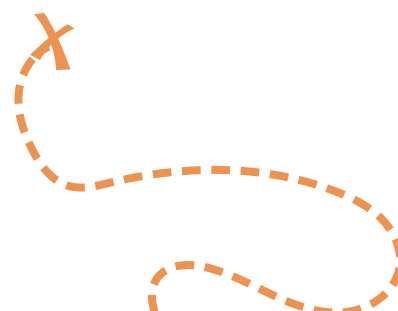


An impact evaluation on the HHP Pilot project was conducted during 2023. Data was collected from parents **(520)**, schools department heads **(31)** and teachers **(80)**.

Research Findings:

- Both **parents (65%)** and **teachers (80%)** consider the HHP to be a useful tool.
- More than **60% of the parents** observed an improvement in their children's performance since they started using the HHP.
- Most **teachers (>70%)** report that the learners do more homework and their understanding of taught concepts improved since the introduction of the HHP.

The National Reading Coalition Impact Map



A photograph of a person's hands using a laptop at a desk. The desk is white and has a coffee cup, a small green plant, and a notebook. The background is a window with a view of a city. A teal hexagon is overlaid on the bottom right, containing the number 7 and the text 'Systems Capacity Support and Advisory'. A large orange hexagon is overlaid on the bottom left.

7

**Systems
Capacity
Support and
Advisory**

7. Systems Capacity Support and Advisory

Following the reorganisation and reconfiguration of the NECT in **2023**, a dedicated division focusing on building the education system's capacity emerged.

The strategic intent for the Systems Capacity Support and Advisory Division is:



To enhance the state's sustainable ability to meet both immediate and future educational needs. This is done by identifying technical gaps within the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and injects vital technical skills to improve capacity. The identification of the technical gaps is done in collaboration with the different branches within the Department.

Division Two, has three Sub-Divisions: The Education Technical Assistance Office (ETAO), which provides tailored technical expertise to enhance capacity within the DBE and in provinces; **Education Futures (Ed-Futures)**, which facilitates discussions on trends shaping the future of South African education, promoting the inclusion of foresight in strategy development and planning, which in turn should foster an innovative and resilient education system; and **Special Projects (SP)**, which addresses systemic challenges through agile and responsive project management strategies.

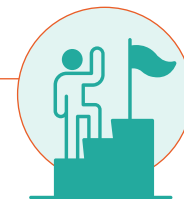
The division holds itself accountable through the following success indicators:

- Increased engagement of technical expertise in the education system;
- Enhanced capacity building through the injection of technical expertise where there are gaps, which will assist the Department in implementing strategic initiatives. In the long term, this support will contribute to the Department's vision of providing quality education;
- Insights and platforms generated for discussing the future of education.

The following key initiatives were implemented by the division's various sub-units in 2023:

7.1. Education Technical Assistance Office (ETAO) sub-division

Provides tailored technical expertise to enhance capacity within the DBE and in provinces.



Achievements

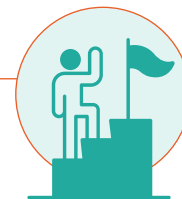
With the injection of a total of 11 Technical Assistants, the DBE was able to achieve the following outcomes:

- Developed the planning framework for the Occupational Stream Pilot.
- Created the strategy for the nationwide rollout of Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education (MTbBE) by 2025.
- Designed the institutional framework for the National Institute for Curriculum and Professional Development (NICPD), awaiting ministerial approval.
- Developed the Online Teacher Development Platform (OTDP), enhancing access to professional development resources for teachers.
- Facilitated a national dialogue with 199 participants, shaping the new Early Childhood Development (ECD) strategy.

In 2023, the Systems Capacity Support and Advisory Division significantly enhanced the capacity of the education system through strategic initiatives and expert support. The Education Technical Assistance Office (ETAO) played a fundamental role in developing frameworks for new educational pathways and bilingual education, facilitating critical dialogues, and establishing sustainable teacher development platforms.

7.2. Education Futures (Ed-Futures) sub-division:

provide a platform for education stakeholders and government to explore trends shaping the future of South African education.



Achievements

- **Research into Education Futures:** Ed-Futures conducted in-depth research to understand the landscape of how futures research is utilised in education. The study identified key stakeholders in the education sector as well as strategic and sectoral gaps to inform the approach to the use of futures research in strategy development and education planning for the sector.

With the injection of a total of 4 Technical Assistants, the DBE was able to achieve the following:

- **South African Competency Framework:** Developed a framework for 21st-century skills through two years of research and consultation with over 1 000 stakeholders across nine provinces. This framework will assist in the strengthening and adaptation of the curriculum to ensure learners exit the system with relevant competencies. It was officially adopted by the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) in November 2023.

