



Show courage!

MOT SA RESEARCH REPORT

FET COLLEGE STUDENT RESPONSES TO THE MOT LIFESKILLS PROGRAMME

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



Table of Contents

Table of Figures	1
Background to the research	2
What is the MOT Programme?	2
FET Colleges in South Africa	3
MOT and vocational education policy context in SA	3
Findings of the MOT Research	5
Student demographics	5
Section 1: Access to communication technology and social media	6
Section 2: Impact on classroom interactions	7
Section 3: Impact on personal growth	8
Section 4: Impact on personal values	9
Section 5: Impact on personal lifestyle choices	10
Section 6: Overall responses to the MOT programme	11
Section 7: Additional comments by students on the MOT programme	14
Conclusions.....	14
REFERENCES	16
Appendix A - Questionnaire administered to MOT exit students	17

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Student access to cell-phone and internet technology	6
Figure 2: Students' use of social media	6
Figure 3: Student responses on positive impact of MOT on classroom interactions.....	7
Figure 4: Student responses to positive impact of MOT on personal growth.....	8
Figure 5: Student responses to positive impact of MOT on personal values	9
Figure 6: Students' lifestyle choices before and after MOT	10
Figure 7: Student responses to overall positive impact of MOT	11
Figure 8: Averaged responses by section	12

Background to the research

The MOT SA life-skills training programme (hereafter referred to as 'MOT') which has its origins in Norway, has been implemented in Further Education and Training (FET) colleges and senior schools in the Western Cape since 2007. MOT sets out a clear vision, a mission and intended outcomes with well-developed facilitator materials for the delivery of the course. Around 154 students across three Western Cape FET colleges completed the three year programme in November 2011. MOT had formed part of the three successive levels of their College programmes. In September 2011 MOT SA contracted the Further Education and Training Institute at the University of the Western Cape to conduct a study into the perceptions of FET College students who had been exposed to three years of MOT training in an effort to establish baseline research on the role of the MOT programme in students' lives, in relation to the intended outcomes of the MOT programme. It is likely that there will be more detailed follow-up research with other role-players in the programme at a later stage, but in this first phase the following research activities were undertaken:

- A desktop perusal of relevant documentation in the MOT SA programme, to ascertain the intended outcomes and goals of the programme.
- A questionnaire for each of the students in the exiting cohort of 2011. MOT SA distributed the questionnaire to the three Colleges and MOT coordinators within these colleges administered the questionnaire to students. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as Annexure A.

This research is bounded by the goals of the MOT SA curriculum and the experiences of students in the programme as expressed in their feedback. Questionnaires were distributed to 87 students who had undergone 3 years of MOT training, resulting in a sample of 56% of the students who had completed MOT. In research terms this would be more than sufficient for establishing trends in student views of the programme. 86 completed questionnaires were returned, constituting a 99% response rate.

What is the MOT Programme?

The philosophy of MOT was developed by a team of Norwegian professional athletes. Their intentions were to reduce and prevent bullying, violence and substance abuse among the youth, hence the basic principles of MOT are stated as 'Courage to live, Courage to care, and Courage to say no'. MOT proposes a teaching method that is activity based, inclusive, positive, creates a sense of security and acknowledges others. There is a strong focus on self-knowledge, personal development and responsibility, caring for others, respect and affirmation. The MOT facilitator is provided with a structured programme which sets out a series of sessions that are clearly described with all the necessary resource materials.

FET Colleges in South Africa

FET Colleges in South Africa prior to 1994 had a difficult and racially defined history as they had initially been aimed at enabling white youth to acquire technical skills and become employed, and deliberately excluding black people from such opportunities. It was only in the 1980's that colleges were established for black students, and after the advent of democracy in 1994 reforms of the college system were rolled out in order to integrate, upgrade and modernise FET college/technical training, processes which are still on-going at this time. Given this history, technical college training did not enjoy much public understanding and support, and technical training was largely seen to be of lesser social and economic value than traditional academic schooling which allowed access to university. In the last 15 years considerable effort and resources have been invested in FET Colleges, but much remains to be done to change public perceptions of skills directed education.

In a recent study (FETI 2009) it was found that most of the younger learners in new college training programmes were not enrolled by personal choice. In most instances learners had been brought to college by parents and school teachers because they were troublesome in school and seemed unable to cope with the school academic curriculum. Hence they were sent to college to acquire skills that might enable them to become employable. Colleges are in many instances still plagued with this stigma, and often encounter learners who are not self-motivated, who are demoralised and have low self-esteem. Within this context the new FET college curriculum introduced in 2007 resulted in high failure and drop-out rates. Provincial and national Education Departments were alarmed, and began to consider seriously what needed to be done to improve retention and success for young people. The issue of student support was recognised as critical: emotional, academic and financial support being key elements of this focus. MOT was therefore implemented at a critical time in 2007 at the introduction of a new FET college curriculum, with college staff overburdened by change initiatives and frustrated by constant policy interventions, and with learners seemingly unable to cope with the more cognitively challenging vocational education demands.

In spite of the difficult policy environment of FET Colleges, it would appear that MOT is fully aligned with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) Student Support Services policies and the learner support needs of FET colleges as is outlined below.

MOT and vocational education policy context in SA

The Department of Education responsible for FET College education in 2008 produced a framework for FET College Student Support Services. This framework made reference to the need for student support as suggested within existing FET College legislation as follows:

Career guidance and learner support services will be a central element of the new FET system (Education White Paper 1997).

