



planning, monitoring & evaluation

Department:
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Report on the Assessment of Government Evaluations

Evaluation Title:	Evaluation of the Grade 12 Learner Support Intervention
Evaluation Number:	523
Evaluation Completion Date:	15 April 2015
Period of Evaluation:	3.5 months
Submitted:	13 December 2016 by Cara Hartley
Approved:	14 December 2016 by Mike Leslie

Evaluation Details

Evaluation Title:	Evaluation of the Grade 12 Learner Support Intervention
Evaluation Number:	523
Evaluation Completion Date:	15 April 2015
Created:	14 September 2016 by Mike Leslie
Submitted:	13 December 2016 by Cara Hartley
Approved:	14 December 2016 by Mike Leslie
Period of Evaluation:	3.5 months
Known Cost:	R 282 720.00
Known Cost Type:	Referenced
Initiated By:	Office of the Premier of the Eastern Cape
Initiated By Internal:	Yes
Undertaken By:	Kellelo Consulting
Undertaken By Internal:	No

Assessors

Cara Hartley	cara@pdg.co.za
--------------	----------------

Assessment Documents

Document Name:	Document Type:	Added By:	Added On:
LAIS Pillar 2 Evaluation Report.PDF	Evaluation report	Mike Leslie	14 September 2016
2015 04 15 LAIS Pillar 2 evaluation Kelello Consulting EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.pdf	Evaluation report	Cara Hartley	12 December 2016
2015 02 25 - LAIS evaluation inception report - Kelello Consulting.pdf	An inception report	Cara Hartley	12 December 2016
2014 12 04_ LAIS ToRs_final.doc	Terms of Reference (ToR) for the evaluation	Cara Hartley	12 December 2016
2015 02 26_ LAIS ToRs - revised.doc	Terms of Reference (ToR) for the evaluation	Cara Hartley	12 December 2016
Assessment Report at Moderation.pdf	Assessment Report at Moderation	Mike Leslie	13 December 2016

Quality Assessment Summary

This evaluation scores 3.21 indicating an evaluation of above adequate quality.

This evaluation was undertaken within a very brief period of time (only 3.5 months) and relatively constrained budget. Taking this into account the evaluation did not include in its scope some of the elements that government assessments ideally should involve according to these quality assessment standards e.g. development of a theory of change if none is forthcoming; capacity building elements; and piloting instruments. This is reflected in the scores (including the low score of 1 for Capacity Building). However, the elements within the scope were generally implemented well, and the evaluation was completed to the satisfaction of the steering committee and within time and budget constraints.

The evaluation featured more than adequate Quality Control. The Terms of Reference was well conceptualised; the data analysis appears to have been well done; and the final report is readable and clear. The reader can clearly see the evidence on which the conclusions are based, and the evaluation report is very transparent about areas where data and documentation was not complete. The statistical analysis of LAIS participating schools' results is presented transparently with clear acknowledgement of alternative explanations. This overarching consideration scores 3.29, despite scoring low on one assessment standard related to piloting (the interview and focus group guides were not piloted in the field before data collection started).

The evaluation process was also more than adequate in terms of Project Management (3.52) because of the effective implementation of the evaluation process, including using the inception phase to good effect to achieve agreement about the evaluation approach, and the completion of the project within time and budget.

The evaluation scores very well on Evaluation Ethics (4.3), as the evaluation team took care to ensure high ethical standards throughout the evaluation, including keeping the sampled schools anonymous to the steering committee within a larger sample; and clearly documenting ethical procedures followed in interviews and focus groups (including with grade 12 learners).

If one looks at the evaluation in terms of phases, it was implemented more than adequately until the final phase of Follow-up, Use and Learning (2.53). The reason for this twofold. Firstly, senior management of the Department of Education (which implements the intervention in question) were not actively, regularly involved in the steering committee and therefore there was a concern among those interviewed that the evaluation results would not be used to affect positive improvements to the programme. Secondly, no stakeholders who were involved after the presentation of the final results were reached during this quality assessment process to provide evidence to the contrary.

Overall, the steering committee and the evaluation service provider together overcame several practical constraints to produce a clear and accessible evaluation report that serves as a good basis for the review of the LAIS pillar 2 intervention. It also presents two case studies and a set of lessons learned from similar interventions from literature on the subject, which could be valuable to others seeking to design or improve education interventions in South Africa and beyond.