The Education Futures (Ed-Futures) sub-division advanced forward-looking strategies by researching future education trends and creating the South African Competency Framework, ensuring learners acquire essential 21st-century skills

7.3. Special Projects Sub-Division:

The Special Projects Sub-Division focuses on targeted initiatives that directly impact schools and learners. Notable achievements of its initiatives are described below:

a. **Transforming Education Management: Progress in South African School Administration and Management System (SA-SAMS) Modernisation**

- Phase one of the SA-SAMS Modernisation project has successfully concluded the development of the three core modules (Manage Learner, Manage School, and Manage Staff), and the design and development of the Curriculum and Assessment module is underway.
- User acceptance testing of the three completed modules was subsequently undertaken, and about 50% of the 2 400 schools identified for the purpose have tested the three modules successfully.
- The next phase is to pilot the modules in all nine provinces, with the Free State doing a full provincial rollout

Summary of four of the 14 envisaged core modules:

LEARNER MANAGEMENT

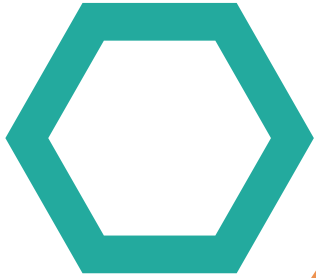
The module streamlines enrolment, monitors attendance, evaluates academic performance, and tracks progression. It uses robust analytics and customisable reports to help educators make informed decisions and improve learner outcomes.





SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

The module optimises school administration and operations, managing profiles, services, infrastructure, extracurricular activities, staff and learner behaviour, performance, timetables, feeder schools, transfers, drop-outs, new school year preparations, and compliance with educational standards and regulations.



STAFF MANAGEMENT

The Staff module manages attendance, performance evaluation, professional development, and administration, streamlining staff allocation, tracking attendance, assessing performance, facilitating growth opportunities, and handling administrative tasks to ensure optimal staff management and a productive educational environment.



CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT MODULE

The module streamlines the organisation, implementation, and evaluation of school curricula and assessments. It manages curriculum creation, lesson planning, assessment administration, performance tracking, and reporting, and ensures alignment with educational standards, thereby supporting continuous improvement in teaching and learning outcomes.

b. Empowering Digital Learning: Remote and Digital Learning (RDL) Initiative

In collaboration with 28 partners, the RDL project delivered curriculum-aligned content and online support for Grade R to 12 learners, teachers and parents. The initiative aimed to assist with curriculum coverage, revision and exam preparation through two key multi-platform campaigns:

- Tswelopele Learner Support Campaign: Provided curriculum support for Grade R to 11 learners, teachers and parents.
- Woza Matrics Catch-Up Campaign: Focused on curriculum coverage and exam preparation for Grade 12 learners.

Platform Utilisation in 2023:

- Television: DBEtv (Openview Channel 122), SABC Education (SABC Plus), Mzansi Wethu (DSTV Channel 163)
- Mobile Apps: Matric Live, 2Enable, MTN Online School, WhatsApp (Tswelopele & Woza Matrics)
- Online Platforms: YouTube (Tswelopele & Woza Matrics), iono.fm, Spotify, DBE Cloud, various websites (Tswelopele, Woza Matrics, DBE)

Content Creation and Reach:

- Developed **372** learner lessons and **17** ATP teacher support videos. (Subjects broadcast included: Agricultural Sciences, Accounting, EFAL, EMS, Home Language, Life Orientation, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, Geography, History, Mathematics, Maths Literacy, Technology, as well as Teacher Support).



c. 149 Schools Transformed: Sanitation Appropriate for Education (SAFE) Project's Impact in 2023

Established in 2018, the SAFE project collaborates with the DBE to eradicate pit latrines in schools across KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Limpopo. The project's strategic focus on providing safe and dignified sanitation facilities has significantly enhanced student safety, particularly in underserved communities. Moreover, the SAFE project extends its support beyond sanitation infrastructure by providing strategic infrastructure assistance during disasters and emergencies. For instance, in response to the July 2021 unrest and the April 2022 floods in KwaZulu-Natal, the project played a crucial role in providing aid.



In 2023, we successfully constructed sanitation facilities and carried out infrastructure repairs in **149 schools**.

Impact: contributing to a safer and more conducive learning environment, reaching up to

43 211 learners across the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo.

Images of the work completed in 2023:

Xabadiya Primary School, Eastern Cape

Before



After



Bohwelabatho Primary School, Limpopo

Before



After



Masonwabe JPS, Eastern Cape

Before



After



Dalala Primary School, KwaZulu-Natal

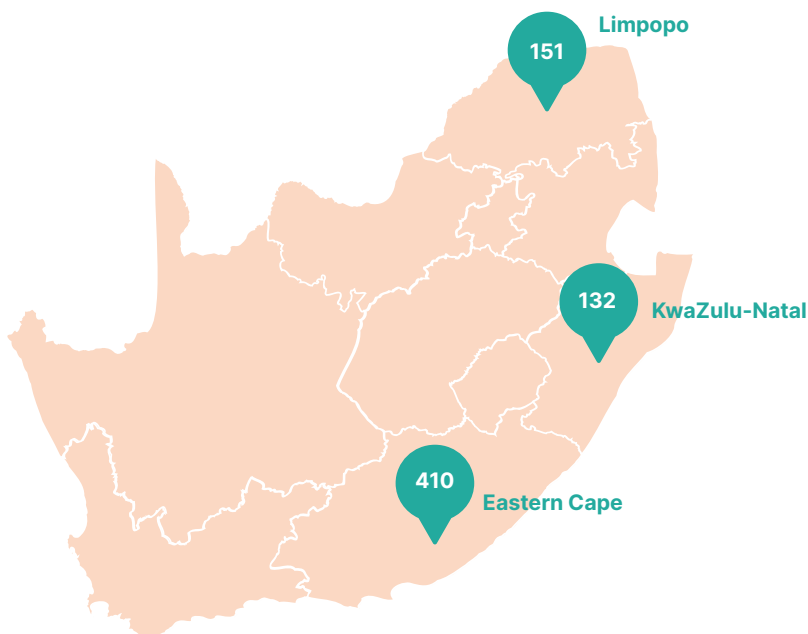
Before



After



Schools that have benefited from the SAFE project since 2018



Of the **693 completed SAFE projects** since inception, a total of **199** were delivered through private-sector funding, while **494** were funded through government allocated funds.

d. Empowering Inclusive Early Education: Gender-Responsive Teaching Training (GRP4ECE):

The Department has made significant strides in advancing early childhood education by equipping 4 000 ECD practitioners and Grade R teachers with the necessary skills to create gender-responsive and inclusive learning environments. This initiative is part of the broader effort to ensure that early education is equitable and effective for all children.

