

MOT SA RESEARCH REPORT
HIGH SCHOOL LEARNER RESPONSES TO THE MOT
LIFE-SKILLS PROGRAMME

**Research Report prepared by the FET Institute,
University of the Western Cape**

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INTRODUCTION

The MOT programme has been extended to high schools after growing steadily in South African Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges since it was first introduced in 2006. Since 2009, MOT SA has conducted research with students at TVET colleges exiting the programme to determine the perceived impact of the MOT programme. The questionnaire has therefore been fine-tuned through successive iterations, but this is the first time that high school learners who completed the programme have been surveyed.

The goals of the MOT programme are expressed in the focus areas of the questions addressed to learners regarding their experiences of the programme and the questionnaire places a strong emphasis on self-knowledge, personal development, responsibility, caring for others, respect and affirmation - in line with the themes of the programme content.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

From the 130 High School learners who completed the MOT programme, 98 responded to the research study questionnaire. They included learners from 2 high schools in the Western Cape (Buren and South Peninsula High Schools). The distribution of responding MOT learners by school is provided in Figure 1 below.

ANALYSIS OF THE MOT DATA

The questionnaire covered biographical information, and categories of questions related to how the MOT programme had impacted on learners' classroom interactions with other learners, on their personal values and attitudes, and on their personal choices. Learners were asked to answer 'yes', 'no' or 'not sure' in 5 cloze procedure¹ exercises, while the final section asked for written comments on the programme. The questions in each section were based on the content areas that were covered in the MOT curriculum, and learners were asked to reflect on their behaviour and attitudes before undertaking MOT and to decide when answering the questions, whether MOT had changed the way they thought, felt or behaved. Learners were allowed to remain anonymous in the hope that this might make them answer more truthfully.

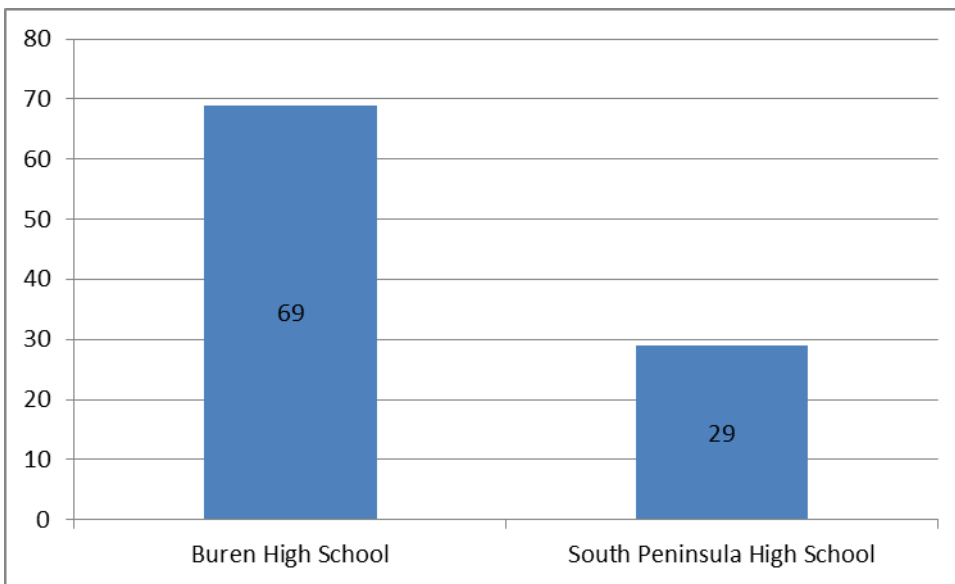
¹ Exercises where respondents 'fill in the blanks'

The following overall findings are set out in the sequence in which questions were answered in the questionnaires.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY

There were 98 learners who completed the MOT questionnaire in 2015. The distribution of respondents by school is provided in Figure 1. Students participating in the MOT programme were in Grade 10 at the time of the completion of the questionnaire (many learners had participated since Grade 8). Learners ages ranged from 15 to 20 years old. Of the respondents to the study, 40 were male and 57 female, and none reported any disabilities.