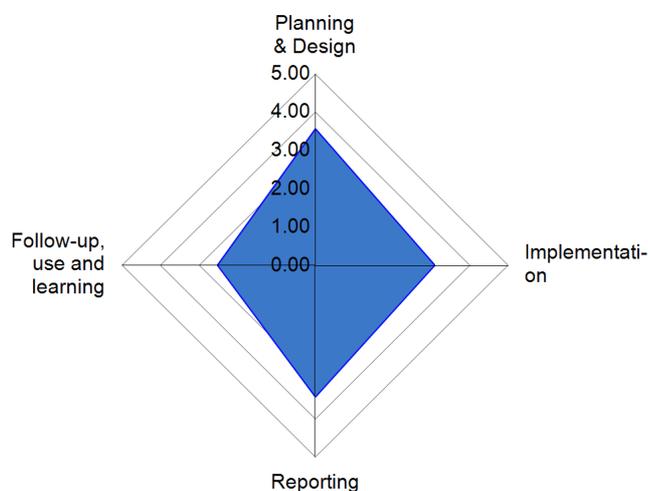
Quality Assessment Scores

Phase of Evaluation	Score
Planning & Design	3.57
Implementation	3.10
Reporting	3.43
Follow-up, use and learning	2.53
Total	3.21

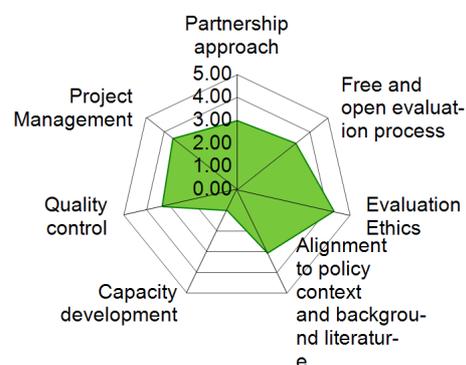
Overarching Consideration	Score
Partnership approach	3.00
Free and open evaluation process	3.22
Evaluation Ethics	4.30
Alignment to policy context and background literature	3.07
Capacity development	1.00

Quality control	3.29
Project Management	3.52
Total	3.21

Scores: Phases of Evaluation



Scores: Overarching Considerations



Phase of Evaluation	Area of Evaluation	Score
Planning & Design	Quality of the TOR	3.38
Planning & Design	Adequacy of resourcing	3.57
Planning & Design	Appropriateness of the evaluation design and methodology	3.73
Planning & Design	Project management (Planning phase)	4.00
Implementation	Evaluation ethics and independence	3.50
Implementation	Participation and M&E skills development	2.14
Implementation	Methodological integrity	2.95
Implementation	Project management (Implementation phase)	4.00
Reporting	Completeness of the evaluation report	3.50
Reporting	Accessibility of content	3.50
Reporting	Robustness of findings	3.45
Reporting	Strength of conclusions	3.00
Reporting	Suitability of recommendations	3.00
Reporting	Acknowledgement of ethical considerations	4.43
Follow-up, use and learning	Resource utilisation	3.00
Follow-up, use and learning	Evaluation use	2.42
Total	Total	3.21

