

Implementation Evaluation of the Funza Lushaka Bursary Programme



planning, monitoring
& evaluation

Department:
Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation
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Policy Summary

This document is a summary of the policy implications of an implementation evaluation of the Funza Lushaka Bursary Programme (FLBP) undertaken by JET Education Services covering the period 2007 to 2012. Reference is made to the full and summary reports where the full set of recommendations are detailed.

The FLBP is an important mechanism to address shortages in teacher supply in South Africa, having supported 15% of students recruited into initial teacher education (ITE) programmes over the first six years of its implementation. Overall, the FLBP is an appropriate tool for meeting the policy goals of an increased supply of high-performing ITE graduates for the education system. The FLBP is part of a range of important policy initiatives which relate to overall teacher education and supply and which together focus on improved access to ITE and success rates in ITE; improved supply of appropriately qualified teachers in identified subjects and geographic areas of need; and improved quality

of teacher education. The FLBP is critical, given the need to continue to attract high performing school leavers into the teaching profession and the high cost of university education for which a majority of students require financial support. These are strong arguments for the Programme's retention.

The FLBP must, however, be distinguished from the many linked policy objectives that it cannot directly influence (such as overall supply and demand planning and improvements in the quality of teacher education), so that the Programme itself can be enhanced in the area in which it has direct influence, which is the supply of funding to support ITE students to access and graduate as qualified teachers who can then enter public schools.

In this context, the FLBP would benefit from investigation into the mismatch between qualification specialisation and subjects teachers are actually teaching; why large numbers of FLBP graduates appear to be teaching outside of their areas of specialisation; and more

efficient placement mechanisms for newly-qualified teachers. This information would enable more targeted and appropriate selection and placement mechanisms, allowing FLBP graduates to properly fulfil their service obligations in schools where they are most needed and in fields of specialisation which are policy priorities.

In spite of a number of key successes of the FLBP, which include relatively good student success rates¹ and growing numbers of applicants², a number of important improvements are necessary to ensure that the Programme can fully meet its complex goal and objectives. These include: to select appropriate students, to support them financially to graduate in priority areas of specialisation and to ensure that they meet their full teaching obligations to the State while teaching in areas of need. The programme must also be sustainable in its operations, which are currently under strain.

The evaluation provides evidence that the FLBP is broadly effective (and cost-effective) in attracting high-achieving students who complete ITE programmes in good time and take up government-paid positions in public schools. However, substantial data collection and management improvement initiatives are necessary to streamline the efficiency of the FLBP key business processes and provide greater evidence of impact. These improvements include effective student and graduate tracking systems, which do not currently exist. Selection processes could be improved to identify both relative financial need (broadened beyond the current criteria used by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS)) and passion for teaching. Academic merit and financial need can be addressed in tandem. Placement can be improved by ensuring more efficient placement processes nationally in collaboration with specific programme changes, including greater flexibility in the FLBP placement policies.

The administrative requirements of the FLBP cannot continue to be met with current staffing and resources. Urgent and effective investment in administrative support, which includes a dedicated unit for the FLBP within or outside of the ITE Directorate in the Department

of Basic Education (DBE), resourcing and staffing support for all aspects of the FLBP across a number of stakeholders and a proper set of management information systems, is necessary. These investments will allow for more efficient streamlining of business processes, more effective monitoring and support, reduced workloads due to fewer manual processes and more effective reporting. A part investment from FLBP resources into administration will contribute to a more efficient and sustainable Programme.

There is evidence that the multi-stakeholder working model of the FLBP is a key strength. In conjunction with enhancements to administration, maintaining the strong stakeholder involvement of universities, NSFAS, provincial education departments (PEDs) and the DBE will be important for the continued success of the FLBP.



¹ 81% of B Ed and 49% of PGCE graduates completed their studies in the prescribed minimum time, which is significantly higher than the average.
² From 2 801 in 2008 to 44 736 in 2013.

