

# BBD VIEW

## DRIVING EDUCATION



By Peter Searle, BBD Chief Executive Officer

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## DATA ANALYSIS INITIATIVE ENABLES EDUCATORS TO MAKE DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONS

12 Oct 2017

The Michael & Susan Dell Foundation (MSDF) launched a partnership with the National Department of Education in 2012 to enable South African schools to translate data into actionable insights.

The Data Driven Districts (DDD) initiative aims to enable data to be accessible and actionable for 80% of South Africa's 12 million learners by 2018. By correctly utilising educational data, learner outcomes can be improved. This is of particular importance if South Africa's poorer communities are to be uplifted through education.

BBD assisted by developing an online dashboard to enable access to the learners' data. The dashboard is a visual tool for officials and educators and shows how districts, circuits and schools are performing on learner achievement, attendance for both educators and learners and promotion.

The project has enabled schools and district officials to view relevant education data immediately and graphically via a dashboard. The dashboard enables education-related data to be captured, extracted and consolidated more effectively. By allowing educators to make data-driven decisions to facilitate targeted interventions, they can effectively improve the educational outcomes of all learners in the school system. Essentially potential problem areas can be highlighted to enable education officials to better decide where to deploy their resources, very helpful given these resources are limited.

The DDD project extracts data from the existing South African School Administration and Management System. This data is consolidated and aggregated to provide insights at all levels within the education system, from circuit offices all the way to national. By showing the data in a dashboard – principals, circuit managers and district, provincial and national staff can identify meaningful insights to assist in improving learner outcomes.

MSDF South Africa Country Director, Dean Villet, advises that the DDD project has collected data from over 19 000 schools and more than nine million learners. "The scale of DDD's quarterly data collection is an incredible achievement in and of itself, however, even more impressive is that we now have over 6 000 schools submitting a full set of attendance, assessment and curriculum coverage data every single week. Our initial research leads us to believe that there is not another education system in the developing world that is achieving anywhere near that scale of near-real time data submission."

Villet says the DDD Dashboard can provide data and information from country level right down to an individual learner level, to enable a school's management team as well as district and provincial officials to provide the support required, at the point in time it is needed." The programme is active across seven provinces, with training and support being offered to education officials to ensure that data is collected, quality assured and then used in

service of improving learning outcomes across the system."

By putting in place a tech-enabled tool to visualise education data in a dashboard, education outcomes can be improved through fact-based insights driven by real data. The application of analytics in an educational context is beginning to show real promise in South Africa.

### About Peter Searle

Peter is the CEO of BBD and serves on its board of directors. A very hands-on CEO, Peter believes in getting involved in every aspect of the business by ensuring the company employs passionate tech people, to keep BBD growing as an African software development powerhouse.

### About BBD

A provider of custom software development and application design solutions, BBD's 34 years of technical and developer expertise spans the banking, insurance, telecommunications, education and public sectors. Employing over 700 highly skilled, motivated and experienced IT professionals - BBD is South Africa's largest independent custom software development company.