Similarly, the FET Colleges Act of 2006 called for the establishment of Student Representative Councils, a student admission policy and a student Code of Conduct in order to strengthen the overall student support services at FET Colleges. The recommended [student] Code of Conduct sets standards for behaviour and aims to:

- Promote responsible and disciplined behavior;
- Create a safe learning environment for all who are involved in the teaching and learning process;
- Develop respect for self, others and the environment as a strong value (p.43).

Nearly 90 % of all student responses on the effects of the MOT programme indicated that they had developed respect for themselves, others and their learning environment, as a result of their MOT training.

A key success of the MOT programme is students' improved understanding of themselves and the choices that they make towards developing self-understanding. In the Department of Education's Student Support Services Manual it is stated that:

It is of critical importance that students know who they are in terms of interests, personality attributes, abilities and motivations. Only if such information is available can they explore and end up in careers in which they are interested and for which they have the required aptitude (p. 16).

A critical success of the MOT programme is its emphasis on respect for peers and speaking out against socially unacceptable behaviour, underpinned by a deeper knowledge of self. In this regard too, the research conducted on students in the MOT programme shows that it made significant gains.

In addition, the Student Services Support Manual emphasizes critical skills necessary for employability, one of which is social competence, defined as:

- Ability to get on with others and work in a team;
- Ability to help clients in a knowledgeable and courteous manner (p. 146).

The MOT research showed that students felt the MOT Programme had provided them with social interaction skills and respect for other viewpoints. Student feedback within this research also showed that this was seen as a key strength of the programme.

Findings of the MOT Research

The questionnaire attached hereto as Appendix A details the set of questions students were requested to answer. Questions covered biographical information, and categories of questions related to how the MOT programme had impacted on students' classroom interactions with other students, on their personal values and attitudes, and on their personal choices. Students were asked to answer 'yes', 'no' or 'not sure' in 5 cloze procedure exercises, while the final section asked for written comments on the programme. The questions in each section were based on the content areas that would have been covered in the MOT curriculum, and students 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. Students were allowed to remain anonymous in the belief that this might make them answer more truthfully.

The following overall findings emerged from an analysis of the questionnaire data:

Student demographics

The respondents consisted of 42 female students in the study, and 44 males. Students ranged in age from about 17 years to 30 years and were distributed across various programmes. As shown in the graphs below most students use cell-phones, with fewer accessing the internet, but usage of social media like Facebook and Mxit (very cheap communication) is high.