FIGURE 1: MOT RESPONDENTS BY SCHOOL



SECTION 1: ACCESS TO COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

FIGURE 2: LEARNER ACCESS TO CELL-PHONE AND INTERNET TECHNOLOGY

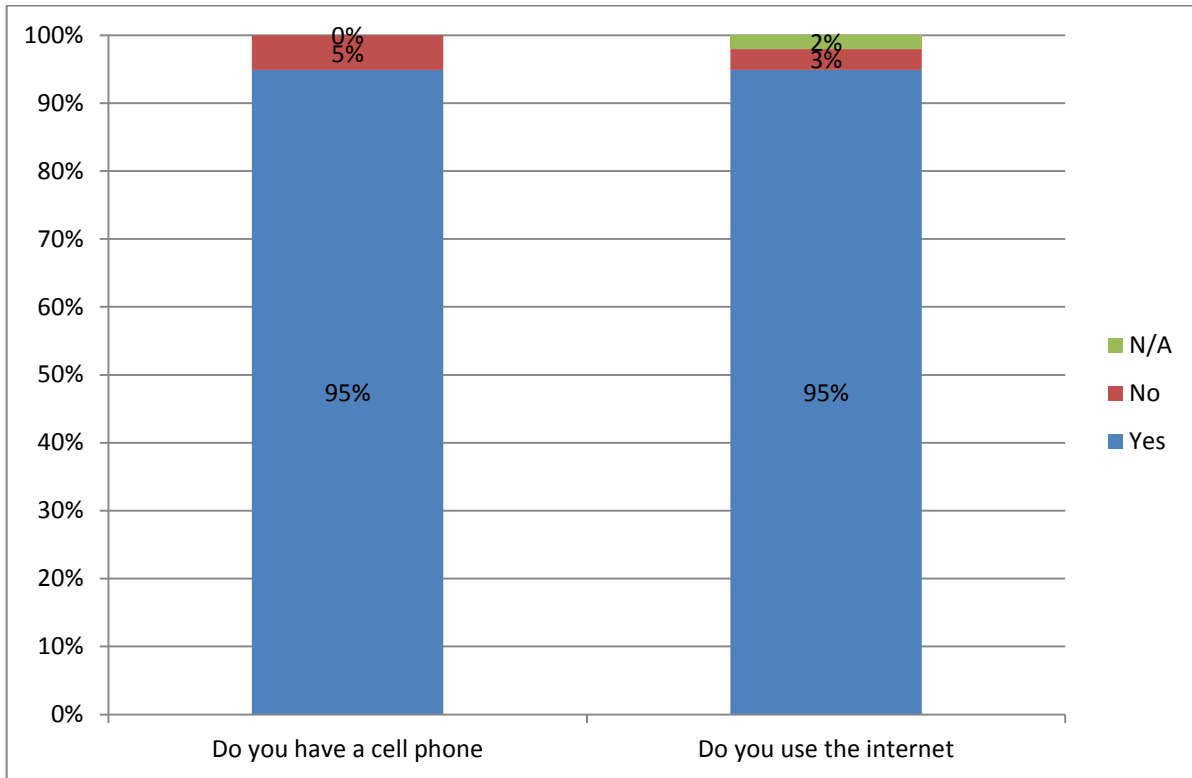
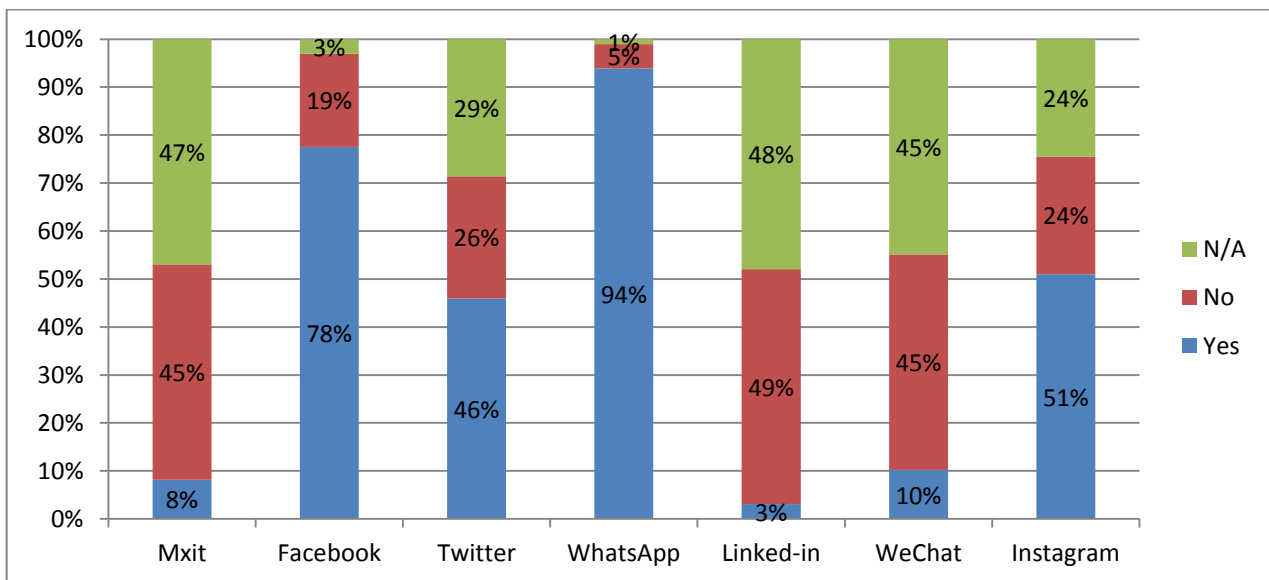