Executive Summary

1. Introduction and background

This is an implementation evaluation of the Funza Lushaka Bursary Programme (FLBP), established in 2007 with the goal of attracting greater numbers of students into initial teacher education (ITE) programmes in South African universities. High-achieving students are given generous full-cost bursaries to undertake initial teacher education (ITE) programmes in priority phases and subject areas to address both supply and quality issues in the education system. In return, recipients of the bursary are expected to teach in public schools for a period equal to the number of years they have received funding. The Programme is large-scale: during the period under evaluation (2007-2012) 23,392 students were funded under the Programme, representing on average 15% of the total ITE enrolment over the period.

The FLBP is a complex programme involving a large number of stakeholders who have different roles and responsibilities in relation to the key business processes of the Programme, grouped for the purposes of this evaluation into four processes: recruitment, selection, disbursement and placement. These stakeholders include 22 universities offering ITE programmes, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), nine provincial education departments (PEDs), and the ITE Directorate in the Department of Basic Education (DBE), which is the administrative hub of the FLBP.

The key evaluation questions to be answered were:

1. What are the measurable results of the FLBP, specifically with regard to supply and placement of FLBP-sponsored teachers? To what extent has the FLBP been effective in achieving its major goals, objectives and intended outcomes? Have recruitment strategies been effective?
2. Is the design of the FLBP appropriate and to what extent is the intervention design consistent with education sector priorities, policies and partnerships with all key stakeholders?

3. To what extent has the FLBP been efficient in its implementation, with specific reference to administration and management arrangements?
4. How sustainable is the FLBP? What key insights, lessons and recommendations are offered, with a view on the possible scaling up of the FLBP?

A programme theory and logframe were clarified with stakeholders at the beginning of the evaluation process and guided the evaluation. A summary of the theory of change which was proposed for the FLBP and agreed to by the evaluation steering committee is presented below:

In Chapter 2 of the main report, amendments are proposed to the programme theory and logframe in light of the evaluation findings.

If you provide a sufficient full-cost bursary as an incentive to recruit students for initial teacher education, **and** you select teacher students based on merit (academic performance) and suitability (passion for teaching, teaching ability and desire to teach in priority subjects, phases and identified areas), **and then** you develop induction and academic support programmes and tracking systems to ensure satisfactory completion of funded students, **and** you link bursaries to service contracts and place FLBP graduates in posts where they will be teaching priority subjects and phases in identified geographical areas of need, **then** you should be able to increase the supply of qualified teachers to meet the need in priority areas (subjects, phases and identified geographical areas of need) so as to address educator scarcity.

A comprehensive literature review has shown that the FLBP is both appropriate (in the South African policy context) and relevant (in terms of the Programme environment). For example:

- The quality of teachers is a matter of concern in South Africa. Teachers “are central to education, and teaching should be a highly valued profession” (NPC, 2011: 265)³. The FLBP recruits high-achieving bursars but the adequacy of the ITE programmes they study is beyond its control.
- The increase in uptake of teacher education, to which the FLBP is making a substantial contribution, is encouraging, and it is predicted that by 2020 ITE enrolment will be sufficient DHET (2014c⁴). However, it is likely that there will still be relative and localised shortages.
- There is currently no robust system for estimating teacher supply and demand (DBE, 2012a)⁵; this gap in the planning system is an important challenge for the FLBP, the success of which hinges on bursars’ choices of subject and phase to meet demand.
- Vacancy rates in schools are high and rising; the dramatic ageing of the teacher population is another critical factor that the FLBP is helping to address.
- The literature review also examined the issue of scarce skills among teachers (DHET, 2014b), showing that the priority areas identified by the FLBP are attuned to national needs.

2. The evaluation methodology

A variety of methods, quantitative and qualitative, were used to conduct the evaluation, including in-depth interviews and focus groups with 120 FLBP stakeholders and a telephonic survey with a representative sample of 3,200 bursary recipients. Extensive quantitative analysis of various datasets was undertaken. Selected criteria of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Development (OECD) provided the framework for the evaluation.

³ National Planning Commission. 2011. *Our future -make it work: National Development Plan 2030*. Pretoria: NPC.