Section 1: Access to communication technology and social media

Figure 1: Student access to cell-phone and internet technology

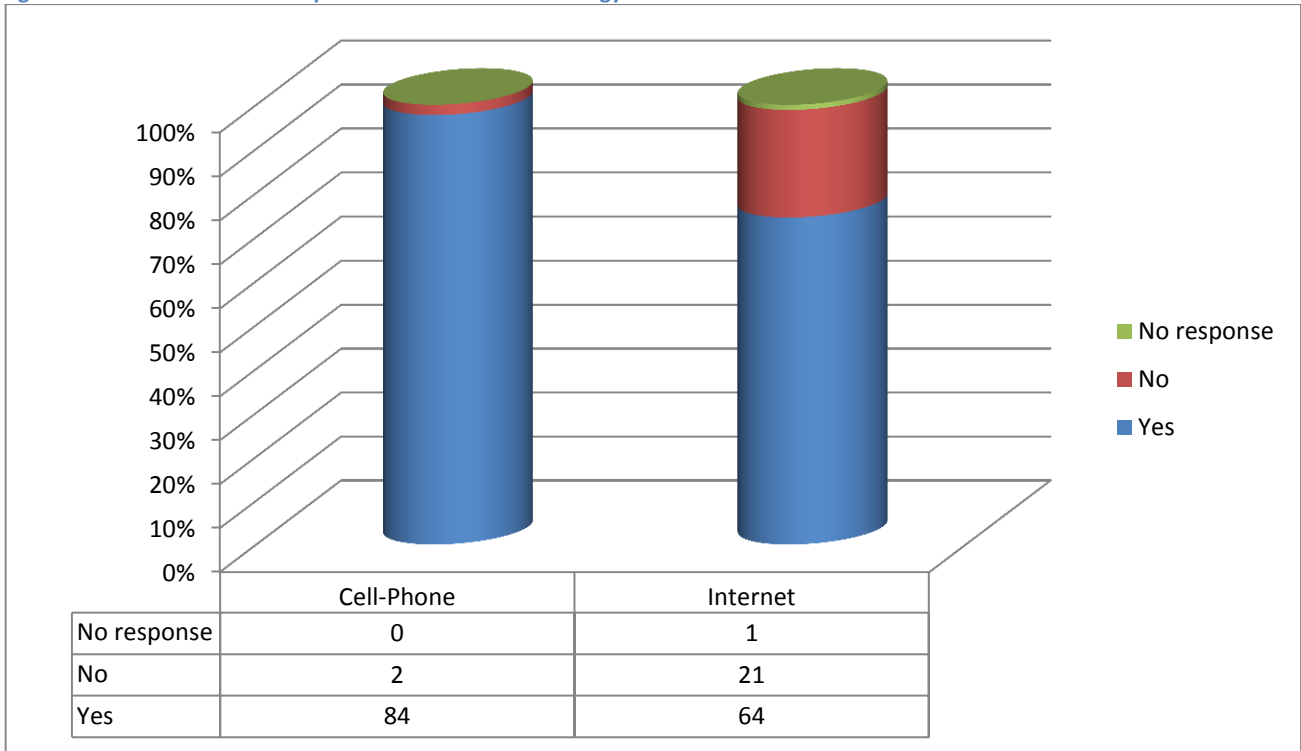
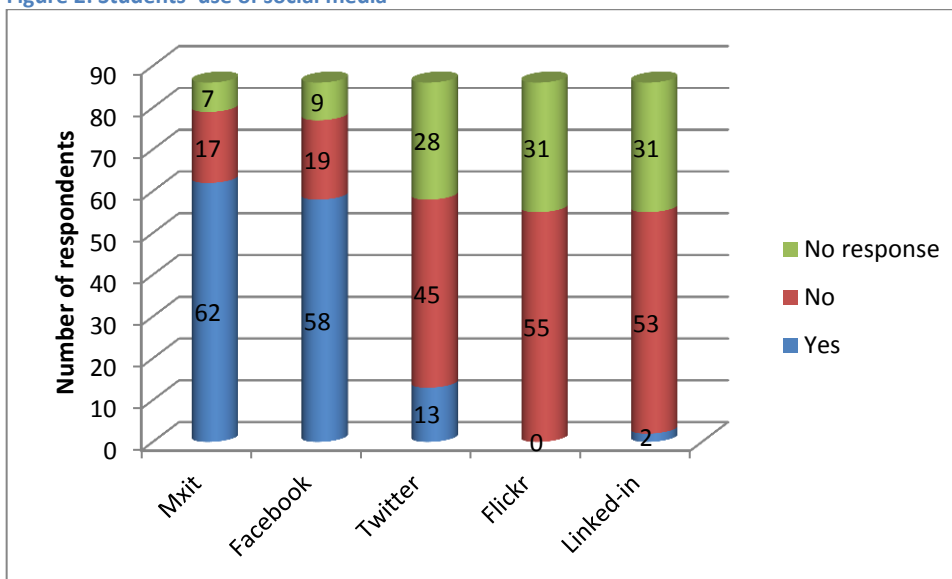
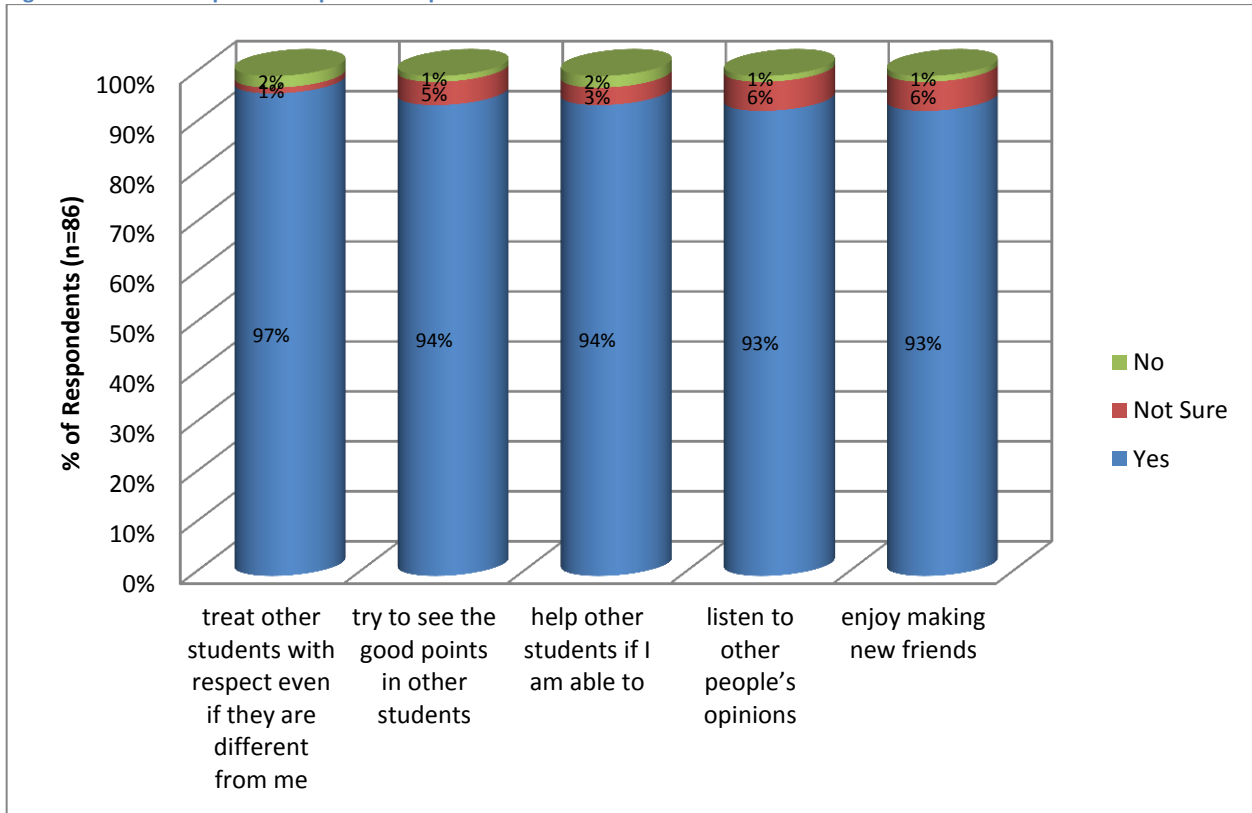


