



MAGIC IN THE  
COMMUNITY:  
*A MAGICAL JOURNEY*  
EVALUATION REPORT

---

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION BY:  
JEAN BAXEN  
SENIOR LECTURER, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



COMMISSIONED BY THE DG MURRAY TRUST

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

List of Appendices	3
1 Introduction	4
2 Aim of the Evaluation	5
3 Research Design	5
3.1 Methodological Considerations	5
3.2 Sample and Process of Selection	7
3.3 Process of Data Collection	8
3.4 Ethical Considerations	9
4 Evaluation Results	10
4.1 Magic wand, please paint me a picture:	11
4.2 Mirror, mirror on the wall	20
4.3 The wand has been waved	67
5 Conclusion	74
6 Recommendations	75
7 References	77
8 Appendices	78

---

## LIST OF APPENDICES

---

A Research Time Schedule
B Learner Interview Guiding Schedule
C Letters of Permission to Parents
Di Letter of Agreement
Dii Letter of Agreement

# MAGIC IN THE COMMUNITY

~ A MAGICAL JOURNEY ~

---

## 1 - INTRODUCTION

---



The College of Magic [hereafter referred to as the College], established in 1980, provides education and training for aspirant magicians and entertainers from a cross section of the South African population. Currently, at least 150 part-time students are involved in the extra-mural performance arts training. As a way of expanding the cultural diversity of participants and, more importantly, as a way of providing opportunity for those members from previously disadvantaged communities, a “Magic in the Community Project” [hereafter referred to as the Project] was

formally established in 2000. This programme currently hosts fifty-nine learners. In 2001, this project received financial support that made it possible for it to become more firmly entrenched in the core functions of the College and facilitated a better level of sustainability.

The following are the goals of the Project:

- “To enthuse and inspire young people with an exciting and rewarding education experience
- To build self esteem, improve co-ordination, develop valuable performing skills and potential job opportunities and to nurture excellent life-skills
- To offer access to information, performance and employment opportunities, services and computerised resources
- To empower young people, enabling them to gain the respect of their families and community and improve leadership potential
- To inspire students to be creative and productive through sharing skills, thereby contributing to wealth creation and career development”

*Proposal, College of Magic (2002)*

---

## 2 - AIM OF THE EVALUATION

---

This evaluation sought to investigate and evaluate the extent to which the Project is meeting its proposed goals. More specifically, through the use of a variety of data collection instruments, this evaluation sought to understand and describe the potential educational gains of the project.

#### 3.1 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

While this research may be described as an evaluation, its key focus was to understand the potential educational gains that projects of this nature propose to offer. As such, a qualitative approach to the research was used. The goal of qualitative research is defined as “describing and understanding rather than the explanation and prediction of human behaviour (Babbie, et al, 2001:53). Other theorists like Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) and Mayket and Morehouse (1994) further suggest that qualitative researchers are particularly interested in studying distinctive individual perspectives and experiences and in understanding the phenomena in natural settings. This is usually perceived as a holistic approach in that researchers attempt to understand the phenomenon in its natural contexts and are sensitive to the individuals and contexts under scrutiny. They are also keenly aware of the process as well as the product of research and as such acknowledge the role of researcher and the subjectivity it brings with it. There is an understanding that the process of analysis is inductive in that the researcher does not have pre-designed categories or units of analysis pre-planned prior to going into the field under investigation. There is also a flexible approach to the research design and a commitment to understand rather than to prove or to advocate.

Cohen, Manion & Morrison, further highlights the relevancy of this methodological orientation. They suggest, among other things, that this approach embraces the notion that “humans actively construct their own meaning of situations; meaning arises out of social situations and is handled through interpretive processes; behaviour, and thereby data are socially situated, context-related, context-dependant and context-rich. To understand a situation, researchers need to understand the context because situations affect behaviour and perspectives; realities are multiple, constructed and holistic” (2000: 137). Qualitative studies, states Mishler, (in Denzin & Lincoln, 1998: 145) “ultimately aim to describe and explain (at some level) a pattern of relationships, which can be done only with a set of conceptually specified categories”.

Therefore, within a broad qualitative framework, a case study approach was used. According to Denzin & Lincoln a ‘case’ is “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context—the unit of analysis, in effect” (1998: 204). Usually, in a case study approach, there is a focus and a loosely defined physical and/or social boundary in which the research is carried out. According to Denzin & Lincoln (1998), foci and boundaries can be identified by large or small social units, e.g. individual, group, institution, organisation, etc. and of note, some cases can have sub-cases. In this instance, ‘case’ will denote and include both individual and family.

To this end, this evaluation is largely descriptive and somewhat deviates, in its style and format, from the conventions generally associated with evaluations. It seeks to elicit what potential benefits of magic [educational and other] the Project has provided to participating learners. However, it does not seek to make broad claims about these perceived benefits, but, importantly, seeks to give readers a glimpse into the lives of the learners, parents and families of those participating in the project. In particular, the evaluation report seeks to give voice to the sometimes - voiceless number of parents (and their respective families) who have been touched by a magical wand that has changed their lives irrevocably.

In this report, each family is treated as a ‘case’ with a story to tell. As the stories unfold, common themes are extracted and presented in the final section of the report.

### 3.2 SAMPLE AND PROCESS OF SELECTION

#### *Learners*

Participation in the evaluation was dependent on the return of letters of permission sent to all participating Project learners and parents. Due to time constraints, the learners who brought in their letters of consent timeously were included in the individual interviews. While time was an important consideration, attention was paid to ensuring that the final sample included learners from all the courses and levels on offer. The final sample therefore included twenty-four learners (twenty-three male and 1 female). As a way of managing the data collection process, a strategy was developed which included conducting individual interviews with a sample of ten learners and focus group interviews with the rest of the participating learners (see process of data selection below).

#### *Parents*

Those parents, whose children participated in the individual interview, were selected for in-depth interviews in order to develop descriptions of how magic is perceived and as a way of understanding what the possible gains are of the Project [at home and at school].

#### *Teachers*

Three teachers, all of whom teach the learners at various levels in the Project, were selected for interviewing.

### 3.3 PROCESS OF DATA COLLECTION

Two primary processes were used to collect data, namely interviews and observations, as these were deemed appropriate tools for what the evaluation sought to achieve. With regards to interviews, two forms were used, namely, in-depth individual and focus group interviews.

#### *Interviews*

##### i - In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with ten *learners*, ten *parents* and three *teachers* from the College.

From the main group of twenty-four *learners*, ten were purposively selected for in-depth interviews. This means that, in the selection, attention was paid to the age, level of course and period of involvement at the College. The reason for a purposive sample was to ensure that a range of perspectives and experiences inform the evaluation. The final sample therefore included learners from the first to the sixth course as well as those participating in the theatre production.

*Parents* of those learners who had participated in the individual interviews were selected for in-depth interviews. In some cases, both parents were present during the interview. However, in almost all the cases, only one parent contributed substantially to the interview process.

Three *teachers* from the College were also interviewed with the purpose of gleaning information about the history of the Project, their particular interest in magic as well as how this interest shapes teacher and learner engagement, course content and the process of lesson delivery.

## ii - Focus group interviews

The remaining sample of thirteen learners participated in two focus group interviews.

### *Observations*

Regarding observations, the principal evaluator and research assistant spent between six to eight Saturday mornings observing classes as well as the interval interactions between children and adults and amongst the children themselves. This was done with the view to obtaining data on the general life of the College, as well as to get a glimpse into the life of the children as they participate and interact within this context. Field-notes were kept and used as a source of data.

## **3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In field research of any kind, one has to be sensitive to the ethical challenges that face researchers when working with human subjects. Individual rights need to be protected, confidentiality has to be upheld unless permission has been granted for names to be used and/or disclosed and consent has to be obtained for participation in the research.

As far as possible, this evaluation has adhered to appropriate ethical practices. The evaluators gained consent for both learner and parent participation. While names have been used, none of the information is injurious to those involved.



---

## 4 – EVALUATION RESULTS

---

The results are presented in three sections. The first describes the context from which these learners are drawn and provides a situational framework within which to understand the claims made in the rest of the report. The second section portrays the participants and briefly describes them as people who have a history that shaped and continually shapes their present history making. Profiles of learners and parents are presented using data drawn from the interviews. These profiles go some way in providing a glimpse into the family life of selected learners and begins to illustrate how magic is affecting or influencing lives within homes. The final section draws on the interview [learners, parents and teachers] and observation data to develop patterns and themes that have emerged. These themes describe what potential benefits the programme has had on the individual and collective lives of children and their respective families.

### 4.1 MAGIC WAND, PLEASE PAINT ME A PICTURE

#### Contextual realities of learners

Fifty-nine learners participate in the Project courses on offer. Even though there is no explicit policy on gender preference as an entrance criterion to the Project, it was noted that the males far outnumbered the females.



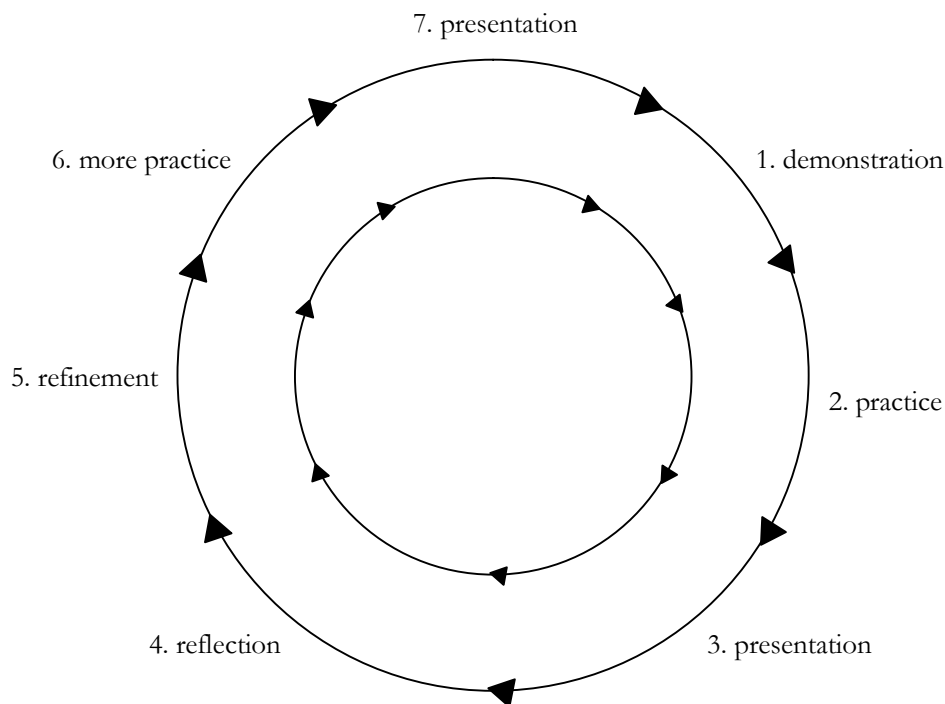
The participants' ages range between 10 and 20 years. The school grades, from which these learners are drawn, range between 4 and 10. With a few exceptions, most learners are drawn from a variety of schools situated in Khayelitsha and its surrounds. The rest attend ex-Model C or ex-Coloured schools.

The types of dwellings in Khayelitsha vary, ranging from formal to informal structures. The informal structures lack the basic services, such as taps for running water and in-house toilets. However, most of these houses have access to electricity. Despite the availability of electricity, it was noted that illumination and visibility in the homes and in the street is remarkably poor. The majority of the learners who participated in the individual interviews live in informal houses.

#### Nature and Structure of the 'Magic in the Community' Courses

The Project consists of six core courses that are structured hierarchically, with each course increasing in complexity, expectations of the learner and skill mastery. The nature and structure of the course is instructive. Fundamental to the nature of the courses, are opportunities for learners to continually 'go back as it were' to refine, rehearse, improve and become more competent 'magical' performers at that particular level. Embedded in each course is a cycle of action (illustrated below) that includes demonstration (by the teacher), practice, presentation, reflection, refinement, practice, and presentation.