To support ECD practitioners, 4 000 tablets were distributed across four provinces. The tablets were preloaded with valuable resources designed to enhance teaching and learning.

Features of the tablet content:

- **Introductory video:** Each tablet includes a video guide to help practitioners navigate and utilise the device effectively.
- **Learner Management System (LMS):** The tablets are equipped with an LMS, providing access to the GRP4ECE online self-training modules.

Distribution of tablets:

Province	Tablets Delivered
Northern Cape	962
North-West	978
Free State	1 050
Eastern Cape	1 010
Total	4 000

In addition to the distribution of tablets, a two-day physical training session was conducted to further support the professional development of ECD practitioners. This training focused on equipping practitioners with the knowledge and skills to implement gender-responsive teaching practices.












Training Summary

Province	Practitioners Trained:
Northern Cape	962
North-West	978
Free State	1 050
Eastern Cape	1 010
Total	4 000

e. Empowering Life Skills Education: Life Orientation Textbooks Development Project

During 2023, the development of **Life Orientation Textbooks** for Grades 4 to 12 was finalised, resulting in open-source materials and a comprehensive Teachers' Guide for the Life Skills and Life Orientation curriculum.

In order to facilitate conceptual progression of concepts through the nine years of schooling, 12 threads were identified. A thread consists of conceptually related sets of lessons (a lesson set consists of CAPS content to be covered within a particular time period). The 12 threads are:

 <p>1</p> <p>Development of self, mental health, emotions, self-concept, self-management, life plan</p>	 <p>2</p> <p>Sexuality, safe and unsafe relationships, lifestyles and habits</p>	 <p>3</p> <p>Conflict, bullying, peer pressure, violence</p>	 <p>4</p> <p>Safety – road, railway, water, fire, electricity, cyber safety</p>
 <p>5</p> <p>Human rights and constitutional education, social responsibility and religious tolerance</p>	 <p>6</p> <p>Health and hygiene, communicable diseases including HIV</p>	 <p>7</p> <p>Substance abuse and nutrition</p>	 <p>8</p> <p>Environmental health – local and global action</p>
 <p>9</p> <p>World of work</p>	 <p>10</p> <p>Study skills</p>	 <p>11</p> <p>Creative Arts</p>	 <p>12</p> <p>Physical Education</p>

The DBE has completed the development and quality review of the English versions of these textbooks. The next step is to version these textbooks into Afrikaans and Braille, as required for state textbooks. Once this step is completed, the books will be added to the school catalogue and be made available in digital format for provinces and schools to print.

Systems Capacity Support and Advisory Impact Map





8

Social Compact Building and Partnerships



8. Social Compact

Building and Partnerships

In the past decade, the education sector has not experienced any strikes, a success attributed to the role of dialogues and consultative forums. The NECT has been pivotal in convening these dialogues, a fact echoed by teacher unions, civil society and the DBE. Founded on the principle of dialogue, the NECT brings together stakeholders, thought leaders, business and civil society representatives and others to discuss and find solutions to issues in education improvement.

8.1. Stakeholder engagements: Fostering collaboration for education improvement

The Education DialogueSA Sub-Division is a key component of Division 3, and through the dialogues it convenes, the NECT interacts regularly with a wide range of role-players and stakeholders. For many constituencies, the dialogues are the public face of the NECT, where participants benefit from the various platforms provided to engage with each other and with the Minister and Department. As such, the Dialogue programme seeks to assist the NECT in positioning itself as a credible and independent interlocutor between government and civil society.

During 2023, Education DialogueSA focused on enhancing conversations within the sector through policy dialogues, civil society forums and national and provincial dialogues.

2023 Education DialogueSA Key Highlights



Success may be measured in part by the levels of participation in the Dialogues, which indicates both interest and belief in the integrity of the discussions.

Civil Society Forum

This platform enables government and civil society to discuss sector developments, share ideas and plan education priorities. In 2023, two consultative forums engaged 356 participants. The Minister challenged the NECT to facilitate the development of an Education Manifesto by civil society in 2024.



Policy Dialogues on Education Transformation



This series seeks to bring together thought leaders, policy makers, academics and practitioners to reflect on the 30 years of education transformation in South Africa and explore future possibilities beyond 2024. The first two dialogues were convened in 2023: 1) Convergences and Differences: Party Positions on Basic Education, 2) Values in Education. The latter garnered more interest from the sector and was presented during the Director General's engagement with provinces.

10th Anniversary Celebrations – Provincial Dialogues.