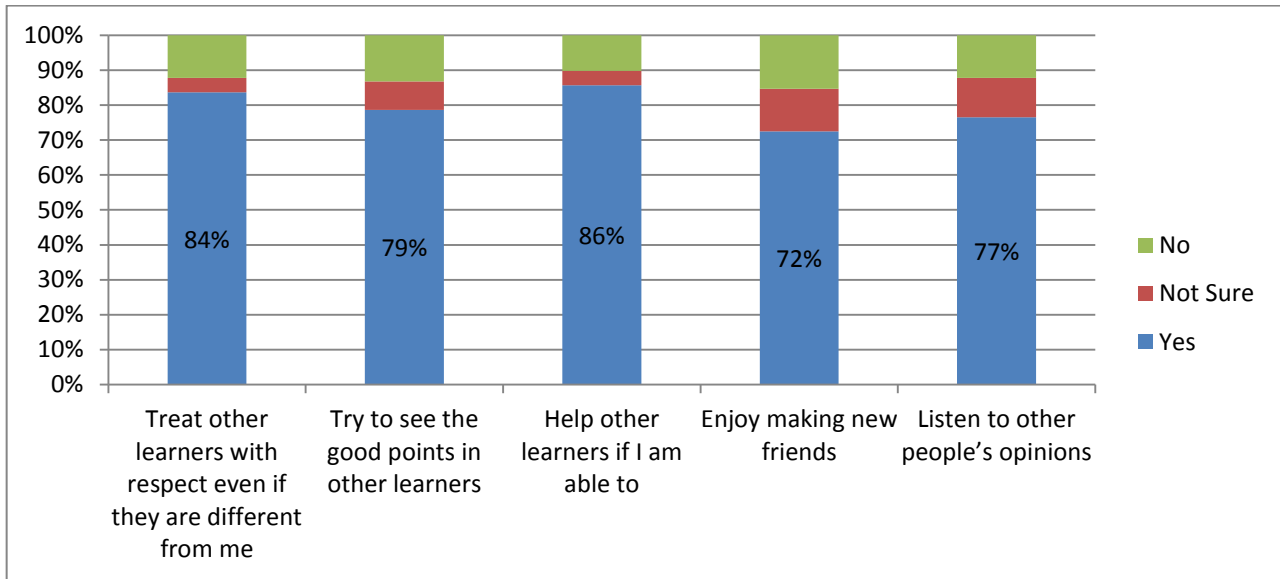
FIGURE 3: LEARNERS' USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA



As shown in Figures 2 and 3 above, nearly all respondents had both cell-phones and the internet (95%). Of the social media applications, WhatsApp (94%) users were in the majority, followed by Facebook (78%) with a smaller though significant numbers using Instagram (51%) and Twitter (46%). Few used Mxit, WeChat and Linked-in. Most smartphones are able to access the various applications.

SECTION 2: IMPACT ON CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS

FIGURE 4: LEARNER RESPONSES ON POSITIVE IMPACT OF MOT ON CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS



Most responses on the positive impact of MOT on classroom interactions with peers were positive (within the 72% - 86% range). 'Help other students if I am able to' (86%), received the greatest affirmative responses followed by 'Treat other students with respect even if they are different from me' (84%). 'Try to see the good points in other students' (79%), 'Listen to other people's opinions' (77%) and 'Enjoy making new friends' (72%) received fewer positive responses but still within the 70% range.