As this cycle illustrates, learners participate the use of a range of cognitive skills, which include critical, reflective, organisational and planning skills, to name but a few. While the basic structure of the cycle remains identifiable and recognizable, the expectations and processes of engagement and responsibility-taking by the learners become increasingly more complex as they progress through the various courses. This cycle may therefore best be described as a spiral that, when reaching the end of its first cycle, repeats the process at a higher, more refined level each time.



With the exception of Course Five where there are only two learners, each core course has an average of ten students. In addition to the ‘core’ courses, there are nine students who are involved in the Theatre Production Course, some of whom participate in the core courses as well.

Courses One to Six are held on a Saturday from 09h00 to 13h00 while the theatre production course is held on a Tuesday from 16h00 to 18h00. In addition, on Saturdays, the learners are able to participate in additional activities such as juggling.

### The Enablers

Seven teachers facilitate the courses. Two Xhosa-speaking teachers {one of whom is the co-ordinator of the Project) are responsible for teaching the initial years where learners are taught in the vernacular. English is introduced additively as learners demonstrate understanding and a grasp of the fundamental concepts. Interestingly, most of the teachers were learners at the College of Magic, an aspect that seems to have a positive influence on the learners they teach.

### The magic is about to begin



Saturday morning...pressed black pants and crispy white shirts, shoes polished, hair neatly combed and sometimes jelled, shiny faces, bags of tricks, homework done, magic rehearsed and smiles abounding. All fifty-nine (with Shedi in tow) eager faces are ready at their respective taxi-points, waiting to see another eager face, their co-ordinator, who has woken up at five o'clock to make the journey to a few stops in Khayelitsha to collect the groups of children. After some pushing and shoving to get a good space in

the taxi (and to make sure that no pants or shirts are creased!), everyone is on board and the journey to another magical day, another magical moment, begins. 'What awaits us today?' seems to be the unuttered question.

### At the College

Eight forty-five and the College is abuzz. As one enters the building, one is caught up 'in the magic'. Children practicing, some exchanging tips, others juggling, some replenishing their 'bags of tricks' and all this time, one is greeted with smiles, loud hellos and chatty aspirant magicians. Then without warning... a loud gong ... a signal for classes to begin.

### The magic begins ...

The learners scurry to their respective classes. We (the evaluators) begin our observations in a course one class and progressively make our way, during the course of the observation period, into all the other courses. Children in each class look excited and one gets the feeling that there is definitely 'magic in the air'.



Noticeably, within the initial courses, there are a few shy learners, only speaking when spoken to. This shyness, however, is less evident in the higher courses. Instead, what is more evident is a camaraderie and a level of comfort and familiarity between teacher and learners and amongst the learners themselves. This seems to encourage learners to speak more freely and

take pedagogical risks without the fear of being ridiculed.

'Follow my example' is the unwritten rule of teachers. Without exception, each teacher is well prepared and has been meticulous with preparations that include a 'bag of new tricks' to teach, old ones to rehearse and worksheets to complete for homework.

In their preparation, teachers also seem to pay close particular attention to the material and social conditions of the class. With regards to the material conditions, each teacher has a file with typed lesson notes, resources (for demonstration [which is usually larger in size] and for individual learners) as well as a typed homework task. In terms of the social conditions, teachers create an atmosphere that is cordial, relaxed and friendly, yet exceptionally professional. As the lesson begins, each teacher acknowledges and addresses each child by name and it is noted that, as the lesson unfolds, the same kind of respect is demanded from and amongst learners.

#### Stage, lights, let the magic begin: Sequence of the learning experience



After the usual greetings, each lesson, it would seem, always begins with a re-cap of the previous work by learners, while the teacher merely observes. Thereafter the teacher engages with the class to identify practices that were not performed correctly or satisfactorily by the group during the re-cap session. Discussions follow during which time concepts are reinforced so as to ensure that the correct skills are learnt. Emphasis is placed on not appearing “fake” or pretending that you have mastered the act, when the evidence (the

performance) suggests differently or otherwise.

After this recap process, the teacher introduces the new trick and demonstrates the skill, while at the same time explaining the underlying concepts and practice. This demonstration is repeated a few times and is interactive in that different volunteers (learners) are used.

Learners are given opportunity to practise, once the teacher is confident that they have grasped the underlying principles and concepts of the particular trick and can attempt it by themselves. Thereafter learners voluntarily present. After each presentation, a discussion ensues during which time learners and teacher reflect on issues that need refinement. These often focus on the finer points that make a magic performance ‘convincingly magical’ and include a discussion on the dexterity of the performer, speed of the performance, the angle of performance and the lack of hesitation in the presentation process.

Without hesitation and without exception in each class, the teacher has a barrage of lifted hands, each learner eagerly wanting to be selected to present and ‘show off’ the new learnt skill.

Strikingly, as the lessons unfold, one is acutely conscious of the many learning opportunities that go beyond merely learning ‘the magic trick’. Each time a learner goes to the front, he/she greets, introduces his/her helper (if he/she is using one) using physical contact, like the shaking of hands. Acknowledging and respecting one another is an unwritten rule and a taken for granted practice that is reinforced each time there is communication between teacher and learners and amongst learners themselves. During the observations, it was noted that learners are at varying levels of confidence and expertise in performing this social skill, particularly because it was linked to their competence in English. Those who were more confident in the English language were very bold in performing the skill. However, learners who were not comfortable in responding in English were able to do so in Xhosa even though, it seemed, they all wanted to attempt speaking in English.

The emphasis on practice forms a large part of the interaction with the learners. The learners are provided with individual resources with which to practice their tricks and are given clear guidelines of what will be expected from them in the lesson.

Each learner is given an opportunity to practise individually. Continuing to practise is an explicit expectation with dire consequences for development, progress and confidence building if not done (e.g. embarrassment, mistakes on stage, etc.). The cycle illustrated earlier is observed in and out of the classroom.

### Stage performance: Tips and Ideas



During the course of the year each child is given an opportunity to present a 2 to 3 minute act to an audience that consists of parents and interested friends. The importance of engaging the audience is emphasised, for example 'maintaining eye contact' and 'never turning your back on the audience'. Prior to the performance, learners are supported as they build and rehearse their acts. They are also provided with information regarding the use of appropriate props, the use of emotions and facial expressions.

Depending on the course level, ideas are presented by the teacher on how to be creative when presenting a show or when performing on the stage. Students are given a chance to plan their presentations for the stage performance. Objectives for creativity are clearly identified and made very simple. All the contributions and various ideas are considered. Discussions on the merits of any creative idea follow, as well as the reasons why it may be best to revise the idea. At the end of the day, the learners learn with and from each other as a result of these rich discussions.

During the stage performances (to which parents and friends are invited) there is total focus on the presenter and the presentation. Respect for the performer is honoured. At the end of the presentation, all learners and teacher always applaud.

### Capturing the moment...

Each formal stage performance is recorded; one of the roles of the theatre production students who capture the events as they unfold during the course of the year. It would seem that during such periods, those learners on stage seem comfortable and unfazed with the lights and the fact that they are being 'watched' in more than one way. Instead, what the learners seem to focus on is the task at hand, that is, on performing the trick or performing the act as perfectly as possible. The practice of being 'in the eye' figuratively and in reality is reinforced through the various performances that take place during the year as well as the videotaping.



Learners grow increasingly accustomed to being in the 'public eye' but, importantly, it begins in the supportive environment of friends, teachers and parents, and as a result, their confidence is boosted.

All the video recordings are archived and later used by the learners as a self-teaching tool. At the end of their training at the College, each learner is presented with a tape of their 'life at the College'.

### In the corridors and on the veranda

Optional courses are offered which include mime, clowning and juggling.

#### Mime and Clowning

Some learners participate in mime and clowning classes. This class involves physical exercises carried out through a process of imagination using a series or a theme, for example, climbing stairs or entering a lift. Imagination is an important component in the lesson, as learners are encouraged to reach for things not seen with the naked eye, while simultaneously, using the muscles of the body; facial muscles for expressing amazement, surprise, wonder awe and so on.

#### Juggling

On the veranda, learners engage in juggling activities, from simple to very complicated forms. Learners are allowed to practice their skills during breaks and in-between classes.

### Socialising



There is usually a bustle of events and activities that occur before formal lessons every Saturday morning, someone preparing to do a performance at a birthday party or for some event where they have been invited to perform; practicing for an ensuing stage performance; helping younger or less-experienced performers; and the list continues. Throughout all of these activities, the level of excitement, anticipation and the joy learners display at seeing and helping peers and friends strikes one.

After each lesson the learners have the opportunity to freely socialise with each other through engaging in unstructured activities. This may include general practising of juggling; a visit to the magic shop, an act rehearsal, a quick exchange in Xhosa and English, preparation for a private performance, and the list goes on. There does not seem to be a single dull moment between 9 am - 1pm on a Saturday at the College!

## Summary

As an observer, whose experience in magic was very limited, the six weeks spent in the company of children and teachers, engaging in the process was instructive. The following is worth signalling as illuminative at this stage:

- The emphasis on preparation and how this is exemplified in the actions of teachers
- The structure and processes followed during lessons and how this creates multiple opportunities for learners to succeed
- The multiple opportunities to practice and, by implication, to learn to succeed
- The implicit [not explicitly defined by teachers] educative and social processes, skills and competencies developed and enhanced at multiple levels and through numerous opportunities that spiral within and between courses
- The built-in levels of complexity of skills and competencies as learners progress through the course
- Intrinsic motivation of learners
- The interpersonal relations between teachers and learners and amongst learners themselves
- Reciprocal nature of respect, positive acknowledgement and affirmation by teachers and learners

## **4.2 MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL**

Who are these learners? Where are they from? What are their families like? How do their families and the community perceive their involvement in magic? Why have they chosen to do magic? What motivates them to continue with magic? What benefits are traceable? How do their families perceive the benefits? These were some of the questions that shaped the data collection process at this stage.

What follows below, and as already explained in the research design, is the result of in-depth interviews conducted with learners and their respective parents. The format adopted in this section includes 'profiles' of the ten learners and their respective parent/s. These are presented as a 'case' or a 'unit' each time. In the descriptions of each 'case', I attempt to sketch a picture that goes beyond providing a technical reporting of the benefits of magic. What I attempt to provide is a portrait of the learner in context, a context that is complex and multi-layered, challenging yet exciting.

The approach used is deliberate. Through it, I wish to draw attention to the significance of the learners' involvement (individually and collectively for families) in a more comprehensive way. I attempt to illustrate how the nature and extent of this involvement has touched the lives of the families and communities in unintended ways; a rich description that a 'technical approach' might not have allowed. Particularly, and very importantly, through the 'cases', I attempt to move away from a narrow definition of education (as a predominantly academic endeavour) to an understanding of education as holistic and broad. Within this understanding of education, learners are perceived as contributors and active participants in their own learning. There is an understanding too, that adults and child learn with and from each other and the educational outcomes include academic, psychological and social benefits.

## MIRROR 1 – VUYISA NDABENI

Vuyisa is a fourteen-year-old boy who attends Chris Hani Senior Secondary School in Khayelitsha. He is in Grade 8. He lives in Makhaza, Khayelitsha with his parents, a brother and a sister. His father owns a small business and his mother is a housewife. Prior to coming to live in Makhaza, the family stayed in Site B, a place where larger populations of people live in shacks than where they currently live.



Both his parents were born in the Transkei, his mother from Qkuvambo and his father from Queenstown. The family does not go to the Transkei often. He, however, visited his grandparents last year and the family plans to go to the Transkei again in 2004. This, he suggests, is always a great experience because he has many friends there. Vuyisa is keenly aware of how different life is in the Transkei, the most obvious being that there is no electricity and that the houses have thatched roofs. Another feature is that many people in the Transkei own sheep and cattle.

