



#7. Jika iMfundo at Inqaba Primary School

“Some are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them.” I’m not sure whether William Shakespeare had an idea that these lines would carry such a relevant message after so many decades. This is the feeling I had when I met the Principal of Inqaba Primary School, Mr Ntombela, in Northern KwaZulu Natal. The school is in the deep rural area of Zululand, known as KwaYanguye, about 20 kilometres from the small town of Melmoth. When one is at the school it’s easy for one to forget the dirt road leading to the school because of the reception and the atmosphere in the school. It is a secured environment for learning and focus.

The words by William Shakespeare are found to be relevant when one meets the passionate manager in the person of Mr Ntombela. When I met him I found the combination of a person born great, a person who achieved greatness and the one who had greatness thrust upon him and he picked greatness and ran with it. He credits Jika iMfundo for the way he manages the school and the success the school has attained. He speaks without stopping about how Jika iMfundo gave direction to the enthusiasm he had and gave meaning and direction to his thinking as a manager. It enabled him, as a principal to be able to focus on ‘what matters most’ as he manages the school. According to the Principal pronounces it in different words that with Jika iMfundo everyone in the school knows what to do and when. The Management tool of Jika iMfundo has made it easier to do management work for the Principal, for the Deputy Principal, for the Head of Department and also for the educator in the classroom. Every task gets easier with a proper plan. The assessment plan provides clear guidance on what to assess and in the process, learners benefit. As the Principal speaks to you he brings the documents that he is speaking about. With excitement he puts the Monitoring plan on the table, which shows the plan for the first term. The term shows who should have done what by when and this makes the role of the Principal quite manageable. Before the introduction of Jika iMfundo it was not easy to prepare for the school visit by the team from the District or any other education office. Everybody knows his/her responsibilities.

The Deputy Principal, Mrs N. Magwaza monitoring work effectively, using the proper tools. It brought light to the educators and makes the task of advising educators easier. Capacitation that comes with the programme helps in doing the work properly. What one sees whilst one sits and listens to the SMT is that each one complements the other, in the process confirming what the Principal says about Jika iMfundo. One of the Heads of Department, Mr S. Biyela confirms that the programme unites them as teachers. The post level one teachers know beforehand what the HOD requires from him/her, and likewise, that goes for the Deputy Principal and the Principal. Nothing comes to anyone as a surprise. Talking about the key success factors for the programme Mr Biyela singles out the Monitoring and the Planning tools, which enables the Principal to be on top of his management responsibility. These tools also help the Deputy Principal when checking whether the HODs are in line with their responsibilities. He refers to the HODs as the core engineers of the curriculum whose role and responsibilities were made easier by the use of Monitoring and Planning tools.

One of the writers said, *'What you hear, you forget; What you read, you remember, but What you do, you know.'* This is the thought which came to my mind when I saw all the interviewees bringing along some evidence, some proof of work to illustrate their experience with Jika iMfundo, e.g. the File or the Plan. The files keep their work organized and easy to refer as and when there is a need. The visit had been arranged at short notice, but that short time frame never affected the presentation of their quality of work. What cannot be faked is the order and discipline in a school situation, especially in the primary school where there are young learners. This schools is a reflection of a well-managed school.

As the Principal refers to the Inqaba Primary School Year Plan for 2017, he brings it along and refers to some pages which are critical in his planning. He emphasizes that the programme makes him more than one hundred steps away from other managers who are not exposed to Jika iMfundo. The Head of Department Mrs N. G. Ntuli, of the Foundation Phase stresses that the tools, the tracker and the lesson plans make her management work easier, especially in terms of curriculum coverage. Paperwork is quite reduced with the use of the programme. Even learners show a lot of improvement in learning areas. In all the work that is done, there is evidence and can easily be followed through.

The Head of Department of the Senior Phase, Mrs A.S. Ndlovu emphasized that to her the tracker is the most important because it guides on how many activities will be done in a week. As she checks the progress she looks at alignment with the policy document. Work gets easier when using the tracker because it refers the user to the page in the Learner's book, plus the page in the Teacher's Guide thus saving a lot of learning time.

Talking about the tracker, Ms Ndaba says that it informs the HOD and the teacher where to develop in terms of curriculum coverage and what to improve. If for any reason the teacher had some setbacks and the backlog, it is easier to strategically plan to recover the time loss. In passing she mentioned that if the teacher plans her lessons well it minimizes the use of a lot of paperwork. We may have seen people who develop plans but never follow the plans. With this programme when you have scheduled a phase meeting on a particular day of the week, it is important to hold that meeting with the number of available teachers. If one of the teachers is either absent or for some particular reason is not able to complete the work, the improvement plan has to be developed. This helps in the coverage of the curriculum because if a learner progresses to the next class there'll be an accumulation of gaps in his knowledge. If the gap in learning is not attended to in good time it has a major effect later in life and even in Matric. One of the teachers uses an example of building a house, stressing the importance of the Foundation Phase. The builder has to make sure that there are bricks on every part of the wall. If there are any gaps on the foundation, as time goes on the wall will get heavier and the house will collapse. The cracks that appear later in the house are usually a reflection of a weak foundation.

It is important to conclude with the Principal's words emphasizing that it is not possible to cheat with Jika iMfundo. In his words, "You can't cook meetings, you can't cook your one-on-ones ..." He closes with the words that this programme is here to stay, in fact it is the future.