

WC COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Learning Brief

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The Role of After School in Academic Catch-Up

1 IN 10 LEARNERS NEVER RETURNED TO SCHOOL IN 2020 AND THE OVERALL DROP-OUT RATES FOR 2021 ARE STAGGERING.

‘Academic catch-up’ or ‘education recovery’ are terms that have garnered more use in the midst of the current global pandemic. There is a growing need to assist learners to overcome the burdens of reduced classroom time, curriculum backlogs, learning losses, and missing foundations.

The Wave 5 results of the [NIDS-CRAM](#) state that learners across the country lost between 70% to 100% (a full year) of learning between March 2020 and June 2021. It is against this backdrop that government departments and major education donors alike have expressed an interest in working with civil society to close these gaps and to work towards a more stable future for South African youth. One example of this commitment is the rise in support for unemployed youth; an opportunity that should be leveraged by After School Programmes (ASPs) in their partnerships with schools.

The Role of After School

Perceptions are shifting and the After School sector is becoming more visible. The value of ASPs to learners, parents & schools has been highlighted by Covid-19. South Africa has no option but to engage in significant remediation efforts in the coming years and to avoid future school disruptions as much as possible. ASPs offer a complementary solution to closing learning gaps and supporting schools to offset a longer-term education disaster:

[OLICO Maths Education](#) has developed extensive materials to support primary and secondary learners to improve their foundational knowledge in the subject through a fun, self-paced online platform.

[Syafunda](#) has made academic content more accessible by creating a digital library that enables discount access to textbooks. In partnership with the Department of Education, they have also created a digital classroom that provides video, audio, and eBook interaction via free wireless hotspots and offline functionality.

[Tomorrow Trust](#), like many organisations, has adapted its programmes and integrated life skill development and mental health support into its core programming. Building these non-academic competencies is inherently valuable and has a profound knock-on effect on a learner's academic performance.

[Reflective Learning](#) is an online platform, empowering teachers to catch-up learning backlogs. The app provides educators with diagnostic tools to identify knowledge gaps and offers learners an individualised learning experience to cover the math curriculum and key concepts.

The After School sector now has an opportunity to present a united front as an education solution to mitigate learning losses and assist learners to catch-up. It is not necessarily about doing things differently, but about leveraging the materials, resources, and initiatives available to maximise education recovery for our learners.

We will also be required as a collective, to educate the public and private sectors on just how integral ASPs are as catch-up interventions over the coming years.

Questions to consider as we move into 2022:

1. What are we noticing as the needs of learners in our ASP? Have these changed?
2. How can we adapt our programme offering to ensure we are meeting these needs?
3. Is our ASP 'working practice'? In what way? How do we know that it is working?
4. Does our ASP align with common trends in national and international funding?
5. What resources are needed to support academic catch-up?