Vuyisa began participating in the Project three years ago when he was in Grade 5. He heard about the College of Magic from the teachers at school. He states that he had always been interested in entertaining people and realises that magic will provide him with the opportunity to do so. Before his involvement with magic, he had never performed on a stage. Now, though, he loves stage performance since, he says, one is not required to do much talking.

The teachers and his peers at school are aware that he does magic. His friends all admire him and are not scared of him as ‘the magician’. His peers often ask him to perform tricks and often, at parties with the family, he is asked to entertain. It is for this reason, he says, that he is always prepared and always carries some magic trick resource in his pocket.

Vuyisa’s favourite trick is the water-in-the-newspaper trick. When he performs for adults however, he often does the cigarette trick. This trick involves making a cigarette vanish and reappear. The adults are always amazed at how he makes the cigarette vanish and are even more surprised when the cigarette re-appears!

He spends lots of spare time practicing his performances. This he does not need to be reminded to do, because, as he says, he needs to practise in order to perform well.

For Vuyisa participating in the Magic in the Community project has meant:

- An improvement in his English communicative skills because as he suggests ‘at the College of Magic I have learnt to practice my English’.
- An escape from the many ‘things in the community’, such as being involved in the wrong company
- A perception of himself as ‘special’ because coming to the college ‘makes me feel special’

- The development of a vision for the future. One day he would like to be a doctor and believes magic will help him entertain the patients. For now though, after completing the courses at the college of magic, he would like to be an entertainer and also to assist with training at the college.

### **Victor: Vuyisa's father**

#### Introduction



Victor was born in the Transkei and only completed Standard six (Grade 8). He only went to school when he was eleven years old, an experience he recalls with pleasure and fondness. For him going to school was one of the significant moments in his life because, he had an idea that it would change the course of his life, and that 'you can do things for yourself when you are educated'. He was aware, however, that he lagged behind other children who had gone to school at six or seven, as he says, 'most of the other children were already at school and I had to make up that gap'. He 'made up the gap' by listening to his teachers and

learning 'very hard'. He was aware that he was a little 'brighter than the other children' so he could grasp things quicker!

Victor moved to Cape Town in 1992, a vivid memory. He recalls his reaction to 'all the lights!' Coming to Cape Town meant an opportunity for 'a better life', one that he believes he has taken full advantage of. Amongst other things, it has meant better learning opportunities for his children.

#### Perspectives on Magic

When Vuyisa approached his parents about becoming involved in magic, they were both 'shocked' and uneasy about this because as his father says:

*You see there are sometimes whereby they do some funny things you cannot believe so you don't know whether do they ... how do they do this ... those are the main things that made us to be afraid of magic*

As the above suggests, community perspectives and reactions to anyone involved in magic is often met with much scepticism especially because it is 'not a thing that was familiar among us' states Victor. This apprehension regarding community expectations and attitudes influenced Vuyisa's parents adversely at first.

However, upon receiving some information regarding the activities at the College, the parents agreed for Vuyisa to join the College. Today, Victor has only good things to say about magic. He has also noticed a change in the attitudes of people in the community. In this regard, he says

*No, these days the rest of the people like magic you see ... because they can believe ... you see ... the way it is ... they are happy too with it because they understand sometime it makes them to laugh, to be happy, to forget everything when they looking at that thing*

### Perceived Benefits of Magic

- Greater interest in reading and intensified curiosity. Vuyisa's father has noticed a marked increase in interest in reading any material he gets his hands on (newspapers or magazines). As he suggests:

*Ever since he [Vuyisa] went there [the College] he is always... has interest of even reading the newspaper you see reading magazines himself sometimes he comes with the magazine and say look father, here we are ...so [I] began to think that this thing make him to be so curious that is ... I like that*

- Role modelling for peers. Victor is conscious of the positive influence Vuyisa has on his peers. Vuyisa has always been a popular child but this popularity has 'grown now you see'. Other children view him as smart and want to be like him. Striking in this conversation though, was Victor's suggestion that Vuyisa has become more loyal and 'easy with his friends'.
- Improved communicative English skills. It would seem that Vuyisa has become more confident in communicating in English, especially with first language English speakers. Victor states that:

*The other thing that I noticed him is when he likes to talk English and I believe that he can talk even with anybody who talks English ... he does not feel so afraid to talk about English ... so I think the magic caused him to have that 'friendship' [confidence]*

- Appropriate dress code. Being involved in magic seems to have influenced Vuyisa's sense of dress and his understanding of the relationship between context and appropriate dress code. This suggests that he has become much more conscious of his choice of clothes for different occasions. As his father states:

*I think the magic has influenced him more especially that part, but because I see that he is always look ...he likes to be formal always and when he goes there ... nobody tells him what to wear, he dresses himself. He can choose clothes for any function and dress himself according to that function.*

- Interrelationships between parents and child. Magic seems to have provided a catalyst for better parent-child relationships and better parent-to-parent relationships. Regarding the former, Victor suggests that magic has provided he and his son with many 'talking points'. More importantly though, it seems to have served as a vehicle for improving family relationships. While it may play a small role in this regard, his comment is instructive. As he suggests:

*In the sense that as you know if your family there are same disturbances when you see there is something like he is doing ... your child has done something which is good for you and make you be happy ... that makes you to be similar in thinking ... just because of your children.*

## **MIRROR 2 – KEVIN RWICILA**

Kevin is twelve years old and is in Grade 5. He attends Rosmead Primary School in Lansdowne. He has been at this school since 1998. He failed his first year, as he could not speak English. He was very upset about this but his mother encouraged him to speak and improve his English. He now spends lots of time reading as a way of improving his English.

He lives with his mother, father and two sisters in Site B, Khayelitsha. The family first lived in Greenside Gardens near Kenilworth Centre. Thereafter, the family moved to a shack in Site B where they are now in the process of building their own house. Kevin is looking forward to the new house, as he will have his own room.

Kevin's one sister is at Walmer Secondary School and the other sister is a final year Bachelor of Commerce student at the University of the Western Cape. His mother is a domestic worker for a psychologist in Mowbray and his father is unemployed. He loves being the youngest in the family as he gets money (for movies) from the rest of the family.

His parents grew up in Umtata in the Transkei. He has never been to Umtata but has visited his grandparents in their new home in Hofmeyer, near Cradock. This has been an annual event, which lasts about two months long. The environment in Hofmeyer is very different to the one in Cape Town. The roads are gravel and the houses' roofs are thatched. When he visits there, he is expected to look after the sheep during the day, an activity that he enjoys only sometimes. He always looks forward to coming back to Cape Town.

Kevin has many extra-curricular activities. He loves sport. He plays soccer and belongs to a soccer club in Observatory. This means that he has to practise on Tuesdays and Thursdays. For this reason, he has to get up quite early to do his homework and catch the bus on time. He also represents his school in cross-country running. Notwithstanding, he still manages to cope quite well with all the activities and also does well at school.

Kevin first heard about the college of Magic at his school. He and a friend came to the college two years ago where they met with Khonzani, the Project co-ordinator. They asked how they could join the college. They were given forms and asked to have them completed by their parents. His mother's major concern at the time was the financial implications of joining, but Khonzani informed her that that should not be a deterrent.

Kevin's teacher is unaware that he does magic. According to him the 'magic and soccer keeps [him] out of gangsterism'. He states that many of his friends are gangsters and they smoke and try to get him to join them. When he refuses, they call him a chicken. They always refer to him as 'here comes the pain!'

At school, he does perform magic for his friends. His friends think that he can make a lot of money from doing performances at Kenilworth Centre. They always ask him to use 'his magic' to make them a cake.

He is loved on the soccer field and lots of his friends think he scores well because he can do magic. However, he does not think it is because of his magic that he is good at soccer. He believes that he is good at magic because he practises. He is also good at soccer because he tries to practise.

For Kevin participating in the Project has meant:

- A commitment to practice in order to do well. Magic has taught him to 'practise the skills he has learnt in order to perform well'. This approach to magic has translated to an overall approach to his schoolwork as well. For example, he states that 'when [he] is taught an experiment at school he tries to practise it in order to get it right'. He still struggles but always does his corrections!
- Learning how to say NO. According to him magic keeps him 'out of lots of things' in the township and he 'can say NO' to his friends.
- A sense of fulfilment and contentment/satisfaction. After the successful performance of a trick he always feels 'happy'.
- Overcoming fear. Through practice he has managed more and more to be less nervous when he performs.
- Being organised and methodical. This is evident in the way he organises his daily and weekly programme.
- Developing a vision for his future. When he finishes school, he would like to be a pilot. He envisages magic as part of the plan for the future (suggests that it will help him entertain at airports!).

### **Fezeka: Kevin's Mother**

#### Introduction

Fezeka was born in Steynberg but grew up, with fifteen other siblings, in Hofmeyer, a little town not far from Cradock. She completed form three and wanted to become a nurse but was unable to, due to the family's financial constraints and the prevailing perception about girl-education and the low status it held in communities such as the one in which Fezeka grew up.

She decided to come to Cape Town to earn some money (while awaiting a response for an application to do nursing) to assist with taking care of the rest of her siblings. She was not successful in her application, something she regrets. Since then she has worked as a domestic worker for most of her life. In her current employ for a psychologist, she does more than the housework; she manages the consultancy schedules and answers the telephone, etc.

Fezeka met and married her husband and now has three children, of whom Kevin is the youngest. She is focused and has set goals that she is seeing come to fruition (building her own house is one example).

#### Perspective on Magic

The pervasive attitude in Fezeka's community is one that seems to attribute evil to magic involvement and seeks to find explanations for 'bad things happening' through 'blaming' witchcraft activities or magic. Thus, when Kevin approached her about registering for magic, Fezeka was concerned about the community's response to his involvement. She says:

*I wanted to know what it was about. I was worried that people might think he is involved in witchcraft, but he kept on saying, mummy, I want to do it! Just because, our people, when money gets lost, you are the one who take the money, because you are the magic man. Maybe if somebody is turning things in the wrong way, they will think it is witchcraft.*

After receiving information and a clearly articulated explanation about what magic entails, Fezeka was convinced to register her son. She was, thereafter, not too concerned about people's attitude because she knew it was not witchcraft. Today, three years later, Fezeka believes it is one of the best things that has happened to Kevin.

### Perceived Benefits of Magic

- New Interest and off the streets. One of the major benefits as Fezeka perceives it is that magic has kept her son off the street, given him focus and more significantly, kept him away from bad company. She states:

*Ever since he has been with these magic things, I just pray that God just keep him the way he is. Even like today I was saying, as I see the other children robbing people, when the children are doing extra mural things like when he is at the Magic College, on Saturday when I am working, I am working Monday to Sunday, I am not having a rest. But the days when Kevin on a Saturday I was always worried on a Saturday, because he can get into wrong things.*

*Now since he has been in, always I use to worry and hear that Kevin was at the bridge with the other children, than, there are so many things I heard, that he is not at home, I worried. But now, since he has got into this "magic things" I feel fine. Even in the morning when I leave on Saturday, I know that he is there, and that by the time I come back from work, than he is just around me, You see, these days you can never know what is happening with them. They can say that they are with a friend and they can teach other smoking 'dagga' and things like that. You see your child is no longer the one that he use to be before*

*There is a lot of change. He is not too much with friends. But, whenever you find Kevin, where he is, with friends, and he is always talking about his magic and tricks and Khonzani and friends and always trying to attract the others with this. Sometimes he takes his magic video, as we don't have a video, he goes to watch elsewhere, maybe I am work, he says you tell mummy I am here or there. He is interested to learn this things, and sports. He is very much involved in sports and this.*

- Balance and improved time-management. There is a conspicuous improvement in the way in which Kevin balances school and other extra-mural activities (soccer and magic) especially because he loves both activities passionately. As his mother suggests:

*He can manage everything, he can balance, and that is what he said to me, he could balance everything.*

### MIRROR 3 – ZODWA SIKO



Zodwa is fourteen years old and is in Grade eight at Harry Gwala Senior Secondary in Khayelitsha. She lives with her father, mother, an older sister and two younger brothers. Her sister attends the same school she does, while one of her brothers is in Grade 3 and the youngest attends a crèche. Her father works in Bellville and her mother is a stay-at-home mum.

