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AccessEd ZA 2025 Programme Impact Report

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Acknowledgements

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“By virtue of the fact that the tutors are young, the pupils were able to associate and engage comprehensively. The level of motivation shows in the pupils' schoolwork. The direct engagement with postgraduate researchers helped to bring reality to the lives of the pupils. The AccessEd ZA Programme has proven to be a life-changer for all participants.”

Teacher, LEAP 6 Science and Maths School, Ga-Rankuwa



Executive Summary

We are proud to present the seventh AccessEd ZA Programme impact report, showcasing our initiatives, partnerships, and the impact of our work.

In this milestone year, we successfully engaged 255 pupils across two partner schools in the Western Cape and Gauteng. We take immense pride in our outreach efforts, which reached students from six of the most marginalised communities and townships, including Tsakane, Linbro Park, Ga-Rankuwa, and Langa.

This year's programme achieved remarkable milestones, which are detailed throughout this report. Key highlights include:

- **171 postgraduate applications, reflecting enthusiasm for our programme mission;**
- **Selecting 14 postgraduates for 15 tutor placements;**
- **Recruiting 10 postgraduate facilitators for an Academic Enrichment Workshop;**

- **Delivering a Mental Health and Dropout Prevention workshop, providing support and enriching students' educational experiences;**
- **Observing significant improvements in pupil evaluation scores across key competencies, showcasing the programme's effectiveness;**
- **Nurturing pedagogical skills among tutors and candidate fellows, fostering their growth as educators and mentors;**
- **Receiving endorsements from pupils, tutors, candidate fellows, and partners, highlighting the programme's value and transformative impact.**

The AccessEd ZA Programme continues to play a pivotal role in empowering young people from underserved communities to access higher education opportunities and transform their futures.

We look forward to ongoing collaboration and dialogue to further enhance the programme, ensuring it remains a powerful catalyst for change and opportunity for South Africa's youth.

Yours sincerely,



Clarisa Laltha
Director



Lesedi Matlala
Director



Nicola Vermooten
Director



Samora Menze
Director

About the Programme

The Problem - Education Inequality

Where you start should not affect where you end up. Too often it does.

In countries worldwide, including South Africa, a young person's chance of progressing to tertiary education or completing an undergraduate education is significantly influenced by their background.

It's time for change.

Inclusive, high-quality tertiary education is a key driver to breaking cycles of poverty and reducing socio-economic inequality.

University may not be the choice for everyone, but it should be accessible to all.

University can be transformative for individual and societal life outcomes, improving employment prospects, earning power, health, well-being and civic engagement. A university education prepares young people for participation in the global economy and society.

The Solution - AccessEd ZA Programme

AccessEd exists to increase access to university and higher education for young people from underserved backgrounds globally.

The AccessEd ZA Programme unlocks the potential of postgraduates in South Africa. We mobilise Postdocs, PhDs and Master's researchers to mentor young people from under-represented backgrounds.

The programme uses the passion and expertise of postgraduate tutors, who take their research work and convert it into a university-style course for pupils to complete. Designed to give pupils an authentic university experience, the programme breaks down barriers to higher education. Aside from postgraduate tutors, pupils interact with a range of professionals who further enrich their programme experience through a series of academic enrichment workshops and online platforms.

Programme outcomes include improved subject knowledge, university readiness, motivation, self-efficacy and meta-cognition.

4 out of 9

19-year-old South Africans have dropped out of school

General Household Survey, 2021

Out-of-school youth in South Africa has tripled from 250 000 to

750 000

due to Covid-19

Unicef, 2021

The employment rate among 25 to 64-year-olds with a degree is

30%

higher than those with Grade 12

DHET, 2021



Programme Journey



Complete university preparatory package

Pupils embark on a complete university preparatory package that includes:

- In-school launch event
- 6 university-style tutorials with homework assignments
- Challenging final assignment
- 1 Academic Enrichment Workshop
- Tailored one-to-one feedback from postgraduate tutors
- In-school/ on-campus graduation event

Coursebooks and learning approach

Tutorials are accompanied by a bespoke 'coursebook' designed and written by the postgraduate tutor delivering the course.

Coursebooks are aligned with school-level study, but contain fascinating material to stretch students beyond the curriculum.

When undertaking cutting edge research, postgraduate researchers question everything. We encourage AccessEd ZA pupils to do the same. This means final assignments require pupils to switch between subject areas to find the answers.

