IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION OF THE NATIONAL LEARNER TRANSPORT PROGRAMME

COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION REPORT (final)

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Quest research services

THE IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION OF THE NATIONAL LEARNER TRANSPORT PROGRAMME - COMPREHENSIVE REPORT (FINAL)

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ENQUIRIES

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List of Abbreviations

CAPI	Computer Aided Personal Interviews
CATI	Computer Aided Telephone Interviews
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DP	Data Processing
DSD	Department of Social Development
DoT	Department of Transport
DPME	Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation
LTP	Learner Transport Programme
QRS	Quest Research Services
ToR	Terms of Reference
VFM	Value For Money
USA	United States of America
IPA	Importance Performance Analysis
CR	Central Region
NIDC	National Interdepartmental Committee
SLA	Service Level Agreement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
CE Analysis	Cost-effectiveness analysis
CU Analysis	Cost-Utility Analysis
CBA	Cost-Benefit Analysis
SROI	Social Return on Investment
SA	South Africa
ESC	Evaluation Steering Committee
TWG	Technical Working Group
TOC	Theory of Change
EC	Eastern Cape
FS	Free State
GP	Gauteng
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LIM	Limpopo
MP	Mpumalanga
NC	Northern Cape
NW	North West
WC	Western Cape

Policy Summary

The National Learner Transport Programme (LTP) was developed by Government with an aim of addressing the challenge of learners who live relatively far from the nearest school and/or experience risks to personal safety to-and-from school. The purpose of this implementation evaluation is to assess the implementation of the DOT/DBE LTP, with specific reference to the current patterns of its operational performance, results (delivery), and immediate outcomes. Performance is assessed relative to the original programme goal(s), objectives and intended outcomes.

The learner transport programme has been in existence and has been implemented in many provinces prior to the implementation of the approved National Learner Transport Policy in 2015. The background to this goes back to the DOT in the early 1990s, which had its own broader framework which included special needs transport.

The right to basic education is embedded in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996). In order to facilitate the realisation of this right, learners must be able to get to and from school. The ability of learners to access education is hampered by long distances from the nearest local schools, resulting in significant walking/travel time to get to school, as well as threats to their safety and security along the routes followed, and the high costs of public transport. In some cases the effect is that some learners do not attend school regularly. The following are the legislative imperatives that underlie the implementation of the Learner Transport Program:

(1) Section 85(2)(b) of the Constitution mandates the DOT to develop and implement transport policy.
(2) The National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 has prioritized investment in public transport of which learner transport is a key component. The NDP has further called for investment in ensuring safe, reliable and affordable public transport.
(3) National Policy for the Equitable Provision of an Enabling School Physical Teaching and Learner Environment (2010)
(4) The provision of learner transport is in alignment with the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2014-2019 which seeks to support on-going efforts by Government to address the socio-economic development of the country through standardized implementation plans.
(5) The National Land Transport Act (NLTA) 2009 stipulates that learner transport provincial strategies and local government plans must be approved by the MEC and submitted to DOT at specified times.
(6) The National Learner Transport Policy (2015) aims at providing national principles, requirements, guidelines, frameworks and national norms and standards that must be applied uniformly in the provinces.
(7) Section 3 of the South African Schools Act (SASA) 1996 makes provision for a compulsory general education phase for learners from the age of seven until age of 15 of grade nine, whichever occurs first. Members of the Provincial Executive Committee (MECs) are responsible for ensuring that there are sufficient school places so that every child of eligible age can attend school and receive compulsory general education and training.

(8) The learner transport function has been in place for more than a decade, and provides for the provision of subsidized transport to learners who walk more than five kilometres. The National Learner Transport Policy (2015) section 3.3.1 outlines the following criteria for subsidised learner transport services
   (a) Learners from grade R to grade 12 with primary schools given a priority over secondary schools.
   (b) Learner transport is only subsidised to the nearest appropriate school only and not to a school of parental choice.
   (c) Learners with disabilities are given a priority.
(9) The IGFRA (Act No. 13 of 2005), provides the basis for all spheres of Government to facilitate coordination in the implementation of policy, including the provision of services, monitoring implementation of policy and realisation of national priorities.

After initial work over 2007-2008, in February 2009 the final draft national scholar transport policy was released by the Minister of Transport, J Radebe. The draft Policy was firmly located in the post-Apartheid era, and made reference to various studies such as the DOE study to analyse the impact of walking long distances to school on learning, and several other South African studies - the DOT (2003) National Household Travel Survey (NHTS), DOE (2006) Review of the Financing, Resourcing and Costs of Education in Public Schools; Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005); and the Human Rights Commission (1998) – which together have provided valuable information on the issue of distances that learners have to travel to schools as one of the key barriers to learners accessing schools. The studies suggested that the ability of scholars to access education was hampered by the long distances involved, threats to safety, as well as the cost of scholar transport. Scholars had difficulty accessing educational institutions because of the unavailability of scholar transport.

The General Household Survey 2010: FOCUS ON SCHOOLING[1] (GHS 2010) provided the empirical research for the draft Policy (2015) - conducted by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) in around 22,000 households and specifically designed to measure various aspects of the living circumstances of South African households, with a focus on schooling. Key points from the GHS 2010 reflected in the Policy: the draft *Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure* (DOE, 2008) stipulates norms and standards for the building of schools. At full implementation of the *draft* norms, every school will be required to have a catchment area to the radius of up to 3 kms. A total walking distance to and from school will be up to 6 kms. According to the norms, learners who fall beyond the set catchment area will be provided with either transport or hostel accommodation on a progressive phased and pro-poor sequence. The GHS indicates that of the 11 million who walk to school, over 300 000 (3%) walk for more than an hour to school.[2]

[1] The source and reference is confusing. The original source is: DOT (2009:11) Final Draft Scholar Transport Policy, which refers to the National Household Travel Survey 2009, typically undertaken by Statistics South Africa. But there is no NHTS 2009! The NHTS 2003 was the last national travel survey undertaken by STATSSA, but in 2010 there is a General Household Survey (GHS) 2010: Focus on Schooling. This evaluation report assumes that the Final Draft Scholar Transport Policy must be referring to a preliminary report that may have been in circulation in 2009, but released in 2010 by STATSSA. In any event, the STATSSA 2003 NHTS is too far back to be useful as background in this 2018 evaluation.

[2] STATSSA (2010:26) General Household Survey (GHS) 2010. STATSSA: Pretoria.

The National Learner Transport Policy (2015) is based on the Final Draft Scholar Transport Policy (2009) with relatively few changes evident between the two documents. An important change between the 2009 draft Policy and the approved 2015 Policy is that the target group definition is vague in the latter version:

(10) The Scholar transport function will be provided on the basis of a number of principles, including that scholar transport must be affordable, safe and secure. The target group of the Policy is scholars who attend schooling between Grade R to 12 and **live more than 3km from the nearest school** (own emphasis).[3]

(11) The target group for subsidised transport is learners who attend grade R to 12 and live in areas where they do not have access to public transport services and have to **walk long distances to school** (own emphasis).[4]

Other important changes evident between the drafts of learner transport policy (2009, 2015) relate to: the **removal** of the following in the final approved LTP (2015):

(12) Guidelines for developmental programmes for Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) and Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMME's) in order to bring the previously marginalised groups into the formalised transport sector and economic mainstream.[5]…

(13) Policy detail that there should be… the migration of the scholar transport function to the DOT.

(14) Recommendation that scholar transport provision should be managed by dedicated units at both national and provincial levels of government. …has been removed in the approved Policy (2015), which reflects the essence of the very lengthy (and unacceptable delays – own insert) in its finalization process of some eight years!

According to the STATSSA (2016:30) GHS there is a slow decline in the percentage of learners (7-18 years) who walk to school. The majority of learners reported that they walk to school, but as learners get older they are more likely to walk for more than 30 minutes to educational institutions. In 2016, around 5.4% of learners travelled to school by means of a minibus taxi, whereas 9.7% of learners travelled to school by means of a vehicle hired by a group of parents. The majority of individuals aged 5-18 years old who reported that they walk to their educational institutions, walk for less than 15 minutes, while less than 3% of households reported that learners are traveling to school by means of a minibus or bus provided for by the school or the government.

In GHS (2016:30) the majority of learners reported that they walk to school, but as learners get older they are more likely to walk for more than 30 minutes to educational institutions. In 2016, around 5.4% of learners travelled to school by means of a minibus taxi, whereas 9.7% of learners travelled to school by means of a vehicle hired by a group of parents. The majority of individuals aged 5 to 18 years old who reported that they walk to their educational institutions, walk for less than 15 minutes, while less than 3% of households reported that learners are traveling to school by means of a minibus or bus provided for by the school or the government. KwaZulu-Natal has the highest percentage of learners who walk for more than 30 minutes to educational institutions, while Western Cape has the lowest percentage of learners who walk for more than 30 minutes to educational institutions.

[3] DOT (2009:7)

[4] DOT (2015:8)

[5] DOT (2009:8)

KwaZulu-Natal has the highest percentage of learners who walk for more than 30 minutes to educational institutions, while Western Cape has the lowest percentage of learners who walk for more than 30 minutes to educational institutions.

Table 1. Proportions of 7 to 18 year olds that use different modes of transport, 2009-2016 (source: *Statistics South Africa, General Household Survey (GHS)*

Means of transport	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Walking	74.9	73.6	74.1	71.8	72.3	71.3	69.0	68.9

In terms of the policy contribution, the national Learner Transport Programme was assessed as follows:

1. **Programme Relevance**: The National Learner Transport Programme is relevant in terms of the fundamental policy cornerstones: the National Development Plan (NDP) and the Medium Term Strategic Frameworks (MTSF). The Programme is contributing to Outcome 1: improved quality of basic education, Outcome 3: All People in South Africa are and feel safe, Outcome 4:decent employment through inclusive growth, Outcome 5: A skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth, and Outcome 6: an efficient, competitive and responsive economic infrastructure network. Furthermore, the pro-poor nature and focus of the LTP, is aligned with national priorities which also extensively aim at alleviating the economic and social ills of vulnerable and rural communities and as a way of reducing the inequality gap.
2. **Policy Alignment**: At its base, there is policy alignment of the Programme with the Basic Education and Transport sector mandates, and key policy references: The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 Section 85(2)(b) mandates the DOT with the role of developing and implementing transport policy. This learner transport policy is guided by the White Paper on National Transport Policy (1996), the National Land Transport Act, Act 05 of 2009, the National Land Transport Strategic Framework, the Public Transport Strategy and Action Plan (2007) and other legislation such as the National Road Traffic Act, Act 93 of 1996. In terms of access to education, there is also alignment with the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996), and the National Policy for the Equitable Provision of an Enabling School Physical Teaching and Learner Environment (2010). The National Learner Transport Policy accommodates for the transportation of learners from Grade R to 12 including learners with disabilities as defined by the SASA of 1996.

   There is generally policy alignment between the National Learner Transport Policy (2015) and provincial policies on Scholar Transport/Learner Transport. All provinces have developed aligned provincial learner transport policy which has been approved by provincial executive structures. Kwa-Zulu Natal is in the process of updating the provincial policy.

3. **Programme Appropriateness**: The National Learner Transport Policy (2015) is considered appropriate, in terms of the needs of its primary intended beneficiaries (learners), as well as key stakeholders in the learner transport "sector". The NLTP provides that national government will oversee the implementation of the policy in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including provinces, municipalities and School Governing Bodies (SGBs). Although participation in the Learner Transport Programme is generally strong, there has been no meaningful partnerships established with civil society organisations even though these possibly exist in relation to programme monitoring and oversight dialogue.
4. **In sum**, the Learner Transport Programme design is considered relevant and appropriate in terms of national priorities, education and transport sectors context and policy, and institutional environments. Programme eligibility criteria is generally appropriate in terms of beneficiaries' priorities, and is being applied with a measure of variability to learners who live between 3-10 kilometres away from the nearest school. There is some vagueness in the Policy (2015) that does not specifically detail the distance threshold for learner eligibility. However, the Department of Transport have developed guidelines for learner eligibility which the provinces would use.
5. In **summary of the key results** (in terms of effectiveness to deliver transport to learners) in the period 2012/13-2016/17, it is clear that the NLTP has made a **major contribution to providing a transport solution** to qualifying learners in need across South Africa. A total of 499,350 learners across the country in 2017/18 were travelling to-and-from-school in vehicles funded by the Programme. If we contextualise the provision of transportation to those learners fortunate enough to receive programme benefits, against the (conservative) estimation of the total learner population (627,114[6]) who are eligible for inclusion under the programme, we reach a conclusion that the Programme is **largely effective** in addressing the scale of the learner transport challenge in South Africa. With 75% *programme coverage* in 2016/17, It is clear, that the Programme's effectiveness can be improved, considering *unmet need* and underspending.
6. The large difference between reported need by provincial departments versus the estimate of total need using StatsSA data from the GHS 2016, causes significant uncertainty in terms of programme performance. If we used reported performance data from provincial departments solely, specifically for reported need, then we could conclude that the **Learner Transport Programme nationally is largely effective**, based on the understanding of three critical performance factors: (1) An assessment of *83% average programme coverage*[7] of learner transport services provided, in the period 2012/13 to 2016/17.[8] The average *unmet need* was therefore 19% in the same period. (2) In terms of punctuality, most of the learners sampled (58%) as well educators interviewed in this evaluation reported that learner transport vehicles arrived punctually in time for school. About 13% indicated arriving at school "most of the time", and about 24% "sometimes on time", and 4% of learners say that buses are "always late". Although there are obvious improvements possible, the Programme is also considered to be largely successful in this area. (3) In terms of safety, 80% of learners sampled travelled in buses, but 50% of all learners did not use safety belts. Further, combined with a consideration of overcrowding (25% of sample)

[6] STATSSA GHS 2016

[7] Learners transported versus reported need of

[8] Based on available data

on buses and taxis, the assessment is that learners supported by the Programme (i) have gained access to learner transport when they probably were unable to do so before, (ii) about 499,350 learners are being transported in a manner that poses some safety concerns which presents clear areas for implementation improvements from a road safety perspective.

7. If we accept the StatsSA GHS figures for 2016/17 and 2017/18 with conservative assumptions[9], then the Learner Transport Programme would still be considered relatively **effective in responding to the extent of country need**, based on performance of 77% for the first factor of *average programme coverage* for the two years for which we have data available (2016/17 and 2017/18). *Programme coverage* is 75% in 2016/17 (STATSSA data) from levels of 70%-93% in preceding years (DOT/DBE data). There is a possibility is that the assessment of *average programme coverage* of learner transport services provided will drop in the period 2012/13 to 2016/17 if STATSSA data was available and used in the same period.
   In sum, the **Programme's performance** would be considered **largely effective** in meeting the national need across the entire period of review. It is important to note that even utilizing a conservative STATSSA GHS 2016 estimate for *unmet need*, the Programme's response is substantially inadequate in KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo in 2016/17. There is a significant portion of learners that has not been counted as part of *unmet need*[10] because there is no clarity on how many learners are walking more than five kilometres (to-and-from school) in the StatsSA GHS 2016 and 2017 band of learners who take 31-60 minutes to walk to school. Further research is needed to establish what this additional figure may be.
8. Further **significant improvements are possible in terms of safety**, and **punctuality** in terms of the feedback received from sampled learners. **Overloading**, the **absence of/non-use of safety belts**, and the **roadworthiness of vehicles** are the main safety concerns in terms of feedback from sampled learners.
9. As far as **immediate outcomes** are concerned, when about 499,000 learners across the country in 2017/18 were able to catch buses/minibus taxis (100% subsidized by Government), and mostly arrived at schools on time, and in relatively safe transport, **access to education** was improved, and the day-to-day experience of getting to-and-from school was made easier, and **inclusion was enabled** because learners were now less time-poor, less tired, and were able to get on with day-to-day activities like making and keeping friends (while being transported on the buses), and were more ready and able to participate in education development opportunities provided in schools. Both departmental Education-related and Transport-related higher-level outcomes are being contributed to. In the case of Transport, achievements are being registered by the NLTP in terms of: a **timeous delivery** of service; a **reduction in road accidents** (number of); a **coordinated approach** to planning and implementation; (sub-outcome) **adherence to road traffic regulations** by operators; (output) **vehicle maintenance plans** and technical support for emergencies; (sub-outcome) **viable and sustainable operations**; (output) **uniformity of services** and tariff structure; and (output) a **coherent performance monitoring** system.

[9] See the chapter on Efficiency for the assessment of *unmet need*, and the use of STATSSA GHS 2016 and GHS 2017 below

[10] See write-up below in Efficiency chapter, on STATSSA GHS data.

10. A reported effect across all nine provinces, is that the Scholar Transport Programme has improved **school enrolments** in schools, because learners are being enrolled by their parents/enrolling themselves (orphans) in schools supported by the Programme, specifically because the Programme is supporting a given school. This represents **an intermediate outcome**, and supports the mandate and institutional outcomes of the departments of Education.
11. There were some other **intended consequences** that are observable, based on the data available: in the **Eastern Cape**: **Local Economic Opportunities for SMMEs:** it is reported that, the Programme has brought with it a host of opportunities for local businesses to provide services to Government. Though the total number of contracted service providers and the value of the opportunities could not be readily verified in this report, interaction with owners and provincial officials confirm that, a number of local entrepreneurs are now sustainably engaged or contracted for the next three years. In addition, many drivers are also employed. The long-term spin-offs may be improvement in livelihoods for the related families in the various districts.

The general national picture emerging from combined provincial analysis as far as implementation of the joint Learner Transport Programme is concerned, is one of relatively sound and effective systems on the ground (school-level), through the sprawling reach of provincial departments of Education down into distant schools at grassroots level. Although obviously and necessarily uneven in places, respondents were generally aware of the Programme, understood what it was meant to achieve; and embraced the value of safely transporting qualifying learners to-and-from school. Programme coverage has reached about 75% of national need, but where it has been able to reach, it is making a big difference to the lives of those children, in many communities across all nine provinces.

There are significant problems with programme systems and performance data integrity, especially between district and provincial levels, with the result that there are sharp movements in performance data trends from year-to-year, and which cannot plausibly be accounted for. Our evaluation assessment is, therefore, qualified and makes clear recommendations in this regard.

The Programme is profoundly pro-poor, pro-education, pro-rural and pro-inclusion in orientation because of its reach into poor and distant communities that have difficult access to public ordinary schools, and together with other Government interventions, such as no-fees in schools, and the school nutrition programme, has a strong redistributory effect to improve the day-to-day experience of children and adolescents in education, and in their lives in general.

There is no need for major policy reorientation. The following policy improvements are proposed:

R1 The DBE and DOT need to reconsider the distance threshold or consider a range to be used in rural settings and in urban settings. The threshold also need to be clearly stated in the actual policy document, to avoid the ambiguous interpretations by users of the policy.

R2 A common standard (costing model) for learner transport specifications in SCM processes should be set to ensure financial efficiency of the Programme.

R3 A complete overhaul of district, provincial and national systems for record-keeping, data storage/retrieval and reporting is urgently required to ensure that learner transport policy goals are achieved. Programme management processes and procedures must be strengthened in this regard.

Executive Summary

Evaluation approach and Method

The general approach employed in this evaluation is to follow a "classic" programme evaluation approach, based on typical logic models (theory of change and logical frameworks) used to make sense of projects and/or programmes like the National Learner Transport Programme.

In evaluation research terms, the general approach adopted was to utilize accepted research methods in a mixed methods approach in order to collect the appropriate data that could be analysed using triangulation to establish a credible assessment of programme performance of the Learner Transport Programme. As a consequence the evaluation design was set up to collect relevant data in all of the performance areas of the National Learner Transport Programme – on the ground in sampled schools (with the primary focus on learners, educators/principals, transport drivers and operators), the institutional environment of provincial administration, and the general country context in terms of what is currently known and has been established in relation to learner transport, including international insights for key lessons, principles and standards.

Sampling method**:** Given the diversity and layers of the population to be covered, a *stratified or multistage purposive sampling* strategy was used. This allowed for the use of a sampling frame to capture the complexity embedded in the various layers of the population for representativeness. The population is stratified and sampled in stages.

The total population of learners who are eligible for learner transport was estimated to be in the region of 370,225[11] which equals N in 2012/13. In 2016/17, N = 521,711. The primary selection of the sample is at school level, with two schools randomly selected per province. In other words, the schools were first selected randomly, followed by the random selection of learners. So the population in this case is N = 3,800 of schools supported by the Programme.

The following evaluation assessment is offered, with the qualification that there are significant problems with programme systems and data integrity, especially between district, provincial and national levels, with the result that there are sharp movements in performance data trends from year-to-year, and which cannot plausibly be accounted for. There is no other basis for making an assessment in relation to the evaluation terms of reference, but available performance data. Our evaluation assessment is, therefore, qualified and makes clear recommendations in this regard.

[11] Using a calculated estimated average increase of 9% in learner transport demand over 2013/14 to 2016/17. See table 16 on page 76 below

Relevance and Appropriateness

Key evaluation Question: To what extent is the design of the Learner Transport Programme appropriate, and consistent with education & transport sectors' priorities and policies, and partnerships with all key stakeholders?

1. **Programme Relevance**: The National Learner Transport Programme is relevant in terms of the fundamental policy cornerstones: the National Development Plan (NDP) and the Medium Term Strategic Frameworks (MTSF). The Programme is contributing to Outcome 1: improved quality of basic education, Outcome 3: All People in South Africa are and feel safe, Outcome 4: decent employment through inclusive growth, Outcome 5: A skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth, and Outcome 6: an efficient, competitive and responsive economic infrastructure network. Furthermore, the pro-poor nature and focus of the LTP, is aligned with national priorities which also extensively aim at alleviating the economic and social ills of vulnerable and rural communities and as a way of reducing the inequality gap.
2. **Policy Alignment**: At its base, there is policy alignment of the Programme with the Basic Education and Transport sector mandates, and key policy references: The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 Section 85(2)(b) mandates the DOT with the role of developing and implementing transport policy. This scholar transport policy is guided by the White Paper on National Transport Policy (1996), the National Land Transport Transition Act, Act 22 of 2000, the National Land Transport Strategic Framework, the Public Transport Strategy and Action Plan (2007) and other legislation such as the National Road Traffic Act, Act 93 of 1996. In terms of access to education, there is also alignment with the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996), and the National Policy for the Equitable Provision of an Enabling School Physical Teaching and Learner Environment (2010). Learner Transport Policy accommodates for the transportation of learners from Grade R to 12 including learners with disabilities as defined by the SASA of 1996.

   There is generally policy alignment between the National Learner Transport Policy (2015) and provincial policies on Scholar Transport/Learner Transport. All provinces have developed aligned provincial learner transport policy which has been approved by provincial executive structures.
3. **Programme Appropriateness**: The National Learner Transport Policy (2015) is considered appropriate, in terms of the needs of its primary intended beneficiaries (learners), as well as key stakeholders in the learner transport "sector". The NLTP provides that national government will oversee the implementation of the policy in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including provinces, municipalities and School Governing Bodies (SGBs). Although participation in the Learner Transport Programme is generally strong, there has been no meaningful partnerships established with civil society organisations even though these possibly exist in relation to programme monitoring and oversight dialogue.
4. In **sum**, the Learner Transport Programme design is considered relevant and appropriate in terms of national priorities, education and transport sectors context and policy, and institutional environments. Programme eligibility criteria is generally appropriate in terms of beneficiaries' priorities, and is being applied with a measure of variability to learners who live between 3-10 kilometres away from the nearest school. There is some vagueness in the Policy (2015) that does not specifically detail the distance threshold for learner eligibility. Also, the tariff structures being applied by provinces, seem not to take into account in its rates, the plights of rural routs (gravel)

operators in contrast with urban route (tared) operators, in terms of road conditions as well as incentives for minimum or shorter routes.

Effectiveness

To what extent has the implementation of the Learner Transport Programme been effective in achieving its goal(s), objectives and intended outcomes? What are the measurable results of the LTP in the period of review?

The limitations regarding available performance data have been noted above, and apply to all evaluation dimensions including effectiveness.

5. **Inputs**: The biggest input into the Programme has been the budget. The vote[12] was R1,572 billion in 2012/13 which grew dramatically to R2,66 billion in 2016/17, with an **average annual increase** of 13% over 2012/13-2016/17.[13]
6. **Activities**: The main business processes involved in implementing the national Learner Transport Programme (across all nine provinces) have typically involved the following generic processes or activities: (1) policy development, (2) budgeting and planning, including recruitment into the Programme, verification and selection, management of the Programme, and identification of Programme need, (3) establishment of structures and systems development, (4) services delivered, including programme coverage, (5) monitoring, audit and evaluation. Typically, there has been a proper process of programme need identification that has occurred in each province.
7. **Programme Output**: In terms of actual learners transported (programme delivery), based on available data (see table below), 330,436 learners were transported nationally by the Programme in 2012/13, 343,402 in 2013/14, 363,529 in 2014/15, 395,592 in 2015/16, 465,977 in 2016/17, and 499,350 in 2017/18. In sheer numbers, most learners comparatively are transported in Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Mpumalanga, and Western Cape.
8. How did the Programme respond relative to **demand (need) for learner transport** across the country? The demand reported by provincial departments in the period of review ranges from a national total of 403,545 eligible learners requiring learner transport in 2013/14 increasing to 521,711 learners in 2016/17. This is an average annual increase of just 13% in comparison to the average annual increase of 21% in the Programme's allocated budget.[14] But, there is a significant variation (18%) between the *reported demand*, and *unmet need* in terms of the data supplied in the StatsSA GHS (2016) - *total need* figures for 2017/18 show that there were 627,114 learners requiring transport in South Africa. Even though this is a rather conservative estimate of *unmet need*, it is 18% more than the reported need (national DBE, DOT).

[12] Of all provincial programme budgets combined, and for all non-recurring expenditure items, such as payments to transport operators.

[13] Please see supporting table below (Programme Budget) for disaggregated data on voted funding and *all data sources*.

[14] Comparison with the actual programme expenditure was not possible due to the gaps in the data.

9. In terms of provincial comparison of **average annual increase**[15] (%) in order of highest reported need, KwaZulu-Natal increased from 17,521 learners in 2012/13 to 71,000 in 2016/17 (122.7%), Limpopo increased from 19,344 learners in 2012/13 to 34,321 in 2016/17 (27.3%), Gauteng increased from 66,718 learners in 2012/13 to 97,114 in 2016/17 (13.4%), North West increased from 40,722 learners in 2012/13 to 52,684 in 2016/17 (12.4%), Free State increased from 8,061 learners in 2012/13 to 9,736 in 2016/17 (8.2%), Eastern Cape increased from 110, 474 learners in 2012/13 to 111,406 in 2016/17 (0.6%), Northern Cape increased from 27,239 learners in 2012/13 to 27,803 in 2016/17 (1.4%) and Western Cape increased from 53,920 learners in 2012/13 to 57,416 in 2016/17 (1.6%), and Mpumalanga decreased from 102,219 learners in 2012/13 to 111,406 in 2016/17 (-3.1%).
10. The significant difference between reported need by provincial departments versus the estimate of total need using StatsSA data from the GHS 2016, causes uncertainty in terms of programme performance. If we used reported performance data from provincial departments solely, specifically for reported need, then we could conclude that the **Learner Transport Programme nationally is assessed to be largely effective**, based on the understanding of three critical performance factors: (1) An assessment of *83% average programme coverage*[16] of learner transport services provided, in the period 2012/13 to 2016/17. In other words, the Programme response to national need was an average of 83% in the period of review.[17] The average *unmet need* was therefore 17% in the same period. (2) In terms of punctuality, most of the learners sampled (58%) as well educators interviewed in this evaluation reported that learner transport vehicles arrived punctually in time for school. Although there are obvious improvements possible, the Programme is also considered to be largely successful in this area. (3) In terms of safety, 80% of learners sampled travelled in buses, but 50% of all learners did not use safety belts. Further, combined with a consideration of overcrowding (25% of sample) on buses and taxis, the assessment is that learners supported by the Programme (i) have gained access to learner transport when they probably were unable to do so before, (ii) those 499,350 learners are being transported in a manner that that presents a need for implementation improvements from a road safety perspective.
11. However, if we accept the STATSSA GHS figures for 2016/17 and 2017/18 with conservative assumptions[18], then the Learner Transport Programme would still be considered **largely effective in responding to the extent of country need**, based on performance of 77% for the first factor of *average programme coverage* for the two years for which we have data available (2016/17 and 2017/18). Programme coverage is 75% in 2016/17 (STATSSA data) from levels of 70%-93% in preceding years (DOT/DBE data). There is a possibility is that the assessment of *average programme coverage* of learner transport services provided will drop in the period 2012/13 to 2016/17 if STATSSA data was available and used in the same period. In sum, the Programme's performance would be considered largely effective in meeting the national need across the entire

[15] Average annual increase for all percentages quoted

[16] Learners transported versus reported need of

[17] Based on available data

[18] See the chapter on Efficiency for the assessment of *unmet need*, and the use of STATSSA GHS 2016 and GHS 2017 below

period of review. It is important to note that even utilizing a conservative STATSSA GHS 2016 estimate for *unmet* need, the Programme's response is substantially inadequate in KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo in 2016/17.

There is a significant portion of learners that has not been counted as part of *unmet need*[19] because there is no clarity on how many learners are walking more than five kilometres (to-and-from school) in the STATSSA GHS 2016 and 2017 band of learners who take 31-60 minutes to walk to school. Further research is needed to establish what this additional figure may be.

12. In terms of actual expenditure relative to allocated budget, average **underspending** was about 15% for the period under review, noting data fluctuations, and about 5% in 2016/17. Against the average programme **unmet need (**of eligible learners not supplied with transport) of 17%, it is unacceptable that there is any programme underspending.
13. **Average increases** per **provincial learner transport programme delivery** in the same period, and in order were: KwaZulu-Natal (123%), Limpopo (27%), Gauteng (13%), North West (12%), Free State (8%), Eastern Cape (0.6%), Western Cape (2%), Northern Cape (1%), and Mpumalanga (-3%).
14. **Programme performance data gaps** were very significant as detailed in the report. There was virtually no data available for programme KPIs, except for the North West Province: Learner transport operators contracted (number), Contracted Learner Transport Operated (kilometres), Cost per Learner Transport Kilometre (R), Vehicles operating contracted learner transport (number), and Forensic audit reports on scholar transport (number). The absence or unavailability of performance data is partially linked to coordination issues between DOT and DBE, as well as management weaknesses at national level which suggests that national departments are unable to compel provincial departments to meet all programme-related obligations.
15. The **cost per learner** increases from R4,567 in 2012/13 to R5,015 in 2016/17, and there were unfortunately lots of data gaps in the number of learner transport kilometres financed by the Programme in the period of review, which made it quite difficult to undertake further analysis of budget/expenditure and programme performance trends.
16. There appears to be a **measure of disconnect** between programme expenditure and the fundamentals of the Programme – expenditure grows erratically but reported demand for learner transport, the number of learners transported, and overall programme coverage grows more steadily in percentage terms. This assessment is qualified and requires careful examination – missing data! is likely to provide for confounding and possibly even contradictory trends in analysis of key programme areas.
17. In **summary of the key results** (in terms of effectiveness to deliver transport to learners) in the period 2012/13-2016/17, it is clear that the Learner Transport Programme has made a **major contribution to providing a transport solution** to a total of 499,350 qualifying learners in need across South Africa in 2017/18. If we contextualise the provision of transportation to those learners fortunate enough to receive programme benefits, against the (conservative) estimation of the total learner population (627,114[20]) who are eligible for inclusion under the programme, we reach a conclusion that the Programme is **largely effective** in addressing the scale of the learner transport challenge in South Africa. With 75% *programme coverage* in 2016/17, It is clear,

[19] See write-up below in Efficiency chapter, on STATSSA GHS data.

[20] STATSSA GHS 2016

that the Programme's effectiveness can be improved, considering *unmet need* and underspending.

18. In terms of data collected regarding safety, reliability and punctuality… from learners surveyed, more **learners sampled** were **female** (54%), **rural** (61.5%), **transported mainly in buses** (80%) and the rest in **minibus taxis** on **gravel roads** (78%), and are **aged mainly 11-13** and **14-17**. Most of the learners in the sample reported **travelling by bus** to-and-from school. In the sample, there are **more female learners** than male learners being transported by the Programme. There is a **more or less even distribution** across the learner grades in the sample, although slightly more for grades 5, 6, 7, 10 and 11.
19. All of the following **findings** relate directly to the **sampled data** from all nine provinces:

    1. L**earner transport programme experience:** learners are being **picked up "close to" home** (64%), but a significant number (29%) are **still walking some distance** to get to learner transport pick-up points. In time, that translates into about 18% of sampled learners **walking for 20 minutes or more** to get to the learner transport.

    2. Generally, **pick-up points** are reported to **have no shelter** from weather elements (80%).

    3. And most **pick-up points** (75%) are reported to **have no adult supervision**.

    4. Once learners have arrived at the pick-up points, **waiting times for learner transport vehicles** are usually **relatively short** (less than 15 minutes), but 20% of learners report that they wait 20 minutes or more.

    5. The Programme is **pro-education**. In terms of **school punctuality**, learners report that **buses are consistently arriving on time** (58%), although 4% of learners say that buses are "always late". About 13% indicated arriving at school "most of the time", and about 24% "sometimes on time".

    6. **Drop-off/collection points** at school are **within the school grounds**, or **immediately outside** the school, with 52% of learners reporting that a **security guard is on duty**. Most learners report that they **wait** for a relatively **short 5-15 minutes** before being collected **in the afternoons**.

    7. In terms of **safety**, **buses on gravel roads** are relatively safer than other means, but at least 50% of learners sampled reported that **safety belts are not used/buses do not have them**. A quarter of learners reported that there is **learner transport overloading** occurring on a daily basis, and that **some drivers are speeding** (8%).

    8. A combined 15-26% of learners complained about the **roadworthiness/condition of vehicles**. These issues are significant because learners have reported that they experience these problems on a daily basis. In line with this, **learners want**: bigger/more buses (25%), and the condition of vehicles to be improved (21%).

9. **Other problems** (yet significant and important) raised by learners are: **bullying** (7%), and **learners misbehaving** (6%) despite having a learner transport code of conduct in many cases.

20. The Programme has been assessed to be largely effective in terms of responding to the extent of country need, and performs relatively well in the first factor of *average programme coverage* (77%) for the two years for which we have data available (2016/17 and 2017/18), but it is clear that there are still **significant improvements needed in terms of safety**, and **punctuality** in terms of the feedback received from sampled learners. **Overloading**, the **absence of/non-use of safety belts**, and the **roadworthiness of vehicles** are the main safety concerns in terms of the feedback.

> The general national picture emerging from combined provincial analysis as far as implementation of the joint Learner Transport Programme is concerned, is one of relatively sound and effective systems on the ground (school-level), through the sprawling reach of provincial departments of Education down into distant schools at grassroots level. Although obviously and necessarily uneven in places, respondents were generally aware of the Programme, understood what it was meant to achieve; and embraced the value of safely transporting qualifying learners to-and-from school. Programme coverage has reached about 75% of national need, making a big difference to the lives of those children, in many communities across all nine provinces.
>
> There are significant problems with programme systems and performance data integrity, especially between district and provincial levels, with the result that there are sharp movements in performance data trends from year-to-year, and which cannot plausibly be accounted for. Our evaluation assessment is, therefore, qualified and makes clear recommendations in this regard.
>
> The Programme is profoundly pro-poor, pro-education, pro-rural and pro-inclusion in orientation because of its reach into poor and distant communities that have difficult access to public ordinary schools, and together with other Government interventions, such as no-fees in schools, and the school nutrition programme, has a strong redistributory effect to improve the day-to-day experience of children and adolescents in education, and in their lives in general.

21. It is clear though, that even though administrative data indicates that there is an *unmet need* of 17% in terms of average programme coverage in the period of review[21], the real situation **on the ground shows significantly higher demand** for learner transport services, which is backed up by data collected from respondents (learners, educators, operators) during the course of fieldwork of this evaluation, as well as being in line with country data (NHTS 2013, GHS 2016) on learner

[21] And for which data is available

transport.[22] The inclusion of GHS 2016 data for *unmet need* for learner transport, suggests that the *unmet need* is conservatively about 25% in 2016.

22. Based on the performance data available for programme effectiveness above, it has been difficult to confidently assess where the **provincial function** best lies in terms of the two partner departments. The evaluation team's general assessment is that programme data leaves a feeling of strong uncertainty, and it is clear that there are problems with the integrity of the data that is currently available. There are examples of good practice at the level of schools in many provinces, but the main system weaknesses are evident between the districts (Education) and the province (Education or Transport). Programme performance data in some provinces is "inconsistent" as it moves up levels from grassroots (schools) to education districts and ultimately to the lead provincial department. What is clear is that reported performance data sometimes either presents as missing, erratic and/or questionable, even though national transport policy, provincial transport policies and general public sector policies (such as the PFMA for example) provide a strong policy environment for enabling optimal programme management. In other words, there are significant concerns about the integrity of available programme performance data as identified in the body of this report. This points to the need for programme systems to be strengthened at the levels of the district, the province, and national, across the entire Learner Transport Programme.
23. The evaluation team concludes that it would be prudent to separate out day-to-day implementation and management of the Programme on the ground by PDEs, from strategic and high-level programme management at the level of the province, and up to national. In other words, **the lead department at the level of the province should ideally be the PDOTs**, that take responsibility for budgeting, procurement, contract management, province-wide monitoring including operators, reporting and auditing, and should work closely with the provincial departments of education in identifying and quantifying the need. A further advantage of this institutional arrangement would be the possibility to include Learner Transport indicators amongst transport sector performance indicators, which in turn would lead to programme performance audits of learner transport performance data by the AGSA.

Efficiency

To what extent has the implementation of the Learner Transport Programme been efficient, with specific regard to (i) organisational design and applied delivery model(s), (ii) core "business processes" used, (iii) management and administration, including record- keeping, and (iv) value-for-money?

Organisational Design and delivery model:

24. The Learner Transport Policy (2015) and its Guidelines (2016) provide the policy framework and operational details for programme delivery. Clear policy goals and objectives provide the basis for programme structures to be established and processes to be put in place, including those for oversight, interdepartmental coordination and operational management across national,

[22] STATSSA 2013, STATSSA 2016

provincial, district and local (schools) levels. The Policy is assessed to be relatively sound, and the mechanics (structures, processes) in design are appropriate for delivery of learner transport solutions in the country. The delivery model is considered adequate and appropriate.

25. However, there appears to be insufficient capacity to plan, and implement the Programme in terms of its financial systems and technology. The responses from provincial departments to requests for programme performance information was uneven, with some able to provide information, and others unable to provide credible information despite numerous requests. Provincial departments that did respond to the detailed requests for performance information provided data on reported learner demand, actual learners transported, actual expenditure, allocated budgets and costing model. The data provided by provincial departments displayed significant discrepancies with performance data supplied by DoT and DBE. Data relating to the contract monitoring and procurement required for modelling and cost effectiveness was not obtainable for most provinces.

Management and administration, including record- keeping: Is there adequate capacity to plan, run the Programme? Financial systems, technology? [23]

26. In this context, capacity means administrative capacity, thus the ability of an implementing department to run the Programme using dedicated human resources, administrative systems including data collection systems. In terms of **programme performance data, financial and technological systems**: there seems to be insufficient capacity in terms of financial systems and technology required to collect and retain performance data for the Learner Transport Programme. The assessment relating to the inadequacy of the performance data systems was based on the speed with which provincial departments responded to requests for programme performance data, whether the requested data was readily available, the reliability of the data obtained in terms of consistency with data available from national departments, and the ability to supply specific programme performance data on request in the period of review.
27. Provincial departments that did respond to the detailed requests for performance information provided data on reported learner demand, actual learners transported, actual expenditure, allocated budgets and costing model. Other provincial departments did not respond to the request for data, in some cases indicating that historical programme performance data was not readily available, highlighting critical programme management information system weaknesses.
28. The following was noted (1) The provincial departments that were able to respond: Gauteng provided the actual expenditure and actual transported performance data for the entire review period and a copy of their costing model; Northern Cape provided the budget allocation for only the last year in the review period and a copy of their costing model; KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern and Western Cape provided performance data for actual expenditure, actual learners transported, reported need, budgeted allocation, monitoring costs, monitoring document and costing model and Free state provided data on actual expenditure and learners transported for the last two years in the review period in the form of a monitoring document. (2) Other provincial departments did not respond to the request for performance data or responded and indicated data was not readily available. In some cases, provincial departments would promise to send data but failed to do so

[23] Evaluation TOR question 3.1.3

as agreed. (3) Some of the performance data provided displayed significant discrepancies with previously-supplied data provided in performance reports to DBE and DOT, as reported under question 3.4 relating to *Value for Money*, with data supplied by DoT and DBE; (4) The monitoring tool provided by Free State represents a good model for monitoring and accumulation of programme financial and non- financial performance information. The detail in the report received from Free State included the budgeted and actual cost per district, number of learners transported, amount claimed by operators, schools benefitting per district, number of routes, number of contracts, change in vehicle, applicable tariff, applicable bid from which tariff was obtained, change in operator, complaints received and corrective action taken, town, route name and number of days transported.

29. Performance data supplied to the evaluation team was evidently not produced as an output from an electronic programme management system in use in provincial departments, but were compiled manually.

Structures Established and key roles

30. The NLT Policy (2015) provides that national government will lead and coordinate its implementation in consultation with relevant stakeholders including other relevant government departments, provincial departments, municipalities and school governing bodies (SGBs). SCOA and parliamentary Portfolio Committees provide key policy oversight of national implementation. At national level, the Inter-Departmental Committee consisting of the DBE, DOT and National Treasury play a coordinating role in providing strategic direction to provincial departments. At provincial level, also, data gathered shows that there are key structures that are put in place to ensure the smooth running of the programme. Different levels of structure exits within provinces. These include structures at provincial level, districts, in some cases area committees (NW), and at school level.
31. In the **Free State**, the PR&T (where the program resides) and the DoE which offers planning support the Provincial Learner Transport Committee, established according to the provincial policy guidelines in 2015 and comprising of representatives of FS DoE and PR&T carries out the planning, including needs assessment, routing and verification. Some issues highlighted include timeliness and reliability of LTP data e.g. Demand, to PR&T to support the planning function, resulting in delays. Also, inadequate communication between other institutions such as the School renationalization teams and LTP teams seems week, resulting in unnecessary expenditure to make trips to schools only to discover they've been closed. I
32. In **Gauteng,** Education in the province is managed through a two-tier structure with a Provincial Office and 15 District Offices aligned to the local government boundaries. Districts provide direct services to schools, educators and learners. The Department's realignment of its structure was approved in 2013 and form the basis of diagnosing where and how the Department needed to focus in terms of reorganising, process and people. This was ultimately to ensure that the Head Office and Districts Offices could provide relevant, coordinated and effective set up according to the provincial Guidelines. It is noted that the District Officials perform "roadshows" aimed at introducing the operators to the districts. There is currently no direct engagement with broader civil society organisations CSOs, and no platforms have been established, although there are limited opportunities for participation of CSOs in national oversight activities linked to the portfolio committees and SCOA.

33. **In Limpopo**, the departments of transport and Education work hand in hand to ensure programme delivery. It was noted that turnover of staff (educators, learner transport monitors) has sometimes led to challenges – skills and knowledge have been lost.
34. In the **Northern Cape**, the LTP function is led by the planning units of the LTP. Additionally, a Learner Transport Coordinating Committee (LTCC) was established with DoT and DoE and Provincial Treasury (PT) as members and meet on quarterly basis.
35. In the **North West,** the Departments of Education and of Transport, Roads and Community Safety share critical functions of managing the LTP. In Kwa-Zulu Natal, the programme resides with the Department of Education. What was reported from the provincial interviews is that, capacitating programme implementers on the provisions of the learner transport policy appears to be lacking. This seems to be reflected in most of the schools using what they think the criteria is for need identification. While some schools are using 3km, others are using 5km and 8km.
36. **In Summary**, the evaluation finds that there are key strategic structures and mechanisms in place to provide support to programme implementation. This cascades from national to provincial levels and down to school levels. Horizontal structures refer to those such as committees between the sector departments. Vertical structures refer to those specifically in the provincial education system, encompassing the Corporate, Districts, school principals and educators, learners, parents and transport operators.

Civil Society Participation:

37. Although participation in the Learner Transport Programme is generally strong in most provinces, there is weak evidence of meaningful partnerships established with civil society organisations even though these may possibly exist in relation to programme monitoring and oversight dialogue.
38. In the case of Equal Education and Section 27 in KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Gauteng, there is evidence of antagonistic engagement, sometimes resulting in litigation against the State. Equal Education on a few occasions has launched litigation in order to compel the State to the provide learner transport to remote area schools, notably a recent one in Nqutu where 12 schools are now being supported by the Programme.

Location of Learner Transport Function

39. Based on the performance data available for programme effectiveness above, it has been difficult to confidently assess where the **provincial function** best lies in terms of the two partner departments. The evaluation team's general assessment is that programme data leaves a feeling of strong uncertainty, and it is clear that there are problems with the integrity of the data that is currently available. There are examples of good practice at the level of schools in many provinces, but the main system weaknesses are evident between the districts (Education) and the province (Education or Transport). Programme performance data in some provinces is "inconsistent" as it moves up levels from grassroots (schools) to education districts and ultimately to the lead provincial department. What is clear is that reported performance data sometimes either presents as missing, erratic and/or questionable, even though national transport policy, provincial transport policies and general public sector policies (such as the PFMA for example) provide a strong policy environment for enabling optimal programme management. In other words, there are significant concerns about the integrity of available programme performance data as identified in the body of this report. This points to the need for programme systems to be strengthened at the levels of the district, the province, and national, across the entire Learner Transport Programme.
40. The evaluation team concludes that it would be prudent to separate out day-to-day implementation and management of the Programme on the ground by PDEs, from strategic and high-level programme management at the level of the province, and up to national. In other words, **the lead department at the level of the province should ideally be the PDOTs**, that take responsibility for budgeting, procurement, contract management, province-wide monitoring including operators, reporting and auditing, and should work closely with the provincial departments of education in identifying and quantifying the need. A further advantage of this institutional arrangement would be the possibility to include Learner Transport indicators amongst transport sector performance indicators, which in turn would lead to programme performance audits of learner transport performance data by the AGSA.

The discussion of where the programme should reside between provincial departments of transport and Department of Education can also be argued on the basis of other factors, largely based on notions of an ideal environment for programme efficiency and sustainability.

41. **Legislative mandate:** Even though the ultimate goal is to provide access to education, the learner transport function falls squarely into (well…) the transport sector. This notion is in line with the provisions of the Constitution (1996), in terms of Section 85(2) (b) which mandates the National Department of Transport to develop and implement a learner transport policy. This implies that the Department of Transport constitutionally has the onus to include learner transportation in its transport infrastructure and services.

42. **Education Sectors improving access to education** the Department of Education is obligated to provide access to education, through whichever means possible including intergovernmental partnerships, involving possibly the building of schools, provision of hostels or transportation of learners. Learner transport is a means to provide access to education. As several authors[24] argued, the Department of Education better understands the educational needs of learners and is able to identify such needs, including those who travel long distances to school. From this perspective, the Programme at local level must clearly remain with the Department of Education. This is already the case in all provinces, and over and above this, the PDEs are also responsible for implementation in Gauteng, Western Cape, Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, even though the success of the location varies from province to province.
43. **Autonomy of Provincial Executive:** The Learner Transport Programme has been in operation several years (in some cases, pre-1994) in provinces before the Learner Transport Policy was put in place late in 2015. Section 132 of the Constitution (1996) infers the privilege on the Premier to allocate functions to any member (sector department) as deemed necessary for the province. This political autonomy of provincial governments to allocate functions and decide the roles of some departments appears to played a significant role in the placement of the learner transport function in different provinces. This flexibility also allows the Premier to re-allocate functions to departments deemed more capable of executing such functions. This appears to be the current situation where provincial governments decide which of the departments is more suitable to run the programme, as seen in the example of KwaZulu Natal were the Programme was transferred to the Department Of Education, then to Transport in 2015, and back again to Education in 2018. A few other provinces also shifted the programme between the two sector departments. From this perspective, the location of the Programme is left to the Provincial Executive Committee to decide, and is not automatic that it will fall under Education or Transport.
44. **Institutional and administrative Capacity** Administrative capacity lies in the ability of the institution to run the programme using its dedicated human and financial resources, and administrative systems including data collection systems. Provinces may have built institutional capacity in terms of personnel, budgeting functions and administrative systems over the long term to allow for institutionalisation of the Programme. Mention is made earlier in this report that certain business processes such as *need identification* appear to be working relatively well at school level, because it is integrated into the day-to-day functioning of schools in all provinces, under the PDEs. There are, of course, provinces where the Programme resides with the PDOT. Examples are: the Department of Transport, Police and Roads in the Free State, the Department of Transport and Public Works in Mpumalanga (which also uses the EPWP programme to assist in monitoring), and the Department of Community Safety and Transport Management in the North West. In both cases of either education or transport sector departments taking the lead for programme implementation, systems have obviously been developed, tested and implemented over varying periods of time.

[24] Authors such as D. Budlender (2017), Whitman (2010) advocated that education department is better placed to spearhead educational related programmes.

45. What could useful is the separation of operational versus oversight activities in the Programme, and to allocate overall functional responsibility to one national sector department to allow for proper oversight and accountability. In this case, as earlier argued, the evaluation team is of the view that the Department of Transport, by virtue of its constitutional mandate should play the overall implementation and management/coordination function. That is, the Programme should reside with Transport at national with proper institutional arrangements with the Department of Education, who should continue to identify the extent of the need for learner transport. MOUs would need to be amended between DBE and DOT to this effect, and should cascade down to provincial level. This arrangement has the potential to strengthen horizontal accountability to DBE as the custodian of *access to education* and DOT as the provider of *transport infrastructure and services*, as opposed to the DBE having to account to itself.
46. **Funding model implications/requirements for programme location**: The linkage between the inter-departmental placement of the Programme and funding models is also explored. As indicated in the interview with National Treasury, the allocation of the equitable share funding is at provincial spheres of government. This implies that provinces will be at liberty to allocate the funds they deem fit for each programme in each sector department. The situation becomes a little more complex in the case of a conditional grant which is allocated by national Treasury for specific purposes. Zooming out to national level, this becomes a complete allocation which is to be administered by one department. That is, there is the need for the Programme to reside with one national department and its provincial agencies. Thus, if equitable share funding model is continued, then the Programme must be run by the PDOTs in different provinces. On the other hand, if a conditional grant is decided upon, then this requires the Programme to reside with either DBE or DOT in the provinces, but with the DOT as overall national custodian. As noted, current programme *need identification* at school level is integrated into DBE's systems within schools. Irrespective of the location of the Programme, DBE needs to continue to take responsibility for implementing this activity as it is best placed to do so.

Coordination and Communication:

47. Currently, a number of issues were picked up in terms of communication and coordination between key role-players and implementing agencies of LTP. There are a number of areas where the Programme needs to be strengthened. These range from inadequate communication Stakeholder involvement, participation and engagement is fundamental to the success of the Programme. In some provinces, communication between the different vertical levels and horizontal structures is working well, and in other cases, there is dysfunctionality or under-performance. Significant care and effort must be given at national and provincial levels to ensure optimal coordination, management, and implementation. Poor communication as identified by this evaluation must be addressed.

Efficiency of Core "business processes":

48. The main business processes involved in implementing the national Learner Transport Programme (across all nine provinces) have typically involved the following generic processes or activities: (1) policy development, (2) budgeting and planning, including recruitment into the Programme, verification and selection, management of the Programme, and identification of Programme need, (3) establishment of structures and systems development, (4) services delivered, including programme coverage, (5) monitoring, audit and evaluation.
49. Overall, **recruitment**, **verification** and **selection on entry** into the Programme has been sound, with schools making a big contribution to success in this area. Typically there has been a thorough process of programme need identification at school level that has occurred in every province. **Need identification** (School level): the identification of learners who qualify for learner transport is done in the schools by the School Principals with the help of SGBs. Needs identification at school level is going well. Need identification (provincial level) appears flawed, and there are significant concerns about performance data in this area. Figures for programme need for learners requiring transport appear not to be subjected to similar processes of verification and rigour as those at school level. There is, therefore, an apparent disconnect between need identification data at schools, and figures used in planning in provincial departments. Also, Learner Transport Programme officials are often not involved in provincial lead department planning (and budgeting) processes which leads to planners basing their plans for the Programme on an annual incremental budgeting increase.
50. **Policy development** has been strong, with good consultation and inputs from stakeholders over a number of years.
51. **Structures** and **processes** are reasonably well-developed and have functioned as intended. **Interdepartmental coordination** has sometimes been ineffective in some provinces, with relatively little rigorous
52. In terms of **programme management** and **systems developed**, there are clear weaknesses and gaps in the programme performance management systems in use horizontally across provinces. There are also vertical system weaknesses[25] with ineffective programme management leading to gaps in- and concerns about- the quality of programme performance information.
53. The delivery of services is covered under the programme effectiveness assessment.

Monitoring and reporting:

54. **School levels**: The the collection of data and reporting occurs at all of the levels of the Programme. Notably, at local level (schools), principals run a systematic process to monitor learner transport (drop-offs, pick-ups) on a daily basis. Schools are provided with the operator details and the bus details by provincial departments.
    In some cases, the monitoring data available is obtained though forms issued to service providers for capturing daily delivery. These provincial forms for the drivers contain the name of the driver, vehicle registration number, make and model, capacity of vehicle, the route, number of learners transported on each day of the week, This form is filled endorsed by the principals and dated and submitted to the provincial office at the end of the month and the new one given which signifies

[25] National down to provinces, and down to district and schools.

a renewal of the contract between the department and the supplier. It is also reported that arrangement between law traffic section and the policy unit of the department also assists in monitoring general compliance with road worthiness regulations.

55. **Provincial monitoring**: At the level of the province, the Department's officials do conduct site visits to selected schools when there are urgent issues to address. On-site monitoring by provincial officials is also noted to be severely hampered by lack of capacity, monitoring tools and systems. Though some provinces do contract independent service providers to undertake monitoring as interim measures, it is reported, for instance in the Free States and Eastern Cape that this is unsustainable due to insufficient budget. The schools do provide some data intermittently, but they also feel this to be additional workload and hence not done regularly.
    The lack of reliable monitoring systems, coupled with inadequate capacity budget and limited capacity within the system is largely blamed for the discrepancies of the LTP data that is reported on to national departments. It also have serious repercussions on the planning and budgeting. There is therefore the need to strengthen the monitoring system, by finding a more adequate and mechanism.

Value for money[26]:

56. We have not been able to establish if the price paid for learner transport is market related. We have not inspected documents that show whether the prices are reasonable and market-related. Additionally, we have not established the basis on which the prices in the pricing models are calculated. However, the description of the pricing model below shows that the price for Northern Cape and Western Cape appear market- related as the price is obtained from open tender. An open tender price that is route specific are market related and fair as the bidder is expected to know the conditions of road by the time the bidding process occurs.
57. There is **unreliable measurement of cost per direct beneficiary**. The direct beneficiary on the LTP is the Learner. Cost per learner calculated about is fraught with complications that inhibit its usefulness for decision making. Given that in 2013-14 and 2014-15, there is missing data for certain provinces, the actual applicable provincial and thus national expenditure for learner transport is understated for those years. Therefore, the cost per student appear understated for predominantly four provinces, Free State, KwaZulu Natal, North West and Northern Cape. Added to that there are different costing models implemented in each province, that making cost per student the only sensible measure for comparing cost per student but the way the cost is accumulated gets affected by differing terrain and rural vs urban considerations, among other

[26] Value for money is about the optimal use of resources in the form of obtaining not necessarily only the cheapest option but delivering the best outcome and impact using the cheapest option or maximising the output and impact per rand spend. The following components of VfM are relevant to the evaluation of the LTP: (1) *Economy* as applicable to LTE, this will translate to whether the services of providing Learner transport was at the right price and whether the quality of the service, provided by the service provider at that price, is satisfactory. (2) *Efficiency* which measures the how well the LTP converts inputs, (3) *Effectiveness* which relates to efficiency relates to how well output are converted into outcomes and impacts. For the Programme this is about how the outcomes such as the provision of access to education have been achieved through the LTP and (4) *Equity* being the assessment whether the project produces equal benefits to different groups. *Exclusion error* is a measure of value for money that considers the proportion of unmet need.

things. The number of learners transported might not be reliable given that the number provided by provinces differed from those at national departments in some provinces.

58. **In general**, the cost drivers for Learner Transport Programme delivery are fixed rate per learner (depended on capacity), number of learners, number of days, number of kilometres.
59. The Conditional Grant mechanism appears to be the funding mechanism that is consistent with the addressing of distance to school, given that the existing funds are ring-fenced. The conditional grant does not however create new funds in the system and thus will not eliminate the underfunding that existed before the move to conditional grant funding mechanism.

Assessment of Learner Transport Service Models:

60. There *are three major Service Models for Learner Transport namely, Outsourcing, Outright Buying and the PPP model. In terms of our* assessment of the **most efficient service model:** Based on the calculation of Net Present Cost and Equivalent Annual Cost, the most efficient and optimal service model is the **outsourcing option**. The Net Present Cost of the outsourcing option is R46 997 907 508 (with Equivalent Annual Cost R6 962 786 685) compared to PPP option at a Net Present Cost of R 97 841 385 061 (with Equivalent Annual Cost R14 495 298 310) and Net Present cost of R98 884 662 033 for PPP Model (with Equivalent Annual Cost R14 649 860 830). We acknowledge the documented limitations of available programme data, explained below, relating to reliability and that the LEARNER TRANSPORT solution is a short-term to medium term method as a way of addressing distance to school as in the long-term alternative ways such as building of schools and hostels will be considered. The current model of service delivery (outsourcing) appears to be the most cost-effective in the short term.

61. **Measurement of direct cost to beneficiary and program costs:** Overall, direct costs to beneficiaries could be measured, despite missing data for some of the years. The exception is that programme costs cannot be measured reliably as for the years 2013-14 and 2014-15,where there is missing data relating to actual expenditure for certain provinces, resulting in actual applicable provincial and thus national expenditure for learner transport is understated for those years. Given the number of learners transported, the direct cost per beneficiary has been measured and reported on elsewhere in the report.
62. **Programme costs may be inaccurate.** The results of the comparison between the actual expenditure data from the provinces that provided data and the data available at national department show significant differences between the two data sets. This might make the significantly over/understate the program costs and reliability of decisions taken on based on these costs. This has been reported on in detail in the previous and subsequent sections of the report.
63. **Lack of available data on programme administration costs**: It was impractical to disaggregate actual expenditure into costs paid to operators and administrative costs. This is largely because such data was not readily available as we could not obtain such data on request. Lack of data on actual administration costs might result in an understatement of the actual costs of running the Programme. Additionally, high administration costs might have the unintended consequences of transferring benefit from the beneficiaries to the personnel implementing the function. This is not consistent with good value for money attainment. There is a general view that monitoring and administration costs do not apply to all provinces. Gauteng province has indicated that they do

not incur monitoring and administration cost as there is a separate department monitoring the programme. KZN, Free State and Eastern Cape has provided detailed administration costs and Western Cape also provided detailed guidance on how they are determined. We have not received formal communication from other provinces on whether administration costs are incurred separately.