She was born at Mowbray hospital and was raised in the Western Cape. However, her parents were born in the Eastern Cape. Her mother was born in Mount Frere while her father is from Lady Frere. The family has visited these places and has plans to go there again this year. She does not like visiting the Eastern Cape family because there are many children and when it is eating time all the children have to eat from one dish. As a result, often they are not satisfied after the meal because the food was insufficient. She also does not like the fact

that water is not readily available and when they want to drink water or make tea, they have to go and fetch water from a distance and make a fire and often they are required to fetch the wood to light the fire.

Being at a new school (first year in secondary school) means that none of the teachers are aware that she is involved with the College of Magic. There are no extra-mural activities at the school so Zodwa sees magic as a good outlet. However, the teachers at her previous school were aware of her involvement because they saw her when she made a brief appearance on television. They approached her and wanted to know from her whether ‘she was doing magic’ and ‘going to America’. She would like to do a show at her old school and plans to visit and discuss the possibility of this with the teachers at her old school.

She does perform magic tricks for her friends and often charges them a fee for her ‘services’. She has not performed a show at her new school. She does, however, think it is possible and has discussed this possibility with a fellow College of Magic student (Thando) who is in Grade ten.

Zodwa’s family loves the fact that she is doing magic. Her little brothers love her to do magic for them and they also have plans to do magic one day. She does, however, find it challenging to maintain a balance between housework, schoolwork and practice. Typically, her week would unfold as follows:

She gets up every morning and goes to school. After school she would come home, wash the dishes, cook and complete all her homework. Sometimes she practises her magic. She tries, as often as possible, to alternate the responsibility of cooking and completing household chores with her sister.

She has lots of homework and when she has to do things for magic (making a production box) as well she often feels overwhelmed: ‘like I is going crazy’. Some of the schools projects are difficult and she has to ask her father or older sister to help her.

She rarely gets a chance to watch TV, as she prefers sitting in front of the mirror (when she has the chance) and practises her magic.

For Zodwa participating in the Project has meant:

- A sense of independence. She has the vision that ‘magic will help her make money to support her family, her mother, father, sister and brothers’. She also believes that magic will help her ‘support’ herself and help her buy ‘the things [she] would like and not have to ask her mum ‘for things every time’.
- A growing confidence in her ability and gender equality. Zodwa suggests that she ‘never gets a chance to watch television because she ‘has to sit in front of the mirror and practise’. She is nervous about performing in front of her peers, but she does not feel any different to performing with boys. In class, the boys are patient with her. At school her peers comment and say that ‘a girl is making magic with boys’. The boys seem more adept at learning the tricks. However, while this might be the case, she does not feel that she will ‘not get there’. Instead what she believes is that she needs more practice in order to be able to compete at their level.
- An improvement in communicative English.
- Good time-management. As a girl it is ‘expected’ of her to engage in household duties such as washing dishes and cooking. This has meant that, in addition to school, homework and household chores, she has had to plan her magic practices. Zodwa suggests that she manages this by alternating activities and chores. She has also made a point of spending at least three hours on a Friday practising her magic tricks.
- A vision for the future and the possibility to have BIG dreams. Zodwa plans to complete the whole course. More particularly, though, she sees completing the course as a vehicle towards her independence and self-sufficiency. When she finishes at the College of Magic she plans to do magic at schools, churches and homes. The church people all know that she does magic as her mother has told them about this. They all tease her and say that she is a “witch” but she knows that they do not really mean it. She would like to be a BIG magician one day. She sees herself performing on big stages, overseas, such as in America.

### **Nobom: Zodwa’s Mother**

#### Introduction

Nobom was born in Mount Frere in the Transkei. She spent most of her life there and followed her husband to Cape Town in 1988. She describes life in the Transkei as good and much better than in Cape Town where the effects of modern times are very prevalent. She suggests that there seems to be little respect for others, that there are many gangsters in the township and abuse is rife. She states that where she grew up, there was a lot of respect for elders and people could be trusted; ‘everyone was accepted as family’. This, to her mind, is what sets her generation apart from the current group of young people. The modern times, she believes, has resulted in a breakdown of values and respect for elders.

She has four children, two of whom are girls. She has fears about their safety, especially in the township, because as she says ‘you can’t trust anyone’. It would seem that this is one of the overriding reasons for her positive attitude towards Zodwa’s involvement in magic, an aspect detailed below.

### Perspectives on Magic

Nobom had no preconceived idea about magic, nor was she overtly concerned about how the community would react to Zodwa's involvement. She viewed it as a way to keep her daughter off the streets, a primary reason for agreeing to her participation.

### Perceived Benefits of Magic

- Improved communication: A marked difference in Zodwa has been her ability to communicate with others. Performing and having to project oneself has meant that Zodwa has had to learn to be articulate; conscious of her voice and how she projects it on stage; keenly aware of herself as a performer.
- Enhanced Confidence. It would seem that Zodwa's confidence has developed because she is not 'shy to perform' in front of others and she 'now talks a lot'
- Interrelationship between parent and child. Magic seems to have provided an opportunity for mother and daughter to engage in more conversations that are varied in nature and content, thereby improving communication between them in ways that she believes she did not have with her oldest daughter. Within an environment, for example, where Zodwa seeks assistance to complete a magic task, they can discuss issues of concern regarding the task, something that she thinks is lacking in her relationship with her oldest daughter.
- Task engagement and level of Involvement: Magic 'has kept Zodwa busy' and has heightened her curiosity. She is more focused and committed to complete her work and spends much time practising her magic. By implication, this comment suggests that she is learning the benefits of practise - continued task engagement that leads to positive outcomes.

The following 'case' includes cousins Siphe and Eddie Ntontela.

#### **MIRROR 4 – SIPHE NTONTELA**

Siphe, an eleven year-old boy, lives with his mother, two sisters and aunt with her family in Khayelitsha. He attends Portia Primary School in Lansdowne. His teachers do not know that he is doing magic as he has forgotten or omitted to tell them. His friends at home know about him doing magic but he has not done any magic tricks for friends at school.

Siphe prefers close-up magic, as he does not like to go onto the stage because, he suggests, he is scared. He does however acknowledge that with practice, he will do better.

#### **MIRROR 4B – EDDIE NTONTELA**

Eddie is fifteen years old and lives with his mother and sister in the same house as Siphe, his cousin. Their mothers are sisters and come from the Transkei. The children have been to the Transkei and think it is good to be there. They love to play with their friends and take the cows to the fields. They also love visiting the Transkei for a month or two at a time but love the idea of coming back to Cape Town.

He attends Portlands Senior Secondary where his teachers do not know that he is involved in magic performances. Only his friends at home know that he is involved with magic - those at school are unaware. He wants to 'amaze children at school' one day when he feels he is ready to perform. Eddie is very confident about the tricks he does, and says that often he "practises too much".

He plays football for a club at Khayelitsha. He has football practice on Mondays to Fridays and often plays a match on Saturday and Sunday. This means that he has to be very organised because he comes to the College of Magic on Saturday mornings and plays soccer in the afternoon. All his soccer friends are aware that he is involved in magic and think that he is a very good magician.

He is keenly aware that schoolwork also needs practise. He states that when he is taught something at school, he learns it at that time and then practises it as well.

Being organised seems important to Eddie. His mother does not need to remind him to complete his homework. However, he often has to help his cousins with their homework. His daily routine after school includes changing his clothes, eating, checking all his homework and then going out to play after which he watches a little bit of television. He only spends concentrated time practising his magic over the weekend, especially on Fridays because, during weekdays, his focus is on his schoolwork. He wants to become a pilot and knows that this requires good grades and practise in mathematics, science and accounting.

Eddie says that he 'loves magic' and thinks that 'magic can make me a star one day'. He suggests that he would like to perform all the time so that he does not forget the magic. He says that he always carries at least one magic item to be able to perform a trick if and when asked! Whenever he has to go onto a stage, he is usually anxious and scared. Notwithstanding, he is confident in performing close-up magic because he 'knows this and [he] can perform' and even won a trophy for this last year.



### **Noloyiso and Patiswa Ntontela: Siphe and Eddie's mothers**

Noloyiso and Patiswa Ntontela are sisters. They are Siphe and Eddie's mothers respectively. They were born in the Transkei where they lived with their mother. The two now share a 'house' in Makhaza, Khayelitsha. Loyiso works at a funeral parlour and Patiswa works at the post office.

They come from a family of seven. Their dad lived and worked in Cape Town for most of their young lives and so they did not get to know him well. They remember their mum making occasional trips to Cape Town to visit their father.

According to these women, they were very poor and as a result, not all of them could be educated. Life was difficult as they were growing up, but even in the midst of the struggles, there were moments of fun. At the time, there were expectations that girls had to perform particular chores. The girls were expected to go to the river to fetch water, cook food and clean the house. Eddie's mum states, though, that it was not so bad.

*As you grow up you are a child and you don't know what life is like in the big cities. You go to school like any other child and come home and do the jobs that you, as a girl, are expected to do*

They lived with their aunt when they first came to Cape Town. They viewed her as their mother especially because she was very good to them and initiated them into life in Cape Town.

They are single parents. They are very pragmatic about their responsibility as single parents and attribute their inner strength and determination to succeed to their mum, whom they both acknowledge as their role model. Having children significantly changed the course of their lives and shaped the way they both consider possibilities for the future.

Patiswa heard about magic from the co-ordinator who is her personal friend. When she heard where he was travelling and what he was accomplishing through magic, she was very excited and suggested to her son that he should join. She was concerned about his reaction, but it was positive. He hasn't looked back since!

### Perspectives on Magic

They had seen people perform magic acts during their school career but never (in their wildest dreams) did they conceive of magic as an acquired skill or competence. To them it was something that was natural and inborn! There was no thought about how magic is done. Patiswa says 'I never thought, never thought a single day that they go through training... like there is a school for this [magic]' until she met the coordinator who told her about the College.

Some of the family members [one sister in particular] were sceptical and suggested that this 'magic thing' is witchcraft. These sisters however, convinced them that children attend a College where they are taught the skill of magic.

### Perceived Benefits of Magic

- Off the streets. The idea that they are out of the township on a Saturday morning, away from company that might encourage mischievous behaviour
- Confidence and improved self-esteem

- Enhanced stage performance coupled with building confidence
- Improved parent and child relationship
- Improved organisational skills
- Enhanced time management and is capable of completing tasks independently of the mother
- Improved reading ability
- Improved English competency
- Positive role model: Children within the magic community especially those from within the same community.

## MIRROR 5 – MZOLISI LEMBENI



Mzolisi is twenty years old. He currently lives in Khayelitsha with his mother and older brother, but is originally from East London. He and his older brother did not grow up together.

He first came to Cape Town in 1994 (when he was in Grade 5) and lived here for three years before returning to live with his grandmother in East London where he completed standard 5 to standard 8 (grade 7 to 10). He returned to Cape Town and matriculated in 2000. He thereafter joined the College of Magic

His father, a traditional healer, still lives in the Transkei and is unaware that Mzolisi is involved in magic performances. He does not see his father often and states that the last time he saw him (in 1998), he had not been involved at the College of Magic. His grandmother knows and is supportive of his involvement in magic, particularly because of Khonzani's influence.