As a pre-cursor to the NECT's 10th Anniversary National Convention, provincial dialogues were convened in four provinces (Mpumalanga, Limpopo, Eastern Cape and North West), with a total reach of 732 attendees. These dialogues provided a platform for the NECT and its provincial partners to share insights and lessons learned from a decade of collaboration in driving education improvement. (See section 9 for more details)



Stakeholder engagement



On behalf of the DBE, the NECT engaged with business and labour constituencies to develop a compact for education improvement, under the auspices of the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC). This engagement provided a platform for the NECT to showcase its collaborative work within the sector.

PIRLS Dialogues: Beyond the Rankings

The Minister's Reading Dialogue convened 300 participants, including reading experts, education stakeholders, teachers and learners. This dialogue facilitated discussions on local and international reading assessments such as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) within the current educational context.



Stakeholder Engagements Impact Map.



8.2. Partnerships

8.2.1. Enhancing learner support and wellbeing through CSTL Initiatives

Partnerships are at the core of NECT's programming and strategic direction. The establishment of the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) Investment Portfolio in 2020 has solidified these partnerships by bringing together key partners and role players across various sectors who are committed to supporting the national care and support mandate. The CSTL programme focused on initiatives that strengthen the education system. These initiatives include the CSTL Research Programme, Foundation Training, Promoting Youth Leadership and Agency, and Improving Psychosocial Support (PSS) across the country.

From partnering with three universities in 2022 to advance evidence-based planning, the NECT expanded its collaboration to include six universities in 2023. Additionally, two prominent partners were added to the NECT network, namely the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) and RMB/EDivision, which enhanced partner participation in the development of a digital platform. This platform aims to consolidate services, enabling districts to make informed decisions and plans.

Below are some of the key of achievements of the CSTL Investment Portfolio:

Common Elements Treatment Approach



In collaboration with the DBE, Johns Hopkins university experts, UNICEF, and the University of Johannesburg, **35 master trainers** were trained on the Common Elements Treatment Approach (CETA). The NECT has created a window of innovation for the country by supporting the DBE in its endeavour to build the capacity of the system to provide psychosocial support to learners and educators. This initiative aims to capacitate non-mental health professionals with skills and tools for treating mental health problems and stress-related disorders in schools.

Child and Youth Agency Framework



This framework gives learners agency to participate in areas that affect them directly, for example, climate change actions and learner leadership. Through the Ubuntu Youth Leaders Programme, which aims to build servant leaders, a total of **2 881 youth** were reached in 2023.

CSTL Research



The NECT partnered with six universities in South Africa to implement the CSTL Research Programme, aiming to advance knowledge and evidence of care and support initiatives within the education system. A successful CSTL Conference convened experts to share knowledge, receive advice and set priorities for enhancing CSTL services. Up to **500 stakeholders** joined the conference.

CSTL Foundation Training



Through the CSTL Foundation Training, a total of **533 district officials** were trained in six provinces. The purpose of the training was to raise awareness and orientate districts to gain an understanding of CSTL as well as their role in its implementation.



Ubuntu Training Facilitated by the Youth Leaders - Pretoria



Ubuntu Master Trainers - SADC, MIET, Zimbabwe, Zambia



Ubuntu Training with COSAS Members



Master Training Partnering with Youth Organisations - Coach Itu Academy



Ubuntu Testimony - Sharing of Ideas in Pretoria



Team Reflections

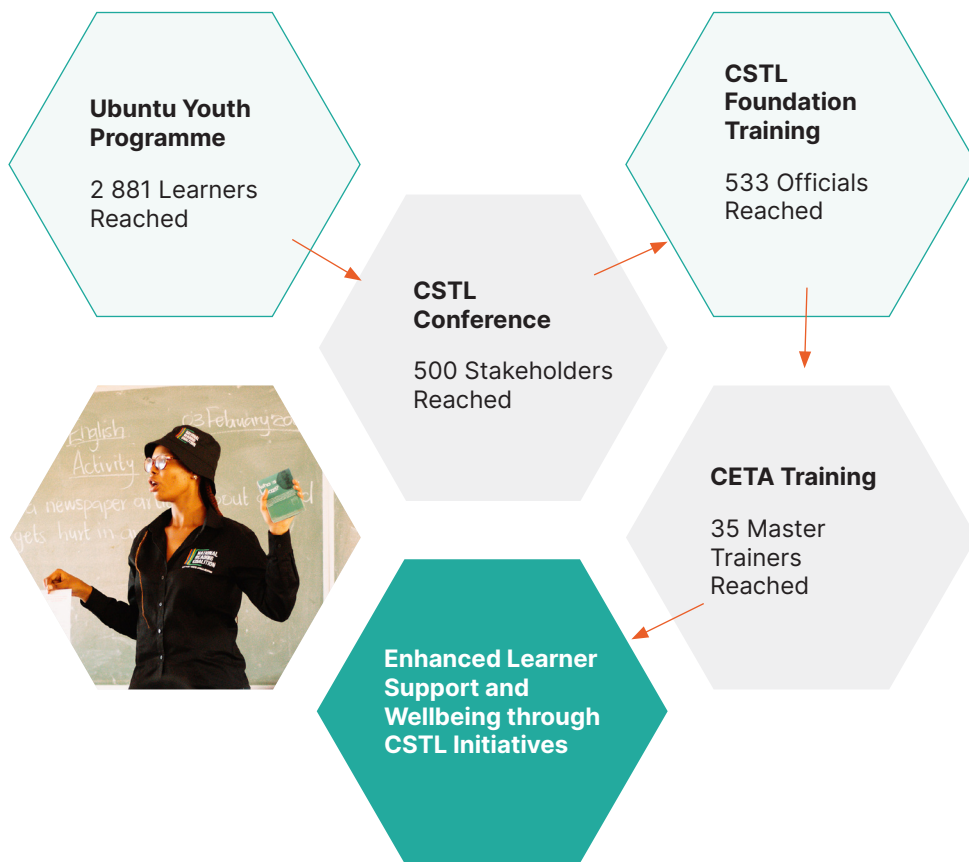


Ubuntu Youth Leaders Programme and the CSTL Conference



Free State TLO Master Trainers - 5 Districts

Care and Support for Teaching and Learning Investment Portfolio Impact Map.



