

The Journey Programme (JP) Evaluation Report: November 2004

By

Dr Nirmala D. Gopal

Researcher: *CEREP University of KwaZulu Natal*

The Evaluation Project

This evaluation was conducted by a team of researchers, fieldworkers and translators. The evaluation was initiated by The Journey as part of its pilot study. The evaluation reported here focused on the Pilot Project that commenced in March 2004 and ended in October 2004. The central thrust of the evaluation remained with the task of ascertaining learners', educators', parents' and principals' perceptions on learners and educators' satisfaction and achievement.

The learning goals of The Journey programme encompass academic development, social awareness and lifeskills, the development of broad competencies such as problem solving, critical thinking and communicating.

Aims and Objectives

The purposes of this evaluation are to describe the programme in action and report on its achievements, partly with a view to accountability of the programme to the funders.

Strategic Objectives

- To interact with learners on programme delivery and quality
- To better understand the learning contexts of the learners and educators with reference to The Journey Programme with a view to strengthening support for them
- To identify challenges and successes during the programme, and ways it might be improved
- To disseminate findings in a report to The Journey management.

The Evaluation Process

We have used a combination of qualitative and quantitative data in an effort to comprehensively assess the programme. The heart of the qualitative aspect consisted of classroom observations, to provide insight into and information about learners and the teaching methods of the programme. The questionnaires that we administered to educators, learners, principals and parents provided descriptive information and ratings of the programme. Questionnaires are amenable to a collation and quantification of responses and therefore provide a weighted picture of participants' views. The questionnaires were supplemented with observations and interviews, to elaborate the quantitative dimensions. A translator was present to ensure that learners understood the questions in the questionnaires and to provide clarity.

Description of Evaluation Sample

We administered questionnaires to

- Grade 5, 6 and 7 learners
- Parents
- Educators
- Principals

Questionnaires were completed at the end of the lessons.

Classroom observations and interviews were conducted at mutually agreed upon times between educators and researchers and parents and researchers.

Classroom observations included 12 lessons encompassing grades 5-7 and depended on their availability.

Data Collection

A questionnaire was administered to the sample, principals, teachers, learners and parents, to collect the data. Focus group discussions were held with parents and interviews with educators.

The questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions elicited responses concerning

- The impact of the Journey Programme on learners' social and academic development
- . The implementation of the programme by educators

Three hundred and seventy six questionnaires were administered to the sample of learners. We also administered questionnaires to 14 educators, 4 principals and 20 parents. Interviews were held with the same 14 educators and focus group discussions with the same sample of 20 parents. This was the primary data used in this evaluation. Sampling was judgemental based on the availability of learners in the four targeted schools identified for the study. The evaluation aimed at determining the impact of the Journey Programme, if any, on the learners. After the interviewing was done, the researchers then observed lessons being taught and made field notes.

The evaluation combined qualitative and quantitative methodologies as we sought a deeper understanding of how the Journey Programme was impacting learners. Our evaluation was primarily phenomenological. This method seeks for participants' identification and perception of what the Journey Programme was like for them. The setting was naturalistic, we took the programme context as it really was, as it actually happened.

Data Analysis

To analyse the data from the questionnaire, a coding schedule was developed from the open-ended questions in the questionnaire. Data capturing was done on the Survey System programme a statistical programme which allows for the quantifying of responses. Each questionnaire was coded manually and thereafter captured. Data from the interviews and focus group discussions were interpreted according to common themes that emerged. The data will be organised as follows: interviews with educators, focus group discussions with parents, questionnaire responses of educators, learners, parents and principals.

Hopes

At the chosen schools educators had a feeling of expectation and excitement at being chosen as well as the benefits that they perceived learners receiving. Educators felt confident that they had the necessary skills to implement the programme in the classroom. The large class sizes did not serve as a deterrent. In fact the majority of educators claimed that the programme assisted them with discipline in the large classes. Educators overall claimed that the programme may successfully be implemented in large classes. This may easily be done as a whole class activity.

On the issue of resources educators claimed that since the implementation of the programme required no other resource except educator materials. It circumvented the frustrations for educators and learners in attempting to secure resources.

Educator responses on learners' achievements

Overall the educators' best experiences centered on the learners and how they were transforming. Learners were showing greater interest in their academic work and relationships had improved significantly. Educators also commented on how they enjoyed the learners share experiences and listen to one another. They felt that through this they were developing respect for one another as well as releasing emotional baggage that they were carrying for a long time. This programme created the space for learners to deal with emotional issues that they would not have otherwise dealt with. Many learners really enjoyed the freedom they had to discuss and talk about their emotional releases. Learners also became more self-disciplined and learning skills improved.

Parents' Responses

These responses were elicited from the focus group discussions with parents at the four schools. The groups varied from 5 to 8 participants depending on their availability.

Overall parents welcomed the JP in their children's lives and its inclusion in the school curriculum. Parents also noted with satisfaction the improvement in their children's discipline and attitude to schoolwork. Parents also praised educators for their commitment in assisting their children and regarded this as a unique opportunity for their children. All parents in the focus group discussions were pleased that their children were participating in the programme.