Figure 2: Students' use of social media



Section 2: Impact on classroom interactions

Figure 3: Student responses on positive impact of MOT on classroom interactions

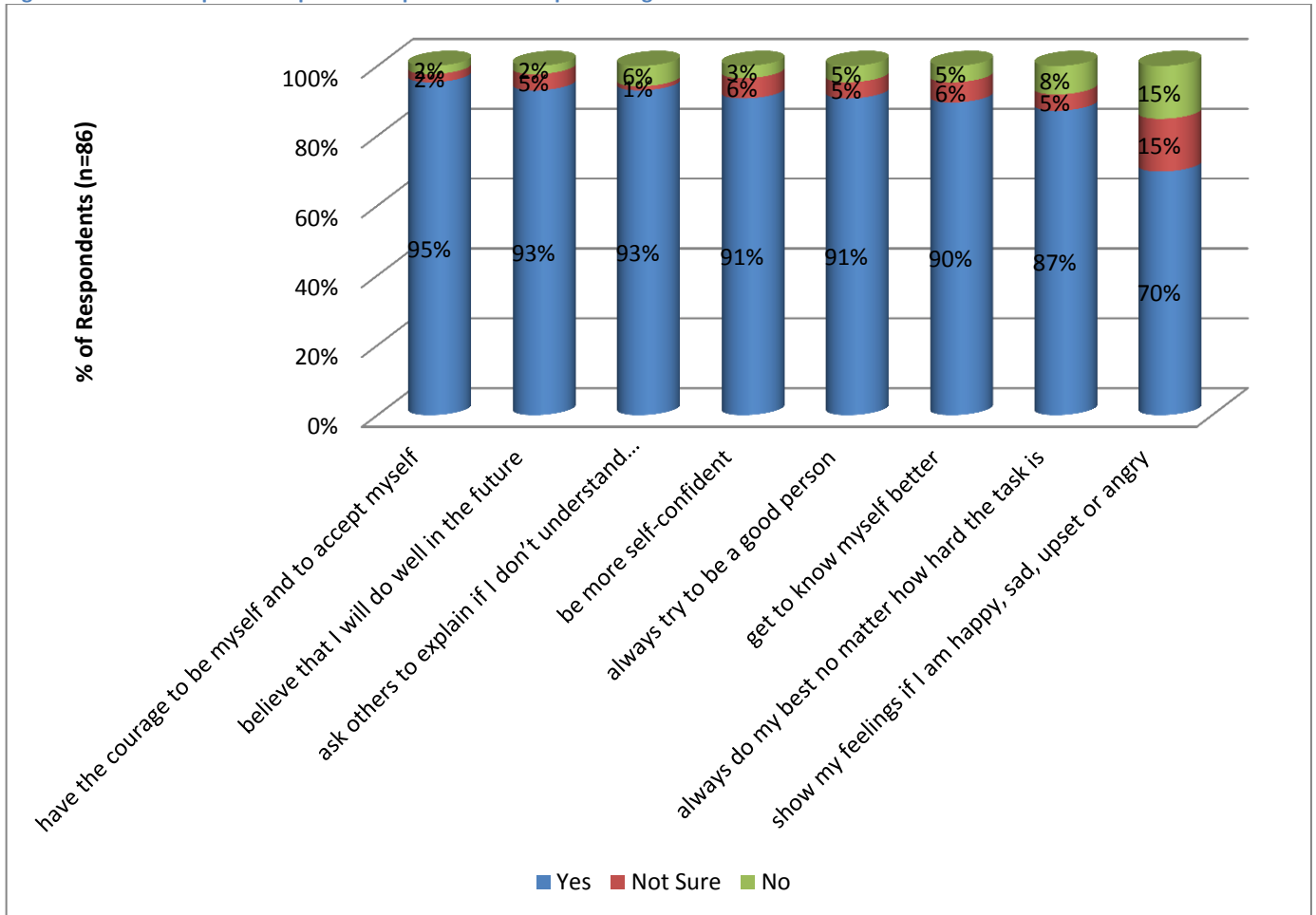


As can be seen there is a very high positive response throughout and student perceptions of the positive impact of MOT on peer interaction leaves little doubt. Given diversity challenges with regard to race and language in particular of a changing student profile in colleges, it is significant that 'treating other students with respect' received the greatest affirmative response.

A key objective of MOT is to create an inclusive, supportive and friendly learning environment in the classroom. Such positive classroom environments have been shown to impact positively on student performance and retention (see Kuh, G.D. et al, 2006: 'What matters to Student Success - A Review of the Literature'. National Postsecondary Education Cooperative).