Economy:

64. There is a significant disparity between the average increase in actual expenditure and average change in actual demand. This is evident in the following provinces: **Free State** (164% vs.16.3%), Gauteng (101% vs 14.6%), KwaZulu Natal (-18.8% vs 28.8%), **Limpopo** (72% vs. 18.5%), Mpumalanga (6% vs.-2%), Northern Cape (206% vs. 1.3. Western Cape and North West provinces show a plausible and consistent relationship between the increase in actual learners transported and increase in actual costs.
65. Our discussions with provincial officials bring to fore the fact that the following are reasons for this disparity: (1) Contracts that get renewed will be negotiated at rates that are higher although the number of learners being carried might not necessarily increase significantly,(2) Provinces might introduce new costing models that are in line with the rise in cost of operations,(3) The increase in the cost of operations such as fuel might mean that the increase in cost of carrying learners might outstrip the increase in the actual learners transported as operators seek to recover the increasing costs,(4)The payments might include other payments that do not directly translate to carrying passengers such as paying for litigation and (5) There might be significant accruals present in the LEARNER TRANSPORT actual payments which does not translate to an actual service. The Eastern Cape province has indicated that the actual LEARNER TRANSPORT costs provided to us for analysis included year on year accruals.
66. A further discussion with the Gauteng Department of Education officials on this matter pinpoints the following as the reasons for the disparity between the change in actual cost and the change in actual learners transported; (1) The rates paid by the province increased (The increase in rates was as follows; 2012- R1, 2013, 1.2, 2014 to 2017 remained at R1.4). The increase in the rate is meant to recover the operating costs and not necessarily to ferry more students. The amount of R1.41 per student appears low at first glance, but this rate is applied per kilometre per student. Therefore, the average rate per kilometre per student from the Gauteng costing model is around R91 per kilometre/student. (2) increase in kilometres travelled as a result of migration. This factor increases the costs given that their cost model is applied to kilometres travelled. (3) The Gauteng province historically had problems of being unable to cater for learner need due to lack of funds. Over the years, funds were negotiated for to cater for LEARNER TRANSPORT, thus the increase in costs relative to learners being transported.
67. A possible interpretation we made regarding the disparity described above is that, the big increases in program cost could be as a result of other factors in the costing model that is unrelated to actual number transported. There could be inefficiencies in the pricing/costing model that reduce the economy aspect of VfM as the right price is most likely not being paid across the provinces. This could be a possible indication of unregistered suppliers, not providing Learner Transport services being paid.

68. As per the above, a generalisation is that the program costs are not delivering value for money as it is not creating more access per year in relation to the increase in costs. The value seems to be lost in the costing model. It is not apparent if the costs we were provided with only relate to the costs to the operators and thus exclude monitoring and administration costs.
69. Another plausible explanation for the disparity is that the difference should provide more information on the program configuration. For example, in Mpumalanga, where we have information that suggest that are acquired by operator and operator gets paid a cost that recovers his cost and profit and the instalment is paid by implementing department, the disparity might reflect acquisition costs for buses that makes it less comparable with a normal outsourcing model.

Costing model: Duplication and lack of equity in costing models:

70. Although the costing model costing models are fairly similar for most provinces, there are significant variations on provincial costing models. These variations might inhibit inter-province comparison of the economy of the price paid and might result in the implementing department paying an unnecessarily high price as a result of possible duplication of cost and might unfairly disadvantage operators in provinces where an unfair model is used. A costing model that remunerates on both the number of learners and the kilometres travelled might double count the cost as it is likely that the charge per kilometre is also linked to the capacity of the vehicle leading to unnecessary extra cost for the implementing department.
71. As alluded to above, there are significant variations in the costing models relating to variables and thus cost drivers that are not common to all provinces. Such variables include number of days travelled, gravel kilometres (as reflected in the Northern Cape Costing Model), fixed rate per learner/. It is not clear how the rates in the costing models are determined. The costing model for almost all provinces appear not to pay an incentive to operators for bad state of the road such as gravel road. Only Northern Cape state that there is compensation for gravel road travel in their costing model and Western Cape, impliedly through open tender model as they state that the price is route specific.
72. **Equity: Coverage and prioritisation of learners** to be ferried under budget constraints**.**
    1. **Lack of program equity**: As per the provincial's interviews conducted prioritisation is widely done using criteria relating to giving preference to primary school learners over secondary, students that stay in bushy, remote areas and disabled learners. The only problem is that students who qualify as per a set criterion are excluded. The prioritisation will never be fair as the problem of distance and access to schools remains.
    2. **Exclusion error more than 0%**: All students who require transport are not catered as the average coverage for the review period is less than 100%. The average programme coverage for the review period is 83%. This number might seem high, but as stated above, as long as 100% of the learners are not ferried, the problem of walking long distance to school remains and the delivery model will be regarded as being unfair to learners that qualify for LEARNER TRANSPORT but cannot be carried because of either the budget reprioritisation or the remoteness of their homes (places not easily accessible by LEARNER TRANSPORT).

3. **Expected demand understated:** Our deductive conclusion, given our understanding of the LTP is that the documented expected demand for LEARNER TRANSPORT is understated. We based our assessment of the following factors that increase demand for LEARNER TRANSPORT; the migration of students to other places, proliferation of informal settlements, the rationalisation of schools, the fact that there is a known unmet but unquantified demand such as that case of Free State, where they are currently serving the students at farms only (demand for another segment such as rural and urban might need LEARNER TRANSPORT). We estimated the **unmet demand** to be **127,764 learners** (2016/17) and thus the *total known demand* for 2016-17 as being 627,114.

Sustainability and upscaling?

Key Evaluation Question: How sustainable is the Learner Transport Programme, considering the many competing priorities and demands in the education-transport sectors, and what is the medium-to-long-term prognosis of the learner transport challenge posed to Government? Are there viable alternatives to the current LTP programme intervention?

Alternative options to address distance to school:

73. The alternative ways of addressing distance to school such as the building of schools and hostels could not be evaluated due impracticability of performing the exercise due to the detailed information that was not readily available; such as the number of students a typical school/ hostel take, the minimum operating number of students to run a hostel or school, the measurement of the impact of rationalisation in terms of cost savings from not running the school anymore and savings and additional LEARNER TRANSPORT costs associated with old school closed, the availability of space to build a school or hostel, the running costs of both. Therefore, we concentrated on other ways of delivering the LTP in the short term.

Budget Sustainability

74. The **current budget allocations for learner transport is not adequate:** the programme budget allocation appears to be done on the basis of available budget which is subject to departmental (re)prioritisation, as opposed to learner need (demand). The current **funding shortfall estimate** based on this evaluation is **R404,657,892** (2016/17).
75. **Unclear budget prioritisation:** It is not clear how provincial departments select learners who qualify from the larger group of learners who are eligible to receive programme benefits, especially how selection happens amongst learners with similar characteristics (eg. younger, remoteness, etc.).

76. **Underspending of budget:** It is noted that there is underspending in the following provinces based on the average utilisation of the budgeted amount over the review period: **Free State**; 63% (average coverage 106%)**; KwaZulu Natal**; 40% (average coverage 70%); **Limpopo**; 73% (average coverage 77%); **Northern Cape;** 62% (average coverage 88%); **Mpumalanga**; 73% (average coverage 100%) and North **West**;77% (average coverage 71%). Budget underutilisations could be a result of budget reprioritisation linked to the equitable share funding model. Taking into account the *total unmet demand* as estimated from the GHS 2016 and GHS2017, there is current underfunding of **R404,657,892** (2016/17).
77. **Differences between the provincial and national department data on budget allocations and actual expenditure:** Differences were noted in programme financial data reported/held by provincial departments and national departments with regard to budget allocations and actual expenditure. Generally provinces report higher costs and smaller budget allocations. As a result, provincial departments report more efficient budget utilisations. Additionally, there was varying performance data provided (on request by evaluators) by the same province over the same period, but submitted at different times.

Emerging Impacts

What are the signs of emerging impact of the Learner Transport Programme, if any?

This is an implementation evaluation that did not attempt to measure programme impact. A proper programme impact study design should be developed as part of the Improvement Plan agenda in the coming five years, and should be budgeted for.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS: EFFECTIVENESS

Programme Output:

78. The Learner Transport Programme has been largely effective and achieved 75% coverage by 2016/17 in meeting the scale of the learner transport challenge., if we accept the STATSSA GHS 2016 conservative estimate of ***unmet need of* 127,114 learners**. The Programme's response is substantially inadequate in KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo in 2016/17.
    Significant inefficiencies and capacity issues were identified in the evaluation. It is recommended that Government reviews the learner transport policy response, to determine to what extent additional financial resources can be raised to address the financial requirement of including underfunding of **R404,657,892** (2016/17).

Safety:

79. The Department of Transport must ensure that improved safety compliance is achieved, specifically to address overcrowding, roadworthiness of vehicles, and use of safety belts.

Punctuality:

80. Although two-thirds of learners in the sample and supported by the Programme are arriving at school punctually for the day's lessons, many learners (24%) are sometimes arriving on time, and 4% are always late. This obviously can be improved on, through better operational management of learner transport services on the ground.

Performance data and systems issues are dealt with in the Efficiency chapter.

RECOMMENDATIONS: EFFICIENCY

Programme Output:

81. More learners can be transported, through improved financial efficiency[27] as well as disbursing the full allocated budget in a given financial year. It is also true that improved management and coordination underpinned by more effective management systems will enable improved programme effectiveness overall.

Service model

82. *There are **three major** Service Models for Learner Transport namely, outsourcing, outright buying and the PPP model. These service models were evaluated based on Net Present cost and Equivalent annual cost using over the average age of 13 years, at a discount rate of 11%.* **Because** of the fact that the outsourcing option has the lowest Net Present Cost and Equivalent Annual Cost and

[27] To be dealt with under the Efficiency section.

therefore the most efficient and optimal service model, given the short-term to medium term nature of the Learner Transport Programme as a way of addressing distance to school. The outsourcing model should be continued as a short-term solution of addressing distance to school.

Programme location

83. The discussion as at where the programme should reside was based on its link to the funding model, and the need for strengthening national oversight of the programme. From the various arguments put forward, this study recommends that the programme at national level should reside with the department of transport as it is constitutionally mandated to develop the LTP policy and implement it in terms of Section 85(2) (b) of the constitution.
84. In support of the conditional grant as possible funding model being proposed, the funds will be administered by the departments of transport, generally, but with DOE acting as implementing agents in provinces where the programme currently resides with Education. This will mean that, proper institutional arrangements such as MOUs between the two sector departments needs to be put in place and adhered to, to ensure proper coordination of the programme.
85. The need identification function however, should be integrated into the school system as currently is, and the data supplied to the implementing departments for planning and implementation.

Tariff and Costing Model *Although the costing model costing models are fairly similar for most provinces, there are significant variations on provincial costing models.* In resolving the problems discussed elsewhere in this chapter, we recommend the following:

86. The costing model should provide for the kilometres travelled, state of the roads, terrain, capacity of the vehicle/ number of learners transported, allowance for wear and tear, the consequent repair allowance for the vehicle and provide a reasonable mark-up. The model should provide for the open tender, route specific price determination to avoid the issue of operators abandoning non- profitable routes.
87. Develop a detailed model that is used to determine the fairness of the price charged by operators per kilometre and as fair compensation for state of road.
88. Develop a pricing guideline for LEARNER TRANSPORT.
89. **In summary**, the costing model should have the following components: (1) an **all-inclusive cost per kilometre** that is depended on the capacity of the vehicle, (2) an **additional compensation for driving on gravel road** (charged per gravel kilometre travelled) and (3) a **minimum charge** given to the operator whose route comprise short trips. An operator travelling short distances might not make sufficient profit to remain in business.

Monitoring systems and data systems: *There seems to be insufficient capacity in terms of financial systems and technology required to collect and retain data for the Learner Transport Programme.*

90. A complete overhaul of district, provincial and national systems for record-keeping, data storage/retrieval and reporting is urgently required to ensure that learner transport policy goals

are achieved. Programme management processes and procedures must be strengthened in this regard.

a. It is recommended that DOT and DBE develop a proper system for programme record-keeping, data storage/retrieval and reporting which integrates all levels from schools to districts to provinces and to national.
b. The programme management system must preferably be ICT-driven, to ensure data integrity and reporting credibility. Programme data retrieval must be efficient, and ensure easily-accessible and reliable financial and non-financial performance data for learner transport across all provinces. The recommended system must enable day-to-day viewing of programme performance and expenditure data, and allow for real time access on demand.

91. It is also recommended that a full performance audit of the Programme be undertaken by the Auditor General (AGSA), to establish certainty about programme performance data over 2015-2018.
92. Going forward it is recommended that key learner transport programme indicators are included as sector targets, which the AGSA will audit annually, and that all provinces will report on, on a quarterly basis. This requires that the Learner Transport Programme be administered under a single department (Transport), in order for Programme targets to be included amongst transport sector indicators and targets.
93. DOT and DBE should engage with STATSSA to establish an adequate countrywide estimate of learners in need of transport. This will establish a clear programme baseline against which to measure programme responsiveness.

Reporting: *Differences were noted between the provincial and national department data on budget allocations. The results of the comparison between the actual expenditure data from the provinces that provided data and the data available at national department show significant differences between the two data sets. Data relating to the contract monitoring and procurement required for modelling and cost effectiveness was not obtained for most provinces as it was not readily available. It was practical to disaggregate actual expenditure into costs paid to operators and administrative costs.*

94. It is recommended that a monitoring tool should be developed for each province. This tool, will, among other things, contain the following metric; budgeted and actual cost per district, number transported, amount claimed by operators, schools benefitting per district, number of routes, number of contracts, change in vehicle, tariff, applicable bid from which tariff was obtained, any change in operator, complains received and corrective action, town, route name and number of days transported.
95. Quarterly reports to DBE on should be completed in full. Some quarterly reports we inspected for 2012-13 do not appear to be complete.
96. A detailed comparison and reconciliation should be done between the quarterly reports and data used for preparing the DBE Learner Transport Annual Report.
97. A quarterly comparison of data submitted to national departments to the data held at provinces.

98. A detailed record of program administration costs should be maintained. This could be costs allocated for personnel already performing other functions. This will reflect the true program cost as currently the direct costs of learner transport are captured.

Programme Equity: *All students who require transport are not catered as the average coverage for the review period is less than 100%. Our deductive conclusion, given our understanding of the LTP is that the documented expected demand for LEARNER TRANSPORT is understated:*

99. Budgets **allocations** should be based on learner transport need so as to prevent unsatisfactory coverage. It is not sustainable to meet learner demand by only using the available budget and satisfy the demand that the budget can satisfy.
100. A detailed exercise should be carried out by DoT and DBE to establish the undocumented need for LEARNER TRANSPORT. This might be in the form of a detailed need identification that starts with a high-level assessment of need. This could take the form of a very focused study such as a General Household Survey conducted by Stats SA.

RECOMMENDATIONS: SUSTAINABILITY

Funding model

101. The **recommended funding model is a conditional grant** as a mechanism to create access to school through addressing distance. The main issue is not the allocative inefficiencies of the conditional grant but rather satisfying all the need identified without ant reprioritisation mechanisms.

    On the balance of factors discussed under the efficiency section in the main report we recommend **conditional grant** as a mechanism to create access to school through addressing distance. The main issue is not the allocative inefficiencies of the conditional grant but rather satisfying all the need identified without ant reprioritisation mechanisms. Despite the setback of conditional grants above and any further, organisational, reporting and administration burdens of conditional grants, given the priority of providing learner transport as a way of providing access to schools and coverage of less than 100% across provinces, a conditional grant appears to be a viable option to protect the funding for learner transport and prevent inconsistent and uncertain allocation of funding to the LTP.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The National Learner Transport Programme (LTP) was developed by Government, in collaboration with the DBE with an aim of addressing challenges with access to education through the provision of learner transport. The purpose of this implementation evaluation is to assess the implementation of the DOT/DBE National Learner Transport Programme (LTP), with specific reference to the current patterns of its operational performance, results (delivery), and immediate outcomes. The focus of the evaluation is on current models of learner transport provision and how and what can be done to improve Learner Transport Programme performance, and use of resources. Performance is assessed relative to the original programme goal(s), objectives and intended outcomes. Quest research has been appointed to conduct the evaluation. This report is compiled on the findings of the evaluation, commissioned by the DPME.

The report contains six chapters in total. Chapter one provides a **background to the evaluation study**, detailing the policy issue, the evaluation questions and the scope to be covered. Chapter Two details the evaluation **approach and methodology**, and outlines the evaluation procedures and data collection methods. The third chapter summarises the **literature review**, and its findings including local thinking on access to education and the role lf learner transport. International literature containing examples of learner transport and common issues with implementation and solutions were also reviewed, in order to draw on key lessons therein. The forth chapter presents the **main findings** of the evaluation, and related analysis of fundamental programme elements. Lastly Chapter Five provides a set of **conclusions and recommendations** for Government and other stakeholders of the National Learner Transport Programme.

1.2 Policy Background

The National Learner transport Programme has been in existence and has been implemented in many provinces prior to the Implementation of the learner transport policy in 2015. The background to this went back to the Department of Transport in the early 1990s, which had its own broader framework where it included special needs transport. With special needs transport, learner transport became a possibility, with provisions that it would look into. The intergovernmental relations framework of 2005 helped departments such as Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Transport (DOT) to collaborate to implement learner transport in order to get the final services to the learners. The Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations Framework Act would come in and help the two departments down to the district level with regard to the payment of service providers who provided the transport.

In 1999, the National Department of Transport (NDoT) released its policy strategy document, *Moving South Africa: The Action Agenda*, in an effort to consolidate the national goals of transportation development and to clearly define the responsibilities of provincial governments and the relationship between the public and private sector. Additionally, *Moving South Africa* (MSA) identified the challenges facing the development of South Africa's transportation system and highlighted the areas of greatest concern. Significantly, the document also recognised the impact that transportation has

on development and outlined the specific needs of the poorest and most vulnerable members of society.

With respect to the challenges facing transport reform, MSA acknowledges three key factors. First, "the legacy of apartheid" is still very much a part of transportation infrastructure in South Africa. The embedded features of South Africa's transport network continue to be shaped by apartheid-era planning decisions and strategies based on the preservation of an elite minority. Second, the expansion of basic services to formerly disadvantaged communities has created new challenges to the reconstruction of the national transport system. The NDoT is expecting a sharp increase in the demand for transport as a result of these improved services. MSA outlines the reasoning behind this, and concludes that intuitively, the integration of previously isolated communities into the economy necessitates the expansion of South Africa's existing transportation framework into a flexible and holistic network that meets the needs of diverse and evolving spatial developments. Third, a lack of financial resources severely limits the ability of the government to invest in appropriate transportation initiatives. The National Department of Transport contends that transportation reform is largely "capital-intensive" and generally exceeds the financial capabilities of the state (NDoT, 1999). As a result, the Government has assigned itself a role as a facilitator to transportation reform by guiding the process through a national strategic framework. The lack of appropriate national funds, it is argued, challenges the reform process while simultaneously allowing an opportunity for locally-led development of transportation infrastructure and services.

The right to basic education is embedded in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996). In order to facilitate the realisation of this right, learners must be able to get to and from school. The ability of learners to access education is hampered by insufficient schools in areas where they live, resulting in long distances to get to school, as well as threats to their safety and security along the routes they travel, and the high costs of public transport. This results in some learners not attending school regularly. The following are the legislative imperatives that underlie the implementation of the Learner Transport Program:

(15) Section 85(2)(b) of the Constitution mandates the Department of Transport to develop and implement transport policy.
(16) The National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 has prioritized investment in public transport of which learner transport is a key component. The NDP has further called for investment in ensuring safe, reliable and affordable public transport.
(17) The provision of learner transport is in alignment with the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2014-2019 which seeks to support on-going efforts by Government to address the socio-economic development of the country through standardized implementation plans.
(18) The National Land Transport Act, 2009 stipulates that learner transport provincial strategies and local government plans must be approved by the MEC and submitted to Department of Transport at specified times.
(19) The National Learner Transport Act(NLTA) aims at providing national principles, requirements, guidelines, frameworks and national norms and standards that must be applied uniformly in the provinces.

(20) Section 3 of the of the South African Schools Act (SASA), 1996 makes provision for a compulsory general education phase for learners from the age of seven until age of 15 of grade nine, whichever occurs first. Provincial members of the Executive Committee (MECs) are responsible for ensuring that there are enough school places so that every child of eligible age can attend school and receive compulsory general education and training.

(21) The Learner Transport Programme has been in place for more than a decade and provides for the provision of subsidized transport to learners who walk more than five kilometres. The National Learner Transport Policy (2015) section 3.3.1 outlines the following criteria for subsidised learner transport services

(d) Learners from grade R to grade 12 with primary schools given a priority over secondary schools.

(e) Learner transport is only subsidised to the nearest appropriate school only and not to a school of parental choice.

(f) Learners with disabilities are given a priority.

(22) The intergovernmental Relations Framework, 2005 9Act No. 13 of 2005), provides the basis a basis for all spheres of Government to facilitate coordination in the implementation of policy, including the provision of services, monitoring implementation of policy and realisation of national priorities.

The National Learner Transport Programme was developed in collaboration with the Department of Basic Education (DBE) with an aim of addressing challenges with learner transport. The provision of learner transport has as such remained a shared responsibility of national and provincial Departments of Transport and Education at both national and provincial levels.

After initial work over 2007-2008, in February 2009 the final draft national scholar transport policy was released by the Minister of Transport, J Radebe. The draft Policy was located in the post-Apartheid era, various studies referred to, such as the DOE study to analyse the impact of walking long distances to school on learning, and several other South African studies - the National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) DOT (2003), DOE (2006) Review of the Financing, Resourcing and Costs of Education in Public Schools; Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005); and the Human Rights Commission (1998) have provided valuable information on the issue of distances that learners have to travel to schools as one of the barriers to learners accessing schools. The studies suggested that the ability of scholars to access education was hampered by the long distances involved, threats to safety, as well as the cost of scholar transport. Scholars had difficulty accessing educational institutions because of the unavailability of scholar transport.

The draft Policy (2009:7+) referred to the absence of a national policy on scholar transport which resulted in fragmented provision of scholar transport services administered by the Provincial Departments of Education and Transport. Consequently, it was argued that the amount of funding made available for scholar transport varied, and was often insufficient to meet the existing need. The operationalisation and management of scholar transport had also taken different forms in the various provinces.

The draft Policy (2009:7) continued that in order to address the problems mentioned above, the Department of Transport (DOT) through its constitutional mandate to develop and implement national transport policy initiated a process to develop the national scholar transport policy. A single framework, and an enabling environment for Government and other stakeholders to address scholar transport challenges, underlined the purpose of the draft Policy. It also outlined the implementation framework for scholar transport policy which would assist Government and stakeholders to render an improved scholar transport service throughout the country.

The primary objectives of the draft national scholar transport policy (2009:7) were detailed as: to provide national uniform norms and standards, promote co-ordination and co-operation amongst stakeholders, and provide a framework for monitoring and evaluation of scholar transport services. The basic idea was that scholar transport would be provided on the basis of a number of principles, including that scholar transport must be affordable, safe and secure. The target group of the policy was scholars who attend schooling between Grade R to 12 and live more than 3km from the nearest school. The draft scholar transport policy (2009) articulated the various responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in the provision of scholar transport. The DOT was identified as the custodian of the Policy and responsible for, inter alia, the regulation, funding, communication, monitoring and evaluation of overall national scholar transport policy. The DOT was also responsible for review of the policy in consultation with Provincial Departments of Transport (PDOTs) and other relevant stakeholders. PDOTs were noted as being responsible for managing the implementation of scholar transport provision in their respective provinces, planning (in consultation with key transport stakeholders), identifying beneficiaries (after consultation with Provincial Departments of Education), contracting of services, tendering for contracts, law enforcement and ensuring road safety (together with Local Government), and monitoring services.

In terms of planning, the final draft Policy (2009:8) recommended that scholar transport plans must be developed and integrated into the Provincial Land Transport Framework (PLTF), as well as into the Integrated Transport Plans (ITPs) of Local Government through an eight-stage planning cycle.

The draft Policy also prescribed the institutional arrangements, governance, regulatory and legislative aspects of scholar transport. The safety and service quality issues that conform to international best practice are addressed in the draft Policy. The draft Policy also provided guidelines for developmental programmes for Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) and Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMME's) in order to bring the previously marginalised groups into the formalised transport sector and economic mainstream.

The draft Policy (2009) prescribed the transitional mechanisms for the migration of the scholar transport function to the DOT. Further, it recommended that scholar transport provision should be managed by dedicated units at both national and provincial levels of government.

A seminal reference which is used to gird the final draft Policy (2009:11) is the General Household Survey 2010: FOCUS ON SCHOOLING.[28] The General Household Survey (GHS) is a survey conducted by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) in around 22,000 households and is specifically designed to measure various aspects of the living circumstances of South African households. This household- based survey is conducted annually and was first compiled in 2002 (Statistics South Africa, 2017). The purpose of the survey is to measure the quality of service delivery in a number of key service sectors.

Key points from the GHS 2010 used as empirical evidence in the Policy:

> The draft *Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure* (DOE, 2008) stipulates norms and standards for the building of schools. At full implementation of the *draft* norms, every school will be required to have a catchment area to the radius of up to 3 kms. A total walking distance to and from school will be up to 6 kms. According to the norms, learners who fall beyond the set catchment area will be provided with either transport or hostel accommodation on a progressive phased and pro-poor sequence. The GHS indicates that of the 11 million who walk to school, over 300 000 (3%) walk for more than an hour to school.[29]

In 2010, **76% of learners** attending schools **walked to their schools**, followed about by 7% indicating that they used a minibus taxi. Other modes of transport used by learners include private vehicles, bus, bicycle/ motorbikes and trains.[30]

1.4 % (198 000) of learners indicated that they travel to school via **transport provided by the government**. Meanwhile approximately 1% (85 000) of learners travel to schools by minibus/bus provided and paid for by the institution.

[28] The source and reference is confusing. The original source is: DOT (2009:11) Final Draft Scholar Transport Policy, which refers to the National Household Travel Survey 2009, typically undertaken by Statistics South Africa. But there is no NHTS 2009! The NHTS 2003 was the last national travel survey undertaken by STATSSA, but in 2010 there is a General Household Survey (GHS) 2010: Focus on Schooling. This evaluation report assumes that the Final Draft Scholar Transport Policy must be referring to a preliminary report that may have been in circulation in 2009, but released in 2010 by STATSSA. In any event, the STATSSA 2003 NHTS is too far back to be useful as background in this 2018 evaluation.

[29] STATSSA (2010:26) General Household Survey (GHS) 2010. STATSSA: Pretoria.

In GHS (2016:30) the majority of learners reported that they walk to school, but as learners get older they are more likely to walk for more than 30 minutes to educational institutions. In 2016, around 5.4% of learners travelled to school by means of a minibus taxi, whereas 9.7% of learners travelled to school by means of a vehicle hired by a group of parents. The majority of individuals aged 5 to 18 years old who reported that they walk to their educational institutions, walk for less than 15 minutes, while less than 3% of households reported that learners are traveling to school by means of a minibus or bus provided for by the school or the government. KwaZulu-Natal has the highest percentage of learners who walk for more than 30 minutes to educational institutions, while Western Cape has the lowest percentage of learners who walk for more than 30 minutes to educational institutions.

[30] This section from STATSSA (2010:26-27)

Time taken to walk to school: approximately 43% of learners took less than 15 minutes to the school, approximately 41% took between 15 to 30 minutes to walk to school while about 13% took more than 31 to 60 minutes to walk to school. Meanwhile 3% of learners took more than an hour to walk to school.

Attendance at nearest school: In 2010, **13%** of learners indicated that they were not attending a school nearest to where they were staying. The reasons for them not attending the nearest school include: inadequate facilities (e.g. classrooms; laboratories), lack of resources/equipment (e.g. computers; textbooks; laboratory equipment; sport equipment), lack of services (e.g. water; electricity; toilets), poor quality of teaching, overcrowded classes, lack of safety, weak management, lack of discipline, no/too few extra-mural activities, not accepted for enrolment, preferred course/ subject not offered and current institution better than closest.

Of **reasons for learners being absent from school**: the main reason cited for being absent from schools is *"other".* It is highly probable that *"other"* refers largely to the public servant strike action that took place in July 2010, since the strike was not included as an option in the questionnaire. *Illness (5%)* and *"did not want to go to school"* (2%) were also dominant reasons for children being absent from school. Additional reasons include: *"writing exams", "no money for transport", "doing households chores", "employed", "do not feel safe at school" and "weather was bad".*

In terms of empirical data (original source unknown) in the Final Draft Scholar Transport Policy (2009:11): In the country as a whole, nearly **13,5 million scholars attend primary and secondary schools**, while a further 1,5 million attend pre-schools. Nearly half reside in rural areas, with the rest fairly equally divided between metropolitan municipalities and district municipality areas.

The vast **majority of scholars (76% or about 11,4 million) usually walk to school**. While almost all scholars walk to school in the rural areas and more than 70 percent walk to school in urban areas, little more than half of those in metropolitan areas walk to school.

Car travel and taxis (minibus-taxis, light delivery vehicles or sedan taxis) are the modes of transport most frequently used by those who do not walk to school.

A third of the scholars in metropolitan areas travel by either car or taxi, while a fifth of those in other urban areas also use these modes. Buses have some patronage in metropolitan and other urban areas, but trains are very seldom used. Other forms of transport (bicycles, motorcycles, metered taxis, trucks, tractor-trailers or animal transport) are also rarely used.

For the majority of scholars (70% or about 10,5 million) the total **door-to-door travel time** to reach their destination **is 30 minutes or less**. However, seven per cent or more than 1,1 million scholars take longer than an hour to reach their place of education.

The provinces with a high proportion of scholars travelling for longer than 30 minutes are KwaZulu-Natal and, to a lesser extent, the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and North West Province.

Some 25 percent of primary scholars who walk to school (1,7 million) walk for longer than 30 minutes in one direction. Considering all children who walk to school, there are **560,000 who spend more than two hours per day walking to and from school**

In the country as a whole, only about **13 percent of all the trips to schools are made by public transport**. The monthly costs for these trips vary considerably, ranging from zero (for trips by school buses) to more than R200 per month. For the largest group of scholars the cost is between R101 and R200 per month.

Gauteng has the highest incidence of public transport usage for educational purposes, by far the largest number of people travelling for this purpose, and also the highest percentage paying R200 or more per month to reach their destinations.

Limpopo has the lowest proportion of trips by public transport, but also the lowest monthly cost, the majority paying less than R100 per month for their trips to educational centres.

The highest proportion of public transport trips to schools is made by taxi, despite the fact that taxis are the most expensive means of travel of the three public transport modes, with a relatively high number of taxi users paying more than R200 per month for their travel. The cheapest mode, the train, which costs less than R100 per month for the majority of train users, accounts for only one percent of public transport trips and attracts far fewer scholars.

It is evident that cost alone does not determine patronage of public transport by scholars, but that other factors, such as availability, accessibility, travel time, safety, security and comfort certainly play a role in their choice of mode.

On 13 September 2010… there is a record of meetings under the then chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Transport, Ms N Bhengu… The Department of Transport briefed the Portfolio Committee on Transport on this date about the current status, challenges of and future policy development for scholar transport in South Africa.[31] Government had prioritised the delivery of education, and that was inextricably linked to ensuring that scholars had access to transport that allowed them to get to their schools. Planning in the past had been fragmented, with schools often being situated far away from human settlements, with inadequate road infrastructure. There were a number of aspects relating to scholar transport. These included not only the actual provision of transport, and which department should bear the responsibility, but also discussion of the means through which it was organised and enforced.

Despite the many years of work since the end-2000s and the development of the final draft Policy (2009), it was argued that there was still a need to investigate whether adequate vehicles were used, whether the safety issues were properly addressed if special vehicles were needed to cope with poor road conditions, transportation of children in unlicensed or unsafe vehicles, licensing of drivers, to ensure that they held valid drivers' licenses, had no criminal convictions, and had received training in issues such as proper running of their transport businesses, had adequate life skills to cope with children, and had special skills to deal with disabled learners.

[31] PMG: **Scholar Transport: Briefing by Department of Transport** (13 September 2010). Source: https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/12015/ (downloaded 23 10 2018)

The Portfolio Committee on Transport also stressed that the DOT must also accept responsibility for maintaining roads, consider whether it was financially sustainable to put money into bus subsidies or into other forms of transport, must look at whether, for instance, bridges and proper walking paths were provided, and whether there was sufficient enforcement. The Committee was told of some of the negotiations around the transport policy, and noted that the funding mechanism had also been fragmented, with different payment mechanisms in different provinces, and that only two provinces had transferred scholar transport responsibilities to their provincial Departments of Education. There had been minimal research on certain aspects, and some statistics were outdated. It was not, for instance, known, what ages were the children walking to school for an hour or more, although statistics indicated that 76% of learners walked to school.[32] The DOT indicated that there had been delays in the process, largely due to the final draft policy becoming "stuck" between the Departments of Education and Transport, but that the two Ministers had now intervened and matters were moving forward.

The Committee accepted that the DOT had tried hard with the process but their questions highlighted a number of areas that needed discussion, and the Committee urged that whilst the draft Policy should not be finalised without input from the Committee, the whole process must be speeded up. The Committee was particularly concerned with the (slow pace of – own insert) implementation, and stressed that sufficient policing on very clearly stated requirements would be vital. Committee Members were also concerned with whether sufficient attention had been paid to the rural areas, and the provision of monitoring facilities there, and suggested that local residents could be trained and mentored. The DOT conceded that wide enough stakeholder participation had perhaps not been included, although this was a difficult issue. Members also highlighted their concerns that other departments, the South African Human Rights Commission and the South African National Civic Organisation should be consulted.

Members also suggested that the DOT should consider making roadworthiness tests a prerequisite to licensing and that scholar transport vehicles should be tested every three months. They were worried about devolution of functions to local level, the possibility of corruption, the payment systems that would help to combat corruption, and a cohesive funding model that took into account the fluctuations in the petrol prices. Committee Members also urged that national and provincial departments must ensure that their roles of enforcer and monitor were clearly delineated. They highlighted the lessons to be learnt from recent tragedies. They asked for special scholar tickets that allowed for reduced rates, for integration between the various transport sectors, and asked what forms of non-motorised transport were taken into account. Members asked in which financial year the policy was likely to be put fully into operation, and urged that time frames must be set and adhered to. They thought that this Committee should engage with the Portfolio Committee on Education to urge the process forward. They also wanted updated figures from the DOT.

[32] Unreferenced by the DOT

In 2011, the Portfolio Committee on Transport met on 11 April to discuss scholar transport again.[33] The DOT briefed Members on progress with Scholar Transport. The DOT had consolidated the Portfolio Committee's inputs (14 September 2010) in a draft policy document. Meetings and discussions with the DBE had taken place and were still ongoing. The HEADCOM of the DBE had recommended that the scholar transport function should be transferred from Education to Transport. The scholar transport migration plan had been developed. The DOT outlined the status quo and challenges: the function currently resided with both Departments of Basic Education and Transport; some provinces were in the process of migrating functions from provincial departments of education to provincial departments of transport; ensuring safe transportation of scholars to and from school; insufficient budgetary allocations; and monitoring of scholar transport services provided by contracted service providers, which remained a key policy issue due to lack of capacity. The DOT outlined funding and the currently fragmented regulatory framework for scholar transport. The DOT outlined the basic steps, including route verification and design, for the scholar transport migration plan. The way forward included establishing the steering and technical committees to manage migration of scholar transport, the development of short term intervention plans and mechanisms, the development and implementation of a national scholar transport database, the identification of subsidy mechanism, the development of provincial implementation plans and strategies, and the development and amendment of legislation.

There is evidence in Hansard of Ministers of Basic Education and of Transport receiving written questions related to learner transport, and approval of the final draft Policy (2009) to which responses were provided in the National Assembly, over the subsequent period 2011-2013[34]. It is known, for example, in 2011 that 54,406 learners in 644 schools were provided with learner transport.[35] Ministers were pushed to account for the long delay in approval of the final draft Policy (2009), and sometimes were at pains to express their own disappointment of progress with the DOT and DBE:

> On the issue of scholar transport, how is it that the department has not completed the Scholar Transport Policy in 2013, when we have only less than a year to go to wind up the five-year term? In 2010, I lamented the scholar transport situation, which is characterised by a series of fragmented guidelines that have yet to result in a co-ordinated and effective strategy to ensure a safe, efficient and affordable journey to school for the majority of the nation's scholars. We have less than a year to wind up our five-year term and the Department is still singing the same song, that it is about to complete the Scholar Transport Policy.

[33] PMG (2011) **Scholar Transport and the Shova Kalula Bicycle Project: Department of Transport briefing** (11 April 2011) Source: https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/12849/ (downloaded 23 10 2018)

[34] PMG (2012) Questions & Replies: Basic Education. Source: https://pmg.org.za/question_reply/418/ (downloaded 23 10 2018)

[35] Hansard QUESTION 1123. DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION: 04/05/2012. (INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 11/2012). Source PMG (2012)

> In six out of seven provinces, the scholar transport function is with the Department of Basic Education. In three provinces, there is no indication that they intend involving the Department of Transport to provide policy direction or to facilitate migration of the functions, and only in one province the functions of the scholar transport is with the Department of Transport.[36]

Other Members of Parliament were also aggrieved that it had taken almost seven years to finalise the Learner Transport Policy (2015):

> Portfolio Committee Transport: Committee Legacy Report & Outstanding Matters. Mr Duma agreed with Ms Pule, and suggested it was critically important to provide a timeframe for the finalisation and implementation of the (Scholar Transport – own insert) policy. As Mr Ollis had said in his email, the Department needed to finalise the scholar transport policy by December 2014. Mr Ollis had been very generous, as departments normally finalised their policies by the end of each financial year. He also expressed his dismay that it had taken the Department almost seven years to finalise the scholar transport policy.[37]

In conclusion, the delays in getting the Scholar Transport Policy (2009) finalised and approved meant that a further National Household Travel Survey was completed in 2013. STATSSA (2013) still currently provides us in 2018 with the most up to date information regarding learner transport at a country level. What we know that most learners in the country **attended school** (79,4%), followed by those who went to preschool (10,5%).[38] Residents of rural areas (40,6%) were more likely to attend educational institutions than those in the metropolitan areas (34,2%) and urban areas (25,2%). This is primarily because **rural areas** tend to proportionally **have more school-going children**. In Western Cape and Gauteng, the highest proportions of learners were located in the metropolitan areas, followed by those in urban areas. However, in Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape, most persons who indicated that they attended educational institutions were concentrated in areas classified as rural.

Scholars in all geographic locations were more likely to **walk all the way** to their educational institutions than using any of the other modes of travel. Similar percentages of **disabled scholars** used taxis (11,8%) and cars/trucks as passengers (11,3%). In urban and rural areas, **taxis were the second** most **commonly used modes of travel** for scholars, followed by car/truck passenger. In metropolitan areas, the second most used modes of travel, after 'walking all the way' was 'car/truck passenger', followed by taxis. Scholars from households with different income quintiles walked all the way to their

[36] PMG (2013) Hansard: Debate on Vote No 37 — Transport. (House: National Assembly. Date of Meeting: 28 May 2013) Source: https://pmg.org.za/hansard/18378/ (downloaded 23 10 2018)

[37] PMG (2014) Portfolio Committee Transport: Committee Legacy Report & Outstanding Matters. (10 March 2014) Source: https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/17072/ (downloaded 23 10 2018)

[38] This section sourced from STATSSA (2013:18) National Household Travel Survey. STATSSA: Pretoria.

educational institutions, the scholars from households with the highest income quintile mentioned 'car/truck passenger' as the second most used mode of travel used (51,0%).

Nationally, the vast **majority of learners studied on-site** (96,5%) rather than through distance learning (3,5%).[39] Between 97% and 98% of learners in all provinces except Gauteng (92,3%) attended classes. North West and Mpumalanga had almost the same percentage of learners that attended classes.

Across all educational institutions, **most learners travelled for 5 days in a week**.[40]

Individuals who attended **educational institutions and used public transport** were most likely to use **taxis (69,8%)**.[41] Approximately a quarter (24,6%) made use of buses and 5,5% used trains. Within provinces, the public transport modes that dominated remained taxis, except in Northern Cape where buses were used by more than half of the learners. In Western Cape, trains played a bigger role than anywhere else (20,7%). Fifty per cent (50,7%) of learners who used public transport in this province used taxis, and 28,6% used buses. As indicated above, a different pattern was found in Northern Cape with higher (54,2%) percentages of learners who used buses compared to taxis (45,5%). As many as 47,9% of those attending educational institutions and who used public transport in Mpumalanga, made use of buses, 51,8% used taxis, and only 0,3% used trains. Eastern Cape had the highest percentage of learners who utilised taxis (82,8%). Some learners also used buses (14,6%) as well as trains (2,6%). The same applies to Free State with 77,9% of learners who used taxis, 21,2% used buses and 0,9% used trains. Again in KwaZulu-Natal, 74,6% used taxis, 21,7% used buses and 3,7% used trains. Seventy-three per cent (73,0%) of learners in Gauteng used taxis, followed by those who used buses (19,4%) and trains (7,6%).

Learners attending school used a **large variety of transport modes**. Scholars using trains were more likely to be located in Western Cape (33,5%) and Gauteng (32,9%). Taxis were used by more scholars in Gauteng (26,8%) and KwaZulu-Natal (23,7%) than elsewhere. Approximately 23,9% of scholars who used buses were found in Gauteng, followed by 18,5% in KwaZulu-Natal, 17,5% in Mpumalanga and 10,8% in Western Cape.[42]

Most scholars using cars/bakkies/trucks as passengers resided in Gauteng (31,8%), KwaZulu-Natal (19,8%) and in Western Cape (18,0%). Scholars driving themselves to school primarily lived in the Gauteng (46,4%). KwaZulu-Natal had about 16,3% learners who drove to school, followed by Limpopo (11,3%) and Western Cape (8,9%). More than half of learners who attended school walked all the way. Of all the scholars walking all the way to school in the country, provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal (23,7%), Eastern Cape (18,0%) and Limpopo (16,8%) made the biggest contribution to the total.

[39] Figures in this paragraph sourced from STATSSA (2018:19)

[40] STATSSA (2013:21)

[41] Figures in this paragraph sourced from STATSSA (2013:22)

[42] Figures in this section sourced from STATSSA (2018:23)

In terms of **modes of travel used by learners** to reach different educational institutions. Of the 10 million learners who walked all the way to their educational institutions, most attended school (8,7 million), followed by pre-school (1,0 million). Besides walking all the way, the majority of scholars used taxis (12,8%), followed by 11,7% who were passengers in a car/truck. Six out of ten (61,5%) of pre-school learners walked all the way and 23,3% were passengers in cars/trucks.

Trains were the least common mode of travel used by learners in general.

Nationally, approximately **6% of learners walked all the way** to their educational institutions. This is one percentage point higher than in 2003. Rural learners (8,1%) were more likely than metropolitan (2,7%) or urban learners (3,0%) to walk more than 60 minutes.

In 2013, the highest proportion of scholars walked all the way to school, followed by those who used cars and taxis (12,1% and 12,8% respectively).

Learners who walked all the way decreased from 76,3% in 2003 to 63,4% in 2013.[43] Learners using trains, buses, taxis and cars increased in number from 2003 to 2013. In both years, most learners walked all the way. This mode of travel was followed by taxis, cars and buses. The mode least likely to be used was trains. It is interesting to note that in all the provinces, the **majority of learners (60,9%)** who attended educational institutions, **normally left home between 07:00 and 07:59**. A significant percentage of learners (20,4%) left between 06:30 and 06:59. Some learners (12,5%) travelled before 06:30, and 6,2% at 08:00 or later. More than 70,0% of learners in Western Cape and Eastern Cape left their place of residence from 07:00 to 07:59. Northern Cape (29,3%) and Limpopo (27,0%) had the highest percentages of learners who tended to leave from 06:30 to 06:59 when compared to other provinces. Learners in Gauteng (9,3%), Free State (9,2%) and Western Cape (7,6%) started travelling at 08:00 or later.

Three-quarters (75,0%) of Western Cape learners travelled between 07:00 and 07:59, while 12,5% travelled between 06:30 and 06:59.[44] More than seventy per cent (74,3%) of learners in Eastern Cape started travelling to their educational institutions between 07:00 to 07:59, followed by those who travelled from 6:30 and 6:59 (11,9%), and 6,1% who travelled at 08:00 or later.

Fifty-four per cent (54,3%) of learners in Northern Cape indicated that they started travelling from 07:00 to 07:59, while 29,3% travelled from 06:00 to 06:59, and 11,9% travelled before 06:30. In Limpopo, about forty-seven per cent (47,4%) of learners left their place of residence to their educational institutions between 07:00 and 07:59. Twenty-seven per cent (27,0%) left between 06:30 and 06:59, while 20,7% left before 06:30 to their educational institutions.

A total of **5,5 million learners** across the country indicated that they **walked to get to their first transport**. The **majority (93,6%) walked for up to 15 minutes**, followed by 5,1% of persons who walked for 16–30 minutes. Only 0,3% of learners walked for more than 60 minutes.

[43] Figures in this section sourced from STATSSA (2018:29)

[44] Figures from this section sourced from STATSSA (2018:30)

The highest proportion of learners who walked more than 15 minutes were found in KwaZulu-Natal (8,5%), Gauteng and Mpumalanga (7,2%). North West had about 97,0% of learners that walked for up to 15 minutes to their first transport, followed by 2,5% that walked 16–30 minutes. About ninety-six per cent (95,7%) of Western Cape learners walked for up to 15 minutes, whilst 3,8% walked for 16–30 minutes.

About **5,3 million learners waited for their first transport to arrive**. Even though waiting times varied between provinces, nationally **most learners waited for up to 15 minutes (94,7%)**, 4,5% waited for 16– 30 minutes. One per cent (0,8%) of learners waited for their first transport for more than 30 minutes.

Eastern Cape, Western Cape and Gauteng had the highest percentage of learners that waited for up to 15 minutes. Approximately 96,7% of learners in Eastern Cape waited for up to 15 minutes for their first transport while 3,1% waited for 16–30 minutes and 0,2% waited for more than 30 minutes. About ninety-five per cent (94,7%) of learners in Mpumalanga waited for up to 15 minutes, followed by 4,9% of those that waited for 16–30 minutes and 0,5% that waited for more than 30 minutes. Limpopo had about 94,0% of learners who waited for up to 15 minutes, 5,3% waited for 16–30 minutes and 0,7% waited for more than 30 minutes.

About ninety-three per cent (93,2%) of learners in North West waited for up to 15 minutes, 6,1% waited for 16–30 minutes and 0,8% waited for more than 30 minutes. Northern Cape (91,3%) on the other hand, had slightly lower percentages of learners that waited for up to 15 minutes.

Of the **learners (5,1 million)** that mentioned that they still had to **walk a distance at the end of the trip** to reach their educational institutions, **94,0% walked for up to 15 minutes**, while 4,3% walked 16–30 minutes. Only 0,2% walked for more than 60 minutes.[45]

Ninety-six per cent of Western Cape learners walked for up to 15 minutes, 3,2% walked for 16–30 minutes. In the Northern Cape, about 90,2% of learners walked for up to 15 minutes, 4,3% walked 16–30 minutes and 2,5% walked 31–45 minutes.

The most significant percentage of learners that walked 30 minutes or longer lived in Northern Cape (5,6%), Limpopo (4,0%) and KwaZulu-Natal (2,9%).

Nationally, most learners using **trains tended to travel for more than 60 minutes** to their educational institutions (54,2%). In Gauteng (62,4%), KwaZulu-Natal (61,3%) and Western Cape (45,5%), the time taken to travel by train was mostly more than an hour.[46]

Most learners using taxis took at most 30 minutes to reach their educational institutions (40,7%). About 22% of learners needed more than an hour to get to their educational institutions using taxis. Western Cape (56,5%), Northern Cape (54,7%) and Free State (55,2%) had the highest proportion of learners who travelled 30 minutes or less when using taxis.

[45] Figures from this section sourced from STATSSA (2018:31)

[46] Figures from this section sourced from STATSSA (2018:33)

The highest proportion of **learners who walked all the way** or who used cars/bakkies/trucks as passengers or drivers **travelled for 30 minutes or less**. Learners who walked to their educational institutions for more than an hour were mostly found in KwaZulu-Natal (9,9%), followed by Eastern Cape with 6,5%.[47] Between 2003 and 2013, the **percentage of learners who travelled more than 60 minutes** to their educational institutions **increased across all provinces**. The only exception was North West, where there was a decrease of 0,5%. Since 2003, there has been an increase in the percentage of learners who travelled for more than 60 minutes to reach pre-school, school, tertiary and other educational institutions. For tertiary learners there was an increase of about ten percentage points from 2003 to 2013.

1.3 Learner Transport Policy (2015)

The National Learner Transport Policy (2015) is based on the Final Draft Scholar Transport Policy (2009) with relatively few changes evident between the two documents. An important change between the 2009 draft Policy and the approved 2015 Policy is that the target group definition is vague in the latter version:

> Scholar transport will be provided on the basis of a number of principles, including that scholar transport must be af- fordable, safe and secure. The target group of the policy is scholars who attend schooling between Grade R to 12 and live more than 3km from the nearest school (own emphasis).[48]

> The target group for subsidised transport is learners who attend grade R to 1 2 and live in areas where they do not have access to public transport services and have to walk long distances to school (own emphasis).[49]

Other important changes evident between the two drafts of learner transport policy (2009, 2015) relate to: the **removal** of

> The policy also provide guidelines for developmental programmes for Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) and Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMME's) in order to bring the previously marginalised groups into the formalised transport sector and economic mainstream.[50]...

[47] Figures from this section sourced from STATSSA (2018:34)

[48] DOT (2009:7)

[49] DOT (2015:8)

[50] DOT (2009:8)

even though it is clear that the this (now undetailed) policy objective has been achieved according to feedback from some important respondents in this 2018 evaluation. Further, the policy detail that there should be…

> …the migration of the scholar transport function to the DOT. Further, it recommends that scholar transport provision should be managed by dedicated units at both national and provincial levels of government. …

has been removed in the approved Policy (2015), which reflects the essence of the very lengthy (and unacceptable delays – own insert) in its finalization process of some eight years!

According to the STATSSA 2016:30) GHS there is a slow decline in the percentage of learners (7-18 years) who walk to school. The majority of learners reported that they walk to school, but as learners get older they are more likely to walk for more than 30 minutes to educational institutions. In 2016, around 5.4% of learners travelled to school by means of a minibus taxi, whereas 9.7% of learners travelled to school by means of a vehicle hired by a group of parents. The majority of individuals aged 5 to 18 years old who reported that they walk to their educational institutions, walk for less than 15 minutes, while less than 3% of households reported that learners are traveling to school by means of a minibus or bus provided for by the school or the government.

KwaZulu-Natal has the highest percentage of learners who walk for more than 30 minutes to educational institutions, while Western Cape has the lowest percentage of learners who walk for more than 30 minutes to educational institutions.

Table 2. Proportions of 7 to 18 year olds that use different modes of transport, 2009-2016 (source: *Statistics South Africa, General Household Survey (GHS)*

Means of transport	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Walking	74.9	73.6	74.1	71.8	72.3	71.3	69.0	68.9

1.4 Evaluation Purpose and Key Questions

1.4.1 Evaluation Purpose

This evaluation is commissioned by the DPME to conduct a critical assessment of the implementation of the Learner Transport Programme with a focus on current operational trends, performance and the extent to which immediate outcomes are being realised. The evaluation is also to assess the current model of learner transport and its performance in order to determine what improvements may be needed.

1.4.2 Key Evaluation Questions

The evaluation sets out to investigate the following key aspects of the programme, in line with the published Terms of Reference (TOR) for this evaluation:

Relevance and Appropriateness: To what extent is the design of the Learner Transport Programme appropriate, and consistent with education & transport sectors' priorities and policies, and partnerships with all key stakeholders?

Effectiveness: To what extent has the implementation of the Learner Transport Programme been effective in achieving its goal(s), objectives and intended outcomes? What are the measureable results of the LTP in the period of review?

Efficiency: To what extent has the implementation of the Learner Transport Programme been efficient, with specific regard to (i) organisational design and applied delivery model(s), (ii) core "business processes" used, (iii) management and administration, including record- keeping, and (iv) value-for-money?

Sustainability: How sustainable is the Learner Transport Programme, considering the many competing priorities and demands in the education-transport sectors, and what is the medium-to-long-term prognosis of the learner transport challenge posed to Government? Are there viable alternatives to the current LTP programme intervention?

Impact: What are the signs of emerging impact of the Learner Transport Programme, if any?

1.5 Evaluation Scope

The evaluation is to cover the entire country focusing especially on, national, provincial and school levels. The review of data on the programme is to the period 2012/13 to 2016/17 financial years.

2. EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Evaluation approach

The general approach employed in this evaluation is to follow a "classic" programme evaluation approach, based on typical logic models (theory of change and logical frameworks) used to make sense of projects and/or programmes like the National Learner Transport Programme.

In theoretical terms, it follows a results-based management conceptual model, which seeks to establish initial purpose, vision and intended change at the very inception of programme design. Philosophically, this implies an underlying theory of change, and how using a (now widely-accepted) theory of change outline, which attempts to establish and explicitly articulate the long-term outcomes towards which effort and resources are employed, and which can be plausibly mapped backwards or forwards, in a series of steps that lead/are preceded by other steps linked to a clear visionary end-point.

This logic model to make sense of the programme, helps to clearly establish its performance parameters, which in turn enables measurement of performance of the Learner Transport Programme in response to the evaluation terms of reference.

The generic programme evaluation approach adopted is also in line with Government's outcomes-based system, which is designed to make sense of delivery/implementation in relation to immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes.

The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)[51] lenses for measurement of programme performance in four or five main dimensions are used:

1) **relevance** of policy and appropriateness in relation to primary beneficiaries and key stakeholders,
2) programme **effectiveness** to establish the main development outputs, and the extent to which the programme is effective in reaching its intended purpose, specifically learner transport provision, and safely, reliably and punctually.
3) programme **efficiency**, in terms of management and coordination, administration and supporting systems, as well as a big focus on use of financial resources and value-for-money,
4) programme **sustainability** in relation to current patterns of performance and delivery model.

2.2 Evaluation Design

In evaluation research terms, the general approach is to utilize accepted research methods in a mixed methods approach in order to collect the appropriate data that can be analysed using triangulation to establish a credible assessment of programme performance of the Learner Transport Programme.

[51] Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). European

As a consequence the evaluation design is set up to collect relevant data in all of the performance areas of the National Learner Transport Programme – on the ground in sampled schools (with the primary focus on learners, educators/principals, transport drivers and operators), the institutional environment of provincial administration, and the general country context in terms of what is currently known and has been established in relation to learner transport, including international insights for key lessons, principles and standards.

The evaluation is designed to pay particular attention to localised provincial cases of implementation of the LTP programme, with a view of having an in-depth understanding of how each of the nine provinces has adapted the Programme to its needs and context, and what lessons can be learned from each province towards a collective assessment of the programme at country level.

The period of the evaluation is 2012/13 to 2017/18, and this report's conclusions are therefore based on current and available data.

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 *Population and Sample size*

National officials purposively sampled include those who are directly involved in managing and coordinating the LTP programme from DBE, DoT and National Treasury.

At Provincial Levels, the Provincial population consist of all officials involved in the planning and implementation of LTP in each province.

The total number of officials could not be readily determined prior to sampling. School level population includes all schools that are currently participating in the learner transport from each province. Sub groups include school principals, transport coordinators, transport owners and drivers as well as the learners (beneficiaries).

Sampling method (for selection of schools): Given the diversity and layers of the population to be covered, a *stratified or multistage purposive sampling* strategy is largely used.

This allowed for the use of a sampling frame to capture the complexity embedded in the various layers of the population for representativeness. The population is stratified and sampled in stages.

Sampling Scheme: In view of the inherent complexity of the population, a sample scheme was devised to take into cognisance the key layers of the population under study.

The population of schools can be divided into the following layers:

- Schools per province and districts
- Schools within Quintile divisions (Quintile 1 and 2),
- Special Schools (to include all 7 sub-components of disability) and Ordinary Schools and (also to include Farm Schools)
- Rural and urban Schools to include farm Schools)

Sampling procedure: At school level, a list of all schools participating in the programme per province is provided by the Departments of Education and Transport. This list is stratified according to the sample scheme, beginning with selecting two districts from each province randomly, then selecting three schools from each districts, taking into consideration representation of the sampling scheme.

Programme coordinators, principals, drivers and operators interviewed are from the schools selected and visited. The sample distribution is show in the table immediately below.

Table 3. Planned Sample Distribution (School levels per province)

Province	Sample Distribution /Targets					
Location		**Qualitative**			**Quantitative**	
	Number of schools to be visited (per province)	**School Principal / LTP Coordinator (per school)**	**Transport Operators/ Drivers (per school)**	**Qualitative Sample size in Schools (Per province)**	**Quantitative (Learner interview – ordinary schools per province)**	**Quantitative (Learner interview – Special schools per province)**
Eastern Cape	6	1	2	**18**	**54**	**9**
Free State	6	1	2	**18**	**54**	**9**
Gauteng	6	1	2	**18**	**54**	**9**
KwaZulu-Natal	6	1	2	**18**	**54**	**9**
Limpopo	6	1	2	**18**	**54**	**9**
Mpumalanga	6	1	2	**18**	**54**	**9**
Northern Cape	6	1	2	**18**	**54**	**9**
North West	6	1	2	**18**	**54**	**9**
Western Cape	6	1	2	**18**	**54**	**9**
Total	54	9	18	**162**	**486**	**81**

Table 4.Sample of Learner Grades

Primary		Secondary	
Grade	**Sample**	**Grade**	**Sample**
Five	3	**Nine**	3
Six	3	**Ten**	3
Seven	3	**Eleven**	3

Sampling Design

Sampling method: Given the diversity and layers of the population to be covered, a *stratified or multistage purposive sampling* strategy is used.

This allowed for the use of a sampling frame to capture the complexity embedded in the various layers of the population for representativeness. The population is stratified and sampled in stages.

The total population of learners who are eligible for learner transport was estimated to be in the region of 370,225[52] which equals N in 2012/13. In 2016/17, N = 521,711.

The primary selection of the sample is at school level, with two schools randomly selected per province. In other words, the schools were first selected randomly, followed by the random selection of learners.

So the population in this case is N = 3,800 of schools supported by the Programme. This means that the sample n = 54, which translates into an error rate of 11,2% at the 90% confidence interval. To bring the error rate down to 5%, a sample of 254 is required. Due to significant financial constraints, the evaluation Steering Committee (comprised of NT, DPME, DBE and DOT amongst others) approved the sample as marked below for use in this evaluation study.

Table 5.Sampling: Error rate and Confidence Interval

Sampling Illustration						
Sample (n)	54	100	174	200	220	254
Population (N)	3,800	3,800	3,800	3,800	3,800	3,800
95% C.I.	13,4%	9,7%	7,3%	6,8%	6,4%	6,0%
80% C.I.	8,8%	6,4%	4,8%	4,4%	4,2%	3,9%
90% C.I.	11,2%	8,2%	6,1%	5,7%	5,4%	5,0%

[52] Using a calculated estimated average increase of 9% in learner transport demand over 2013/14 to 2016/17. See table 16 on page 76 below

Sample sizes

Table 6. School level Sample

Province	Sample Distribution				
	Number of schools to be visited (per province)	**School Principal / LTP Coordinator (per school)**	**Transport Operators/Drivers (per school)**	**Qualitative Sample size (Per province)**	**Quantitative (Learner interview per province)**
Eastern Cape	6	1	2	**42**	**18**
Free State	6	1	2	**42**	**18**
Gauteng	6	1	2	**42**	**18**
KwaZulu-Natal	6	1	2	**42**	**18**
Limpopo	6	1	2	**42**	**18**
Mpumalanga	6	1	2	**42**	**18**
Northern Cape	6	1	2	**42**	**18**
North West	6	1	2	**42**	**18**
Western Cape	6	1	2	**42**	**18**
Total	54	9	18	**378**	**162**

Table 7 Learner samples per grade per school

Primary		Secondary	
Grade	**Count**	**Grade**	**Count**
5	3	9	3
6	3	10	3
7	3	11	3

2.4 Data Collection Procedure and Methods

2.4.1 Literature and document review

A comprehensive and systematic review of literature was undertaken to inform the evaluation. In order to conceptualise the notion of access to education and transport as a channel of creating this access, both academic and non-academic literature are intensely interrogated. International examples of learner transport programmes were also considered, paying particular attention to the modes of transport used, the planning design and operational challenges in other countries and strategies used in addressing such issues. This is to see what lessons and best practice models are embedded for the evaluation and the LTP in South Africa. Specifically, cases on school transport programmes from USA, Brazil, Indonesia, China, Greece and Kenya have been examined.