Planning & Design

Quality of the TOR

Standard:	The evaluation was guided by a well-structured and complete TOR or a well-structured and complete internal evaluation proposal (e.g. Background, Purpose, Evaluation Questions, Design & Methodology, Deliverables & Timeframes, Resource requirements, Intended Audience & Utilisation, etc).
Comment and Analysis:	The Terms of Reference covered all the components listed above, and was well structured making it possible for a reader to get a clear understanding of the services being requested.
Rating:	4: The evaluation was guided by a well-structured and complete TOR or internal evaluation proposal of a good standard
Standard:	The approach and type of evaluation was suited to the purpose and scope of the evaluation TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal)
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The TOR called for an interim evaluation of the Learner Attainment Improvement Strategy (LAIS) with regards to the pillar focusing on Grade 12 Learner Support Interventions. The focus would be on implementation of the programme to date, based on a review of programme documents and data, and primary qualitative data collection from key stakeholders. The purpose of the evaluation was to inform further support and improvement of the programme as it entered its final year of a three-year implementation period.</p> <p>The approach and type of evaluation was well suited to provide an understanding of implementation realities and emerging results, thereby supporting decisions around further support and improvement of the programme.</p>
Rating:	4: The approach and type of the evaluation was well-suited to the purpose and scope of the evaluation TOR
Standard:	The TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal) identified the intended users of the evaluation and their information needs
Comment and Analysis:	The TOR clearly identified the main evaluation stakeholders and their roles. Their roles were discussed in such a way that their information needs could be understood, but not made explicit. These were GIZ, the Eastern Cape Office of the Premier (OTP) and Eastern Cape Department of Education (DOE), provincial political leadership and representatives of the interviewed (sampled) schools.
Rating:	2: The TOR made only implicit or indirect mention of the users of the evaluation and their information needs
Standard:	Key stakeholders were involved in the scoping of the TOR and choosing the purpose of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	The OTP and GIZ scoped and conceptualised the evaluation and chose its purpose. They met with the DOE to discuss the draft TOR and took DOE's inputs into account before finalising it.
Rating:	3: Key stakeholders were involved in the scoping of the TOR and choosing the purpose of the evaluation

Adequacy of resourcing

Standard:	The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of time and budget allocated
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation was tightly resourced in terms of time - only 2.5 months were allocated for a study that included desktop research as well as practical fieldwork. However, this time frame was not considered inadequate. The budget was considered adequate for the scope called for in the evaluation.
Rating:	3: The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of time and budget allocated

Standard:	The team conducting the evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of staffing and skills sets
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation was well-resourced in terms of skills sets. Both consultants have Masters degrees in Mathematics Education and are experienced consultants in the South African education sector. One also has an M.Phil degree in Monitoring and Evaluation. This gives them the theoretical background, understanding of the provincial context, and practical experience to conduct an evaluation such as this. Despite the tight time frames, the two-person team was able to devote the needed time to the evaluation, and therefore the evaluation was sufficiently resourced in terms of staffing as well.
Rating:	4: The evaluation was well resourced in terms of staffing and skills sets

Appropriateness of the evaluation design and methodology

Standard:	There was explicit reference to the intervention logic or the theory of change of the evaluand in the planning of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	<p>There was explicit reference to the need for an intervention logic or theory of change of the evaluand (the LAIS pillar 2) in the planning of the evaluation, but not explicit reference to what the intervention logic or theory of change is.</p> <p>The Inception Report noted that the evaluators had not yet received the programme documentation it had been agreed they would receive, including a LAIS logic model or logical framework that outlines the desired outcomes of the programme. It was not within the evaluation's scope to create such a model/framework, especially given the tight time frames.</p>
Rating:	3: There was explicit reference to the intervention logic or the theory of change of the evaluand in the TOR or the Inception Report

Standard:	The planned methodology was appropriate to the questions being asked
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The planned methodology and agreed evaluation questions were captured in a Revised TOR dated 25 February 2015.</p> <p>The evaluation questions (which had been developed in consultation between the steering committee and service providers), covered four main areas (implementation context, implementation reporting, evaluating efficacy and value for money, and recommendations emerging).</p> <p>The planned methodology was mixed-methods, with a review of programme documentation, collection of qualitative data from provincial stakeholders and school-based stakeholders, and a statistical analysis of matric results from LAIS participating and non-participating schools. This methodology was appropriate to the questions being asked, and the revised TOR specified the data that was believed to be available for each of the methods.</p>
Rating:	4: The planned methodology was well suited to the questions being asked and considered the data available

Standard:	The sampling planned was appropriate and adequate given the focus and purpose of evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The planned non-probability sampling involved four schools from two different districts. In each district one performing above average and one performing below average was sampled. This was good given that the purpose of the evaluation was to understand how LAIS pillar 2 is being implemented and how this influences school performance. These qualitative results from four schools would not be representative of the hundreds of participating LAIS schools in the province; instead it would allow for a sense of the general dynamics: how different schools implement/experience LAIS pillar 2, and how school performance can be influenced by LAIS pillar 2 differently under different conditions.</p> <p>Sampling of the interviewees would be done in consultation with OTP and would include provincial and district officials as well as, possibly, trade union officers. This sampling was appropriate given the management and implementation arrangements of the LAIS programme and the improvement-focused purpose of the evaluation.</p>
Rating:	4: The sampling planned was good given the focus, purpose and context of the evaluation