Tutor selection and training

We mobilise Postdocs, PhDs and Master's researchers to tutor and mentor young people from under-represented communities.

All tutors must pass a competitive assessment process to work with AccessEd, as well as undergoing sector-leading training to meet school, parent and student expectations before being able to deliver courses.

Course topics

Like university study, AccessEd ZA courses may cover a variety of intersecting subjects. Switching between subject areas helps students understand their strengths and areas of interest for onward study.

All courses fall under 3 subject streams:

- STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
- Social Sciences - Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Economics and Politics
- Arts & Humanities - Literature, Philosophy, History, Archaeology, Geography, Law, Religion, and Art

Pupil Feedback

Pupil overview

The AccessEd ZA 2025 Programme supported 255 pupils from the most marginalised communities and townships in the Western Cape and Gauteng, including Tsakane, Linbro Park, Ga-Rankuwa, and Langa.



255 pupils participated in the programme



2 schools participated in the programme



2 provinces represented by pupils



4 communities and townships represented by pupils

Data snapshot

At AccessEd, we prioritise data-driven evaluation to assess the impact of our programmes. Through rigorous evaluation methods, we analyse outcomes associated with the programme to measure its effectiveness.

The following data highlights key outcomes of the programme for students at partner schools, including metrics such as tutorial attendance, final assignment submission and pass rates, and student attainment.

92%

average tutorial attendance

89%

homework submission

91%

final assignment submission

61%

of pupils obtained a 1st grade pass

Performing at an excellent standard for the grade above their current grade

25%

of pupils obtained a 2:1 grade pass

Performing at a good standard for the grade above their current grade

14%

of pupils obtained a 2:2 grade pass

Performing at an excellent standard for their current grade



Pupil Feedback

Data snapshot [cont.]

Pupils were asked to respond to 36 questions that evaluate key competencies that support progression to higher education: university readiness, motivation, meta-cognition, and self-efficacy. The data below shows the average pupil response on a 7-point Likert scale and percentage distribution across competencies.



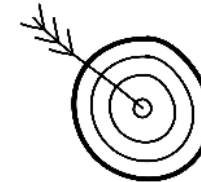
University readiness
Knowledge pupils have around higher education and how to access it



Motivation
Factors that drive pupils to behave in a particular way



Meta-cognition
Pupils' ability to think explicitly about their own learning



Self-efficacy
Belief pupils have about their ability to achieve future goals



“ I felt stuck due to the academic stress, but after the programme, I felt more confident and relieved. I am ready to face my fears and strive for my goals. ”

Grade 10 pupil, Leap Science and Maths School in Langa

Interpretation notes

We assess students' competencies using the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire, a standardized self-report assessment recognised for its reliability and validity in measuring university readiness, motivation, metacognition and self-efficacy.

Pupils are required to rate their responses on a 7-point Likert scale (1 - strongly disagree; 7 strongly agree). Modest numerical shifts hold statistical significance, indicating tangible improvements in pupil performance.



Tutor Feedback

Tutor overview

This year, we received 171 applications from postgraduate researchers eager to contribute to our mission. Through a rigorous selection process, we selected 14 outstanding candidates (57% female; 43% male) who demonstrated the skills, dedication, and passion needed to deliver exceptional academic tutorials. These talented individuals were placed in partner schools, where they inspired and empowered young minds to reach their full potential.



171 applications from postgraduates



14 postgraduate researcher placements



4 universities represented by tutors



4 nationalities represented by tutors

To ensure the highest quality of support for pupils, all postgraduate tutors participated in comprehensive researcher development training. Tailored specifically to meet the diverse needs of students, this training capitalised on tutors' enthusiasm for their research fields and their depth of academic expertise. The training equipped tutors with the necessary tools to excel in their roles as mentors and educators, covering essential elements such as course design, fundamental pedagogical approaches, effective classroom management techniques, and adherence to professional codes of conduct within educational settings.

Data snapshot

The data below offers a snapshot of the tutor post-programme questionnaire.

100%

of tutors recommend that other postgraduate researchers participate in the programme

100%

of tutors agreed pupils are more likely to pursue higher education due to the programme

100%

of tutors agreed they can help pupils value learning after participating in the programme

100%

of tutors agreed they can help students value progression to higher education following the programme

100%

of tutors agreed that they can identify student misconceptions hindering understanding of subject fundamentals after the programme

100%

of tutors agreed they saw an improvement in pupils' self-awareness and critical thinking



Facilitator Feedback

Academic enrichment overview

The programme featured a Mental Health and Dropout Prevention workshop designed to address the unique challenges faced by South African youth. Integrated with subject-specific tutorials, this workshop provided students with a comprehensive and holistic learning experience, supporting both their academic and personal growth.