SECTION 3: IMPACT ON PERSONAL GROWTH

FIGURE 5: LEARNER RESPONSES TO POSITIVE IMPACT OF MOT ON PERSONAL GROWTH

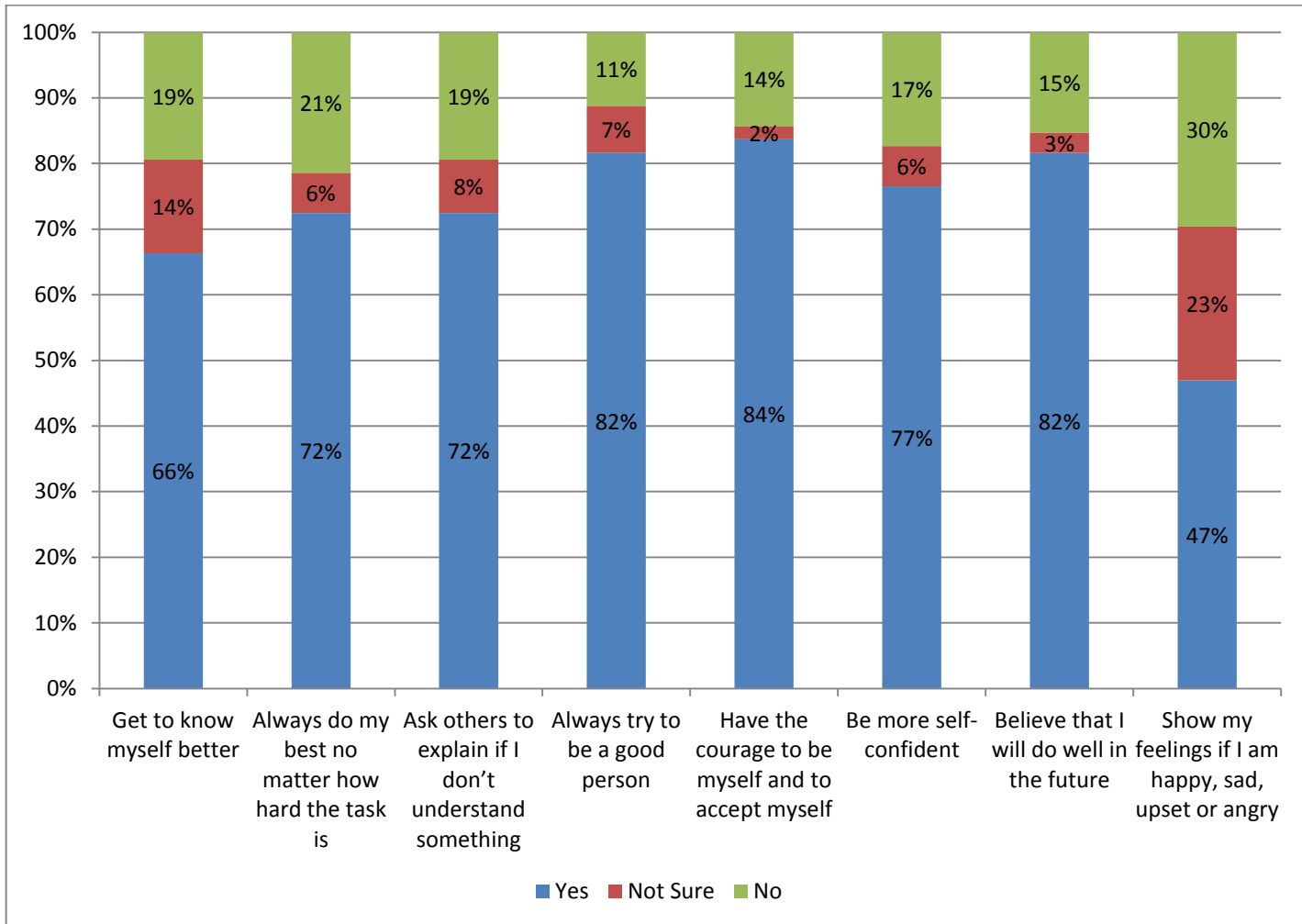
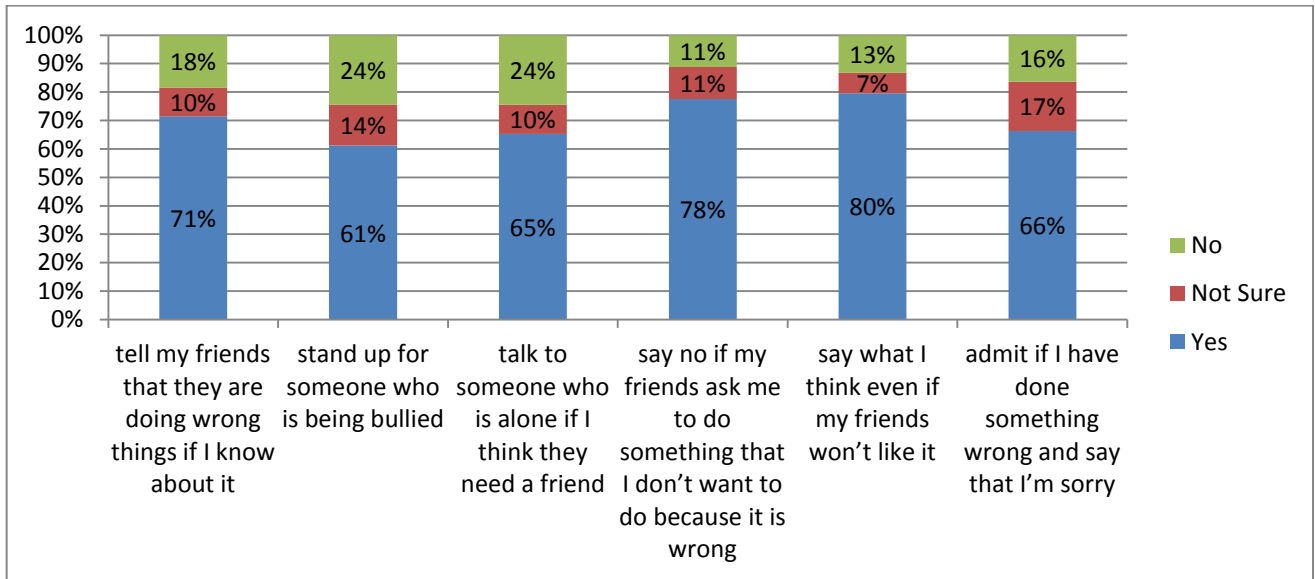


Figure 5 shows mostly positive responses to the impact of MOT on personal growth mostly in the 70% to 84% range. The highest number of positive responses were in self-belief, confidence in the future and moral choice followed by self-confidence. Relatively lower was the ability to seek help, self-motivation and the impact that MOT had on self-knowledge (66%). Comparatively low across all measures was self-expression of emotions at 47%, where learners indicated that they had difficulty ‘to show my feelings if I am happy, sad, upset or angry’.