Project management (Planning phase)

Standard:	The inception phase was used to develop a common agreement on how the evaluation would be implemented
Comment and Analysis:	As mentioned above, in February, a detailed "revised Terms of Reference" was produced including detailed evaluation questions, methods and processes. This document showed the shared understanding achieved between the stakeholders. According to interviewed stakeholders, by the end of the inception phase there was a "good alignment" between the stakeholders of the evaluation. This is evidenced by smooth implementation of the evaluation thereafter.
Rating:	4: The inception phase was used to good effect to achieve a common agreement and understanding of how the evaluation would be implemented

Implementation

Evaluation ethics and independence

Standard:	Where data was gathered in contexts where ethical sensitivity is high, informed consent, assurances of confidentiality and appropriate clearance were achieved; e.g. through an ethics review board, in evaluation involving minors, institutions where access usually requires ethical or bureaucratic clearance
Comment and Analysis:	Learners participated in focus groups only after permission was obtained from principals and school governing bodies. In the case of interviews and focus groups with adults (officials, principals and others), informed consent and confidentiality arrangements were in place. The full report contains the documents used for informed consent and confidentiality arrangements as Annexures.
Rating:	4: There was clear evidence that ethical protocols were observed for most data collection instances including: informed consent agreements; confidentiality; documenting and storing data notes, recordings or transcripts; Where data was gathered in contexts where ethical sensitivity is high, appropriate clearance was achieved through an ethics review board; e.g. in evaluation involving minors, institutions where access usually requires ethical or bureaucratic clearance, and situations where assurances of confidentiality was offered to participants

Standard:	Where external, the evaluation team was able to work without significant interference and given access to existing data and information sources
Comment and Analysis:	<p>From a reading of the various evaluation documents, as well as interviews with key stakeholders, there is every indication that the evaluation team worked without any deliberate interference.</p> <p>However, the report notes (and interviewed stakeholders echoed) that obtaining access to existing data and information sources was challenging. Reasons are twofold: Firstly, LAIS monitoring had been haphazard with poor record-keeping; and secondly, no senior officials of DOE were actively involved in the steering committee, making it harder to obtain documents or get respondents to make themselves available for interviews.</p> <p>Nevertheless those on the steering committee supported the evaluation team as far as possible to obtain the existing sources, e.g. following up with interviewees that the evaluators were struggling to reach. For the visits to schools, the evaluator had a letter from the Department of Education to introduce him which facilitated access. Ultimately, stakeholders indicated, the evaluators were given access to nearly all data and information sources they sought (as long as the sources existed).</p>
Rating:	3: The evaluation team was able to work without significant interference and was given access to existing data and information sources

Participation and M&E skills development

Standard:	Key stakeholders were involved in the evaluation through a formalised mechanism or institutional arrangement
Comment and Analysis:	The following key stakeholders were represented on the evaluation steering committee: The Eastern Cape Department of Education (DOE) (department responsible for the LAIS programme); the Eastern Cape Office of the Premier (commissioning organisation); and GIZ (the funder). From the DOE's side it should be noted that no senior officials (i.e. those responsible for conceptualising LAIS and making strategic decisions about its implementation going forward) were actively involved with the steering committee, but the DOE officials who were there were described as actively engaged.
Rating:	3: Key stakeholders were involved in the evaluation through a formalised mechanism or institutional arrangement (e.g. a steering committee or reference group)

Standard:	Where appropriate, an element of capacity building of partners responsible for the evaluand and evaluators was incorporated into the evaluation process
Comment and Analysis:	Interviewed stakeholders believed that the members of the steering committee learned about M&E from the evaluation experience. However there is no evidence of any deliberate/explicit capacity building element to the evaluation (nor was any called for the in TOR scope).
Rating:	1: There was no evidence of any capacity building of partners responsible for the evaluand or evaluators being incorporated into the evaluation process

Methodological integrity

Standard:	A literature review was developed which informed the analytical framework and findings of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	The literature scan, although brief, covered valuable content: summary table of FET interventions in SA; two case study examples of implementation in SA (Gauteng; and a national programme implemented in certain districts across SA) and lessons from the literature on similar interventions in various settings. These elements were all highly relevant to the evaluation and provided a valuable context for the findings. The "lessons" section in particular was valuable as it showed how the lessons from LAIS in the Eastern Cape reinforce lessons learned elsewhere. These were used to good effect in the concluding section, building a basis for the recommendations.
Rating:	4: A good quality literature review was developed which was insightful in terms of the analytical framework and provided good context for the findings