⁴ Department of Basic Education. 2014c. Report on Funza Lushaka bursary programme in 2013. Pretoria: DBE.

⁵ Department of Basic Education. 2012a. Teacher supply and demand. PowerPoint presentation for meeting of the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education. 21 August 2012.

Conceptual framework applied to the evaluation areas and questions

DAC Criteria	Evaluation Questions
Relevance & Appropriateness	Is the design of the FLBP appropriate? To what extent is the intervention design consistent with education sector priorities, policies and partnerships with key stakeholders?
Effectiveness	What are the measurable results of the FLBP? To what extent has the FLBP been effective in achieving its major goals, objectives and intended outcomes?
Efficiency	To what extent has the FLBP been efficient in its implementation, with specific reference to administration and management arrangements?
Sustainability	How sustainable is the FLBP? What key insights, lessons and recommendations are offered, with a view on the possible scaling up of the FLBP?

The evaluation was supported by a project management committee and an evaluation steering committee that included representatives of all stakeholders involved in the FLBP.

3. Key evaluation findings

The evaluation report presents findings on Programme design (covering relevance and appropriateness), effectiveness and results, efficiency and sustainability:

1. The FLBP **design** is relevant in terms of its political, economic and social context. It is also largely appropriate in terms of the complex environment in which it is implemented, characterised by multiple role players and stakeholders. Despite complex challenges, the FLBP responds to the supply and demand requirements of the basic education system. The FLBP has implemented continuous improvements in its strategy, including

(in 2012) the introduction of a district-based recruitment system.

2. The evaluation has found ample evidence of Programme **effectiveness**. The Programme has made an important contribution to the very substantial increase in enrolment in ITE over the period under evaluation (FLBP students were on average 15% of the total ITE student intake over the period). It has been successful in attracting quality students to become teachers (however, we note that in the period under review, 'quality' was measured exclusively in terms of academic performance rather than, for example, criteria such as a "passion for teaching"). The majority of students are paying back their bursary obligations by teaching in public schools in government-paid positions, a key legal obligation attached to the bursary (however, large numbers of FLBP graduates are not teaching in the subject of their specialisation). We have noted, however, that in the absence of a tracking mechanism the proportion of FLBP graduates who have fulfilled their service obligation is not known.
3. Programme **efficiency** has been examined in the four key business processes of the FLBP: recruitment and application; selection; disbursement; and placement. Programme monitoring and data management have been discussed as a separate set of cross-cutting support mechanisms to all the business processes; the cost-effectiveness of the FLBP has also been assessed.

- **Recruitment** is working efficiently, as the Programme is able to select adequate numbers of students who meet the selection criteria. Universities are playing an important and cost-efficient role in marketing the Programme. Means testing of students does not take place but would be one mechanism to determine relative need of students; marketing to rural and poor students could improve significantly, though this may already be happening through

the district-based recruitment strategy. There are important inefficiencies in recruitment: for example, the Funza Lushaka website lists national rather than provincial or district-level priorities; the new district-based recruitment strategy is more labour-intensive and needs to be adequately resourced; and marketing of the FLBP needs more human and financial resources at all levels.

- The **selection** process is generally efficient and thorough. Importantly, it appears that most selected students are motivated to teach and to pay back their service obligations. However, the lack of human resource capacity in the ITE Directorate of the DBE, which is involved in each university selection process and is responsible for final decisions about awards, is a major factor affecting efficiency in the selection process. No financial support is allocated for administrative work on the Programme, so the FLBP is dependent on PEDs, universities and other institutions for allocating adequate staff and resources to the Programme.
- The **disbursement** of funds is efficiently governed by the FLBP steering committee. Funding is sufficient to meet student needs; the amount of the FLBP bursary represents an important Programme efficiency. However, the timing of disbursement is problematic because the government fiscal year differs from the academic year; consequent delays in payments to students impact on their basic needs and also on the cash flow of universities that provide support to students to bridge the gap.
- **Placement** of FLBP graduates has serious inefficiencies that are largely not within the control of the Programme: although 83.5% of FLBP graduates are potentially fulfilling their service obligation in public schools, only 50.6% of graduates surveyed reported that they are

