

CASE STUDY

Jika iMfundo Mobile Relationship Tool

Jika iMfundo, which means 'changing education', is an initiative of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education funded by the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) established by the Minister of Basic Education. Implementation is supported by the Programme to Improve Learning Outcomes (PILO: an NGO team established for this purpose). It is an example of what can be done when South Africa's government, business, labour and civil society work together across levels on the apex national priority of improving education.

INTRODUCTION

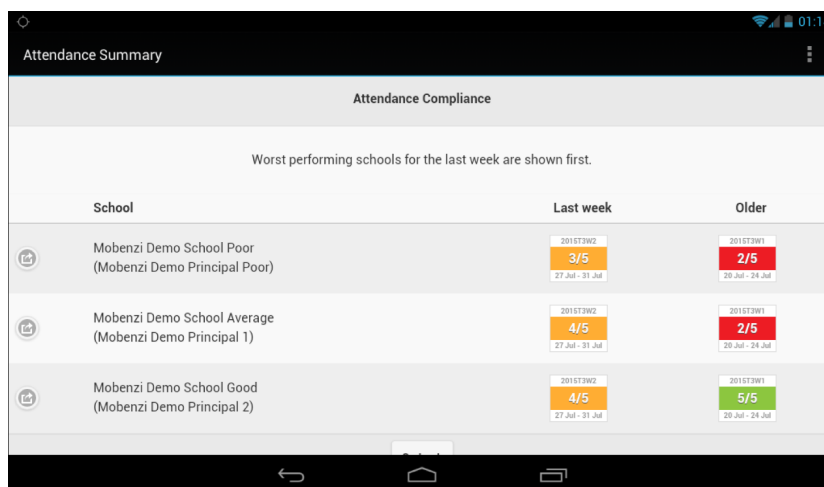
The Mobenzi app has been configured and developed for purpose and introduced via significant funding from Old Mutual Education Flagship Project as the Jika Mfundo "Mobile Relationship Tool". In working towards improved learning outcomes, a basic task is to ensure that learners attend school regularly. Attendance must be managed in real-time, daily and weekly. With the help of the Mobenzi app configured as the "Mobile Relationship Tool" (MRT), schools (principals), circuit managers (CMs who support & supervise schools), chief education specialists (CESs who manage CMs) and Jika iMfundo support staff from PILO can track school attendance daily and weekly. Users receive both immediate and regular reports, including institutional trends and insights, including contextual comparisons across schools, which are important in managing attendance. The MRT thus puts useful and user-friendly information for management into users' minds and hands. Users gain insight into which grades and/or schools need differentiated attention and support, guided by a carefully constructed set of algorithms that highlight potential problems.



Professional relationships, built on communication between management levels, are improved through the CM Tool module that forms part of this app. The CM Tool, previously paper-based, structures CMs in their conversations on regular developmental visits to schools to support and supervise principals. The Tool, including the Self-Evaluation version available to schools, guides principals and CMs to focus together on critical practices that need to improve.

MOBENZI IMPLEMENTATION

In one pilot CMC in each of the two districts, school principals have been equipped with entry-level Android mobile phones running the Mobenzi software, which guides them through submitting accurate daily attendance figures yielding reports; completing CM Tool self-evaluations for school development; preparing for visits from their circuit managers; and improving curriculum and general management based on recommendations and relevant, clear feedback.



Circuit managers have been equipped with entry-level Android tablets running the Mobenzi software. Their "app" interface gives them access to the profile of each of their allocated schools, and assists them to manage and schedule the routine visits to these schools. It allows them to review completed self-evaluations as and when submitted by schools; and it streamlines the capturing and scoring involved in completing the CM Tool. Automatically, several interactive reports are generated to assist circuit managers in identifying issues to focus on to improve each school's management and thereby curriculum coverage and ultimately performance.

Each CES has been issued with an Android tablet running the Mobenzi software which links them to all the CMs assigned to the circuits in their Circuit Manager Centre (CMC, ie. circuit cluster). The CES is able to access attendance submission and ranking reports for every circuit and all circuits together. The CES also has a view of CM Tool visit management (scheduling and completion) and schools' completed CM Tool score reports – aggregated for the CMC as well as for each individual school. District Officials from the Joint Data Working Group that championed the introduction of the MRT, as well as some support staff from PILO, have at times been attached to a specific CMC with access to exactly the same functionality as the CES for that CMC.

Messages from the district as well as MRT training material and technical support are also delivered via the Mobenzi software to all users – though there is scope to enhance the MRT as a reliable two-way communication channel between schools and districts. This is planned for the next phase (see below). The MRT also includes a web portal comprising dashboard and report interface. This enables support staff to monitor use across the districts and export data for reporting to district directors and others.

The MRT was introduced in August 2015 and is now in its third phase, with at least a fourth phase of development planned to go live in early 2017. Potential development beyond this may include one or more additional mobile modules and/or web-based system administrator functionality to configure key system parameters, manage school and CM lists, configure term calendars, refresh school profiles, and load relevant content.

VALUE AND PROGRESS TO DATE

The MRT system aids in:

- Driving reciprocal accountability by focusing on and strengthening the relationship between schools (principals) and districts (circuit managers and chief education specialists).
- Putting a reliable communications and information interface, tools and channel in the hands of schools and district users.
- Turning routine data into actionable insights
- Supporting and strengthening management conversations based on evidence and reliable, timely data.

Progress to date:

- 96% of fifty-three school users interviewed for feedback in early 2016 recommended to other principals that they should use the MRT to submit attendance data.
- 94% of fifty-three users interviewed said that the MRT is very easy to use to capture and submit attendance data.
- Circuit managers and district officials have strongly pushed for the expansion of the MRT to more CMCs and additional functionality.

Based on this:

- Significant funding was secured from the Old Mutual Education Flagship Project.
- Expansion is underway to two more CMCs between Oct 2016 and Feb 2017.

Further Reading:

Access more Mobenzi case studies at <http://www.mobenzi.com/researcher/case-studies>