In collaboration with the Zero Dropout Campaign and My Online Therapist, we designed workshop materials to address the specific needs of pupils effectively.

Facilitated by 10 dedicated facilitators (60% female; 40% male), the workshops provided a meaningful platform for student engagement. By leading these sessions, candidate fellows not only enhanced the educational experience for pupils but also developed teaching and facilitation skills, contributing to their professional growth.



Data snapshot

The data below offers a snapshot of the candidate fellow post-programme questionnaire.

100%

of candidate fellows agreed that pupils benefitted from attending academic enrichment workshops

100%

of candidate fellows agreed that future fellows will benefit from participating in the programme

100%

of candidate fellows agreed that they are eager to partake in the 2026 programme cycle

“It is the most rewarding experience. You get to engage with the learners in the most positive way. The programme also provides learners with diverse, passion-driven learning experiences that go beyond the standard curriculum, which I think is great, as it helps bridge knowledge gaps. Moreover, the programme also equips one with the skills to develop a coursebook/curriculum, public speaking and facilitation.”

PhD researcher in Biochemistry, University of Johannesburg

“Learners do not receive much, if any, of these talks at their schools, and so it helps to introduce them to ways of dealing with challenges that may arise from school.”

Honours student in Literacy and Creative Writing, University of the Witwatersrand



Partner Feedback

Partner school overview

The AccessEd ZA 2025 Programme was delivered in partnership with 2 schools.

Since 2017, AccessEd has established lasting partnerships with the African School for Excellence and LEAP Science and Maths Schools, enabling a sustained impact on educational opportunities and outcomes. In 2026, AccessEd will continue and deepen these partnerships to further empower pupils and foster positive change in South Africa's education landscape.



Data snapshot

The data below offers a snapshot of the partner post-programme questionnaire.

100%

of partners agreed that pupils are interested in applying to university after participating in the programme

100%

of partners strongly agreed that the AccessEd ZA Programme improved pupils' motivation

100%

of partners agreed that pupils were more engaged in their tutorial subject after participating in the programme

97%

of partners strongly agreed that tutors and candidate fellows inspired and encouraged pupils

100%

of partners strongly agreed that more pupils should participate in the programme

100%

of partners agreed that they are eager to partake in the 2025 programme cycle

“Learners get the chance to meet people from higher areas of learning - people they can look up to and ask questions related to university life. This is important, especially for learners who have never seen a glimpse of what life could be out there after high school. Learners are exposed to topics of learning and discussion that broaden their horizon, out of the curriculum, into the world of research. This exposes them to problems within society and problem-solving from a scientific or educational view.”

Teacher, LEAP 3 Science and Maths School, Linbro Park



Final Assignment Extract

Grade 9 Pupil

LEAP Science and Maths
School 6, Ga-Rankuwa

*Growth Mindset:
A pathway to educational
and career objectives*

Why is Growth Mindset important to your educational and career objectives? How have you applied your learning about Growth Mindset? What else have you learnt about Growth Mindset that is not included in this coursebook?

Growth mindset means believing that I can always improve myself through effort, practice and learning from mistakes. To me, it is the understanding that my intelligence and abilities are not fixed but can grow over time if I work hard and do not give up. This idea is very important to me because me hope and strength. Sometimes I struggle with certain subjects or tasks, and in the past, I used to think that maybe I am just not smart enough. But through learning about growth mindset I have realised that my brain can develop like a muscle and that failure does not mean the end...

This new way of thinking gives me confidence to keep going. I will apply growth mindset to my other courses by always reminding myself that every skill can be developed. In mathematics, for example, there are times when certain topics are very hard. Instead of giving up, I will break the problem into smaller steps and keep trying until I understand them. In languages like Setswana and English, I will practice writing and reading more often to improve. In life, I will apply growth mindset by being open to learning new skills such as cooking, sports or even learning how to manage my emotions better. Growth mindset will help me remember that I can learn from feedback from other people and my own mistakes.

To sustain and develop my growth mindset, I need to take practical steps every day. The first step is positive talk. I must remind myself that I can do it even when something seems impossible. The second step is to set small goals that lead to big goals. For example, if I want to improve my writing, I can set a goal to write a paragraph every day. Another step is to ask for help when I need it instead of keeping quiet and struggling alone. Talking to teachers, friends, or family can give new ideas and encouragement. Last but not least, I need to celebrate progress, not just results. If I see that I have improved even a little bit, I should be proud, because growth takes time...