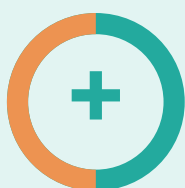
8.2.2. Nine universities collaborate on the Classroom Research Project.



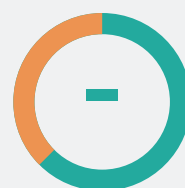
In partnership with the **Teaching, Teacher, and Teacher Education for Equitable and Quality Education Research (TTTEQL)** consortium, comprising nine South African universities, the NECT launched the first phase of a teaching pedagogics pilot study across all nine provinces.

The project aims to unlock the “black box” of South African classrooms by responding to a need for greater research in order to understand the learning and teaching dynamics in classrooms. Preliminary findings on classroom dynamics in South Africa were unveiled at the NECT’s 10th Anniversary celebration in September. These insights were also be shared at the Education Dean’s Forum and the South African Education Research Association’s conference in October 2023, with the aim of informing key stakeholders about and raising awareness of classroom dynamics as well as fostering discussions on best practices, capacity development and strategic policy interventions.

Some key preliminary findings from the research:



The most salient finding is that the pedagogical practices of **55%** and **45%** of teachers across all the sampled schools were found to be **highly effective** for the dimensions learner engagement and classroom environment respectively. Highly effective refers to the pedagogical practices in which all the elements of the particular dimension of productive pedagogy were observed.



On the negative side, teaching related to the introduction of lessons was found the **most lacking**, as indicated by **62%** of pedagogical practices of teachers observed to be at the emerging effective level.



9

NECT's 10th Anniversary Campaign



9. NECT's 10th Anniversary Campaign

As guided by Minister Motshekga and the Board of Trustees in 2022, NECT management developed a six-month plan to commemorate the NECT's 10th anniversary, which took place in July 2023. A campaign was launched in February 2023 under the theme **"10 Years of Social Capital Building for Education Improvement"**. The campaign aimed to:

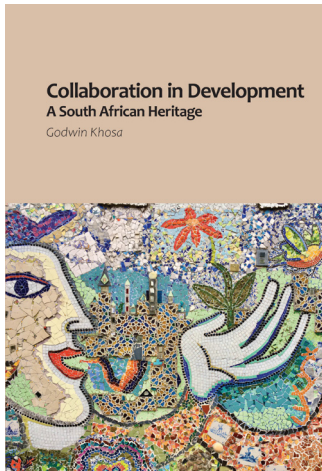
1. Magnify and celebrate the successes and impact of the NECT's work;
2. Provide platforms for reflecting on and sharing lessons learnt in driving collaboration for education improvement;
3. Present proposals for strengthening collaborative interventions like the NECT for improved education outcomes.

This section provides an overview of how the 10th anniversary commemoration unfolded.

9.1. Publications

The NECT undertook a significant initiative to commission, write and publish a series of comprehensive publications. These publications were created to document and preserve the noteworthy achievements, milestones and lessons learned during the organisation's ten-year journey. By capturing the organisation's progression, impactful activities and accumulated knowledge, these publications celebrate the NECT's legacy and provide a lasting resource for stakeholders, partners and the broader community interested in understanding the organisation's transformative impact.

Collaboration in Development - A South African Heritage



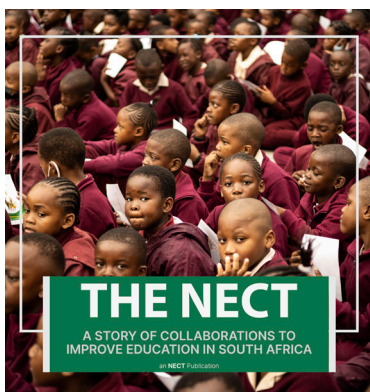
Inspired by his doctoral dissertation titled **“Modelling Multiple Stakeholder Approach to Education Services Improvement: A Case study of the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT)”**, Dr Godwin Khosa, CEO of the NECT, launched the publication at Inanda, Sandton, on 12 September 2023. The book provides a synthesis of the multistakeholder collaboration model that was used to launch the NECT in 2013 and the role of social capital, national heritage and networking theory in operationalising partnerships with the aim of driving education improvement.

10 Years of Impact: Our Learning Legacy of Empowerment, Innovation and Transformation



This collection weaves a vibrant tapestry of knowledge, fresh perspectives and reimagined ideas to breathe life into and redefine our approach to educational improvement. Within these pages, you will gain access to the minds of the NECT’s passionate implementation staff, each contributing their unique and diverse viewpoint to enrich the depth and breadth of this work.