Standard:	The methods employed in the process of the evaluation were consistent with those planned and implemented adequately
Comment and Analysis:	The methods employed in the process were consistent with the planned methods as per the revised TOR. They were implemented as well as possible given the data available. Interviewed stakeholders appreciated the commitment the evaluators demonstrated in making the data collection and analysis happen in the time frames despite challenges.
Rating:	3: The methods employed in the process of the evaluation were consistent with those planned and implemented adequately

Standard:	A pilot of basic data collection instrumentation occurred prior to undertaking data collection and it was used to inform the research process
Comment and Analysis:	Given the scope of the original TOR, time pressure and logistical considerations, there was no piloting of the data collection instruments (i.e. the interview guides and focus group guides).
Rating:	1: No pilot of any data collection instrumentation took place prior to data collection

Standard:	Data was collected from key stakeholders (e.g. implementers, governance structures, indirectly affected stakeholders) as data sources
Comment and Analysis:	Data was collected from school-based stakeholders, DOE officials (senior provincial staff; circuit managers) and a trade union representative. Between these the key stakeholders of the LAIS programme are well covered. The majority of those planned to be reached, were reached.
Rating:	4: Data was collected from the intended key stakeholder groupings in line with the envisioned range and type of stakeholders (approx. 80-89% of intended)

Standard:	The methodology included engaging beneficiaries appropriately as a key source of data and information
Comment and Analysis:	The methodology included focus groups with the grade 12 learners at each of the 4 sampled schools. These were carried out and yielded some useful data, but the report also notes that in some lines of questioning the learners did not yet have much to add as this was February/March of their grade 12 year and they had not yet experienced the holiday programmes that form part of the grade 12 LAIS interventions. The focus groups were still valuable, but had the timing of the evaluation been closer to the end of the year, it might have been possible to engage grade 12s even more meaningfully.
Rating:	3: The methodology included engaging beneficiaries as a source of data and information (or if based on secondary data, includes data from beneficiaries)

Project management (Implementation phase)

Standard:	The steering committee, technical working group and service provider worked together adequately to facilitate achievement of the objectives of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	All parties reportedly worked together effectively to facilitate achievement of the objectives of the evaluation, including addressing challenges along the way. There were no significant instances of unconstructive behaviour among the stakeholders. The key challenge of providing data and documentation was not entirely in the hands of these parties.
Rating:	4: The steering committee, technical working group and service provider worked together in a flexible and constructive manner facilitating achievement of the objectives of the evaluation

Standard:	Support provided by the evaluation secretariat (e.g. the administrators responsible for the evaluation) facilitated achievement of the objectives of the evaluation (eg turnaround times, addressing problems, preparation for meetings etc)
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation secretariat support was reported as good, with meetings reportedly well organised, and turnaround times that facilitated completion of the evaluation within the tight time frames as agreed.
Rating:	4: Good support was provided by the evaluation secretariat and facilitates timely and constructive achievement of the objectives of the evaluation

Reporting

Completeness of the evaluation report

Standard:	The first draft evaluation report was of a sufficient quality to go to stakeholders and did not require major changes
Comment and Analysis:	The draft report was shared with all members of the steering committee. According to all interviewed stakeholders, the steering committee fundamentally agreed with the findings as per the draft report, and did not have major concerns about the methodology, content, presentation etc. Steering committee comments on the draft did not call for any major changes.
Rating:	4: A first draft of the evaluation report was of a good quality and required only minor changes prior to finalisation

Standard:	The final evaluation report is well-structured and complete in terms of the following: executive summary; context of the development evaluation; evaluation purpose, questions and scope; methodology; findings and analysis; conclusions and recommendations
Comment and Analysis:	The final report includes the above listed components, but the following are not clearly distinct in the structure: - Scope (the scope can be discerned from the sections on evaluation purpose, questions and methodology, and limitations) - Analysis and conclusions (the section presenting findings does not go on to analyse the findings; instead the analysis and conclusions are combined in section 5 under "evaluation comments") Despite the above, the structure is adequate and does not cause any confusion.
Rating:	3: The final evaluation report is complete, follows a clear structure and addresses at minimum: executive summary; background/context of the evaluation; evaluation purpose, questions and scope; methodology; findings and analysis; conclusions and recommendations