in schools in the three poorest quintiles; there do not seem to be mechanisms to detect when students have changed their specialisation in the course of their studies, so it is difficult to check whether their subjects match priority needs; students sometimes choose priority areas in which there is an oversupply of teachers (resulting from weak demand and supply projection); monitoring of placement is difficult as information is held in the Personnel Salary System (PERSAL) rather than the ITE system; there is currently no system in place to track defaulting graduates; almost a quarter of all FLBP graduates surveyed were placed in their teaching position directly by schools, although this option is not in line with FLBP policy; and, finally, approximately 30% of FLBP graduates were not placed within the required 60-day period and are therefore not required to fulfil their service obligation.

- Programme **monitoring, tracking and data management** is weak and under-resourced; for example, the ITE Directorate has only one key staff member responsible for managing the FLBP database and also data on the entire teacher education system. The system is primarily manual and there are multiple points at which data are manipulated, which opens the system up to possible errors at each point and raises confidentiality and security issues. Very importantly, the information system does not allow the monitoring or tracking of students across the various business processes of the FLBP.
- Although it was not possible to do a full cost-benefit analysis of the Programme, it has been possible to do a limited assessment of the **cost-effectiveness** of the FLBP during the period 2007 to 2012. Overall, the Programme is relatively cost-effective. For example, the proportion of FLBP graduates working

as teachers in public schools is high and there appears to be a significant saving with students who complete their studies in the minimum time, as most FLBP bursars do.

4. The FLBP will continue to be dependent on other functions of the DBE, DHET and other stakeholders such as the universities and NSFAS for its **sustainability**. This is particularly the case in two areas – the ongoing discussions about the quality of ITE and the various systems for the placement of new teachers in public school teaching posts. The FLBP does not have direct control of either of these areas of work, but both are critical for its success and perceptions of its success. The extent to which broader changes in these areas can be influenced by the FLBP is a necessary ongoing discussion. Wherever possible, partnerships and collaboration should be strengthened to improve in these critical areas. Implementation of the recommendations of this evaluation is also critical for Programme sustainability, in particular, adequate resourcing and major improvements in the management of information.

4. Recommendations for implementation, policy and further research

Key recommendations related to Programme **design** are presented below.

1. *Practical ways of using the refined definition of merit in the recruitment and selection processes (as per the programme theory documented in Annexure B) are needed.*
2. *The Programme needs a planning and contracting system that helps to attract increased numbers of FLBP graduates to poor and rural schools in “geographical areas of need”.*

Recommendations related to Programme **effectiveness** are presented below.

3. *The DBE, in collaboration with universities, should develop an effective academic monitoring and tracking system (this will also*

assist with efficiency in selection).

4. The DBE, in collaboration with PEDs, should examine different approaches to placement, such as allowing students to apply directly to schools and extending the current 60-day period in which graduates must be placed or they are released from their service obligation (this will also assist with efficiency in placement).
5. The DBE, in collaboration with PEDs and universities, should conduct rigorous research to improve the match between FLBP graduates' studies and schools' needs.
6. The DBE should plan to respond effectively to the Incremental Introduction of African Languages (IIAL) policy.
7. The DBE should ensure that selection and disbursement processes are streamlined to support the academic cycles.

Recommendations related to **efficiency in recruitment** are presented below:

8. The DBE should ensure that effective recruitment strategies are shared among key role players.
9. The DBE should consider whether administration of the FLBP can be enhanced by issuing a single contract for the duration of the qualification.
10. The DBE should consider requesting universities to waive their application fees for needy FLBP applicants.

Recommendations related to **efficiency in selection** are presented below:

11. The DBE should draw up guidelines that set out possible mitigating factors in students' applications, such as illness.
12. The DBE, in conjunction with other Programme stakeholders, should consider ways to improve efficiency in responses to applications.
13. Since universities are national not provincial institutions, studying in another province should not affect a candidate's chance of selection; however, the DBE and PEDs should collaborate to attune the priority areas to local circumstances and consider district-level priority areas. Working in a particular district

should be part of a district-based FLBP student's service obligation.