Prior to his move to Cape Town, he grew up on a farm as a shepherd and lived with my father's sister tending sheep and staying in the bush all day. Sometimes, if he did not round up all the goats or sheep, he would sleep in the bush, as he was afraid to return home without the full complement of sheep. He was a shepherd since the age of six and continued this until he was eleven. He was not focused on education and only attended school part-time. This was usually on alternate days since he tended to the sheep. Sometimes, he says, he would just take the sheep to the mountains and then go to school for a week. Then, on the weekend he would go back to the mountains to collect the sheep and cows.

Mzolisi's life in the Transkei was generally very challenging. As he states

*You lack education and become a stereotype. Growing up in the Transkei, there was no life there because you are struggling. If you want to get some food, you must plant it. You have to look after the cows or they go missing. Transport is very scarce there. It is difficult to explain.*

He remembers how his brother, who came to the Transkei during a December vacation, went along to the bush with him and was unable to climb to the top of a rock because he had grown up in Cape Town! He left his brother at home the following day because he just could not manage!

Life as a shepherd was not easy especially because 'you just sit and look after the goats and the cows'. As Mzolisi states:

*Just because I was young I did not feel unhappy, as I was shy at that time. I welcomed the life as it is. At the age of 8 years I realised that this life was not for me.*

He managed to 'get out of that life' as his mother 'stole' him from his father's family. He had not told her that he was unhappy as he did not have contact with her, but she heard a rumour that he was sick with a type of cancer, so she came and 'stole' him away.

He recalls his days in East London as aimless and empty because ‘there was no life even there’. He says that ‘even though [he] was not a shepherd there’ they lived in a village. Notwithstanding, his life with his grandmother was happy because she ‘was a nice person’. One of the things that made him very happy was that his grandmother gave him all that he wanted. ‘I am a man now because of her’ he says. One memory that stands out is Christmas time with his grandmother. Even though they did not have electricity, they would make a party and use newspaper and steel wool to make “lights” and have the ‘sparkle!’

Mzolisi is currently doing a bridging course in engineering at the Headstart College in Salt River. Teachers at the engineering college know that he is involved in magic as they had a talent show and he performed some of his tricks. They have invited him to perform again soon, a performance for which he will be paid.

He heard about the magic from Khonzani, the co-ordinator of the Project, who invited him to the College of Magic. He had never heard of this College before. Mzolisi’s first impression when saw magic being performed was that it was real... but he soon found out that it was tricks that could be learnt! He has now been at the College for two years and is currently completing his third year after which he hopes to perform magic shows.

Mzolisi loves stage magic and would love to perform more frequently. He hopes to use both the skills he is currently learning (engineering and magic) to make money.

He says that his life experiences have prepared him for his present life. Important for him though, is that magic has given him vision and something to focus on. He does not have time for alcohol and drugs, and in this way he says, magic has been good for him.

Engineering, he suggests, compliments magic because the two are ‘similar’. He says that:

*When one is connecting wires one needs to have calculations. Even with magic, one uses angles to hide things from the audience. So the engineering science applies the use of angles in a similar way as magic.*

Another example of this interrelationship between his two chosen fields of study lie in the communicative skills acquired in magic. He states that ‘at the College of Magic you learn communication, which I can use at Headstart.’ There is a suggestion that what Mzolisi learns in the one context, he is able to transfer and apply in the other context and vice versa.

For Mzolisi participating in the Project has meant:

- Learning respect for himself and others
- Having discipline
- Having a vision and working hard to achieve set goals
- Widening his horizons of possibility

## **Edna: Mzolisi's Mother**

### Introduction

Edna lives in Makhaza, Khayelitsha and has been in her current home since 1992. She was born and raised in the Transkei. Life was challenging because her mother single-handedly raised six children. She was 'reared' for the most part, by her grandmother. As the eldest she had to attend to her siblings because her mother had to go off to East London to work, a challenging task for a young lady.

When she first came to Cape Town about twenty-three years ago, she worked as a domestic worker but that, she says, was not 'full-time' because she worked for different people on different days. In an attempt to ensure either full-time employ or fill her 'empty' days of the week she placed her name in the Argus advertisement column. A doctor contacted her, offered her a job and she has been in his employ to this day. Their friendship is deep and extends beyond an employer/employee type relationship to one in which she considers him as her mentor, friend, 'father' and provider.

### Perceived Benefits of Magic

- Off the streets. Children are kept off the street thus limiting the opportunity and temptation to join gangsters. This, she considers to be a direct result of their involvement in magic.

*I did not want children to play outside and to walk up and down. All my children I grew up learnt how to do everything, how to do washing, everything themselves. So I was very happy when they started with the school of magic as I noticed that they had no chance to go join the 'gangsters'. That made me happy.*

- Financial incentives. Edna is aware of the financial benefits magic has provided for Mzolisi. As she states:

*It helped him to raise money for himself, as I don't have money to buy the things he wants, as I am the only one working in this home. Sometimes he makes money for himself at parties.*

- Enhanced Respect. Edna believes that involvement in magic 'keeps him clean, and keeps him respectful. As she says 'When the children go there, it changes their life'

More than one member of Edna's family is involved at the College. The children participating in the Project also frequent her home. Therefore, she has [she says] first-hand experience of how magic changes children's lives, as she articulates in the following extract:

*Like some of the children [were] wayward in the street, but when they join the magic, as many of them come here now, I see the change, the old life is finished and they come here and are able to behave like they way we live here in this home.*

- Focus, improved discipline and improved organisational skills. While she suggests that her children have 'always been disciplined and organised in the home' since joining the College, they have shown better focus on tasks. In addition they seem to organise their time and activities with more exactitude and just generally seem more well adjusted and fit the programme into their schedule and seemed to cope well?.

- Improved self-confidence. Mzolisi's self confidence has developed and he is now confident to speak in public. As his mother says Mzolisi was a very shy boy but now, 'I love the magic college as it gives them confidence to speak in front of an audience'.
- Pride and improved self-worth. Mzolisi performed for former-President Nelson Mandela, an occasion that occurred in Madiba's hometown. This event together with a few other 'minor' performances influenced Mzolisi significantly and changed the way he perceives himself. He has developed a sharper sense of worth.
- Off the streets. Magic has created an outlet for Mzolisi and has kept him off the street. This is what Edna had to say in this regard:

*Praise the College and thank them for taking all the children and teaching them and showing them a way so nicely. It [magic] gives him a chance to be busy and he does not have time to play outside and be idle, as I am working on a Saturday.*

## MIRROR 6 – MBULELO MGUZULWA

Mbulelo is sixteen years old and comes from a family of five. He has two older brothers, one older and one younger sister. He is in Grade 10. He has been living in Khayelitsha since 1994, having lived with his family at his aunt's house in Guguletu before. He was born in Newport; a place in the Eastern Cape.

His eldest brother lives with his aunt in Guguletu and helps her with her business. His second brother works in Johannesburg. His oldest sister lives in Worcester while the younger of the two girls lives at home. The brothers do visit.

Growing up in Guguletu was much fun, as Mbulelo recalls. He fondly recalls the day when his aunt came back from America in 1990. According to him

*It was a super day, as it was the first time I saw someone from America. She lived in America. I was so excited because we had lots of fun and she told us all about life in America. I thought I would like to go to America too as the life there seems to be a lot more easier than life here.*

A memory he recalls about life in Khayelitsha was the day his father took ill. He describes it as the worst day in his life because the family thought they 'were going to lose him'.

For him the greatest thing that has happened to him was joining the College of Magic. He heard about magic from a friend who attended the College of Magic. His friend came to school one day and showed him some tricks. He was excited as he, too, wanted to make magic. His eldest brother called the College for him and spoke to Khonzani, the co-ordinator, to make arrangements for his joining.

He only 'exposed' his magic at school this year. It was a nerve-wracking experience, as he knew that some of the children at school are naughty and would not know how to behave during his performance. Now, he says, they all want him to do magic even when he is busy. He says 'they do pester me, but I am firm and tell them this is not the time to do magic, I will do it after my schoolwork'.

He does perform some tricks free of charge, since he feels he is not ready to perform on stage. He says that

*Magic is all about entertaining, so I enjoy showing the friends. I don't think the novelty will wear out by me showing my friends the tricks I can perform, I just need to get surer of myself.*

Mbulelo does the regular magic courses as well as the Theatre Production Course. He also helps other students during their preparation for a performance.

For Mbulelo participating in the Project has meant:

- Learning to respect himself and other people. As he states:

*Other people are not nice; all are different, different characters. Magic helps me. Sometimes they become angry as they feel you are not doing your job correctly. I still need to treat them with respect even if I feel that they have not treated me with respect.*

- Extensive concentration on tasks; be they schoolwork or magic tricks. To this end he states that:

*Magic has helped me to concentrate because with magic whatever you do, you need to concentrate. I was good in work, but not as good as I am now. Now I concentrate a lot more.*

- Application of concepts learnt at the College to other areas of his life, particularly school work. He gives an example of this by stating the following

*The trick that I can apply in my schoolwork is like the 'rope magic'. I can apply it in mathematics. I know and understand the concept before the others in class. In the rope magic you're using hands and your mind and counting numbers... I find that before the others can understand it, I get it!*

- Improving his English because he is placed in situations that compel him to communicate in English, an advantage as he sees it.
- Communicating across racial lines with confidence. He says that:

*I feel that the College has helped me as I meet a lot of white guys here and have to talk English. I feel good about being with white guys. In the Township, we are not used to being with white guys so I feel I have to change and be like, I can't explain... White guys are friendly, unlike the black guys who would rather say, 'Get away from us'. The other things I admire about them is their creativity, most of them are creative.*

- Firmer time-management. On a typical day he would:

*Normally sit and relax for a while and then practise accounting as it is a lot more difficult than the other subjects. After practising my schoolwork I practise my magic. I don't see my friends as they know that I am busy. They don't worry me to come and play, as they know that even if they do try to persuade me, I will not go, as I have to practise my work.*

*At 5pm I usually go to the gym as I also play soccer and practise on Mondays, Tuesday and Thursday only and usually have free day on Friday. On Saturday after college, I go and play soccer. Sometimes I have to go to school to attend extra classes for accounting. This does not interfere with my magic classes only on a Tuesday, as I have to attend 'Theatre Production'. I usually get home about 6pm after gym. I usually do tricks for my family, especially my niece, as I have children's magic and practise this.*

- The elaboration of attainable goals and ambitions. In this regards he states that he wants to become a sound engineer and that one day he wants to be:

*Not rich, not poor and be able to support family, as I want to have a family...have my own cars. Magic is part of my life and I believe it will help me a lot.*

## **Mr Mguzulwa: Mbulelo's Father**

### Introduction

Mr Mguzulwa was born in Newpoort, in the Karoo- a little town en-route to Johannesburg. He is not sure exactly when he was born because his parents 'were old fashion and illiterate.'

In 'those days there were no such things like that, birth certificates and things like. So I just decided how old I am. I took my age from a friend of mine, who I thought was my age...'

Mr Mguzulwa is the youngest of two brothers and four sisters. His mother died when he was still very young. His father was self-employed for most of his life. However, during the height of Apartheid, his business was taken away and he had to work 'for the White people'. This adversely affected Mr Mguzulwa's school trajectory. He left school and began to work in 1974. He moved to Cape Town in 1989 where he began work as a truck driver for Joel's Transport, a position he still holds today.

Mr Mguzulwa is married with five children. He holds strong family values and suggests that what he values most in his life is the well being of his family.

### Perceptions of Magic

Mr Mguzulwa did not hold any strong perceptions; good or otherwise regarding magic. In fact, he states that he did not know about Mbulelo's registration with the College

*I don't know how he found out about it, as I was not here. In fact when I came home I was told that Mbulelo has joined the College. In fact, he joined without my consent, Ha! Ha! When I got home they told me that he was doing magic and there was a guy called Khonzani, he seemed a little bit excited. I said to myself, if he feels like doing it; it is fine with me, it is his future. Maybe he sees something that can help him in time to come, you know.*

However, there is an indication [in the above quotation] that he holds positive sentiments regarding Mbulelo's participation in magic.