The NECT: A Story of Collaborations to Improve Education in South Africa



Discover the inspiring journey that began with a dream and a handful of visionaries in 2012. **“The NECT: A Story of Collaborations to Improve Education in South Africa”** pulls back the curtain on a decade of daring initiatives and transformative partnerships. When the National Development Plan issued a call to action, a fearless group of patriots answered - uniting business, civil society, unions and government under one ambitious umbrella.

9.2. The NECT documentary

The documentary is a visual account of the NECT's journey since its formation and features interviews with various stakeholders from business, civil society, unions and government. Ten years and countless milestones later, this documentary illuminates the extraordinary impact of the organisation. More than just a tale of educational reform, it is a masterclass on the power of collaboration. The documentary was premiered on the NECT YouTube channel and shared across various social media platforms.

9.3. Lessons from 10 years of education improvement: 10th Anniversary dialogues

These dialogues preceded the 10th Anniversary Convention, providing a platform for the NECT and its provincial partners to share insights and lessons learned from a decade of collaboration in driving education improvement. Held in four targeted provinces (Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape and North West), with 732 attendees, the dialogues were well-received and engaging. Key insights from the dialogues highlighted the positive experiences of provincial departments when collaborating with the NECT.



Various provincial officials gathered at the Waterkloof Hills Primary School in Rustenburg, North West



The Mpumalanga Province hosted the dialogue at the Alex Benjamin Secondary School, Hendrina

9.4. Looking forward: NECT's 10th Anniversary Convention Declaration

On 11 and 12 September 2023, over 300 delegates representing government, the private sector, teacher unions, teachers, universities, community leaders and the media gathered to reflect on the NECT's first decade. The theme of the convention was "Reflections on Collaboration to Enhance Education Reform Efforts in South Africa". Over sixty national and international experts reflected on the collaborative education improvement efforts led by the NECT over the past decade and discussed the future of education in South Africa.

1. Work of the NECT

- Acknowledgement of NECT's 10 years of work
- Leveraged Social Capital network to uplift teacher capacity
- Improvement of teaching methodologies
- Systemic approach that reached 25% of teachers through subject advisors

2. Districts & Schools

- Need to strengthen district discourse with focus on foundational learning
- Optimum utilisation of district capacity budgeted for
- Simultaneous building of its capacity
- Care not to conflate pilots with actual delivery of education

5. Partnerships & Collaboration

- Greater clarity of education improvement vision at national, provincial and district level to increase leverage potential
- Need to strengthen and reinforce impact metrics
- Professional associations needs to be brought to the centre along with teacher unions at the beginning of initiative
- Taking advantage of secondments to strengthen the system as well as build teacher capacity
- Planning and resourcing should heed the need for demographic balance for sustainability
- Strengthen collaboration between DBE and DHET



4. Exploring the future of Education

- Awareness of tension between keeping the integrity of the system and pacing it with the fast-changing world
- Need to consolidate the curriculum strengthening initiatives and the schools of specialisation

3. System Programming & Policy

- Vying for adaptable policies to reach schools
- Large scale interventions to prioritise buy in, data and international experiences
- Acknowledgement and planning of education reform as a multiyear endeavor, building on previous lessons, failures and successes
- Budget for capacity building initiatives that centre around one or two focus areas

A Decade of the NECT



Ed-hub exhibition



Stage for panel discussions



10 Year Convention hall with delegates seated



Brian Figaji and Min Angie Motshekga



Brian Figaji, Min Angie Motshekga, NECT Chairperson Sizwe Nxasana



Brian Figaji, Min Angie Motshekga, NECT Chairperson Sizwe Nxasana and Mweli Mathanzima (DG)



Delegates attentively listening to insights from the keynote speaker



Opening remarks from the Angie Motshekga Minister of Basic Education

10-year Anniversary Highlights



Gift ceremony for the Trustees



Delegates attending a keynote session on reflection of the NECT's work in the last decade



Enthusiastic delegates listening to speakers



Delegates from across the education sector gather at the 10th Anniversary Convention, ready to exchange ideas and collaborate on future initiatives.



Address from Basil Manuel (NAPTOSA)



Opening and Welcoming from Sizwe Nxasana



Panel Discussions



Address from Nkosana Dolopi (SADTU)



10

Financial Review

10. Financial Review

The NECT total income reached R2.8 billion for the period 2014 to 2023. In 2023, the income decreased to R333.2 million from R466.8 million recorded in 2022, representing a decrease of 29%. This reduction in income for 2023 is mainly attributed to the decreased income realised from the SAFE project and response initiatives (COVID-19, floods, riots). The DBE SAFE project is nearing completion, with only 56 projects out of the allocated 550 remaining as of 31 December 2023.

Similarly, expenditure in 2023 decreased by 33% compared to the previous year, aligning with the decrease in income movement and resulting in a surplus of R6.8 million for 2023. The loss from the prior year is attributed to learning recovery investments made during that period.

The accumulated surpluses are planned to be invested in districts over three years to support priority programmes jointly undertaken with the private sector, districts and the DBE.

10.1. Abridged statement of comprehensive income, statement of financial position and statement of cash flows

The abridged statements below are extracts from the annual financial statements as audited by PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc. The full audited annual financial statements, which received an unqualified audit opinion, are available on the NECT's website (www.nect.org.za).

Tables 1 and 2 and 3 below present an abridged statement of comprehensive income, statement of financial position as at 31 December 2023, and statement of cash flows respectively.