SECTION 4: IMPACT ON PERSONAL VALUES

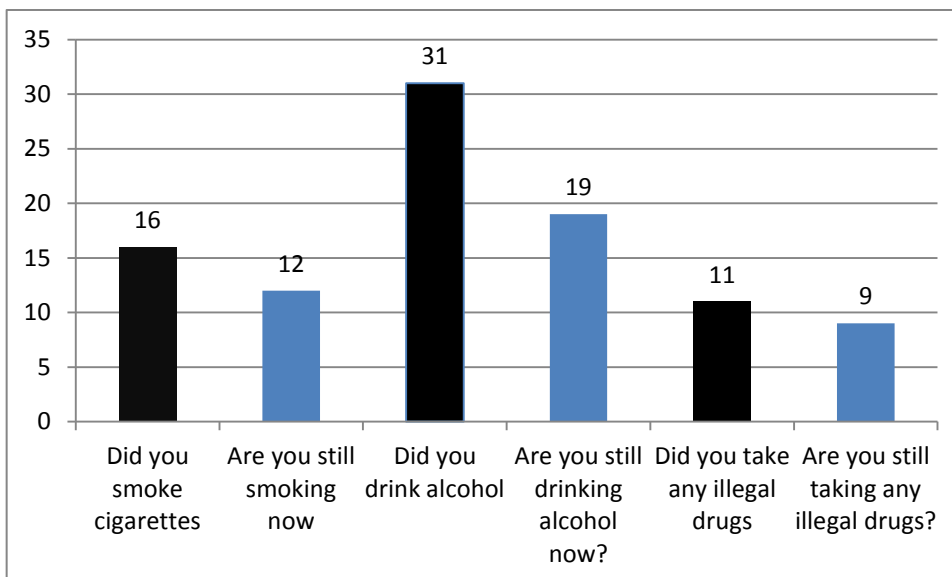
FIGURE 6: LEARNER RESPONSES TO POSITIVE IMPACT OF MOT ON PERSONAL VALUES



Here respondents were challenged to think about whether MOT had assisted them in how they responded to uncomfortable situations involving their friends, and which demanded some adherence to personal values. From Fig. 6 above, many learners were confident that they could express contrary views (80%), and refuse to do something if they knew it was wrong (78%) and also to discourage friends from wrong-doing though somewhat less so (71%). Fewer were prepared to own up and apologise for wrong-doing (66%), talk to someone who needed a friend (65%) or to defend a peer against bullying (61%).

SECTION 5: IMPACT ON PERSONAL LIFESTYLE CHOICES

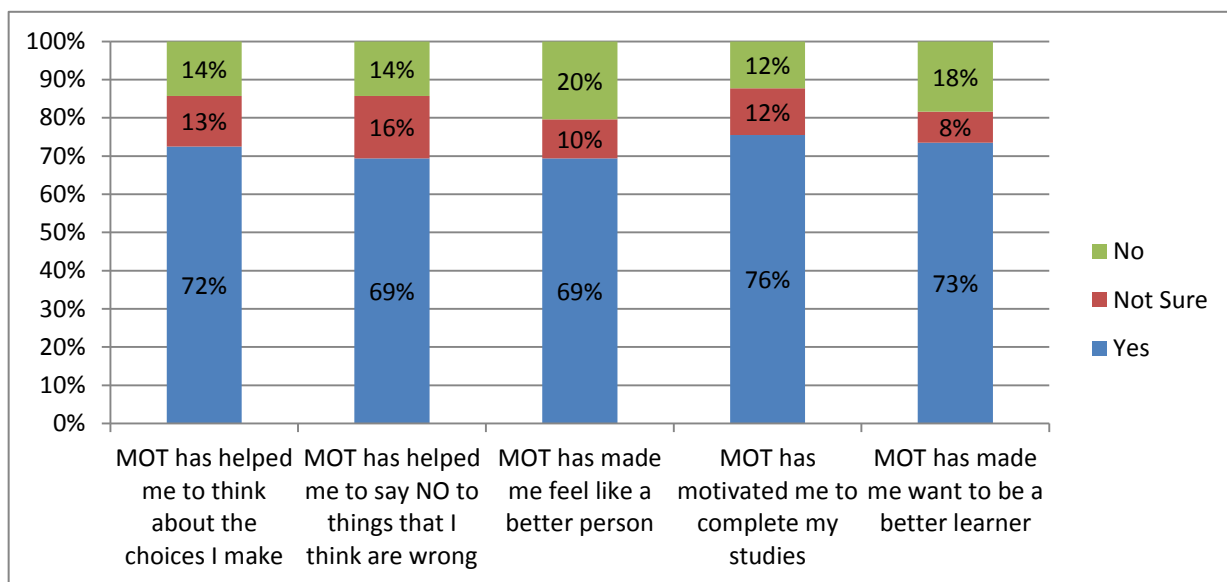
FIGURE 7: LEARNERS' LIFESTYLE CHOICES BEFORE AND AFTER MOT



In terms of MOT's impact on personal lifestyle choices, there was a decline in drug usage and smoking, and substantial declines in alcohol consumption, attributed by respondents to the influence of the MOT intervention. It is encouraging that only 16 reported smoking at the start of the MOT programme, and 12 by the end of the programme. Similarly of the 31 respondents acknowledged that they had consumed alcohol, with 19 indicating that continued to do so. Nine of the initial 11 indicating that they were taking illegal drugs indicated that they were still taking illegal drugs. The potential negative social impact of these lifestyle choices is considerable, therefore the indication that 2 people stopped using drugs is significant. In addition, 4 stopped smoking and 12 stopped using alcohol. This is significant and encouraging for the MOT programme.