### Perceived Benefits of Magic

- Behavioural change. Mbulelo's father suggests that magic has 'upgraded' his son's life. When asked to elaborate, this is what he said:

*You know, like now that Vuyo is not here, they are always together, but since he has been busy with Khonzani and his magic, I see a lot change with him, because his mother used to suffer here, looking for kids to send to the shop. The guys were just missing. But with this magic that he is doing, the guy has just changed. He does go like any young man, but not for long. He may go for an hour or two and then he is back. I think he is growing and becoming an adult now. We used to look for him and Vuyo. But most of the time now we are looking for Vuyo. Mbulelo is always here at home.*

- Improved inter-personal relationships. Mbulelo was generally not shy but 'now with this magic business he has become more liked and a soccer player. He is always among people. And now where he is, it is always magic'. He seems to have improved his inter-personal relationships and attracts a crowd wherever he is. One of the reasons for this is because he readily has a trick to perform.
- Improved school performance. While it is difficult to attribute improved school performance exclusively to Mbulelo's involvement in magic, his father suggests that his involvement has meant better focus, time off the streets and a more mature young man. The unintended outcome has been an improvement in his school grades. As he states:

*I think it is doing something in his brain. For even at school he is doing better than before. It has changed something in his brain; the guy is wiser than before. He used to be lazy, but now that he is in this magic he is no longer in the street.*

## MIRROR 7 – NTOBEKO MDLANKOMO



Ntobeko is ten years old and is in Grade 4. He comes from a family of five. His brother is fifteen years old and is still at school. He has a twenty-one year-old sister who is at college.

Before coming to live in Khayelitsha, the family lived in Langa. However, Ntobeko was born in Khayelitsha. His parents are from the Transkei. His mother comes from Nkhomani, and his father from Lavuma. He has visited these areas during school holidays with his parents. It was a good experience, except that the roads are gravel and people live in thatched-roofed houses.

Ntobeko attends Prestwich Street Primary in Sea Point. His father and mother work in town so it is convenient for Ntobeko to attend the school he does.

He started at the College of Magic this year and is in the process of completing Course 1. He learnt about the College through Khonzani. The first time he saw someone doing magic, he felt very 'nice'. He told himself that he could be just as good as that man who did the magic. (It was the man from the magic shop!). He does not do any magic at school because, as he says:

*They will tell the whole school and the school will want that I must tell them about the magic, how I do it. So I don't tell anyone about my magic. My mother said I must not do it, I must only tell them about the magic when I am very good in magic, when I am very good!*

His first experience of stage performance was pleasant and very positive. He says that:

*I was happy when I did it the first time, when I was number one!! I did it on the stage, on Saturday and it worked very nicely. When I go onto the stage, I am like scared. But later I realised it was so easy, so I must. After this, if I have to go on a stage I will not be scared.*

Ntobeko is also involved in juggling. While he admits that it is difficult:

*[I am] trying to do it, but I cant! It is not easy, I have to try and try. If I do it, I have to look for someone to help me do it, but I will keep on trying. Even when I go out now, I will look for a person who can help me.*

For Ntobeko participating in the Project has meant:

- Planning and working towards reaching a goal, however small. For example, he intends coming back to complete Course 2. He says that when he has completed all the Courses, he wishes to come back to the College and teach.
- A vision for the future, evidenced by the following excerpt:

*When I am very good, I will perform. I will make money. I intend to give this money to my Daddy to buy food so we will all eat or he will keep it for me. They will also buy me something.*

## **Ntobeko's Parents**

### Introduction

Ntobeko's parents were both born in the Transkei and came to live in Site B, Khayelitsha before moving to Makhaza. They have three children, a twenty-one year old daughter, a sixteen-year-old son and Ntobeko, who is ten. The parents view their move to Cape Town as a positive one even though they personally prefer living where their roots are. As the father suggests:

*But for me, bringing the children to Cape Town, it was a very good thing we did. When we grew up, there was no chance to go for an education, because my parents were poor and, my mother, she never worked. When we came to Cape Town with our children. Our children got a chance to mix with all other kinds of children; that is a good thing, but for me...*

Ntobeko's parents did not 'have a problem with that [him joining the College], if he thinks he can be a magician, maybe it is his role and route he will take in his life. Give him a chance, if he wants to do it, he can take'. They also did not have difficulty with community perceptions that might have distorted their views of magic.

### Perceived benefits of Magic

- Off the streets. Magic creates opportunity for involvement in an activity that keeps children off the street. As his mother suggests

*I wanted to keep him out of the location, like on Saturdays, he must not be here he must go and learn something. Even for half a day, most Saturdays he is there and then he comes in the afternoon.*

- Interest and entertainment. Ntobeko's mother is aware that magic creates opportunity for entertainment; something she believes will benefit her son as he grows.

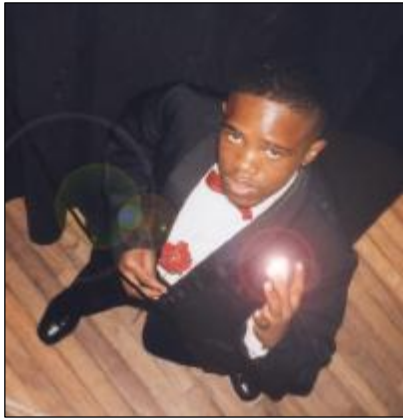
*I think he can benefit because he can attract the people, because of the 'tricks' he does learn*

- Improved dexterity. What magic seems to be enhancing is the child's dexterity and his ability to 'get it right' with a high level of proficiency. In magic, his mother suggests, there is no room for mistakes. As she states, 'he must be quick and as they say, you must not do it twice. So I think it will be something different from what everybody is doing'.
- Enhanced self-worth. Magic has provided Ntobeko with something he can call 'his own'. In this regard, his father suggests:

*He has changed, he now seems that he has his own, he doesn't come to me like he used to; he now has something that he hides himself. I can see that there is a change in him.*

When probed about what he means by 'he hides himself' the father explained that this magic was something that no one else in the family was doing, thus making Ntobeko feel unique and special. This, by implication, enhanced his confidence and feelings of self-worth.

## MIRROR 8 – ANELE MAKHALANE



Anele is fourteen. He lives with his parents, two brothers and a sister in Makhaya, Khayelitsha. Anele is fifth in the family and has a younger brother who attends school in Mitchell's Plain. Anele attends Queens Park Senior Secondary School in Woodstock. He says that he wanted a 'better education' that is why he was placed at this school.

His parents come from the Transkei, his mother from Qumbu and his father from Mt Fletcher. These places are very different from Cape Town. Anele loved visiting the rural area because he had opportunity to tend the sheep and milk cows. However, he is not sure whether he would be able to live there permanently. The family is planning a visit to his mother's family again at the end of the year, a trip he is looking forward to. His father's parents have died and he seems to have lost contact with his sister, so they don't see his father's family when they travel to the Transkei.

Anele lost a brother in 1997, an experience that has had a major emotional impact on the family.

He has attended the College of Magic for four years. He first heard of the College from one of his friends, Siphamandla, who is now a graduate from the College. In the beginning, his mother did not want him to participate in the magic activities because she thought that it was 'dirty stuff'. Khonzani then came and explained it to her, and she changed her mind and gave her approval.

The first time he saw someone perform a trick, he was fascinated and wanted to emulate the person. He asked the magician if he always carried some trick in his pocket, to which the magician replied positively. Today Anele does the same! He always carries a trick in his pocket because he is well recognised in the community as the 'magician. As he says, 'I am always prepared!

Anele prefers stage performance to close-up magic since, he says, he feels more confident on stage. His first few experiences on stage were filled with anxiety but the scenario has changed now. This anxiety is diminished as a result of his higher level of confidence but, more importantly, because he is always well prepared. As he states:

*I was very nervous, but now I am fine. But sometimes I do feel anxious. I don't worry about forgetting one of my tricks, as I rehearse well*

The learners at the school he attends are aware of his involvement with magic as he did a show at the school, just to demonstrate to them. That is how they got to know that he is a magician. They were very impressed and were amazed. Prior to that he had not told anybody about this involvement.

For Anele participating in the Project has meant:

- Development of respect for others. As he says

*At the college, you don't only learn how to do magic, but you are also taught how to speak to people and how to respect.*

- Enhancement of communication skills. Regarding this aspect, Anele states that

*When I am in the community, I find that I do use the communication skills I am taught at the College, I keep on doing the same thing that I have learnt at the College. I don't get into fights with friends. If my friends get into an argument, I always tell them not to fight, they must talk. My friends do look at me as a peacemaker.*

- Firmer time-management. He has to juggle school and magic practise so as to ensure that none of the aspects suffer adversely.
- Peer admiration and role modelling. He states that he was popular even before his involvement in magic but now this has increased tremendously.
- Increased understanding of what it means to always 'be prepared' and the interrelationship between preparedness and practice. Anele says that he is always prepared to do a trick because he practises often. To this end he states

*I had lots of friends, even before I showed them that I knew magic, and after I showed them the tricks I could perform, they are always around asking me to show them something amazing. I always say that I will, tomorrow I will bring something to amaze them. The children pay me to do the tricks. I am quite confident about the tricks I perform, and don't feel like they may catch me out. They say that practice makes perfect. And I practise often.*

- Heightened organisational skills. Being involved in magic means one has to be organised in terms of what one wears, how one prepares for the magic classes, how one has to practise in order to be successful in one's performance, aspects that have become integral to Anele's life .
- A keen awareness of appropriate dress codes that match various occasions. As Anele suggests:

*I do organise my stuff. I see, Oh! I have got something else to do, then I do it. About getting ready for College, before coming here, we use to wear anything, but when I started at the College, I wore my black and white. Now I have changed, when I go home, I wear clean stuff and can organise myself. I think the college has changed me, I love coming to the College. When the College is closed, it is boring, in the area where I live.*

- The development of a vision for the future. Anele wants to do 'what Khonzani is doing' and help the College. He also wants to be a doctor, something he believes is within his reach because he is good at mathematics and science.

## **Sheila: Anele's Mother**

### Introduction



Sheila was born in the Transkei and was one of eleven children. She completed primary school and was forced to quit school because of financial constraints and negative perceptions about educating girls.

Her mother loved to sew, a skill she has developed. Her father was a builder, a skill she learnt from him. Sheila suggests that she has become very adept at this skill too!

Her parents were very strict and did not allow the children to visit other people's homes for prolonged periods of time. She has

applied this strictness to her own family. She is aware of how different life is today compared to when she grew up. In comparing life in the Transkei and Khayelitsha, she states that children in Khayelitsha are more 'stout', something that is of concern to her.

Sheila is deeply religious and attends church almost every evening. This is a very significant aspect of her life since it keeps her focused.

Sheila is married with seven children [she lost her eldest son a few years ago]. She followed her husband to Cape Town in 1983 primarily because one of her children needed specialized hospital care.

### Perspectives of Magic

When Sheila first heard about magic in the community she was sceptical, particularly because of her religious orientation. She perceived it as 'evil' and was concerned about what her congregation members would say if any of her children became involved.

However, after an explanation from Khonzani, the coordinator of the Project, she understood and changed her perspective. She spoke to her religious leader about Anele's involvement and after her explanation, he too was at ease, to an extent that he even came to pray for Anele's success. Today her congregation is very supportive and is proud of Anele's achievements!