To provide a contextual overview of learner transportation programme in South Africa, local empirical and grey literature, including programme documentation and legislative instruments and also polices documents were intensively interrogated. The is also to present the current thinking on the subject, trends and implementation models as well as a summary of the status quo, as portrayed in local literature and programme documents. The document review also forms the basis for the derivation of the programme theory of change to guide the evaluation, particularly data collection strategies and interpretation. A list of documents reviewed is attached in the annexures.

Lastly, both the literature and document review culminated into the formulation of the theoretical and conceptual framework with which the evaluation findings are navigated. Is also teased out the analytical framework for interpreting the evaluation findings, including a descriptive overview of the OECD evaluation criteria or analytical framework and also a conceptual framework for measuring value for money.

2.4.2 Stakeholder workshops

Several participatory stakeholder workshops and engagements were held at various stages of the evaluation.

These include meetings with the Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC), representatives of provinces and national programme officers and the Technical Working Group (TWG) which is a component of the ESC.

A one day Theory of Change (TOC) workshop was also carried out in order to confirm and further expand the draft ToC derived from the literature and document review.

Participants include the ESC and TWG members, provincial representatives working on learner transport and other sectorial interest groups.

2.4.3 Surveys interviews and observations

Primary data collection made use of Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with stakeholders and role players, such as national officials relating the LTP from DBE, DoT, National Treasury, from provincial spheres of government consisting of programme managers from the departments of education, transport, and some civil society organisations with interest in LTP. KIIs were also undertaken at school levels with programme coordinators and principals, and with LTP service providers specifically the drivers and owners. Close ended surveys in the form of Computer Aided Personal Interviews (CAPI) is used to collect learner localised experiences and views on the learner transport in their respective schools and roots. Observations were also carried out with the aid of an observation grid developed as part of the data collection instruments in the schools, on the conditions of the transport, driver documentation, and arrival and departure time and processes. A summary of the data collection methods at the various stages of the evaluation, the purposes of the data collected and the respective sources is presented in Figure 13.

2.4.4 Field work

After establishing the programme theory of Change, **data collection instruments** were drafted by the evaluation team, and approved by the evaluation steering committee. The instruments were then **piloted** in three schools consisting of two primary and one High School all within different parts of Gauteng Province. The Provincial instrument was also piloted in the Gauteng province. Other than the length of the provincial instrument which was considered too long, but could not be reduced due to the depth of the data to be solicited, the rest of the instruments were deemed ok for full data collection, based on the satisfactory results from the piloting.

Upon field worker briefing and induction by Quest, various teams were sent to different provinces. Prior to that, appointments were set with relevant school officials. On success of the appointment, the team then goes to the school to collect data. All ordinary schools were covered during this phase of the data collection. Only three special schools were visited. The remaining special schools that were sampled confirmed that they are not on the government funded LTP. A decision was later made by the TWG to substitute the special school samples with those not on the government funded programme to make up the target and also to offer an opportunity to explore the nature of the programme in these schools.

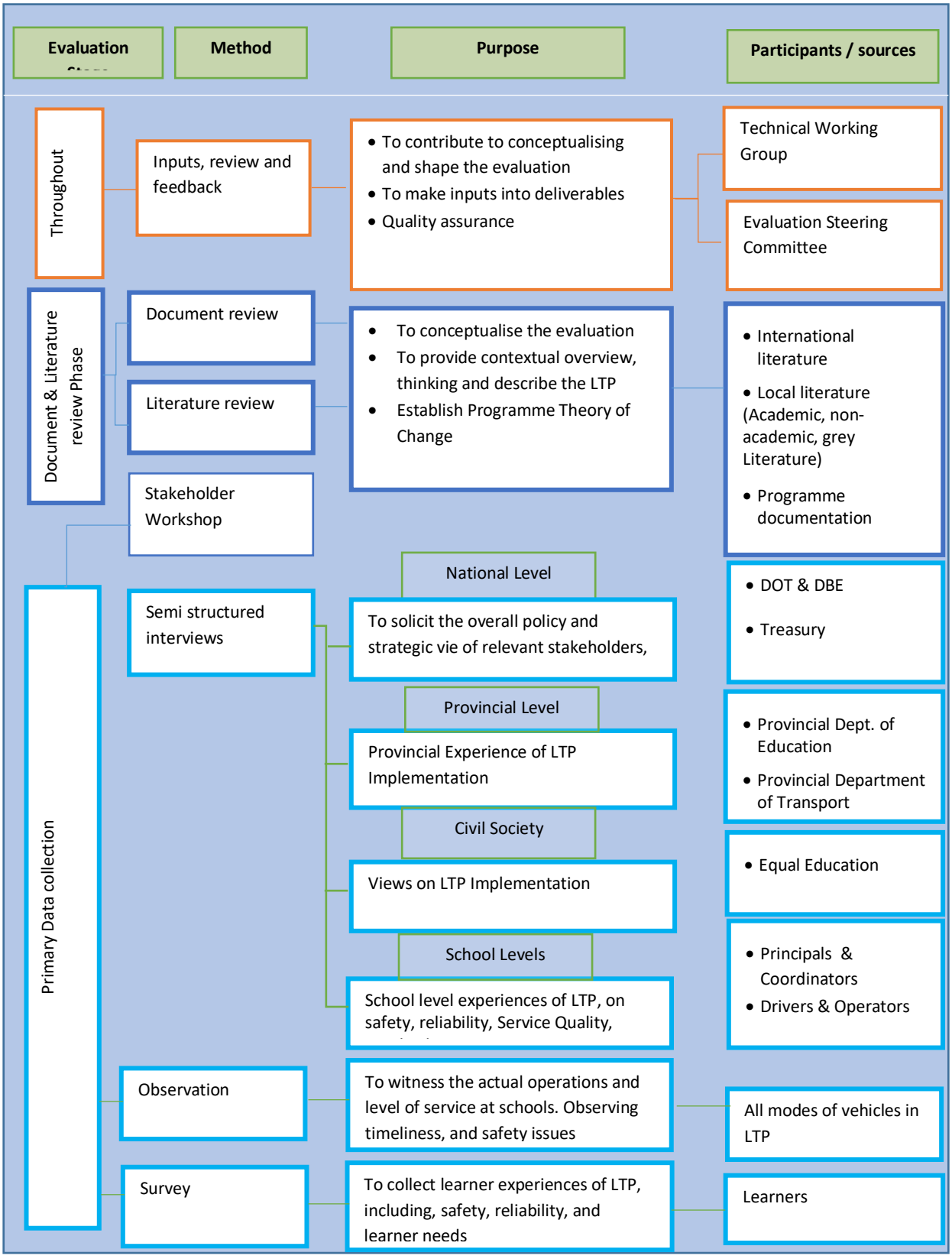
Due to the difficulty in securing appointment with provincial officials, only some provincial officials were interviewed in few provinces during the schools data collection. The rest of the provincial interviews were however completed in the subsequent weeks after the school data collections. National level interviews were also conducted during the provincial level data collections.

2.4.5 Description of respondents

Table 8 Description of Respondents

DESCRIPTION		PLANNED SAMPLE	ACTUAL	REMARKS
No of Mainstream Schools covered		54	54	
Special Schools covered		9	9	
Learners Totals (Surveys)		567	567	*Including Special Schools*
Drivers (Interviews)		63	65	
Owners		9	7	
Provincial coordinators interviews	DoT	9	7	
	DBE	9	7	
National interviews	DBE	1	1	*Focus Group / 2 Key Officials*
	DOT	1	1	
	Treasury			*Focus Group / 2 Key Officials*

Respondents were selected randomly from provincial databases of schools supported by the Learner Transport Programme.


Evaluation
Method
Purpose
Participants / sources
Throughout
Inputs, review and feedback
To contribute to conceptualising and shape the evaluation
To make inputs into deliverables
Quality assurance
Technical Working Group
Evaluation Steering Committee
Document & Literature review Phase
Document review
Literature review
To conceptualise the evaluation
To provide contextual overview, thinking and describe the LTP
Establish Programme Theory of Change
International literature
Local literature (Academic, non-academic, grey Literature)
Programme documentation
Stakeholder Workshop
Primary Data collection
Semi structured interviews
National Level
To solicit the overall policy and strategic vie of relevant stakeholders,
DOT & DBE
Treasury
Provincial Level
Provincial Experience of LTP Implementation
Provincial Dept. of Education
Provincial Department of Transport
Civil Society
Views on LTP Implementation
Equal Education
School Levels
School level experiences of LTP, on safety, reliability, Service Quality,
Principals & Coordinators
Drivers & Operators
Observation
To witness the actual operations and level of service at schools. Observing timeliness, and safety issues
All modes of vehicles in LTP
Survey
To collect learner experiences of LTP, including, safety, reliability, and learner needs
Learners

2.5 Ethical Considerations

In order to ensure the integrity of the data collection process, key protocols were observed. Prior to field work, the DPME informed all provincial HODs in writing, to ask permission and request access to relevant data. Letters were sent to each provincial department, to this effect. The field team also carried copies of these letters to present on arrival at each provincial office and in each school as a form of identification. Younger children that might require parental ethical clearance (as per the DBEs) requirements were also excluded from the sample. At school. The consent of each principal was sort and confirmed during the appointment priori to arrival in the school. All due protocols were then observed, with the due cooperation of school authorities.

2.6 Data processing and storage

All interviews were tape recorded, and later transcribed and cleaned up. Similarly, the quantitative data was also captured into excel and cleaned. All data files are then stored in safe storage in electronic formats and to be transferred to the DPME as the commissioner of the evaluation. All measures were taken by the Quest team to ensure the safety, integrity and confidentiality of data collected during the evaluation period.

2.7 Data analysis

Data analysis is largely underpinned by a system thinking approach to policy implementation, paying attention to how the various components and processes intertwine and interact to bring about the change required. From this perspective, based on data collected from the literature review and stakeholder engagements, the programme theory was analysed and captured using a log frame approach which presents the causal relations between the implementation and expected results.

Qualitative data collected is analysed largely using descriptive statistical analysis and presented with graphs, tables and with narratives. Qualitative data makes use of thematic analytical frameworks in organising the data, and presenting the findings of the evaluation. This themes include the scope of themes presented in the Evaluation Terms of reference covering largely policy, definitional and design process, institutional and coordination, implementation and monitoring and associated systems and processes including procurement and management. The OCED DAC analytical framework or criteria are engaged in making sense of the findings, looking at relevance, implementation efficiency and effectiveness and also value for money, which is analysed using a combination of cost benefits and cost effectiveness analysis. Our use of the OECD DAC Criteria is shown in the table below.

The use of mixed method strategy largely paved the way for sufficient triangulation as a way of verifying and confirming the information or data collected through the various means and sources in order to check for validity and to an extend reliability. Data gathered from the literature is triangulated against information data collected from field work, paying attention to conformity and any disparities.

2.8 Evaluation Limitations – technical and administrative

There are a number of evaluation limitations, that are linked to the evaluation design, the selection of the sample, available data, constraints encountered during fieldwork, and limited access to respondents in some cases.

Methodological limitations: it is noted that the focus of the evaluation is on implementation. As a result, the data collection focused more on planning and operational aspects of the programme. Samples drawn are aimed at collecting national, provincial and school level experiences with which to adjudge the implementation of the programme. The primary data collection from school levels is intended to provide localised conclusions of implementation experience in each province. Thus, in proportion to the number of schools in each province, it is not necessarily scientifically representative as would be needed in the case of a full impact evaluation. As a result, even though the evaluation intends to identify any emerging impacts, a robust and comprehensive impact analysis (using counterfactuals) was not possible due to the limited sample size, based on time and budgetary contains in using treatment and comparative groups. Instead, most significant approach was used to tease out key and significant issues that emerged during the data collection to paint a picture of implementation issues in each province. Additionally, comprehensive documentary data was collected on each province to provide a broader and more holistic view of programme implementation in each province.

With an estimated population size of 3,800 schools that are supported by the Learner Transport Programme, with a confidence interval of 95% and a desired error rate of 5%, the recommended sample size is 349.

In this evaluation's sample of 64 schools, the insights although useful into implementation patterns in the selected schools, are however not generalizable to the population.

On the flipside, with the sample of 66 against the given population, and a 90% confidence interval, the error rate is 10.1%. Patterns in the sample, however, approximate national learner transport trends (STATSSA 2013).

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Policy context of the Learner Transport Programme

The background to this goes back to the Department of Transport in the early 1990s, which had its own broader framework where it included special needs transport. With special needs transport, learner transport became a possibility, with provisions that it would look into. The intergovernmental relations framework of 2005 helped departments such as Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Transport (DOT) to collaborate to implement learner transport in order to get the final services to the learners. The Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations Framework Act would come in and help the two departments down to the district level with regard to the payment of service providers who provided the transport. This chapter does not repeat the policy background writeup in chapter one.

Policy Base[53]: The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 Section 85(2) (b) mandates the Department of Transport with the role of developing and implementing transport policy. This mandate places a huge responsibility on the Department's role to ensure that transport policy development addresses the mobility needs of all citizens. It is in this regard that the Department has developed the first overarching learner transport policy for the country.

Policy on Transport: This learner transport policy is guided by the White Paper on National Transport Policy (1996), the National Land Transport Act, Act 05 of 2009, the National Land Transport Strategic Framework, the National Development Plan (NDP) and other legislation such as the National Road Traffic Act, Act 93 of 1996.

The National Development Plan (NDP) is a broad strategic framework. It sets out a coherent and holistic approach to confront poverty and inequality. One of the priorities of the NDP is to improve the quality of education, skills development and innovation. Specifically, the provision of learner transport is critical in realizing government's outcome 1 of improved quality of basic education. An effective and efficient transport system for learners plays a pivotal role in the realisation of the objectives of the NDP. One of the objectives is that the proportion of people who use public transport will expand significantly, and by 2030, that public transport will be user-friendly, less environmentally damaging, cheaper and integrated or seamless. The NDP requires that the DOT consolidates and expands infrastructure with a key focus on public transport infrastructure and systems, including the renewal of the commuter rail fleet, supported by enhanced links with road-services. The NDP also calls for substantial investment to ensure safe, reliable and affordable public transport.

[53] This section draws heavily on publicly available official policy documentation on the Learner Transport Policy (2015)

The development of the Learner Transport Policy occurs within the national transport policy context. The National Transport White Paper (1996) puts forward the vision for the South African transport system as: the provision of safe, reliable, effective, efficient, and fully integrated transport operations and infrastructure, which will best meet the needs of freight and passenger customers at improving the levels of service and cost in a fashion which supports government strategies for economic and social development whilst being environmentally and economically sustainable.

The purpose of the National Land Transport Act, No.05 of 2009 and its regulations is "to prescribe national principles, requirements, guidelines, frameworks and national norms and standards that must be applied uniformly in the provinces, and other matters contemplated in section 146(2) of the Constitution".

The National Road Traffic Act (NRTA) Act No.93 of 1996 aims to provide for road traffic matters which shall apply uniformly throughout the Republic and for matters connected therewith: these refer to registration and licensing of motor vehicles, fitness of drivers, and fitness of vehicles. The implementation of the policy shall take into cognisance the provision of national road traffic regulations.

The NATMAP 2050 builds on the foundation of the government's Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), and it's Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF 2014– 2019). The MTSF is structured around 14 priority outcomes that cover the focus areas identified in the NDP 2030 (refer to Figure 1-1). Of the 14 priority outcomes identified by the MTSF, the DoT is champion to 4 (refer to highlighted outcomes in Figure 1-1). The achievement of these shared objectives requires effective coordination within and cooperation between the various government spheres and relevant private sector and civil society partners

3.2 Academic Literature on Scholar Transport

It is important to note that transport issues in South Africa have been an important area of academic study, and that the published works available indicate that these studies have sometimes led to and/or informed the development of transport policy, including learner transport. This section, outlines some of the most important contributions in local thought on learner transport. Most of the available scholarly literature on scholar transport in South Africa refers to the period before introduction of the National Learner Transport Policy (2015).

A Historical scoping of the critical issues of learner transport in South Africa

Back in 1999, the National Department of Transport (NDoT) released its policy strategy document, *Moving South Africa: The Action Agenda*, in an effort to consolidate the national goals of transportation development and to clearly define the responsibilities of provincial governments and the relationship between the public and private sector. Additionally, *Moving South Africa* (MSA) has identified the challenges facing the development of South Africa's transportation system and has highlighted the areas of greatest concern. Significantly, the document also recognises the impact that transportation has on development and outlines the specific needs of the poorest and most vulnerable members of society.

Safety and Transport

Early in 2000s, Rogan (2006) had already established that the journey to school for a significant number of South African learners is characterised by long travel times, unsafe modes of travel and exposure to weather and traffic related dangers. Rogan's (2006) review of the literature suggested that poor access to schools impedes the accumulation of human capital and the right to a basic education. The research, conducted in a peri-urban municipal district near Durban, KwaZulu-Natal suggested that, if "scaled up", a similar intervention could potentially improve travel times, reduce excessive walking distances, improve the safety of travel to schools and curb the rates of absenteeism in the nation's schools. The study also uncovered several impediments to the implementation of such an intervention within the policy environment at the time.

Lang et al. (2011) have done research looking at the safety of the child as a pedestrian when travelling to and from school. It appears parents are more concerned for their children's safety than the negative effects of increased motor vehicle use. As mentioned, distance is found to be the largest influence on modal choice to school. Lang et al.'s (ibid) studies reveal that parents who drive their children to school are mostly concerned about their child's road safety and time constraints. Urban form gives preference to motor vehicles instead of the pedestrian and a motorist believes they have preference over the pedestrian (Lang et al. ibid). In Cape Town, road traffic accidents are a monumental problem and in 2004 it was recorded that 60% of road accident fatalities were pedestrians, many of whom were children. The most vulnerable children are learners from lower and middle income areas travelling far distances to school (Behrens et al. 2007). Transport safety is interlaced with general issues of safety and security.

Holtmann and Jansen van Vuuren (2007) believe that road safety is rooted in criminal activity in South Africa. Crime affects mobility and as one has to be mobile, it makes one vulnerable. The presence of alcohol and guns make the biggest contribution to criminality and increase fear and perceptions of safety, which then increases the use of guns in society. Transport safety is affected by those consuming alcohol while driving and those that keep guns on themselves. Road safety is further influenced by unroadworthy vehicles, unlicensed drivers and corruption. Unsafe transport systems affect the most vulnerable (such as children) and often constrain their mobility and participation in activities. In the South African city the majority of people travel far distances using public transport. So if the system does not provide protection it is up to individuals to protect themselves (Holtmann and Jansen van Vuuren 2007).

The way in which public transport is designed and managed will influence safety. In some cases the lack of transport in mostly low income areas often leads to exposure to crime. Different modes of transport offer different risks. For example, train stops can be dangerous when there are often few people around, buses can be overloaded and unroadworthy, and passengers can be exposed to what is known as taxi violence in South African cities (Holtmann and Jansen van Vuuren 2007). Environmental design can be used for crime prevention by reducing the cause and opportunity for crime. Crime patterns experienced in poorer areas, in suburbs and in the inner city, are all different and therefore environmental designs need to be made accordingly.

Territoriality gives community a sense of ownership of a space. Spaces should ensure pedestrians can coordinate themselves from a given location, which will increase their perception of safety. Open spaces that are left vacant attract criminal activity. It is also better to have a number of smaller open spaces along a route than only one open space along the route, as it increases visibility over a further distance (CSIR 2005). Designing on a human scale is safer and more child-friendly. All principles should be used together to have a greater effect on reducing crime and increase youth mobility (CSIR 2005).

Although the built environment alone cannot be relied on to offer security, these principles should be used when considering the safety of learners travelling between home and school. To improve the perception of road safety in order to encourage parents to allow their children to walk to school, besides built form, Lang et al. (ibid) suggests having environmental campaigns highlighting the negative effects of driving learners to school and the positive affects walking can have on children.

Rogan (2006) argued that despite its establishment, transport continues to be one of the largest components of the cost of education and represents a serious obstacle to accessing a basic education. The following are the main factors: (1) The cost of transport, (2) safety and (3) the time spent commuting. The cost of transport deserves special attention because of the specific interest in this area for this evaluation.

The Cost of Transport

The cost of learner transport can be measured in terms of both the amount of money spent on commuting to school and as the amount of time spent travelling each day. In 2003, it was estimated that transport to school in South Africa makes up about 38% of the total cost of education and roughly 13% of household incomes (Ramadiro, 2003:3). Centre for Applied Legal Studies (2003:5) argued that access costs to education (transport costs, school fees, uniforms and textbooks) are extremely high and often force the nation's poorest households to choose between educating their children and meeting their basic needs. Furthermore, since the costs of education are disproportionately high for poorer families, rates of absenteeism from school are higher for poorer households. Approximately 45.7% of the survey participants in urban and peri-urban schools listed "unreliable transport" as the primary reason for not attending school regularly (Gautrans, 2003:26). Indeed, Pillay (2003:17) confirmed that the cost of learner transport is a problem that affects both rural and urban households. The argument can, therefore, be made that the cost of transport to school in South Africa is prohibitively expensive.

The Effect of the cost of transport

An obvious result of high transport costs for many learners is the choice between walking long distances and staying at home. Many households are simply unable to pay the necessary transport costs to send their children to school. According to a 2002 Statistics South Africa report, 90% of rural learners are forced to walk to the nearest school (Stats SA, 2002: 105). Nationwide, the 2003 travel survey conducted by Statistics South Africa estimates that over 560,000 learners in South Africa spend more than two hours commuting between home and school each day (Naidu and Khumalo, 2005: 5). Human Rights Watch observes that the distances walked by rural or farm school students are sometimes as far as 30 kilometres each way (HRW, 2004: 13). Naturally, walking such distances has adverse effects on the quality and availability of a basic education. According to more than one report,

the cost and accessibility of transport directly affect school absenteeism, the ability to do school work and the physical safety and well-being of those who choose to walk to school (HRW, 2004: 15; HSRC, 2005: 47; V3 Consulting, 1999: 42).

The conclusion is that long distances that learners walk to school and the dangers that they face along the way in terms of crime, violence, over-flowing rivers and traffic accidents (See Naidu and Khumalo, 2005: 5). Thus, the existing problem is that transport costs for low- income learners in South Africa are high in monetary terms, safety and in terms of the time spent commuting. The result is a strain on poorer households and a challenge to the government's goal of "a quality basic education for all." (Rogan 2006:7-8).

In 2007, Behrens et al. reviewed scholar transport policies and strategies in other parts of the world that have potential to be implemented in Cape Town because they are relatively low cost, do not rely too heavily on public sector expertise and facilitation or funding54. Behrens et al. (ibid) believe that there will be greater prospects for the success of school travel planning in municipalities with higher budgets and a high dependence on cars. In a few countries, school travel plans have been developed as a means to improve road safety, reduce traffic congestion and encourage learners to walk or cycle to school.

Besides the work of Behrens who is associated with the University of Cape Town's Centre for Transport Studies, there is very little research done on learner transport in South Africa and may present a bias to learner transport in Cape Town because the city is a particular focus of Behrens' research. This therefore highlights a gap in research but also presents an opportunity for further possible study to be done. It is also important to note that at the time, Behrens' research revealed that there are a few key trends in learner mobility that match those experienced worldwide.

Parents of learners in Cape Town recognise that schools that were previously only for the "advantaged" offer a greater level of education and therefore although they live far away from these schools, they choose to send their children there. The transport costs are substantially high for those with lower incomes and therefore significant sacrifices are made by many families. Learners that travel far distances to schools were found to use a mix of transport modes throughout the city. Bicycles are the least preferred method of transport and reflect dangers of Cape Town roads with high average traffic speeds. A study carried out by Lemon and Battersby-Lennard (2010) revealed that learners travelling far distances often do not travel for more than an hour in total and most learner travel occurs within peak periods. Travel in the morning occurs with peak traffic (7am-8am) and in the afternoon its spread between 12h00 and 17h00 because of different grades finishing school at different times. Older learners are found to travel longer distances and leave for school earlier in the morning (Behrens et al. 2007).

The most significant trend found by Behrens (2004) is that learners from lower to middle income areas are far more reliant on walking as the primary mode of travel to and from school, compared to middle to upper income areas that increasingly reliant on the automobile. As schools that were previously labelled as being for "whites only" were allowed to be attended by anyone, school travel distances

[54] In: Kay, Nina (2013) RSA, 2010. **Mobilising Youth: A study of School Learner Mobility in Claremont, Cape Town**. UCT: Cape Town.

have increased substantially for learners from low to middle incomes areas. Another key trend is that as learners from low and middle income areas become older, their use of public transport increases, pointing out that schools are becoming increasingly further from home. Learners from middle to high income areas are mostly being driven to school (Behrens 2004).

Although measures were taken after apartheid to loosen residential and educational segregation, segregation levels still remain high. Qualitative studies on integration between learners done by Lemon and Battersby-Lennard (2010) reveal that friendships are more strongly linked to schools than areas of residence and friendship choice is generally found to be determined by socio-economic status of home areas. Social integration and true equal access to education cannot be achieved even if there is a sufficient transport system that allowed all learners to get to a school of their choosing because of substantially high school fees for schools that have the highest levels of education. Lemon and Battersby- Lennard (ibid) suggest that incentives could be used to encourage schools to share human and physical resources.

Table 9. 2016/17 Provincial Experiences with Learner Transport Services[55]

PROVINCE	Safety & Security Issues	Stakeholders: Parents Learners & Operators	Schools	Provincial Responses
Eastern Cape	Accidents due to lack of oversight, operator negligence; and vehicle roadworthiness; Hotspots: former Transkei and parts of Port Elizabeth	Protests, school shutdown, some violence; EC Taxi & Bus Chamber court case of R19m & R1.4bn; Corruption: same no. of learners, but double cost in 3 yrs. R1.9m for 6 learners.	Incomplete/Incorrect applications; No delivery on promises in response to requests	No action on tender fraud; Policing: strict compliance enforced re: operator vehicles; Second biggest province and highest allocation & expenditure
Free State				Transports under 20,000 learners with R40 million budget
Gauteng	Accident. Negligence & recklessness; Many vehicles not roadworthy	School shutdown by parents; Learners left behind by transport		Engagements with Siyabuselela Learner Transport Association of Cosmo City, Lanseria Learner Transport Association; Big demand, relatively small expenditure. Budget deficit obstacle.

[55] *Ibid*

KwaZulu-Natal	Accidents	Protests, some violence; Government taken to court |#LongWalkToSchool	Nquthu schools; Lack of policy understanding by schools	Greatest demand, but least expenditure. Budget deficit hindrance
Limpopo	Lack of scholar transport; Long distance walking	Voice out of dissatisfaction through EXCO outreach programme; Insufficient scholar transport operators		Application for operator permits done by Limpopo Provincial Regulatory Entity; Operating license lasts 90 days; SPENDING: Average demand compared to other rural provinces, 6,500 learners not covered. No applications for additional funding.
Mpumalanga	Accident between provincial boundaries; Long distance walking	Protests by parents, SANTACO; Bus service halted	Principals requesting intervention	Tenders: Postponement of meetings with suppliers; Commission of enquiry established
Northern Cape	Use of unroadworthy vehicles prone to breakdowns	Protest action for unsafe cars; Government taken to court #LongWalkToSchool	Consult with DBE for cause of late coming; Principal requests additional transport	Tenders: investigation launched Stricter rules for criteria of qualifying learners
North West	Walk +8km to school; Walk through crime-rife areas and veld	Protest action by +1000 learners in Blydeville; Disparities in operator criteria and payments	Interventions asked by school principal	Tenders: investigation launched; Compulsory vehicle testing & thorough permit inspection of operators; Additional funding requested, provided by Treasury
Western Cape	Unruly behaviour & operators exceed carrying capacities: train-taxi Blackheath crash (2010); Poor maintenance of vehicles; Long distance walking	Gugulethu consultation with operators	Schools have approached Department	Tenders: strict scrutiny of proposals/bids; Policing to ensure valid operating licenses;

3.3 Summary of international case studies of learner transport

Columbia

Bogotá is well known for its TOD BRT system named the TransMilenio which was modelled on Curitiba's BRT system. It was initiated in 1998 under Peñalosa, the mayor at the time, who saw a BRT system to be cheaper and more efficient than subways (Berney 2011). Reshaping the urban form of Bogotá was not the aim of the TransMilenio but rather ensuring quick and affordable access for poorer communities (Cevero 2013). At the time there was also a desperate need for the city to move away from the informal and unsafe bus services it had (Montezuma 2005). The TransMilenio is considered a sustainable transport system. It is a mass transit system with corridors and feeder routes and since the system was introduced, demand for its service increased from 14 000 passengers per day in 2000 to 1.7 billion in 2011 (Hidaldo et al. 2011).

Travel time and costs involved in operations have had the greatest impact in terms of saving costs for Bogotá. According to Hidaldo et al. (2011:134), "52% of the estimated benefits come from travel time savings for transit users, 37% from savings on the operation of traditional buses removed from service following the implementation of Trans-Milenio, and 8% come from air pollution and traffic crashes savings." Employment has increased since the implementation of the system even though traditional buses are no longer in service. The system carries 45 000 passengers per direction per hour (Cervero 2013).

The transport system is well integrated with land uses. Higher density development has resulted due to the presence of the TransMilenio and areas on the periphery that have access to it have grown compared to those that do not have access. Not specifically a learner transport intervention, but broadly pro-poor.

United States of America (USA)

Established in 1939, the programme transports about 25 million students from grades K - 12, using nearly 500,000 school buses, mostly painted in yellow for conspicuousness. The services are mostly managed at district levels and are governed by two forms of regulations - federal (national) policies and state (provincial) policies. According to the study, national policies focus on border strategic issues regarding student safety, requirements and guidelines on specifications for school bus manufacturers and operators. The programme also includes transporting students with disabilities and the homeless. State level regulations deal with operational aspects such as routing, contracting and determining of distance thresholds (Shiess & Burgoyne-Allen, 2017).

Three models of the transport service are provided, *vis*, district-owned yellow bus services, contracted yellow bus services (privately owned) and public transit service. About two-thirds of the school transport services are ***district-owned***. In this model, the districts buy their own buses, plan routes, undertake vehicle maintenance, hire, train bus drivers and manage the running of the service. Students are generally selected based on state policy eligibility criteria, based on distance thresholds.

Exceptions relate to specific eligibility and vary from districts to districts based on unique requirements of each district, such as the occurrence of hazardous installations like railways near schools or lack of sidewalks posing a safety **risk**. In such cases, shorter distances were included. *Contracted school* buses were also operated, and about one-third of the buses are privately owned and managed by the service providers. Here the contractor buys their own buses (same standards as district buses), manage fleets and human capital. The district controls the operational details, such as routing, and technical requirements that must be met. The third model - the *public transit model* is said to be rather unpopular and used only in larger urban districts with a robust transit system. Here, students use existing public transits to school at fully or partially subsidised cost. No special routing is done unless the school is the existing destination. In few districts, combinations of models are also used (Shiess & Burgoyne-Allen, 2017).

The study found that districts are finding it increasingly difficult to provide efficient services because of increasing costs and insufficient state funding, coupled with an increasingly complex educational systems which required students to go to other schools further from where they reside. The inadequacy of state funding forces districts to divert funds allocated for other services, which sometimes is noted to be problematic as it results in quality services being compromised. Also, federal and state regulations on some issues are incongruent, hindering improvement strategies. Districts were also noted to have failed to adopt at least basic technologies to improve data collection and enhance operational efficiency (Shiess & Burgoyne-Allen, 2017).

The study recommends investment in robust data and technological systems, the creation of funding incentives for efficiency, and flexibility in the school transport system design that is context-dependent, taking into account what works in urban districts versus rural school districts.

Indonesia (Malang City)

The Malang City provides the school bus as an alternative mode of transport to ferry students to and from school. The students don't pay for the rides. The city provides seven buses to serve the five districts in Malang, one of which is on standby. The buses follow a designated route to the schools. The routes followed are designated per bus number (between number 1 and 6). *(Hariyani, 2017).*

The study was carried out to evaluate the level of service of the bus service in Malang City. The primary survey was conducted by researching and recording the condition of school bus system level of service. Importance Performance Analysis (IPA) was used to determine the factors that influence the system's level and performance. Importance Performance Analysis (IPA) is used to analyse the performance of school bus's services at all levels. The attributes that were examined were measured using a Likert scale. The secondary survey was conducted by analysing the literature relevant to the issues relating to service. A sample was calculated using Slovin's formula and distributed among the five districts. The relationship between the level of interest and the performance perceived by the customer was mapped and placed in 4 relevant quadrants. Twenty-two attributes relating to the level of satisfaction and level of importance were used and the attribute with the highest score, indicating what students perceive to be the most important was noted. The IPA, degree of suitability, mean and range were calculated, mapped on a Cartesian Diagram and interpreted. (*Hariyani, 2017)*.

Findings / conclusions /challenges

The study showed that fewer students used school buses than expected due to the following reasons:

- Not all students were interested in using the bus system
- Malang City has a standby bus for any unseen eventuality
- School bus provision is expected to reduce the use of vehicles by students of elementary, junior high school or senior high school
- Public transport drivers refused to acknowledge the school bus (Hariyani 2017).

Brazil

The inadequate access to education which is a constitutional right for all citizens of Brazil is noted to be more severe in the rural areas where children walk long distances to school due to lack of public transport, and inability to pay for private transport (Carvalho & Yamashita, 2016). This resulted in children in rural areas dropping out of school after few years (Vasconcellos, 1997). This is also attributed to the shortage of schools, low level of services and poor quality of educational infrastructure. School transportation was then introduced to address the lack of access to education, especially among historically ignored rural areas in Brazils immensely diverse society (Carvalho, et al, 2010). The service is defined as "the conveyance of students from their home in order to enable them to attend a teaching facility"(Carvalho et al., 2010, p. 4).

As Carvalho et al (2010) noted, more than 70% of school transport users in the country are rural dwellers shared between federal, state, local and privately operated schools. These riders consist of 1679 Federal, 1966175 State, 2890 118 local government and 39 746 private school students, making a total of 4, 897 718. In urban areas, students in the programme consist of 8 296 Federal, 1 003 974 State, 906 107 Local government schools, making a total of 1.982 854 students.

Free school transport is viewed to be Brazilian government's way of providing sustained access to schools among rural communities. However, studies on the programme reported key issues associated with the effectiveness and efficiency of the planning and implementation of the project. From a policy perspective, the inadequacy of a streamlined government policy to appropriately deal specifically with school transportation was highlighted as a colossal hindrance to implementation (Carvalho & Yamashita, 2016). Other issues include lengthy routes, overcrowding, dilapidated or old vehicles, and inadequate vehicles. Improper planning of routes resulted in lengthy trips, where some rides were about 140km. About 30% of routes surveyed were more than 50km. It was also reported that more than 32% of routes have a journey time of between 60 -90 minutes, while about 13% of routes require a journey time of more than 2 hours. The lengthy routes, coupled with poorly maintained vehicles, overcrowding, and poor road conditions caused severe discomfort to students who use the transport service. Most students also have to walk long distances to access the school bus. As a result, they arrive at school exhausted which affects their concentration and performance when learning (Carvalho et al., 2010).

More than 90% of rural roads were noted to be unpaved, or gravel roads. Inappropriate vehicles were reported to be used in transporting students. Vehicles were in what was described as "precarious" conditions. According to a study cited, by Carvalho et al (2010, 2016), data from 2200 municipalities revealed that on average, vehicles used for school transportation were more than 15 years old, while a few others were more than 70 years old. More than 22% of School transport consist of heavy-duty trucks, pick up tracks canoes and motorcycles, mostly due to deplorable nature of roads, and improper planning.

Conclusions and recommendations

Most of the studies on Brazil's implementation of school transportation have a convergence of the inadequacy of planning and control of the programme implementation. This resulted in operators finding their own mechanisms of coping with the problem. Some operators have taken the planning and implementation into their own hands, as a coping mechanism for government failure to properly manage the implementation process, leading to disorganised and inefficient quality of service delivery which compromises safety and comfort for students. Also mentioned as a hindrance was the lack of political will in support of the development of the school transport sector, from relevant government sectors.

Recommendations for improvement include series of actions consisting of adequate legislation, best practice operating manuals, and continuous planning. Government authorities, including municipal officials, need to gain an understanding of the school transport system and its operation, before drawing up regulations and routes. To this end, a greater understanding of different aspects of the service is required. An ideal model of the future of the service needs to be devised by all role players. This should be underlined by a proper diagnosis of the key problems in localised settings, taking into consideration, principles and values enshrined in the constitution for school transportation and the general rights of citizens. Operating manuals should include strategies on how the service should operate in rural areas, provide information on legal procedures for procurement of goods, including guidelines for the bidding process.

For this evaluation, similar issues in rural settings such as road conditions, vehicles types and their impact on the operational efficiency of the service may need to be tested. Specific issues such as road conditions in relation to types of vehicles and appropriateness may require critical attention and an impact analysis of the model and its objectives.

China

School transport in China is defined as a vehicle that carries a minimum of 5 children and their custodial teachers to and from kindergartens, primary and secondary schools and other educational institutions.(Li, Zhang, Guo, & Jiang, 2012, p. 1). The school bus system was acknowledged to have evolved over the years from a 25 seater horse-driven wagon to modern dedicated and specially designed buses in the form of vans, and long buses. These school buses are also painted in easily identifiable, uniform colour.

Findings of the study

Studies on the Chinese school transport focus on the issues around safety and ways to improve safety and reduce accidents. The school bus system came under severe scrutiny after several fatal accidents were recorded in many regions (Deng & Kurgan, 2012). These called for the need to find a solution to all kinds of school transport injuries, campus security, and school bus traffic safety. A synthesised study that aggregated several school transport cases in China aimed at finding common reasons or causes underlying such cases looked into key statistics of rates of occurrence in provinces and the reasons for such cases as well as possible solutions. This was based on international best practices in countries with already established school transport systems.

According to statistics reported, between the years of the study, hundreds of children died, with an average of 2 fatalities per accident to as much as 21 deaths in some cases. Hundreds more sustained injuries in each accident. The nature of the crashes ranged from bus collusions, roll overs and children suffocating as a result of neglect in buses, with temperatures as high as 32^{o}C. The analysis of 35 cases revealed that 6 of the cases involved drivers without qualifications, 6 incidents of traffic accidents, 7 cases of illegal school buses, 10 cases of the carelessness of teachers, and 13 cases of buss overloading (Li et al., 2012).

Conclusions and recommendations for programme improvement

Solutions sort were based on an analysis of best practices and bus specifications and standards from the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, United Kingdom and Australia. Recommendations include improving on bus design to include safety features, improving equipment and to reduce vehicle deficiencies as well as the strengthening of supervision and management systems. Other measures included rigorous enforcement of safety standards and improving legislative instruments such as manuals to regulate and guide the operations (Li et al., 2012). In another study, the World Bank also confirmed that appropriate school bus designs and regular maintenance, accredited driver training and qualifications, regular raining effective regulatory framework are some of the fundamental best practice, towards ensuring school bus safety (Deng & Kurgan, 2012).

Deng and Kurgan (2012 recommended that management systems move towards **a** unified approach, where a national level agency leads and is supported by relevant technical, regulatory and law enforcement institutions. The responsibilities of each of these institutions should be clearly defined. Bus designs should be regulated, registered, well maintained and monitored, in addition to physical inspection. Also, the authors recommended that local police should be engaged to enforce school zone traffic management and inspection of safety systems. National campaigns on school transport safety should be used to create awareness, coupled with **an** adoption of new safety regulations to enforce action on the safety of the school transport system.

Lastly, Bao & Jin (2012) also in another study, concluded that the rampant school bus accidents, especially in primary and secondary schools in rural areas, were due to insufficient government financial investment, unsound or inadequate supervision, improper routing, and weak safety consciousness among key role players including principals and parents. To address these problems, the study recommended a commitment to government funding and investment at all levels, a legislation that is clear about the responsibilities of each role player, proper coordination, and

communication among institutional structures. The regulation of operations, especially in rural areas, was encouraged, to be accompanied by supervision of blind spot s areas, and creation of safety awareness among school bus operators, principals, parents and the general public. (Bao & Jin, 2012).

The case of China presents a more vivid account of what could happen if safety measures are not fully incorporated into the planning and implementation of large-scale programmes of school transport. For this evaluation, it is important to tease out what safety practices are put in place in South Africa, what deficiencies might be present and how best to resolve them, if any, based on some of the best practices presented in these international examples.

Greece

Kotoula et al (2017) , in describing school transport in Greece, adopted the definition of the service as provided by Morfoulaki et al (2015), as the transfer of students to and from school, school events and activities, undertaken by students themselves through walking and cycling, by parents, family members, caregivers or organised collectively. An overview of the school transport programme in Greece shows that 12 000 itineraries are carried out per day using public transport which occurs twice a day and serves 215 000 public school students whose ages range from 6 to 18. About 7 000 private contracts, whose cost is estimated at 150,000,000€ are entered into every year. Public primary and secondary schools are entitled to free transfer from their residents to school units and vice versa. If the distance from the residence to the school unit is over 1.2 km for primary school students, over 2.5 km for high school students aged 12-15 and over 4.0 km for high school students aged 16-18. Central regions sign public service contracts with private companies in order to serve primary school students living in a distance over 1.2 km from their school unit (Kotoula et al., 2017).

The corresponding distances for high school students aged 12-15 and 16-18 are 3.0 km and 5.0 km respectively. The school transportation service is either provided for by existing transport and or by Central Region (CR) owned vehicles. The CR vehicles are paid for by the government at a predetermined formula. Parents can transport their children and get compensated for the distance and get an allowance of 85€ if they move closer to school **.** This cost translates to 0.35€ per kilometer or 1500 per student per year. Directors confirm that both the student who qualify for distances travelled and transmit all the relevant details to the Region. Buses are labeled and a regulatory speed limit exists. (Kotoula et al, 2017).

The school transport process coordination is done by the directors of school units, central regions, and municipalities. These directors confirm eligible students for the free transport, having verified the distances between the residence and schools of the applicants. The confirmed list is then published on the special student's bulletin. The appropriateness of vehicles is certified at regional levels and in accordance with safety standards. This is followed by route planning. Mode of transport to be used on each route is then identified and certified together with t**he** number of students to be transported by that vehicle.

For safety purposes, all buses were required to place special signs in the front of the buses to indicate the name of the school, route number and operating number. At the back of the vehicle, signs were to include “caution, school bus. Continual stopping”, in addition to the speed limit sign of 60km/h (Kotoula et al., 2017, p. 5).

Findings, conclusions and recommendations

The findings of the study reported some major barriers and problems with implementation. One of them regards the mathematical formula used in the calculation of the cost of transport, the formula was reported to be based on data from 1998 and was never reviewed until 2013, making it outdated. As a result, bidding processes were declared barren and operators were rather engaged in negotiating costs which resulted further in operating costs being higher than departmental budgets. By reviewing the formulae and rationalising the system, operating costs were noted to be about 60% lower. This, however, did not go well with operators, as they considered the new cost unviable. This resulted in the abandonment of the school transport services in most areas. In some cases, parents were made to bear the additional cost.

Another issue pointed out is the lack of public transport systems in most urban and peri-urban areas in some regions. Also, these regions do not own the appropriate vehicles for school transport services. The public was consulted and then engaged, and the system/process was considered complicated, costly, time-consuming and rather ineffective.

The benchmarking process revealed that Greece's programme follows similar models like many of the comparative countries. The use of a mixture of conspicuous colour to distinguish the model and other mixed models were common, while the use of signs as additional safety measures were commensurate with international examples. Distance from school was also the popular criteria for eligibility. The criteria, however, has not yet incorporated the distance covered on foot from home to the bus pick-up spots. Walking and other transport modes such as cycling were not yet included in the programme priorities.

For improvement, the use of special labelling and colour for all buses was recommended for easy control. The use of public transports as alternatives in some areas was recommended but had to be done with strict guidelines and standards so as to satisfy the needs and requirements of students. Drivers were to receive special training on how to handle students, using new technology in the buses, and responding to emergency incidents. Minimum specifications for buses were recommended, to include safety equipment and technology.

Furthermore, it was recommended that procedures include clarification and allocation of responsibilities in each district, allocation of attendants to all bus routes, and promotion of alternative transport. The study concluded that the improvement of the regulatory framework in Greece, like in many other countries, will lead to an alleviation of complications experienced in operating school transport, which will ensure access to education.

Kenya

A study on learner transport made a distinction between two kinds of school transportation in Kenya. This includes the occasional "point to point" transportation model, which involves transporting students to specific activities, and regular scheduled and fixed routes. The objectives of the study were to assess the status quo of the school transport programme with a special focus on safety issues, and requisite policy dimensions to ensure safety. This Kenyan model consists of both school active

transport, including walking and cycling, as well as vehicular transport, which consists of specially designed school buses. Private travel to school involves parents driving their children to school. The provision of free or subsidised school transport in Kenya is known not to be mandatory. There are, however, a number of legislative instruments that speak to the safety of school transport operations in Kenya.

As the study noted, the inadequacy of safety guidelines and manuals remains a challenge for school in Kenya, transportation because they are outdated. High rates of accidents involving pedestrians of which about 90% of fatalities are school children portray a dire situation of school transport safety.

Recommendations for improvement

Recommendations for improvements include a review of the outdated school safety manual to make it relevant and aligned to the current situation in Kenya. A number of guidelines and operating manuals were also proposed. These included learner pedestrian safety guidelines, which should create awareness on how learners should conduct themselves on the road and crossings. The roles of older learners in assisting younger ones were also highlighted. Others included safety manuals on public transports, two wheeled and three wheeled motorcycles, and operating manuals for schools with school transport vehicles. School operated transport services were to be comprehensively insured and regularly maintained. Buses were fitted with seat belts and all necessary safety equipment, including first aid kits. Buses also were also to display names and addresses of schools they serve - they were not allowed to have advertisements such as cigarette and alcohol. Driver and driver assistants are to have adequate qualifications and special certifications or permits and for transporting schoolchildren. Operations are to include keeping school logs where drivers' record school trip details at the gates. Owners or operators are to ensure that their employee drivers are suitable and adequately qualified to conduct school transport.

3.4 Summary of Insights and findings from the Literature Review

Policy and definitional Issues

Defining and conceptualising Learner transport

The definitions of school transport as portrayed in the literature covers both active forms of transport which include walking, cycling and in some cases boat riding and non-active modes, covering vehicular and rail transportation. Vehicular transports includes private (parent /guardian driven) cars, organised school transportation and use of public transport systems. A common understanding is that school transport is to an educational facility and back home. In some cases the definitions include only the transportation of the students, but in China, it includes the responsible teachers. For this evaluation of the LTP, given that the programme focusses only on organised vehicular transport to and from schools, all other forms of transport such as walking, cycling may not be intensively discussed. A conceptual derivation and location of school transport in the broader scheme of transport as an alternative to accessing education is diagrammatically presented in appendix 1. In the South African

LTP, the understanding of scholar transport shall be construed to be the transportation of children from grade R to 12 to educational institutions from home or a pickup points and back, as per the LTP description. This is similar to definitions in the international literature, as seen in Brazil and China. Also, the use of the word: scholar, learner, and student appears to have the same meaning in the local literature as different authors have used them interchangeably.

3.4.2 Planning and design aspects

3.4. 2.1 Description of Service Models:

From the literature, key distinct service models were identified as being implemented in various - countries. The disjuncture between the models pivots on the levels of ownership and management relationship government has with the service provision. These include:

1) Outright Government Ownership
2) Government Lease
3) Public Private Sector Partnerships (Turn-Key Model)
4) Full Outsourcing
5) Transit (Metro-Transit) Model
6) Hybrid Models.

Table 10. Learner Transport Model Descriptions

Model Description	Main Characteristics /Features/Variables
1 Outright \Full Government Ownership Model This model consists of full government ownership and operation of the school transport services. Here, Government buys the buses used and may hire drivers to drive the buses. The planning, operation and managing all aspects of the service is undertaken by the state. An example of this is in the USA (Shiess & Burgoyne-Allen, 2017), and China (Li, Zhang, Guo, & Jiang, 2012)., where school transport services are fully offered by the state. All capital costs and operational costs are borne by government. Planning and day to day management of the service may lie with, school districts or regions (provinces).	• Buses are usually branded in one colour through the country or on state (provincial) basis for conspicuousness • Buses are custom-made (with specifications given by government)- and equipped with special safety and tracking features (as seen in USA and China Examples) • Bus drivers are on government payroll, as school staff • Cost of operation, including maintenance is borne by the state • Different capacity buses may be used, based on needs, but with same branding. • Observed to be used mostly in developed countries, such as USA, Canada, Japan and Australia (Li et al., 2012)

Model Description	Main Characteristics /Features/Variables
2 Government Lease Model This model is similar to Model 1 above. The point of departure lies in the fact that government does not own the buses but rather lease them from buss companies for as long as needed or as agreed. The operations, in terms or planning, routing are undertaken by the state departments.	• Lower Capital Costs • Buses may be Branded or not, depending on detail of leasing agreement • Operation costs is borne by government, including drivers • Servicing and maintenance costs are still borne by the state or are shared, based on the terms of the lease or servicing may be undertaken by the bus companies.
4. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) Models /Turn-Key models This models may involve special agreements between government and private sector, where private investors acquire the buses and operate the service for a period of time and then hand it over to government. Due to high initial capital costs, private investors may design the service model, and run it for an agreed period, taking the profits made on the operations within the period. The state pays or subsidises the cost of transporting learners, but in a package as per the agreement. The routing, and contracting of drivers, cost of maintenance are all borne by the investor company. However, monitoring and need identification and data for planning may still be provided by the school districts. An Example of this model is seen in South Africa, in Mpumalanga Province[56].	• Set up capital and operational costs are borne by the investor/ service provider. • Ownership of buses lies in the hands of few investors who government may choose to partner with • Government inherits a tested model therefore may ensure higher sustainability.
5. Outsourcing/Contracting model The outsourcing model is where government identifies the needs for learner transport, makes funding available and then contract private service providers to transport learners to school. The service is delivered as per the contract terms with each service provider. This is mainly based on localised needs in each school and district. The Service providers acquire their own transports (buy or lease), but meeting agreed sets of specifications and road worthiness as pre-decided by government. Service	• The Ownership of the buses or vehicles (Capital Cost) lies in the hands of the individual owners • Regular maintenance and servicing costs are borne by the service operators. • The operational panning is done by government • Transports are diverse but largely within restricted government requirements

[56] Based on data obtained (interviews) with provincial officials in Public Works and Service providers.

Model Description	Main Characteristics /Features/Variables
providers who satisfy the requirements are contracted. Usually this is done through competitive bidding processes or other government regulated procurement processes. The Outsourcing model is seen in the case of Brazil (Carvalho et al., 2010) and also as applied in most of South Africa's provinces, with the exception of Mpumalanga Province.	• No uniform branding is done. Buses may be branded as per the service providers business brand • Creates localised employment and business opportunities.
6. Transit (Metro Transit) Model Transit models operate on existing transport systems where learners use the existing pubic transport systems to school at subsidised costs. This could be fully or partially subsidised. Learners are given tokens or tickets to subsidise daily commenting to school. Mostly applies to already well established transport systems, especially within urban and metropolitan areas and may include train or bus rides. This is seen similar to the Trans Milenio System Operated in Bogota, in Colombia (Berney 2011). USA also operates public transit services in some districts (Shiess & Burgoyne-Allen, 2017).	• This does not require special capital costs from government other than the existing public transport system/infrastructure • No dedicated routing is done for learner transportation. Learners are dropped at the nearest spots to theirs schools • Depends on availability of suitable transport infrastructure • Service Is not exclusive to learner passengers only
6 Hybrid models This may include any number of combination of the above models within one particular country. While some models are only operated in urban areas where here is sufficient infrastructure, rural settings mays see outsourcing of servicing providers to provide learner transport.	• Operated on discretion and as per existing conditions and choices. • Easily adjustable to urban rural needs • Depends on availability of suitable and efficient public transport infrastructure

Funding models

From the international literature, learner transport funding models seem to be dependent on the type of service model and packaging. While in some cases, government funds the services fully, in other cases it is shared between government and the private sector service providers. Government funding models for learner transport then follow the prescribed national funding models legislated in the country.

In South Africa, this includes funding models such as ***Equitable Share Funding*** provided to provinces to allocate as per their need priorities. It is noted that, by discretionary allocating funds to programmes as per provincial needs and priorities, there is not guarantee that any particular programme will always be funded. As priorities change, so is the funding allocation per year. An alternative to this is the ***Conditional Grant Funding*** model, where funds are specifically allocated by National Treasury for specific programmes and can only be used for such dedicated programmes for which they are allocated. While this may ensure certainty in funding for specific programmes, failure to use any part of such funds results in returning the unused portions back to national treasury coffers for reallocation in the subsequent financial years.

Additional Insights

A special focus on the safety of transport and design considerations

A common theme that appears in the literature for all the school transport is safety. This is not limited to only vehicular transport, as some authors also stress the "urgent" need to ensure that walking and cycling are also safe and pleasant for learners. It is highlighted that social policies that decrease distances to school could have a large impact on road traffic injuries, air pollution, and physical activity levels (Tetali, et al., 2016, p. 6)." Kotoula, et al. (2017) assert that, if an appropriate transport system is not in place, the right to education is negated as children, particularly those from lower-income households or living in remote areas with no access to public transportation services, will not be able to access the school system. Investigating the wider concept of school transportation, it can further be claimed that for a society, it is one of the most crucial services provided to the public. This is because it substantially ensures that children have access to school. On the other hand, an inefficient provision of it may cause a lot of problems to the student's learning process. Similarly, for a government, it is considered as one of the constitutional mandates to combine quality services with a population's needs and requirements (Viscusi et al., 1997 in Kotoula, et al. (2017).

In the case of the international examples, safety parameters include the policy framework, its enforcement and also the actual design of the transport vehicles. In well-established transport systems such as in the US and other advanced systems, buses have been specially designed with safety considerations embedded in the very structure of the skeletal body and in the questioning compartmentalisations of the vehicles. Other safety factors include monitoring and enforcing traffic regulations. In the case of China, the neglect of regulations led to many accidents, most of which were attributed to overloading, and use of unqualified drivers and vehicles. This points to the crucial function role players in the programme. Most developing nations are learning from the design of safety features from the examples of well-established school transport systems in other countries. One of these includes adopting the transport for the roads on which they are being used.

Roles and responsibilities, institutional arrangements

The quality of service provided for depends on available and useful guidelines to streamline and standardise the offering of the service and to a large extent the capacity of officials to enforce it. In some cases, as seen in China and Brazil, operators took the planning of the programme into their own hands due to lack of capacity in government to manage the programme effectively. The routing and choice of vehicle was based on what was suitable for the particular road condition. Operators

sacrificed the quality of the service for cost-cutting. This significantly affected the quality of the service offered.

School transport as a means to addressing social dysfunctionality and inequality

The literature also reveals that "…growing social and economic inequalities are embedded through high spatial inequality in the provision of state schools and affordable public transport to these schools." (Moreno-Monroy, et al., In Press). Provision of school transport may increase school attendance, especially for spatially disadvantaged (Murphy, 2007). "Inequalities in educational and transport infrastructure are mutually reinforcing, in that, the right to mobility is intrinsically linked to the right to education." (Moreno-Monroy, et al., In Press). A holistic approach is required for school transport – "Route planning for school transport, support for clear identification of school bus stops and driver training are particularly important components". Information systems are also important. (Ripe, 2017). Inter-generational equity posits that placing children at the centre is crucial for a society to be sustainable. The rationale is that a city that works for children is said to work better for everyone" (Darwish, et al., 2016). The gap between accesses to schools in urban areas in relation to the rural areas is portrayed as enormous. The case in rural areas, including in farming communities is especially arduous, and is mostly attributed topoor road conditions in these areas.

In conclusion, it is well established that in South Africa, Accessibility to education has been found as key to the betterment of children's future and breaking the cycle of poverty is highlighted in the literature as key to improving school enrolment with the intended effect of creating brighter future for children for a better chance of breaking from the cycles of poverty. As Kooser (2015) observed, schooling offers not only a better future to children, but also for their families and communities at large. Yet many children around the world have no access to schooling. The situation is noted to be even more challenging for children with disabilities as their needs seem not to be adequately catered for (Parliamentary Liaison Office, 2012). While the solutions to individual learner transport issues are deemed to be relatively simple, the collective solution on a national scale raises some complexities, especially in the public education system. (Mngaza, Dhlamini, & Van Zyl, 2001) for which holistic and robust planning is required. As Mngaza et al noted, some of these complexities are attributed to the involvement of various role players, different modes of transport and the varying circumstances in different parts of the country.

Internationally, the study in the USA by Shiess & Burgoyne-Allen (2017), found that school districts were struggling to provide efficient school transport services due to escalating costs and increasing complex educational systems that lead to more and more students having to attend schools outside their neighbourhoods. School transportation is thus seen as not only an integral part of educational sector transformation, but also a crucial issue for society as a whole. As Kotoula et al (2017) cautioned, inefficient provision of such a service, is a hindrance to the right of learners to access education, especially those from lower-income families. Even in cases where the service is provided, but not efficiently delivered, the quality of and access to education may still be adversely affected. In other studies, unintended consequences may arise, which may inadvertently affect the beneficiaries. An example of a study to this effect revealed that the provision of school transport to students from low-income families who were travelling between 2-6 miles from their homes to school led to a decrease

in their cost of travel. However, this led to many students going to schools that are of less quality, which sacrificed the quality of their education (Masi, 2018).

4. KEY FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION as per Terms of Reference

This chapter presents the main findings of the implementation evaluation of the Learner Transport Programme. Every effort has been made to present specific pointed assessments, although there may be instances where general arguments are put forward because of the sheer scale and magnitude of the Programme over its lifespan to date.

The chapter is presented in the following order: (i) a presentation of findings in relation to the implementation evaluation team's terms of reference; (ii) General comments and feedback.

It is important for readers to bear in mind the manner in which Quest's evaluations are usually undertaken. An attempt is first made to simply, but comprehensively state what the programme/project has produced as outputs in the period of review. These are usually sourced from formal documentation and verified through interviews and examination of programme financials, and in this case, official documents such as Annual Performance Plans (APPs), Annual Reports, and so on. These outputs are simply stated as facts, as per the preliminary findings. Second, an analysis is presented to make sense of these, and specifically engage with the immediate outcomes of learner transport programming. Third, an attempt is made to determine the extent to which there is evidence of emerging impact, besides engagement with other issues typically found in evaluations such as sustainability, replicability and so on. The findings of the evaluation are presented for each evaluation question as per the ToR.

4.1 Relevance and appropriateness

To what extent is the design of the Learner Transport Programme appropriate, and consistent with education & transport sectors' priorities and policies, and partnerships with all key stakeholders?[57]

Programme Preparation: What process/data/information was used to inform placement of the function? What opinions were considered?[58]

The evaluation did not find evidence of any dedicated study or research that was used to inform the design of the programme. However there is evidence of large local and international literature that expounds extensively on the issues of learner transport. Also, through the interviews for this evaluation, it was said that the analysis of the problem was said to be based on statistical information and estimations of the problem as provided by institutions such as the National Household Surveys provided by STATSA. According to the key informant interviews, the development of the national learner transport programme was in response to an urgent need to improve equitable access to education for the vulnerable to which a political commitment to find a solution was pronounced by parliament. As a result the programme was quickly assembled and put in place without the normal policy planning processes. However, the programme was developed by the department of Education

[57] Evaluation TOR key question 1

[58] Evaluation TOR question 1.1

based with consultations with keys stakeholders such as National Treasury, the DOT, and provincial departments. There is not substantial evidence from school level and SGBs of their participation during programme design. The implementation of the programme commenced in many provinces, before the official policy came into place in 2015. Provinces have since developed their own provincial policies in line with the National Policy requirements.