Accessibility of content

Standard:	The final evaluation report is user-friendly, written in accessible language and adequate for publication (e.g. adequate layout and consistent formatting; complete sentences and no widespread grammatical or typographical errors; consistency of style and writing conventions; levels of formality; references complete and consistent with cited references in reference list and vice versa; etc.)
Comment and Analysis:	The report is user friendly. There are no noticeable grammar or typographical errors. Although the methodology is academically sound, the language is relatively direct and informal throughout, which makes for a very accessible report that the common reader would find easy to follow.
Rating:	4: The final report is well written, accessible to the common reader and ready for publication with only minor spelling, grammar or formatting mistakes

Standard:	Figures, tables and appropriate conventions are used in presentation of data (e.g. use of appropriate statistical language; reporting of p-values where appropriate; not reporting statistically insignificant findings as significant; clarifying disaggregation categories in constructing percentages; not using quantitative language in reporting qualitative data, etc.) and are readily discernible to a reader familiar with data presentation conventions
Comment and Analysis:	The one figure and several tables are presented in a way that is readily discernible to a reader familiar with presentation conventions.
Rating:	3: Figures, tables and appropriate conventions are used in presentation of data and are readily discernible to a reader familiar with data presentation conventions

Robustness of findings

Standard:	Data analysis appears to have been executed to an adequate standard
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The main data collected is first presented in the section on Findings: themes in the qualitative data collected from various stakeholders; tables showing budgets; etc. This section also contains the results of the quantitative analysis of pass rates in participating and non-participating schools - this difference-in-difference analysis appears to have been executed to an adequate standard with the appropriate caveats.</p> <p>Thereafter, the section Evaluation Comments and Recommendations analyses the findings by integrating the various sources of data and weighing this against the lessons from the Literature review. Because the preceding section showed the data on which the findings are based, the reader can gauge fairly confidently that the data analysis has been executed to an adequate standard. The partial nature of some of the datasets did limit the extent of the analysis, but this was adequately acknowledged.</p>
Rating:	3: Data analysis appears to have been executed to an adequate standard for most datasets

Standard:	Findings are supported by evidence which is sufficiently and appropriately analysed to support the argument, integrating sources of data
Comment and Analysis:	As mentioned above, the arguments presented in the Evaluation Comments and Recommendations section are clearly supported by the preceding evidence. They are also sufficiently triangulated where possible, or the reader is reminded of the partial nature of the data where necessary.
Rating:	3: The evidence gathered is analysed to support the argument to an adequate standard and integrates sources of data

Standard:	There is appropriate recognition and exploration of the possibility of alternative interpretations
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The analysis is fairly straightforward, guided by evaluation questions that mostly do not require significant logical leaps. It is hard to imagine what alternative interpretations could have been made of the qualitative findings and programme documentation.</p> <p>The statistical analysis however is more open to alternative interpretations, and here there is a clear discussion of alternative interpretations. The authors explain how the results, which imply no effect of the LAIS programme, could be supplemented if more detailed data were available.</p> <p>Overall the evaluation report deals with the possibility of alternative interpretations well.</p>
Rating:	4: There is clear recognition of the possibility of alternative interpretations and these are concisely presented without detracting from other findings

Standard:	The report appears free of significant methodological and analytic flaws
Comment and Analysis:	A reading of the report raises no significant methodological or analytic concerns. One methodological / analytical process used to ensure absence of flaws is review of draft report by the steering committee.
Rating:	4: The report documents some of the methodological and analytical processes used to ensure that it is free of methodological and analytic flaws

Standard:	Limitations of all aspects of the methodology and findings are clearly articulated (e.g. limitations of scope or evaluation design, recommendation for additional research, data collection challenges, etc)
Comment and Analysis:	Two limitations are explicitly mentioned i.e. time constraints (leading to limited data availability) and the fact that monitoring and evaluation had not been designed along with the programme (leading to unavailability of documents and performance indicators). The statistical analysis is also presented with clear recognition of limitations. This is adequate, covering all limitations raised in interviews with stakeholders.
Rating:	3: Limitations of all aspects of the methodology and findings are articulated