SECTION 6: CHOICES AND TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

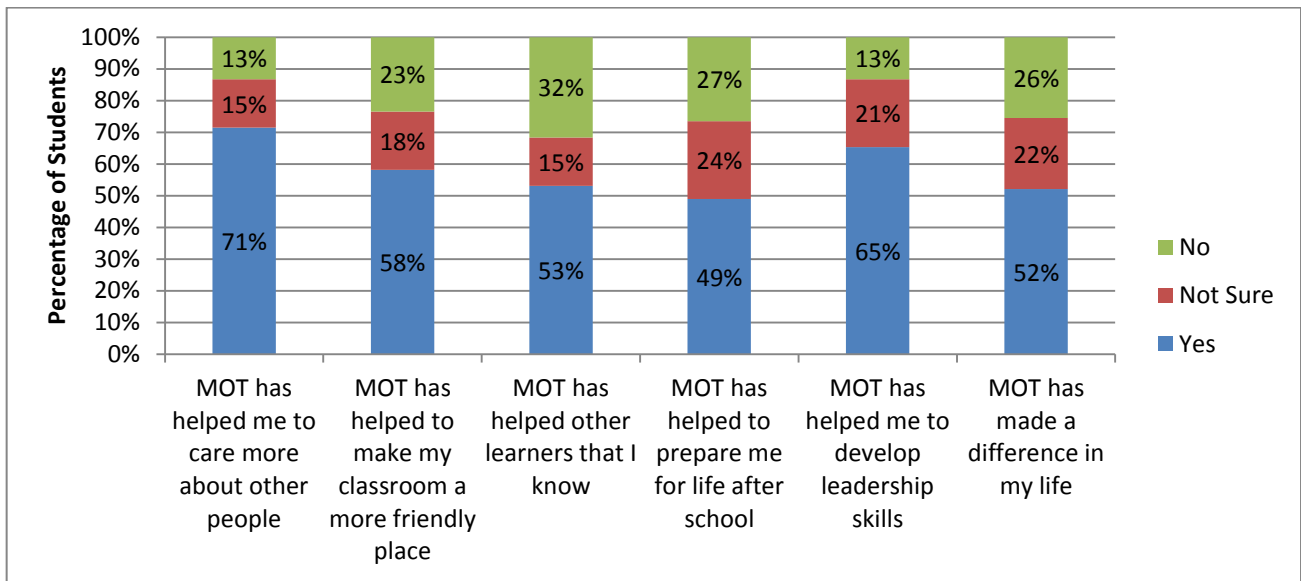
FIGURE 8: IMPACT ON CHOICES AND TAKING RESPONSIBILITY



Section 6 of the questionnaire dealt with the impact of the MOT programme on learner choices and taking responsibility, represented in Figure 8 above, which shows the percentage of learners who attributed MOT with positively influencing them in the above behaviours/attitudes. The questions covered a range of issues regarding MOT's impact on choices, motivation in studies, caring for others, preparation for life, making a difference and classroom atmosphere. The greatest impact had been in the areas of completion of studies (76%), wanting to be a better student (73%), and in the choices made (72%). Slightly fewer indicated that MOT had a direct impact in areas of being a better person (69%) and willingness to 'say no to things that I think are wrong' (69%).

SECTION 7: RESPONSES TO THE MOT PROGRAMME

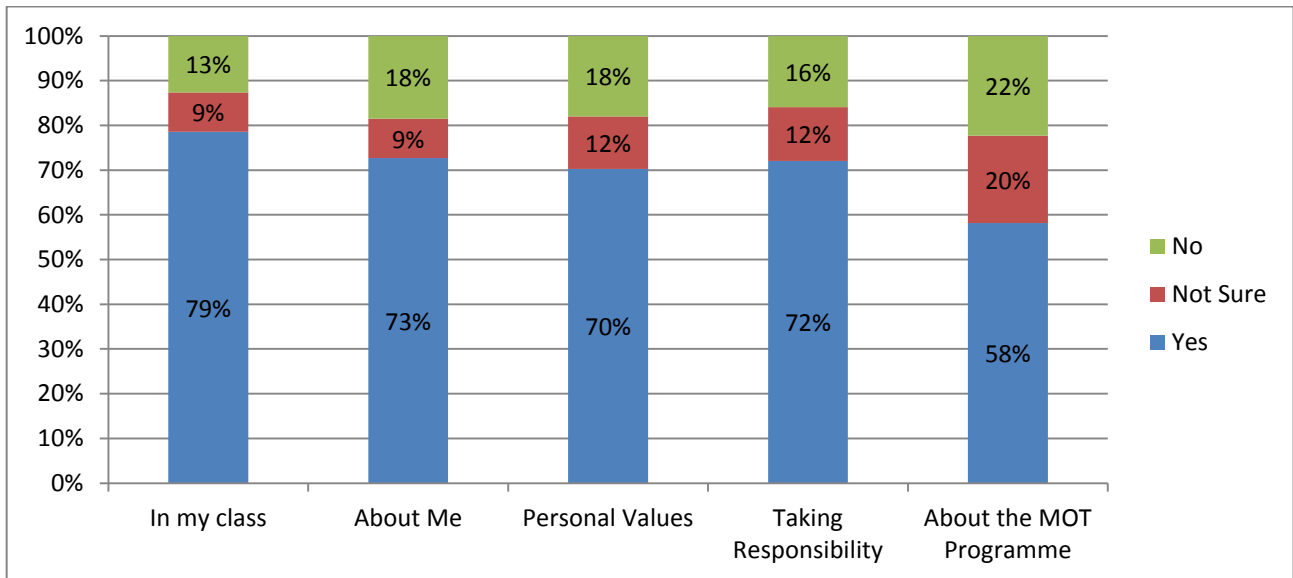
FIGURE 9: LEARNER RESPONSES TO OVERALL IMPACT OF MOT