To what extent is the design of the Learner Transport Programme appropriate, and consistent with education & transport sectors' priorities and policies, and partnerships with all key stakeholders and what options were considered?[59]

The national priorities on education extend from the bills of rights established in the constitution of 1996 which entrenches the right to free basic education on all citizens. The National Development Plan (NDP) and the Medium Term Strategic Frameworks (MTSF), which details government's outcome-based approach, are key in the prioritisation of the realisation of these basic rights of citizens by setting the countries developmental goals and blue prints by which all sectorial developmental initiatives must be aligned. The provision of learner transport has a direct and fundamental bearing on the long term realisation. The NATMAP 2050 builds on the foundation of the government's Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), and it's Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF 2014– 2019). The MTSF is structured around 14 priority outcomes that cover the focus areas identified in the NDP 2030. Of the 14 priority outcomes identified by the MTSF, the DBE is facilitator of Outcome 1, while the DoT is champion to Outcome 4 and a significant contributor to many others including six key related priorities. In addition, the combination of the efforts of these two departments, is essential in creating the foundational fabric for the realization of some of the other outcomes relating to the broader national and sector specific economic development (for instance as in Outcomes 3, 4, 6 and 12). The achievement of these shared objectives requires effective coordination within and cooperation between the various government spheres and relevant private sector and civil society partners.

Table 11 LTP Related National Priorities

Key NDP outcomes (goals) to which LTP is key contributor
Outcome 1: improved quality of basic education
Outcome 3: All People in South Africa are and feel safe
Outcome 4:decent employment through inclusive growth
Outcome 5: A skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth
Outcome 6: an efficient, competitive and responsive economic infrastructure network

[59] Evaluation TOR question 1.1.2

Furthermore, the pro-poor nature and focus of the LTP, is aligned with national priorities which also extensively aim at alleviating the economic and social ills of vulnerable and rural communities and as a way of reducing the inequality gap. One of the priorities of the NDP is to improve the quality of education, skills development and innovation. An effective and efficient transport infrastructure and system for learners plays a pivotal role in the realisation of the objectives of the NDP. One of the objectives is that the proportion of people who use public transport will expand significantly, and by 2030, that public transport will be user-friendly, less environmentally damaging, cheaper and integrated or seamless. The NDP requires that the DOT consolidates and expands infrastructure with a key focus on public transport infrastructure and systems, including the renewal of the commuter rail fleet, supported by enhanced links with road-services. The NDP also calls for substantial investment to ensure safe, reliable and affordable public transport.

Alignment of sector priorities to national priorities

DBE and DOT Sector Priorities:

As presented above, learner transport as a means to access education is crucial in the attainment of Action Plan "Towards the Realization of Schooling 2025" as per the NDP. Access to the nearest school has been and is still a challenge in the education system. According to South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996), the MEC (Member of the Executive Committee) must ensure that all learners have access to the nearest school, and where schools are far an alternative must be considered. Section 3 of the SASA (1996) makes provision for a compulsory general education phase for learners from the age of seven until age of 15 of grade nine, whichever occurs first. At provincial levels also, MECs are responsible for ensuring that there are enough school places so that every child of eligible age can attend school and receive the compulsory general education and training. The National Policy for the Equitable Provision of an Enabling School Physical Teaching and Learner Environment (2010)[60] provides for the provision of alternatives where the provision of school infrastructure is not feasible. The policy provides alternatives including the provision of learner transport, hostels and special schools. All these options are geared towards creating access to education. The NDP requires that the DOT consolidates and expands infrastructure with a key focus on public transport infrastructure and systems, including the renewal of the commuter rail fleet, supported by enhanced links with road-services. The NDP also calls for substantial investment to ensure safe, reliable and affordable public transport. The Learner transport programme is thus a significant contribution to increasing transport infrastructure to a segment of the pubic – learners.

Partnership with and ownership and participation of stakeholders

Regarding development of the programme in partnership with key stakeholders, the Department of Transport collaborated with the Department of Education and other key stakeholders such as National Treasury in developing the National Learner Transport Policy (NLTP, 2015). The NLTP provides that national government will oversee the implementation of the policy in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including provinces, municipalities and School Governing Bodies (SGBs).

[60] In terms of section 3(4) of the National Education Policy Act (Act No 27 of 1996)

Policy Guidelines for operationalisation of the LTP objectives

As literature reveals, the availability of a clear vision expressed in national policies and guidelines is a key factor that influence implementers to take action. Trowbridge & Weingarten (2001) asserts that the value and importance of national policies and guidelines lies in the fact that they provide the norms and standards of practice. Operationalisation of the LTP policy goals is outlined in the National Operational Guidelines for Learner Transport Implementation (2016).

The national LTP policy Guideline provides that an intergovernmental committee be set up to oversee the implementation of the policy. This committee is to report to DBE, DOT and the ministers on the progress of implementation. The Policy guidelines spells out clearly the roles and responsibilities of the respective role players as shown in figure 4.

Table 12 LTP Institutional Arrangements and responsibilities (Source: LTP Guideline 2016)

Responsibility	DoT	DBE	PDoT	PDE	LA	DOE Regional Offices	Schools
Development of national Policy Guidelines, norms and standards	*						
Development of LTP safety and security regulations	*						
Beneficiary Determination		*		*		*	*
Beneficiary determination			*	*			
Funding			*	*	*		
Planning Service needs			*		*		
Provision of Road Infrastructure and facilities			*	*			
Procurement Law enforcement	*		*				
Monitoring and Evaluation	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Communication	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

At provincial level however, provincial guidelines or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) do accompany the provincial policies. This was seen in Gauteng, Free States, Northern Cape and Western Cape, the guideline in KwaZulu-Natal is said to be under review. As a requirement to foster cross departmental coordination between the provincial departments of Transport and Education is formalised through Memorandum of Agreements/Understandings in all provinces. The MOAs/MOUs spell out the collaboration and participation arrangements between each department.

Did provincial LTPs identify the need or plan to do so?[61]

The National guidelines provides that provinces must identify the needs in each educational district. While a general national criteria for need identification is prescribed, there are flexibilities for provincial contextual variations. The National criteria required criteria that is not discriminatory, on the basis of race, gender or disability. The key tenets of the criteria are shown in the table below.

Table 13 National Criteria for need beneficiary need determination (source: NLTP Guideline 2016)

The Key national criteria for beneficiary identification:
• Beneficiary must be learners from Grades R-12 • Distance travelled must not be more than 5km per trip. (Variations are for *less than* 5km, in dangerous terrains, but variations must be approved by provincial HOD) • Learner transport subsidy will be provided to the appropriate school and not to school of parental choice • Learners with disability should be prioritised, taking into consideration the nature of the disability • Primary schools learners who walk long distances must be prioritised • Need identification must take into account existing transport services: LTP should not be in areas where there is already public transport.

It is observed from the evaluation that, most provinces have need identification criteria that is in line with the national guidelines. However, several variations were observed in terms of the distance travelled by a learner to be included in the programme. Some provinces are using distances that re rather more than the national prescribed criteria.

While the full magnitude of the needs within each province is not fully yet determined, the need identification and assessment as needed to keep the programme running each year is being done in all provinces. Engagement with schools and provincial officials indicate that there are still more learners that need to be transported than is currently being identified. Each province over the years, undertake the need identification, which begins at school level and collated at provincial departments of DBE or DOT as per the requirements of the guidelines.

In Gauteng Province, the GDE identifies the need to be addressed (of learners requiring a transport solution, and who meet the basic criteria as detailed in the approved provincial policy). Schools are very active in identifying qualifying learners who may benefit from the Programme. The number of learners who require learner transport are reportedly "quality assured", using the *L1 forms*, but GDE must account for how learner need matches programme supply for three years running 2013/14-2015/16[62]. Evidence suggests that there is some manipulation in order for need to perfectly match supply. Similarly in **Eastern Cape,** Recruitment into the programme lies with the ECDOE. The DOE circulates a circular by the DOE which is assessed by the school principals. The schools convene a parents meeting (to explain the Scholar Transport Policy) to parents. The instructions to principals are to identify the number of learners at each given school who require free transport services, and who meet the basic requirements of living more than 5 kilometres from the school, and are walking a

[61] Evaluation TOR question 1.1.3

[62] See table 5 below in the section dealing with programme performance

distance of five or more kilometres from the nearest appropriate public ordinary school. Parental choice of schools shall are not subsidised by the policy. The schools issue application forms to learners that qualify for scholar transport. The identification and verification of the scholar transportation routes are done by principals and parents. The parents and teachers sign the application form to complete the selection process.

In the **Free State**, the identification of learners who needs transport occurs during the registration into the school. In most cases, beneficiary identification is compiled by the principal and with assistance from the parents /SGBs. For now only farm schools are covered in the programme. Mostly learners' need for transportation is indicated on the admission form, or by signing separate concern form during admission process. The criteria for recruitment entails learners from grades R-12 who travel more than 10km from farms to public schools. However, learners in farm schools and who have special needs (disabilities) are to be transported. The bulk of the identification of qualifying learners takes place in December each year, A standard route identification form is filled, which details the learners full name, school and grade, home address and route to nearest school. The complied forms are collected by the district official of DoE and submitted to provincial office to compile into the statistics as the basis for planning and budgeting.

In most provinces **Limpopo, Mpumalanga**, and the **Western Cape** provinces, the scope of the policy (criteria for recruitment) is detailed, and applies "to all needy learners walking long distance. In access of five kilometers (5km) or more to the nearest public ordinary school per single trip. It is expected that Grade R sites will be established close to where learners live, but provision will be made for learners who live relatively far away. Safety issues are also taken into account, and sometimes override the prescribed minimum of 5 kilometers. In **KwaZulu-Natal**, similar approaches followed in the deed deification. Also, though bulk of the need identification occurs at the beginning of school calendar, a significant portion is undertaken throughout the year. The need analysis is also undertaken though out the year, but approval give only based on availability of budget. The officials indicated that, the threshold for identifying needs is 3km. However in some schools, the interviews find that 5km, and 8km are used in different schools.

Identification of the needs of learners with special needs (Disabled **Learners)**

The policy applies for the transportation of learners from Grade R to 12 including learners with disabilities as defined by the SASA of 1996. According to the data obtained, no special provision is made for transporting disabled learners. Most of the learners with disabilities attend special schools, and are not included in the main stream school system and hence are also not covered by the mainstream government sponsored LTP. In Limpopo for instance, in most provinces, the Department of Basic Education is currently subsidising only two schools of learners with disability in Limpopo. These learners are learners that are not severely disabled, it's the learners that can use the day to day transport. The classification of the special school is in Limpopo is handled by a particular directorate within the department.

All programme empirical data is detailed in Chapter 4 further below, in the section dealing with *programme effectiveness* (delivery of services).

Conceptual Design. Is the programme design relevant and appropriate in terms of national priorities, education and transport sectors context and policy, and institutional environments?[63]

The conceptual design of a programme involves an assessment of programme logic, and the extent to which this has been articulated by managers of the programme, and other key stakeholders. In other words, it involves a critical assessment of the technical design of the programme, using either theory of change or a logical framework model to drive the assessment. The primary objectives of the draft national scholar transport policy (2009:7) were detailed as: to provide national uniform norms and standards, promote co-ordination and co-operation amongst stakeholders, and provide a framework for monitoring and evaluation of scholar transport services. The basic idea was that scholar transport would be provided on the basis of a number of principles, including that scholar transport must be affordable, safe and secure. The target group of the policy was scholars who attend schooling between Grade R to 12 and live more than 3km from the nearest school. In the final approved Learner Transport Policy (2015), the target group for subsidised transport is learners who attend grade R to 12 and live in areas where they do not have access to public transport services and have to **walk long distances to school**.

In lieu of the policy analysis of the learner transport policy (2009) and scholar transport policy (2015) in chapter one, the National Learner Transport Programme is clearly relevant in terms of the fundamental policy cornerstones: the National Development Plan (NDP) and the Medium Term Strategic Frameworks (MTSF). The Programme is contributing to Outcome 1: improved quality of basic education, Outcome 3: All People in South Africa are and feel safe, Outcome 4:decent employment through inclusive growth, Outcome 5: A skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth, and Outcome 6: an efficient, competitive and responsive economic infrastructure network. Furthermore, the pro-poor nature and focus of the LTP, is aligned with national priorities which also extensively aim at alleviating the economic and social ills of vulnerable and rural communities and as a way of reducing the inequality gap.

At its base, there is policy alignment of the Programme with the Basic Education and Transport sector mandates, and key policy references: The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 Section 85(2)(b) mandates the DOT with the role of developing and implementing transport policy. This scholar transport policy is guided by the White Paper on National Transport Policy (1996), the National Land Transport Transition Act, Act 22 of 2000, the National Land Transport Strategic Framework, the Public Transport Strategy and Action Plan (2007) and other legislation such as the National Road Traffic Act, Act 93 of 1996. In terms of access to education, there is also alignment with the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996), and the National Policy for the Equitable Provision of an Enabling School Physical Teaching and Learner Environment (2010). Learner Transport Policy accommodates for the transportation of learners from Grade R to 12 including learners with disabilities as defined by the SASA of 1996.

There is generally policy alignment between the National Learner Transport Policy (2015) and provincial policies on Scholar Transport/Learner Transport. All provinces have developed aligned provincial learner transport policy which has been approved by provincial executive structures.

[63] Evaluation TOR question 1.2

The National Learner Transport Policy (2015) is considered appropriate, in terms of the needs of its primary intended beneficiaries (learners), as well as key stakeholders in the learner transport "sector". The NLTP provides that national government will oversee the implementation of the policy in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including provinces, municipalities and School Governing Bodies (SGBs). Although participation in the Learner Transport Programme is generally strong, there has been no meaningful partnerships established with civil society organisations even though these possibly exist in relation to programme monitoring and oversight dialogue.

What is the underlying Theory of Change?[64]

Prior to this evaluation, the LTP does not have an explicit theory of change (ToC). To guide the evaluation, the programme ToC has been explicitly established. This was first drafted after the literature and document review, and then further interrogated, expanded on and validated through a workshop session with key stakeholders. From the DBE, DOT, Treasury, DPME and provinces.

In terms of **programme activities**, key business processes, viz. need identification, budgeting, planning, verification, monitoring, procurement and contract management, implementation (learner transport services), management and reporting, happens at different levels, with the bulk of daily programme delivery, management and monitoring happening in schools under the PDEs.

The **main development output** based on the logic model developed in the theory of change for this programme is obviously **learner transport services**. In policy terms, the Programme seeks to deliver a service that makes a big difference to the lives of children in many communities across all nine provinces. Through programme activities that link schools to districts and provincial governments, the Programme reaches out to learners attending schools in quintiles 1 and 2, to provide better access to **education**, and in an **inclusive way** because of its reach into **poor and distant** (rural) communities that have difficult access to public ordinary schools, and together with other Government interventions, such as no-fees in schools, and the school nutrition programme, seeks to improve the day-to-day experience of children and adolescents in education, and in their lives in general.

As far as immediate outcomes are concerned, when learners across the country are able to catch buses/minibus taxis (100% subsidized by Government), and arrive at schools mostly on time, and in relatively safe transport, **access to education** is improved, and the day-to-day experience of getting to-and-from school is made easier, and **inclusion is enabled** because learners were now less time-poor, less tired, and were able to get on with day-to-day activities like making and keeping friends (while being transported on the buses), and are more ready and able to participate in education development opportunities provided in schools. Both departmental Education-related and Transport-related higher-level outcomes are being contributed to. In the case of Transport, achievements are being registered by the NLTP in terms of: a **timeous delivery** of service; a **reduction in road accidents** (number of); a **coordinated approach** to planning and implementation; (sub-outcome) **adherence to road traffic regulations** by operators; (output) **vehicle maintenance plans** and technical support for emergencies; (sub-outcome) **viable and sustainable operations**; (output) **uniformity of services** and tariff structure; and (output) a **coherent performance monitoring** system.

[64] Evaluation TOR question 1.4

As a result (an intermediate outcome), the **quality of life of transported learners is improved**. The significance of this outcome may often not be understood, because of its complex weightiness and consequential effects on long-term personal and professional development. An improved day-to-day experience at primary and/or high school can have quite profound effects on individual outcomes in later life. Improved access to education is known is strongly associated with a better quality of life in adulthood and in the world of work. An improved quality of life as a child learner can in in itself potentially improve educational outcomes, and decreased time-poverty, improved vitality, and social inclusion together will have potentially dramatic possibilities opening up for individual self-expression and holistic learning inside and outside of the classroom environment.

Does the Programme have a logframe? Does it comply with standards for good practice?[65]

As stated earlier, there were no formal logic models in place when this implementation evaluation was commissioned – no formal theory of change, or logframe existed. However, the evaluation team found that the national learner transport policy was relatively well-developed, with specific sections detailing the institutional framework for the implementation of learner transport; learner transport planning; learner transport safety and security; criteria for learner transport beneficiaries; service design for learner transport; procurement of learner transport services; remuneration of learner transport operators; funding; modal Integration; universal design; law enforcement; and monitoring and evaluation.

The **policy objectives** are clearly articulated as far policy documents go: (1) To guide the implementation of a shared vision to improve access to quality education through a coordinated and aligned learner transport system; (2) To improve the planning and implementation of an integrated learner transport service. (3) To ensure an effective management of learner transport system. (4) To provide reliable, safe and secure transport for learners through co-operation and collaboration with law enforcement authorities.

The **desired outcomes**[66] are clearly articulated too: (i) timeous delivery of service; (ii) rate of road accidents reduced; (iii) a coordinated approach in relation to planning and implementation; (iv) learner transport operators that adhere to road traffic regulations; (v) vehicle maintenance plan and technical support for emergencies; (vi) viable and sustainable operations; (vii) uniformity of services and tariff structure; and (viii) a coherent performance monitoring system.

The ToC drafted at the beginning of the evaluation is shown in the figure below.

[65] Evaluation TOR question 1.5

[66] Expressed mainly as a few Outputs, Immediate Outcomes, with some Intermediate o
Outcomes, and a Long-term Outcome.

Figure 1. Diagrammatic Theory of Change for Learner Transport Programme

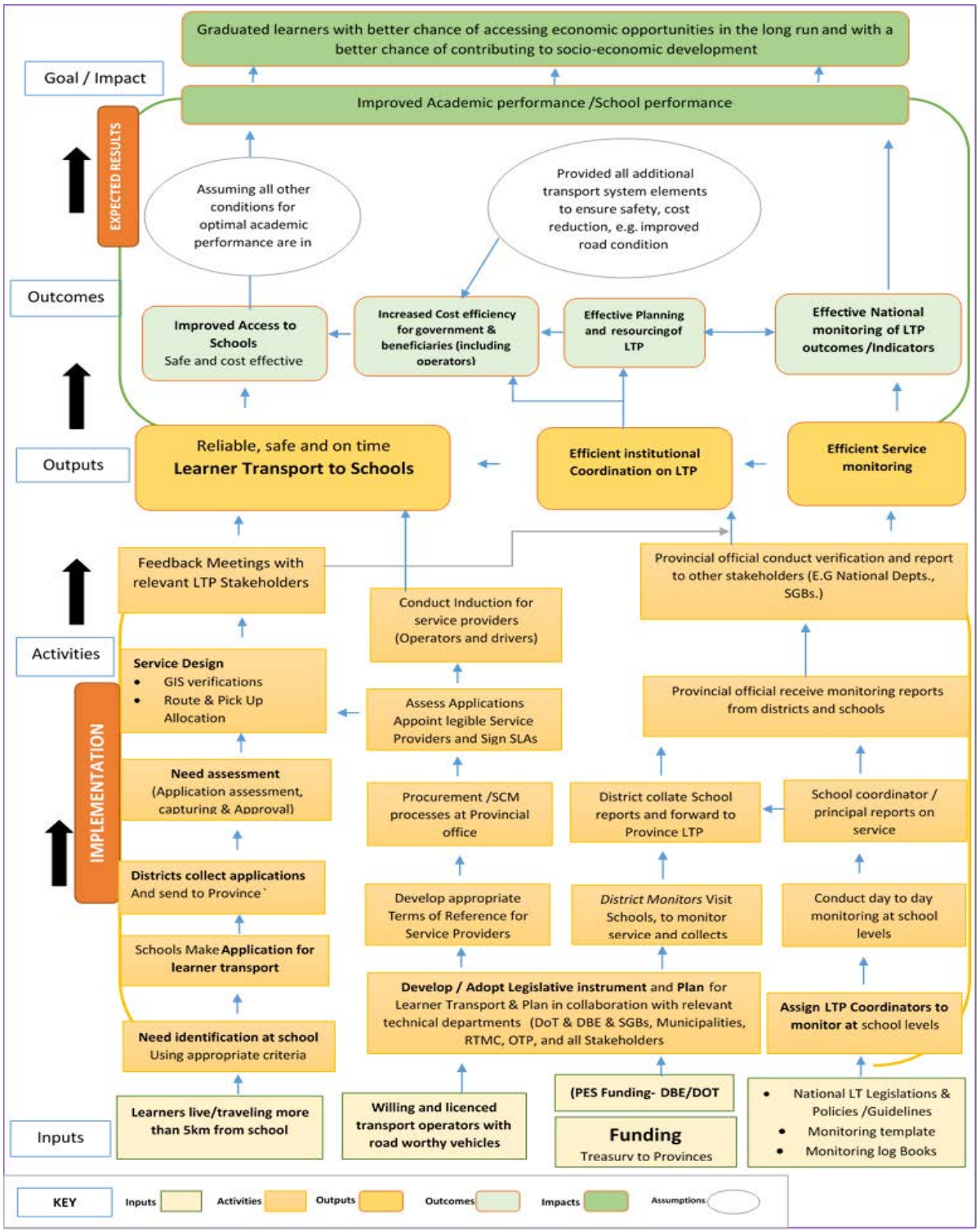


Figure 2 Consolidated Theory of change

The fact that a theory of change and logframe was not developed at the onset of the programme in 2015, has contributed to the absence of clear indicators for measuring the results. Even though provincial departments have included learner transport as part of their Technical Indicator Schedule for performance reporting, there is not a common set of standardised indicators in place, against which PDEs' and PDOTs' programme reports are compiled and feed into at national level under the DOT.

Ownership and Participation? To what extent was there effective consultation with all key stakeholder institutions and role-players of the conceptualisation and design and planning of the Programme. Including NT, DOT, DBE, provincial governments (departments), private operators, and CSOs? (Provincial reports)[67]

The National Learner transport Programme has been in existence and has been implemented in many provinces prior to the Implementation of the learner transport policy in 2015. The background to this went back to the Department of Transport in the early 1990s, which had its own broader framework where it included special needs transport. With special needs transport, learner transport became a possibility, with provisions that it would look into. The intergovernmental relations framework of 2005 helped departments such as Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Transport (DOT) to collaborate to implement learner transport in order to get the final services to the learners. The Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations Framework Act enables the two departments to work together locally at the district level with regard to the payment of service providers who provide the transport.

After initial work over 2007-2008, in February 2009 the final draft national scholar transport policy was released by the Minister of Transport, J Radebe. The draft Policy was located in the post-Apartheid era, various studies referred to, such as the DOE study to analyse the impact of walking long distances to school on learning, and several other South African studies - the National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) DOT (2003), DOE (2006) Review of the Financing, Resourcing and Costs of Education in Public Schools; Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005); and the Human Rights Commission (1998) have provided valuable information on the issue of distances that learners have to travel to schools as one of the barriers to learners accessing schools. The studies suggested that the ability of scholars to access education was hampered by the long distances involved, threats to safety, as well as the cost of scholar transport. Scholars had difficulty accessing educational institutions because of the unavailability of scholar transport.

According to the interviews held with key stakeholders, there were several consultative engagements between the DBE, DOT, and Treasury which led to the development of the programme. At provincial spheres also, there is evidence of consultations between the DOT and DBE in designing the programme as confirmed in the provincial MOU/MOAs. In some provinces, some District and SGB members participated. Programme ownership at school levels appear to be high, from an end user perspective. At provincial spheres, the ownership was observed to be rather accepted dutifully by the department where the programme currently resides. This leads to non-participation and cooperation in some cases between provincial DBEs and DOTs. This was also found to be a major issue in data flow between the two departments within the provinces.

[67] Evaluation TOR question 1.6

Embedded in the learner transport policy (2009 and 2015), the DOT is identified as the custodian of the Policy and responsible for, inter alia, the regulation, funding, communication, monitoring and evaluation of overall national scholar transport policy. The DOT is also responsible for review of the policy in consultation with PDOTs and other stakeholders (PDEs). In the draft scholar transport policy (2009), PDOTs were noted as being responsible for managing the implementation of scholar transport provision in their respective provinces, planning (in consultation with key transport stakeholders), identifying beneficiaries (after consultation with PDEs, contracting of services, tendering for contracts, law enforcement and ensuring road safety (together with Local Government), and monitoring services.

In terms of planning, the final draft Policy (2009:8) recommended that scholar transport plans must be developed and integrated into the Provincial Land Transport Framework (PLTF), as well as into the Integrated Transport Plans (ITPs) of Local Government through an eight-stage planning cycle.

The draft Policy also prescribed the institutional arrangements, governance, regulatory and legislative aspects of scholar transport. The transitional mechanisms for the migration of the scholar transport function to the DOT were prescribed. Further, the draft Policy recommended that scholar transport provision should be managed by dedicated units at both national and provincial levels of government. The draft Policy (2009) was approved in 2015 with relatively few changes as discussed in chapter one.

Provincial level policy development and planning

In most provinces, this study found that the policy development involved consultation with all the relevant stakeholders in the transportation industry, through consultative meetings, usually held at school levels. Data from the provinces suggest that, in the province, including parents of the learners, Traditional Leaders, Community Development workers, Councilors, Mayors, Municipal Managers, Community Policing Forums, SGBs, School Principals, Religious Bodies, Bus and Taxi Operators, and all other organs of civil society. The Eastern Cape Department of Transport also Developed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Scholar Transport Programme in the Province.

Detailed roles allow for participation by both departments and other role payers. For instance, the DOE confirms the learners to be transported on an annual basis, once a year in January. The verification of the kilometres (pick-up routes) is done by the principal and the school SGB's. The routes are named by the principal and the SGB. The principal confirm the learners' application against the school admission. The Principal and SGB confirm the learner's school address from the applications received. The school consolidates the list of learners to be transported for the year.

In Gauteng Province, the provincial Scholar Transport Policy document details the key roles and responsibilities of the major stakeholders, but does not make specific reference to the major partnership with the Department of Transport, and the Department of Community Safety, even though transport policy is referred to throughout the document. Nevertheless, there is a clear basis for the core business processes required to deliver the programme: (1) GDE (principals, SMT and educators) establishes the learner transport need, and identifies potential beneficiaries; (2) the

provincial education system[68] receives the applications, and engages in transport planning (service design)[69], with reference to operators (service providers), drivers, SMT, and the GDE; (3) procurement of operators is indirectly referred to, and the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) is referenced, (4) selection, application, enrolment of qualifying learners by principals, is not detailed (but assumed) (5) collection of learner transport data, weekly/monthly monitoring reports by GDE (districts, and schools) is detailed, (6) official verification of invoices (claims by operators) by school principals, districts and Head Office, (7) custodian role, budget[70], risk mitigation, coordination, contract management of SLAs with operators, payments of service providers, routes[71], road safety, road traffic laws, regulations and compliance enforcement are included.

In KZN, Learner Transport programme in KwaZulu-Natal commenced in 2007 as part of the Department of Education's prioritization of access to education for rural learners and farm schools, until it was transferred to the KZN DOT in 2015. The ownership of the programme lies with the DPT, with limited support from the KZN DOE in the form of supplying the necessary planning data, needs identification and verification. Likewise in the in the North West Province, the DOE identifies the need to be addressed (of learners requiring a transport solution, and who meet the basic criteria as detailed in the approved provincial policy).

Are the programme eligibility criteria appropriate in terms of beneficiaries' priorities? (Provincial reports. And National Learner Transport Policy)[72]

The learner transport policy posits the transportation of learners from Grades R-12 who are impoverished. In each province, data from the evaluation shows that the programme is mostly benefiting learners from rural and farm schools who walk long distances. The appropriateness of the programme to the needs of these learners leans on the backbone of general conditions in rural areas where most households earn low or no income at all and are mostly unable to afford transport. The programme is found to be assisting learners from these rural and poor households to get to school more easily, with still some energy left to spend on academic work. The pro-poor focus of the programme is thus an appropriate response to the needs of these learners. The unevenness of some of the eligibility criteria however, may be a cause of excluding some learners who otherwise would have qualified to be transported.

Is the Programme relevant, appropriate, and understood by key stakeholders - learners, educators, districts, provinces, operators, bus drivers, NGOs?[73]

From the engagement with the key stakeholders, there is clear understanding of the programme objectives and main goal by the relevant stakeholders by stakeholders. There are however some issues

[68] Levels: GDE (Head Office), districts, schools

[69] Probably in partnership with the Department of Transport

[70] Budget - compilation, submission and management

[71] Routes – designing, planning, consultation with GDE

[72] Evaluation TOR question 1.7

[73] Evaluation TOR question 1.7

with vertical communication of the policy requirements in some provinces, from the provincial departments to the school levels. This results in some schools using different eligibility thresholds, as found out in KZN.

A key challenge that emerged from the evaluation is the relative inconsistency of the need identification criteria. While some provinces such as the policy uses 10km, other provinces use 3km, 5km and 8km in some cases. This could lead to exclusion of many would-be-qualified learners. While rural learners on farm schools in the Free States for instance, need to be walking more than 10km to qualify, farm and rural schools in KwaZulu-Natal, qualify if they are more than 3km, and 5km in some instances to qualify. This perhaps can be attributed somehow to the silence of the national policy on qualification threshold dimensions.

There is also clear understanding of the programme and its functions among the NGO community. Key NGOs leading and advocacy for programme improvement demonstrate clear understanding of the policy and the programme as being implemented. In KZN for instance, Equal Education and Section 27 have been in the fore in proliferation of the policy agenda, and ensuring that schools who need learner transport the most are provided. A bulk of the data and literature on the programme is also provided by some of these NGOs and academic researchers with interest in learner transport.

4.1 Learner Transport Programme Effectiveness

Key Evaluation Question: To what extent has the implementation of the Learner Transport Programme been effective in achieving its goal(s), objectives and intended outcomes? What are the measurable results of the LTP in the period of review?

Programme Performance[74]: What is the Programme's performance in the period of review?

The concept of "programme effectiveness" typically refers to a programme's ability to effectively achieve its intended results and/or immediate outcomes. The Learner Transport Programme results framework is paramount because it is basically comprised of nine small provincial learner transport programmes. In terms of logic model, there were no formal logic models in place when this implementation evaluation was commissioned – no formal theory of change, or logframe. However, the evaluation team found that the national learner transport policy was relatively well-developed, with specific sections detailing the institutional framework for the implementation of learner transport; learner transport planning; learner transport safety and security; criteria for learner transport beneficiaries; service design for learner transport; procurement of learner transport services; remuneration of learner transport operators; funding; modal Integration; universal design; law enforcement; and monitoring and evaluation. Across each of the provinces, a provincial learner transport/scholar transport policy was developed and approved, aligned with the NLTP.

The policy objectives are clearly articulated as far policy documents go: (1) To guide the implementation of a shared vision to improve access to quality education through a coordinated and aligned learner transport system; (2) To improve the planning and implementation of an integrated learner transport service. (3) To ensure an effective management of learner transport system. (4) To provide reliable, safe and secure transport for learners through co-operation and collaboration with law enforcement authorities. The desired outcomes75 are clearly articulated too: (i) timeous delivery of service; (ii) rate of road accidents reduced; (iii) a coordinated approach in relation to planning and implementation; (iv) learner transport operators that adhere to road traffic regulations; (v) vehicle maintenance plan and technical support for emergencies; (vi) viable and sustainable operations; (vii) uniformity of services and tariff structure; and (viii) a coherent performance monitoring system.

The measurement of implementation performance of the Learner Transport Programme can be answered empirically first, in terms of the main activities, outputs and key performance indicators used across provinces, but also analytically, in terms of the immediate outcomes and feedback provided by respondents during the course of this evaluation.

A lot has been written about the access to education as an educational outcome, but it is important to note that the NLTP is a joint programme involving the departments of Transport, who are also leading programme implementation in some provinces. The development of the learner transport policy from Transport perspective, was a response to a realization of a policy gap relating to the provision of the service. Challenges experienced included no services at all, unsafe and insecure

[74] Evaluation Terms of Reference (TOR) question 2.1

[75] Expressed mainly as a few Outputs, Immediate Outcomes, with some Intermediate o
Outcomes, and a Long-term Outcome.

methods that were used, uncoordinated services, unscrupulous operations and non-standardised operations.[76] As a result, the NLTP contains critical transport policy imperatives embedded in the key elements of the Policy: institutional framework for the implementation of learner transport; learner transport planning; learner transport safety and security; criteria for learner transport beneficiaries; service design for learner transport; procurement of learner transport services; remuneration of learner transport operators; funding; modal integration; universal design; law enforcement; and monitoring and evaluation. To this end, the stated Transport policy objectives are: to guide the implementation of a shared vision to improve access to quality education through a coordinated and aligned learner transport system; to improve the planning and implementation of an integrated learner transport service; to ensure an effective management of learner transport system; to provide reliable, safe and secure transport for learners through co-operation and collaboration with law enforcement authorities. Related and important Transport policy principles are: equity and redress, quality and effectiveness, operational safety and efficiency, operational sustainability, and multi-modal integration.

What are the main activities undertaken by the Programme? To what extent were they aligned with the Programme's Theory of Change?[77]

The main business processes involved in implementing the national Learner Transport Programme (across all nine provinces) have typically involved the following generic processes or activities: (1) policy development, (2) budgeting and planning, including recruitment into the Programme, verification and selection, management of the Programme, and identification of Programme need, (3) establishment of structures and systems development, (4) services delivered, including programme coverage, (5) monitoring, audit and evaluation. Policy development is covered in previous chapters/sections dealing with the assessment of relevance and appropriateness, processes and an efficiency assessment is dealt with in the subsequent chapter. This chapter focuses almost exclusively on the services delivered by the DOT and DBE (in partnership with other relevant departments), and provides an assessment which attempts to provide an accurate indication of delivery across provinces, with a national programme overview, within the limitations of this study. Detailed provincial reports are contained as annexes in this comprehensive report, which allow for interested readers to access province-specific information.

Typically, there has been a proper process of programme need identification that has occurred in each province. The provincial Departments of Education have worked incredibly hard on the ground, to collect the data of those learners requiring a transport solution, and who meet the basic criteria as detailed in the NLTP as well as approved provincial policy. It is important to note that in certain cases, a provincial criteria might be differ from the guide provided in the NLTP, and the criterion might also be applied differently to meet local conditions, but there is general alignment between provincial policy for the Programme and the NLTP. For example, in Gauteng Province, the qualifying criteria for distance from school is five (5) kilometres, and in application many learners who live closer to schools are assessed to qualify for inclusion in the provincial Scholar Transport Programme. Schools are very

[76] Department of Transport (2017) **LEARNER TRANSPORT PRESENTATION** to **STANDING COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS (SCOA)** (07 March 2017)

[77] Evaluation TOR question 2.1.1

active in identifying qualifying learners who may benefit from the Programme. The number of learners who require learner transport are reportedly "quality assured".

What were the main programme outputs produced, associated with the activities identified?[78]

The **main development output** based on the logic model developed in the theory of change for this programme is obviously **learner transport services**. In other words, how did the programme perform in transporting learners, safely and on time? In terms of actual learners transported, based on available data (see table below), 330,436 learners were transported nationally by the Programme in 2012/13, 343,402 in 2013/14, 363,529 in 2014/15, 395,592 in 2015/16, 465,977 in 2016/17, and 499,350 in 2017/18. In sheer numbers, most learners comparatively are transported in Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Mpumalanga, and Western Cape.

Table 14. Learners transported 2012/13 to 2017/18

PROVINCE	Actual transported 2012-13[79]	Actual transported 2013-14[80]	Actual transported 2014-15[81]	Actual transported 2015-16[82]	Actual transported 2016-17[83]	Actual transported 2017-18[84]
Eastern Cape	54 400	54 527	57 176	68 576	78 061	80 552
Free State	7 320	8 077	8 053	7 193	11 929	7 684
Gauteng	64 628	66 718	75 299	82 917	109 618	116 773
KwaZulu-Natal	18 087	22 045	34 814	37 223	47 747	55 307
Limpopo	18 917	19 162	18 908	21 131	34 321	37 143
Mpumalanga	65 559	66 615	59 354	60 231	60 119	60 629
Northern Cape	22 575	23 424	22 641	23 640	23 684	23 749
North West	29 530	31 830	33 334	37 164	42 281	58 853
Western Cape	49 420	51 004	53 950	57 517	58 217	58 660
National LTP	**330 436**	**343 402**	**363 529**	**395 592**	**465 977**	**499 350**

[78] Evaluation TOR question 2.1.2

[79] Data for 2012-13 was obtained from Learner Transport Annual Report 2012-13 (DBE). *Number of learners* calculated as the *average number of students transported*.

[80] Source: DBE Learner Programme administrative data as supplied.

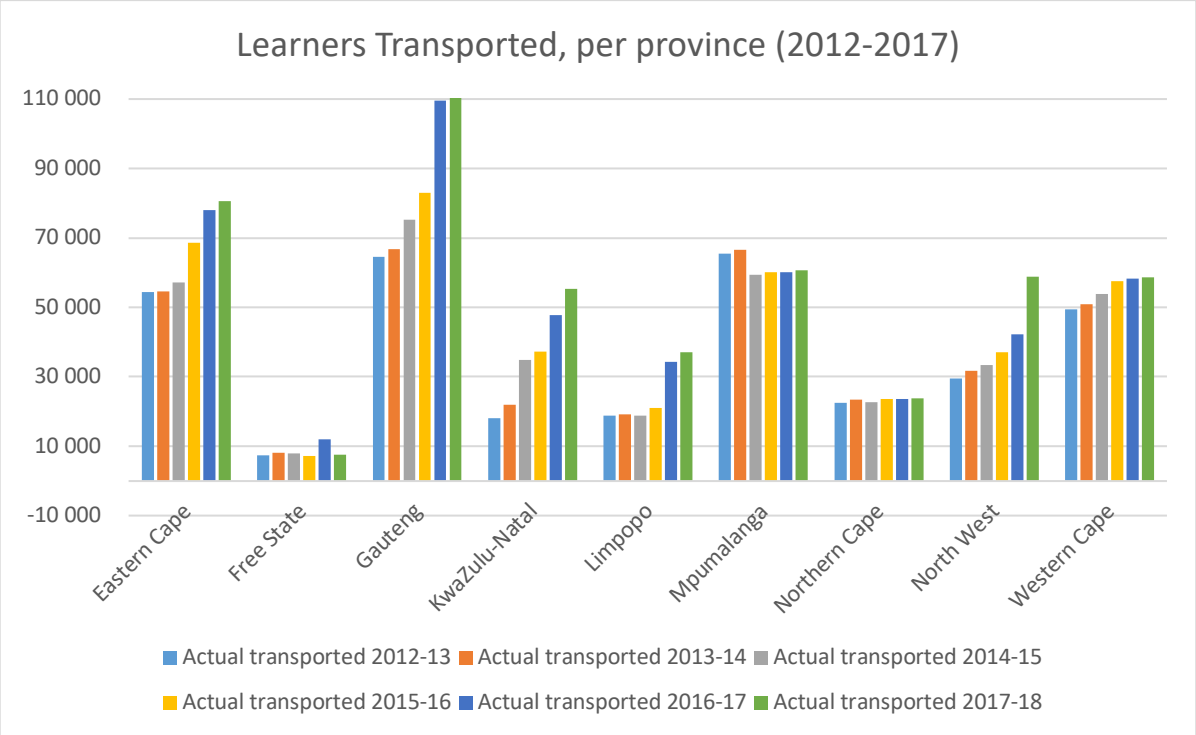
[81] Source: DBE Learner Programme administrative data as supplied.

[82] Source: DBE Learner Programme administrative data as supplied.

[83] Source: DBE Learner Programme administrative data as supplied.

[84] Source: DBE Learner Programme administrative data as supplied.

Figure 3. NLTP Actual Learners Transported by Province, 2012/13-2016/17



It is important to make sense of programme outputs relative to inputs, and the largest one by far is the State's financial commitment to learner transport.

Based on available data, the total budget vote[85] was R1,572 billion in 2012/13 which grew dramatically to R2,66 billion in 2016/17, with an **average annual increase** of 13% over 2012/13-2016/17.[86]

In 2012/13, the largest provincial budget was R350.1 million in Mpumalanga, R216.3m in Western Cape, R210m in Eastern Cape, R200m in North West, R165.3m in Gauteng, R140m in KwaZulu-Natal, R134.2m in Limpopo, R104m in Northern Cape, and R52,68m in Free State.

By 2016/17, the order of greatest provincial learner transport programme budget average annual increase (%) over the period 2012/13-2016/17 was: Gauteng (39%), Limpopo (17%), Western Cape (14%), Mpumalanga (8%), KwaZulu-Natal (8%) and North West (8%), Northern Cape (4%) and Free State (-3%).

[85] Of all provincial programme budgets combined, and for all non-recurring expenditure items, such as payments to transport operators.

[86] Please see supporting table below (Programme Budget) for disaggregated data on voted funding and *all data sources*.

Table 15. Learner Transport Programme Budget allocated (voted funds), and by Province

PROVINCE	BUDGET 2012/13[87]	BUDGET 2013/14[88]	BUDGET 2014/15[89]	BUDGET 2015/16[90]	BUDGET 2016/17[91]
Eastern Cape	210 000 000	210 000 000	356 076 000	432 000 000	462 951 000
Free State	52 682 017	36 300 000	27 589 000	40 000 000	40 000 000
Gauteng	165 319 090	165 319 090	338 349 000	461 000 000	535 896 000
KwaZulu Natal	140 081 122	140 081 122	168 430 000	185 976 000	186 000 000
Limpopo	134 209 000	134 209 000	152 995 000	141 103 000	226 691 000
Mpumalanga	350 145 000	350 145 000	455 000 000	441 622 000	455 329 000
Northern Cape	104 081 943	101 061 000	116 097 000	125 359 000	121 524 000
North West	200 000 000	200 000 000	240 444 000	264 466 000	272 640 000
Western Cape	216 305 000	207 436 000	242 593 000	270 138 000	359 755 000
National Learner Transport Programme	**1 572 823 172**	**1 544 551 212**	**2 097 573 000**	**2 361 664 000**	**2 660 786 000**

In terms of actual expenditure relative to allocated budget, average **underspending** was about 15% for the period under review, noting data fluctuations, and about 5% in 2016/17. Against the average programme **unmet need (**of eligible learners not supplied with transport) of 17%, it is unacceptable that there is any programme underspending.

[87] Source: DBE (2013) **Learner Transport Annual Report 2012/2013**. DBE:

[88] Source: DBE (2014) Scholar Transport Presentation to the Select Committee On Appropriations: 1 September 2014. (*unpublished*)

[89] Source: DBE (2014) Scholar Transport Presentation to the Select Committee On Appropriations: 1 September 2014. (*unpublished*). Projected budget for 2014/2015.

[90] DOT (2017) Learner Transport Presentation to the Select Committee On Appropriations: 6 March 2017. (*unpublished*

[91] DOT (2017) Learner Transport Presentation to the Select Committee On Appropriations: 6 March 2017. (*unpublished). Data for Eastern Cape was obtained directly from the province. This amount agrees to the EPRE for Eastern Cape for 2017-18.*

Table 16. Learner Transport Programme Actual Expenditure 2012-2017

PROVINCE	Actual Expenditure 2012-13[92]	Actual Expenditure 2013-14[93]	Actual Expenditure 2014-15[94]	Actual Expenditure 2015-16[95]	Actual Expenditure 2016-17[96]
Eastern Cape	366 064 159	392 035 660	375 873 000	462 076 000	485 848 000
Free State	52 794 069		63 452 389	9 847 939	50 419 489
Gauteng	75 149 630	307 999 893	417 737 661	461 000 000	681 216 163
KwaZulu Natal	32 497 822		158 430 000	52 483 535	68 995 857
Limpopo	103 961 302	103 883 000	115 558 000	50 555 000	218 555 693
Mpumalanga	235 314 661		405 011 000	484 904 664	448 334 260
Northern Cape	97 531 052			28 265 500	86 528 696
North West	73 928 351			248 316 722	272 139 395
Western Cape	225 716 238	231 047 000	268 405 968	307 514 666	329 298 018
National LTP	**1 262 957 285**	**1 034 965 553**	**1 804 468 018**	**2 104 964 027**	**2 641 335 571**

Relative to a budget allocation (voted funds) of R2,66 billion in 2016/17, nationally the Learner Transport Programme was able to disburse R2,64 billion.

Against the allocated budgets per province, on average the Programme was able to disburse % of the 2013/14 appropriation, and 99% of the 2016/17 appropriation.

The gaps in data marked in the grey blocks makes further data analysis of the intervening years impossible.

[92] Source: DBE (2013) **Learner Transport Annual Report 2012/13**. DBE: Pretoria & Data for Eastern Cape was obtained directly from the provincial Department of Transport

[93] Source: Data for FY 2013-14 and 2014-15 for Gauteng, Limpopo, Western Cape and Eastern Cape was obtained directly from the Provincial Implementing Department.

[94] Data for FY 2014-15 for Gauteng, Limpopo, Western Cape and Eastern Cape was obtained directly from the Provincial Implementing Department; Data for KZN was obtained from: Learner Transport Quarterly report 2014-15(unpublished) & Data for Mpumalanga for FY2014-15 was obtained from: Scholar Transport presentation 2015(unpublished)

[95] Source: DOT & DBE (2017) Learner Transport Presentation to the Select Committee on Appropriations: 6 March 2017 (unpublished) &Data for Eastern Cape was obtained directly from the province.

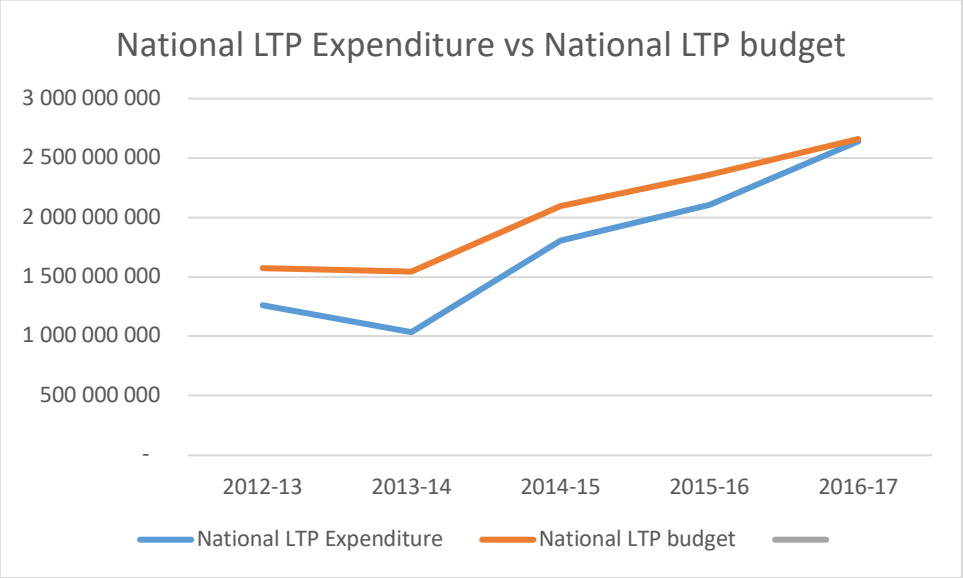
[96] Source: DOT & DBE (2017) Learner Transport Presentation to the Select Committee on Appropriations: 6 March 2017 (unpublished); Data for Eastern Cape was obtained directly from the province. *The actual expenditure provided by the province was significantly different (R25 000 000 less) from the amount on both the Eastern Cape Department of Transport Annual Report for 2016-17 and the EPRE 2018-19, where actual expenditure will be reflected as an (audited) outcome. We therefore disregarded the amount provided by the province of R460 848 000 and substituted in by the figure reflected in both the publicly available EPRE and Annual report of R485 848 000. For the rest of the years, that is 2012-13 to 2016-17, the data for actual expenditure was not materially difference from the EPREs for the period 2016-17 to 2018-19, except for the 2014-15 actual expenditure which reflected a difference of R900 000.*

Table 17. Budget Utilisation Rates 2012/13 to 2016/17 (calculated)

PROVINCE	Budget utilisation 2012/13	Budget utilisation 2013/14	Budget utilisation 2014/15	Budget utilisation 2015/16	Budget utilisation 2016/17
Eastern Cape	174%	187%	106%	107%	105%
Free State	100%	0%		25%	126%
Gauteng	45%	186%	123%	100%	127%
KwaZulu Natal	23%		94%	28%	37%
Limpopo	77%	77%	76%	36%	96%
Mpumalanga	67%	0%	89%	110%	98%
Northern Cape	94%			23%	71%
North West	37%			94%	100%
Western Cape	104%	111%	111%	114%	92%

The figure below shows the relationship over time in the period of review between the appropriated budget versus actual Learner Transport Programme expenditure. The graph shows an exaggerated relationship because of the gaps in data frustrating a more accurate representation.

Figure 4. NLTP Budget vs NLTP Actual Expenditure 2012/13-2016/17



How did the Programme respond relative to **demand (need) for learner transport** across the country? The demand reported by provinces in the period of review ranges from a national total of 403,545 eligible learners requiring learner transport in 2013/14 increasing to 521,711 learners in 2016/17.

Table 18. Reported demand (need) for learner transport 2013/14-2016/17[97]

PROVINCE	Reported Demand 2012/13	Reported Demand 2013/14	Reported Demand 2014/15	Reported Demand 2015/16	Reported Demand 2016/17
Eastern Cape	110 474	102 219	94 938	98 312	111 406
Free State		8 061	8 053	7 193	9 736
Gauteng		66 718	75 299	82 971	97 114
KwaZulu-Natal		17 521	85 023	81 038	71 000
Limpopo		19 344	36 123	37 272	34 321
Mpumalanga		66 615	59 354	59 346	60 231
Northern Cape		27 239	23 573	27 526	27 803
North West		40 722	61 950	52 684	52 684
Western Cape	53 920	55 106	53 950	57 517	57 416
National LTP	**164 394**	**403 545**	**498 263**	**503 859**	**521 711**

Reported **demand (need)** in definition is the number of learners identified in a given province, who are eligible for inclusion in the Learner Transport Programme. The specific criteria which determines which learners qualify for inclusion are determined by approved provincial learner transport policy, and are specific to each province. *Reported demand (need)* must be distinguished from StatsSA's figures for *unmet need*: this refers to all learners who walk to the nearest school[98]. There is significant variation (18%) between the reported demand by provincial departments, and *unmet need* in terms of the data supplied in the StatsSA GHS (2016). This discussion below is initially focused on reported demand, and is followed by a comparative analysis with *unmet need*, with an evaluative conclusion about the data as supplied by provinces.

Reported **demand (need)** across the country increased from 403,545 qualifying learners who required learner transport in 2013/14, to 521 711 in 2016/17, an average annual increase of just 13% in comparison to the average annual increase of 21% in the Programme's allocated budget.[99]

In 2013/14 the number of learners transported by the Programme in South Africa was 343,402 which increased to 465, 977 learners in 2016/17, and 499,350 in 2017/18.

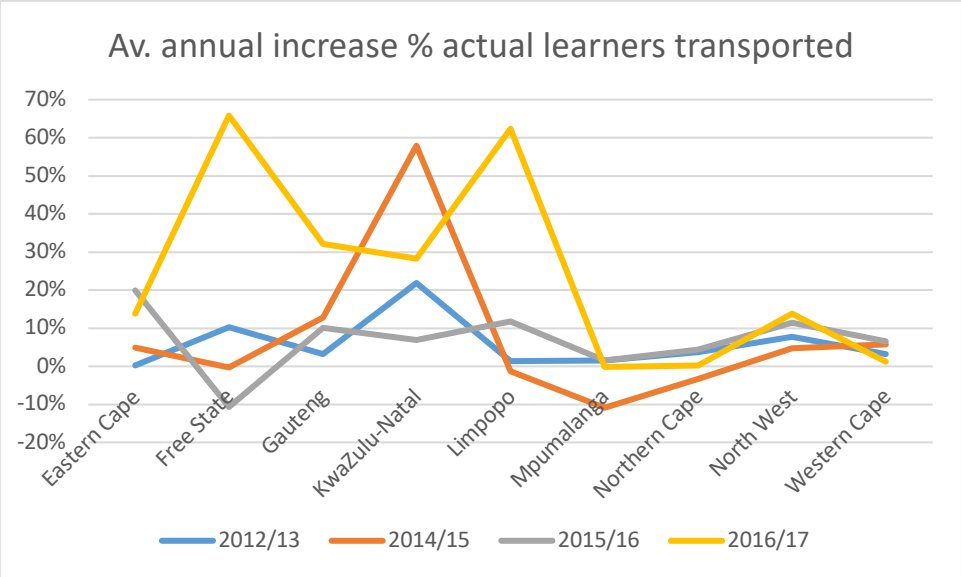
[97] Source: Data for 2012-13 was obtained from the provincial implementing departments; Data for **perceived demand** from 2013-14 to 2016-17 was obtained from the Department of Basic Education (administrative programme data).

[98] Beyond a minimum distance as discussed in the section dealing with the efficiency assessment below

[99] Comparison with the actual programme expenditure was not possible due to the gaps in the data.

In terms of provincial comparison of **average annual increase**[100] (%) in order of highest reported need, KwaZulu-Natal increased from 17,521 learners in 2013/14 to 71,000 in 2016/17 (122.7%), Limpopo increased from 19,344 learners in 2013/14 to 34,321 in 2016/17 (27.3%), Gauteng increased from 66,718 learners in 2012/13 to 97,114 in 2016/17 (13.4%), North West increased from 40,722 learners in 2013/14 to 52,684 in 2016/17 (12.4%), Free State increased from 8,061 learners in 2013/14 to 9,736 in 2016/17 (8.2%), Eastern Cape increased from 102,219 learners in 2012/13 to 111,406 in 2016/17 (3.2%), Northern Cape increased from 27,239 learners in 2013/14 to 27,803 in 2016/17 (1.4%) and Western Cape increased from 55,106 learners in 2013/14 to 57,416 in 2016/17 (1.4%), and Mpumalanga decreased from 102,219 learners in 2013/14 to 111,406 in 2016/17 (-3.1%).

Figure 5. Average Annual Increase (%) in Actual Learners Transported, for available data: 2013/14-2016/17



The general view amongst most stakeholders expressed in this evaluation is that there is a significant under-estimation of the extent of learner transport need (demand) in the country. The issue was explored in some detail (see efficiency section below), and produced some eye-opening figures using the StatsSA General Household Survey 2016 with reference to learner transport data. On the basis of the StatsSA GHS 2016 data, the total need figures for 2016/17 show that there were 617,311 learners requiring transport in South Africa. Even though this is a rather conservative estimate of unmet need, it is 18% more than the reported need (national DBE, DOT).

[100] Average annual increase for all percentages quoted

Table 19. Total demand (need) for learner transport 2016/17 and 2017/18[101]

PROVINCE	Reported Demand 2016/17	Actual transported 2016/17	Unmet demand (GHS 2016)	Total Demand 2016/17 (incl. GHS)	Actual transported[102] 2017/18	Unmet Demand (GHS 2017)	Total Demand 2017/18 (incl. GHS)
Eastern Cape	111 406	78 061	14 625	92 686	80 552	22 046	102 598
Free State	9 736	11 929	1 782	13 711	7 684	1 733	9 417
Gauteng	97 114	109 618	1 272	110 890	116 773	2 009	118 782
KwaZulu-Natal	71 000	47 747	113 126	160 873	55 307	83 432	138 739
Limpopo	34 321	34 321	11 174	45 495	37 143	6 409	43 552
Mpumalanga	60 231	60 119	4 223	64 342	60 629	3 633	64 262
Northern Cape	27 803	23 684	343	24 027	23 749	237	23 986
North West	52 684	42 281	4 789	47 070	58 853	7 742	66 595
Western Cape	57 416	58 217	-	58 217	58 660	523	59 183
National LTP	**521 711**	465 977	151 334	**617 311**	**499 350**	**127 764**	**627 114**

Reported **demand (need)** across the country increased from 403,545 qualifying learners who required learner transport in 2013/14, to 521,711 in 2016/17, an average annual increase of just 13% in comparison to the average annual increase of 21% in the Programme's allocated budget.[103]

In 2013/14 the number of learners transported by the Programme in South Africa was 343,402 which increased to 465,977 learners in 2016/17, and 499,350 in 2017/18.

In terms of provincial comparison of **average annual increase**[104] (%) in order of highest reported need, KwaZulu-Natal increased from 17,521 learners in 2013/14 to 71,000 in 2016/17 (122.7%), Limpopo increased from 19,344 learners in 2013/14 to 34,321 in 2016/17 (27.3%), Gauteng increased from 66,718 learners in 2012/13 to 97,114 in 2016/17 (13.4%), North West increased from 40,722 learners in 2013/14 to 52,684 in 2016/17 (12.4%), Free State increased from 8,061 learners in 2013/14 to 9,736 in 2016/17 (8.2%), Eastern Cape increased from 102,219 learners in 2012/13 to 111,406 in 2016/17 (3.2%), Northern Cape increased from 27,239 learners in 2013/14 to 27,803 in 2016/17 (1.4%) and Western Cape increased from 55,106 learners in 2013/14 to 57,416 in 2016/17 (1.4%), and Mpumalanga decreased from 102,219 learners in 2013/14 to 111,406 in 2016/17 (-3.1%).

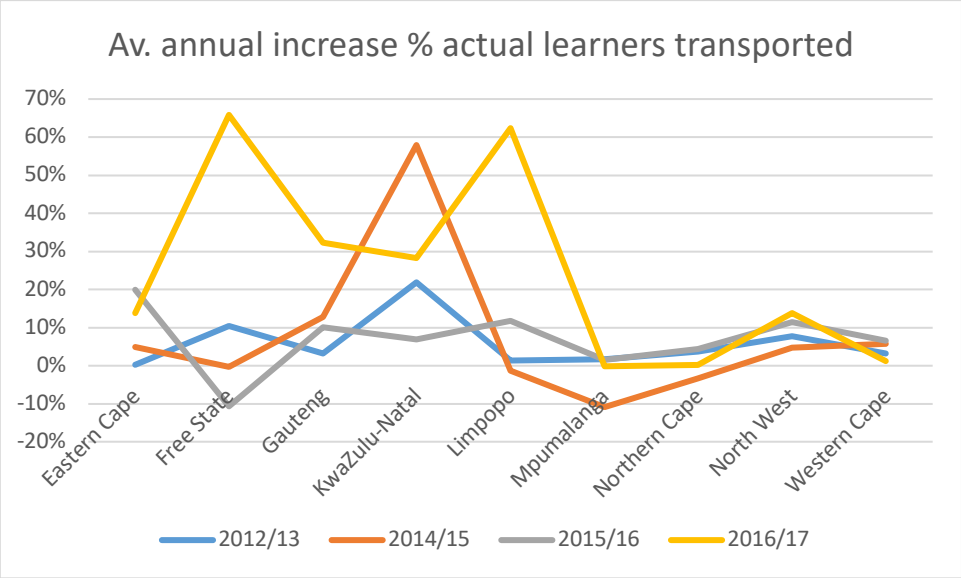
[101] Source: Data for 2012-13 was obtained from the provincial implementing departments; Data for **perceived demand** from 2013-14 to 2016-17 was obtained from the Department of Basic Education (administrative programme data).