Table 1: Abridged statement of comprehensive income

Statement of Comprehensive Income	2023 R	2022 R	Movement %
Income	333,231,672	466,971,246	(29%)
Expenditure	336,699,659	505,528,260	(33%)
Operating Surplus/(Deficit)	(3,467,986)	(38,557,014)	(91%)
Net Finance Charges	10,271,178	9,154,863	12%
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	6,803,192	(29,402,152)	(123%)

Table 2: Abridged statement of financial position

Statement of Financial Position	2023 R	2022 R	Movement %
ASSETS			
Non-Current Assets	3,188,136	4,287,758	(26%)
Current Assets	158,509,087	254,352,678	(38%)
Total Assets	161,697,223	258,640,437	(37%)
FUNDS AND LIABILITIES			
Accumulated Funds	118,716,885	111,913,693	6%
Non-Current Liabilities	91,031	1,403,462	(94%)
Current Liabilities	42,889,307	145,323,282	(70%)
Total Funds and Liabilities	161,697,223	258,640,437	(37%)

Table 3: Abridged statement of cash flows

Statement of cash flows	2023 R	2022 R	Movement %
Net cash flows from/ (used in) operating activities	(96,354,877)	(7,181,991)	1242%
Net cash used in investing activities	(725,627)	(339,387)	114%
Net cash flows used in financing activities	(1,607,745)	(1,442,887)	11%
Net decrease in cash and cash equivalents for the year	(98,688,251)	(8,964,265)	1001%
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	238,515,254	247,479,523	(4%)
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	139,827,004	229,550,993	(39%)

10.2. Analysis of income

Figure 3 below presents the income distribution between core and special projects in 2023 compared to 2022.

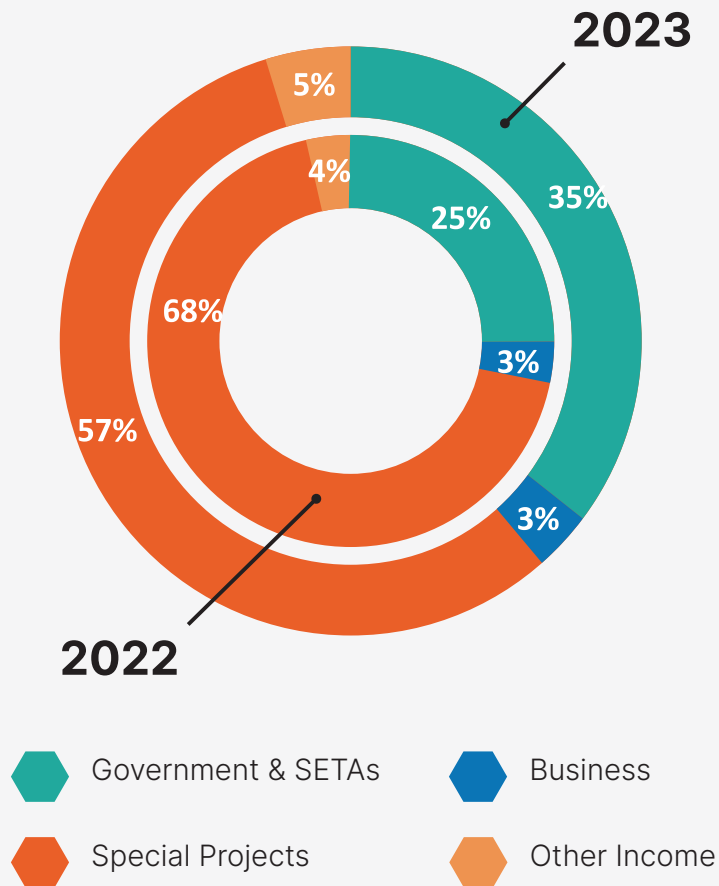
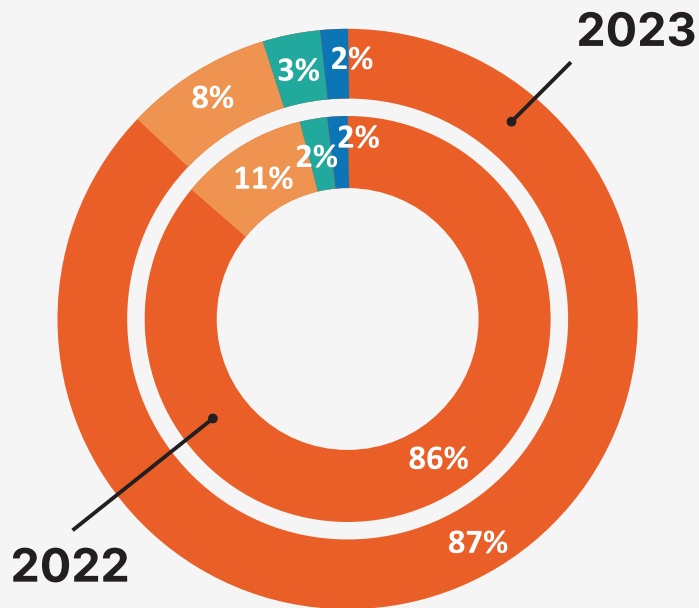


Figure 3: Funding distribution between Core and Special Projects

The percentage of special projects funding decreased slightly from 68% in 2022 to 57% in 2023, primarily due to a decrease in income from the SAFE project and response initiatives (COVID-19, floods, riots).