Section 7 of the questionnaire required learners to assess the overall positive impact of MOT. The questions covered broader issues of MOT’s impact such as caring or preparing for life beyond school, helping others or improving the classroom environment, their own journey towards changing, and developing leadership skills. The results are shown in Figure 9, above. The highest level of positive responses were in MOT helping learners to care more about other people (71%) and helping to develop leadership skills (65%). Fewer students felt that MOT was able to make the classroom a more friendly place (58%). The weakest scores were that about half of the students felt that MOT helped other students that they knew (53%), made a difference in their lives (52%) or MOT prepared them for life after school (49%).

Figure 10 below shows averages of the responses across all the items within each of the Sections of the questionnaire. The figure suggests that MOT’s impact was strongest on classroom interactions (79%), followed by personal growth and taking responsibility and personal values (73%, 72% and 70% respectively). This averaged response suggests that a majority of learners responded positively to the programme or alternatively felt that they were well-equipped in terms of the MOT programme goals. However, the overall positive response as to the MOT programme’s impact on their lives was more tentative with 58% providing a firm positive response, 22% being uncertain and 26% arguing that MOT has made no difference in their lives.

FIGURE 10: AVERAGED RESPONSES BY SECTION



To conclude this section on the quantitative research findings, a ranked table is provided below, listing the individual attributes referred to in the MOT questionnaire, and showing how learners responded in a ranked order from highest to lowest (for positive responses) on all the items tested. It begins to highlight the areas in which MOT apparently had the highest success rates. From the table below, attributes most positively affected by MOT (all above 80%), were mostly in relation to respect for difference, self-knowledge and self-belief. This contrasts somewhat with lower scores, between 70-80%, which were related to challenging others and being honest/open about personal feelings.

TABLE 1: RANKED LISTING OF ATTRIBUTES BY PERCENTAGE² OF LEARNERS POSITIVELY AFFECTED

Question	Yes
Help other learners if I am able to	86%
Treat other learners with respect even if they are different from me	84%
Have the courage to be myself and to accept myself	84%
Always try to be a good person	82%
Believe that I will do well in the future	82%
Say what I think even if my friends won't like it	80%
Try to see the good points in other learners	79%
Say no if my friends ask me to do something that I don't want to do because it is wrong	78%
Listen to other people's opinions	77%
Be more self-confident	77%
MOT has motivated me to complete my studies	76%
MOT has made me want to be a better learner	73%
Always do my best no matter how hard the task is	72%
Ask others to explain if I don't understand something	72%

² Rows may not add up to 100% as some rounding off may have occurred.

Enjoy making new friends	72%
MOT has helped me to think about the choices I make	72%
Tell my friends that they are doing wrong things if I know about it	71%
MOT has helped me to care more about other people	71%
MOT has helped me to say NO to things that I think are wrong	69%
MOT has made me feel like a better person	69%
Get to know myself better	66%
Admit if I have done something wrong and say that I'm sorry	66%
Talk to someone who is alone if I think they need a friend	65%
MOT has helped me to develop leadership skills	65%
Stand up for someone who is being bullied	61%
MOT has helped to make my classroom a more friendly place	58%
MOT has helped other learners that I know	53%
MOT has made a difference in my life	52%
MOT has helped to prepare me for life after school	49%
Show my feelings if I am happy, sad, upset or angry	47%

SECTION 8: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS BY LEARNERS ON THE MOT PROGRAMME

At the end of the questionnaire, learners were asked to write general comments on their experience/impressions of the MOT programme and/or their MOT presenter. The comments were generally positive, with some negative comments (all of which have been included). Comments ranged from personal change to the MOT programme to the presenter (the first two are included). Below is a selection of comments made.