[102] Source: Progress report on the implementation of learner transport: 4th Quarter 2017-18(DBE: 2018)

[103] Comparison with the actual programme expenditure was not possible due to the gaps in the data.

[104] Average annual increase for all percentages quoted

Figure 6. Average Annual Increase (%) in Actual Learners Transported, for available data: 2013/14-2016/17



The significant difference between reported need by provincial departments versus the conservative estimate of total need using StatsSA data from the GHS 2016, causes uncertainty in terms of programme performance. If we used reported performance data from provincial departments solely, specifically for reported need, then we could conclude that the **Learner Transport Programme nationally is largely effective**, based on the understanding of three critical performance factors:

(1) An assessment of *83% average programme coverage*[105] of learner transport services provided, in the period 2012/13 to 2016/17. In other words, the Programme response to national need was an average of 83% in the period of review.[106] The average *unmet need* was therefore 17% in the same period.

(2) In terms of punctuality, most of the learners sampled (58%) as well educators interviewed in this evaluation reported that learner transport vehicles arrived punctually in time for school. Although there are obvious improvements possible, the Programme is also considered to be largely successful in this area.

(3) In terms of safety, 80% of learners sampled travelled in buses, but 50% of all learners did not use safety belts. Further, combined with a consideration of overcrowding (25% of sample) on buses and taxis, the assessment is that learners supported by the Programme (i) have gained access to learner transport when they probably were unable to do so before, (ii) those approximately 466,000 learners are being transported in a manner that poses some safety concerns which presents clear areas for implementation improvements from a road safety perspective.

[105] Learners transported versus reported need of

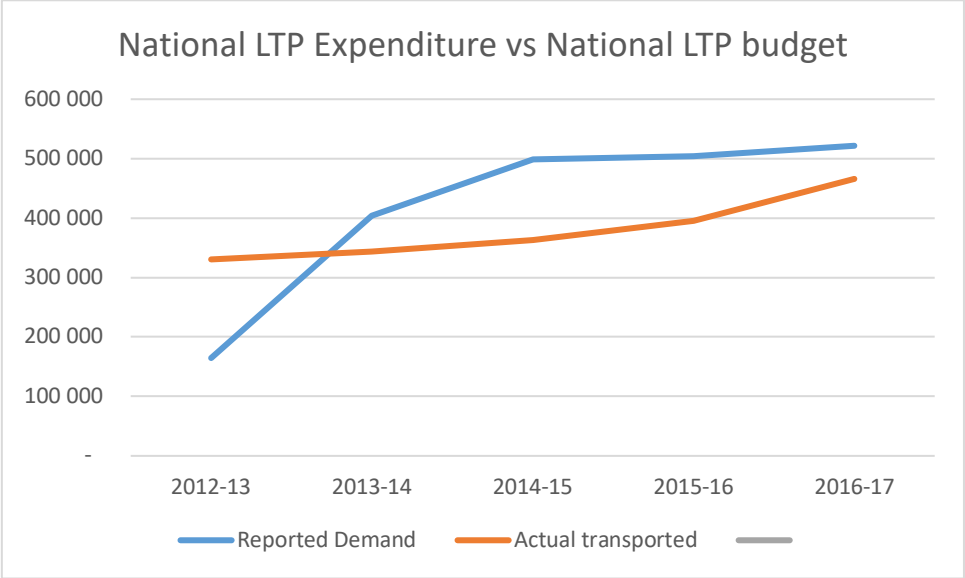
[106] Based on available data

If we accept the StatsSA GHS figures for 2016/17 and 2017/18 with conservative assumptions[107], then the Learner Transport Programme would still be considered relatively **effective in responding to the extent of country need**, based on performance of 77% for the first factor of *average programme coverage* for the two years for which we have data available (2016/17 and 2017/18).

Programme coverage is 75% in 2016/17 (STATSSA data) from levels of 70%-93% in preceding years (DOT/DBE data). There is a possibility is that the assessment of *average programme coverage* of learner transport services provided will drop in the period 2012/13 to 2016/17 if STATSSA data was available and used in the same period. In sum, the Programme's performance would be considered largely effective in meeting the national need across the entire period of review. It is important to note that even utilizing a conservative STATSSA GHS 2016 estimate for *unmet* need of 127,764 learners, the Programme's response is substantially inadequate in KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo in 2016/17.

There is a significant portion of learners that has not been counted as part of *unmet need*[108] because there is no clarity on how many learners are walking more than five kilometres (to-and-from school) in the StatsSA GHS 2016 and 2017 band of learners who take 31-60 minutes to walk to school. Further research is needed to establish what this additional figure may be.

Figure 7. Learner Transport Programme Coverage (response) relative to demand (need)



The table below captures the **critical programme performance data** for the period 2012/13 to 2016/17: allocated budget, actual expenditure, reported demand, learners transported, programme coverage, and cost per learner transported.

[107] See the chapter on Efficiency for the assessment of *unmet need*, and the use of STATSSA GHS 2016 and GHS 2017 below

[108] See write-up below in Efficiency chapter, on STATSSA GHS data.

Table 20. National LTP Key Performance Indicators 2012/13-2016/17 (calculated figures)

NLTP Key Performance Indicators	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
National LTP **allocated Budget**	1 572 823 172	1 544 551 212	2 097 573 000	2 361 664 000	2 660 786 000
National LTP **Actual Expenditure**	1 262 957 285	1 034 965 553	1 804 468 018	2 104 964 027	2 641 335 571
National LTP **Reported Demand**	164 394	403 545	498 263	503 859	617 311[109]
National LTP **Learners Transported**	330 436	343 402	363 529	395 592	465 977
National LTP **Coverage** (programme response)	70%	93%	78%	81%	75%[110]
Cost per Learner Transported (R) - average per year	4 153	5 439	6 066	4 305	5 298

There was virtually no data available for programme KPIs, except for the North West Province:

- Learner transport operators contracted (number),
- Contracted Learner Transport Operated (kilometers)
- Cost per Learner Transport Kilometre (R)
- Vehicles operating contracted learner transport (number)

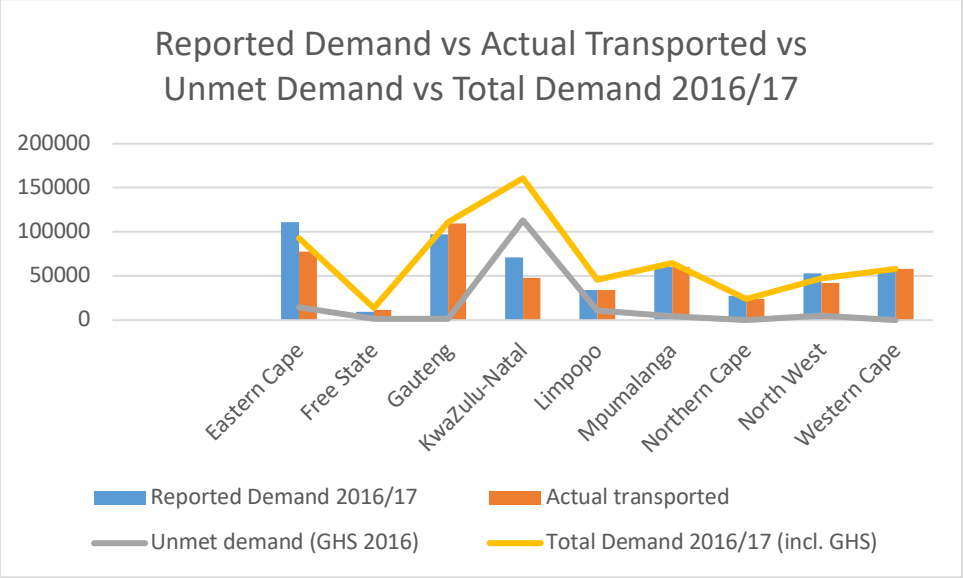
Reported demand[111] for learner transport across the country increased by an average of 9% between 2014/15 and 2016/17, based on available data – data is absent for two years (2012/13 and 2013/14).

[109] This is based on a conservative estimate of *Total Demand* (comprised of Programme data: *learners transported* PLUS GHS (2016) *unmet demand* of learners walking to nearest school)

[110] Based on conservative STATSSA GHS (2016) estimate – see chapter on Efficiency below.

[111] See table on learner transport demand above for sources.

Figure 8. Reported Demand (DBE, DOT) vs Learners Transported (DBE, DOT) vs Unmet Demand (GHS 2016) vs Total Demand (combined)



The diagram (above) graphically represents the effect of programme-related data sources on observable trends of programme performance, specifically *programme coverage*. We only have DOT/DBE administrative data available in the period 2012/13-2015/16. Even utilizing a conservative STATSSA GHS 2016 estimate for *unmet* need 127,764 learners, the diagram above shows that the Programme's response is substantially inadequate in KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo in 2016/17.

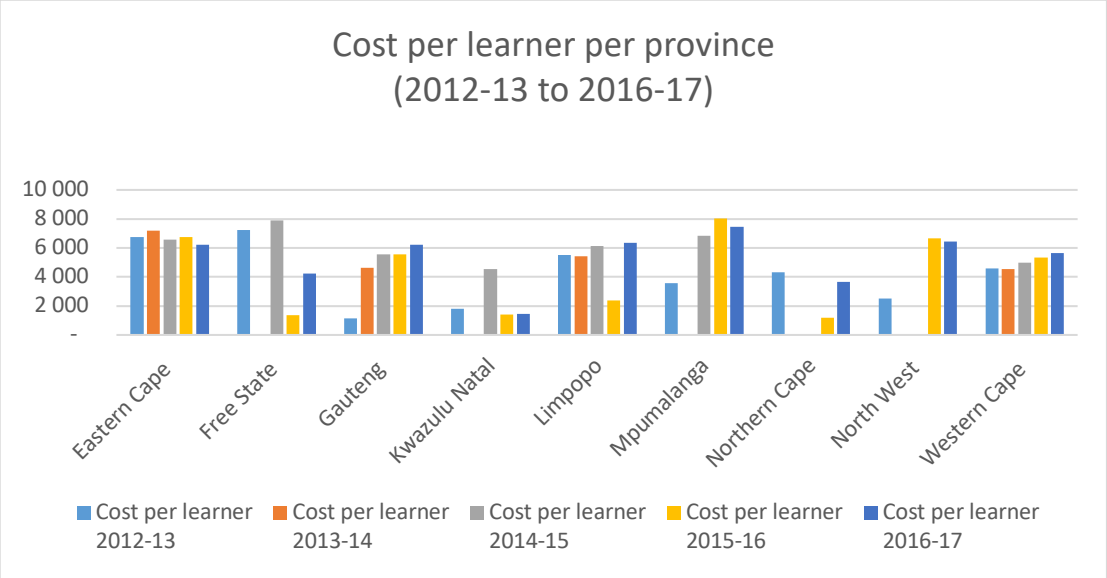
Average increases per **provincial learner transport programme delivery** in the same period, and in order were: KwaZulu-Natal (123%), Limpopo (27%), Gauteng (13%), North West (12%), Free State (8%), Eastern Cape (3%), Western Cape (1%), Northern Cape (1%), and Mpumalanga (-3%).

Table 21. Average annual increase (%) in reported demand by Province

PROVINCE	Reported Demand 2012/13	Annual increase (%) 2013/14	Annual increase (%) 2014/15	Annual increase (%) 2015/16	Annual increase (%) 2016/17	Average increase (%)
Eastern Cape		-7%	-7%	4%	13%	0.6%
Free State			0%	-11%	35%	8.2%
Gauteng			13%	10%	17%	13.4%
KwaZulu-Natal			385%	-5%	-12%	122.7%
Limpopo			87%	3%	-8%	27.3%
Mpumalanga			-11%	0%	1%	-3.1%
Northern Cape			-13%	17%	1%	1.4%
North West			52%	-15%	0%	12.4%
Western Cape		2%	-2%	7%	0%	1.6%
National LTP		-7%	-7%	4%	13%	0.6%

The cost per learner increases from R 4,567 in 2012/13 to R5,015 in 2016/17, and there were unfortunately lots of data gaps in the number of learner transport kilometres financed by the Programme in the period of review, which made it quite difficult to undertake further analysis of budget/expenditure and programme performance trends.

Figure 9. NLTP Financial Cost per Learner Transported (R), 2012/13-2016/17



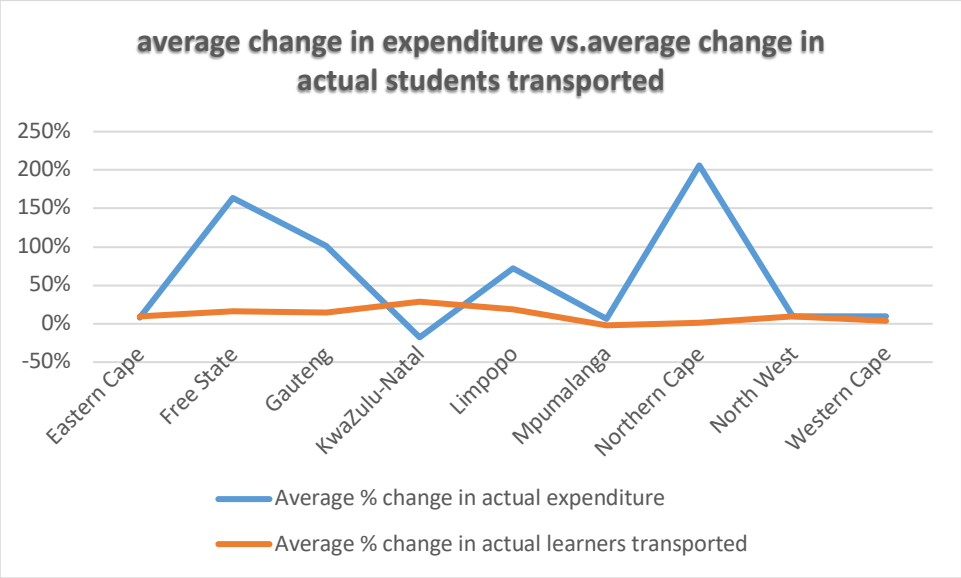
In **summary of the key results** (in terms of effectiveness to deliver transport to learners) in the period 2012/13-2016/17, it is clear that the Learner Transport Programme has made a **major contribution to providing a transport solution** to a total of 499,350 qualifying learners in need across South Africa in 2017/18. If we contextualise the provision of transportation to those learners fortunate enough to receive programme benefits, against the (conservative) estimation of the total learner population (627,114[112]) who are eligible for inclusion under the programme, we reach a conclusion that the Programme is **largely effective** in addressing the scale of the learner transport challenge in South Africa. With 75% *programme coverage* in 2016/17, It is clear, that the Programme's effectiveness can be improved, considering *unmet need* (127,764 learners) and underspending.

In terms of **provincial comparison**, transport was delivered for learners (2017 figures, actual) in Gauteng (109, 618), Eastern Cape (78,061), Mpumalanga (60,119), Western Cape (58,217), KwaZulu-Natal (47,747), North West (42,281), Limpopo (34,321), Northern Cape (23,684) and Free State (11, 929).[113]

[112] STATSSA GHS 2016

[113] See table 6 above.

Figure 10. Average annual change: Programme Expenditure vs. Learners Transported



There is an apparent disconnect between need identification data at schools, and figures used in planning in provincial departments. There appears to be a **measure of disconnect** between programme expenditure and the fundamentals of the Programme – expenditure grows erratically but reported demand for learner transport, the number of learners transported, and overall programme coverage grows more steadily in percentage terms. This assessment is qualified and requires careful examination – missing performance data! is likely to provide for confounding and possibly even contradictory trends in analysis of key programme areas. The GHS figures for *unmet need* for 2016/17 (127,764 learners) provide an indication of the extent to which evaluatory assessments of the Programme can change when data becomes available.

In many of the provinces reviewed[114], official figures reported and/or audited also appear puzzling, or at least require further investigation. There are also critical gaps that make further data analysis impossible. Data is missing for other aspects of programme performance (empirical), viz. learner transport operators contracted, the contracted learner transport kilometres, vehicles operating contracted learner transport, and forensic reports in scholar/learner transport.

Now that we have established that 50350 learners per annum (2016/17) are being transported to-and-from school every school-day, to what extent are learners arriving at school safely, and on time? In terms of the data collected in this evaluation, a learner survey was administered, alongside individual interviews and/or focus groups with national and provincial officials, principals, educators, operators, drivers, and a civil society organisation (Equal Education).

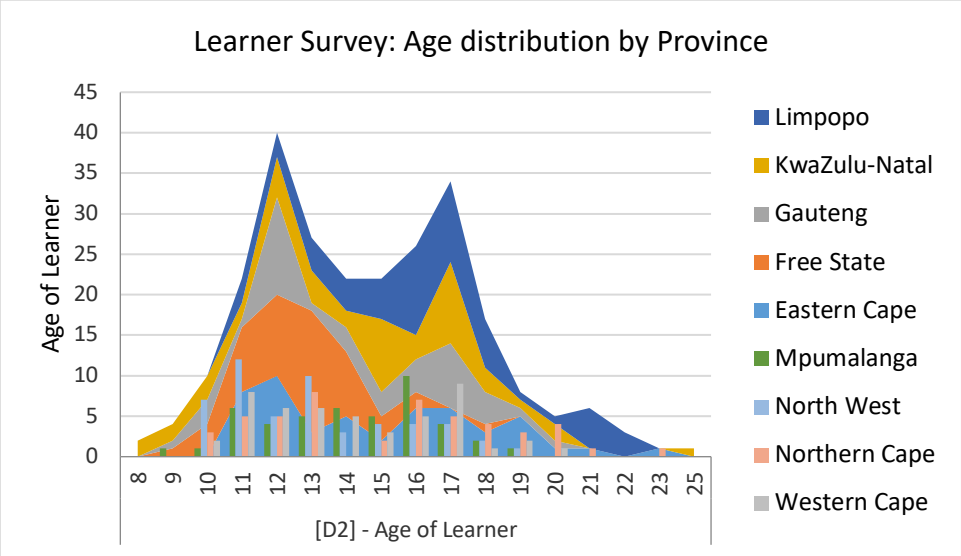
The sampled data collected during evaluation fieldwork is meant to provide information about the Programme, its implementation on the ground, and the **day-to-day experiences** of learners and

[114] See individual provincial reports in the Annexures

teachers, over-and-above the empirical data which was accessed from official/administrative sources as detailed.

In terms of the national profile of learners surveyed, more **learners sampled** were **female** (54%), **rural** (61.5%), **transported mainly in buses** (80%) and the rest in **minibus taxis** on **gravel roads** (78%), and are **aged mainly 11-13** and **14-17**.

Figure 11. Learner Sample Age distribution



Most of the learners in the sample reported **travelling by bus** to-and-from school. See below.

Figure 12. Learner Transport Vehicles in Use

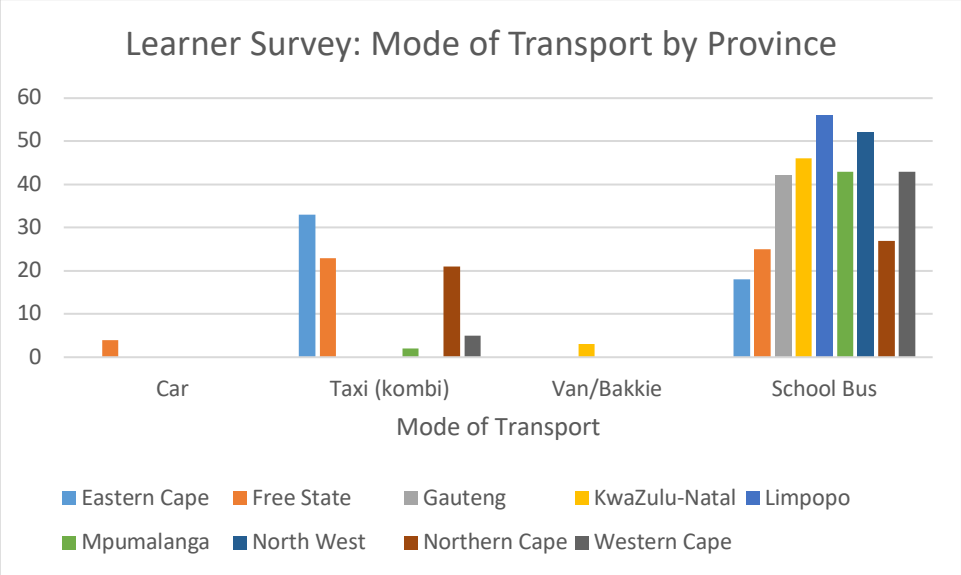
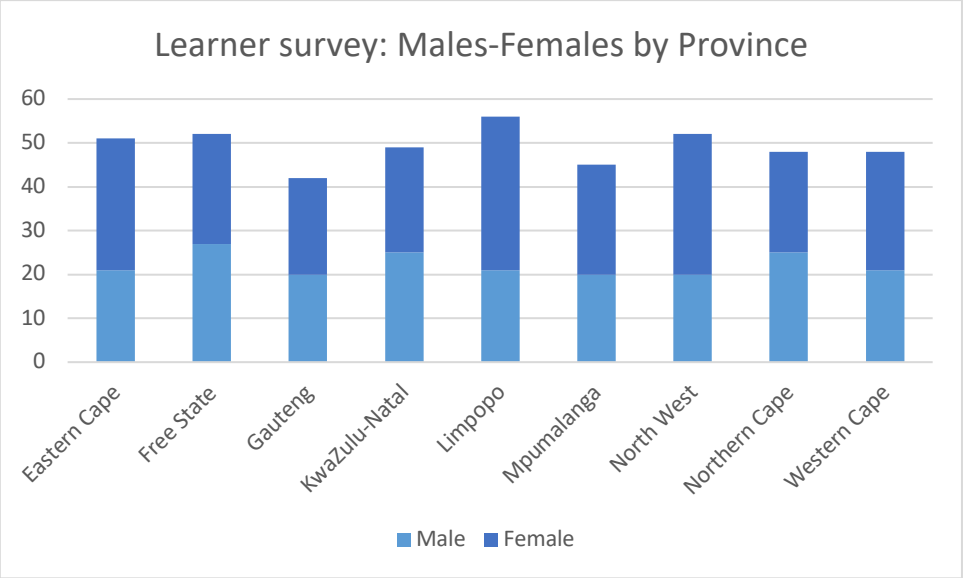
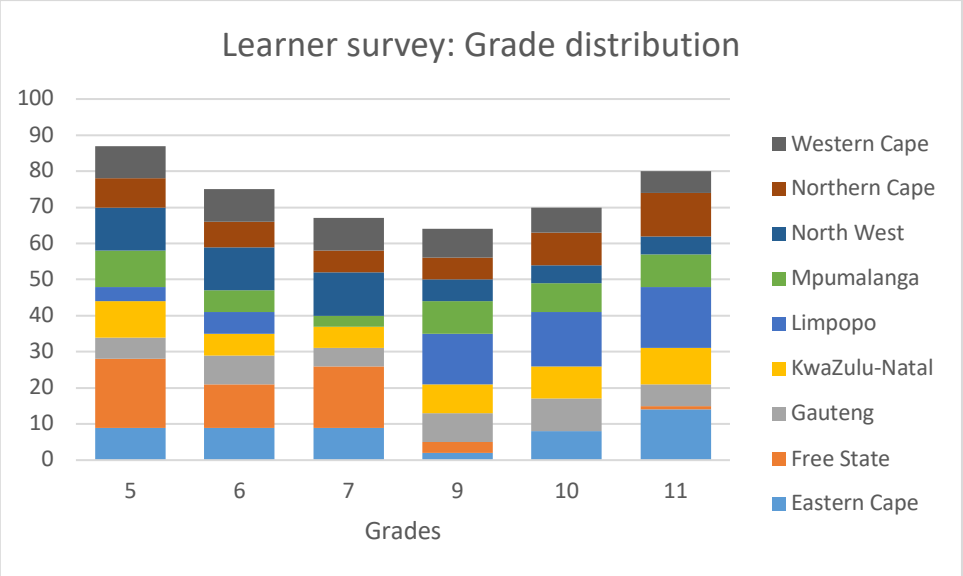


Figure 13. Learner survey: Male-Female distribution by Province



In the sample, there are **more female learners** than male learners being transported by the Programme.

Figure 14. Learner survey: Grade distribution by Province

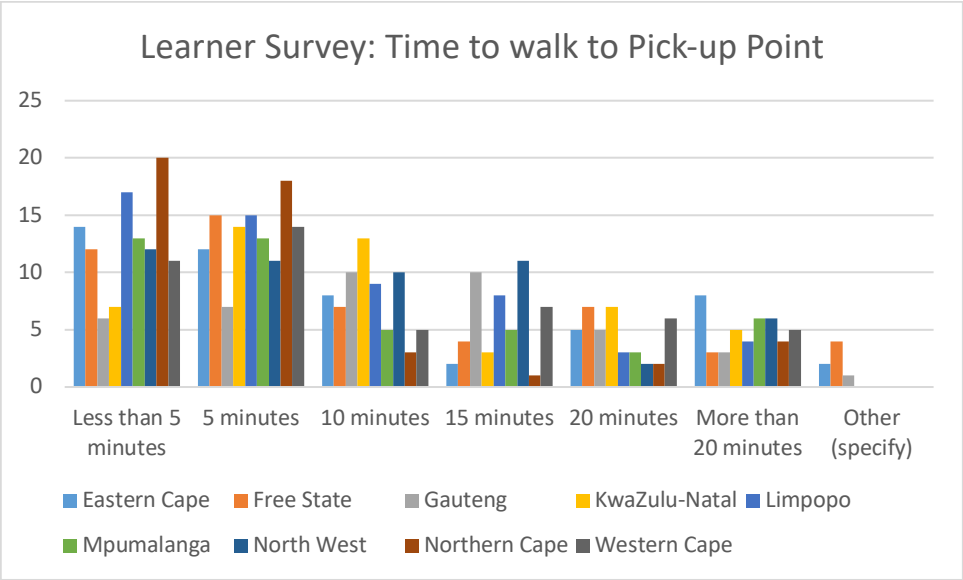


There is a **more or less even distribution** across the learner grades in the sample, although slightly more for grades 5, 6, 7, 10 and 11.

All of the following **findings** relate directly to the **sampled data** from all nine provinces:

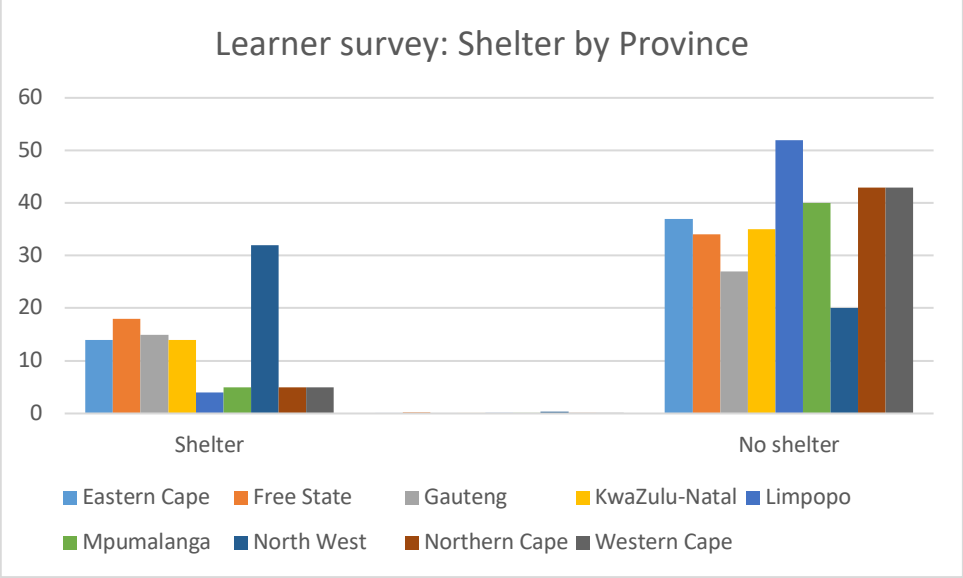
1. **Learner transport programme experience:** learners are being **picked up "close to" home** (64%), but a significant number (29%) are **still walking some distance** to get to learner transport pick-up points. In time, that translates into about 18% of sampled learners **walking for 20 minutes or more** to get to the learner transport.

Figure 15. Learner Survey: Time taken to walk to Pick-up Point



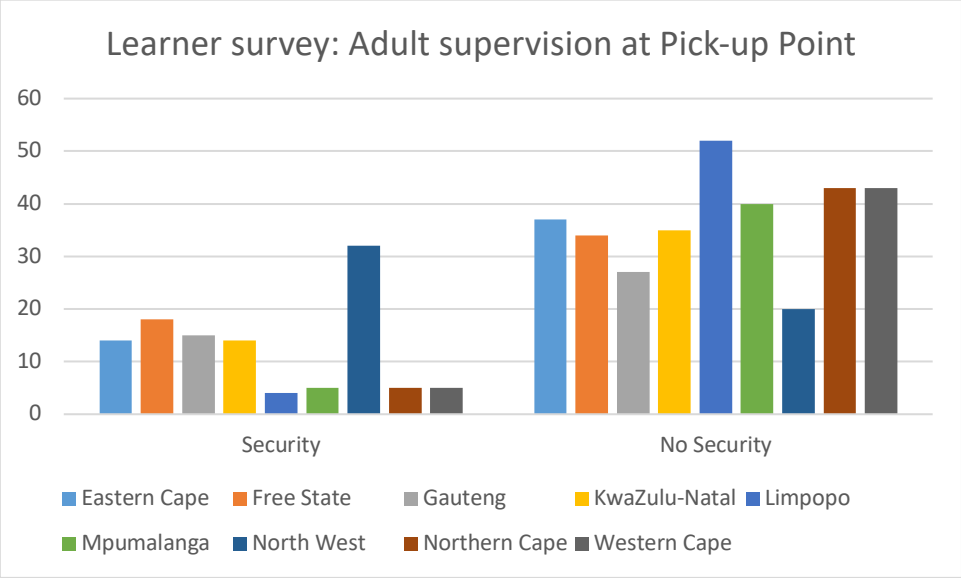
2. Generally, **pick-up points** are reported to **have no shelter** from weather elements (80%).

Figure 16 . Learner survey: Shelter by Province



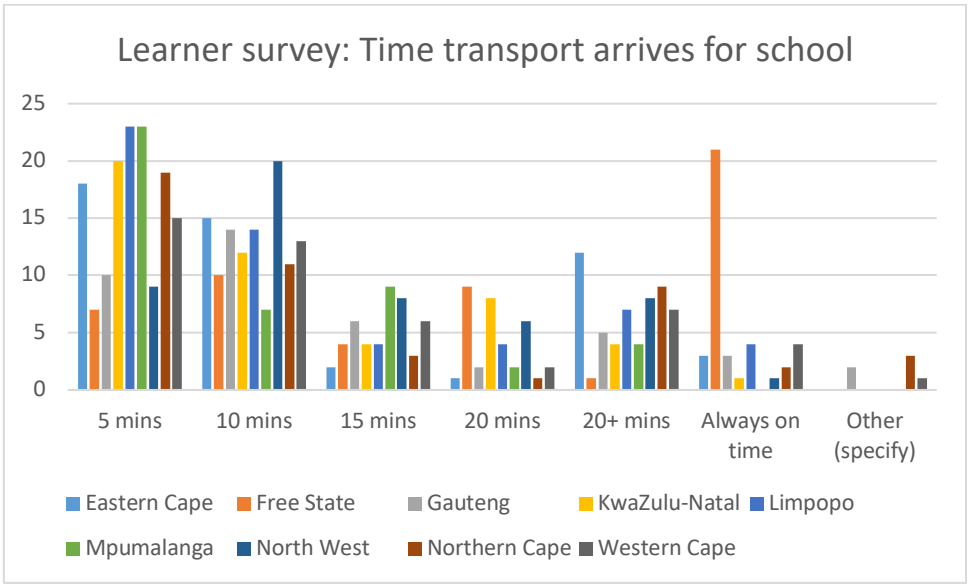
3. And most **pick-up points** (75%) are reported to **have no adult supervision**.

Figure 17. Learner survey: Adult supervision at pick-up point by Province



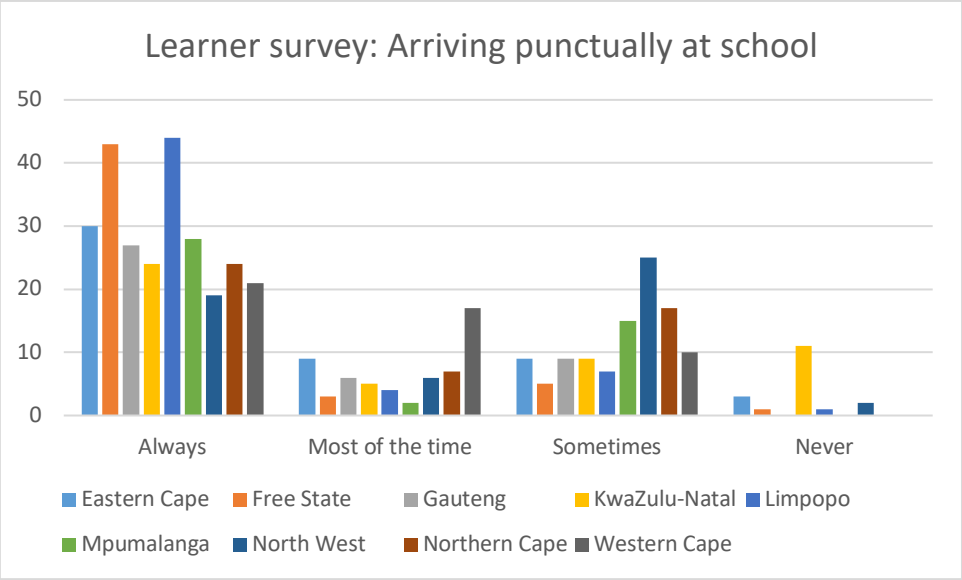
4. Once learners have arrived at the pick-up points, **waiting times for learner transport vehicles** are usually **relatively short** (less than 15 minutes), but 20% of learners report that they wait 20 minutes or more.

Figure 18. Learner survey: Time before transport arrives for school



5. The Programme is **pro-education**. In terms of **school punctuality**, learners report that **buses are consistently arriving on time** (58%) for the start of school, although 4% of learners say that buses are "always late".

Figure 19. Learner survey: Arriving punctually at school in the morning



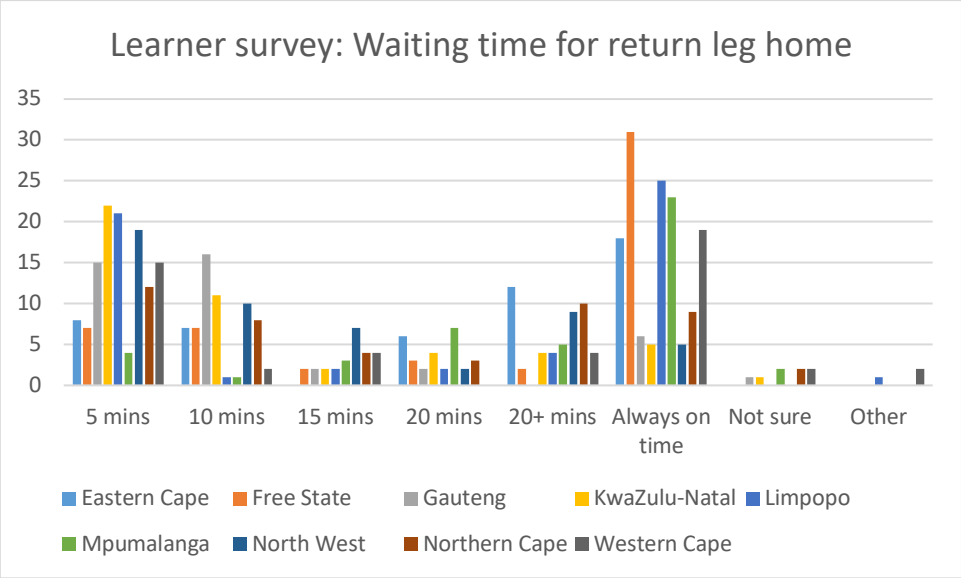
Of learners sampled, 13% indicated arriving at school most of the time, and about 24% sometimes.

Table 22. Learner survey: Punctuality by province

Province: Punctuality	Eastern Cape	Free State	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Natal	Limpopo	Mpumalanga	North West	Northern Cape	Western Cape
Always	59%	83%	64%	49%	79%	62%	37%	50%	44%
Most of the time	18%	6%	14%	10%	7%	4%	12%	15%	35%
Sometimes	18%	10%	21%	18%	13%	33%	48%	35%	21%
Never	6%	2%	0%	22%	2%	0%	4%	0%	0%

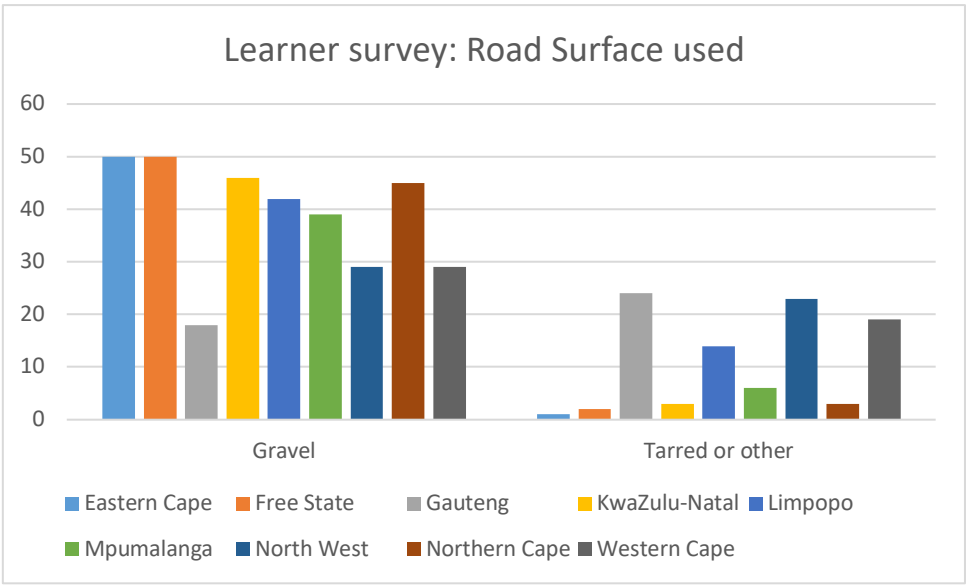
6. **Drop-off/collection points** at school are **within the school grounds**, or **immediately outside** the school, with 52% of learners reporting that a **security guard is on duty**. Most learners report that they **wait** for a relatively **short 5-15 minutes** before being collected **in the afternoons**.

Figure 20. Learner survey: Waiting time for return leg home



7. In terms of **safety**, **buses on gravel roads** are relatively safer than other means, but at least 50% of learners sampled reported that **safety belts are not used/buses do not have them**. A quarter of learners reported that there is **learner transport overloading** occurring on a daily basis, and that **some drivers are speeding** (8%).

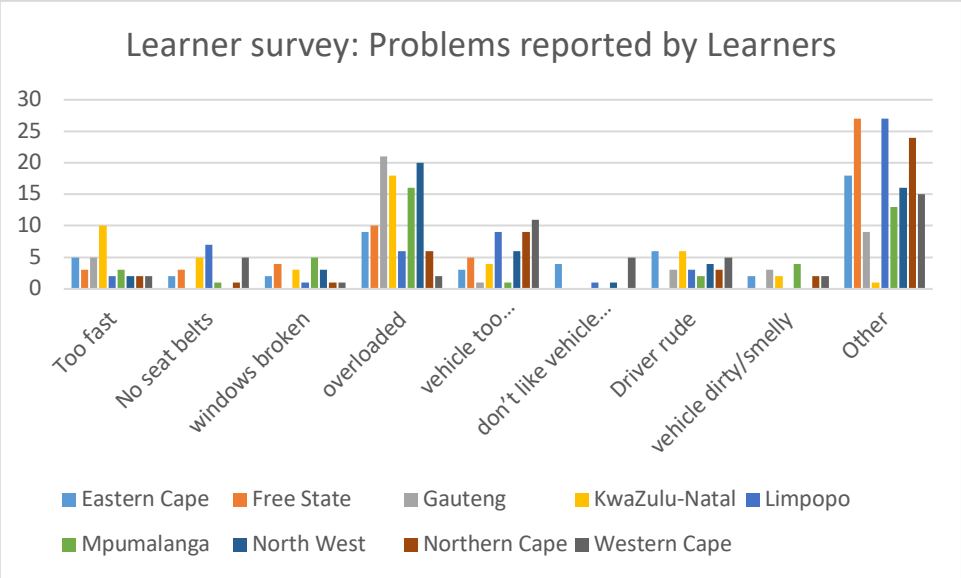
Figure 21. Learner Transport Road Surfaces



8. A combined 15-26% of learners complained about the **roadworthiness/condition of vehicles**. These issues are significant because learners have reported that they experience

these problems on a daily basis. In line with this, **learners want**: bigger/more buses (25%), and the condition of vehicles to be improved (21%).

Figure 22. Learner survey: Problems reported by Learners by Province



9. **Other problems** (yet significant and important) raised by learners are: **bullying** (7%), and **learners misbehaving** (6%) despite having a learner transport code of conduct in many cases.

The programme purpose of the National Learner Transport Programme is to safely transport learners (who relatively far away from the nearest school) to and from school through dedicated transport solutions including integrated services that cater for the needs of learners. Safety and punctuality are, therefore, critical issues that must also be taken into account in the assessment of the effectiveness of the Programme. However, if we accept the StatsSA GHS 2016 and 2017 conservative estimate of *unmet need* of 127,764 learners, then the Learner Transport Programme would be considered **largely effective** in responding to the extent of country need, and performs relatively well in the first factor of *average programme coverage* (77%) for the two years for which we have data available (2016/17 and 2017/18). The Programme's performance would be considered largely effective in meeting the national need across the entire period of review.

It is clear that there are still significant challenges in terms of **punctuality** and **safety**, in terms of the feedback received from sampled learners. Overloading, the absence of/non-use of safety belts, and the roadworthiness of vehicles are the main safety concerns in terms of the feedback. Almost two-thirds of sampled learners reported that learner transport vehicles are arriving punctually at school in the mornings.

What were the main immediate programme outcomes, and intermediate outcomes?[115]

The national Learner Transport Programme may have transported 499,350 learners (2017/18) in the country, but were they delivered on time? What immediate difference did having access to learner transport make for the learners, and for their day-to-day schooling experience? The specific experience of learners and system feedback from educators/monitors will largely be dealt with in the section on programme efficiency, but here we will also pick up on some of the quality elements of the effectiveness assessment of the Programme.

The general national picture emerging from combined provincial analysis as far as implementation of the joint Learner Transport Programme is concerned, is one of relatively sound and effective systems on the ground (school-level), through the sprawling reach of provincial departments of Education down into distant schools at grassroots level. Although obviously and necessarily uneven in places, respondents were generally aware of the Programme, understood what it was meant to achieve; and embraced the value of safely transporting qualifying learners to-and-from school. Programme coverage has reached about **75% of national need**, and where it has been able to reach, it is making a big difference to the lives of those children, in many communities across all nine provinces.

There are **significant problems with programme systems and performance data integrity**, especially between district and provincial levels, with the result that there are sharp movements in performance data trends from year-to-year, and which cannot plausibly be accounted for. Our evaluation assessment is, therefore, qualified and makes clear recommendations in this regard.

The Programme is profoundly **pro-poor**, **pro-education**, **pro-rural** and **pro-inclusion** in orientation because of its reach into poor and distant communities that have difficult access to public ordinary schools, and together with other Government interventions, such as no-fees in schools, and the school nutrition programme, has a **strong redistributory effect** to improve the day-to-day experience of children and adolescents in education, and in their lives in general.

As far as **immediate outcomes** are concerned, when 499,350 learners (2017/18) across the country were able to catch buses/minibus taxis (100% subsidized by Government), and arrived at schools mostly on time, and in relatively safe transport, **access to education** was improved, and the day-to-day experience of getting to-and-from school was made easier, and **inclusion was enabled** because learners were now less time-poor, less tired, and were able to get on with day-to-day activities like making and keeping friends (while being transported on the buses), and were more ready and able to participate in education development opportunities provided in schools. Both departmental

[115] Evaluation TOR question 2.1.3

Education-related and Transport-related higher-level outcomes are being contributed to. In the case of Transport, achievements are being registered by the NLTP in terms of: a **timeous delivery** of service; a **reduction in road accidents** (number of); a **coordinated approach** to planning and implementation; (sub-outcome) **adherence to road traffic regulations** by operators; (output) **vehicle maintenance plans** and technical support for emergencies; (sub-outcome) **viable and sustainable operations**; (output) **uniformity of services** and tariff structure; and (output) a **coherent performance monitoring** system.

As a result (an intermediate outcome), the **quality of life of transported learners improved**. The significance of this outcome is often not understood, because of its complex weightiness and consequential effects on long-term personal and professional development. An improved day-to-day experience at primary and/or high school can have quite profound effects on individual outcomes in later life. Improved access to education is known is strongly associated with a better quality of life in adulthood and in the world of work. An improved quality of life as a child learner can in in itself potentially improve educational outcomes, and decreased time-poverty, improved vitality, and social inclusion together will have potentially dramatic possibilities opening up for individual self-expression and holistic learning inside and outside of the classroom environment.

A reported effect across all nine provinces, is that the Learner Transport Programme has improved **school enrolments** in schools, because learners are being enrolled by their parents/enrolling themselves (orphans), specifically because the schools referred to are being supported by the Programme. This represents **an intermediate outcome**, and supports the mandate and institutional outcomes of the departments of Education.

There were some other **intended consequences**[116] that are observable, based on the data available: the Programme has had an effect on local economic development, specifically business opportunities to provide learner transport services across the country. It stands to reason that Government-spend of more than R2.5 billion per annum (2016/17 figure) would generate an economic effect. Although this implementation evaluation was not specifically tasked to make an assessment of the economic contribution of this Programme-spend, it became clear from the data available, that some effect was taking place.

In the **Eastern Cape**: **Local Economic Opportunities for SMMEs:** it is reported that, the Programme has brought with it a host of opportunities for local businesses to provide services to Government. Though the total number of contracted service providers and the value of the opportunities could not be readily verified in this report, interaction with owners and provincial officials confirm that, a number of local entrepreneurs are now sustainably engaged or contracted for the next three years. In addition, many drivers are also employed. The long-term spin-offs may be improvement in livelihoods for the related families in the various districts. **Free State**: the Programme is also reported to lead to the generation of employment and business opportunities for local service providers, which is expected to bring about economic spinoffs within the province. In the **North West**: regarding **supplier development**, the programme has made a very significant contribution to local black business development. More than 200 operators have been contracted, and feedback from respondents

[116] DOT (2009) Final Draft Scholar Transport Policy

indicates that a number of businesses have been established, and have thrived, as a direct result of the Programme.

Other un**intended consequences**: In **Gauteng**: one respondent in a school was quite unhappy about the additional work and responsibilities brought to bear down on her/him as a result of the Programme. This is a possible response from educators that could potentially harm the full effect of the Programme going forward. Educators and principals and whole schools are making a profound contribution to making the Programme a success – it is important that national, provincial and district programme leaders make serious efforts to recognize, acknowledge and reward this contribution to child, household, community and country.

In this light, it is important that the right educators are selected to contribute. **Northern Cape**: **Operators from outside the NW Province** were used, and cross-subsidized NW Province trips using Limpopo Province revenue, and vice versa for cash-flow/profit-seeking reasons. In some cases, this is raised as a problem, especially when contracts are not managed properly by the provincial department of Transport.

Other issues: not related to learner transport. **Orphans** have required a response from learner transport monitors. A major problem reported in one school in the **North West**, is that more than half of the school is attended by orphans. Despite learner transport enabling better access to schooling, many of these children have nothing to eat. Teachers at the school have to address hunger before teaching. Children are living on their own, without parenting/supervision by an adult.

To what extent is learner transport provided by the Programme (1) reliable, (2) safe, (3) secure? Provide a provincial breakdown relative to national and provincial policy.[117]

In terms of **reliability**, the following was observable from the data collected from the learner sample:

In **Eastern Cape**: About 96% report that the transport arrives for school every morning. 59% report always on time for school, 18% most of the time.

In **Free State**: in testing **service reliability**, 60% reported that the transport is always on time, and 83% reported getting to school on time, mostly before 8am. 15% reported being late on some days. Almost 23% indicated that the vehicle does not always arrive. When this occurs, most learners do not go to school at all on such days, while about 25% walk to school.

Gauteng: In terms of **punctuality**, 64% report that they get to school on time, and 14% report "most of the time", but 21% report only "sometimes: on time". School monitors and principals interviewed that punctuality of transported learners is good, and that generally learners make school starting times.

Limpopo: About 79% report that they always get to school on time in the morning. 7% that they get to school on time most of the time, and 13% that they sometimes get to school on time. On the return

[117] Evaluation TOR question 2.1.4

leg home, 48% stated that they wait for approximately 5-20 minutes, while 25% stated that the learner transport is always on time.

KwaZulu-Natal: About 78% report that the bus comes every day in the mornings, while 22% that the bus comes sometimes, or does not come at all.

Mpumalanga: In terms of **punctuality**, 62% report that they always get to school on time, but 33% report that they are only "sometimes: on time".

Northern Cape: 40% wait about 5 minutes before the learner transport collects them for school. 19% have to wait for more than 20 minutes. About 65% report getting to school on time, most times.

North West: 37% report that they get to school on time, but 12% report "most of the time", and 48% report that they are only "sometimes: on time".

Western Cape: Around 79% reported getting to school on time or most of the time.

In terms of **personal safety and the environment**, the following was observable from the data collected from the learner sample:

(1) In **Eastern Cape**: 55% report being **picked up** at a point close to their homes, while 45% indicated being picked up from a place far from their homes. About 80% indicated **not having shelters** at the pick-up points for protection against bad weather while they wait for the transport, while 73% also indicated not having any **adult supervision** while they wait at the pick-up points. Most 71% wait between 5-15 minutes to be collected by learner transport operators in the morning, while about 17% reported that they wait 20 minutes or more.

(2) In the **Free State**: Most 25% report being **picked up** either at home or at a pick up point that is close to their homes (56%). About 20% reported being picked up from points far from their homes. 69% report that the pickup point does not have **shelters**. 65% report being accompanied by an adult on the way to the pick-up point, while the remaining either walk alone or with other learners. Some also wait in groups then they arrive at the pickup point, where there are other learners gathering at the same spot. Most are **dropped off** at the school gate or within the school car park, mostly within the school yard. In some cases (52%) there are teachers, or security at the sport where they get dropped off. **After schools** learners are **picked up** - buses wait at the schools, and it takes between 5-10mins for learners to be collected from school to home after school. Where the buses do more than one trip in the in both mornings and afternoons, the second batch then have to wait. Those that have *extracurricular activities* also wait. About 20% indicate waiting more than 20mins. The afterschool scenarios are similar to the morning ones where there are either teachers or security at the gates or points of pick up at the school. Where learners have to wait for the transport, they usually do so in groups.

(3) In **Gauteng**: **pick-up** points: About 55% are collected close to home, but 45% of learners report being collected at a point "far from home". To put this in perspective, for time taken to get to the pick-up point, most (48%) take an estimated 10-15 minutes, which does not appear to be significant. The estimated distance walked is likely to be about one kilometer. Only 7% reported having to walk more

than 20 minutes to the collection point. About 88% of learners reported that collection points currently have no **shelter** from weather elements. In Gauteng's thunder storms, this can pose a significant problem for learners. Only 36% reported that there is adult **supervision** at the collection point, but 64% report that there is currently **no adult supervision**, which increases safety risks for learners, although they are travelling with others. In terms of **waiting time**, most have to wait between 5-20 minutes for the contracted transport to arrive. About 15% of learners reported that they have to wait more than 20 minutes at the collection point. Adverse weather conditions could significantly affect learners on the way to- or from- school. 52% report that there is currently no **teacher/monitor/security guard** on duty at the **drop-off point** at school. And 64% report that there is no teacher/monitor/security guard when they are collected for the return trip home. Because of the relative proximity to the school premises, security linked to learner transport appears to be of relatively smaller concern than general school security matters, and monitoring of school grounds.

(4) In **Limpopo**: Most (69%) reported that they are collected at a **pick-up point** close to home. About 29% report that the pick-up point is far from home, and 5% said that they get picked up at their homes. About 71% report that they walk between 5-20 minutes to get to the pick-up point. About 12% have to walk for more than 20 minutes. About 82% report that collection points **do not have shelter**. About 93% report that there was **no adult supervision** at the pick-up point. Most (66%), wait for between 5-10 minutes before the learner transport come to take them to school. About 38% report waiting between 10-20 minutes. About 45% report that there usually is a teacher/scholar/security guard at school drop-off. 54% report there is no teacher/scholar/security guard near where they get picked up **after school**.

(5) In **KwaZulu-Natal**: almost half (51%) report being **picked up** from a place close to their home. The remaining 49% indicated pick up points far from their homes. About 34% walk for 20 minutes or more to the pick-up point, which gives a sense of the distances being walked.

(6) In **Mpumalanga**: More than 90% are collected at a **pick-up point** close to home. Most walked for less than 5 minutes, and for 5 minutes before getting to the pick-up point, 29% respectively. About 96% reported that collection points currently have no **shelter** from weather elements, and also that there was no adult **supervision** at the collection point. In terms of **waiting time**, most have to wait for 5 minutes before being collected to school. Almost half said the learner transport was always on time to take them **back home** after school. Most of the learners were being **dropped-off** at the school gate, 40%, this was closely followed by those who were dropped off at the drop off point the school gate, 36%. However, 67% report that there is **teacher/monitor/security guard** on duty at the drop-off point at school. A total of 100% are collected after school at a pick-up point inside/at gate, or close to school. Majority of learners reported that collection points (return trips) currently have **no shelter** from weather elements.

(7) In **Northern Cape**: Most report that the learner transport picks them up at a **pick up spot** close to where they reside. Worryingly, 17% express that the pick-up spot is far from their home. 80% indicated that they have to walk for 5 minutes, or less. 12% have to walk between 10-20 minutes and only 8% have to walk for more than 20 minutes to get to the pick-up point. The majority have to wait for the learners transport at a pick-up point that does not have a **shelter**, 98%. 90% report that there is **no**

adult supervision at the collection point. Most report that there is **no shelter** at the pick-up point. Only about 27% indicated that there is a shelter at the pick-up point.

(8) In North **West**: About 63% are collected at a **pick-up point** close to home, but 37% report being collected at a point "far from home". In terms of time taken to get to the pick-up point, 23% take less than 5 minutes, 21% take an estimated 5 minutes, 19% take 10 minutes, and 21% take 15 minutes. Only 12% reported having to walk more than 20 minutes to the collection point. About 92% reported that collection points currently have no **shelter** from weather elements. About 62% reported that there is adult **supervision** at the collection point, but 38% of learners report that there is currently no adult supervision. In terms of **waiting time**, most reported having to wait between 5-20 minutes for the contracted transport to arrive. About 15% reported waiting more than 20 minutes at the collection point.

(9) In **Western Cape**: 75% indicate that they walk between <5-15 minutes to get to the **pick-up point**. Most (73%) reported that there is **no shelter** at the pick-up point. 90% report no adult supervision while waiting for transport. At the pick-up point, 71% report having to wait between 5-15 minutes. All learners reported being **dropped off** at the school/outside the school, and being picked up at similar proximity to the school. Teachers and/or security guards are present in many cases. Most learners reported waiting up to 15 minutes before collection by learner transport on the **return leg home**.

Has the Programme been implemented as planned, relative to need?[118]

All available **empirical data** has been presented and analysed, and it has been argued that there are many limitations imposed by the reliability concerns outlined in terms of programme performance data. Based on available data, the National Learner Transport Programme has successfully transported the figure of 499,350 learners in 2017/18.

The Programme, therefore, with a *programme effectiveness lens* has been implemented as planned, and there is a conservative estimate of *unmet need* of 127,764 learners in 2017/18 who qualify for transport.[119] Over the period 2012/13 through 2017/18, (1) In **Eastern Cape**: 393,292 learners were transported; (2) In **Free State**: 50,256 learners. (3) In **Gauteng**: 515,953 learners. (4) In **Limpopo**: 149,582 learners. (5) In **KwaZulu-Natal**: 215,223 learners. (6) In **Mpumalanga**: 372,507. (7) In **Northern Cape**: 139,713. (8) In **North West**: 232,992. (9) In **Western Cape**: 328,768 learners. Combined, in the period for which data is available, a total of 2,398,286 learners have been supported by the National Learner Transport Programme.

It is clear though, that even though administrative data indicates that there is an unmet need of 17% in terms of average programme coverage in the period of review[120], the real situation on the ground shows significantly higher demand for learner transport services, which is backed up by data collected from respondents during the course of fieldwork of this evaluation. The inclusion of GHS 2016 data

[118] Evaluation TOR question 2.1.5

[119] Based on StatsSA GHS 2016 data on learner transport

[120] And for which data is available

for *unmet need* for learner transport, suggests that the unmet need of 127,764 learners is conservatively about 25% in 2016.

Table 23. Effectiveness Assessment: Areas for Improvement

Effectiveness: Areas for Improvement	
Issue	**Conclusion that improvement is needed**
1. Learners transported	Partially effective, but It is possible to improve output with the existing budget
2. Safety	Eligible learners now transported, but further safety improvements needed to meet road traffic compliances
3. Punctuality	Sampled learners (58%) arriving on time, but still about a quarter (24%) arriving "on time sometimes". Punctuality can be improved.

In terms of **provincial location of learner transport function**, the lead department differs in the provinces. The lead department is important for overall provincial management of the Programme, including budgeting, planning, monitoring, receipt and processing of reports, reporting to oversight structures, and financial management.

Table 24. Lead department by province (2012/13-2016/17)

Provincial Lead Department	
Department of Education…	**Department of Transport…**
Gauteng	Eastern Cape
KwaZulu-Natal	Free State
Limpopo	Mpumalanga
Western Cape	Northern Cape
	North West

Based on the data available, it has been difficult to quickly assess where the **provincial function** best lies in terms of the two partner departments. In the North West Province (lead department Transport) we have been able to access data on key indicators in published official reports (Annual Reports) and plans (APP) that should ideally have been able to provide quality programme performance information. However, the very large movements in the indicator values in this province's case, has left the evaluation team with a similar assessment about the quality of data that is currently being recorded and reported, in comparison with other provinces that do not report on the same Learner Transport Programme indicators (lead departments education).

The Programme's key business processes, viz. need identification, budgeting, planning, verification, monitoring, procurement and contract management, implementation (learner transport services), management and reporting, happens at different levels, with the bulk of daily programme delivery, management and monitoring happening in schools under the lead department Education. There is a

huge effort undertaken every day at this level, by teachers and principals to make sure that our children get to school, and are returned home safely. This occurs whether the lead department is Education or Transport. Typically in provinces with the lead department Transport, the reliance remains on provincial education departments to do the school-level work, and provide reports for review and approval to the provincial department of Transport. On the flipside, in provinces where the provincial education department is leading, and undertakes procurement of learner transport operators, the role of the provincial department of Transport is understated and rather limited, to ensure compliance with road traffic and transport policy. In the current situation, and where the main challenge is the quality and integrity of the data that is being collected, recorded and reported, there is little difference in the performance of strategic management and overall programme accountability, whether the lead department is Education or Transport.