Section 3: Impact on personal growth

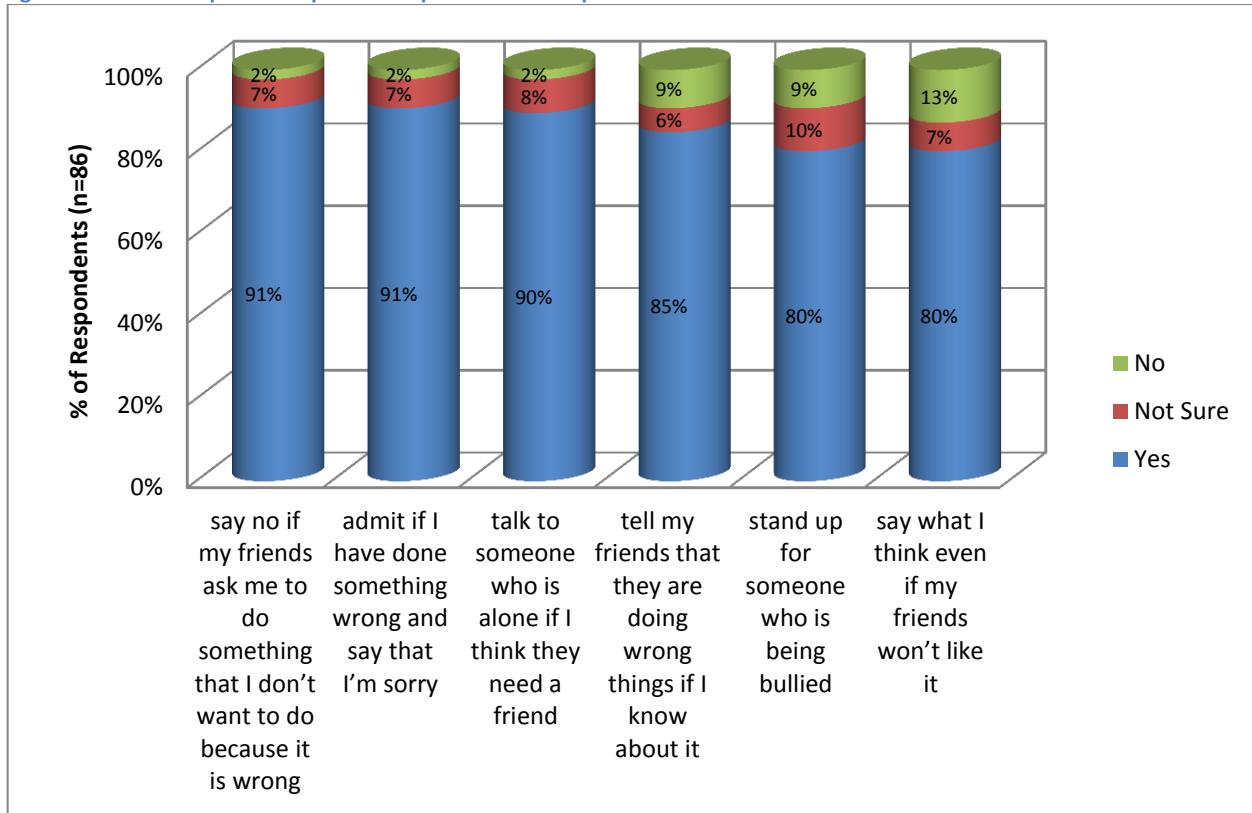
Figure 4: Student responses to positive impact of MOT on personal growth



Here the overall positive response is high across the board. Particularly high is self-acceptance. This is critical given a South African history of internalised racism, and a probable history of previous academic trauma at school. Also significant is the indicated willingness to ask questions which is attendant to self-confidence. Many school cultures discourage questioning as impertinence, particularly where teachers have weak subject knowledge or are under-qualified. Note that students still struggle to show their feelings but the data did not disaggregate how this applies to male and female students, which might reveal interesting differences.

Section 4: Impact on personal values

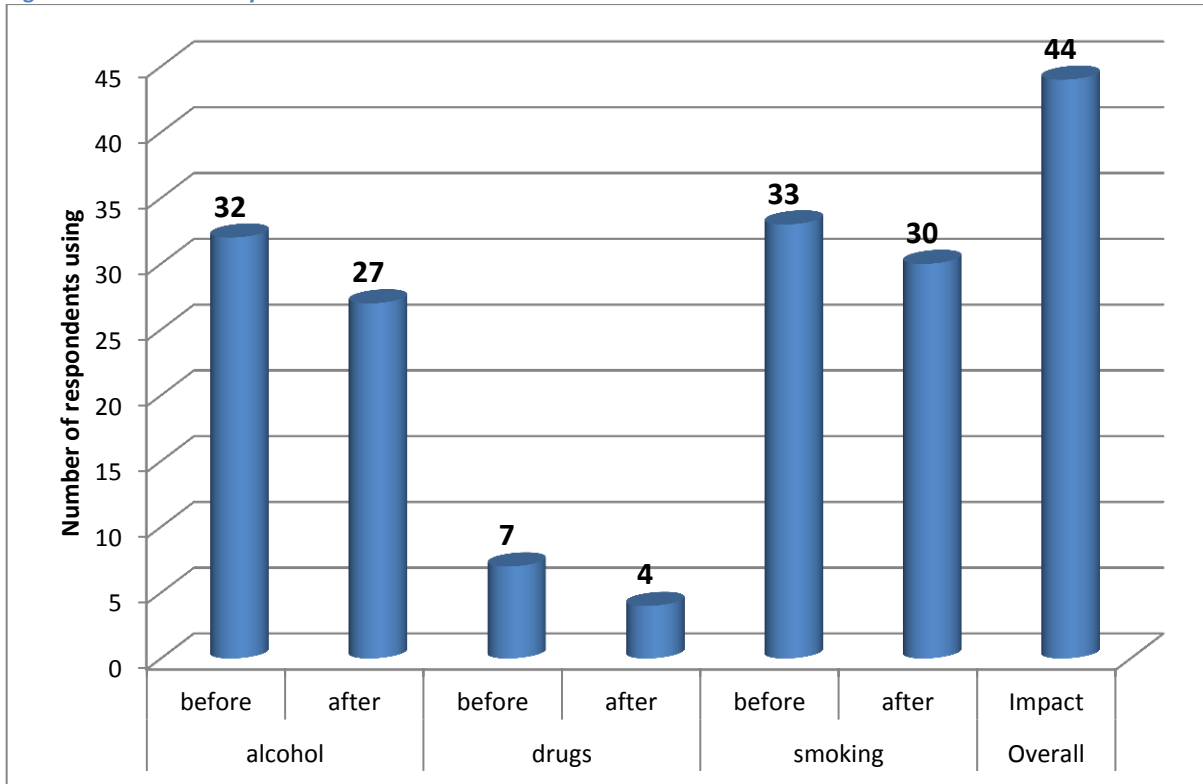
Figure 5: Student responses to positive impact of MOT on personal values



Once again positive responses ranged from 80% to 91%. The strongest responses are in areas that require students to 'do the right thing'. This willingness to 'say no' is significant, showing a resistance to peer pressure which is particularly important among youth in disadvantaged, crime-ravaged areas where peer pressure and high risk behaviour hold the potential to derail the benefits procured by college education. The weaker responses occurred in relation to confronting peer wrong-doing or standing up against bullies, although here the positive responses also by far outweighed the negative or 'not sure's.