### Perceived Benefits of Magic

- Closer family relationships. For Anele's family, magic has provided them with something to focus on during the time of adversity. It has provided a catalyst for changed perspectives on life and respect for others.
- Off the streets. According to his mother, Anele has been kept off the streets because Saturday morning means time at the College.
- Enhanced problem solving. This mother suggests that magic has assisted Anele in seeking solutions to his problems (magic, school or home) in practical, yet creative ways. His creativity has been enhanced in tangible ways. Anele has been awarded accolades in recognition of his talent and creativity.

## MIRROR 9 – LUNIKO FETESE

Luniko is eleven years old and lives with his mother and a baby sister in Khayelitsha. He is in Grade 5. He attends a Chuma Primary School in Town Two, Khayelitsha. His favourite subjects at school are mathematics and physics because, he says, he learns about things he did not know before.

He learnt about the Project from a friend who also attends the College. He also knew a few more people who attend the College. The magic show by Khonzani at his school spurred him on to find out how he could join. His main reason for wanting to join is because he thinks that magic will provide him with opportunities to travel and see places he has not been to before.



While it is only his first year at the College, Luniko is conscious of the benefits. For him participating in the Project has meant:

- Improved communication in English. Luniko suggests that his English has improved and that this improvement has helped him understand work in the different subjects at school.
- Improved self-worth. His friends call him “Mr Magic” and this makes him feel ‘great’.
- Sense of vision and purpose. Luniko sees two members of the group as role-models and people he emulates and says that one day, he wants to be as good as they are. This inadvertently has given him a sense of purpose and determination to succeed.

### **Teresa: Luniko’s Mother**

#### Introduction

Teresa grew up in Somerset West with her parents and two brothers and a sister. Her mother worked as a domestic worker and her father as a chef in a hotel. She and her siblings lived with her mother in one room, a memory that she finds painful to describe.

She completed part of her schooling in the Eastern Cape and matriculated in Belhar, Cape Town. She had a break in her schooling career because, at the age of sixteen, she fell pregnant with Luniko, who was born in 1992. Her mother took care of him while she went back to school to complete her matric. She thereafter trained as a researcher at a non-governmental organisation based in Observatory. Teresa does not have a full-time position as a researcher but gets called upon to conduct surveys as and when required.

#### Perspective on Magic

When Luniko first mooted the idea of participating in the Project, Teresa was very sceptical for two reasons. The first related to the financial implications of this commitment. However, the more serious reason related to general community perspectives on magic and the perceived consequences of this involvement. She was opposed to Luniko joining the College because, as she says, ‘people who do magic are sorcerers and do bad things to other people’.

Her primary fear, however, centered on community attitudes and perspectives because, as she suggests, the prevailing view in the community is that ‘magicians do bad things to people’.

She was also acutely aware of her financial limitations and knew that she would not be in a position to finance Luniko. Notwithstanding, his persistence and indeed his proactive nature (he called the College and personally made his own arrangements) forced her to relent on her position and Luniko registered for the course. Her perspective on magic also changed when she met Khonzani who clarified the two issues and made her comfortable about Luniko’s participation.

Today, her perspective is very different. She is positive and excited about the opportunities Luniko has had as a result of his involvement.

### Perceived Benefits of Magic

- Sense of purpose. Teresa has been very aware of how magic has given Luniko ‘more than something to do’; it has provided him with an outlet that is purposeful, rewarding and interesting. He is kept off the streets, away from undirected ‘township’ life. He is in a safe, nurturing environment every Saturday. She does not ‘have to worry about his whereabouts and what he is up to or involved in’ every Saturday because she knows exactly where he is.
- Improved English communicative skills. According to Teresa, Luniko has improved in English and speaks much ‘better’ since he has joined the College. He uses his ability to help other children in the ‘township’ by interpreting and explaining English concepts and words. This unintended outcome has boosted his own confidence to communicate in English with ease.
- Firmer time-management and improved organisation. Teresa has noticed that Luniko is managing his time differently since his involvement in the Project. For instance, he is focused when he comes home after school. Often, his daily routine now includes completing his homework and then practising magic. Friday is a particularly focused day for him because he prepares his clothes and magic bag for the Saturday morning class. Even at eleven years, Luniko washes his own shirt because he ‘wants to look good and neat’, a recent occurrence in his life.
- Heightened level of curiosity. Teresa suggests that Luniko has become very curious and has become very eager to know how things work. While this curiosity might be as a result of an expansion of his personal experience and development, involvement in magic seemed to have enhanced this.

## MIRROR 10 – WANDILE LOUW



Wandile is thirteen years old. He lives with his parents and four brothers in Khayelitsha. His father built the house in which they currently live. His two older brothers have completed school. The eldest is doing a Bachelor of Commerce degree at the University of the Western Cape and the younger of the two is working as a casual labourer at South African Breweries. He does, however, intend to study next year.

Wandile is in Grade 7 at Intshayelelo Primary School in Khayelitsha. He likes school because he learns lots of new things. His favourite subjects are mathematics and English.

It is Wandile's first year of involvement and so he found it difficult to articulate what he perceives as the potential benefits. He did, however, state how much he enjoyed magic and coming to the College every Saturday.

### **Vuyile and Violet Louw: Wandile's Father and Mother**

#### Introduction

Vuyile was born in 7th Avenue, Kensington, Cape Town. His parents had seven children. He was born as a twin, one of two sets of twins born to his mother. The family lived in Worcester before he was born, and moved to Kensington. As children, they did not know their parent's place of birth, an issue that is still of great concern to him today because as he states, 'I do not know where my grandfather and grandmother's bones are, I need to know so then I can get the right position'.

Vuyile has five children, Wandile being the third. His wife is a housewife now because she was involved in a car accident that left her unable to walk with ease.

Vuyile's first response to Wandile's request to join the College was silence and indifference, 'I was just busy with my mechanics' he states. His wife, however, realized that Wandile was very serious about wanting to join. She states

*The reason I agreed is that I could see that it was something he really wanted to do. Even when he saw Khonzani at the Vukani Newspaper, he asked if could find out where the school of magic is. We then wrote to Amy and she gave us the address and the phone number.*

Vuyile's attitude changed when he realised that Wandile was persistent about registering. He states:

*Actually I was interested when Wandile came with this to us. I said Wandile, it is all in the hands of God, and I will rather work, wearing overalls, but to Wandile I say, 'Go for it'*

### Perspectives on Magic

This community also seems to hold views of magic as something evil. Vuyile states that:

*One of my friends came to visit the other day and said, Wandile is going to change us, he was scared, and he said everybody must go away.*

However, this perspective is not of concern to the family because Vuyile sees the benefits as far outweighing these negative perceptions.

### Perceived Benefits of Magic

- Detractor from street-life. Even though Wandile has only been involved for five months, his parents are elated because 'we don't need the kids to grow up in the street'. Magic is perceived as the vehicle by means of which children are kept off the street, a sound reason for keeping him in magic!

### **Summary**

Using learner and parent voices, the section above illustrated how involvement in the Project currently impacts on the material and social conditions of some communities in the Western Cape. The reported 'cases' have gone some way to illustrate parent and learner perceptions and perceived benefits [independently of each other]. A significant benefit relates to how both parents and learners have expanded visions for the future and how this is based on tangible evidence (learner achievement in and exposure through magic). No longer are some members of this community dreaming without a plan. Magic is the catalyst through which this community can and indeed have the right to dream!

The 'cases' demonstrate, too, how perceptions about magic in the community are being revised, reshaped and renegotiated as a result of these learners' involvement.



### **4.3 THE WAND HAS BEEN WAVED**

What follows below is a consolidation of the common themes that emerged from learner (individual and focus), teacher and parent interview data as well as data from the observation field-notes.

Two main themes (common strands) emerged from the various sources of data. The first is a focus on the changing perceptions of magic in the communities from which these children are drawn. The second theme encapsulates the educative benefits. Important to bear in mind is that these educative benefits are underpinned by an understanding that transcends limited concepts of education as primarily demonstrable in academic performance. These educational benefits are holistic and are understood to include psychosocial; cognitive (and by implication academic); emotional and familial benefits. Each theme is discussed below.

#### 4.3.1 Changing Perception of Magic in the Community

Magic, in the community from which these learners are drawn (comparable to commonly held and interrogated understandings in many other communities), is not perceived as a competency or a set of skills that can be acquired. Instead, it is essentially perceived as a negative, 'evil' thing that only 'bad' people do. Those who are said to indulge in such practices are often perceived as sorcerers who plan evil against people they dislike or despise. Another perception upheld is that those involved in magic have 'extraordinary powers' that allow them to 'change' things from their original form into something else. It is also perceived that magicians are endowed with powers that allow them to project evil against individuals or families.

During this evaluation, one of the most observable unintended outcomes of the Project was the extent to which parents, families and communities have revised and changed their commonly held perceptions of magic. This was evident in three ways. Firstly, it was confirmed in what the parents said in the interviews. Secondly and more importantly, it was evident in the manner in which they articulated this change. The parents demonstrated immense pride (and smiles) as they described their children's involvement and how this has certainly allowed the community the space to review their understandings of magic in a non-threatening manner. Thirdly, it was reflected in the level of support and encouragement these parents gave to their children.

In cases where parents were unsure or afraid of community responses, adequate information, by someone whom they could trust and relate to, sufficed to help them examine and review their perceptions and thereafter make informed decisions concerning their children's participation. Without fail, all parents chose to allow their children to become involved once they understood the processes involved.

Instructive is how parents themselves are becoming 'educators' concerning magic in their respective communities. Now that they understand magic as a skill/competence that can be taught and learnt, they are sharing this information with other family members, neighbours and friends. The upshot of this is that the magic wand has touched many more lives in the broader community than anticipated.

#### 4.3.2 Educative Benefits

It is difficult to place the perceived benefits below into well-defined categories especially since these are all interrelated and together function to create an interesting mosaic that, in my opinion, needs to be read as such. Notwithstanding, the perceived benefits are discussed under three sub-headings, namely psychosocial, academic, and organisational benefits.

### *Psychosocial Benefits*

Teachers, parents and children reported that one of the immediate benefits of involvement in magic is the sense of well-being and the development of a positive self-image. Teachers described developing self-esteem (and by implication self-worth) as one of the intentional outcomes for the Project, but were uncertain of the extent to which this was being achieved. From the learner and parent perspectives, however, this was tangible. Both groups used a variety of descriptors to illustrate the point. Many children felt that they were 'somebody important' and that they felt 'great' about their participation. One parent described magic as something that his child could claim as 'his very own', a unique signifier of whom he is; thus making his child feel unique and special.

Many children described how they enjoyed being recognised as aspirant 'magicians' by community members and friends, an aspect that also supported and increased their self-worth and the development of a positive self-image. They took pleasure in a label like 'Mr Magic', a label many wore with pride.

A key benefit seemed to lie in how children's self-worth was coupled with being a part of the 'magic group'. Many learners described how important and gratifying it was to be recognised as part of the magic community. Parents also acknowledged this as important because, to them, such a community provided a safe environment, a place where creative energy was released, nurtured and channelled to enhance self-worth.

Indicative in parent and learner responses was a growing level of independence by participating children. This independence was demonstrated in their responsibility taking (for homework, clothes, daily chores, organising and successfully juggling extra-mural activities, etc.). Parents were ardently aware of how the need to be organised in magic spilt over into routine activities children did, in and around the home, and how this was conducted independently of the parents. From the learners' perspectives, this independence extended beyond what is described above, to include the possibility of being financially independent. Many described how they would be able to make money once they felt 'ready' to do shows and stage performances for large audiences. For some learners, this was already a reality because they were already participating in shows, concerts and the like. What was interesting in the cases where this occurred was how children perceived and used this money. They did not perceive their activities as a quick 'money-making' tactic (for immediate gratification; e.g. buying clothes or things that would make them comfortable in the present) but instead to them it was a means to a larger end; that being of becoming 'somebody' one day.