The evaluation team's general assessment is that programme data leaves a feeling of strong uncertainty, and it is clear that there are problems with the integrity of the data that is currently available. There are examples of good practice at the level of schools in many provinces, but the main system weaknesses are evident between the districts (Education) and the province (Education or Transport). Programme performance data in some provinces is "inconsistent" as it moves up levels from grassroots (schools) to education districts and ultimately to the lead provincial department. What is clear is that reported performance data sometimes either presents as missing, erratic and/or questionable, even though national transport policy, provincial transport policies and general public sector policies (such as the PFMA for example) provide a strong policy environment for enabling optimal programme management. In other words, there are significant concerns about the integrity of available programme performance data as identified in the body of this report. This points to the need for programme systems to be strengthened at the levels of the district, the province, and national, across the entire Learner Transport Programme.

In light of this assessment, it would be prudent to separate out day-to-day implementation and management of the Programme on the ground by PDEs, from strategic and high-level programme management at the level of the province, and up to national.

Stakeholder Feedback[121]: What are the stakeholder groups views on the Programme?

Stakeholder views on the Programme are generally positive, but there are significant issues that have been raised, some critical feedback that has to be considered and addressed by national and provincial programme leaderships. The Improvement Planning process after this evaluation will provide an opportunity to consider these at some length, and to put in place corrective measures to address the various issues raised.

In **Eastern Cape** respondents have referred to **Inconsistency of interpretation and communication of policy along vertical spectrum of role players.** While some understand the distance threshold to be 5km, others use 10km in identifying the learners who need transport. It is reported also that some parents seem not to understand the application process, then they walk directly into the provincial

[121] Evaluation TOR question 2.3

offices to apply, rather than follow the school application protocol. The policy, or rather its implementation, is also reported to not prioritise the needs of learners with disability.

Non-communication of schools rationalised: The DOT has complained severely of the issue of school renationalisation process. Due to improper coordination between the rationalisation unit of DOE and DOT, the records of schools that are closed are not communicated in time to the learner transport programme. It is reported that in some instances, service providers will go to the school only to discover that the school is closed or converted into hostels. This results in reshuffling of the budget and cancelling of contracts abruptly which is a disturbance in the business of service providers, leaving some drivers unemployed. Improvement of the monitoring and verification system is requested. It is recommended by officials that some form of remote system monitoring – such as biometric system be investigated and implemented for the province to enable real time monitoring of buses movement. Also, a data management system is recommended to be put in place to allow for sufficient assessment and verification of service provided before payment, to avoid duplications. As suggested in an interview:

> "…Then you are able to feel confident when you are paying the operators that indeed the service was done because you get issues where you're told that they are not using the contracted vehicle, having informed the department you would pick that up early if you have a system…'

In **Free State**: The provincial wide challenges of inadequate funding largely underpins most of the issues. While in 2016/2016 for instance, the need increased to about R65 million, only R40 million had been provided for in treasury. For the past three years, the budget had be pinned at a ceiling of 40 million, while the needs keep increasing. It is also reported that due to the limited funding of the programme, only farm schools are catered for in the province. Other rural schools learners and even those in other schools who walk more than then the required distance cannot be recruited into the programme as it currently is. This funding is also largely a determinant of the current procurement model.

Issues with contracting model: The inability to contract service providers on long term contracts due to limited budget - leading to monthly contracting and tedious admin and paper works for payment. Drivers had to submit each month's service delivered, for processing and payment. While this provides a way verification of service delivered, the voluminous of paperwork results in delays of paying service providers sometimes up to four months before the paperwork is complete for invoices to be paid. One operator reported that he is unable to pay his drivers in time due to this delay leading to lack of cash flow. Additionally, "he has accumulated more than R200,000 on his vehicle instalments which in turn generates interest. So if he gets paid after four months, most of his profit goes into servicing his debts". This makes the learner transport to be commercially unviable. Some community members also confirmed that, this Excessive delay in paying service providers is reported to cause the collapse of some small scale school transport services.

Inadequate Capacity: Inadequate capacity of PRT to monitor service within the province is reported to be major issue for keeping track of service quality on the ground. The district officers sometimes

have to resort to remote /telephonic monitoring. This is also reported as not reliable as not adequate information is obtained. Also the reliability of the information remains questionable.

Inadequate Communication: Improper communication between structures, for example, School rationing team and learner transport teams.

Data issues: Lack of reliable data, (from DoE on number of learners – No working database is kept in DoE for learner transport. Even the IRIS database that is kept is often outdated when it comes to the learner transport information. This is also largely attributed to the dynamic and contact changing numbers of the people included in the programme. This is reported to be largely a cause of data discrepancies in the programme.

In **Gauteng**: a number of respondents have raised the issue of communication between the different levels of the GDE relevant to the Programme. In the schools, some monitors and principals have referred to the district as being mainly absent, with little/no contact and/or response from district officials. In other cases, other respondents are reporting a relatively good and fruitful relationship with the district office. **School coordinators/monitors**: according to reports are sometimes not sufficiently informed about the Programme, and complain about relatively little training provided by the district. Generally respondents report being closely involved with the Programme at school level.

A number of comments were made to improve the Programme: (1) more workshops by districts, to provide information and training. (2) To increase awareness of the programme, and to build capacity. (3) To increase the number of buses, and stops in the Programme. Especially to address overloading and unmet need. (4) Better communication with the districts. (5) Faster resolution of issues/problems in the Programme. (6) Select service providers/drivers that live close to schools, for reasons of efficiency and also access to the companies/drivers.

In **Limpopo**: **Drivers**: respondents reported that they were unhappy that their wages were “low”. They were also unhappy that they were not registered with the UIF. They expressed dissatisfaction with **late payment of wages** by the operators.

In **Mpumalanga**: some school coordinators/monitors in the sample report that DOE sometimes does not provide enough programme information on plans, and/or are receiving notifications at the last minute. The general feeling is that there are very **few complaints** from parents. In most cases schools find themselves not have complaints reporting mechanism as there hasn’t been any incidences or complaints to record.

In **Northern Cape**: learner discipline, low drivers’ wages. Late payments of operators. Poor road conditions. Low tariffs paid to operators. Lots of audit comments by AG: material misstatements in annual financial statements, and annual reports; non-compliance in terms of procurement processes; poor financial controls over scholar transport programme funding; and poor oversight of the Programme’s financial management. Comments to improve learner transport according to the learners themselves include fixing or improving the condition of the bus or getting new busses.

In **North West**: there was no response reported by bus owner for letters written to the DCSTM, regarding overloading, and requests for approval of payment for additional learners (over-loaded) transported. Owner has had to wait four months for payment from the DCSTM. Also, relatively

generalised across the NW provincial sample as an issue. Most driver respondents report that they are unhappy about being paid late by operators, and in some cases, drivers are reporting that they will resign as drivers, in response to wages being paid late. This has a negative effect on programme efficiency. **Fuel increases**: squeezes the margins on operator contracts. **No compensation (payment) for extra loads** transported. Owner has waited six months or longer for approval for payment for extra loads. Overloaded learners typically are not paid for by the DCSTM. As a standard practice, Government is not paying for additional loads of learners, which often results in (serious) overloading with associated safety risks.

NW Monitoring: inconsistent – in many cases learner counts are done, and registers/control sheets are signed on a daily basis by drivers for collection and drop-off of learners. Lots of complaints about no daily registers of learners transport. In other cases, learners are not always counted, but the register is signed. Generally happens between the school and the driver, but in some cases there is no reporting to the district, and the school has to make effort to seek out the district office. In one case, the district office has visited the school physically, but did not supply the school with a copy of monitoring documents taken, as should be the case. This could reportedly lead to possible changes to school records without the knowledge of the school. In some cases, SGB members are involved in the monitoring of the Programme.

NW Reporting: in some cases, the principal reports (worryingly) that there is little or no contact with the district office, let alone support. In other cases, there appears to be a fair amount of interaction between schools and the district, with reports submitted regularly by principals. **School coordinators/monitors**: sometimes are not sufficiently informed about the Programme, and complain about relatively little training provided by the district. Generally respondents report being closely involved with the Programme at school level. **Drivers**: a number of drivers raise problems with late wages payments by operators, ostensibly caused indirectly by late payment by DCSTM. This suggests that bus operators (unfairly) are not paying their drivers because of cash-flow pressures caused by late payments to operators. It further suggests a level of unfair labour practices by operators – they pay their drivers late, but when payments are on time, they do not pay a share of the profits from transport operations. Also, operators sometimes relatively informal in terms of business operations, do not deduct or UIF, for example, or does not make remuneration payments directly into bank accounts, etc. Some drivers are at a loss about the company that has been awarded a learner transport programme contract, for which they are employed as drivers to ferry learners. In one case, a situation of drink-driving by a driver on duty was reported, which was dealt with, and the drunk driver was removed from the trip, and fired. **Assistants**: some drivers use assistants on trips to help with management of the learners while being transported, as well as with administrative tasks, such as taking counts and roll call. A number of suggestions to improve the programme, are for more workshops by districts, to provide information and training. To increase awareness of the programme, and to build capacity. Other: the DCSTM/Education must be **more hands on**, and interested.

In **Western Cape**: Meetings with the service providers are also used as part of monitoring and quality control measures. Through these meetings, the school and the service providers discuss concerns that will be there regarding transporting learners. Solutions to these challenges are also discussed on these forums. **Drivers**: Even though most of the drivers reported that they get paid on time, there was a general dissatisfaction with their remuneration. The general feeling was that they wish they were

being paid more than they are being currently. There was a recommendation that standard rates be used and these should cut across provinces while also considering experience and distance travelled by the driver, with some drivers stating that they travel up to 94 kilometers each day and these are mostly farm dwelling learners. Suggestions for improvement are: for more workshops by districts, to provide information and training. To increase awareness of the programme, and to build capacity. Other: There must be someone who rides with the learners on the bus for discipline purposes

4.2 Efficiency

Key Evaluation Questions: To what extent has the implementation of the Learner Transport Programme been efficient, with specific regard to (i) organisational design and applied delivery model(s), (ii) core "business processes" used, (iii) management and administration, including record- keeping, and (iv) value-for-money?

Organisational Design and delivery model:

The Learner Transport Policy (2015) and its Guidelines (2016) provide the policy framework and operational details for programme delivery. Clear policy goals and objectives provide the basis for programme structures to be established and processes to be put in place, including those for oversight, interdepartmental coordination and operational management across national, provincial, district and local (schools) levels. The Policy is assessed to be relatively sound, and the mechanics (structures, processes) in design are appropriate for delivery of learner transport solutions in the country. The delivery model is considered adequate and appropriate.

However, there appears to be insufficient capacity to plan, and implement the Programme in terms of its financial systems and technology. The responses from provincial departments to requests for programme performance information was uneven, with some able to provide information, and others unable to provide credible information despite numerous requests. Provincial departments that did respond to the detailed requests for performance information provided data on reported learner demand, actual learners transported, actual expenditure, allocated budgets and costing model. The data provided by provincial departments displayed significant discrepancies with performance data supplied by DoT and DBE. Data relating to the contract monitoring and procurement required for modelling and cost effectiveness was not obtainable for most provinces.

Management and administration, including record- keeping: Is there adequate capacity to plan, run the Programme? Financial systems, technology? [122]

In this context, capacity means administrative capacity, thus the ability of an implementing department to run the Programme using dedicated human resources, administrative systems including data collection systems. In terms of **data retention, financial and technological systems**: there seems to be insufficient capacity in terms of financial systems and technology required to collect and retain performance data for the Learner Transport Programme. The assessment relating to the inadequacy of the performance data systems was based on the speed with which provincial departments responded to requests for programme performance data, whether the requested data was readily available, the reliability of the data obtained in terms of consistency with data available from national departments, and the ability to supply specific programme performance data on request in the period of review.

Provincial departments that did respond to the detailed requests for performance information provided data on reported learner demand, actual learners transported, actual expenditure, allocated

[122] Evaluation TOR question 3.1.3

budgets and costing model. Other provincial departments did not respond to the request for data, in some cases indicating that historical programme performance data was not readily available, highlighting critical programme management information system weaknesses.

The following was noted (1) The provincial departments that were able to respond: Gauteng provided the actual expenditure and actual transported performance data for the entire review period and a copy of their costing model; Northern Cape provided the budget allocation for only the last year in the review period and a copy of their costing model; KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern and Western Cape provided performance data for actual expenditure, actual learners transported, reported need, budgeted allocation, monitoring costs, monitoring document and costing model and Free state provided data on actual expenditure and learners transported for the last two years in the review period in the form of a monitoring document. (2) Other provincial departments did not respond to the request for performance data or responded and indicated data was not readily available. In some cases, provincial departments would promise to send data but failed to do so as agreed. (3) Some of the performance data provided displayed significant discrepancies with previously-supplied data provided in performance reports to DBE and DOT, as reported under question 3.4 relating to *Value for Money*, with data supplied by DoT and DBE; (4) The monitoring tool provided by Free State represents a good model for monitoring and accumulation of programme financial and non- financial performance information. The detail in the report received from Free State included the budgeted and actual cost per district, number of learners transported, amount claimed by operators, schools benefitting per district, number of routes, number of contracts, change in vehicle, applicable tariff, applicable bid from which tariff was obtained, change in operator, complaints received and corrective action taken, town, route name and number of days transported.

Performance data supplied to the evaluation team was evidently not produced as an output from an electronic programme management system in use in provincial departments, but were compiled manually.

Structures Established and key roles

The NLT Policy (2015) provides that national government will lead and coordinate its implementation in consultation with relevant stakeholders including other relevant government departments, provincial departments, municipalities and school governing bodies (SGBs). SCOA and parliamentary Portfolio Committees provide key policy oversight of national implementation. At national level, the Inter-Departmental Committee consisting of the DBE, DOT and National Treasury play a coordinating role in providing strategic direction to provincial departments. At provincial level, also, data gathered shows that there are key structures that are put in place to ensure the smooth running of the programme. Different levels of structure exits within provinces. These include structures at provincial level, districts, in some cases area committees (NW), and at school level.

In the **Free State**, the PR&T (where the program resides) and the DoE which offers planning support the Provincial Learner Transport Committee, established according to the provincial policy guidelines in 2015 and comprising of representatives of FS DoE and PR&T carries out the planning, including needs assessment, routing and verification. Some issues highlighted include timeliness and reliability of LTP data e.g. Demand, to PR&T to support the planning function, resulting in delays. Also,

inadequate communication between other institutions such as the School renationalization teams and LTP teams seems week, resulting in unnecessary expenditure to make trips to schools only to discover they've been closed.

In Gauteng, Education in the province is managed through a two-tier structure with a Provincial Office and 15 District Offices aligned to the local government boundaries. Districts provide direct services to schools, educators and learners. The Department's realignment of its structure was approved in 2013 and form the basis of diagnosing where and how the Department needed to focus in terms of reorganising, process and people. This was ultimately to ensure that the Head Office and Districts Offices could provide relevant, coordinated and effective set up according to the provincial Guidelines. It is noted that the District Officials perform "roadshows" aimed at introducing the operators to the districts. There is currently no direct engagement with broader civil society organisations CSOs, and no platforms have been established, although there are limited opportunities for participation of CSOs in national oversight activities linked to the portfolio committees and SCOA.

In Limpopo, the departments of transport and Education work hand in hand to ensure programme delivery. It was noted that turnover of staff (educators, learner transport monitors) has sometimes led to challenges – skills and knowledge have been lost.

In the **Northern Cape**, the LTP function is led by the planning units of the LTP. Additionally, a Learner Transport Coordinating Committee (LTCC) was established with DoT and DoE and Provincial Treasury (PT) as members and meet on quarterly basis.

North West Department of departments of Education and of Transport, Roads and Community Safety share critical functions of managing the LTP. In Kwa-Zulu Natal, the programme resides with the Department of Education. What was reported from the provincial interviews is that, capacitating programme implementers on the provisions of the learner transport policy appears to be lacking. This seems to be reflected in most of the schools using what they think the criteria is for need identification. While some schools are using 3km, others are using 5km and 8km.

In Summary, the evaluation finds that there are key and strategic structures and mechanisms in place to provide support to programme implementation. This cascades from national to provincial levels and down to school levels. Horizontal structures refer to those such as committees between the sector departments. Vertical structures refer to those specifically in the provincial education system, encompassing the Corporate, Districts, school principals and educators, learners, parents and transport operators.

Civil Society Participation:

Although participation in the Learner Transport Programme is generally strong in most provinces, there is weak evidence of meaningful partnerships established with civil society organisations even though these may possibly exist in relation to programme monitoring and oversight dialogue.

In the case of Equal Education and Section 27 in KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Gauteng, there is evidence of antagonistic engagement, sometimes resulting in litigation against the State. Equal

Education on a few occasions has launched litigation in order to compel the State to the provide learner transport to remote area schools, notably a recent one in Nqutu where 12 schools are now being supported by the Programme.

Location of Learner Transport Function.

Based on the performance data available for programme effectiveness above, it has been difficult to confidently assess where the **provincial function** best lies in terms of the two partner departments. The evaluation team's general assessment is that programme data leaves a feeling of strong uncertainty, and it is clear that there are problems with the integrity of the data that is currently available. There are examples of good practice at the level of schools in many provinces, but the main system weaknesses are evident between the districts (Education) and the province (Education or Transport). Programme performance data in some provinces is "inconsistent" as it moves up levels from grassroots (schools) to education districts and ultimately to the lead provincial department. What is clear is that reported performance data sometimes either presents as missing, erratic and/or questionable, even though national transport policy, provincial transport policies and general public sector policies (such as the PFMA for example) provide a strong policy environment for enabling optimal programme management. In other words, there are significant concerns about the integrity of available programme performance data as identified in the body of this report. This points to the need for programme systems to be strengthened at the levels of the district, the province, and national, across the entire Learner Transport Programme.

The evaluation team concludes that it would be prudent to separate out day-to-day implementation and management of the Programme on the ground by PDEs, from strategic and high-level programme management at the level of the province, and up to national. In other words, **the lead department at the level of the province should ideally be the PDOTs**, that take responsibility for budgeting, procurement, contract management, province-wide monitoring including operators, reporting and auditing, and should work closely with the provincial departments of education in identifying and quantifying the need. A further advantage of this institutional arrangement would be the possibility to include Learner Transport indicators amongst transport sector performance indicators, which in turn would lead to programme performance audits of learner transport performance data by the AGSA.

The discussion of where the Programme should reside between provincial departments of transport and Department of Education can also be argued on the basis of other factors, largely based on notions of an ideal environment for programme efficiency and sustainability.

Legislative mandate: Even though the ultimate goal is to provide access to education, the learner transport function falls squarely into (well…) the transport sector. This notion is in line with the provisions of the Constitution (1996), in terms of Section 85(2) (b) which mandates the National Department of Transport to develop and implement a learner transport policy. This implies that the Department of Transport constitutionally has the onus to include learner transportation in its transport infrastructure and services.

Education Sectors improving access to education the Department of Education is obligated to provide access to education, through whichever means possible including intergovernmental partnerships, involving possibly the building of schools, provision of hostels or transportation of learners. Learner transport is a means to provide access to education. As several authors[123] argued, the Department of Education better understands the educational needs of learners and is able to identify such needs, including those who travel long distances to school. From this perspective, the Programme at local level must clearly remain with the Department of Education. This is already the case in all provinces, and over and above this, the PDEs are also responsible for implementation in Gauteng, Western Cape, Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, even though the success of the location varies from province to province.

Autonomy of Provincial Executive: The Learner Transport Programme has been in operation several years (in some cases, pre-1994) in provinces before the Learner Transport Policy was put in place late in 2015. Section 132 of the Constitution (1996) assigns to the Premier to allocate functions to any member (sector department) as deemed necessary for the province. This political autonomy of provincial governments to allocate functions and decide the roles of some departments appears to played a significant role in the placement of the learner transport function in different provinces. This flexibility also allows the Premier to re-allocate functions to departments deemed more capable of executing such functions. This appears to be the current situation where provincial governments decide which of the departments is more suitable to run the programme, as seen in the example of KwaZulu Natal were the Programme was transferred to the Department Of Education, then to Transport in 2015, and back again to Education in 2018. A few other provinces also shifted the programme between the two sector departments. From this perspective, the location of the Programme is left to the Provincial Executive Committee to decide, and is not automatic that it will fall under Education or Transport.

Institutional and administrative Capacity Administrative capacity lies in the ability of the institution to run the programme using its dedicated human and financial resources, and administrative systems including data collection systems. Provinces may have built institutional capacity in terms of personnel, budgeting functions and administrative systems over the long term to allow for institutionalisation of the Programme. Mention is made earlier in this report that certain business processes such as *need identification* appear to be working relatively well at school level, because it is integrated into the day-to-day functioning of schools in all provinces, under the PDEs. There are, of course, provinces where the Programme resides with the PDOT. Examples are: the Department of Transport, Police and Roads in the Free State, the Department of Transport and Public Works in Mpumalanga (which also uses the EPWP programme to assist in monitoring), and the Department of Community Safety and Transport Management in the North West. In both cases of either education or transport sector departments taking the lead for programme implementation, systems have obviously been developed, tested and implemented over varying periods of time.

[123] Authors such as D. Budlender (2017), Whitman (2010) advocated that education department is better placed to spearhead educational related programmes.

What could useful is the separation of operational versus oversight activities in the Programme, and to allocate overall functional responsibility to one national sector department to allow for proper oversight and accountability. In this case, as earlier argued, the evaluation team is of the view that the Department of Transport, by virtue of its constitutional mandate should play the overall implementation and management/coordination function. That is, the Programme should reside with Transport at national with proper institutional arrangements with the Department of Education, who should continue to identify the extent of the need for learner transport. MOUs would need to be amended between DBE and DOT to this effect, and should cascade down to provincial level. This arrangement has the potential to strengthen horizontal accountability to DBE as the custodian of *access to education* and DOT as the provider of *transport infrastructure and services*, as opposed to the DBE having to account to itself.

Funding model implications/requirements for programme location: The linkage between the inter-departmental placement of the Programme and funding models is also explored. As indicated in the interview with National Treasury, the allocation of the equitable share funding is at provincial spheres of government. This implies that provinces will be at liberty to allocate the funds they deem fit for each programme in each sector department. The situation becomes a little more complex in the case of a conditional grant which is allocated by national Treasury for specific purposes. Zooming out to national level, this becomes a complete allocation which is to be administered by one department. That is, there is the need for the Programme to reside with one national department and its provincial agencies. Thus, if equitable share funding model is continued, then the Programme must be run by the PDOTs in different provinces. On the other hand, if a conditional grant is decided upon, then this requires the Programme to reside with either DBE or DOT in the provinces, but with the DOT as overall national custodian. As noted, current programme *need identification* at school level is integrated into DBE's systems within schools. Irrespective of the location of the Programme, DBE needs to continue to take responsibility for implementing this activity as it is best placed to do so.

Coordination and Communication:

Currently, a number of issues were picked up in terms of communication and coordination between key role-players and implementing agencies of the Learner Transport Programme. There are a number of areas where the Programme needs to be strengthened. These range from inadequate communication Stakeholder involvement, participation and engagement is fundamental to the success of the Programme. In some provinces, communication between the different vertical levels and horizontal structures is working well, and in other cases, there is dysfunctionality or under-performance. Significant care and effort must be given at national and provincial levels to ensure optimal coordination, management, and implementation. Poor communication as identified by this evaluation must be addressed.

Efficiency of Core "business processes":

The main business processes involved in implementing the national Learner Transport Programme (across all nine provinces) have typically involved the following generic processes or activities: (1) policy development, (2) budgeting and planning, including recruitment into the Programme, verification and selection, management of the Programme, and identification of Programme need, (3)

establishment of structures and systems development, (4) services delivered, including programme coverage, (5) monitoring, audit and evaluation.

Overall, **recruitment**, **verification** and **selection on entry** into the Programme has been sound, with schools making a big contribution to success in this area. Typically there has been a thorough process of programme need identification at school level that has occurred in every province. **Need identification** (School level): the identification of learners who qualify for learner transport is done in the schools by the School Principals with the help of SGBs. Needs identification at school level is going well. Need identification (provincial level) appears flawed, and there are significant concerns about performance data in this area. Figures for programme need for learners requiring transport appear not to be subjected to similar processes of verification and rigour as those at school level. There is, therefore, an apparent disconnect between need identification data at schools, and figures used in planning in provincial departments. Also, Learner Transport Programme officials are often not involved in provincial lead department planning (and budgeting) processes which leads to planners basing their plans for the Programme on an annual incremental budgeting increase.

Policy development has been strong, with good consultation and inputs from stakeholders over a number of years.

Structures and **processes** are reasonably well-developed and have functioned as intended. **Interdepartmental coordination** has sometimes been ineffective in some provinces, with relatively little rigorous

In terms of **programme management** and **systems developed**, there are clear weaknesses and gaps in the programme performance management systems in use horizontally across provinces. There are also vertical system weaknesses[124] with ineffective programme management leading to gaps in- and concerns about- the quality of programme performance information.

The delivery of services is covered under the programme effectiveness assessment.

Monitoring and reporting:

School levels: The collection of data and reporting occurs at all of the levels of the Programme. Notably, at local level (schools), principals run a systematic process to monitor learner transport (drop-offs, pick-ups) on a daily basis. Schools are provided with the operator details and the bus details by provincial departments.

In some cases, the monitoring data available is obtained though forms issued to service providers for capturing daily delivery. These provincial forms for the drivers contain the name of the driver, vehicle registration number, make and model, capacity of vehicle, the route, number of learners transported on each day of the week, This form is filled endorsed by the principals and dated and submitted to the provincial office at the end of the month and the new one given which signifies a renewal of the contract between the department and the supplier. It is also reported that arrangement between law

[124] National down to provinces, and down to district and schools.

traffic section and the policy unit of the department also assists in monitoring general compliance with road worthiness regulations.

Provincial monitoring: At the level of the province, the Department's officials do conduct site visits to selected schools when there are urgent issues to address. On-site monitoring by provincial officials is also noted to be severely hampered by lack of capacity, monitoring tools and systems. Though some provinces do contract independent service providers to undertake monitoring as interim measures, it is reported, for instance in the Free States and Eastern Cape that this is unsustainable due to insufficient budget. The schools do provide some data intermittently, but they also feel this to be additional workload and hence not done regularly.

The lack of reliable monitoring systems, coupled with inadequate capacity budget and limited capacity within the system is largely blamed for the discrepancies of the LTP data that is reported on to national departments. It also have serious repercussions on the planning and budgeting. There is therefore the need to strengthen the monitoring system, by finding a more adequate and mechanism.

The meaning of value for money

Value for Money (VfM) generally refers to the maximisation of the benefit and impact of the programme. As per the guidance from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development 2011's approach for assessing value for money, value for money is about developing a better understanding of the costs so that one can make informed and evidence-based choices and get better at understanding what is driving programme costs and make sure that the department is getting the desired quality at the lowest price.

Value for money is about the optimal use of resources in the form of obtaining not necessarily only about the cheapest option but delivering the best outcome and impact using the cheapest option or maximising the output and impact per rand spend. This process is an ongoing process that spans the design, programme inception and post programme evaluation. White et al (2013) postulates that VfM is not only about minimising costs; it is about maximising the impact of money spent to improve poor people's lives. This means making the analysis of both costs and benefits of social transfer programmes as rigorous and comprehensive as possible, at the *ex-ante* design and appraisal stage, during implementation, and in *ex post* evaluation.

The following components of VfM are relevant to the evaluation of the LTP: (1) Economy as applicable to LTE, this will translate to whether the services of providing Learner transport was at the right price and whether the quality of the service, provided by the service provider at that price, is satisfactory. (2) Efficiency which measures the how well the LTP converts inputs, such as the financial resources and monitoring time into output. This will basically be an assessment of whether the LTP has managed to deliver the desired outcomes using the resources available, including the stakeholder perception and relationship between cost of programme value delivered to beneficiaries. According to White et al (2013), cost-efficiency analysis spans both economy and efficiency, focussing on the relationship between the costs of a social transfer programme and the value of the transfers delivered to beneficiaries. (3) Effectiveness which relates to efficiency relates to how well output are converted into outcomes and impacts. For the LTP this will assess how the outcomes such as the provision of

access to education have been achieved through the LTP and (4) Equity being the assessment whether the project produces equal benefits to different groups.

Methods considered for Value for Money assessment for LTP

As a way of measuring Value for Money, we have considered the following methods, where applicable; (i) program costs, (ii) program cost variance analysis, (iii) evaluation of the programme cost using Private Sector Comparator(PSC) be established based on what a private provider will charge for the same distance and/or the bid price using the any applicable bids received for the LTP (the PSC is considered as a good proxy of the Willingness To Pay by the beneficiaries if they were to pay), (iv) Cost effectiveness analysis which includes involves evaluating different ways of addressing the outcome for a program, given that the alternatives have the same goal, for example, building a hostel has the same goal with providing transport to the learner as the goal relates to providing access to the school, thus these two options are comparable(ignoring the quantification of the effect or impact). Cost effectiveness can be further assessed using the following measures discussed in White et al; Inclusion and exclusion error which is the proportion of the target group not receiving transfers/ the benefit, that is, learner transport and thus the ratio represents a crude measure of the program reach, assuming that the needs identification and analysis process provides an adequate basis for determining the target group, cost per direct beneficiary, Programme reach/ coverage per year which determines how may beneficiaries benefitted and also what percentage of the target population have been reached by programme and encompassing the headcount of the number of recipients and the envisaged coverage post programme implementation and Cost to Transfer ratio measuring the ratio of administration cost to programme costs, where the data was available.

***Organisational Design125 and delivery model and Value For Money*[126]**

***Is there adequate capacity to plan, run the Programme? Financial systems, technology?*[127] `**

To answer this question, we analysed the following factors(i) The speed with the provinces responded to our request for program data, (ii)The reliability of the data obtained in terms of consistency with data available from the national departments and (iii) ability to supply the specific program data for the review period. We interpret capacity to mean administrative capacity which is the ability of the government implementing departments to run the programme using its dedicated human and financial resources, and administrative systems including data collection systems.

Based on the analysis of the above, the provinces appear generally appear not to have the capacity in terms of financial systems and technology, to plan and run the program as it appears that data is not readily available. The following was noted (1) There were provinces that responded to the detailed request for analytical data manged to provide data on learner perceived demand, actual demand, actual expenditure, budget allocation and costing model. Other provinces did not respond to the request for data. Gauteng provided the actual expenditure and actual transported data for the whole

[125] Evaluation TOR question 3.1

[126] Evaluation TOR question 3.4

[127] Evaluation TOR question 3.1.3

review period and a copy of their costing model; Northern Cape provided budget allocation for only the last year in the review period and a copy of their costing model; KZN, Eastern and Western Cape provinces provided data for actual expenditure, actual learners transported, reported need, budgeted allocation, monitoring costs, monitoring document and costing model; and Free State provided data on actual expenditure and transported for the last two years in the review period in the form of a monitoring document.

(2) Some of the data provided displayed significant discrepancies with previous data provided for the same purpose of with widely available data from DBE and DOT sources, as reported under question 3.4 relating to Value for Money, with data supplied by DoT and DBE.

(3) The monitoring tool provided by Free State province represents a good tool for monitoring and accumulation of programme financial and non- financial information. The detail in the report received from Free State Province included the budgeted and actual cost per district, number transported, amount claimed by operators, schools benefitting per district, number of routes, number of contracts, change in vehicle, tariff, applicable bid from which tariff was obtained, any change in operator, complains received and corrective action, town, route name and number of days transported.

(4) Some provinces did not respond to the request for data or responded and indicated data was not readily available. In some cases, a province would promise to send data and not sent it by the agreed deadline for reporting. The failure to provide data on request (and despite the assistance of the DOT and DBE) as noted brings into question current institutional capacity and systems to monitor the ongoing implementation of the Programme, and the ability to monitor value for money specifically, in terms of monitoring the price paid, vehicles used, kilometres travelled, number of students transported and resolution of complaints.

What changes to policy, institutional arrangements or eligibility criteria could be recommended?[128]

In response to this question relating to the costing model and adoption of detailed monitoring tool: In resolving the problems discussed elsewhere in this chapter, we recommend the following:(1) The policy or institutional arrangements should provide for the same costing model for all provinces that considers the kilometres travelled, state of the roads, terrain, capacity of the vehicle/ number of learners transported, allowance for wear and tear, the consequent repair allowance for the vehicle and provide a reasonable mark-up. (2) The policy or institutional arrangements should provide for the open tender, route specific price determination to avoid the issue of operators abandoning non-profitable routes. (3) Policy or institutional arrangements should provide for the adoption of a LEARNER TRANSPORT monitoring tool that shows, among other things the following; budgeted and actual cost per district, number transported, amount claimed by operators, schools benefitting per district, number of routes, number of contracts, change in vehicle, tariff, applicable bid from which tariff was obtained, any change in operator, complains received and corrective action, town, route name and number of days transported.

[128] Evaluation TOR question 3.1.6

Recommended costing model

Considering the known cost drivers and our understanding of LTP, we do recommend the costing model recommended in tables 22and 23 below:

Table 25. Recommended Costing Model

Recommended Costing model				
#	Component	Capacity of vehicle		
1		1 to 16	17 to 35	36+
	Cost per kilometre/capacity	Y	Y+	Y++
2	State of the road		Gravel	Tar
	Additional cost per kilometre/state		Z+	0
3	Minimum amount for short routes	X	X+	X++

The following are noteworthy from the costing model presented above; (i) X to Z++ represent the prices per specified unit, X is for example the base price for a small bus, X+ is the price when capacity increases and X++. (ii) All the three components of cost above should be determined in an open route-specific tender. (iii) . It should be noted that the model relates to the costing of the service provided by the operators for learner transport. Whilst we acknowledge the significant costs relating to the administration, programme operating costs and personnel costs for the staff involved in the programme, whether directly or indirectly, we are not in a position to recommend a costing model for those variables as we, generally did not obtain specific information relating to those costs from provinces.

The following table shows how the expected cost drivers are represented in the proposed pricing model:

Table 26. How cost drivers are represented in the costing model

Cost Driver	Variable in Model
Wear and tear, running costs and consequent repair	Cost per kilometre / per capacity
Kilometres travelled	Cost per kilometre / per capacity
State of the roads	Charge for state of road
Capacity of the vehicle/ number of learners transported	Cost per kilometre / per capacity

In summary, the costing model should have the following components: (1) an **all-inclusive cost per kilometre** that is depended on the capacity of the vehicle, (2) an **additional compensation for driving on gravel road** (charged per gravel kilometre travelled) and (3) a **minimum charge** given to the operator whose route comprise short trips. An operator travelling short distances might not make sufficient profit to remain in business.

How much is being spent on the Programme nationally, and with a provincial breakdown? Per learner? What is the coverage of the Programme, per kilometre?[129]

This question addresses program costs and cost per direct beneficiary as discussed above. The relevant data is provided in the tables below:

Table 27. Total Actual Expenditure, average change in actual expenditure and average change in actual demand for each province[130]

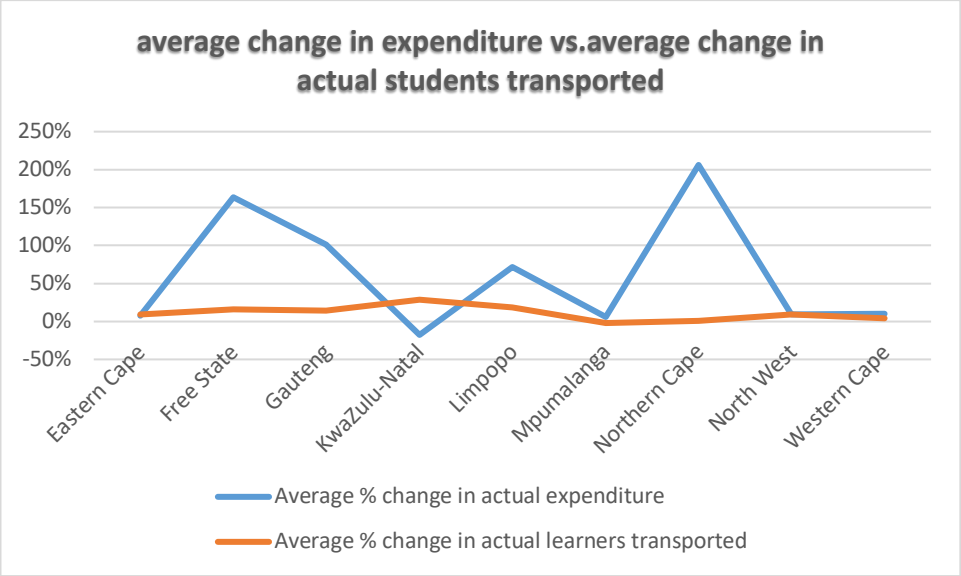
PROVINCE	Actual Expenditure 2012-13[131]	Actual Expenditure 2013-14[132]	Actual Expenditure 2014-15	Actual Expenditure 2015-16	Actual Expenditure 2016-17[133]	Average change in actual expend-iture	Average change in actual learners trans-ported
Eastern Cape	366 064 159	392 035 660	375 873 000	462 076 000	485 848 000	8%	9.7%
Free State	52 794 069		63 452 389	9 847 939	50 419 489	164%	16.3%
Gauteng	75 149 630	307 999 893	417 737 661	461 000 000	681 216 163	101%	14.6%
KwaZulu Natal	32 497 822		158 430 000	52 483 535	68 995 857	-18%	28.8%
Limpopo	103 961 302	103 883 000	115 558 000	50 555 000	218 555 693	72%	18.5%
Mpumalanga	235 314 661		405 011 000	484 904 664	448 334 260	6%	-2.0%
Northern Cape	97 531 052			28 265 500	86 528 696	206%	1.3%
North West	73 928 351			248 316 722	272 139 395	10%	9.4%
Western Cape	225 716 238	231 047 000	268 405 968	307 514 666	329 298 018	10%	4.2%
Total	**1 262 957 285**	**1 034 965 553**	**1 804 468 018**	**2 104 964 027**	**2 641 335 571**		

Given that in 2013-14 and 2014-15, there is missing data for certain provinces, the actual applicable provincial and national expenditure for learner transport is understated for those years. The effect of such incomplete data would be the inability to compare the cost effectiveness of the LTP as a way of addressing distance to school against other ways of addressing distance to school. Related to that, is the problem of accurately measuring programme cost and thus inhibiting Value for Money assessment in terms of measuring programme costs and cost variance analysis.

[129] Evaluation TOR question 3.4.1

[130] Data for FY2012-13 to 2016-17 is referenced in other parts of the report above.

Figure 23. Average Actual Expenditure vs Average Actual Demand



We expect the actual programme cost to be in line with the increase in actual demand. However, as reflected in the graph and table above, there seem to be no problem relating to disparity between the change in the actual costs and the change in actual demand.

There is a significant disparity between the average increase in actual expenditure and average change in actual demand. This is evident in the following provinces: **Free State** (164% vs.16.3%), Gauteng (101% vs 14.6%), KwaZulu Natal (-18.8% vs 28.8%), **Limpopo** (72% vs. 18.5%), Mpumalanga (6% vs.-2%), Northern Cape (206% vs. 1.3. Western Cape and North West provinces show a plausible and consistent relationship between the increase in actual learners transported and increase in actual costs.

There are a couple of reasons why this disparity might occur. Our discussions with provincial officials bring to fore the that the following are reasons for this disparity: (1) Contracts that get renewed will be negotiated at rates that are higher although the number of learners being carried might not necessarily increase significantly,(2) Provinces might introduce new costing models that are in line with the rise in cost of operations,(3) The increase in the cost of operations such as fuel might mean that the increase in cost of carrying learners might outstrip the increase in the actual learners transported as operators seek to recover the increasing costs,(4)The payments might include other payments that do not directly translate to carrying passengers such as paying for litigation and (5) There might be significant accruals present in the Learner Transport actual payments which does not translate to an actual service. The Eastern Cape province has indicated that the actual Learner Transport Programme costs provided to us for analysis included year on year accruals.

A discussion with the Gauteng Department of Education officials on this matter pinpoints the following as the reasons for the disparity between the change in actual cost and the change in actual learners transported; (1) The rates paid by the province increased (The increase in rates was as follows; 2012-R1, 2013, 1.2, 2014 to 2017 remained at R1.4). The increase in the rate is meant to recover the operating costs and not necessarily to ferry more students. The amount of R1.41 per student appears

low at first glance, but this rate is applied per kilometre per student. Therefore, the average rate per kilometre per student from the Gauteng costing model is around R91 per kilometre/student. (2) increase in kilometres travelled as a result of migration. This factor increases the costs given that their cost model is applied to kilometres travelled. (3) The Gauteng province historically had problems of being unable to cater for learner need due to lack of funds. Over the years, funds were negotiated for to cater for LEARNER TRANSPORT, thus the increase in costs relative to learners being transported.

A possible interpretation we made regarding the disparity described above is that, the big increases in program cost could be as a result of other factors in the costing model that is unrelated to actual number transported. There could be inefficiencies in the pricing/costing model that reduce the economy aspect of VfM as the right price is most likely not being paid across the provinces. This could be a possible indication of unregistered suppliers, not providing Learner Transport services being paid.

As per the above, a generalisation is that the program costs are not delivering value for money as it is not creating more access per year in relation to the increase in costs. The value seems to be lost in the costing model. It is not apparent if the costs we were provided with only relate to the costs to the operators and thus exclude monitoring and administration costs.

Another plausible explanation for the disparity is that the difference should provide more information on the program configuration. For example, in Mpumalanga, where we have information that suggest that are acquired by operator and operator gets paid a cost that recovers his cost and profit and the instalment is paid by implementing department, the disparity might reflect acquisition costs for buses that makes it less comparable with a normal outsourcing model.

The results of the comparison between the actual expenditure data from the provinces and the data available at national department level casts some doubt on the reliability of the cost data that we were provided with, possibly leading to the disparity between actual expenditure and actual number transported trend. Refer to table 25 below for differences between the actual expenditure as per provincial sources versus the national department source and analysis of the impact on the study:

Table 28. Differences between the provincial and national department data on actual expenditure[134]

Province	*Year*	*Difference**
Eastern Cape	2012-13	**180 152 224**
Eastern Cape	2015-16	**11 457 522**
Eastern Cape	2016-17	**141 540**
Free State	2015-16	**40 546 224**
Free State	2016-17	**(11 130 180)**
Gauteng	2012-13	**165 516 260**
Gauteng	2015-16	**84 518 123**
Gauteng	2016-17	**(113 056 088)**
Limpopo	2015-16	**95 627 000**
Limpopo	2016-17	**15 457 307**
Limpopo	2012-13	**713 697**
Western Cape		**(9 115 238)**

The data discrepancies reflected in tables above could be more extreme as we only compared the department data against province data only for the provinces that submitted data directly to us.

Internal inconsistencies between data provided for the same purpose by provinces

Eastern Cape data on actual expenditure provided seems to lack internal consistency. On earlier request for data for 2015-16 to 2016-17, we were given data that is not the same as the data provided for the same request. The net difference is R29 427 000.

Impact of the variances in *Programme cost data* on this evaluation

The difference is expected to have a material effect on the evaluation because given the differences and that we are not sure which of the sources is reliable, the actual costs and the cost per learner might be misstated. Given a net positive difference it can be inferred that the provinces who submitted data generally report high actual costs and thus leading to overstatement of programme costs and direct cost per beneficiary. Overall, the data on actual costs is unreliable as a basis for making conclusive evaluation on the direct cost to beneficiaries (cost per learner), measurement of programme costs, assessment of budget utilisation and the overall comparison of the relationship between the average change in actual expenditure and average change in actual learners transported.

How we dealt with the variances between national LTP data and provincial LTP data

Given the differences between the programme data provided by the provinces and that provided by national departments (DoT and DBE) and the internal inconsistencies noted, we have adopted the

[134] Evaluation team's calculation based on data on actual expenditure referenced in prior sections above

following method in the use of data for evaluation; (1) Use programme data provided by the national departments provide, (2) Where a Provincial Implementing Department provides data, that is independently verifiable(against credible documents such as the annual report or EPRE), we used the data provided by the province in place of the data from the national departments and where the national departments do not provide data, we use the data from the province, even if it is not verified.

Table 29. Cost per learner[135]

PROVINCE	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	Average
Eastern Cape	6 729	7 190	6 574	6 738	6 224	6 691
Free State	7 213		7 879	1 369	4 227	5 172
Gauteng	1 163	4 616	5 548	5 560	6 214	4 620
KwaZulu-Natal	1 797		4 551	1 410	1 445	2 301
Limpopo	5 496	5 421	6 112	2 392	6 368	5 158
Mpumalanga	3 589		6 824	8 051	7 457	6 480
Northern Cape	4 320			1 196	3 653	3 056
North West	2 503			6 682	6 436	5 207
Western Cape	4 414	4 530	4 975	5 347	5 656	4 984
Average cost per direct beneficiary across programme (2013 to 2016-17)						**5 150**

The average cost per learner might be understated for the following provinces with missing data: KZN, North West and Northern Cape - their low average cost is not an indication of efficiency, but rather an understatement of direct cost to beneficiary as a result of gaps in programme data.

Cost per learner calculations based on available programme data is fraught with uncertainties that inhibit its potential usefulness for decision making. Given that in 2013/14 and 2014/15 there is missing data for certain provinces, the actual applicable provincial and (by implication also) national expenditure for learner transport is understated for those years. In addition, there are different costing models implemented in each province, thereby making cost per student the only sensible measure for comparison. However, the manner in which the cost is calculated is affected by differing terrain and rural versus urban considerations, amongst other things. To add further uncertainty regarding programme finances and performance data, the number of learners transported might also not be reliable given that the data provided by some provincial departments differed from those reported to national DOT and DBE.

[135] Evaluation team's calculation based on data on actual expenditure referenced in prior sections above

Refer to the table below and the accompanying analysis of impact on evaluation. In terms of comparison of the data of both actual and reported learner demand obtained from the provinces and the national departments data (DBE and DoT), the discrepancies reflected in the table below were noted:

Table 30. The variance in *actual learners transported* and *reported need* between data reported by provincial departments and programme data held by national departments (DBE and DOT)

Variances between DBE-supplied national LTP data and provincial LTP data			
Province	**Year**	**Description**	**Variance**
Eastern Cape	2012-13	Actual Transported	(71)
Eastern Cape	2013-14	Actual Transported	(1 683)
Eastern Cape	2013-14	Total Demand	8 219
Eastern Cape	2015-16	Actual Transported	57
Eastern Cape	2015-16	Total Demand	3 019
Eastern Cape	2016-17	Actual Transported	1 136
Free State	2015-16	Actual Transported	762
Free State	2016-17	Actual Transported	5 978
Gauteng	2012-13	Actual Transported	5 624
Gauteng	2015-16	Actual Transported	12 618
Gauteng	2016-17	Actual Transported	7 526
Western Cape	2012-13	Actual Transported	280
Western Cape	2014-15	Total Demand	3 950
Western Cape	2015-16	Total Demand	7 517
Western Cape	2016-17	Total Demand	2 416
KwaZulu-Natal	2012-13	Actual Transported	(3 357)
KwaZulu-Natal	2013-14	Actual Transported	404
KwaZulu-Natal	2014-15	Actual Transported	12 769
KwaZulu-Natal	2015-16	Actual Transported	(10 524)
KwaZulu-Natal	2015-16	Total Demand	(8 962)
KwaZulu-Natal	2015-16	Actual Transported	(10 524)
KwaZulu-Natal	2015-16	Total Demand	(8 962)
KwaZulu-Natal	2016-17	Total Demand	(19 000)

Because only a few provinces submitted independently-verified data on learner numbers for the review period, the actual differences between the provincial data and national department data might actually be more significant than the ones reflected in the tables above. The only way to verify programme data conclusively may be through forensic audits of sorts, which may of course be costly.

Impact of programme data variances in *learner numbers* on this evaluation

The variances in programme data (see table above) for actual numbers has the effect of distorting the average *cost per learner* calculated using the learner numbers, with the result that the average calculated price is likely to be artificially high or low depending on the direction and magnitude of error. The assessment of the *economy of pricing*, based on average *cost per learner* might, therefore, be misleading. Additionally, the results of the average may not be reliably extrapolated to future demand, when estimates of future demands on the fiscus regarding learner transport are computed.

Learner numbers, relating to the estimated need, that are misstated has the effect of producing misleading results on *programme coverage*[136] and exclusion error[137] . This causes an inaccurate assessment of *value for money* relating to *programme coverage* and thus inaccurate conclusions regarding efficiency of the Programme in delivering the outcome of learner transport. Furthermore, because of unreliable learner number data, we were not able to make a conclusive assessment of the comparison between change in budget allocation and programme coverage.

How we dealt with the variances between national LTP data and provincial LTP data

Since the data from the national departments was consistent and was available for the review period (2012-13 to 2016-17), we have used the data from the national departments .

Recommendations on the variances between national LTP data and provincial LTP data *(learner number data)*

Quarterly programme reports from provinces to DBE and DOT should be completed in full. Some pressure will be required to ensure compliance. Some programme quarterly reports for 2012/13 appeared to be incomplete. Data systems and especially data integrity (within the systems) requires determined and immediate attention to improve current operational levels. In terms of the consolidated Annual Learner Transport Programme report (which should be a standard output), there must be detailed comparison and reconciliation of programme data between quarterly programme reports from provinces and national-recorded data used as the basis for preparing the Annual Report.

General evaluation limitation of scope for this section of the Terms of Reference

We were unable to assess the number of *learner transport kilometres* travelled for almost all provinces (excluding the North West). There was no data available or data was simply not supplied by provincial implementing departments. We are, therefore, unable to calculate the *programme coverage* in terms *learner transport kilometres*.

[136] The proportion of the need that is satisfied

[137] The proportion of the target population that whose need has not been satisfied

Are there significant differences across provinces? What are the provincial funding trends of the Programme? Provide a detailed comparison of provincial models for the provision of learner transport across the country, including Mpumalanga Province which has a public private partnership model.[138]

The provincial (actual) funding trends are reflected in the table below. The provincial models of provision of learner transport are similar for all provinces where subcontracting is use. Except for Mpumalanga which uses a *PPP model* where vehicles are bought by Service Providers, operated for a typical lease term of 5 years and then ownership is transferred to the Mpumalanga Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport. Although the costing models are fairly similar for most provinces in that they include the same basic cost drivers, there are some significant differences described below:

Table 31. LTP Programme Current Cost Models Comparison

			Cost Drivers						
Province	Fixed cost per bus	Fixed cost per day	Fixed cost(per Learner)	Capacity of vehicle	Number of learners	number of days	Number of kilometres	Escalation	State of road
Eastern Cape	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Free State	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Gauteng	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
KwaZulu-Natal	Costing model not obtained								
Limpopo	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗
Mpumalanga	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
Northern Cape	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓
North West	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Western Cape	Number of learners, kilometres, days, Tariffs (are different for each route as determined by open tender system)								

The *cost drivers* depicted above are used in the costing models of provincial departments. There are significant variations in provincial costing models which inhibit inter-province comparison of the *economy of the price* paid. Depending on the cost drivers used in a particular model, an implementing

[138] Evaluation Terms of Reference question 3.4.2

department may end up paying a higher price or a lower price. On average, provincial programme costing models reflect the *kilometres travelled by the operators* and *capacity of the vehicle* used (except for Gauteng). There are significant variations in programme costing models and cost drivers are not common in all cases, such as *number of days travelled*, *gravel kilometres* (Northern Cape), *fixed rate per learner*, and *number of learners transported*. Programme model costing that includes both *number of learners* and *kilometres travelled* might "double compensate" for operator cost, for example, as it is likely that a *vehicle per kilometre cost* already includes a cost factor for the *carrying capacity of the vehicle*, which may lead to unnecessary additional budget implications for a given implementing department.

Another variation in provincial programme costing models is use of tariffs (are different for each route as determined by open tender system), and which in addition has (basic) components such as *number of learners*, *kilometres travelled* and *travel days*, currently in use in the Western Cape. The *open tender* and *route-specific* costing model represent a good option in terms of the Programme, if the basic cost drivers that remunerates the operators are considered (*kilometres travelled*, *capacity of vehicles*, *state of the road*, allowances for *wear and tear*, *running costs* and a fair *profit margin*).

What are the cost implications relative to alternative ways of addressing distance from school (e.g. hostels, more schools)?[139]

Part of our cost-effectiveness assessment of *value for money* would have included evaluation of other policy options to addressing distance and improving access to schools. However, the financial assessment of the option of building of hostels or schools requires such district-specific information for modelling the costs comparison, such as the *number of students per school/hostel*, the *minimum operating number of students per school/hostel*, the calculation of the *opportunity cost* of running the school/hostel, as well as budget savings to the Learner Transport Programme associated with closing of (a superfluous) school(s), the availability of *physical space to build a school or hostel*, and the *running costs* of both. This detailed exercise was not carried out given the interdependence of the variables and the unavailability of such detailed information during this evaluation. The focus of *value for money* assessment, therefore, becomes *cost feasibility* instead of *cost effectiveness* to determine the financial attributes associated with the current Programme.

Given the different variables that are need to be estimated accurately at a district level, subject to the availability of *space to build a school or hostel* and the *distance between schools* and the fact that a school cannot be built just for the learners that need learner transport, it is currently impossible to establish the *viability of the hostel and school options*, we have therefore only concentrated on learner transport as the policy option to improve access to schools in the short term. We have therefore evaluated, quantitatively for *cost effectiveness* and qualitatively for *programme benefits* that can't be quantified, the different service delivery models for learner transport discussed in section 3.4.2.1 of the report relating to, *"Description of the Service Models".* Our evaluation has focused on the four main service delivery models that are practically implemented in South Africa, that is ,(1) *Outright Government Ownership*, (2) *Leasing of the vehicles, without an option to renew*, as the lease option with an option to renew would work exactly the same as an outright ownership service delivery model,

[139] Evaluation Terms of Reference question 3.4.3

(3) *Public Private Sector Partnerships* (Turn-Key Model), the current model being used in Mpumalanga province and (4) *Full Outsourcing*, a model that the remaining eight provinces are currently using.

Brief description of Learner Transport Service delivery models

Outright Government Ownership may result in the initial cost of acquisition of vehicles and set up of depot being high, and since this option is transport-intensive, DoT can manage, monitor and administer it more effectively. Additionally, outright ownership costs of managing the fleet may be high and there might not be adequate capacity to effectively carry out this function at DoT which might result in further significant outsourcing costs. Leasing of the vehicles, without an option to renew, as the lease option with an option to renew would work exactly the same as an outright ownership service delivery model.

The **Leasing Option Without Renewal** provides the implementing department with risk avoidance as does not carry the risk of obsolescence, in other words operating risk. There is a fair amount of operating flexibility should the department wish to change the operating model after expiry of lease term, and since this option is transport-intensive, DoT can manage, monitor and administer it more effectively.

The **Buy, Operate and Transfer Option**, where the service provider buys, operates and transfers ownership to implementing department at the end of a typical five-year lease, represents in substance a "*lease to buy option*" as payment for learner transport effectively results in ownership being transferred to the implementing department. This model can result in the transfer of skills and increase public sector employment where, on transfer, drivers are employed directly by the implementing department to carry on the same model under the new ownership structure. Also, this option is transport- intensive, DoT can manage, monitor and administer it effectively. Under present conditions in an economically-pressurised fiscal environment, this option is becoming less attractive.

Full Outsourcing can imply that implementing department does not carry the risk of obsolescence, operating risk (including the shortfall arising from poor remuneration for Learner Transport). Its major shortcoming is that the model can result in large monitoring costs, there can be inadequate control of the operator behaviour, and ultimately provision of poor-quality service. Since this model is not transport intensive, DBE could effectively monitor and administer it.

As can be seen from the discussion above, the adoption of the service delivery model has possible significant effects for the choice of where the function lies. Based on the outline above, only outsourcing appears to support the placing of the function at DBE.

Table 32. The service delivery models: brief description of key costs and variables

Type of service delivery model	*Description of model of delivery*	*Capital costs*	*Operating costs*	
			"In contract costs"	*"Out of contract costs"*
Outsourcing	Service providers are contracted to carry learners on behalf of the DOT and DBE	**Costs common to all options:** Set up costs, contracting fees, initial administration costs, costs of developing sheltered pick up points	**Costs common to all options:** Administration costs, monitoring costs. **Model specific costs:** amounts paid to service providers/transport operators	Not applicable, but model should be replicated after expiry as our major assumption is that similar **replacement or renewal contracts** get signed on expiry of the current contracts
PPP	The service providers buy the vehicles, operate for an agreed period, typically 5 years, get paid for transporting learners during the contract period and transfer the vehicle to the implementing department after the contract period (Buy, Operate and Transfer Model)	**Costs common to all options:** Set up costs, contracting fees, initial administration costs, costs of developing sheltered pick up points **Model specific costs:** Cost of building depot or the outsourced costs of running the buses on behalf of DoT	**Costs common to all options:** Administration costs, monitoring costs, **Model specific costs:** amounts paid to service providers/transport operators. In this model this can be regarded as the imputed cost of purchasing vehicle	Costs of fuel, repair and maintenance costs, depot operating costs, driver costs, administration and monitoring costs, insurance costs, licencing costs, fleet management costs
Outright purchase	The implementing department, typically the DoT would purchase the vehicles, own them and run it and supply LEARNER TRANSPORT directly to the intended beneficiaries	**Costs common to all options:** Set up costs, contracting fees, initial administration costs, costs of developing sheltered pick up points **Model specific costs:** Cost of building depot or the outsourced costs of running the buses on behalf of DoT	**Costs common to all options:** Administration costs, monitoring costs. **Model specific costs** Costs of fuel, repair and maintenance costs, depot operating costs, driver costs, administration and monitoring costs, insurance costs, licencing costs, fleet management costs	
Leasing	The implementing department, typically the DoT would lease the vehicle, with no option to own, run it and supply LEARNER TRANSPORT directly to	**Costs common to all options:** Set up costs, contracting fees, initial administration costs, costs of developing sheltered pick up	**Costs common to all options:** Administration costs, monitoring costs. **Model specific costs:**	

Type of service delivery model	*Description of model of delivery*	*Capital costs*	*Operating costs*	
			"In contract costs"	*"Out of contract costs"*
	the intended beneficiaries	points. **Model specific costs:** Cost of building depot or the outsourced costs of running the buses on behalf of DoT	lease rental fees, repairs and maintenance, Costs of fuel, repair and maintenance costs? depot operating costs, driver costs, lease administration and monitoring costs, insurance costs? fleet management costs?	

Our approach to the cost effectiveness analysis

A *Public Sector Comparator* (PSC) was selected for the purposes of using as a baseline for estimation of undocumented costs and costs for which we did not receive data from the provinces in order to model and analyse the service delivery models above. We selected *Metrobus* as it is a state-owned company and data was readily available for use as a costing benchmark. We recognise the limitation that operating costs are model-and route-specific, but we used the same information across the three related options of *Leasing*, *Public Private Partnership* and *Outright Buying* to evaluate cost effectiveness, and therefore, there is no variation in cost assumptions across the three options. We did not model the costs common to all options such as *setup costs*, *contracting fees*, *initial administration costs*, construction costs of *sheltered pick up points,* as the costs are common and have no incremental effect on the option selected. Additionally, costs data is not available and they are not reliably estimated given the lack of insider access to operations.