EDUCATOR RESPONSES

	Strongly disagree	disagree	unsure	agree	Strongly agree
Been through intensive training in the Journey Programme	0	0	0	29	71
I am confident in teaching the Journey Programme	0	0	6	35	59
I have a pedagogic knowledge of the Journey Programme	0	6	6	35	41
I have followed the instructional manual closely in my teaching	0	0	12	59	29
The language in the manuals was suitable for the learners	0	6	18	24	41
The manual demanded application, investigation and discussion	0	0	12	24	53
I was able to work independently with the instructional manual	0	0	0	47	53
The Journey Programme should be included in the national curriculum	0	0	0	24	76
The department of education should be responsible for training educators in Journey Programme	0	0	6	12	82
Learners enjoyed their activities	0	0	6	35	59
Learners were open to suggestions and advice	0	0	6	47	47
Learners showed initiative	0	0	0	59	41
The programme is organized in a professional manner	0	0	6	41	53
The journey management involved us in decision making	6	6	6	29	53
The journey staff was always supportive and willing to assist us	0	0	0	24	76
Journey Programme may be used in a variety of school environments	0	0	6	18	76

Overall educators rated the JP highly. One hundred percent of the educators had intensive training and the majority of the respondents are confident in teaching the programme and have a pedagogic understanding of the programme. The majority also found the manuals useful and the language accessible. All respondents believed that the JP should be included in the national school curriculum and the majority agreed that the Department of Education should take on the responsibility of training educators. An overwhelming majority of educators also agreed that learners enjoyed this activity and were open to suggestions and advice. Most educators agreed that

learners showed initiative and that the programme is organised in a professional manner. It was also heartening to note that the Journey management team consulted with educators and provided on-going support.

What aspects of Journey Programme did you like most of all?

- *The campfire*
- *Learners being able to empty out issues*
- *Learners learn forgiveness*
- *Emotional journey*
- *Physical journey*
- *Meditation*
- *No religious connotations*
- *Changes pupils character*
- *Makes teaching easier*
- *The mentor*

What aspects did you like least of all?

- *Nothing*
- *Learners were drowsy after closing their eyes for a long time*
- *Not enough time*
- *Outside disturbance*
- *Emotional journey*

Why would you recommend Journey Programme to other educators?

- *Problem solving element*
- *Teaches good morals*
- *Helps them focus*
- *Teaches self acceptance*
- *Emotional healing*
- *Improves social skills*
- *Makes teaching easier*
- *Helps academically*
- *Teaches discipline*
- *Makes them aware of life in a broader perspective*
- *Improves educator/pupil relationships*

What were your best experiences?

- *Able to council my learners*
- *More forgiving*
- *Learners happy*
- *Improved educator/pupil relationships*
- *Learner attendance better*
- *Kids enthusiastic*
- *Help me deal with my problems better*
- *Taught me self acceptance*

What did you find most difficult?

- *Attending workshops*
- *Time consuming*
- *Nothing*
- *Children become emotional*
- *Children not concentrating*
- *Children didn't understand*
- *Admit to all wrong doings*
- *Hypnosis*

How did your principal support you?

- *Allocated time*
- *Allowing us to attend workshops*
- *Motivated us*
- *Invited journey facilitators*

How did anyone from the organization help you?

- *Helped in implementation*
- *Clarified problems*
- *Gave equipment*
- *Improved classroom standards*
- *One on one with difficult learners*

How were parents of the learners informed?

- *Letters*
- *Parents meetings/when they came to school*

Learner Responses:

. WHAT DID YOU LIKE ABOUT THE JOURNEY PROGRAMME?

- *CAMPFIRE*
- *MAKES ME HAPPY*
- *I LIKE THE JOURNEY PROGRAMME*
- *RAINBOW*
- *THE VEHICLE*
- *STRESS RELIEVING EFFECT*
- *EMOTIONAL/SPIRITUAL HEALING*
- *MAKES ME A PEACEFUL PERSON*
- *TEACHES ME TO BE LOVING*
- *GOOD BEHAVIOUR*
- *COMFORTS ME*
- *HELPS ACADEMICALLY*
- *NO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT*
- *TAUGHT ME TO PRAY*
- *TAUGHT ME TO STOP STEALING*

WHAT DID YOU DISLIKE ABOUT THE JOURNEY PROGRAMME?

- **THE CAR**
- **NOTHING**
- **EMOTIONAL HEALING PROCESS**
- **WHEN WE SEE THE SUN**
- **THE ORGAN**
- **IT WAS TOO QUICK**
- **THE CAMPFIRE**
- **CLOSING MY EYES**
- **BEING REMINDED OF PAINFUL EXPERIENCES**
- **SPEAKING AFRIKAANS**
- **LONG SPEECHES**
- **SPEAKING ENGLISH**
- **UNEXPECTED VISITS FROM THE JOURNEY GUYS**
- **DARK AND THORNY BUSH**
- **COMING EARLY TO SCHOOL**
- **TOO MUCH FOOT STAMPING**
- **TOOK ME AWAY FROM MY HOBBIES**
- **WALKING UP STAIRS**

DO YOU THINK THE JOURNEY PROGRAMME IS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

YES – 99%

NO – 1%

WHY DO YOU THINK THE JOURNEY PROGRAMME IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO DO?

