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DDD PARTNERSHIP CASE STUDY

Penreach Courageous Leadership Development
Programme and the DDD Dashboard

Penreach Courageous Leadership Development Programme and the DDD Dashboard: A Case Study

Introduction

Over the past two years of Data Driven Districts (DDD) programme implementation, the DDD team has increasingly interacted and worked with education NGOs across South Africa. The primary reason for this has been to explore and grow potential areas of collaboration where mutually-beneficial outcomes from data use can be achieved. In this process, the team has found that the DDD Dashboard, its data and the DDD data usage methodologies can significantly benefit education NGO programmes. The key benefits of Dashboard data use in NGO programmes are listed below:

- 1 Timely access to school data**
Time is saved in sourcing data from learners and schools to produce key statistics and reports for funders. This time is freed up for more impactful implementation activities. The Dashboard also gives funders increased visibility of the performance of the schools, learners and educators they are supporting. This allows them to play a more active role in programme implementation.
- 2 Improving programme effectiveness**
The Dashboard data guides interventions toward the schools, subjects, educators and learners that can benefit the most from support.
- 3 Adding to existing implementation**
When a high degree of complementarity exists between an NGO programme and the use of the data on the Dashboard by the education officials being supported, the NGO programme gains by incorporating elements of DDD into their support to officials.

One NGO and programme that has benefitted from the use of the Dashboard and the incorporation of DDD data usage methodologies is Penreach in its Penreach Courageous Leadership Development Programme (PCLDP). This document is a case study on the partnership between Penreach, its PCLDP and the DDD programme.

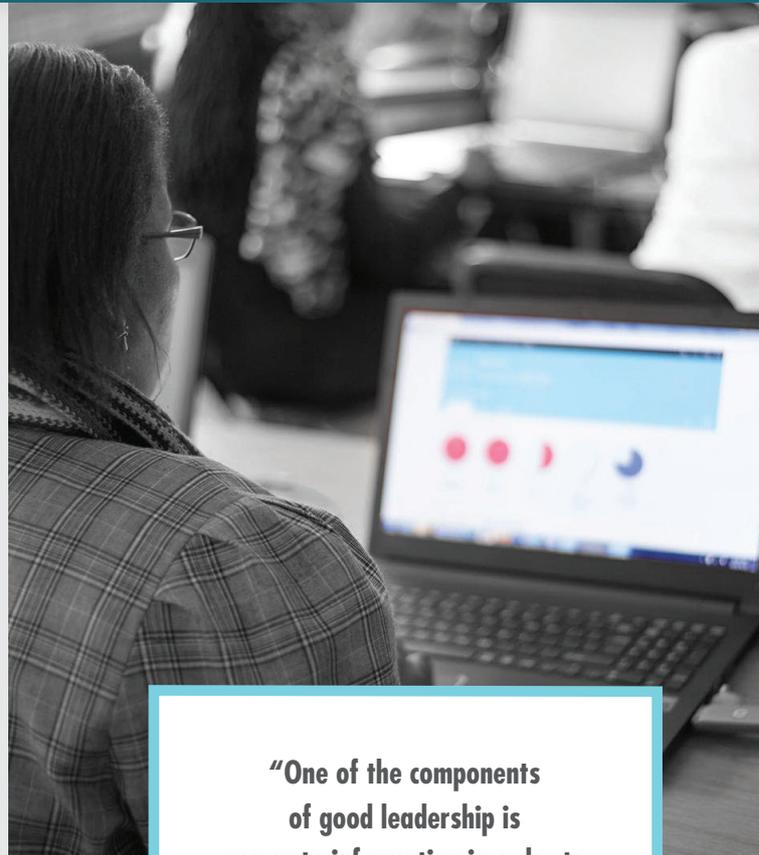


Penreach and the Penreach Courageous Leadership Development Programme

Penreach is a successful education NGO operating in the Mpumalanga province. Established in 1991, Penreach has built a reputation for impactful, sustainable interventions stretching from Early Childhood Development (ECD) through to educator capacitation in gateway subjects for the FET phase. Their ideal is a country where every child has access to quality education, supporting the national objective of 90% of children achieving above 50% in Maths and Science by 2025.

One of the flagship interventions that Penreach implemented was the Penreach Courageous Leadership Development Programme. The programme was a role model approach of training, coaching and mentoring to boost the delivery capacity of school leadership and management teams. Launched in July 2016 and concluded in June 2018, the programme supported 24 schools in two circuits of the Ehlanzeni district. Several of the key impacts of the PCLDP were:

- Improved mentoring and coaching skills amongst principals, deputies and HODs
- The development of effective financial management skills amongst principals
- The development of skills to analyse attendance and learner performance data to monitor outcomes and implement remediation plans
- Increased accountability amongst school staff
- Improved self-reflection amongst principals
- Increased community participation in the running of schools
- Increased collaboration and skills-sharing between neighbouring schools



“One of the components of good leadership is access to information in order to manage effectively. The Dashboard ensures that you have that information.”