14. The DBE, in collaboration with universities, should develop an effective system to monitor the priority areas that students have enrolled for; priority subject areas should be fixed in the period between application and selection; (this will also assist with efficiency in placement).

Recommendations related to **efficiency in disbursement** are presented below:

15. The DBE should consider introducing a mechanism for determining relative financial need of FLBP applicants to better target needy students (this also relates to Programme design and assists with sustainability).
16. The DBE should develop guidelines for universities to ensure that all students receive similar levels and types of support to fill the gap between the beginning of the academic year and receipt of the bursary.
17. The DBE should review the FLBP refund policy, noting that students should not receive the benefit of downward adjustments of university course fees.
18. The DBE should ensure that important discussions lead to policy decisions and action; for example, the discussion among stakeholders about how payments to institutions might be made earlier should lead to decisive action.
19. Given the scale of the Programme and the large amounts of funds available, the DBE and other role players should allocate adequate resources to reduce disbursement delays.
20. To avoid possibly costly legal challenges the DBE should examine the feasibility of mechanisms such as admission of debt when students convert their bursaries into loans.

Recommendations related to **efficiency in placement** are presented below:

21. The DBE should ensure that placement data are captured and stored in an effective management information system.

22. *The DBE should develop a strategy and tools for projecting supply and demand to inform the determination of priority areas; this initiative should link to broader education sector planning.*
23. *The DBE, in collaboration with PEDs, should develop an effective tracking system to provide feedback to universities on placement to help shape their strategy on teacher supply and ensure that FLBP graduates meet their full service obligations beyond their placement and (this will also assist with efficiency in disbursement).*
24. *The DBE should encourage strengthened data management and province-level research into teacher supply and demand.*
25. *Given that in practice many FLBP graduates apply directly to schools, the DBE should accept this but introduce safeguards to ensure that graduates take up posts in areas of need.*
26. *The DBE, in collaboration with PEDs, should ensure that PED responsibilities in terms of placement are clear and develop protocols to ensure that universities receive feedback from provinces on placement.*
27. *The DBE, in collaboration with PEDs, needs to identify methods of effective placement, considering all possibilities, such as national placement for FLBP graduates who agree to be placed in any province when they accept the bursary.*

Recommendations related to **efficiency in monitoring, tracking and data management** are presented below: *The DBE should allocate adequate staff and resources to manage Programme data for effective planning and monitoring.*

28. *The DBE and the State Information Technology Agency (SITA) should develop a new application service specification setting out the software and hardware requirements for a management information system that can support all FLBP business processes for effective planning and decision making.*

A recommendation related to the **cost-effectiveness** of the FLBP is presented below:

29. *The DBE should ensure that appropriate data on net benefits and net costs are available in the future to support a cost-benefit analysis.*

Recommendations related to the **sustainability** of the FLBP are presented below:

30. *The Programme is effective and should be sustained by government, with the improvements recommended in this report.*
31. *The DBE, with the support of other Programme stakeholders, should develop an effective FLBP planning system, which must be linked to and aligned with the overall planning of government in areas such as teacher supply and demand and teacher employment. Effective planning is also necessary to ensure alignment between government funding and planning cycles and those of relevant stakeholders, including universities and NSFAS; the DBE should ensure that measures already in place to bridge the gap between the academic year and the government financial year (such as universities' support for needy students) are encouraged.*
32. *The DBE should develop measures to ensure that marketing is effective and that responses to applications are as speedy as possible.*
33. *Given the scale of the Programme and the large amounts of funds available, the DBE should allocate adequate resources to administer the Programme. The DBE should consider the establishment of a dedicated unit within or outside of the ITE Directorate to manage the FLBP.*

A recommendation for **future evaluation work** is presented below:

34. *The FLBP should commence planning and lay the groundwork now to evaluate the FLBP again in future, including cost-benefit analyses and impact evaluations of the Programme.*
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