- *MOT helped me a lot during my time here. MOT especially helped me to get off "dagga" and is now helping me to get off cigarettes and alcohol.*
- *MOT has helped me be the person I always wanted to be.*
- *My MOT teacher has taught me to be myself and to have the courage to help others.*
- *MOT has helped me to be a better person. Since I've joined MOT, it is as if I've come out of my shell.*
- *MOT has helped me to get to know the people in my class.*
- *Going to MOT has changed me; it increased my self-esteem by saying no more often to certain things, standing up for myself and to not be afraid of things. It helped me overcome my fears, and showed me I'm a good person and I can care.*
- *The MOT programme has helped me a lot. It has built my self-esteem.*
- *MOT has helped me build courage to speak and let my voice be heard.*
- *The MOT programme has helped me to be a better person. It helped me to help learners and teachers in the school.*
- *MOT has helped me to be a better person to people around me. The MOT programme helped me to respect people, and to say no to what's wrong.*

- *Being in a MOT class is so much fun because you get to know each other better. You learn a new thing in every MOT session. I enjoy being in a MOT class and the MOT teacher is amazing.*
- *Being in the MOT class or session is fun, because you start learning new things and start learning about/getting to know ourselves better.*
- *It was cool, I enjoyed it.*
- *I enjoyed going to MOT sessions. It was different than a regular class being taught. We did fun things and my MOT presenter was really exciting.*
- *MOT was enjoyable and we always learned something new and memorable.*
- *I think MOT is a good programme, and it should be continued*
- *Keep on doing what you are doing. They are doing a good job.*
- *I like the MOT programme we get at school. The programme is really helping me.*
- *A very sociable programme.*
- *I would change nothing.*

There were however the following negative comments:

- *I love [the MOT presenter] but I don't like MOT. I was forced by the school to attend. I hope it goes away because I think it's stupid and I've stayed the same before and after MOT.*
- *It hasn't helped me much, hopefully someone else.*
- *MOT programme was nice, but I think they can do better. Sometimes it was very, very, very boring.*
- *I sometimes found it boring, but as time went, I started to pay attention to the things that were said, because I realised that they made sense.*
- *Although the MOT campaign is inspiring and the presenters always want you to be a better person, the activities planned or stories told make you feel like you are at fault. That somehow you are doing something wrong and that others are better than you (sometimes).*
- *MOT has changed my life in a lot of ways, but in some ways it didn't help because sometimes peer pressure is just too strong to resist and I try to fight against it. But MOT is a good programme, and it should continue in this school.*

SUMMARY OF LEARNERS' VIEWS

Learners at schools generally spoke well of MOT and the MOT presenters. From the comments there were many references to MOT being fun and about the interaction with others. Some learners also spoke about the impact that MOT had on their lives. However compared to the TVET colleges, learners were less able to articulate this impact, though there are some very strong statements. There are also more overtly negative comments emanating from the schools than from the colleges. One learner seemed to have been there against that learner's will, and at times some learners found the programme 'boring'. However it should be noted that these learners were very much in the minority (two learners) and that the negative comments are over-represented in the sample of 12

comments above since all the negative comments were included, and only a selection of the positive comments. Generally learners liked MOT, found it enjoyable, got to know their fellow classmates and, in a number of instances, could either identify with the learnings made, or, more powerfully, could say where there had been an actual change in their lives and approach.

CONCLUSIONS

From the overall data which is summarised below in descending order of emphasis, the perceived benefits of the MOT programme were considerable in the lives of the participating learners.

Areas of key strength of the MOT programme: (80-86%):

Help other learners if I am able to	86%
Treat other learners with respect even if they are different from me	84%
Have the courage to be myself and to accept myself	84%
Always try to be a good person	82%
Believe that I will do well in the future	82%
Say what I think even if my friends won't like it	80%

Areas of moderate strength of the MOT programme (71-79%):

Try to see the good points in other learners	79%
Say no if my friends ask me to do something that I don't want to do because it is wrong	78%
Listen to other people's opinions	77%
Be more self-confident	77%
MOT has motivated me to complete my studies	76%
MOT has made me want to be a better learner	73%
Always do my best no matter how hard the task is	72%
Ask others to explain if I don't understand something	72%
Enjoy making new friends	72%
MOT has helped me to think about the choices I make	72%
Tell my friends that they are doing wrong things if I know about it	71%
MOT has helped me to care more about other people	71%

Areas which show relatively weaker results (scores of 61-69%):

MOT has helped me to say NO to things that I think are wrong	69%
MOT has made me feel like a better person	69%
Get to know myself better	66%
Admit if I have done something wrong and say that I'm sorry	66%
Talk to someone who is alone if I think they need a friend	65%
MOT has helped me to develop leadership skills	65%
Stand up for someone who is being bullied	61%

Areas of relative weakness (47-58%)

MOT has helped to make my classroom a more friendly place	58%
MOT has helped other learners that I know	53%
MOT has made a difference in my life	52%
MOT has helped to prepare me for life after school	49%
Show my feelings if I am happy, sad, upset or angry	47%

It is suggested that learners who have experienced the MOT programme at school are tracked at later points in their lives in order to ascertain whether there have been any lasting impacts of the MOT programme, or whether they have retained the positive attitudes that they reported so soon after their MOT experiences.