– Sanette Mattheus

Data Driven Districts (DDD) introduced to Penreach and the PCLDP

While an effective programme from the outset, Penreach’s Director of Monitoring and Evaluation, Sanette Mattheus, was searching from its commencement for a tool to assist the work the NGO was doing. “One of the outcomes for PCLDP was tracking attendance and curriculum management. We realised that the schools had little capacity in the management of SA-SAMS. This resulted in gaps in this outcome and we were looking for a way to solve that problem.”

In early 2017, she was introduced to the Dashboard and its offerings; something she felt was the perfect fit for their needs. “We were very impressed by the data that was on the Dashboard and how it could drill down to a specific learner. We were already working with principals in improving their skills as leaders and their confidence and the Dashboard helped bring that to life because one of the components of good leadership is access to information in order to manage effectively. The Dashboard ensures that you have that information.”

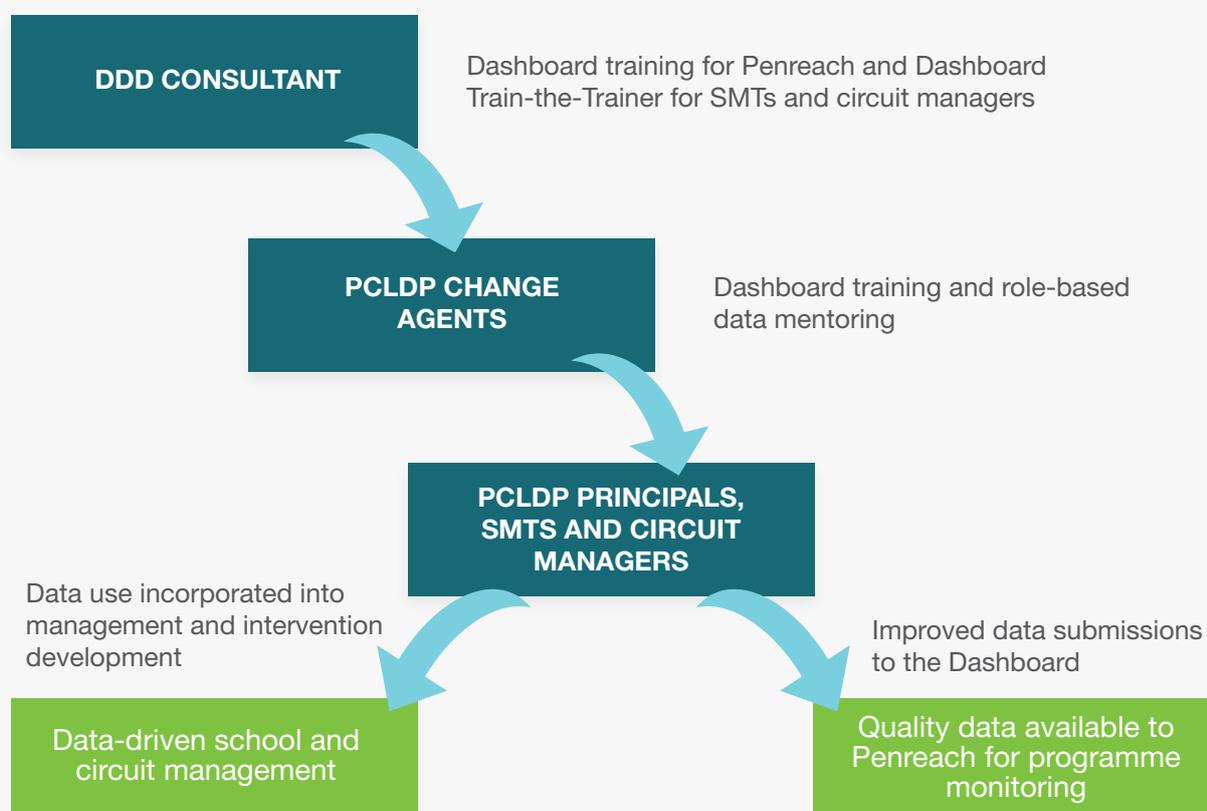
The lead implementation partner of DDD, New Leaders Foundation (NLF), offered training to Penreach staff on the Dashboard. The response to the training highlights its effectiveness in ensuring Penreach was adequately prepared to use the Dashboard to meet their own needs. As indicated by Jabulani Khoza, a Penreach Change Agent on the programme, “The training we received to use the DDD Dashboard was conducted by Emmanuel Sibanda and it was very good. We were given enough information to be able to share the knowledge around the Dashboard with principals and their teams.”