The private sector's funding contributions to core projects remained stagnant from the prior year at 3%, while the government's funding contribution increased from 25% in 2022 to 35% in 2023.

Figure 4 depicts the overall sources of income (core and special projects) for the NECT in 2023 compared to 2022:



- Government & SETAs
- Business
- Investment Income
- Other Income

Figure 4: Sources of Funding

Government is the major contributor of funding for both core and special projects. In 2023, government contribution increased slightly from 86% to 87%.

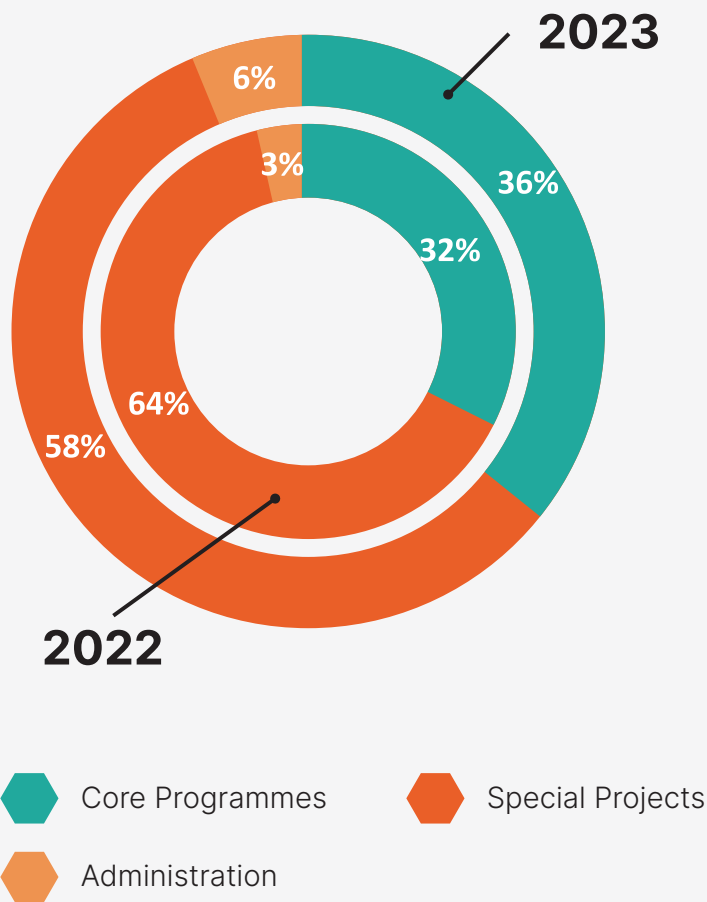
The Government funding is distorted by the once-off SAFE project funding. The Government funding contribution excluding SAFE amounts to 66.3% while the balance of 33.7% comes from private sector sources.

The private sector's funding contribution decreased 11% to 8% due to fact that 2022 funding included income from response initiatives such as COVID-19, riots and floods in KwaZulu-Natal

The other income and investment income contribution is consistency with the prior year's contribution of between 2% and 3%.

10.3. Analysis of expenditure

Figure 5 below compares the distribution of education-specific programmes expenditure and administrative expenditure in 2023 and 2022.



In 2023, the NECT invested 94% of expenditure directly into education-related programmes (core and special projects), with 6% being spent on administration costs.

Figure 5: Analysis of Expenditure



Acronyms and abbreviations

AfL	Assessment for Learning
ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements
CATC	Comprehension Across the Curriculum
CEM	Council of Education Ministers
CETA	Common Elements Treatment Approach
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSTL	Care and Support for Teaching and Learning
DBE	Department of Basic education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DSC	District Steering Committee
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFAL	English First Additional Language
ETAO	Education Technical Assistance Office
ETDP SETA	Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority
EXCO	Executive Committee
FEDSAS	Federation of Association of Governing Bodies
FFL	Foundations for Learning
FoPs	Fundamentals of Performance
GA	Governance Alliance
GBF	Governing Body Foundation
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
GRP4ECE	Gender Responsive Pedagogy for Early Childhood Education
HEDCOM	Heads of Education Departments' Committee
HHP	Household Planners
IDIP	Integrated District Improvement Programme
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
LTSM	learning and teaching support materials
MTbBBE	Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education
MRF	Monitoring, Research and Feedback
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa
NASGB	National Association of School Governing Bodies
NATU	National Teachers' Union
NDP	National Development Plan
NECT	National Education Collaboration Trust
NICPD	National Institute for Curriculum and Professional Development
NRC	National Reading Coalition
OTDP	Online Teacher Development Platform
PDT	Program Testing and Design
PED	Provincial Education Department
PEU	Professional Educators' Union
PSRIP	Primary School Reading Improvement Programme
PSS	Psychosocial Support

PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc.
QLTC	Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign
RDL	Remote and Digital Learning
RMD	Rand Merchant Bank
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SAFE	Sanitation Appropriate for Education
SAL	Second Additional Language
SANASE	South African National Association for Special Education
SA-SAMS	South African School Administration and Management System
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SGB	School governing body
SLPs	Structured Learning Programmes
TAs	Technical Assistants
TMU	Teaching Mathematics for Understanding
TTTEQL	Teaching, Teacher and Teacher Education for Equitable and Quality Education Research
UF4SGBs	United front for School Governing Bodies

Notes



basic education
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