Section 5: Impact on personal lifestyle choices

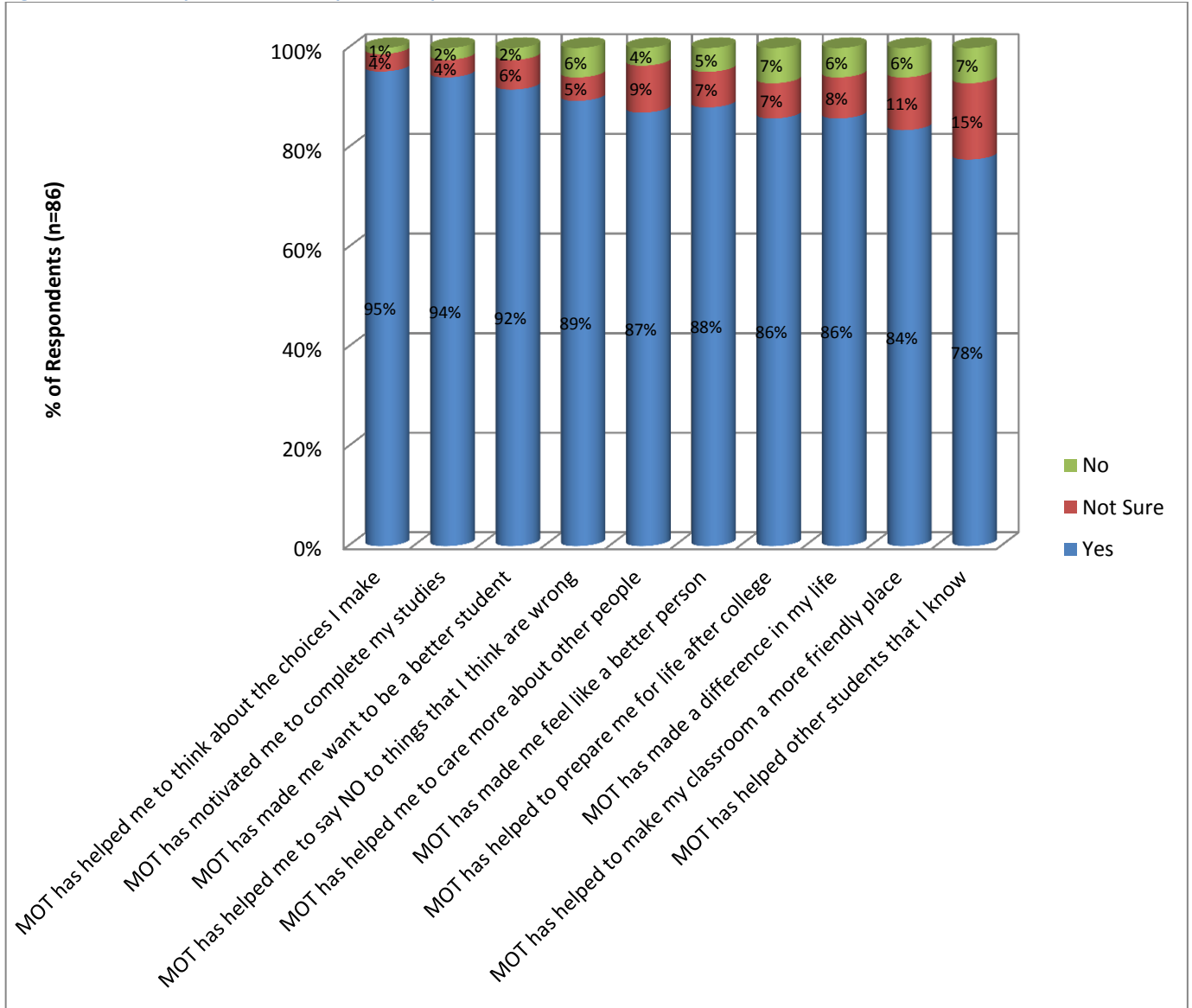
Figure 6: Students' lifestyle choices before and after MOT



This was the area of weakest positive responses, when it came to students actually changing their lifestyle habits. However, given the social pressures youth encounter, it is enormously positive that 3 people stopped taking drugs, 5 people stopped drinking and 3 stopped smoking as a result of the MOT programme. While all the respondents might not have indicated changed habits, 44 said that MOT had impacted on thinking about their lifestyle choices.