Following the Dashboard training, Penreach recognised the complementarity between the PCLDP’s activities to build the leadership and management capacity of principals and SMTs and the use of the Dashboard to manage the many elements of school operations. Penreach developed an additional module for the PCLDP covering the Dashboard and the use of its data in school management practices.

This module (covering Dashboard training and role-based data mentoring) was rolled out to principals, their SMTs as well as the circuit managers responsible for the two circuits.

Illustrated in the figure below, the training cascaded from the DDD consultant to the ultimate end users (the PCLDP principals, SMTs and circuit managers) and resulted in more robust, data-driven decisions and interventions being implemented in the PCLDP schools. In addition to the improved management behaviours and cultures, the incorporation of DDD into the PCLDP resulted in improved quality data being readily available to Penreach management for programme monitoring. This has saved the organisation a significant amount of time and has helped shed light on the inner workings of the schools in terms of curriculum implementation and performance.

DDD training and data mentoring cascading to education officials in PCLDP



Impact experienced in PCLDP schools

Selected PCLDP principals were interviewed to share their experience of using the Dashboard as a tool to support their leadership and management in their schools. The testimonies of two of the principals are outlined below.

Principal Testimony 1: Thembi Nkosi – Mhlosheni Primary School

Thembi Nkosi is the Principal of Mhlosheni Primary School in Khulangwane circuit. She has experienced significant benefit from having access to the Dashboard as it has allowed her to lead with greater purpose and to rally her staff with the information it provides.

“I was surprised by the information that was available to me that I had no access to in the past. I could pinpoint absenteeism, learners without IDs, compare the performance of our school within the circuit and have my eye on the pass rate. One of the aspects of the Dashboard that I really appreciate is being able to see who my strongest and weakest learners are so that I can help accordingly. I want to keep the high achievers motivated and to help everyone else to do better.

“The Dashboard has helped improve the morale in my school. I show the teachers all the relevant information pertaining to them at staff meetings. This conscientises them to the fact that this information is available to the powers that be in the department. Because of this, people are no longer absent for petty reasons. There is a shift in attitude because there is a larger scale sense of accountability with the Dashboard.”

Ms Nkosi uses the Dashboard and its various reports to conduct one-on-one meetings with her educators. In these meetings, the educators account for their learners' results but they also give both parties the opportunity to analyse and respond to the attendance of the learners. One Dashboard report that Ms Nkosi is using to good effect with her educators is the Learner Intervention Planning Report. This report is a new innovation on

“People are no longer absent for petty reasons. There is a shift in attitude because there is a larger scale sense of accountability with the Dashboard.” – Thembi Nkosi



“I use the report to motivate the teachers and also to strategise with the teachers as to how we can avoid the high number of learners failing. It also gives me the type of intervention that is needed.” – Thembi Nkosi

the Dashboard and highlights learners most in need of intervention based on their predicted probability of failing the year. “I use the report to motivate the teachers and also to strategise with the teachers as to how we can avoid the high number of learners failing. It also gives me the type of intervention that is needed.” A good example of where Ms Nkosi used the report was for Natural Science and Technology where she picked up the level of intervention that was needed. “My school has been underperforming in Natural Science and Technology from grade 4 up to grade 6. I had a meeting with the HOD to say that actually this is a school problem and not an individual teacher's problem as all the learners are at the same risk of failing. I asked her to discuss this matter further with the teachers. I am also looking forward to engaging the subject advisor so that he can intervene and also assist the school.”

Ms Nkosi makes use of many other reports and functionality on the Dashboard in her role as the principal. She is even using the tool to engage parents on their children's attendance. She is already experiencing improvements with this strategy in grade R where she identified several highly absent learners. The DDD programme is very encouraged by her courageous leadership and her effective use of data to manage her school.

Principal Testimony 2: Wonderboy Elvis - Mabunda Loti Primary School



Elvis Mabunda is the principal of Loti Primary School in Malelane circuit. Analysing the data on the Dashboard on a weekly basis is increasing accountability amongst his staff both from an attendance and a learner performance perspective.

“I was on of those people who saw and understood the need for SA-SAMS but I didn’t think it had much to do with me as a school principal. I thought that SA-SAMS and the Dashboard were admin-based tasks that were to be left to the admin clerks to see to. I didn’t realise how wrong I was until I was trained on the Dashboard and why it is my responsibility as a principal.