Model input discussion

Our use of financial information from the *Public Sector Comparator* was limited to the direct costs associated with running a bus. This is reflected in the tables below:

Table 33. Public Sector Comparative Direct Costs: Metro Buses (Pty) Ltd Soc.[140]

Public Sector Comparative Direct Costs: Metro Buses (Pty) Ltd Soc	
Financial Metric: description	
Diesel	31 266 000
Staff expenses	154 659 000
Property expenses	6 221 000
Licencing	5 961 000
Insurance	7 853 000
Non- Financial Metric: description	
Passengers per annum	10 320 402
Number of buses	418
Routes	229
Kilometres travelled	10 000 000

Table 34. Estimated cost and other non-financial metrics per Bus based on Metrobus's information.[141]

Estimated cost and other non-financial metrics per Bus based on Metrobus's information		
Description of metric	**Metro Bus Estimated annual costs for 2017-18**	**Cost per bus**
Diesel	62 532 000	149 598
Repairs a & Maintenance		97 686[142]
Staff expenses	309 318 000	739 995
Property expenses	12 442 000	29 766
Licencing	11 922 000	28 522
Insurance	15 706 000	37 574
Annual Direct cost per bus	411 920 000	**1 083 141**
Cost per kilometre		**41.192**
Cost per passenger		**39.91**
Kilometres per bus		**23 923**

[140] Source: Metrobus Annual Report: Medium Term Performance 2017/18

[141] Authors' calculations for the evaluation.

[142] The repairs and maintenance charge are an annualised per kilometre cost of R1.62 obtained from MAN automotive South Africa conservatively, based on bad roads and that each bus does 5 000 kilometres per month. The repairs and maintenance costs are based on a new bus being acquired.

In terms of *cost estimation*, the two tables immediately above refers: (i) The estimate of passengers ferried was obtained by totalling the *mid-term passengers ferried* into an annual figure, (ii) The *direct costs for running a bus* were calculated by totalling the *mid-term direct costs* into an annual figure, (iii) *Property rates* as detailed in the Metrobus mid-term report have been used as a substitute for the cost of renting the depots or provision for the building of the depot for *Leasing*, *Outright Purchase* and *PPP* options, (iv) The *staff costs* in the Metrobus Mid-term report have been used to represent the actual cost of the *Outright Purchase*, *Leasing* and the costs of running the bus after the transfer of the buses to the implementing department. Because we do not expect that there will be significant duplication given inadequate capacity to run the current Learner Transport Programme, we have modelled the *full direct staff cost* of running the operation, and avoided modelling *driver costs* only. And (v) Estimates calculated were based on a company information with a June financial year end, and the 2017-18 estimate is, therefore, not expected to diminish the usefulness of the cost information for use to calculate 2016-17 direct costs for running a bus.

Buses needed per province

We have estimated as part of our base model, the estimate of the number of buses required by each province as reflected in table 31 below, based on the following assumptions: (i) The specific bus that is used in the analysis is a *Volkswagen* 17.210 with *Volkswagen Explorer (VE)* Body 12.5m (which is a 1.8 engine, and will thus save on fuel costs versus the comparable *MAN bus* which is 2.2 litre engine capacity), (ii) The capacity of the bus is 65 passengers, as this bigger bus has the potential to reach remote areas where the smaller vehicles might not be able to access in relatively bad weather. This can present problems in provinces like the Free State, where they have less than 10,000 students supported by the Programme, possibly requiring a model based on smaller vehicles, (iii) We have used a somewhat simplistic assumption that each bus completes just one trip because of the absence of detail regarding *actual number of trips* and *kilometres travelled* in each province. There can be obvious efficiencies and cost savings when a bus completes more than one trip or carries students from nearby schools, as this will reduce the number of buses to be bought or leased. This approach allocates a bus to every 65 students. The simplistic assumptions will assist evaluating the *cost effectiveness* of similar options relating to *PPP*, *Outright Purchase* and *Leasing*.

Table 35. Buses required per province

PROVINCE	Buses needed 2016-17[143]
Eastern Cape	1 714
Free State	150
Gauteng	1 495
KwaZulu-Natal	1 093
Limpopo	529
Mpumalanga	927
Northern Cape	428
North West	811
Western Cape	884

Limitation of scope

A more specific modelling of costs could be undertaken if the following information relating to the PPP option is available: the *operator running costs*, the *total students ferried*, the *total number of kilometres travelled*, *total number of operator contracts* under the Programme, *number of trips per operator* and *kilometres per trip*, the *average contract duration* before transferring ownership to the implementing department, the *open tender price* of the *running of the buses* that have been transferred to the Implementing department and the *cost breakdown* and *disaggregated costs* between *fair remuneration to operators* under the *PPP* option and the *term instalment costs* for the buses if financed.

The limitations in evaluating the options have a significant effect on the numbers as the model is very sensitive to change in variables. Therefore, although it should be used as a guide for decision making, if there is no other further information obtained from the *PPP model* for model refinement, it should be interpreted with caution. If the model is refined, we expect the *number of buses* used in the model to significantly reduce, and thus impact the relative cost. We have not encountered any instances of duplication of spending, but the *Buy, Own and Transfer* option presents a specific risk of duplication as it may be difficult to track the flow and purpose of spending from the implementing department to the operator during the lease, and on its conclusion.

Our understanding is that Government pays for both the *bus instalments* and *operating costs* of the operator. This might create duplication of costs, and raises tangible concerns about whether the operator is the actual owner of the buses when Government pays for it. It can be argued that a *risk sharing arrangement* is needed where the operators owns, and operates the vehicles, and bears risk and gets fairly remunerated during the contract term. The operator bears the responsibility for management operating cost of the buses under the *PPP* option. Because we have not been able to split the *cost of the Programme* for the *PPP* option between the *programme running costs* and

[143] Authors' calculations for the evaluation. This calculation is based on the perceived demand for 2016-17 and the capacity of the bus of 65.

payment for the buses, this could compound the duplication problem or rather the reported *actual costs* might be understated as the cost paid for the buses might be made directly to the bank. It is not clear who the registered owners of the vehicles are.

Evaluation of cost effectiveness of the service delivery models: Assumptions

The following assumptions were made across the models discussed below; (1) Payments are assumed to occur at the end of a relevant year – it is not possible to undertake disaggregation of monthly payments data; (2) The cost of erecting the sheltered pick-up points and depots is common to the *Outright Buying*, *PPP* or *Leasing* options, and it will not be considered in the financial model for alternative options to contracting operators, (3) It is assumed that a *bus's average lifespan* is 13 years based on the average calculated from widely available estimates, and (4) The *lending rate* is used as a *discount rate* because the *Leasing* option and the *PPP* option are essentially *borrowing arrangements* in comparison with an *Outright Purchase* option, which should compare like-for-like. We expect the implementing department to be able to borrow at prime-plus-100-basis points, thus at 11%. Notwithstanding any restrictions on borrowing we assume that departments can enter into leases which are essentially financing arrangements.

Table 36. Option 1: The PPP or BOT Model (Mpumalanga Model) [144]

PPP Model	NPC of direct costs of operation in 2016-17 terms
Totals	83 122 184 215 [145]
"Imputed "Cost of buying buses	15 762 477 818 [146]
Total NPC	98 884 662 033
Equivalent Annual Cost (N=13)	14 649 860 830 [147]

[144] Author's calculation based on data on actual expenditure referenced elsewhere in the report

[145] This is the Net Present Cost of the estimated direct cost of operation based on the estimate from the data obtained from Metrobus report referred to above. This is calculated over the expected life of the bus of 13 years and projected from 2017 levels using the average inflation rate of 6%.

[146] The imputed cost of buying the bus is the payment made to the service provider over the five years. This is very simplistic as this amount need to have a fair consideration for the provision of LEARNER TRANSPORT taken out from it. At the time of the report, we had not inspected a contract that details how the payment is split between a fair compensation and LEARNER TRANSPORT and payment for the bus. If that split is obtained, this could be one of the cheaper options.

[147] This is an annualised present caused to enable comparison with other options with a different economic life.

Table 37. Option 2: The outright buying model (proposed model)

The outright buying model	NPC of direct costs of operation In 2016-17 terms
Totals	83 122 184 215 [21]
Actual Cost of buying buses	14 719 200 846
Total NPC	97 841 385 061
Equivalent Annual Cost (N=13)	14 495 298 310 [23]
Net advantage of Outright buying	1 043 276 972

As per the assumptions outlined above, if the intention is to own and operate buses, the net present cost of the *Outright Buying* option is less than that of the *PPP* option given the net advantage of *Outright Buying* of R1,043,276,972. Therefore, the buses should be bought outright. We cautiously provide this recommendation as the *PPP* cost might be overstated - given the absence of a detailed breakdown of costs. In addition, the department might not be willing and able to invest or expend the amounts needed to run buses, due to budget constraints and capacity constraints.

Table 38. Option 3: The Outsourcing Model (Current model for remaining 8 provinces)

The Outsourcing Model	NPC of forecast payments to Service Providers[148] 2016-17
Total NPC	46 997 907 508 [149]
Equivalent Annual Cost (N=13)	6 962 786 685

Option 4: The Leasing Option

At the time of reporting we had not received the *leasing schedule* for the same bus form MAN, and we had not evaluated the option as our assumptions might not be consistent with the going market structure. We could loosely say that *the Leasing without an option to Buy* is fairly similar to the *Outright Buying* option and *Leasing with an option to Own* is similar to the *PPP* option above.

Recommendation

We propose that departments continue on an *Outsourcing Model* because this is a decision for the short-to-medium-term, with consideration given to options of addressing distance such as the building of hostels and schools in the long term, and budget constraints might inhibit the decision to create capacity as above. The decision is based on the calculation that the *Outsourcing* option has the lowest

[148] Author's calculation based on data on actual expenditure referenced elsewhere in the report

[149] These are the costs forecasted considering the growth in demand and inflation rate as previously calculated and reported on below up to 2023. The average nominal rate (considering real growth and inflation used to forecast for 13 years is 14. 68% per annum. We have grown the payments over the same period as the economic life of the bus to better match the cash flows for the cost effectiveness decision.

Net Present cost over the 13-year period of R46,997,907,508 and its annualised cost over the 13 years is the lowest at R6,962,786,685[150] (compared to R14,649,860,830 for PPP and R14,495,298,310 for the *Outright Buying* option).

Is pricing based on regulated competition for a route? Are pricing models used to cost learner transport provision (in accepted operator bids) reasonable and market-related?[151]

We have not inspected documents that show whether the prices are reasonable and market-related. However, the description of the pricing model below shows that the price for Western Cape appears market-related as the price is obtained from *open tender*. An *open tender* price that is *route-specific* are market-related and fair as the bidder is expected to know the conditions of road by the time the bidding process occurs.

Recommendation on costing model

Whatever variables are decided upon by provincial departments for inclusion in the pricing model we recommend that the price should consider the following elements identified in the Eastern Cape Learner Transport policy: *maintenance and repair costs*, *tyre replacement costs*, *fuel costs*, *depreciation and road costs*, *insurance costs*, *licence costs*, *inflation rates* and *profit mark-up*. Additionally, the costing model should consider the *state of the roads* and *remoteness of the place*. Therefore, the costing model should provide for pricing that cater for rural, semi-urban and urban areas.

A market-related price would be a price that is determined on the open tender system for each route determined when operators bid with full knowledge about *capacity of their vehicles*, the *state of the roads*, *remoteness of the place*, *gradient*. This price is determined for an open market system for each route. This is likely to be widely accepted by operators as they would have set the price themselves and it is also likely be a fair price given that the forces of demand and supply are at play. **Please refer to response above for a specific model recommendation.**

What do departments do to apply a consistent and fair method to prioritise coverage during budget (re)prioritisation? What are the current approaches to (re)prioritisation? To what extent is there duplication in spending with regard to the Programme in provinces?[152]

[150] The Net Present Cost (R15 762 477 818) and Equivalent Annual Costs (R4 264 858 502) are lower if calculated over a typical contract period of 5 years. We have not considered the payment to service providers as a perpetuity as this would not be consistent with the nature of the Learner Transport Programme as a short to medium term solution. Considering a perpetuity would make this option more expensive when in fact its not comparable with other shorter-term options above. It would have been appropriate to compare the perpetuity with long term option such as building hostels and schools

[151] Evaluation Terms of Reference question 3.4.4

[152] Evaluation Terms of Reference question 3.4.5

As per the provincial's interviews conducted prioritisation is widely done using criteria relating to giving preference to primary school learners over secondary, students that stay in bushy, remote areas and disabled learners. The only problem is that students who qualify as per a set criterion are excluded. The prioritisation will never be fair as the problem of distance and access to schools remains.

It is debatable, in considering *value for money* whether the prioritisation is fair and equitable. There is a possibility that some learners with the same circumstances will be treated differently, that is one of them gets access to learner transport and the other one doesn't. *Value for money* generally refers to the maximisation of the benefit and impact of the Programme. *Equity*, a component of VfM analysis, refers to the assessment whether the Programme produces equal benefits to different groups. It generally presents problems and a burden of proof regarding the fairness of the decision given that learners that get dropped as a result of the prioritisation, qualify for learner transport. This also casts some doubt on whether all students that benefit received equal benefits from the Programme, and that leads to a need to consider *inclusion* and *fairness*.

We have not encountered any instances of duplication of spending, but the *Buy, Own and Transfer* option presents a specific risk of duplication as it may be difficult to track the flow and purpose of spending from the implementing department from the operator during the lease and on conclusion.

To what extent would the development of norms and standards for the Programme be appropriate?[153]

We recommend the following:(1) The Policy (2015) should provide for a similar costing model that considers the *kilometres travelled*, *state of the roads*, *terrain*, *capacity of the vehicle*, *number of learners transported*, *allowance for wear and tear*, the consequent *repair allowance* for the vehicle and provide a *reasonable mark-up*. (2) The Policy should provide for *open tender* to procure operators, *route-specific price determination* to avoid the issue of operators abandoning non- profitable routes. (3) Policy should provide for the adoption of a Learner Transport monitoring tool that shows, among other things the following; *budgeted* and *actual cost per district*, *number transported*, *amount claimed by operators*, *schools supported per district*, *number of routes*, *number of contracts*, *change in vehicle*, *tariff*, *applicable bid from which tariff was obtained*, any *change in operator*, *complaints received and corrective action*, *town*, *route name* and *number of days transported*.

Are there comparable international trends in terms of learner transport provision? To what extent can they be applied in South Africa?[154]

Greece:

An overview of the school transport programme in Greece shows that 12 000 itineraries are carried out per day using public transport which occurs twice a day and serves 215 000 public school students whose ages range from 6 to 18. About 7 000 private contracts, whose cost is estimated at

[153] Evaluation Terms of Reference question 3.5

[154] Evaluation Terms of Reference question 4.7

150,000,000€ are entered into every year. **Public primary and secondary schools are entitled** to free transfer from their residents to school units and vice versa. If the distance from the residence to the school unit is over 1.2 km for primary school students, over 2.5 km for high school students aged 12-15 and over 4.0 km for high school students aged 16-18. Central **regions** sign public service contracts with private companies in order to serve primary school students living in a distance over 1.2 km from their school unit (Kotoula et al., 2017).

The corresponding distances for high school students aged 12-15 and 16-18 are 3.0 km and 5.0 km respectively. The school transportation service is either provided for by existing transport and or by Central Region (CR) owned vehicles. The CR vehicles are paid for by the government at a predetermined formula. Parents can transport their children and get compensated for the distance and get an allowance of 85€ if they **move closer to school .** This cost translates to 0.35€ per kilometer or 1500 per student per year. Directors confirm that both the student who qualify for distances travelled and transmit all the relevant details to the Region. Buses are labeled and a regulatory speed limit exists. (Kotoula et al, 2017).

Applicability to South Africa:

The Model described above is manageable if there is adequate capacity in the implementing department to run the transport operation for learners. If this is adopted, the function for Learner Transport will have to lie with DoT, as that provision of transport forms part of their daily activities. A modified version can be done through a *PPP* arrangement such as the one in Mpumalanga, where the buses are owned by Government and leased out.

It has been documented that some students transfer if there is learner transport, even if it is far from their homes. The two options described above of reimbursing the parents might not work at all in the more remote areas where income per capita is low. An adaptation could be attempted to provide the money to the parents weekly for the transport.

The option of moving to school and being given an allowance, might not work as they are a lot of financial and other consideration related to moving a home. The above example for Greece is fairly similar to the current South African Learner Transport Programme.

4.3 Sustainability

Key Evaluation Question: How sustainable is the Learner Transport Programme, considering the many competing priorities and demands in the education-transport sectors, and what is the medium-to-long-term prognosis of the learner transport challenge posed to Government? Are there viable alternatives to the current LTP programme intervention?

What is the economic relationship between increasing Programme versus increasing spending in infrastructure building?[155]

As per discussion in response to question *3.4.3, we have not evaluated the alternative ways of addressing distance to school.*

Will provinces be able to continue funding at current commitment levels?[156] ***To what extent does current funding satisfy the current need?***[157]

ToR questions above will be addressed using table 36 as a reference discussion document.

Table 39. Budget utilisation and average coverage

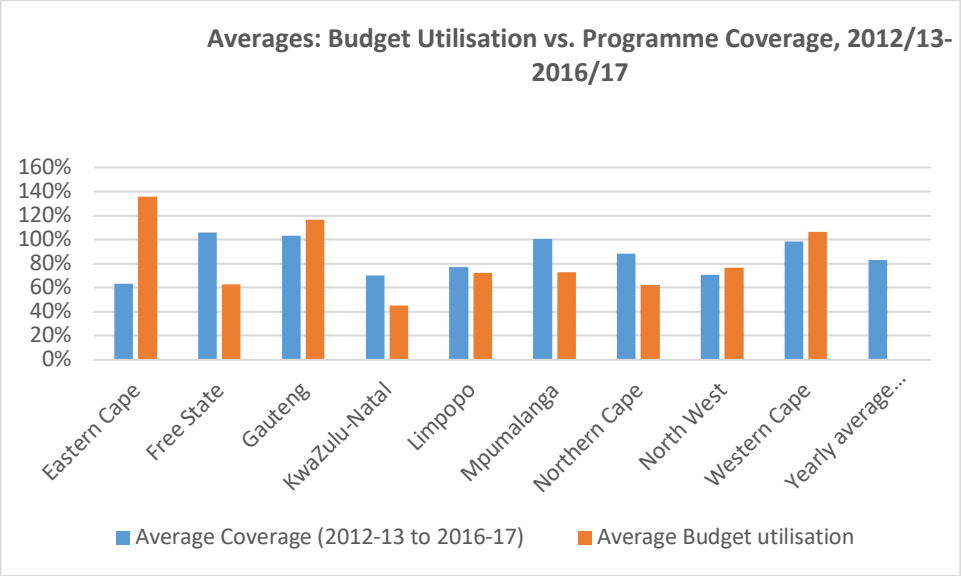
PROVINCE	Budget utilisation 2012/13	Budget utilisation 2013/.14	Budget utilisation 2014/15	Budget utilisation 2015/16	Budget utilisation 2016/17	Average Utilisation	Average Coverage
Eastern Cape	174%	187%	106%	107%	105%	136%	**63%**
Free State	100%	0%		25%	126%	63%	**106%**
Gauteng	45%	186%	123%	100%	127%	116%	**103%**
KwaZulu Natal	23%		94%	28%	37%	45%	**70%**
Limpopo	77%	77%	76%	36%	96%	73%	**77%**
Mpumalanga	67%	0%	89%	110%	98%	73%	**100%**
Northern Cape	94%			23%	71%	62%	**88%**
North West	37%			94%	100%	77%	**71%**
Western Cape	104%	111%	111%	114%	92%	106%	**98%**

[155] Evaluation Terms of Reference question 4.1

[156] Evaluation Terms of Reference question 4.3

[157] Evaluation Terms of Reference question 4.4

Figure 24. Averages: Budget Utilisation vs. Programme Coverage, 2012/13-2016/17



Because only the full satisfaction of need is considered a sustainable level of coverage, given that the main criteria for need is distance from school, all provinces not meeting 100%, will not be considered to have met their outcome. Therefore, Eastern Cape, KZN, Limpopo., Northern Cape and North West are considered not be on sustainable levels of coverage.

This coverage is a measure for value for money which can be crude measure of programme reach and the amount not covered can, loosely, be regarded as an exclusion error. Inclusion and exclusion error are the proportion of the target group not receiving transfers/ the benefit when in fact they have similar circumstances, that is, learner transport. The ratio represents a crude measure of the program reach, assuming that the needs identification and analysis process provides an adequate basis for determining the target group.

A high budget utilisation should be consistent with a higher coverage. This is the case in all but three provinces, Eastern Cape. KZN and Free state:

In assessing whether the provinces can sustain the funding at the current level we will discuss the budget utilisation in the context of provinces whose coverage is less than 100%.

It is noted that there is underspending in the following provinces based on the average utilisation of the budgeted amount over the review period: **Free State**; 63% (average coverage 106%)**; KwaZulu Natal**; 40% (average coverage 70%); **Limpopo**; 73% (average coverage 77%); **Northern Cape;** 62% (average coverage 88%); **Mpumalanga**; 73% (average coverage 100%) and North **West**;77% (average coverage 71%) For the above three cases and generally all provinces, the consistent overbudget can be as a result of the budget adjustments. It might not be sustainable to always meet demand for LEARNER TRANSPORT through adjustment budget as this budget is subject to prioritisation. This might be an indication of a low and unsustainable budget as the budget utilisation of above 100% is not covering all the students that need transport were not transported.

Differences between the provincial and national department data on budget allocations and actual expenditure

Tables 38 reflect Differences between the provincial and national department data on budget allocations. The data on costs from DBE and Dot is rather complimentary as missing data from one year that one department does not have was obtained from the other department's data.

Table 40. Differences between the provincial and national department data on budget allocations

Province	*Year*	*Difference**
Limpopo	2013-14	**8 501 000**
Limpopo	2014-15	**(2 000 000)**
Limpopo	2015-16	**(12 942 000)**
Limpopo	2016-17	**18 159 000**
Northern Cape	2016-17	**524 000**
Western Cape	2012-13	**(4 417 000)**
Western Cape	2013-14	**(23 290 000)**
Western Cape	2014-15	**(19 967 000)**
Western Cape	2015-16	**49 692 000**
Western Cape	2016-17	**(11 771 000)**
Eastern Cape	2012-13	**949 000**
Eastern Cape	2013-14	**126 898 000**
Eastern Cape	2015-16	**818 000**
Eastern Cape		**27 951 000**

The data discrepancies reflected in tables above could be larger as we only compared the department data against province data only for the provinces that submitted data directly to us.

Impact of the discrepancies in cost data on the evaluation assessment:

Given the net positive difference means that the provincial budget allocations are overstated compared to national sources. This will lead to the reporting misstating budget utilisations by provinces. Additionally, sustainability assessments that involve comparison between budget utilisation and coverage will lead to inappropriate conclusion.

How we dealt with the differences between provincial data and national departments data

Given the differences between the programme data provided by the provinces and that provided by national departments (DoT and DBE) and the internal inconsistencies noted, we have adopted the following method in the use of data for evaluation; (1) Use programme data provided by the national

departments provide, (2) Where a Provincial Implementing Department provides data, that is independently verifiable(against credible documents such as the annual report or EPRE), we used the data provided by the province in place of the data from the national departments and where the national departments do not provide data, we use the data from the province, even if it is not verified

Recommendations on the differences in budget allocation

Provincial and national department data should be compared quarterly and confirmation of costs should be carried out quarterly and discrepancies resolved every quarter.

Differences between the DBE and DoT data on budget allocations

When a detailed comparison was made between the data for both budget allocations and actual expenditure, only one difference was noted. The difference is reflected in table D2 below:

Table 41. Differences between the DBE and DoT data on budget allocations

Differences between DBE and DoT data from Presentations					
Province	**Year**	**Description**	**Budget allocation (DBE) presentation)**	**Budget allocation (DoT) presentation)**	**Difference**
Northern Cape	2015-16	Budget Allocation	118 280 000	125 359 000	**-R7 079 000.00**

Impact of the discrepancies in learner numbers data on the evaluation and planning

The difference is not expected to have a material effect on the evaluation given. We used the amount that's is reflected in other corroborating information.

Recommendations on the differences in budget allocation

Inter-departmental confirmation of costs should be carried out quarterly and discrepancies resolved every quarter.

Other matters affecting general program sustainability and sustainability of funding

A range of issues affecting sustainability were raised in the provincial interview: (1) Different rates paid for driving on the same terrain (KZN). (2) Standardised payment made without consideration of the terrain and road condition. (3) Lack of access to roads in rainy seasons. (4) The dynamic nature of the program where learners can be admitted into the program at any time during the years due to differing reasons (All provinces). (5) The absence of an adequate basis on which learner transport budget is determined and the use of a plug variable, thus using the available budget (affects all provinces). and (6) The unreliable data at provincial level (affects all provinces).

Problem 1, 2 and 3 noted relating to the rate and state of roads affects the program delivery where operators might shun the routes and cause some ad hoc and expensive replacement appointments which will distort the panning and throws the funding model into imbalance.

Problems 4 to 6 affect forecasting and cost projection as the need and budgeted cost may never be known with certainty at the time of planning.

Recommendations

The following courses of action might alleviate the problems above: (i)Develop an open tender-route based. (ii) Use bigger buses. (iii) The budget should always be based on need to avoid exclusion error. (iv) A quarterly comparison of data submitted to national departments to the data held at provinces.

What is the most efficient funding model, and funding mechanism(s) (equitable share or conditional grant) for the funding of the Programme in provinces?[158] Should funding for learner transport be ring-fenced?[159]

Funding of Learner Transport: the current Model-Provincial Equitable Share

On average, all provinces are not on a sustainable funding model as discussed above. It has to be determined whether the funding should continue to be transferred through an unconditional equitable share or become a conditional grant.

An equitable share makes the money allocated to the province and thus implementing department be subject to sector priorities and there is no guarantee that students that require learner transport will have access. The Learner Transport Programme is funded from the provincial equitable share, subject to other competing provincial competing priorities for the funds. Provincial interviews generally indicate that the funding of learner transport depends on the available budget, leading to underfunding, a fact that has been established as highly likely from the analysis of the relationship between the trend of budget allocation and perceived demand, which exhibit a relationship that seems to suggest the budget is not based on learner need. This is discussed in detail in other sections of the report. It was generally observed that in most budget documents such as the Provincial Revenue and Expenditure (EPRE), the line item for Learner transport is not separately identifiable in the provincial budget, making monitoring and analysis of the budget allocation for learner transport difficult. A possible response to this challenge noted in the interview with National Treasury is that Learner Transport should possibly become a sub- programme for ease of identification, transparency and monitoring in the provincial budget. The current model is more easily implemented as ideally, an allocation based on the need should be allocated to learner transport from the equitable share. However, besides other disadvantages explained above, the major setback is that the budget for learner transport is not protected and it is therefore subject to prioritisation given the competing provincial priorities for the equitable share.

Alternative model- Conditional Grant

Conditional grants are allocations of money from one sphere of government to another, conditional on certain services being delivered or on compliance with specified requirement and meant for fulfilling specific national priorities in the provincial budget. This model can be used as a solution to the major setback of the current system, where the funds for learner transport are not protected and

[158] Evaluation Terms of Reference question 4.2

[159] Evaluation Terms of Reference question 4.5

thus can be subject to re-prioritisation, a possible reason for the learner transport budget under-utilisation. This method will ensure that funds allocated for learner transport will not be re-prioritised to other competing needs as it will be ring-fenced. For this system to work a proper need identification and forecasting of cost need to be done beforehand, given the dynamic nature of the Learner Transport Programme, for example learners might be added to the programme to the rationalisation of schools and setting up of an informal settlement close to the school for example. These forecasts will be needed upfront for the Treasury to be able to determine the amount of the conditional grant. This can create challenges in applying the grant formula. Budlender (2017) documents further challenges for the conditional grant as; (i) If they are adverse changes in the economy, and there needs to be changes in the fiscal framework, the national departments cut back on conditional grants, instead of the department's own portion of the allocation, creating uncertainty about future funding for learner transport, for example. Budlender (2017) sites that as a possible motivation for use of the equitable share to fund learner transport as national departments will not be able to cut this amount. This argument does not appear to offer a viable and sustainable solution to the lack of protection and underfunding of learner transport; (1) equitable share does not directly recognise the increasing need for learner transport and (2) The non- reduction of equitable share does not decrease the vulnerability of the learner transport budget to budget re-prioritisation.

It appears as if, given the coverage of less than 100%, the learner transport budget should be ring-fenced. One possible way is converting the learner transport budget to a conditional grant. Whilst this earmarks the money to make it available for LEARNER TRANSPORT, it might change behaviour at provincial level, as they might just want to spent because the money is now available. A conditional grant does not provide spending flexibility that the discretionary grant gives and it can lead to unintended inefficiencies. As the provision of LEARNER TRANSPORT is a way of providing access to education, the sustainable option is that which provides equity in terms of providing transport to all students that qualify. There is an argument against using a conditional grant when there is significant underspending. Average coverage is less than 100% (83%) against the backdrop of underspending in other provinces. This coverage reflected above provides for some allocative inefficiency where the redistribution of the funds results a student becoming worse off. Given these coverages above, it cannot be argued that the underspending is due to excess funds being available and thus cannot be used to justify the proper working of the provincial equitable share as an allocation mechanism for LEARNER TRANSPORT.

Recommendation

Therefore, we recommend conditional grant as a mechanism to create access to school through addressing distance. The main issue is not the allocative inefficiencies of the conditional grant but rather satisfying all the need identified without ant reprioritisation mechanisms.

Despite the setback of conditional grants above and any further, organisational, reporting and administration burdens of conditional grants, given the priority of providing learner transport as a way of providing access to schools and coverage of less than 100% across provinces, a conditional grant appears to be a viable option to protect the funding for learner transport and prevent under-utilisation of LTP budget due to re-prioritisation at provincial level.

Specific recommendation relating to future funding – future costs to satisfy identified need.

It is paramount for future funding to estimate the future cost of the programme.

The process followed in our prediction of future costs involve justifying each variable to the model of estimating the actual expenditure for the period 2017/18 to 2022/23.

Data deficiency for 2017/18

The perceived demand numbers obtained from two presentations, one being a DBE presentation and the other being a joint DBE/DoT presentation showed the following discrepancies:

Table 42. Data deficiency for 2017/18 for learner transport need

Province(A)	2017/18 need DBE_6 March 2017(B)	2017/18 need DBE/DoT_23 May 2017(C)	Difference (B-C)
EC	111 406	106 551	**4 855**
FS	9 008	10 689	**- 1 681**
GP	122 801	109 618	**13 183**
KZN	90 000	90 000	-
LP	40 268	40 268	-
MP	60 231	60 256	**- 25**
NC	26 877	26 853	**24**
NW	54 059	54 059	-
WC	59 408	58 000	**1 408**
TOTAL	**574 058**	**556 294**	**17 764**

We used the data from the DBE presentation with a total identified need of 574 058 as it is consistent with two other sources of data including the data we received directly from DBE.

Forecasted reported demand using (only) DBE and DoT data

Because the average provincial increases in perceived demand(need) contained outliers that significantly pushed up the average, we used a median change in need for the period 2012/13 to 2016/17 of 8.2% as a forecasted increase in demand. This provided the real increase part of the total expenditure. Given that the building of schools and hostels are long term measures of addressing access to schools through via distance reduction, it is expected that in the medium term, the past increase in need should be persist over the next five years. The median increase in demand is expected to be an all-inclusive rate that takes into account the effects of population growth, migration and proliferation of new settlements on learner demand. The following results were obtained using the 2016-17 demand as a base:

Table 43. Predicted Demand for Learner Transport 2019 to 2023 (Provincial Overview) (using only DBE and DoT data)

	ACTUAL ANNUAL DEMAND 2017/18	PREDICTED ANNUAL DEMAND 2018/19	PREDICTED ANNUAL DEMAND 2019/20	PREDICTED ANNUAL DEMAND 2020/21	PREDCITED ANNUAL DEMAND 2021/22	PREDICTED ANNUAL DEMAND 2022/23
Eastern Cape	111 406	120 532	130 406	141 088	152 646	165 150
Free State	9 008	9 746	10 544	11 408	12 343	13 354
Gauteng	122 801	132 861	143 744	155 519	168 259	182 043
KwaZulu-Natal	90 000	97 373	105 349	113 979	123 316	133 418
Limpopo	40 268	43 567	47 136	50 997	55 174	59 694
Mpumalanga	60 231	65 165	70 503	76 279	]82 527	89 288
Northern Cape	26 877	29 079	31 461	34 038	36 826	39 843
North West	54 059	58 487	63 279	68 462	74 070	80 138
Western Cape	59 408	64 275	69 540	75 236	81 400	88 068
National	**574 058**	**621 084**	**671 961**	**727 007**	**786 561**	**850 995**

Figure 25. Predicted demand for LTP 2019 to 2023- provincial overview (using only DBE and DoT data)

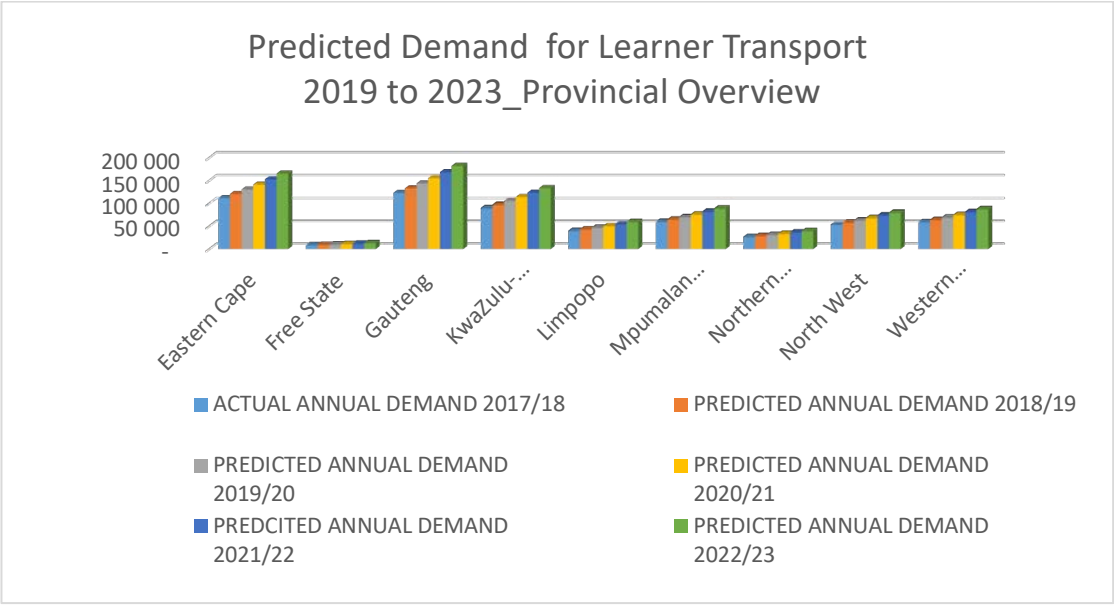
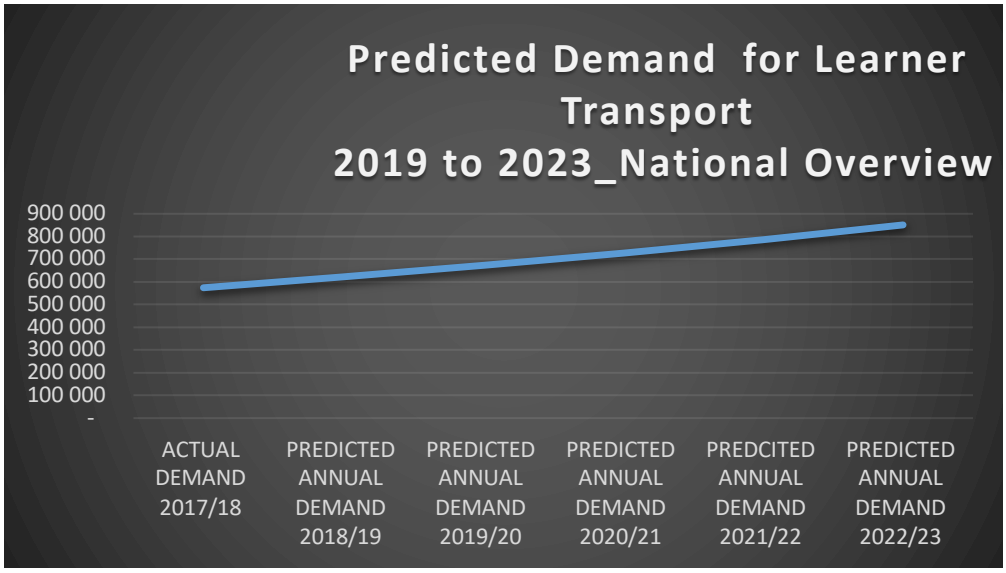


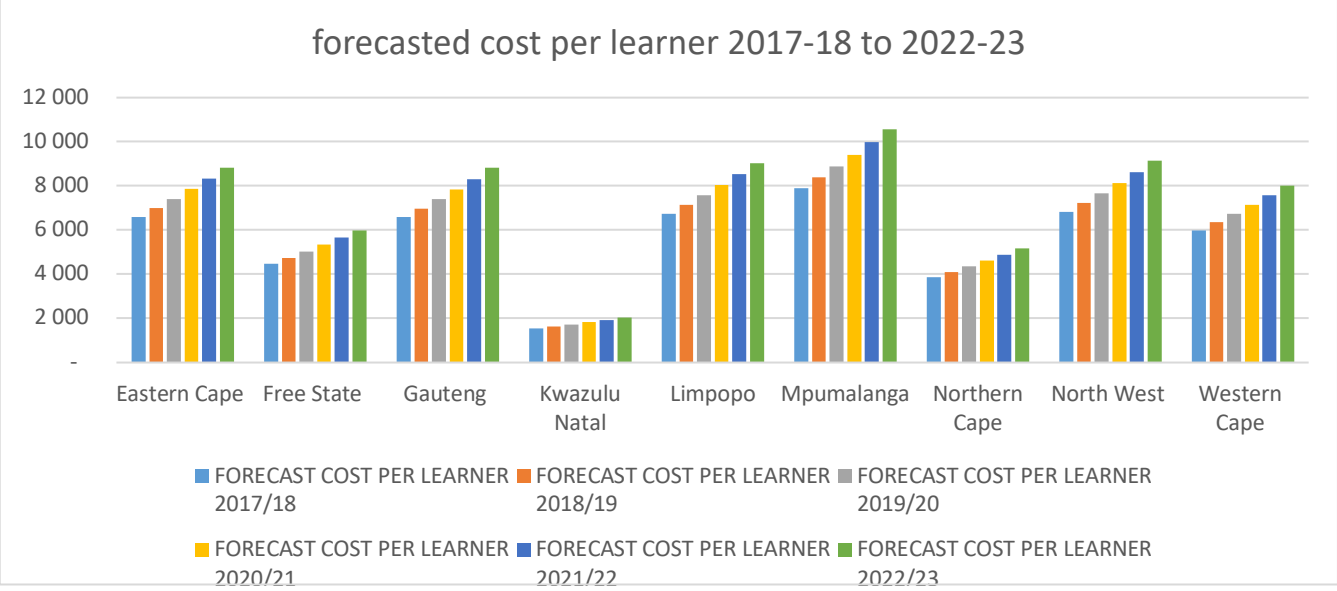
Figure 26. Predicted demand for LTP 2019 to 2023- provincial overview (using only DBE and DoT data)



The predicted actual cost per beneficiary (using only DBE and DoT data)

Using the base cost per learner in 2016-17, calculated for each province we calculated the forecast cost per beneficiary by increasing the base cost by the expected inflation of 6%. We obtained the following results for the forecast period 2017-18 to 2022/23:

Figure 27. Provincial Price Prediction 2017/18 – 2022/23



The predicted cost for 2018/19 to 2022/23 (using only DBE and DoT data)

When we combined the results of the variables explained above we obtained the following results for predicted actual cost for 2018/19 to 2022/23:

Table 44. Projected total cost- provincial overview (using only DBE and DoT data)

PROVINCE	Projected Actual Expenditure 2017-18	Projected Actual Expenditure 2018-19	Projected Actual Expenditure 2019/20	Projected Actual Expenditure 2020/21	Projected Actual Expenditure 2021/22	Projected Actual Expenditure 2022/23
Eastern Cape	734 988 858	842 909 302	966 676 003	1 108 615 710	1 271 396 817	1 458 079 523
Free State	40 357 908	46 283 771	53 079 745	60 873 591	69 811 828	80 062 492
Gauteng	808 929 807	927 707 204	1 063 925 015	1 220 144 064	1 399 301 187	1 604 764 445
KwaZulu-Natal	137 855 881	158 097 641	181 311 555	207 934 031	238 465 559	273 480 116
Limpopo	271 811 680	311 722 540	357 493 622	409 985 397	470 184 686	539 223 202
Mpumalanga	476 119 663	546 029 629	626 204 667	718 152 028	823 600 274	944 531 777
Northern Cape	104 085 867	119 369 083	136 896 375	156 997 248	180 049 587	206 486 765
North West	368 824 734	422 980 289	485 087 653	556 314 412	637 999 594	731 678 837
Western Cape	356 196 864	408 498 234	468 479 158	537 267 246	616 155 680	706 627 520
Control	**3 299 171 263.28**	**3 783 597 692**	**4 339 153 792**	**4 976 283 728**	**5 706 965 212**	**6 544 934 676**

Figure 28. Projected Provincial Actual Cost 2018/19 – 2022/23 (using only DBE and DoT data)

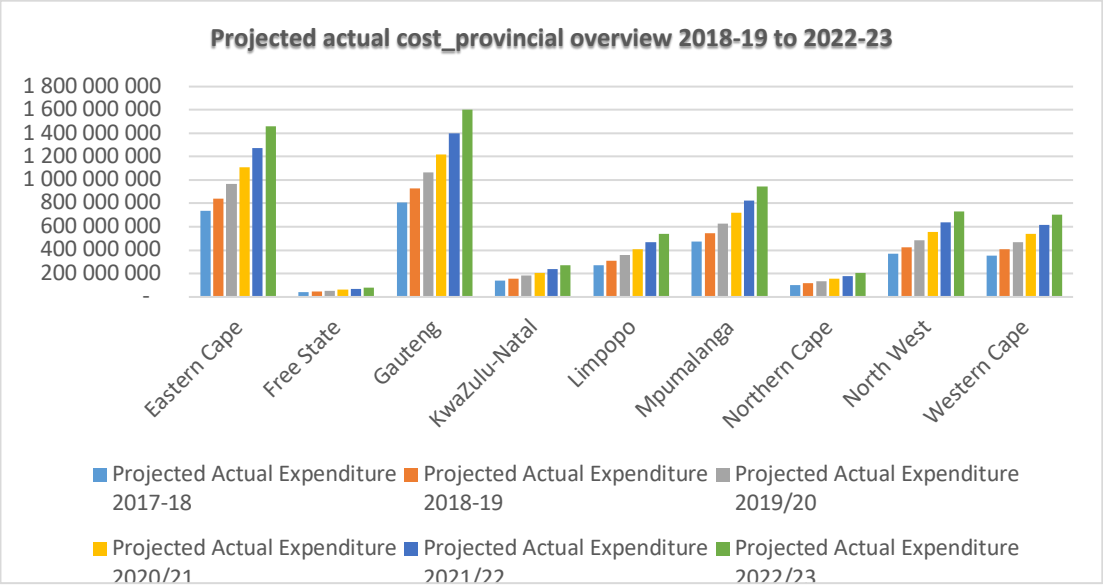
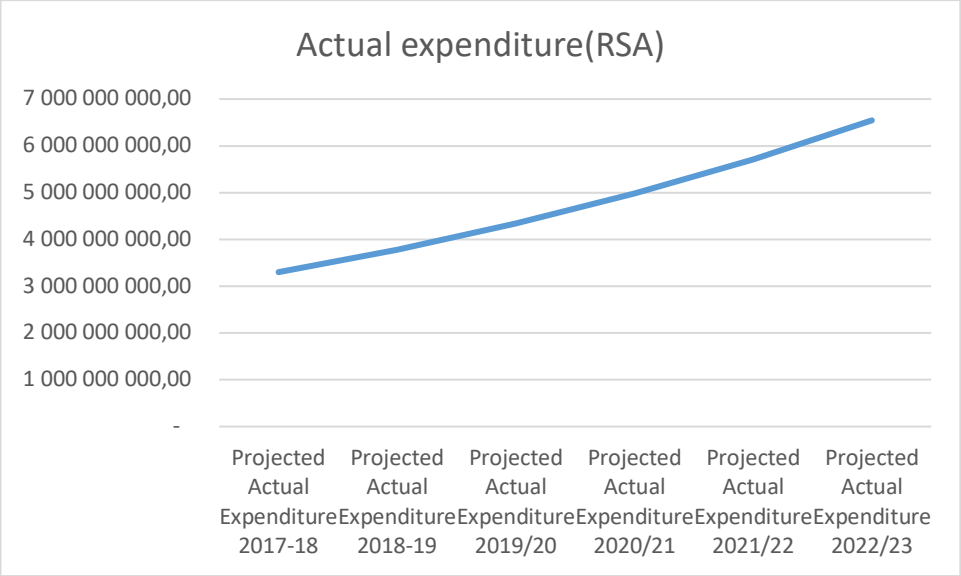


Table 45. Projected Annual expenditure- National (using only DBE and DoT data)

PROVINCE	Projected Actual Expenditure 2017-18	Projected Actual Expenditure 2018-19	Projected Actual Expenditure 2019/20	Projected Actual Expenditure 2020/21	Projected Actual Expenditure 2021/22	Projected Actual Expenditure 2022/23
Actual expenditure(RSA)	**3 299 171 263.28**	**3 783 597 692**	**4 339 153 792**	**4 976 283 728**	**5 706 965 212**	**6 544 934 676**

Table 46. Projected Actual Expenditure for Learner Transport Programme 2017/18 to 2022/23 (using only DBE and DoT data)



Quantification of the unmet need[160]

The above process of determining the projected need and projected expenditure can be done by including the quantification of unmet need and incorporating it into our analysis. Furthermore, if we quantify the unmet need, we will be able to quantify the level of underfunding also, and thus the amount needed to satisfy all known need.

Deductions from the General Household Survey 2016 and General Household Survey 2017 and assumptions used in the use of GHS 2016 and GHS2017 to quantify unmet demand for Learner Transport.

General Household Survey documents the experiences of the general populace regarding access to electricity, housing, water and sanitation, health, social security and education. Specific questions relating to education and thus learner transport were used to make deductions about the *unmet demand*.

Criteria used to extract data for Learner Transport from the GHS 2016 and GHS 2017

We used the following criteria to extract the relevant learner numbers for use in the estimate of *unmet* learner demand. From the questions and criteria provided in the GHS, we selected learners who: (i) attended an educational facility, (ii) specifically attended a school, (iii) walked to school and (iv) attended the nearest school of its kind. Including and documenting only students that walk to school that is nearest to them is important as it filters out students who walk because they would have

[160] Learners walking to school, and who are eligible for learner transport

attended the school of choice, thus making them ineligible for inclusion in the Learner Transport Programme.

Assumptions and interpretations used to simplify analysis

The General Household Survey (GHS) is run over a twelve-month cycle, spanning January to December, whereas the financial year ends on 31 March for government departments such as DBE, DPME, National Treasury and DoT. This creates a reporting mismatch between the two twelve-month cycles as three months in each GHS overlaps into the previous financial year for a department. To counter this discrepancy, we have attempted to match at least 9 months in the GHS to the relevant financial year for the departments. The overlapping 3 months are not expected to distort the estimates significantly as surveys are completed after the year has elapsed, and can therefore be assumed to be accurate for the previous 12 months at the specific time the survey is undertaken. Therefore, to analyse *unmet demand* in 2016-17-year, we use the GHS 2016 Survey and by the same token, to analyse 2017-18, we use the GHS 2017. There is therefore no material difference between these two surveys in terms of *unmet need*.

According to Statistics South Africa (STATSSA) an able-bodied person takes on average of 9-10 minutes to walk the distance of one kilometre. Therefore, we can assume that students who walk for 30 minutes cover a distance of 3 kilometres, and therefore do not normally qualify for learner transport under the current policy. The GHS has the following bands above 30 minutes; 31-60 minutes, 61-90 minutes and more than 90 minutes. A strict application of the current policy would necessitate that we account for students that walk for 45 minutes and above.

It is evident that the 31-60 minutes band creates a problem for estimating *unmet demand* as it includes learners that walk less than 5 kilometres. The 31-60 band includes both students that qualify and those that do not qualify for programme inclusion. There are three possible options of dealing with the overlapping band:

(1) An option would be to calculate a mid-range value, which involves adding only half of the students in this band. There seems to be no adequate basis for making such an adjustment to the student numbers who qualify for learner transport in the band without information of the distribution and dispersion characteristics. Making such an adjustment would assume that the student numbers are equally or evenly distributed. This approach is moderately conservative.

(2) Since the characteristics relating to the distribution and dispersion characteristics of number of students in the 31-60-minute band is not known, the whole population could be included in the estimation of *unmet need*. The rationale for this approach is that it is not possible to disaggregate the numbers without the distribution and dispersion characteristics of students into those that qualify and those that do not. This is a somewhat aggressive approach that is likely to result in an overstatement of the *unmet need*.

(3) Another, more conservative approach would be to exclude the whole band of 31-60 given the difficulty of separating the number of students in this category. Although this results in an understatement of the estimate of *unmet demand* in the period of review, this is consistent with the view we expressed in this report that a thorough exercise needs to be carried out to determine the actual extent of *unmet need*. In designing future surveys, it is recommended that STATSSA specifically

considers the band starting at 45+ minutes separately in order for the GHS to be useful to determine *need* in terms of Learner Transport Policy. We have adopted the third option as outlined in this study, to guide estimation of *unmet need*.

Table 47. Predicted Demand for Learner Transport 2019 to 2023 -Provincial Overview (using DBE, DoT data and GHS data)

	TOTAL ANNUAL DEMAND 2017/18	PREDICTED ANNUAL DEMAND 2018/19	PREDICTED ANNUAL DEMAND 2019/20	PREDICTED ANNUAL DEMAND 2020/21	PREDCITED ANNUAL DEMAND 2021/22	PREDICTED ANNUAL DEMAND 2022/23
Eastern Cape	102 598	111 003	120 096	129 934	140 578	102 598
Free State	9 417	10 188	11 023	11 926	12 903	9 417
Gauteng	118 782	128 512	139 040	150 430	162 753	118 782
KwaZulu-Natal	138 739	150 104	162 400	175 704	190 097	138 739
Limpopo	43 552	47 119	50 979	55 155	59 674	43 552
Mpumalanga	64 262	69 526	75 222	81 384	88 051	64 262
Northern Cape	23 986	25 951	28 077	30 377	32 865	23 986
North West	66 595	72 050	77 952	84 338	91 247	66 595
Western Cape	59 183	64 031	69 276	74 951	81 091	59 183
National	**627 114**	**678 486**	**734 066**	**794 199**	**859 258**	**627 114**

The figures above take into account the *unmet demand* and the *learners actually transported* in predicting the *total known demand*. The detailed discussion for this approach with related tables is presented below. Using the *predicted demand* above as input for our prediction model, the actual expenditure that is required to cover all known demand(actual transported and unmet need) is reflected in the table immediately below.

Table 48. Projected Expenditure for Learner Transport 2019 to 2023 -Provincial Overview (using DBE, DoT data and GHS data)

	Projected Actual Expenditure 2017/18	Projected Actual Expenditure 2018/19	Projected Actual Expenditure 2019/20	Projected Actual Expenditure 2020/21	Projected Actual Expenditure 2021/22	Projected Actual Expenditure 2022/23
Eastern Cape	676 879 308	776 267 367	890 248 848	1 020 966 546	1 170 877 883	1 342 801 117
Free State	42 188 933	48 383 651	55 487 956	63 635 405	72 979 168	83 694 901
Gauteng	782 455 680	897 345 808	1 029 105 572	1 180 211 985	1 353 505 771	1 552 244 762
KwaZulu-Natal	212 511 121	243 714 716	279 500 021	320 539 781	367 605 523	421 582 057
Limpopo	293 977 009	337 142 465	386 646 024	443 418 328	508 526 666	583 195 041
Mpumalanga	507 986 030	582 575 022	668 116 121	766 217 456	878 723 282	1 007 748 648
Northern Cape	92 890 833	106 530 251	122 172 382	140 111 290	160 684 218	184 277 926
North West	454 352 788	521 066 662	597 576 320	685 320 101	785 947 544	901 350 393
Western Cape	354 848 103	406 951 430	466 705 233	535 232 851	613 822 569	703 951 832
National	**3 418 089 805**	**3 919 977 372**	**4 495 558 477**	**5 155 653 745**	**5 912 672 624**	**6 780 846 676**

The table above shows the effect of quantifying the **unmet need** on projected expenditure. Compared to the projections using only DBE and DoT data, the estimation of *unmet need* reflects a consistent underfunding of 16%.

Table 49. Total Demand for Learner Transport _2016/17

PROVINCE	Actual transported 2016/17	Unmet demand (GHS 2016)	Total Demand 2016/17
Eastern Cape	78 061	14 625	92 686
Free State	11 929	1 782	13 711
Gauteng	109 618	1 272	110 890
KwaZulu-Natal	47 747	113 126	160 873
Limpopo	34 321	11 174	45 495
Mpumalanga	60 119	4 223	64 342
Northern Cape	23 684	343	24 027
North West	42 281	4 789	47 070
Western Cape	58 217	-	58 217
Totals	**465 977**	**151 334**	**617 311**

Compared to the use of DBE/DoT numbers for actual transported learners, the total demand estimate now includes the *unmet demand* (GHS) which results in a total of 617,311 learners in 2016-17. This reflects the **need for a proper survey to determine an incontrovertible baseline** by STATSSA. The effect of the *total learner transport need* on *programme coverage* is that the programme response appears inadequate, falling short by approximately 25%. The 2017-18 demand numbers reflect a similar pattern. Refer to table 48 below:

Table 50. Total demand for Learner Transport 2017/18

PROVINCE	Actual transported[161] 2017/18	Unmet Demand (GHS 2017)	Total Demand 2017/18
Eastern Cape	80 552	22 046	102 598
Free State	7 684	1 733	9 417
Gauteng	116 773	2 009	118 782
KwaZulu-Natal	55 307	83 432	138 739
Limpopo	37 143	6 409	43 552
Mpumalanga	60 629	3 633	64 262
Northern Cape	23 749	237	23 986
North West	58 853	7 742	66 595
Western Cape	58 660	523	59 183
Totals	**499 350**	**127 764**	**627 114**

The estimation of the *total demand* was calculated by adding the number of *learners actually transported* to the amount per GHS 2016 and 2017, as appropriate for this specific evaluation because of the number of unknowns. We did not use *reported demand* figures as there is a possibility of double counting given that the learners who are accounted for in *reported demand* may also be included in GHS 2016 and 2017 counts. The use of *actual transported* avoids this possibility of double counting by including the learner once in the total population of learners requiring learner transport. The StatsSA estimate is considered conservative.

Funding Shortfall in 2016-17

Coupled with the recommendation for funding mechanism is the realisation and quantification of the funding shortfall. It has to be realised that whatever the funding mechanism is selected, the funding shortfall has to be addressed as no funding mechanism will create new funding for the Learner Transport Programme. For instance, the conditional grant, as recommended does not take away the need to provide for the shortfall in funding for the Learner Transport Programme. The level of

[161] Source: Progress report on the implementation of learner transport: 4th Quarter 2017-18(DBE: 2018)

underfunding estimated using total demand and the actual average cost per learner per province, reflects **programme underfunding** of some **16%** or **R404,657,892** in 2016/17.

Refer to the table below.

Table 51. Total under-Funding for Learner Transport 2016/17

PROVINCE	Total Expenditure including unmet demand in 2016/17	Actual Expenditure in 2016/17	Funding Shortfall	Percentage funded	Percentage of underfunding
Eastern Cape	576 870 637	485 848 000	91 022 637	84%	16%
Free State	57 949 360	50 419 489	7 529 871	87%	13%
Gauteng	689 122 690	681 216 163	7 906 527	99%	1%
KwaZulu-Natal	232 466 922	68 995 857	163 471 065	30%	70%
Limpopo	289 713 557	218 555 693	71 157 864	75%	25%
Mpumalanga	479 826 537	448 334 260	31 492 277	93%	7%
Northern Cape	87 783 421	86 528 696	1 254 725	99%	1%
North West	302 962 321	272 139 395	30 822 926	90%	10%
Western Cape	329 298 018	329 298 018	-	100%	0%
Totals	**3 045 993 463**	**2 641 335 571**	**404 657 892**	**84%**	**16%**

What is the difference between rural and urban areas with regards to viability? Are the most economically efficient options in rural and urban areas being selected as far as the Programme is concerned? Include specific areas[162]

We did not obtain all the district level information we requested for this analysis.

4.4 Emerging Impact

What are the signs of emerging impact of the Learner Transport Programme, if any?

This main focus of this evaluation is on programme implementation. The impact of the Learner Transport Programme is unknown, and there was no evaluation research methodology employed which attempted to measure impact. Although there may be signs of emerging impact loosely referred to in this study, there are no formal findings on impact offered by the evaluation team.

[162] Evaluation Terms of Reference question 4.6

A proper programme impact study design should be developed as part of the Improvement Plan agenda in the coming five years, and should be budgeted for.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Relevance and Appropriateness (conclusions)

Key evaluation Question: To what extent is the design of the Learner Transport Programme appropriate, and consistent with education & transport sectors' priorities and policies, and partnerships with all key stakeholders?

102. **Programme Relevance**: The National Learner Transport Programme is relevant in terms of the fundamental policy cornerstones: the National Development Plan (NDP) and the Medium Term Strategic Frameworks (MTSF). The Programme is contributing to Outcome 1: improved quality of basic education, Outcome 3: All People in South Africa are and feel safe, Outcome 4:decent employment through inclusive growth, Outcome 5: A skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth, and Outcome 6: an efficient, competitive and responsive economic infrastructure network. Furthermore, the pro-poor nature and focus of the LTP, is aligned with national priorities which also extensively aim at alleviating the economic and social ills of vulnerable and rural communities and as a way of reducing the inequality gap.

103. **Policy Alignment**: At its base, there is policy alignment of the Programme with the Basic Education and Transport sector mandates, and key policy references: The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 Section 85(2)(b) mandates the DOT with the role of developing and implementing transport policy. This scholar transport policy is guided by the White Paper on National Transport Policy (1996), the National Land Transport Transition Act, Act 22 of 2000, the National Land Transport Strategic Framework, the Public Transport Strategy and Action Plan (2007) and other legislation such as the National Road Traffic Act, Act 93 of 1996. In terms of access to education, there is also alignment with the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996), and the National Policy for the Equitable Provision of an Enabling School Physical Teaching and Learner Environment (2010). Learner Transport Policy accommodates for the transportation of learners from Grade R to 12 including learners with disabilities as defined by the SASA of 1996.

    There is generally policy alignment between the National Learner Transport Policy (2015) and provincial policies on Scholar Transport/Learner Transport. All provinces have developed aligned provincial learner transport policy which has been approved by provincial executive structures.

104. **Programme Appropriateness**: The National Learner Transport Policy (2015) is considered appropriate, in terms of the needs of its primary intended beneficiaries (learners), as well as key stakeholders in the learner transport "sector". The NLTP provides that national government will oversee the implementation of the policy in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including provinces, municipalities and School Governing Bodies (SGBs). Although participation in the Learner Transport Programme is generally strong, there has been no meaningful partnerships established with civil society organisations even though these possibly exist in relation to programme monitoring and oversight dialogue.

105. **In sum**, the Learner Transport Programme design is considered relevant and appropriate in terms of national priorities, education and transport sectors context and policy, and institutional environments. Programme eligibility criteria is generally appropriate in terms of beneficiaries' priorities, and is being applied with a measure of variability to learners who live between 3-10 kilometres away from the nearest school. There is some vagueness in the Policy (2015) that does not specifically detail the distance threshold for learner eligibility.

5.2 Effectiveness (conclusions)

To what extent has the implementation of the Learner Transport Programme been effective in achieving its goal(s), objectives and intended outcomes? What are the measureable results of the LTP in the period of review?