Strength of conclusions

Standard:	Conclusions are derived from evidence
Comment and Analysis:	The Conclusions are not separately presented but are presented as part of the Evaluation Comments and Recommendations section. The arguments presented in this section are clearly supported by the preceding evidence. By necessity, not all conclusions are based on multiple sources of data but this is acknowledged where appropriate. In many instances the fact that data was not available is an important conclusion in itself in terms of implementation of the LAIS pillar 2 - and the lack of evidence to the contrary is used to support this conclusion.
Rating:	3: Conclusions are derived from evidence

Standard:	Conclusions address the original evaluation purpose and questions
Comment and Analysis:	The concluding section is structured according to the main evaluation questions and addresses each of the questions well. The use of the "lessons learned" of what works well (from the literature review) is used to good effect in this section, to focus the reader's attention how the programme can be improved in future (which was the purpose of the evaluation).
Rating:	4: Conclusions address the original evaluation purpose and questions well

Standard:	Conclusions are drawn with explicit reference to the intervention logic or theory of change
Comment and Analysis:	The conclusions cannot provide a clear judgment on the intervention logic or theory of change, as none was made available and it was not in the scope of the evaluation to develop one. However the evaluation does not ignore this absence but rather shows it to be an important finding in itself. The concluding section refers to evidence to argue that "there appears to be a lack of clear conceptualisation, coherence and alignment of LAIS intentions and focus areas" and that stakeholders appear not to have agreed on indicators for success. The conclusions also discuss the apparent logic of the programme based on how it has been implemented. The two indicators of success that the evaluators found mentioned in documents, are critiqued in terms of their ability to really reflect the performance of the programme.
Rating:	2: Conclusions make implicit or indirect reference to the intervention logic or theory of change

Suitability of recommendations

Standard:	Recommendations are made in consultation with relevant government officials, stakeholders and sectoral experts
Comment and Analysis:	According to the final report, all members of the steering committee had the opportunity to provide inputs into the draft report (including recommendations) in writing as well as at a face to face meeting. The meeting and comments involved only government officials (OTP and DOE) and GIZ.
Rating:	3: Recommendations are made in consultation with relevant government officials, stakeholders and sectoral experts

Standard:	Recommendations are useful- they are relevant, specific, feasible, affordable and acceptable
Comment and Analysis:	<p>There are 6 main recommendations and they are all clearly relevant. They are also very specific, with some going somewhat beyond the evaluation's evidence (clearly drawing on the evaluators' broader expertise in education management).</p> <p>The affordability of the recommendations is hard to gauge, but an important boost to the potential affordability is that one major aspect of the programme is recommended to be cancelled (see below) so that resources can be focused on more essential and more proven elements. The essence of each recommendation appears feasible, provided it has the necessary buy-in from the department. It is also acknowledged that some of them touch on systemic weaknesses that have proven difficult (if not unfeasible) to address.</p> <p>Most recommendations are acceptable and the one that is potentially less acceptable (stopping centralised Grade 12 vacation schools and revision camps) is carefully supported using the evidence from the evaluation. It is also followed up with another alternative, more acceptable recommendation (anticipating that stopping centralised camps could be a "tough political decision"). This is a useful way of dealing with the tension between the logical conclusion of the evaluation findings and what is acceptable.</p>
Rating:	3: Recommendations are useful- they are relevant, specific, feasible, affordable and acceptable to an extent

Acknowledgement of ethical considerations

Standard:	The full report documents procedures intended to ensure confidentiality and to secure informed consent where necessary (in some cases this is not needed - e.g. evaluation synthesis - in which case N/A should be recorded)
Comment and Analysis:	The full report includes as an Appendix copies of the information statement and signed agreement given to respondents at the school. It includes information about confidentiality, and management and eventual disposal of data. Each data collection instrument also starts with a paragraph ensuring the respondent of confidentiality. The full report gives evidence that every effort was made to ensure appropriate confidentiality and informed consent.
Rating:	5: The full report documents all ethical procedures applied in text and provides examples of all confidentiality statements and informed consent agreements as appendices, as well as indicates how data will be stored and/or disposed of in the future

Standard:	There are no risks to participants or institutions in disseminating the evaluation report on a public website
Comment and Analysis:	No such risks were identified by interviewed stakeholders nor through a reading of the full report.
Rating:	4: There are no risks to participants or institutions in disseminating the original full evaluation report on a public website