Section 6: Overall responses to the MOT programme

Figure 7: Student responses to overall positive impact of MOT

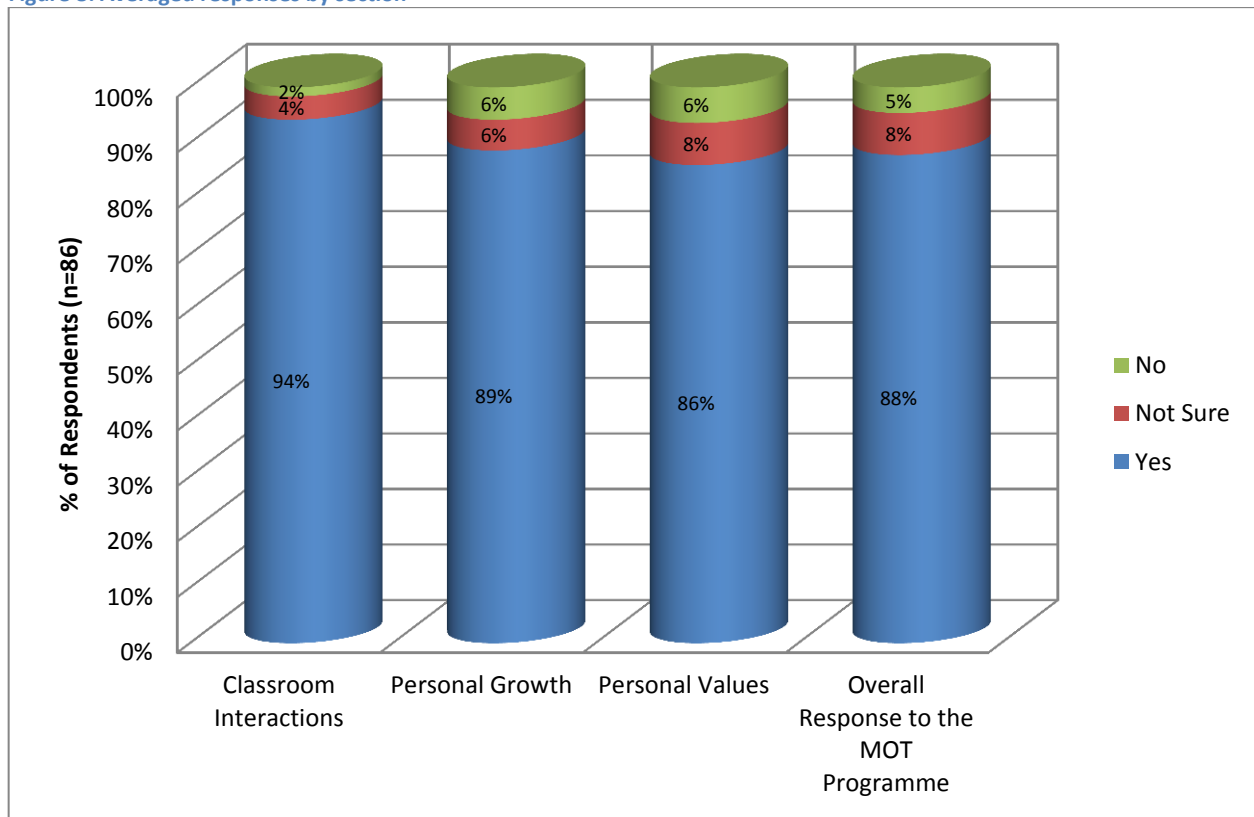


In a collation of overall responses to the MOT programme it is significant that of 86 students in the sample of completing college students, 94% and 92% said that MOT had motivated them to complete their studies and to become better students. This is undoubtedly a hugely positive statistic when confronted with the problem of student retention and success in FET colleges, for reasons outlined in the earlier part of this report.

The graph below shows averages of the responses across all the items within each of the Sections of the questionnaire. The results across all 4 areas of the MOT focus indicate strongly positive perceptions by students of MOT and the impact that it had on their thought and behaviour patterns. Particularly strong was the impact that MOT had on classroom/peer interactions, followed by its impact on personal growth. The overall average of personal values was brought down

somewhat by what appears to be a fear of being unpopular with friends. However this averaged response still shows that the overwhelming majority of students responded positively to the programme and found that it helped them across all the areas of the MOT programme goals.

Figure 8: 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 students 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.

Table 1: Ranked listing of attributes by number of students positively affected

The MOT programme helped me to:	Yes	Not Sure	No
treat other students with respect even if they are different from me	97%	1%	2%
have the courage to be myself and to accept myself	95%	2%	2%
MOT has helped me to think about the choices I make	95%	4%	1%
help other students if I am able to	94%	3%	2%
try to see the good points in other students	94%	5%	1%
ask others to explain if I don't understand something	93%	1%	6%
MOT has motivated me to complete my studies	94%	4%	2%
enjoy making new friends	93%	6%	1%
listen to other people's opinions	93%	6%	1%
believe that I will do well in the future	93%	5%	2%
be more self-confident	91%	6%	3%
say no if my friends ask me to do something that I don't want to do because it is wrong	91%	7%	2%
always try to be a good person	91%	5%	5%
admit if I have done something wrong and say that I'm sorry	91%	7%	2%
MOT has made me want to be a better student	92%	6%	2%
talk to someone who is alone if I think they need a friend	90%	8%	2%
get to know myself better	90%	6%	5%
MOT has helped me to say NO to things that I think are wrong	89%	5%	6%
always do my best no matter how hard the task is	87%	5%	8%
MOT has made me feel like a better person	88%	7%	5%
MOT has helped me to care more about other people	87%	9%	4%
MOT has made a difference in my life	86%	8%	6%
MOT has helped to prepare me for life after college	86%	7%	7%
tell my friends that they are doing wrong things if I know about it	85%	6%	9%
MOT has helped to make my classroom a more friendly place	84%	11%	6%
say what I think even if my friends won't like it	80%	7%	13%
stand up for someone who is being bullied	80%	10%	9%
MOT has helped other students that I know	78%	15%	7%
show my feelings if I am happy, sad, upset or angry	70%	15%	15%

Section 7: Additional comments by students on the MOT programme

Common themes were arrived at by grouping the written comments of students (referenced as 's...') in the majority of positive comments. The commonly stated themes were as follows:

Positive comments:

- "...today I am a different person...to help others... giving without expecting anything in return" (s6)
- "the MOT programme is a very inspirational programme because it helped me to make a difference in my life...it also encouraged me to go out there and achieve my goal in the future" (s11)
- "MOT...taught me to make right decisions to be successful in life" (s14)
- "...it let us think about our future plans, meet new people with different cultures and believe that any person have (sic) a right to be what she/he wants to be..." (s22)
- "...it really helped me to be there for other people when I saw they were sad or felt alone" (s24)
- "MOT help build confidence...brings out the best in you" (s28)
- "MOT has been a great experience and helped me to do well in my studies and relationships..." (s36)
- "...MOT presenter was great" (s2) (students who had different facilitators at their various campuses all spoke glowingly about their presenter).
- "the MOT programme has made me see that in life anything is possible if you make work of it" (s18).