106. **Inputs**: The biggest input into the Programme has been the budget. The vote[163] was R1,572 billion in 2012/13 which grew dramatically to R2,66 billion in 2016/17, with an **average annual increase** of 13% over 2012/13-2016/17.[164]

107. **Activities**: The main business processes involved in implementing the national Learner Transport Programme (across all nine provinces) have typically involved the following generic processes or activities: (1) policy development, (2) budgeting and planning, including recruitment into the Programme, verification and selection, management of the Programme, and identification of Programme need, (3) establishment of structures and systems development, (4) services delivered, including programme coverage, (5) monitoring, audit and evaluation. Typically there has been a proper process of programme need identification that has occurred in each province.

108. **Programme Output**: In terms of actual learners transported (programme delivery), based on available data (see table), 330,436 learners were transported nationally by the Programme in 2012/13, 343,402 in 2013/14, 363,529 in 2014/15, 395,592 in 2015/16, 465,977 in 2016/17, and 499,350 in 2017/18. In sheer numbers, most learners comparatively are transported in Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Mpumalanga, and Western Cape.

109. How did the Programme respond relative to **demand (need) for learner transport** across the country? The demand reported by provincial departments in the period of review ranges from a national total of 403,545 eligible learners requiring learner transport in 2013/14 increasing to 521,711 learners in 2016/17. This is an average annual increase of just 13% in comparison to the average annual increase of 21% in the Programme's allocated budget.[165] But, there is a significant variation (18%) between the *reported demand*, and *unmet need* in terms of the data supplied in the StatsSA GHS (2016) - *total need* figures for 2017/18 show that there were 627,114 learners

[163] Of all provincial programme budgets combined, and for all non-recurring expenditure items, such as payments to transport operators.

[164] Please see supporting table below (Programme Budget) for disaggregated data on voted funding and *all data sources*.

[165] Comparison with the actual programme expenditure was not possible due to the gaps in the data.

requiring transport in South Africa. Even though this is a rather conservative estimate of *unmet need*, it is 18% more than the reported need (national DBE, DOT).

110. **In** terms of provincial comparison of **average annual increase**[166] (%) in order of highest reported need, KwaZulu-Natal increased from 17,521 learners in 2013/14 to 71,000 in 2016/17 (122.7%), Limpopo increased from 19,344 learners in 2013/14 to 34,321 in 2016/17 (27.3%), Gauteng increased from 66,718 learners in 2012/13 to 97,114 in 2016/17 (13.4%), North West increased from 40,722 learners in 2013/14 to 52,684 in 2016/17 (12.4%), Free State increased from 8,061 learners in 2013/14 to 9,736 in 2016/17 (8.2%), Eastern Cape increased from 102,219 learners in 2012/13 to 111,406 in 2016/17 (3.2%), Northern Cape increased from 27,239 learners in 2013/14 to 27,803 in 2016/17 (1.4%) and Western Cape increased from 55,106 learners in 2013/14 to 57,416 in 2016/17 (1.4%), and Mpumalanga decreased from 102,219 learners in 2013/14 to 111,406 in 2016/17 (-3.1%).

111. The significant difference between reported need by provincial departments versus the estimate of total need using StatsSA data from the GHS 2016, causes uncertainty in terms of programme performance. If we used reported performance data from provincial departments solely, specifically for reported need, then we could conclude that the **Learner Transport Programme nationally is assessed to be largely effective**, based on the understanding of three critical performance factors: (1) An assessment of *83% average programme coverage*[167] of learner transport services provided, in the period 2012/13 to 2016/17. In other words, the Programme response to national need was an average of 83% in the period of review.[168] The average *unmet need* was therefore 17% in the same period. (2) In terms of punctuality, most of the learners sampled (58%) as well educators interviewed in this evaluation reported that learner transport vehicles arrived punctually in time for school. Although there are obvious improvements possible, the Programme is also considered to be largely successful in this area. (3) In terms of safety, 80% of learners sampled travelled in buses, but 50% of all learners did not use safety belts. Further, combined with a consideration of overcrowding (25% of sample) on buses and taxis, the assessment is that learners supported by the Programme (i) have gained access to learner transport when they probably were unable to do so before, (ii) those 499,350 learners are being transported in a manner that that presents a need for implementation improvements from a road safety perspective.

112. However, if we accept the STATSSA GHS figures for 2016/17 and 2017/18 with conservative assumptions[169], then the Learner Transport Programme would still be considered **largely effective in responding to the extent of country need**, based on performance of 77% for the first factor of *average programme coverage* for the two years for which we have data available (2016/17 and 2017/18). Programme coverage is 75% in 2016/17 (STATSSA data) from levels of 70%-93% in preceding years (DOT/DBE data). There is a possibility is that the assessment of *average programme coverage* of learner transport services provided will drop in the period 2012/13 to

[166] Average annual increase for all percentages quoted

[167] Learners transported versus reported need of

[168] Based on available data

[169] See the chapter on Efficiency for the assessment of *unmet need*, and the use of STATSSA GHS 2016 and GHS 2017 below

2016/17 if STATSSA data was available and used in the same period. In sum, the Programme's performance would be considered largely effective in meeting the national need across the entire period of review. It is important to note that even utilizing a conservative STATSSA GHS 2016 estimate for *unmet* need of 127,764 learners, the Programme's response is substantially inadequate in KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo in 2016/17.

There is a significant portion of learners that has not been counted as part of *unmet need*[170] because there is no clarity on how many learners are walking more than five kilometres (to-and-from school) in the STATSSA GHS 2016 and 2017 band of learners who take 31-60 minutes to walk to school. Further research is needed to establish what this additional figure may be.

113. **In** terms of actual expenditure relative to allocated budget, average **underspending** was about 21% for the period under review, noting data fluctuations, and about 5% in 2015/2016 and 2016/17. Against the average programme **unmet need (**of eligible learners not supplied with transport) of 19%, it is unacceptable that there is any programme underspending.

114. Average **increases** per **provincial learner transport programme delivery** in the same period, and in order were: KwaZulu-Natal (123%), Limpopo (27%), Gauteng (13%), North West (12%), Free State (8%), Eastern Cape (3%), Western Cape (1%), Northern Cape (1%), and Mpumalanga (-3%).

115. **Programme performance data gaps** were very significant as detailed in the report. There was virtually no data available for programme KPIs, except for the North West Province: Learner transport operators contracted (number), Contracted Learner Transport Operated (kilometres), Cost per Learner Transport Kilometre (R), Vehicles operating contracted learner transport (number), and Forensic audit reports on scholar transport (number). The absence or unavailability of performance data is partially linked to coordination issues between DOT and DBE, as well as management weaknesses at national level which suggests that national departments are unable to compel provincial departments to meet all programme-related obligations.

116. The **cost per learner** increases from R 4,153 in 2012/13 to R4,856 in 2016/17, and there were unfortunately lots of data gaps in the number of learner transport kilometres financed by the Programme in the period of review, which made it quite difficult to undertake further analysis of budget/expenditure and programme performance trends.

117. There appears to be a **measure of disconnect** between programme expenditure and the fundamentals of the Programme – expenditure grows erratically but reported demand for learner transport, the number of learners transported, and overall programme coverage grows more steadily in percentage terms. This assessment is qualified and requires careful examination – missing data! is likely to provide for confounding and possibly even contradictory trends in analysis of key programme areas.

118. In **summary of the key results** (in terms of effectiveness to deliver transport to learners) in the period 2012/13-2016/17, it is clear that the Learner Transport Programme has made a **major contribution to providing a transport solution** to a total of 499,350 qualifying learners in need across South Africa in 2017/18. If we contextualise the provision of transportation to those learners fortunate enough to receive programme benefits, against the (conservative) estimation of the total learner population (627,114[171]) who are eligible for inclusion under the programme,

[170] See write-up below in Efficiency chapter, on STATSSA GHS data.

[171] STATSSA GHS 2016

we reach a conclusion that the Programme is **largely effective** in addressing the scale of the learner transport challenge in South Africa. With 75% *programme coverage* in 2016/17, It is clear, that the Programme's effectiveness can be improved, considering *unmet need* and underspending.

119. The Programme has been assessed to be largely effective in terms of responding to the extent of country need, and performs relatively well in the first factor of *average programme coverage* (77%) for the two years for which we have data available (2016/17 and 2017/18), but it is clear that there are still **significant improvements needed in terms of safety**, and **punctuality** in terms of the feedback received from sampled learners. **Overloading**, the **absence of/non-use of safety belts**, and the **roadworthiness of vehicles** are the main safety concerns in terms of the feedback.

The general national picture emerging from combined provincial analysis as far as implementation of the joint Learner Transport Programme is concerned, is one of relatively sound and effective systems on the ground (school-level), through the sprawling reach of provincial departments of Education down into distant schools at grassroots level. Although obviously and necessarily uneven in places, respondents were generally aware of the Programme, understood what it was meant to achieve; embraced the value of safely transporting qualifying learners to-and-from school; and effectively responded to the need, through a service that is making a big difference to the lives of many children many communities across all nine provinces.

There are significant problems with programme systems and performance data integrity, especially between district and provincial levels, with the result that there are sharp movements in performance data trends from year-to-year, and which cannot plausibly be accounted for. Our evaluation assessment is, therefore, qualified and makes clear recommendations in this regard.

The Programme is profoundly pro-poor, pro-education, pro-rural and pro-inclusion in orientation because of its reach into poor and distant communities that have difficult access to public ordinary schools, and together with other Government interventions, such as no-fees in schools, and the school nutrition programme, has a strong redistributory effect to improve the day-to-day experience of children and adolescents in education, and in their lives in general.

120. It is clear though, that even though administrative data indicates that there is an *unmet need* of 17% in terms of average programme coverage in the period of review[172], the real situation **on the ground shows significantly higher demand** for learner transport services, which is backed up by data collected from respondents (learners, educators, operators) during the course of fieldwork of this evaluation, as well as being in line with country data (NHTS 2013, GHS 2016) on

[172] And for which data is available

learner transport.[173] The inclusion of GHS 2016 data for *unmet need* for learner transport, suggests that the *unmet need* is conservatively about 25% in 2016.

121. Based on the performance data available for programme effectiveness above, it has been difficult to confidently assess where the **provincial function** best lies in terms of the two partner departments. The evaluation team's general assessment is that programme data leaves a feeling of strong uncertainty, and it is clear that there are problems with the integrity of the data that is currently available. There are examples of good practice at the level of schools in many provinces, but the main system weaknesses are evident between the districts (Education) and the province (Education or Transport). Programme performance data in some provinces is "inconsistent" as it moves up levels from grassroots (schools) to education districts and ultimately to the lead provincial department. What is clear is that reported performance data sometimes either presents as missing, erratic and/or questionable, even though national transport policy, provincial transport policies and general public sector policies (such as the PFMA for example) provide a strong policy environment for enabling optimal programme management. In other words, there are significant concerns about the integrity of available programme performance data as identified in the body of this report. This points to the need for programme systems to be strengthened at the levels of the district, the province, and national, across the entire Learner Transport Programme.

122. The evaluation team concludes that it would be prudent to separate out day-to-day implementation and management of the Programme on the ground by PDEs, from strategic and high-level programme management at the level of the province, and up to national. In other words, **the lead department at the level of the province should ideally be the PDOTs**, that take responsibility for budgeting, procurement, contract management, province-wide monitoring including operators, reporting and auditing, and should work closely with the provincial departments of education in identifying and quantifying the need. A further advantage of this institutional arrangement would be the possibility to include Learner Transport indicators amongst transport sector performance indicators, which in turn would lead to programme performance audits of learner transport performance data by the AGSA.

[173] STATSSA 2013, STATSSA 2016

RECOMMENDATIONS: EFFECTIVENESS

Programme Output:

123. The Learner Transport Programme has been largely effective and achieved 75% coverage by 2016/17 in meeting the scale of the learner transport challenge., if we accept the STATSSA GHS 2016 conservative estimate of ***unmet need of* 127,764 learners**. The Programme's response is substantially inadequate in KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo in 2016/17.
Significant inefficiencies and capacity issues were identified in the evaluation. It is recommended that Government reviews the learner transport policy response, to determine to what extent additional financial resources can be raised to address the financial requirement of underfunding of **R404,657,892** (2016/17).

Safety:

124. The Department of Transport must ensure that improved safety compliance is achieved, specifically to address overcrowding, roadworthiness of vehicles, and use of safety belts.

Punctuality:

125. Although two-thirds of learners in the sample and supported by the Programme are arriving at school punctually for the day's lessons, many learners (24%) are sometimes arriving on time, and 4% are always late. This obviously can be improved on, through better operational management of learner transport services on the ground.

Performance data and systems issues are dealt with in the Efficiency chapter.

5.3 Efficiency (conclusions)

To what extent has the implementation of the Learner Transport Programme been efficient, with specific regard to (i) organisational design and applied delivery model(s), (ii) core "business processes" used, (iii) management and administration, including record- keeping, and (iv) value-for-money?

Organisational Design and delivery model:

126. The efficient operationalisation of the policy objectives is subject to the functional mechanisms in terms of institutional structures, administrative systems and procedures put in place and how these are well aligned to ensure smooth flow of required tasks towards the achievement of the policy outcomes. This also hinges on issues of capacity, coordination, communication and interrelation mechanisms that ensure optimal programme delivery. This requires that proper mechanisms exist within government (DOT&DBE) to plan, deliver and supervise the service. The current LTP delivery model is largely outsourcing learner transport where government contracts service providers to deliver the service while government plans and monitor.

127. The LTP Policy (2015) and its guidelines (2016) provide the operational blueprint to guide actual delivery of LTP. This is rooted in the provisions and principles of cooperative governance detailed in Chapter 3 of the Constitution (1996) and the Intergovernmental Governmental Framework act, act 13 of 2005). Section 2 of the LTP Policy (2015) proposes a multi-sectorial approach to LTP planning and implementation. This translates to spheres and organs of government ensuring coordinated and harmonious working mechanisms. Adherence to this is seen in the institutional mechanisms observed associated with the LTP.

128. There appears to be insufficient capacity to plan, run the Programme in terms of the Financial systems and technology. The provinces that responded to the detailed request for analytical data manged to provide data on learner perceived demand, actual demand, actual expenditure, budget allocation and costing model. Other provinces did not respond to the request for data. The data provided displayed significant discrepancies with data supplied by DoT and DBE. Generally, the data provided was not for the whole review period. Data relating to the contract monitoring and procument required for modelling and cost effectiveness was not obtained for most provinces.

Management and administration, including record- keeping: Is there adequate capacity to plan, run the Programme? Financial systems, technology? [174]

129. In this context, capacity means the administrative capacity, thus the ability of the implementing department to run the programme using dedicated human resources, administrative systems including data collection systems. In terms of **data retention, financial and technological systems**: There seems to be insufficient capacity in terms of financial systems and technology required to collect and retain data for the Learner Transport Programme. The assessment relating to the inadequacy of the data retention systems was made based on the speed with which the provinces responded to our request for program data, whether the requested data was readily available, the reliability of the data obtained in terms of consistency with data available from the national departments and ability to supply the specific program data for the review period.

130. The provinces that responded to the detailed request for program data generally managed to provide data on learner perceived demand, actual demand, actual expenditure, budget allocation and costing model. Other provinces did not respond to the request for data, in some cases indicating that historical program data is not readily available.

131. The data provided displayed significant discrepancies with data supplied by DoT and DBE. Data relating to the contract monitoring and procurement required for modelling and cost effectiveness was not obtained for most provinces as it was not readily available. Provinces generally indicated that it takes time to generate the data that we requested for, bringing into question the ability of the custodians of the LTP to monitor the program and the related contracts. The data received was evidently not output from a data collection and retention system, but rather manually complied.

132. The data provided by some provinces was not internally consistent as different data was provided for the same request. This is reported on in detail below under the findings relating to the measurement of efficiency.

[174] Evaluation TOR question 3.1.3

In sum, based on the analysis above, and on the balance of factors such as the speed of providing information on request, the ability to provide timely information and the reliability of the data provided, provincial departments implementing the Learner Transport Programme appear generally not to have inadequate capacity to plan and implement the Programme, in terms of financial systems and technology. Data provided also appears not to be generated from a well organised information system – in some cases handwritten notes about programme performance data were made by officials, scanned and submitted to the evaluation team. Besides obvious concerns about the unofficial and unapproved data provided in these cases, when data is produced from a manual system, it is prone to human error, loss of credible programme data, and possibly even deliberate manipulation. Programme data as supplied by PDEs/PDOTs was also found to be internally inconsistent in some cases (as noted in the narrative of this report), and was not in line with other widely-available programme data.

Structures Established and key roles

133. The NLTP (2015) provides that national government will oversee the implementation of the policy in consultation with relevant stakeholders including other relevant government departments, provinces, municipalities and School Governing Bodies (SGBs). Civil society may also play significant role ad also advocate for key aspects that needs attention to ensure public satisfaction with the policy delivery. At National spheres of government, the Inter-Departmental Committees consisting of the DBE, DOT and National Treasury play an oversight role in giving strategic directions to the programme. Other Structures such as SCOA also provide key oversight to the policy. At provincial level, also, data gathered shows that there are key structures that are put in place to ensure the smooth running of the programme. Different levels of structure exits within provinces. These include provincial level committees, district level committees, and local area committees.

In Summary, the evaluation finds that there are key and strategic structures and mechanisms in place to provide support to programme implementation. This cascades from national to provincial levels and down to school levels. Horizontal structures refer to those such as committees between the sector departments. Vertical structures refer to those specifically in the provincial education system, encompassing the Corporate, Districts, school principals and educators, learners, parents and transport operators.

Civil Society Participation:

134. Although participation in the Learner Transport Programme is generally strong, in most provinces, there is weak evidence of meaningful partnerships established with civil society organisations even though these possibly exist in most provinces in relation to programme monitoring and oversight dialogue, as seen in the case of Equal Education and Section 27 in their work especially in KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Gauteng. As reported, Equal Education on few occasions have taken government to court in order to enforce the provision of learner transport to remote area schools, notably a recent one in Nqutu where 12 schools are now being assisted with the programme. Equal Education is also strong advocate for the resolving of the budget inadequacy and inconsistency by proposing a conditional grant to ensure consistent funding of LTP and inclusion of learners not currently covered (EE, 2017).

Location of Learner Transport Function

The discussion of where the programme should reside between provincial departments of transport and Department of Education hinges on several factors, but largely based on what will provide ideal environment for programme efficiency and sustainability.

135. **Legislative mandate:** The provision of school transport falls largely into transport infrastructure and related services, even though the ultimate goal is to provide access to education. This notion seems to be in line with the provisions of the constitution (1996), in terms of Section 85(2) (b) which mandates the National Department of Transport to develop and implement a learner transport policy. This implies then that the Department of transport constitutionally has the onus to include learner transportation in its transport infrastructure and services.

136. **Education Sectors Embedded interest in creating access:** Another school of thought, suggests that, the department of education is the primary stakeholder in creating access to education, through whichever means possible, including building of schools, providing hostels or transporting learners. From this perspective transport as a means to provide access to education is seen as the duty of the department of education. As several authors[175] argued, the department of education better understands the educational needs of learners and is able to identify such needs, including those who travel long distances to school. From this perspective, it was argued that the LTP should reside within the department of education. This is already the case in some provinces, such as Gauteng, Western Cape, Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, even though the success of the location varies from province to province.

137. **Autonomy of Provincial Executive:** In South Africa However, the learner transport programme has been in operation several years (in some cases, pre 1994) in different provinces before the LTP policy was put in place late in 2015. This implies that provinces have already decided where the programme best resides for them. Furthermore, Section 132 of the constitution (1996) infers the privilege on the premier to allocate functions to any member (sector department) as deemed necessary for the province. This political autonomy of provincial governments to allocate functions and decide the roles of some departments seem to play a significant role in the placement of the LTP in different provinces. This flexibility also allows the premier to reallocate functions to departments deemed more capable of executing such functions. This appears to be the current situation where the provincial governments decide which of the departments is more suitable to run the programme, as seen in the example of KwaZulu Natal Province were the programme was transferred to the department of education, then to transport in 2015, and again back to education in 2018. A few other provinces also shifted the programme between the two sector departments. From the perspective, one would say the location of the programme is left to the provincial executive to decide, and is not automatic that it will be under Education or transport.

138. **Institutional and administrative Capacity** Administrative capacity lies in the ability of the institution to run the programme using its dedicated human and financial resources, and

[175] Authors such as D. Budlender (2017), Whitman (2010) advocated that education department is better placed to spearhead educational related programmes.

administrative systems including data collection systems. It is well acknowledged as an intricate observation of the evaluation that, provinces may have built the institutional capacity, in terms of personnel, budgeting functions and administrative systems over a long term to where it is now in each province to allow the institutionalisation of the programme. Mention is made in previous sections of this report that certain functions such as need identification and collation seems to be working relatively well at school level, because it is well integrated into the educational system in all provinces. The provinces where the programme reside within transport, also have some advantages of riding on the advantages provided by functional units within those departments. For instance, Transport, Police and Roads in the Free states to cater for safety needs internally, The Department of Transport and Public Works in Mpumalanga which uses the EPWP programme to assist in monitoring as well as Community Safety and Transport Management in the North West which also can internally could be better placed to deal with safety of the programme. While school level institutional capacity is mostly with the department of Education, transport also provides strategic advantages that could benefit the programme. This buttress the earlier argument that, provinces are better placed in placing the LTP where is best working within that particular province.

139. What could be more useful would be to separate operational versus oversight activities in the programme, and to allocate overall functional responsibility to one department at national level to allow for proper oversight and accountability. In this case, as earlier postulated, the evaluation team is of the view that the department of transport, by virtue of its constitutional mandate should play the oversight function, that is, the programme should reside with Transport at national with proper institutional arrangements with the department of education, who should assist in identifying the learners who need transport. MOUs would need to be signed between DBE ad DOT to this effect, and this should cascade to provincial's spheres also. This arrangement has the potential to strengthen horizontal accountability to DBE as the primary stakeholder of access to education and DOT as the provider of transport infrastructure and services, rather than DBE having to account to itself.

140. **Funding model implications/requirements**: The linkage between the inter-departmental placement of the programme and the funding models is also explored. As indicated in the interview with National Treasury, the allocation of the equitable share funding is at provincial spheres of government. This implies that provinces will be at liberty to allocate the funds they deem fit for each programme in each sector department. The situation becomes a little more complex in the case of a conditional grant which is allocated by national treasury for specific purposes. Zooming out to national level, this becomes a wholesome allocation which is to be administered by one department. That is, there is the need for the programme to reside with one national department and its provincial agencies. Thus, if equitable share funding model is continued, then the programme can be run by either departments in different provinces as it is now. On the other hand, if a conditional grant must be allocated, then this requires the programme to reside with either DBE in all provinces, or DOT in all provinces. It is observed that the current need identification at school level is integrated into DBE's systems at school levels with the help of school level officials. This irrespective of the location of the programme, DBE need to continue to assist with this function as it se ems to be better placed to do so.

141. Learner Transport Programme Funding

The LTP is currently funded through the equitable share funding model rooted in constitutional prescripts underpinning the intergovernmental fiscal system. Section 214 of the Constitution states that an Act of Parliament must provide for— (a) the equitable division of revenue raised nationally among the national, provincial and local spheres of government; (b) the determination of each province's equitable share of the provincial share of that revenue; and (c) any other allocations to provinces, local government or municipalities from the national government's share of that revenue, and any conditions on which those allocations may be made. Within this legal prescript lies a fiscal mechanism that should be used to disburse funds to provinces and municipalities.

Section 227 further states that each province is entitled to an equitable share of revenue raised nationally to enable it to provide basic services and perform the functions allocated to it. Within these two prescripts of the Constitution lies a common principle that "funds follow function".

Most of the functions performed by provinces are funded through the provincial equitable share. Only in instances where there is sufficient justification should funding be directed through a conditional grant. Instances that justify a conditional grant are:

- To provide for a programme that is not a direct line function responsibility
- To address gaps in the intergovernmental fiscal responsibilities resulting from services provided by multiple spheres of government
- To enhance programme delivery with the objective of achieving set norms and standards and access to government services
- Address backlogs and spatial disparities in economic and social infrastructure.

As established in a discussion with national treasury, in order to establish a conditional grant, a sector department needs to be chosen that will be the lead department in managing the grant. Funds from the provincial sphere would then need to be pooled together at the appropriate national department and then be disbursed to provinces based on need. The key risk in this is that provinces may not get the same proportion of funding as they had initially put in, and this has the potential to cause some contestation amongst provinces as, given the current constrain in the fiscal environment, money is most likely to come from their equitable share[176]. There is thus the need to make such distribution of the grant as fair and equitable as possible (based on need). That is a conditional grant should be fairly distributed between provinces if applied. With this in mind, alternative scenarios of the funding models are explored.

[176] This extends from discussions and insights shared on the evaluation from national treasury.

142. Funding scenarios /models explored

Option 1 maintaining the status quo (equitable share as it is): The current funding model of equitable share through the provincial budget votes seems to present many issues which pivot on inadequacy of the budget allocated for the LTP in most provinces. As per discussions with programme officials, the issue with this is that due to discretional allocation through the budget vote, learner transport seems to not be ***adequately*** provided for to cover the needs reported. For instance, the budget utilisation and coverage analysis of this evaluation from 2012/2012 to 2016/2017 shows that, only three provinces including, Gauteng, Mpumalanga, and Western Cape provinces are able to report an average coverage of 100% or more (transporting of all learners identified) with the budgets allocated. The remaining six provinces, even with overspending the allocated budget, are not able to transport all learners identified within the period of review. The Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, with an average budget utilisation of 120%, and 119% respectively are only able to transport and average of 65% and 64% respectively over the years, which means on average, over 30% of learners identified over the years in these provinces were not covered in the LTP. Even though there may be other reasons that may account for the inability of most provinces to fully cover the reported demand, the key of them is that the budget itself is inadequate to begin with. From the above discussions, if government is committed to ensuring that all learners identified are transported, then the certainty of budget allocation and its sufficiency are paramount. The status quo does not seem to be attending to that in most cases. The fact that the budget allocated is overstretched, yet not all learners identified are transported is key evidence of inefficiencies in the implementation, including insufficient budget allocation. This means that the equitable share model in its present state, is not ideal for the efficiency of the LTP implementation.

An advantage of the current equitable share model, if maintained is that there is no need to enforce the relocation of the programme to one sector department as would be the case in typical conditional grant model, which may run the risk of disruption and need for re-institutionalisation of the programme in the new department as seen from the example of KZN and Free States.

143. Option 2 Conditional Grant accompanied with function relocation

As advocates[177] for Conditional Grant Funding Model postulated, the conditional grant does have the advantage of resolving the primary issue of non-commitment by provinces and ensuring dedicated financial resources for the LTP programme as the basis to hope for an efficient programme delivery, if planning and other processes are also efficiently done. The very nature of conditional grant ensures that the budget is utilised for only learner transport, and prohibits its re-allocation to other priorities that a provinces may have as previously reported in the example of Northern Cape in mid-2016/2017 where LTP funds were reported to be shifted to other programmes[178].

The rigidity of conditional grants though ensures budget certainty, can also be a disadvantage as funds that are not utilised must be returned to Treasury at the end of the financial year, and

[177] Budlender (2017) and Equal Education (2014, 2017) and DBE presentation to Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Appropriations (2014)

[178] Cited in Budlender's work (2017)

cannot be reallocated. Additionally, it is also argued that the conditional grant requires tedious processes in advance, including preparation of business plans stating in advance how much is needed for the next year. Because conditional grants are caped, any further increase in needs within the year (for instance if a school is rationalised) cannot be catted for in the current budget, unless provinces are willing to top up with equitable share or any contingency funds. The business plans also require a good estimate of the need for the year.

144. Additionally, as advised by treasury officials the conditional grant will need to be administered through one sector department (Either the DBE or DOT) which may require a relocation of the programme from the department not holding the fund to where the fund it. This relocation as discussed in earlier sections may become problematic. As one participant in the stakeholder validation argued, the institutional mechanisms and structures established, including the administrative processes currently being implemented in most provinces took several years to institutionalise. Suddenly changing the location of the programme may disrupt the programme in some provinces, especially in provinces where the programme is adjudged to be doing well. This requires a cautious consideration of implementing a conditional grant. That is the option of physically moving the programme to one department in all provinces is not ideal, if the accumulated gains amounted over the years are to be maintained.

145. Option 3 Conditional Grant with Fund Transfer (without physical moving of function)

Another scenario, based on the discussion with National Treasury and DBE Officials, and previously advocated in previous studies[179], is that, either the minister of Transport or Education holds the funds at national level which means that the programme will officially reside with that department. If the DOT, as recommended in this study is holding the conditional grant, then it will be distributed to provincial DOTs. Where the programme resides in Education, the PDOT will make a fund transfer to the PDOE who will be an implementing agent on behalf of DOT.

As pointed out at the beginning of this discussion, a disadvantage of the conditional grant as it is currently being proposed is that, it may not necessarily solve the inadequacy of the funding, unless provinces, or national government (treasury) increases the current funding.

Even though this will address the dilemmas of the previous option, and avoid the relocation of the programme for the conditional grant, this scenario was rather vehemently not favoured by some provincial officials in the stakeholder validation workshop, and is described as very administratively burdensome in the fiscal transfers between departments. This option, is however recommended as an interim solution in using conditional grant as a ring fencing mechanism for the LTP, without having to physically move the programme, while long term solutions are sort. It is noted that the conditional grant is not indefinite, as conditional grants by design are intervention mechanisms. If the equitable share is to be reversed to, ultimately the funds should flow back into the equitable share once programme alignment has been achieved

[179] Also in Budlender (2017) on proposals for conditional grant, and also in DBE presentation to Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Appropriation (Feb 2014). The idea or put forward therein is that conditional grant will resolve the funding issues of LTP and should be explored.

146. Option 4 Strengthened Equitable Share with Learner Transport as Line Item fund in provincial treasury budgets

A fourth option for government, in the event of not using the conditional grant, and which could possibly addresses the issues of inadequacy and inconsistency of funding TP in the long run, could be to find ways of strengthening and increasing the current equitable share allocation and administration by provinces in a manner that ensures adequate and consistent funding of the learner transport. This will also include making learner transport as a line item in the provincial treasury budget to allow for easy monitoring, reporting and transparency. Perhaps the DOT, DBE and Treasury need to investigate the possibility of strengthening its funding policy to engage with provincial executive to dedicate finical resources to learner transport (a form of ring-fencing LTP Funding). This will ensure that current accumulated advantages of the implementation are maintained and avoid starting afresh for some provinces while adequately providing for learner transport. The risk for this scenarios however is the fact that it is so similar to the status quo, and without stringent measures for enforcement, may not work. For this to work a, all other measures (as recommended in this report) for increasing implementation efficiency need to be put in place.

Coordination and Communication:

147. Currently, a number of issues were picked up in terms of communication and coordination between key role-players and implementing agencies of LTP. There are a number of areas where the Programme needs to be strengthened. These range from inadequate communication Stakeholder involvement, participation and engagement is fundamental to the success of the Programme. In some provinces, communication between the different vertical levels and horizontal structures is working well, and in other cases, there is dysfunctionality or under-performance. Significant care and effort must be given at national and provincial levels to ensure optimal coordination, management, and implementation. Poor communication as identified by this evaluation must be addressed.

Efficiency of Core "business processes":

148. The main business processes involved in implementing the national Learner Transport Programme (across all nine provinces) have typically involved the following generic processes or activities: (1) policy development, (2) budgeting and planning, including recruitment into the Programme, verification and selection, management of the Programme, and identification of Programme need, (3) establishment of structures and systems development, (4) services delivered, including programme coverage, (5) monitoring, audit and evaluation. Typically there has been a proper process of programme need identification that has occurred in each province.

149. **Need identification** (School level): The identification of learners who qualify for learner transport is done in the schools by the School Principals with the help of SGBs. Needs identification at school level is going well. However, it is disconnected from planning at provincial levels. Also, Learner Transport Programme officials are often not involved in lead department planning (and budgeting) processes which leads to planners basing their plans for the Programme on an annual incremental budgeting increase.

150. Monitoring and reporting

151. **School levels**: The collection of data and reporting occurs at all of the levels of the Programme. Notably, at local level (schools), principals run a systematic process to monitor learner transport (drop-offs, pick-ups) on a daily basis. Schools are provided with the operator details and the bus details by provincial departments.

152. In some cases, the monitoring data available is obtained though forms issued to service providers for capturing daily delivery. These provincial forms for the drivers contain the name of the driver, vehicle registration number, make and model, capacity of vehicle, the route, number of learners transported on each day of the week, This form is filled endorsed by the principals and dated and submitted to the provincial office at the end of the month and the new one given which signifies a renewal of the contract between the department and the supplier. It is also reported that arrangement between law traffic section and the policy unit of the department also assists in monitoring general compliance with road worthiness regulations.

153. **Provincial monitoring**: At the level of the province, the Department's officials do conduct site visits to selected schools when there are urgent issues to address. On-site monitoring by provincial officials is also noted to be severely hampered by lack of capacity, monitoring tools and systems. Though some provinces do contract independent service providers to undertake monitoring as interim measures, it is reported, for instance in the Free States and Eastern Cape that this is unsustainable due to insufficient budget. The schools do provide some data intermittently, but they also feel this to be additional workload and hence not done regularly.

154. The lack of reliable monitoring systems, coupled with inadequate capacity budget and limited capacity within the system is largely blamed for the discrepancies of the LTP data that is reported on to national departments. It also have serious repercussions on the planning and budgeting. There is therefore the need to strengthen the monitoring system, by finding a more adequate and mechanism.

Value for money[180]:

155. We have not been able to establish if the price paid for learner transport is market related. We have not inspected documents that show whether the prices are reasonable and market-related. Additionally, we have not established the basis on which the prices in the pricing models are calculated. However, the description of the pricing model below shows that the price for Northern Cape and Western Cape appear market- related as the price is obtained from open tender. An open tender price that is route specific are market related and fair as the bidder is expected to know the conditions of road by the time the bidding process occurs.

[180] Value for money is about the optimal use of resources in the form of obtaining not necessarily only the cheapest option but delivering the best outcome and impact using the cheapest option or maximising the output and impact per rand spend. The following components of VfM are relevant to the evaluation of the LTP: (1) *Economy* as applicable to LTE, this will translate to whether the services of providing Learner transport was at the right price and whether the quality of the service, provided by the service provider at that price, is satisfactory. (2) *Efficiency* which measures the how well the LTP converts inputs, (3) *Effectiveness* which relates to efficiency relates to how well output are converted into outcomes and impacts. For the Programme this is about how the outcomes such as the provision of access to education have been achieved through the LTP and (4) *Equity* being the assessment whether the project produces equal benefits to different groups. *Exclusion error* is a measure of value for money that considers the proportion of unmet need.

156. **Incomplete data on actual expenditure for 2014-15 to 2014-15**. As reflected in table 26 in section *7.3(Efficiency*), the actual expenditure data for the following provinces is not available; **Free State** (2014-15), Mpumalanga (2014-15), Northern Cape (2013-14 and 2014-15) , KZN(2013-14)and North West (2013-14 and 2014-15). Due to this missing data we cannot make conclusive reliable evaluations and determination for those years with missing data on the following; (1) measurement of cost per direct beneficiary (cost per learner**)**, (2) Actual expenditure (measurement of program costs),the program costs and direct cost per beneficiary are understated for the above provinces for 2013-14 and 2014-15 years, (3) the assessment of the comparison between average increase in actual expenditure and average expenditure. Decisions taken using the incomplete information might lead to inappropriate conclusions on the economy of the LTP.

157. . On average, provincial programme costing models reflect the *kilometres travelled by the operators* and *capacity of the vehicle* used (except for Gauteng). There are significant variations in programme costing models and cost drivers are not common in all cases, such as *number of days travelled*, *gravel kilometres* (Northern Cape), *fixed rate per learner*, and *number of learners transported*. Programme model costing that includes both *number of learners* and *kilometres travelled* might "double compensate" for operator cost, for example, as it is likely that a *vehicle per kilometre cost* already includes a cost factor for the *carrying capacity of the vehicle*, which may lead to unnecessary additional budget implications for a given implementing department.

158. Based on the balance of factors discussed in detail under section 7.4 Conditional Grant mechanism appears to be the funding mechanism that is consistent with the addressing of distance to school. conditional grant largely addresses the problems relating to budget re-prioritisation as the funds are ring-fenced. Ring- fencing of budget for LEARNER TRANSPORT will over time lead to increased coverage provided the budget is based on need.

159. **Assessment of Learner Transport Service Models**: *There are three major Service Models for Learner Transport namely, outsourcing, outright buying and the PPP model. In terms of our* assessment of the **most efficient service model:** Based on the calculation of Net Present Cost and Equivalent Annual Cost, the most efficient and optimal service model is the **outsourcing option**. The Net Present Cost of the outsourcing option is R46 997 907 508 (with Equivalent Annual Cost R6 962 786 685) compared to PPP option at a Net Present Cost of R 97 841 385 061 (with Equivalent Annual Cost R14 495 298 310) and Net Present cost of R98 884 662 033 for PPP Model (with Equivalent Annual Cost R14 649 860 830). We acknowledge the documented limitations of available programme data, explained below, relating to reliability and that the LEARNER TRANSPORT solution is a short-term to medium term method as a way of addressing distance to school as in the long-term alternative ways such as building of schools and hostels will be considered.

160. **Lack of available data on programme administration costs**: It was impractical to disaggregate actual expenditure into costs paid to operators and administrative costs. This is largely because such data was not readily available as we could not obtain such data on request. Lack of data on actual administration costs might result in an understatement of the actual costs of running the Programme. Additionally, high administration costs might have the unintended consequences of transferring benefit from the beneficiaries to the administration function. This may not be consistent with good value for money attainment when administration costs constitute a large

proportion of the program costs. There is a general view that monitoring and administration costs do not apply to all provinces. Gauteng province has indicated that they do not incur monitoring and administration cost as there is a separate department monitoring the programme. KZN, Free State and Eastern Cape has provided detailed administration costs and Western Cape also provided detailed guidance on how they are determined. We have not received formal communication from other provinces on whether administration costs are incurred separately.

161. **Economy:**

There is a significant disparity between the average increase in actual expenditure and average change in actual demand. This is evident in the following provinces: **Free State** (164% vs.16.3%), Gauteng (101% vs 14.6%), KwaZulu Natal (-18.8% vs 28.8%), **Limpopo** (72% vs. 18.5%), Mpumalanga (6% vs.-2%), Northern Cape (206% vs. 1.3. Western Cape and North West provinces show a plausible and consistent relationship between the increase in actual learners transported and increase in actual costs.

1. Our discussions with provincial officials bring to fore the that the following are reasons for this disparity: (1) Contracts that get renewed will be negotiated at rates that are higher although the number of learners being carried might not necessarily increase significantly,(2) Provinces might introduce new costing models that are in line with the rise in cost of operations,(3) The increase in the cost of operations such as fuel might mean that the increase in cost of carrying learners might outstrip the increase in the actual learners transported as operators seek to recover the increasing costs,(4)The payments might include other payments that do not directly translate to carrying passengers such as paying for litigation and (5) There might be significant accruals present in the LEARNER TRANSPORT actual payments which does not translate to an actual service. The Eastern Cape province has indicated that the actual LEARNER TRANSPORT costs provided to us for analysis included year on year accruals.
2. A discussion with the Gauteng Department of Education officials on this matter pinpoints the following as the reasons for the disparity between the change in actual cost and the change in actual learners transported; (1) The rates paid by the province increased (The increase in rates was as follows; 2012- R1, 2013, 1.2, 2014 to 2017 remained at R1.4). The increase in the rate is meant to recover the operating costs and not necessarily to ferry more students. The amount of R1.41 per student appears low at first glance, but this rate is applied per kilometre per student. Therefore, the average rate per kilometre per student from the Gauteng costing model is around R91 per kilometre/student. (2) increase in kilometres travelled as a result of migration. This factor increases the costs given that their cost model is applied to kilometres travelled. (3) The Gauteng province historically had problems of being unable to cater for learner need due to lack of funds. Over the years, funds were negotiated for to cater for LEARNER TRANSPORT, thus the increase in costs relative to learners being transported.
3. A possible interpretation we made regarding the disparity described above is that, the big increases in program cost could be as a result of other factors in the costing model that is unrelated to actual number transported. There could be inefficiencies in the pricing/costing model that reduce the economy aspect of VfM as the right price is most likely not being paid across the provinces. This could be a possible indication of unregistered suppliers, not providing Learner Transport services being paid.

4. As per the above, a generalisation is that the program costs are not delivering value for money as it is not creating more access per year in relation to the increase in costs. The value seems to be lost in the costing model. It is not apparent if the costs we were provided with only relate to the costs to the operators and thus exclude monitoring and administration costs.
5. Another plausible explanation for the disparity is that the difference should provide more information on the program configuration. For example, in Mpumalanga, where we have information that suggest that are acquired by operator and operator gets paid a cost that recovers his cost and profit and the instalment is paid by implementing department, the disparity might reflect acquisition costs for buses that makes it less comparable with a normal outsourcing model.

162. **Costing model: Duplication and lack of equity in costing models:**

1. Although the costing model costing models are fairly similar for most provinces, there are significant variations on provincial costing models. These variations might inhibit inter-province comparison of the economy of the price paid and might result in the implementing department paying an unnecessarily high price as a result of possible duplication of cost and might unfairly disadvantage operators in provinces where an unfair model is used. A costing model that remunerates on both the number of learners and the kilometres travelled might double count the cost as it is likely that the charge per kilometre is also linked to the capacity of the vehicle leading to unnecessary extra cost for the implementing department.
2. There are significant variations in the costing models relating to variables and thus cost drivers that are not common to all provinces. Such variables include number of days travelled, gravel kilometres (as reflected in the Northern Cape Costing Model), fixed rate per learner/. It is not clear how the rates in the costing models are determined. The costing model for almost all provinces appear not to pay an incentive to operators for bad state of the road such as gravel road. Only Northern Cape state that there is compensation for gravel road travel in their costing model and Western Cape, impliedly through open tender model as they state that the price is route specific.

163. **Equity: Coverage and prioritisation of learners** to be ferried under budget constraints**.**

(i) **Lack of program equity**: As per the provincial's interviews conducted prioritisation is widely done using criteria relating to giving preference to primary school learners over secondary, students that stay in bushy, remote areas and disabled learners. The only problem is that students who qualify as per a set criterion are excluded. The prioritisation will never be fair as the problem of distance and access to schools remains.

(ii) **Exclusion error more than 0%**: All students who require transport are not catered as the average coverage for the review period is less than 100%. The average programme coverage for the review period is 83%. This number might seem high, but as stated above, as long as 100% of the learners are not ferried, the problem of walking long distance to school remains and the delivery model will be regarded as being unfair to learners that qualify for LEARNER TRANSPORT but cannot be carried because of either the budget reprioritisation or the remoteness of their homes (places not easily accessible by LEARNER TRANSPORT).

(iii) **Expected demand understated:** Our deductive conclusion, given our understanding of the LTP is that the documented expected demand for LEARNER TRANSPORT is understated.

We based our assessment of the following factors that increase demand for LEARNER TRANSPORT; the migration of students to other places, proliferation of informal settlements, the rationalisation of schools, the fact that there is a known unmet but unquantified demand such as that case of Free State, where they are currently serving the students at farms only (demand for another segment such as rural and urban might need LEARNER TRANSPORT). The General Household survey states that "In 2016, 12% of those aged 7 to 15 years walked more than 30 minutes to attend educational institutions while 17% of those aged 16 to 18 years walked more than 30 minutes. The same document states that 98.9% of those aged 7 to 15 and 89.6% of children aged between 14 to 18 years attend to school. Applying these numbers to the total population as per mid-year population estimate for 2017 for the age groups above should give a sense about the undocumented need across s the nine provinces.

5.4 Sustainability (conclusions)

Key Evaluation Question: How sustainable is the Learner Transport Programme, considering the many competing priorities and demands in the education-transport sectors, and what is the medium-to-long-term prognosis of the learner transport challenge posed to Government? Are there viable alternatives to the current LTP programme intervention?

Alternative options to address distance to school:63. The alternative ways of addressing distance to school such as the building of schools and hostels could not be evaluated due impracticability of performing the exercise due to the detailed information that was not readily available; such as the number of students a typical school/ hostel take, the minimum operating number of students to run a hostel or school, the measurement of the impact of rationalisation in terms of cost savings from not running the school anymore and savings and additional LEARNER TRANSPORT costs associated with old school closed, the availability of space to build a school or hostel, the running costs of both. Therefore, we concentrated on other ways of delivering the LTP in the short term.

Budget Sustainability

164. **The budget allocations for learner transport are not adequate:** As documented in provincial interviews, the budget appears not to be done based on learner need but rather the learners get transported based on the available budget, which is also subject to prioritisation.
165. **Unclear budget prioritisation:** It is also not clear how the province prioritises students who equally qualify for LEARNER TRANSPORT where one student obtains the transport benefit over the other student, where students remain to be screened after the criteria pertaining to remoteness of area, primary vs secondary are exhausted.
166. **Underspending of budget:** It is noted that there is underspending in the following provinces based on the average utilisation of the budgeted amount over the review period: **Free State**; 63% (average coverage 106%)**; KwaZulu Natal**; 40% (average coverage 70%); **Limpopo**; 73% (average coverage 77%); **Northern Cape;** 62% (average coverage 88%); **Mpumalanga**; 73% (average coverage 100%) and North **West**;77% (average coverage 71%) . These underutilisations could be a result of budget re-prioritisation that is prevalent in the equitable share funding model. These less than 100% budget utilisations occurring a backdrop of less than 100% coverage as reflected

above provides for some allocative inefficiency where the redistribution of the funds result in a student becoming worse off. Besides the part explained by budget adjustment process, an underutilisation of the budget where the coverage for the particular province is less than 100% is not sustainable.

LTP Data Integrity and reliability matters

During the evaluation we encountered issues that bring into questions the reliability of the data from various sources. The data used for the evaluation are largely from the implementing provincial departments, national departments of transport and education and other publicly available data. We noted that the data received from these different sources are inconsistent, even though they seem to be reporting on same variables.

This highlights a significant systemic issue with LEARNER TRANSPORT programme data. The efficient functioning of the LTP is heavily dependent on the availability of reliable and timely data. Therefore, there is the need to ensure that programme data is the same for the particular reporting variable from the different sources. The data should be obtained from centralised data management system. There seems to be no such dedicated data management system for learner transport programme which is evidenced in some of the issues discussed below.

167. **Disparity between actual expenditure based on data available at national departments and that available at provincial implementing departments**: As reported in section 7.3 of this report, at table 25, there is a net positive discrepancy between the two data sets. Given a net positive difference, it can be inferred that the provinces who submitted data generally report high actual costs and thus leading to understatement of programme costs and direct cost per beneficiary. Overall, the data on actual costs is unreliable as a basis for making conclusive evaluation on the direct cost to beneficiaries (cost per learner), measurement of programme costs, assessment of budget utilisation and the overall comparison of the relationship between the average change in actual expenditure and average change in actual learners transported.

168. The variance in *actual learners transported* and *reported need* between data reported by provincial departments and programme data held by national departments (DBE and DOT):

As reported in table 27 and table 40 in section *7.3 (Efficiency),* there are significant differences between the reported and actual demand data provided by provincial implementing departments and the data available at national departments. Learner numbers, relating to the estimated need, that are misstated has the effect of producing misleading results on *programme coverage* and exclusion error. This causes an inaccurate assessment of *value for money* relating to *programme coverage* and thus inaccurate conclusions regarding efficiency of the Programme in delivering the outcome of learner transport. Furthermore, because of unreliable learner number data, we were not able to make a conclusive assessment of the comparison between change in budget allocation and programme coverage, comparison between allocated budget increase and increase in coverage, projection of need and actual costs of LEARNER TRANSPORT and comparison of the increase in actual expenditure to the increase in actual learners transported.

169. **Differences between the provincial and national department data on budget allocations**: As reflected in Table 38, given the net difference of means that the provincial budget allocations are overstated compared to national sources. This will lead to the reporting of incorrect budget utilisations by provinces since the amount that will be compared to actual spend is lower. Additionally, sustainability assessments that involve comparison between budget utilisation and coverage will lead to inappropriate conclusion.

170. Internal inconsistencies between data provided for the same purpose by provinces Similarly, Eastern Cape data on actual expenditure provided seems to lack internal consistency. On earlier request for data for 2015-16 to 2016-17, we were given data that is not the same as the data provided for the same request. The net difference is R29 427 000.

In summary, with about 100% budget utilisation in most provinces (6 out of 9), it can be easily concluded that the inputs are being utilised to derive the outputs of the programme to an extent. However, the several issues identified with implementation reflect the inherent inefficiencies of programme implementation. It is noticed that a greater part of the issues of the learner transport programme are underpinned by data inefficiencies, unreliability and the inadequacy and inconsistency of the programme budget in most provinces. As literature pointed out, dedicated time and resources are at the core of programme implementation efficiency (Rogers, 1995, Cohen 1996, cited in Whitman 2005). The need to agree on funding model that allows for some degree of certainty of availability of funds for planning the programme is not only essential for programme delivery but also pivotal to programme efficiency and sustainability. The issues of planning and budgeting uncertainties are reported to emanate from the current uncertainty of allocation of funds through the equitable share budget votes which seems to not be linked to the needs identified. Previous advocates suggested that a conditional grant funding model will address this issue, as there will be regular and dedicated funding of learner transport which will ensure good planning as the basis of ensuring efficiency. However, in this evaluation, a comparative analysis of the two models highlights key advantages and disadvantages that require careful thought into their application for optimal implementation results.

Even though this report proposes the use of a conditional grant as a ring fencing mechanism to deal with uncertainties of fund allocation, it is essential to note that the fact that conditional grants involves provinces simply pulling together their current funds into a collective fund and redistributing it implies that there is not going to be necessarily an increase in the total funding as it is not new money being added. Thus, a conditional grant still bears the risk of insufficiency of the funding, unless more money is allocation than is currently being done for the programme. This implies also that, a conditional grant that is being proposed is only a temporary measure to deal with the inconsistency of allocation, while a more sustainable means of funding, that ensures more funds to cover all needs, including the current unmet needs is being sort in the long run.

5.5 Emerging Impact (conclusions)

What are the signs of emerging impact of the Learner Transport Programme, if any?

This is an implementation evaluation that did not attempt to measure programme impact. A proper programme impact study design should be developed as part of the Improvement Plan agenda in the coming five years, and should be budgeted for.

5.6 Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS: RELEVANCE AND APROPRIATENESS

*The Learner Transport Programme design is considered relevant and appropriate in terms of national priorities, education and transport sectors context and policy, and institutional environments. Programme eligibility criteria is generally appropriate in terms of beneficiaries' priorities, and is being applied with a measure of variability to learners who live between 3-10 kilometres away from the nearest school. There is some vagueness in the Policy (2015) that does not specifically detail the distance threshold for learner eligibility. Also, the tariff structures being applied by provinces, seem not to take into account in its rates, the plights of rural routs (gravel) operators in contrast with urban route (*tared) operators, in terms of road conditions as well as incentives for minimum or shorter routes. These need to be considered in the programme tariff structure by provinces. In addition, the following key recommendations are proposed.

171. The DBE and DOT need to reconsider the distance threshold or consider a range to be used in rural settings and in urban settings. The threshold also need to be clearly stated in the actual policy document, to avoid the ambiguous interpretations by users of the policy.
172. A common standard (costing model) for learner transport specifications in SCM processes should be set to ensure financial efficiency of the Programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS: EFFECTIVENESS

Programme Output:

173. The Learner Transport Programme has been largely effective and achieved 75% coverage by 2016/17 in meeting the scale of the learner transport challenge., if we accept the STATSSA GHS 2016 conservative estimate of ***unmet need of* 127,764 learners**. The Programme's response is substantially inadequate in KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo in 2016/17.
Significant inefficiencies and capacity issues were identified in the evaluation. It is recommended that Government reviews the learner transport policy response, to determine to what extent additional financial resources can be raised to address the financial requirement of including underfunding of **R404,657,892** (2016/17).

Safety:

174. The Department of Transport must ensure that improved safety compliance is achieved, specifically to address overcrowding, roadworthiness of vehicles, and use of safety belts.

Punctuality:

175. Although two-thirds of learners in the sample and supported by the Programme are arriving at school punctually for the day's lessons, many learners (24%) are sometimes arriving on time, and 4% are always late. This obviously can be improved on, through better operational management of learner transport services on the ground.

Performance data and systems issues are dealt with in the Efficiency chapter.

RECOMMENDATIONS: EFFICIENCY

Programme Output:

176. More learners can be transported, through improved financial efficiency[181] as well as disbursing the full allocated budget in a given financial year. It is also true that improved management and coordination underpinned by more effective management systems will enable improved programme effectiveness overall.

Service model

177. *There are **three major** Service Models for Learner Transport namely, outsourcing, outright buying and the PPP model. These service models were evaluated based on Net Present cost and Equivalent annual cost using over the average age of 13 years, at a discount rate of 11%.* **Because** of the fact that the outsourcing option has the lowest Net Present Cost and Equivalent Annual Cost and therefore the most efficient and optimal service model, given the short-term to medium term nature of the LEARNER TRANSPORT as a way of addressing distance to school. The outsourcing model should be continued as a short-term solution of addressing distance to school.

[181] To be dealt with under the Efficiency section.

Programme location

178. The discussion as at where the programme should reside was based on its link to the funding model, and the need for strengthening national oversight of the programme. From the various arguments put forward, this study recommends that the programme at national level should reside with the department of transport as it is constitutionally mandated to develop the LTP policy and implement it in terms of Section 85(2) (b) of the constitution.
179. In support of the conditional grant as possible funding model being proposed, the funds will be administered by the departments of transport, generally, but with DOE acting as implementing agents in provinces where the programme currently resides with Education. This will mean that, proper institutional arrangements such as MOUs between the two sector departments needs to be put in place and adhered to, to ensure proper coordination of the programme.
180. The need identification function however, should be integrated into the school system as currently is, and the data supplied to the implementing departments for planning and implementation.

Tariff and Costing Model *Although the costing model costing models are fairly similar for most provinces, there are significant variations on provincial costing models.* In resolving the problems discussed elsewhere in this chapter, we recommend the following:

181. The costing model should provide for the kilometres travelled, state of the roads, terrain, capacity of the vehicle/ number of learners transported, allowance for wear and tear, the consequent repair allowance for the vehicle and provide a reasonable mark-up. The model should provide for the open tender, route specific price determination to avoid the issue of operators abandoning non- profitable routes.
182. Develop a detailed model that is used to determine the fairness of the price charged by operators per kilometre and as fair compensation for state of road.
183. Develop a pricing guideline for LEARNER TRANSPORT.
184. **In summary**, the costing model should have the following components: (1) an **all-inclusive cost per kilometre** that is depended on the capacity of the vehicle, (2) an **additional compensation for driving on gravel road** (charged per gravel kilometre travelled) and (3) a **minimum charge** given to the operator whose route comprise short trips. An operator travelling short distances might not make sufficient profit to remain in business.

Monitoring systems and data systems: *There seems to be insufficient capacity in terms of financial systems and technology required to collect and retain data for the Learner Transport Programme.*

185. A complete overhaul of district, provincial and national systems for record-keeping, data storage/retrieval and reporting is urgently required to ensure that learner transport policy goals are achieved. Programme management processes and procedures must be strengthened in this regard.

a. It is recommended that DOT and DBE develop a proper system for programme record-keeping, data storage/retrieval and reporting which integrates all levels from schools to districts to provinces and to national.
b. The programme management system must preferably be ICT-driven, to ensure data integrity and reporting credibility. Programme data retrieval must be efficient, and ensure easily-accessible and reliable financial and non-financial performance data for learner transport across all provinces. The recommended system must enable day-to-day viewing of programme performance and expenditure data, and allow for real time access on demand.

186. It is also recommended that a full performance audit of the Programme be undertaken by the Auditor General (AGSA), to establish certainty about programme performance data over 2015-2018.

187. Going forward it is recommended that key learner transport programme indicators are included as sector targets, which the AGSA will audit annually, and that all provinces will report on, on a quarterly basis. This requires that the Learner Transport Programme be administered under a single department (Transport), in order for Programme targets to be included amongst transport sector indicators and targets.

188. DOT and DBE should engage with STATSSA to establish an adequate countrywide estimate of learners in need of transport. This will establish a clear programme baseline against which to measure programme responsiveness.

Reporting: *Differences were noted between the provincial and national department data on budget allocations. The results of the comparison between the actual expenditure data from the provinces that provided data and the data available at national department show significant differences between the two data sets. Data relating to the contract monitoring and procurement required for modelling and cost effectiveness was not obtained for most provinces as it was not readily available. It was practical to disaggregate actual expenditure into costs paid to operators and administrative costs.*

189. It is recommended that a monitoring tool should be developed for each province. This tool, will, among other things, contain the following metric; budgeted and actual cost per district, number transported, amount claimed by operators, schools benefitting per district, number of routes, number of contracts, change in vehicle, tariff, applicable bid from which tariff was obtained, any change in operator, complains received and corrective action, town, route name and number of days transported.

190. Quarterly reports to DBE on should be completed in full. Some quarterly reports we inspected for 2012-13 do not appear to be complete.

191. A detailed comparison and reconciliation should be done between the quarterly reports and data used for preparing the DBE Learner Transport Annual Report.

192. A quarterly comparison of data submitted to national departments to the data held at provinces.

193. A detailed record of program administration costs should be maintained. This could be costs allocated for personnel already performing other functions. This will reflect the true program cost as currently the direct costs of learner transport are captured.

Programme Equity: *All students who require transport are not catered as the average coverage for the review period is less than 100%. Our deductive conclusion, given our understanding of the LTP is that the documented expected demand for LEARNER TRANSPORT is understated:*

194. Budgets **allocations** should be based on learner transport need so as to prevent unsatisfactory coverage. It is not sustainable to meet learner demand by only using the available budget and satisfy the demand that the budget can satisfy.
195. A detailed exercise should be carried out by DoT and DBE to establish the undocumented need for LEARNER TRANSPORT. This might be in the form of a detailed need identification that starts with a high-level assessment of need. This could take the form of a very focused study such as a General Household Survey conducted by Stats SA.

RECOMMENDATIONS: SUSTAINABILITY

Funding model

196. The **recommended funding model is a conditional grant** as a mechanism to create access to school through addressing distance. The main issue is not the allocative inefficiencies of the conditional grant but rather satisfying all the need identified without ant reprioritisation mechanisms.
On the balance of factors discussed under the efficiency section in the main report we recommend **conditional grant** as a mechanism to create access to school through addressing distance. The main issue is not the allocative inefficiencies of the conditional grant but rather satisfying all the need identified without ant reprioritisation mechanisms. Despite the setback of conditional grants above and any further, organisational, reporting and administration burdens of conditional grants, given the priority of providing learner transport as a way of providing access to schools and coverage of less than 100% across provinces, a conditional grant appears to be a viable option to protect the funding for learner transport and prevent inconsistent and uncertain allocation of funding to the LTP.
197. The conditional grant scenario recommended is to have **DOT to hold the funds**, and distribute to provincial levels, with transfers to Education, in Gauteng, Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces.
198. Where, possible provision for topping up the grant to cover all needs should be made. This will also take care of any contingencies that may require additional funding within the course of the year, given conditional grants are not flexible. DOT, DBE and Treasury should engage with Provincial Executives to explore the possibility of this.
199. A more accurate level of programme underfunding should be assessed. The current level of underfunding requires a further estimation of the actual *unmet need* (over and above the *reported demand*). The estimated underfunding (conservative) for the Learner Transport Programme of **R404,657,892** (2016/17) needs to be addressed as the funding mechanism selected for

implementation will not address the underfunding. For instance, a conditional grant will not address the underfunding without other interventions for sourcing additional funds.

6. Annexures

Annexure 1. Provincial Reports

Annexure 2. List of Supporting Tables

Annexure 3. List of Evaluation Respondents