Data Know Best
Tracking Learner Achievement and Assessing the Old Mutual Education Flagship Project (OMEFP) in Motheo District, Free-State, South Africa

Abstract
Big data has become a focal point in many industries. Companies seek to leverage the use of big data to inform decisions and even increase profit margins. Government departments have also become interested in how private sector expertise meets public service delivery models. The field practicum focuses on using big data generated by schools in informing decisions toward improvement of governance and management and ultimately learner achievement.

The objective of the field practicum was to track learner achievement in nine project schools in the Free-State Province in South Africa by using the Data Driven Districts dashboard to extract learner achievement scores as well as assess the OMEFP by using the Data Driven Districts (DDD) Tracker, a survey instrument based on six indicators relating to school governance and management. OMEFP activities consisted of curriculum mentoring for educators in Math, Science and English subjects.

Background
Basic Education in South Africa possesses serious challenges resulting in learners achieving poor scores in critical subjects like Math and Science. Various reasons based on present and historical factors inform the current status. Some of the main challenges presently faced by the Department of Basic Education are presented as follows:

Objectives
Track learner achievement
Using DDD dashboard
Assess OMEFP using DDD Tracker

Methods
3 sets of paper-based surveys
Data Driven Dashboard System
9 project schools

Results
Grade 12 Bachelor Pass Scores

Conclusions
- Impacts achieved in governance and relationship between school management and educators. However, grade 12 Math and Science scores fluctuate and have slight variations between control and project schools. Thus OMEFP alone cannot be attributed to the slight increases.
- Variance in perceptions regarding effectivity of OMEFP.
- ‘Courtesy bias from respondents for fear of losing future funding. Use independent evaluator.
- Abrupt policies (i.e. progression) affect educators and learner scores.
- Data availability has allowed schools to engage on results and begin identifying areas that need attention.
- Data quality needs improvement (connectivity, input quality, training).

Acknowledgements
Centre of Latin American Studies
Centre of African Studies
MDP Dr. Nos, Dr. Galloway
Dr. McKune, Dr. Israel
NLF & UFS
Cohort 6
Family