Negative comments (it was not necessary to group these as there were only three):

- "...it needs to be more scheduled (sic) (s9).
- "...they are a bit weird when it comes to certain activities...I don't really like being put out of my comfort zone in most of the activities" (s32).
- "...I was just disappointed about not getting a MOT shirt and sweatband..." (s24).

Conclusions

As can be seen from the data, the perceived benefits of the MOT programme were overwhelming.

Key strengths of MOT were particularly seen in its impact on

- Respect for others in spite of difference/diversity
- Making good choices
- Helping others
- Having the courage to accept oneself
- Motivation to complete one's studies

These five key strengths show a combination of impacts in three critical areas: on *personal development, on interactions with peers, and on motivation towards academic success.*

Areas which show relatively weaker results (though still above 70% positive responses), were:

- Challenging peers and asserting oneself
- Showing emotions
- Giving up unhealthy lifestyles

Based on this student research, **the MOT programme is a critical support intervention that has had a significant effect on student retention and success**, since students reported the influence of MOT in encouraging them to become better students and to complete their programmes. The MOT programme is not financially supported through government funding even though the programme practically implements key elements of the DHET Student Support Services Framework recommendations. It is also clear that most FET Colleges do not yet possess sufficient capacity within their own student support services units, to provide this level of intervention and support for students. Should further resources become available to MOT, future research should focus on:

- Long term tracking of MOT students to assess their employment and future learning pathways;
- Locating the MOT programme as a national student support intervention within the post-school education and training sector, in line with the recommendations of the Green paper on Post School Education and Training (2012).

REFERENCES

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Kuh,G.D., Kinzie, J.,Buckley, J.A., Bridges, B.K., Hayek, J.C. (2006). 'What matters to Student Success: A Review of the Literature'. Commissioned Report for the National Symposium on Postsecondary Student Success: Spearheading a Dialog on Student Success. National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC).

Appendix A - Questionnaire administered to MOT exit students



MOT RESEARCH STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Instruction to Students:

This questionnaire contains questions about your experience of being in the MOT programme. We want you to think carefully about what the MOT sessions have meant to you, and to answer the questions as truthfully as you can. Your answers will help us to make improvements to MOT sessions in the future.

Think about yourself before you were on the MOT programme and then decide whether or not the MOT programme has changed the way you think, feel or behave.

You do not have to give your name. For each question circle/tick 'Yes', 'No' or 'Not Sure'.

Section 1: Biographical information – Please complete the following:

Age:

Gender: Male or Female

College you attended:

Programme you are enrolled in:

Now Circle 'Yes' or 'No':

Do you have a cell phone? Yes / No

Do you use the Internet? Yes / No

Do you use any of these social media?

Mxit Yes / No

Facebook Yes / No

Twitter Yes / No

Flickr Yes / No

Linked-in Yes / No

Any other? (Please name them).....

Please only tick one answer for each question. Tick 'Yes' or 'No' or 'Not Sure'

Section 2: In my Class, the MOT programme has helped me to:

- | | Yes | No | Not Sure |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. treat other students with respect even if they are different from me..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. try to see the good points in other students..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. help other students if I am able to..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. enjoy making new friends..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. listen to other people's opinions..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Section 3: About me: The MOT programme has helped me to:

- | | Yes | No | Not sure |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. get to know myself better..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. always do my best no matter how hard the task is..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. ask others to explain if I don't understand something..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. always try to be a good person..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. have the courage to be myself and to accept myself..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. be more self-confident..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. believe that I will do well in the future..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. show my feelings if I am happy, sad, upset or angry..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Section 4: Personal Values: The MOT programme has helped me to:

- | | Yes | No | Not sure |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. tell my friends that they are doing wrong things if I know about it ... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. stand up for someone who is being bullied..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. talk to someone who is alone if I think they need a friend..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. say no if my friends ask me to do something that I don't want to
do because it is wrong..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. say what I think even if my friends won't like it..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. admit if I have done something wrong and say that I'm sorry..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Section 5: Choices and responsibility: Answer 'Yes' or 'No'

- | | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Did you smoke before you started the MOT programme?..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Are you still smoking now?..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Did you drink alcohol before the MOT programme?..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Are you still drinking alcohol now?..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Did you take any illegal drugs before the MOT programme?..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Are you still taking any illegal drugs?..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Did the MOT programme help you in your decision to stop smoking,
drinking or taking drugs?..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Section 6: About the MOT programme

- | | Yes | No | Not sure |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. MOT has helped me to think about the choices I make..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. MOT has helped me to care more about other people..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. MOT has helped to make my classroom a more friendly place..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. MOT has helped me to say NO to things that I think are wrong..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. MOT has made me feel like a better person..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. MOT has helped other students that I know..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. MOT has made me want to be a better student..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. MOT has made a difference in my life..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. MOT has motivated me to complete my studies..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. MOT has helped to prepare me for life after college..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