Follow-up, use and learning

Resource utilisation

Standard:	The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes and budget
Comment and Analysis:	According to documentation and interviewed stakeholders, the evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes and budget.
Rating:	3: The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes and budget

Evaluation use

Standard:	Results of the evaluation have been presented to relevant stakeholders
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The results of the evaluation were presented to the steering committee (GIZ, DOE, OTP). Again it should be noted that in DOE, senior management was not actively involved by this point in the process (but some other officials were).</p> <p>Those tasked with ensuring results are shared further within DOE and beyond could unfortunately not be reached for comment in this assessment.</p>
Rating:	3: Results of the evaluation have been presented to relevant stakeholders in government
Standard:	A reflective process has been undertaken by the steering committee with the service provider (if no steering committee exists then by the evaluation management team or the involved department officials) to reflect on what could be done to strengthen future evaluations
Comment and Analysis:	No such process had been part of the project plan and scope, nor was any such process reportedly undertaken with the service provider.
Rating:	1: There was no reflective process undertaken by the steering committee on what could be done to strengthen future evaluations
Standard:	The evaluation study is seen by interviewed stakeholders as having added significant symbolic value to the policy or programme (e.g. raised its profile)
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The stakeholders interviewed were involved during the evaluation's conceptualisation and up to the service provider's presentation of final results. However they were not involved in further follow-up (further sharing of evaluation results; working with a management response / improvement plan).</p> <p>According to one of the interviewed stakeholders, the DOE officials who attended the final presentation of results and recommendations responded with enthusiasm, perhaps because they hoped the evaluation results would lead to improved awareness of the programme and the ways by which it could be improved. However, another interviewed stakeholder felt that the evaluation had potential to raise the LAIS programme's profile, but that potential had been missed given the apparent lack of interest by DOE senior management in the evaluation. From reading of the evaluation report it also appears that the programme had not enjoyed significant management attention since it had been conceptualised.</p> <p>Without evidence to the contrary, this assessment concludes that the evaluation was probably of limited symbolic value to the programme.</p>
Rating:	2: The evaluation study is seen by interviewed stakeholders as being of limited symbolic value to the policy or programme

Standard:	The evaluation study is of conceptual value in understanding what has happened and possibly in shaping future policy and practice
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation report focuses on what has happened in the first years of LAIS pillar 2's implementation and does so in a way that is quite valuable in understanding what has happened (to a reader and to the interviewed stakeholders). If it is used, it could certainly shape policy and practice, particularly given the clear comparison of current policy and practice with "lessons learned" from other programmes. (However this assessment has no evidence that this has happened.)
Rating:	3: The evaluation study is of conceptual value in understanding what has happened and possibly in shaping policy and practice

References

GIZ (2016), Terms of Reference (revised): Evaluation of the Implementation of the Learner Attainment Improvement Strategy (LAIS) to assess the grade 12 Learner Support Intervention.

GIZ (2015), Terms of Reference: Evaluation of the Implementation of the Learner Attainment Improvement Strategy (LAIS) to assess the grade 12 Learner Support Intervention.

Spencer-Smith, G. and Roberts, N. (2015), Evaluation of the Learner Support Intervention, part of the Learner Attainment Improvement Strategy (LAIS), in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa: Inception Report.

Spencer-Smith, G. and Roberts, N. (2015), Evaluation of the Learner Support Intervention, part of the Learner Attainment Improvement Strategy (LAIS), in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa: Final Report.

Spencer-Smith, G. and Roberts, N. (2015), Evaluation of the Learner Support Intervention, part of the Learner Attainment Improvement Strategy (LAIS), in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa: Executive Summary.

List of Interviewees

Godje Bialluch, KRA 1 Team Leader, Governance and Support Programme, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). Brief telephonic interview, 28 September 2016.

Garth Spencer-Smith, consultant, Kelello Consulting. Interview, 8 December 2016.

Candice Morkel, Chief Director: Monitoring and Evaluation, Eastern Cape Office of the Premier (at the time of the evaluation). Telephonic interview, 5 October 2016.

Nodumo Tyali, Specialist: Monitoring and Reporting (at the time of the evaluation). Telephonic Interview, 12 December 2016.