- **HELPS ME EXPRESS MYSELF BETTER**
- **MENTAL DEVELOPMENT**
- **I LOVE IT**
- **HELPS ME A LOT**
- **HELPS ACADEMICALLY**
- **HELPS ME FORGET BAD PAST EXPERIENCES**
- **RELAXES YOU**
- **PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS**
- **KEEPS YOU FOCUSED**
- **CHANGED MY LIFE**
- **TEACHES RESPECT/ OBEDIENCE**
- **I AM NOW MORE RESPONSIBLE**
- **GAVE US FREEDOM**
- **GUIDES US AGAINST BAD HABITS**
- **MAKES ME HAPPY**
- **FORGIVENESS**
- **LOVE**
- **PEACEFUL**
- **SOCIAL SKILLS**

WAS THERE ANYTHING IN THE JOURNEY PROGRAMME UNCLEAR OR DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND?

YES – 17%

NO – 83%

LIST 2 VALUABLE THINGS YOU HAVE LEARNED?

- **SELF ACCEPTANCE**
- **DON'T DO BAD THINGS**
- **DON'T FIGHT**
- **HONESTY**
- **FORGIVENESS**
- **OBEDIENCE**
- **MENTAL DEVELOPMENT**
- **EXPRESS YOURSELF**
- **RESPECT**
- **HELPS ACADEMICALLY**
- **REACH FOR YOUR GOALS**
- **SOCIAL SKILLS**
- **PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS**
- **BE LOVING AND PEACEFUL**
- **CONFIDENCE**
- **HAPPINESS**
- **FRIENDSHIP**

	NO	LITTLE	SOME	MUCH	BIG
TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE YOUR RESULTS IMPROVED AS A RESULT OF THE JOURNEY PROGRAMME	1	7	17	37	38
RELATIONSHIP WITH FRIENDS	3	3	10	32	52
RELATIONSHIP WITH FAMILY	2	3	7	17	70
RELATIONSHIP WITH EDUCATORS	2	4	10	34	51
ENGLISH	1	8	20	41	30
AFRIKAANS/ISIZULU	2	5	5	31	57
MATHEMATICS	2	6	17	34	42
NATURAL SCIENCE	4	10	24	45	18
E M S	1	9	22	40	29
H S S	3	9	18	37	34
L O	2	7	17	32	42
ARTS AND CULTURE	5	9	17	33	37
TECHNOLOGY	4	6	23	35	32

Overall the JP impacted the learners positively. The majority of learners indicated that their academic results and social skills had improved tremendously. This augurs well for the JP as we are able to see the benefits on the learners which far outweighs the disadvantages.

PARENTS RESPONSES:

What have you heard about the Journey Programme?

- *Improves parent/child relationships*
- *Improves life skills*
- *Mental development*
- *Teaches good morals*

What were your feelings when you heard that your child was part of the pilot project?

- *Excited*
- *Interested*
- *Concerned*
- *Improves social skills*

How did your child benefit from the Journey Programme?

- *Improves academic results*
- *More helpful at home*
- *Enthusiastic about future plans*
- *Deals with problems better*

PRINCIPALS' RESPONSES

WHAT WERE YOUR FEELINGS WHEN YOU HEARD THAT YOUR SCHOOL HAD BEEN CHOSEN TO TAKE PART IN THE PILOT PROJECT?

- *Happy*
- *Supportive*
- *Confused*
- *Eager*
- *Excited*

DID YOU NOTICE ANY CHANGES TAKING PLACE IN THE CLASSROOM DURING THE PILOT PROJECT?

YES – 100%

WHAT CHANGES DID YOU NOTICE?

- *Children calmer*
- *Children resourceful*
- *Better problem solving skills*
- *Reduced absenteeism/late coming*
- *Learners better behaved*
- *No more bullying*

WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT THE JOURNEY PROGRAMME?

- *Should be in all schools*
- *Reduces socio-economic problems*
- *Substitute for corporal punishment*
- *Assists in mental development*
- *Helps learners express themselves better*
- *Successful*

Conclusion and Recommendations

As evaluators we attempted to make meaning for ourselves by bringing together responses by various parties. In this evaluation we noticed the strengths and a few challenges as seen through the eyes of various participants. Educators, learners, parents and principals are characterised by high levels of commitment and responsibility.

Our data showed that the JP is a successful programme in the classroom as a practise in terms of developing learners socially and academically. The curriculum is intense and well regarded by all participants. Educators and learners enjoy the programme and find it liberating.

We offer the following recommendations:

- On-going evaluation of learners experiences
- The assurance that the language used is accessible to all learners all the time
- An increase in the time allocation for learners to be fully self expressed about their experiences
- The introduction of The Journey Programme in the schools' curriculum