“Since our training, information about my school is uploaded every last day of the week so that I can see it on the Dashboard on Monday. It has made curriculum coverage clear and I can see if the teacher has done nothing to hit the target of formal tasks. The Dashboard reflects that information easily and I can be on top on everyone’s performance. I have come to learn that being able to review what you are doing as a teacher and principal is important because it means you are not blindly doing your job. The same goes for others whose jobs it is to ensure that schools and learners are working optimally. We are seeing great results at this point. The teachers are holding each other accountable and I am able to lead confidently because I have a lot of information at my disposal.”

One story that best illustrates how the Dashboard has empowered Mr Mabunda as a leader and manager occurred in 2018 term 3. By viewing the Dashboard’s attendance records, Mr Mabunda found that a grade 4 educator had not been prioritising her work in term 2 and was absent for minor reasons on Mondays and Fridays. At the beginning of term 3 he showed the educator her term 2 attendance statistics and the pattern of days missed and explained that this conduct was not acceptable in his school. The intervention with this educator is bearing fruit. In the first nine weeks of term 3 (at the time of publishing this case study) this educator had not missed a single day of school.

Like Ms Nkosi in Mhlosheni Primary, Mr Mabunda is also using the Dashboard to monitor learner attendance. This is not only discussed with educators on weekly basis but also with parents when required. “We had a problem with the grade Rs and Grade 1s. When the weather changes, the parents tend to not send their children to school. Until we flagged to them that this has a negative impact on the performance of the learners. If the learners don’t come to school it doesn’t mean they won’t get taught by the teachers again. We do catch-ups but for them the time is too little for the learners to keep up as the others are far ahead. They (the parents) have now started to bring in the learners even when the weather isn’t great. They try their best.”

During the PCLDP, Mr Mabunda became recognised as the DDD champion as he took it upon himself to build the capacity of his counterpart principals in the programme on how to make full use of the Dashboard. One of the principals he supported with becoming a super user of the tool was Ms Nkosi of the previous testimony.

Sustainability of DDD within the context of the PCLDP

The principals participating in the PCLDP have been encouraged to create communities of practice (CoPs). These are principals put together in a group so that they share best practices and other management issues and advice with each other. According to another Change Agent of the programme, Sam Khoza, “CoPs are essential in making sure that the principals use the tools we give them during our training. We have been attending some of their CoP meetings to see how they are doing. The Dashboard has become part of every meeting because of how strongly it affects their ability to run their schools effectively.” It is in one of these CoPs that Mr Mabunda builds the capacity of his peers to expand their use of the Dashboard but the sharing of know-how is not limited to him as other principals have also started sharing their experiences.

Impact experienced within Penreach

Penreach has found that being able to track what is happening in their area of interest serves them as an organisation. According to the Director of M&E, Sanette Mattheus “The Dashboard really benefitted the principals but it has done a lot for us as an organisation as well. Because the results of the areas we work in affects how we adjust our work, access to the information on the Dashboard helps us make more informed decisions. We are then better able to track whether our interventions are working. It works well as a tool for an organisation that is vested in making sure that the work they do actually has the desired impact.”

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– Sanette Mattheus

Mattheus also stated that Penreach would be using the tool for other organisational initiatives outside of the programme that was done with the principals. “We use the data for our pitches and presentations to the Department of Education and other stakeholders. You can never underestimate the difference that access to this kind of information makes. There is no need to rely in hearsay when you can actually see the data and use it to make big decisions affecting your organisation.” In this way, the Dashboard is helping improve collaboration between Penreach and the Department.

Conclusions

The Dashboard and the suite of methodologies within the DDD programme can play a significant role in strengthening NGO interventions focused on building school leadership and management capacity. This is not only for the governance-related responsibilities of SMTs but also for critical areas in curriculum management. In addition, the Dashboard can be a substantial time saver for NGO project management teams as it allows for quick access to information needed to monitor the effectiveness of the intervention and for reporting to funders. It must be noted that DDD also experiences considerable benefit from such partnerships. With over 21,000 schools on the Dashboard housing over 11 million learners’ information, the DDD team is simply unable to reach all education officials. Other NGOs operating in the basic education system, like Penreach, have strong relationships with their schools and are able to provide the depth of support that enables school leaders to become data-driven.

The success of the collaboration between DDD and Penreach is a clear indicator that working with NGOs and businesses that are committed to improving learner outcomes in South Africa is a perfect fit; one that has great impact and works from a place of knowledge-based action and interventions. The Data Driven Districts programme has been very encouraged by the win-win partnership with Penreach and the PCLDP and is therefore eager to cultivate more mutually-beneficial partnerships in the basic education system.