In conclusion, growth mindset is about believing in improvement and not giving up. It is important to me because it changes how I see myself and my future. I have also learnt that growth mindset applies beyond academics. It is a way of living. Even though I have avoided challenges before, now I know that facing them is the best way to grow. Growth mindset is not just a theory. It is a practice that I want to carry with me for the rest of my life.

Final Assignment Extract

Grade 9 Pupil

African School for
Excellence, Tsakane

*Quality Counts: Why
doing things well matters*

What has this course taught you about the importance of quality? How has your thinking changed since Tutorial 1? How will you try to improve the quality of your own work or actions in the future?

Quality is one of the most important aspects of an activity, whether in business, education, or daily life. It is not just about producing something; it is about ensuring that what is produced meets expectations, serves its purpose, and creates satisfaction. In business, quality can determine whether a company survives in a competitive market. In education, quality is seen in well-prepared work that is accurate, structured, and reflects effort. The concept of quality, however, is not limited to products or services – it extends to processes, people, and improvement over a wide range of time.

According to the material provided, quality can be defined as fitness for purpose and meeting or exceeding customer expectations. It is about creating value and ensuring that both the product and the process achieve their intended results. Importantly, quality is not something checked only at the end, it must be built into every stage. This is why continuous improvement and error prevention are central to the definition of quality. Different perspectives shape how quality is understood. For customers, it is about satisfaction: does the product or service meet their needs? For employees, it is about pride in their work and reducing rework or waste.

For management, quality ensures efficiency, competitiveness and long-term sustainability. The importance of quality cannot be overstated. A company that prioritises quality gains customer trust and loyalty. It reduces waste and cost, as fewer resources are spent on fixing errors. Quality also makes organisations competitive by ensuring they deliver reliable and consistent products. In education, quality leads to growth. Students/schools learn more effectively, assignments are clearer, and performance improves with the task...

As a student, I see a clear connection between total quality management and my academic work. Writing an assignment is like producing a product: it requires planning, accuracy and revision. Feedback from teachers is similar to customer feedback, as it identifies areas for improvement. Editing and proofreading act as quality control steps, ensuring errors are reduced before submission. Just as businesses strive for continuous improvement. I must see each assignment as a chance to grow, improve my skills, and increase confidence...

Appendix

Tutors and Courses



Partner	Tutor	University	Subject	Course title
African School for Excellence	Mmasibi Hlatshwayo	University of Johannesburg	Humanities	Quality Counts: Why doing things well matters
African School for Excellence	Karabo Kgwete	University of Johannesburg	Humanities	CTRL + YOU: Write beyond the Bot, write into University
LEAP Science and Math School 1	Buhle Maphosa	Stellenbosch University	STEM	The Power of the Sun: Using Solar Energy in food processing
LEAP Science and Math School 3	Nicolas Buthelezi	University of Johannesburg	STEM	From a Garden to a Pharmacy: How Medicine is made from Plants
LEAP Science and Math School 3	Thozamile Ntsenge	WITS	Humanities	Writing to Ignite: Unearthing creative writing and literacy skills
LEAP Science and Math School 3	Thulisile Ngcobo	University of Johannesburg	Social Science	Speak Up! The power of whistleblowing
LEAP Science and Math School 3	Sapana Sewpersad	WITS	Social Science	Food for Thought: The relationships between food, culture and inequality
LEAP Science and Math School 6	Daniel Ekup-Nse	University of Pretoria	Humanities	Growth Mindset: A pathway to educational and career objectives
LEAP Science and Math School 6	Emmanuel Sebareme	University of Pretoria	STEM	Technology and Sports: Revolutionising the game
LEAP Science and Math School 6	Joel Leonard	University of Pretoria	STEM	Basic maintenance practice for everyday life
LEAP Science and Math School 6	Tinashe Mushonga	University of Johannesburg	STEM	4IR technologies and skills for the future
LEAP Science and Math School 6	Keneiloe Matsoabuli	University of Pretoria	Social Science	The need for Fintech regulation in South Africa
LEAP Science and Math School 6	Faith Abimaje	University of Pretoria	STEM	Can Soil Clean Water? From waste to filter
LEAP Science and Math School 6	Beatrice Oyoo	University of Pretoria	STEM	A crash course on food fermentation

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