Characteristic in almost all the learner interviews was a sense of purpose and a vision for the future, features closely allied to a sense of well-being and self-worth. Without exception, learners stated that magic had created opportunity for them to have 'big dreams' and anticipate a better future for themselves and their families. They seemed to be keenly aware that their vision was not unreasonable, out of reach or unrealistic. To them their visions were possible because, already, for one or two of them, they had begun to unfold. In cases where this was happening, these children served as role models for the rest of the participating children. Learners in this Project, therefore, seemed to understand that external circumstances are not sole factors that determine one's future. Through magic, they could dare to create, shape, participate in and plan their own future ... what a gift to give to any child!

Parents reported that children participating in the Project were role models for friends and others in the community in a variety of ways: in the way they were disciplined, focused, organised and in the level of respect that they showed towards anybody; young and old. Learners attested to the sentiments of their respective parents. They were conscious of being admired, being 'in the eye' and

of being role models within the magic community and especially among their school peers. This made them feel good about themselves and increased their self-worth and self-image.

Within the magic community, certain children stood out as role models from learner and parent points of view. Parents would say 'I want my child to be as good as so-and-so' and children would say 'I want to be as good as so-and-so'. Interestingly, the children who were perceived as role models did not view this negatively but accepted this role with ease and understood the importance of maintaining their 'new status' through hard work and lots of practise!

Increased self-confidence made it easier for learners to say 'no' under circumstances where there was pressure to do otherwise. They seemed to have developed the confidence not to succumb to peer pressure even under circumstances where some were singled out and called 'chicken' or 'pain' for refusal to take part in 'naughty habits' such as smoking. Children reported that even during those instances when the pressure was intense, they were able to be firm because they knew what they wanted to achieve.

Learners mentioned that they had learnt to laugh at and enjoy themselves. The ability to laugh at oneself with others is important for one's well-being and a healthy addition to one's sense of self!

Learners' perceptions of themselves in relation to other racial groups changed. Participating in the Project and mixing with children from other racial groups made them realise that they were the same in terms of ability and competencies, even if they did not necessarily look alike. There were instances when children in the Project performed better than those who were either more experienced or from racial groups they thought would be 'better'. The upshot is that stereotypes have been shattered on both sides of the divide... a very positive benefit during this era of nation building.

Learners have talked about increased respect for themselves, evident as they say, in their appearance especially on a Saturday morning.

Finally, in this theme, learners' self-confidence was enhanced by their participation in stage performances. Enhanced self-confidence was closely linked with confidence in their ability and in understanding the interrelationship between preparation, practice and performance. Many learners understood that their ability to perform well was more a consequence of much practice rather than as a result of luck, an understanding that shaped the way they articulated their vision for the future.

#### *Academic Benefits*

Parents stated that it was difficult to attribute the academic performance exclusively to their children's involvement in magic. Notwithstanding, they did acknowledge the following: increased curiosity; enhanced creativity; improved reading competency; increased ability to problem solve and find things out for themselves; improved communicative skills and greater English proficiency and communication.

Learners were in agreement with their parents' points of view. However, they were more articulate in explaining the academic benefits. Learners recognised that mathematics and science concepts are fundamental in understanding magic. Thus, many magic tricks that were learnt depended on understanding the underlying mathematics or science concepts. They enjoyed learning these concepts in a fun way, through magic. More importantly though, was that these learners could transfer this knowledge to the classroom and make the connections between school knowledge and magic competency and vice versa.

The ability to problem solve and think things through in magic was another competency learners stated they could transfer to other learning areas like mathematics and science. These competencies, it would seem, are enabling learners to become independent, creative thinkers - critical outcomes within the new curriculum framework and essential competencies needed to compete within a global environment.

Finally, learners were benefiting by developing competencies in stage performance and public speaking, in verbal and non-verbal communication. Enhanced communication has had the added benefit of enabling learners to articulate feelings and provide alternative ways of resolving conflict amongst peers. Children reported, for example, that when friends got into arguments, they would always tell them not to fight, but talk instead. As a result, some children were looked upon as peacemakers. Others intimated that increased communication skills allowed them to recognise differences in people and enabled them to respect and be more tolerant of differences.

#### *Organisational Benefits*

Organisationally, learners benefited from their involvement in magic. Parents were also conscious of how involvement in magic changed the way in which their children organised their daily activities and how more focused they had become. This sharper focus on managing time was associated to and integrally linked with making time to practise magic. Many children stated that they had to manage their time more effectively so as to ensure that they could have playtime, schoolwork time, soccer time, chore time and magic time! This, many managed without coercion from parents.

As already stated, learners made the association between practice and success in performance, an understanding that they related to other aspects of their lives (such as practising soccer, science experiments, mathematics, speaking English etc.).

#### 4.3.3 Familial Benefits

For many parents and children alike, involvement in the Project meant a detractor from life in the street. Parents knew where their children were on a Saturday morning and children understood what it meant to be away from the township on a Saturday morning. Literally, parents were happy that their children were being kept off the streets. Figuratively however, it meant giving them a chance in life; a reason for being and a vision for possibilities beyond the township! The children, young and older, understood and articulated this sentiment.

Magic also served as a catalyst in relationship building within certain families. Some children stated that magic provided them with something to talk about; something to make the family laugh together and something that made them become close. Parents, who normally found it difficult to relate to their children, experienced this involvement as a vehicle to establishing, building or mending relationships between parent and child.

---

## 5 - CONCLUSION

---

This evaluation sought to investigate and evaluate the extent to which the Project is meeting its proposed goals. More specifically, through the use of a variety of data collection instruments, this evaluation sought to understand and describe the potential educational gains of the project.

It is not difficult to see that the Project has succeeded in meeting and going beyond its proposed goals. Significantly, the evidence from the data suggests that, in meeting its proposed goals, this Project has embraced a holistic approach to education, a concept of education that is proposed within the current educational reform. No finer expression of the spirit of the new curriculum is found than in what is evident in the classrooms and lived experiences of the children in the Project!



If projects of this nature can wave magic wands through the streets of one township and be so successful, imagine what similar projects embedded within the communities themselves can achieve.

---

## 6 - RECOMMENDATIONS

---

- The Project is funded on an annual basis, an aspect that can potentially put a strain and undue anxiety on the service provider and teachers involved. Longer-term funding should, therefore, be solicited to sustain and expand the services provided.
- Learning English is a significant benefit for Xhosa-speaking learners. This environment provides a natural space where English speaking learners can learn to speak Xhosa, an aspect that should be more consciously integrated into the planning and teaching at the College.
- Parents were very eloquent in explaining the potential benefits of magic. They also clearly stressed their changed perspectives of magic. It would seem, therefore, that parents are becoming an excellent resource in the community. Ways of using parents in talks, information sessions, show introductions etc. should be explored.
- There is evidence that children have gained much confidence in public speaking and stage etiquette. More and more, children should become involved in the planning, preparation and presentation of performances and not solely as performers. In addition, like their parents, they could be involved in talks, shows and performances in the community, involvement that goes beyond 'the performance'.
- Many children were very conscious of the short and long-term benefits and goals of magic in their lives. Ways should be explored in which these children, for whom magic is clearly working, may be used to encourage and motivate other children in and outside the Project.
- It is clear that children in the Project are more focused, prepared (in and out of project activities) and vision oriented. Tracking children, in a more systematic way through a longitudinal study, (to ascertain the benefits in and out of school) may be valuable for the life and sustainability of the Project.

- Very few girls seem to be attracted to participate in the Project. Reasons why should be sought and an effort should be made to correct the balance especially since, generally, it is the girl-child who seems more vulnerable.
- The evaluation focused only on the learners in the Project. It may be useful to do a comparison between the various groups of learners within the College as a way of ascertaining the perceived benefits from a more representative cohort/sample.



---

## 7 - REFERENCES

---

Babbie, E.; Mouton, J.; Payze, C.; Vorster, J.; Boshoff, N. & Prozesky, H. (2001). *The Practice of Social Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000).

Denzin, N. K. (1989). *Interpretative Interactionism*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1998). *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. London: Sage Publications

Fraenkel and Wallen (1993). *How to design and evaluate research in education*. Boston: McGraw-Hill

Maykut, P. & Morehouse, R. (1994). *Beginning Qualitative Research*. London: Falmer Press

Proposal, College of Magic (2002)

---

## 8 - APPENDICES

---

### A Research Time Schedule

*April*

- Negotiating access
- Identifying students and obtaining as much background information from College about learners
- Interview College lecturers
- Interview learners
- Observe at College
- Analysis

*May*

- Home and school visits
- Analysis

June

- Writing up
- Draft Report

August

- Final report

## **B Learner Interview Guiding Schedule**

1. Tell me your name, surname and how old you are
2. Tell me a little bit about your family: (Probe the learner to talk about his/her immediate family and significant others- mother, father, grandmother, siblings, etc. Ask with whom they live and who else lives in the family home with them)
3. Do you have any brothers and sisters? If you do, how many (brothers and sisters) and where do you fit in line? [Probe to find out what it is like to be either eldest, middle child or only child – whatever the child is. The probe can include questions like “How do you feel about being...the oldest/youngest child in the family?”]
4. Where did your parents grow up? (Probe learner to discuss when parents moved to Cape Town if they are not from the area)
5. Where do you go to school?
6. What grade are you in?
7. Tell me about the things you enjoy about school?
8. What don't you like about school? Why?
9. What is your favourite subject? Why?
10. What grade were you when you started at the College of Magic?
11. Who told you about the College of Magic?
12. What made you decide to do this course?
13. Tell me what you like about the things you learn at the College.
14. How do you think the things you learn about at the College help you at home and school?
15. What do your friends say about you doing this course?
16. Tell me about the first time you watched someone from the College doing magic... what tricks did they perform and how did you feel when watching the magic?
17. Would you perform in front of the children at your school? Why or why not?
18. Have you done any performances? [If yes, probe to find out more about how they felt before, during and after the performance, how it made them think about future performances.]
19. How do you think coming to the college and doing the course has changed you?
20. How do you think coming to the college has helped you in your school work?

## **C Letters of Permission to Parents**

The College of Magic  
215 Lansdowne Road,  
Claremont, Cape Town  
7740  
26 April 2003

Dear Madam/Sir

Re: Permission to conduct interviews and observations

The College of Magic, established in 1980, provides education and training for aspirant magicians and entertainers from a cross section of the South African population. Currently, at least 150 part-time students are involved in the extra-mural performance arts training. As a way of expanding the cultural diversity of participants and, more importantly, as a way of providing opportunity for those members from previously disadvantaged communities, a “Magic in the Community” project was launched in 2002.

The goals of the project include developing competencies and capacities in young people that extend beyond the world of magic to include social, emotional and educational gains. The project seeks to “enthuse and inspire young people with an exciting and rewarding education experience, build self esteem, improve co-ordination, develop valuable performing skills and potential job opportunities and to nurture excellent life-skills, provide access to information, performance and employment opportunities, services and computerised resources; empower young people by enabling them to gain the respect of their families and community and improve leadership potential and inspire students to be creative and productive through sharing skills, thereby contributing to wealth creation and career development”.

An evaluation process has been launched to assess the extent to which these project goals have been met. More specifically, this investigation will seek to understand and describe the potential educational gains of the project.

In order to complete the research, in-depth interviews and observations have to be completed with learners, family members, teachers of selected learners as well as staff teaching at the College of Magic.

Permission is hereby sought to complete interviews and observations. Dates and times will be negotiated in due time with all parties concerned.

All information will be handled strictly confidentially and will only be used for purposes of this evaluation. Where names are used, permission will be sought.

Thank you for your kind consideration

Yours Faithfully

David Gore  
Director: College of Magic

Jean Baxen  
Principal Researcher

**Di Letter of Agreement**

LETTER OF AGREEMENT

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (Mother/Father/Guardian) hereby grant permission for \_\_\_\_\_ to be interviewed and observed at the College of Magic and at school for purposes of the evaluation.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Dii Letter of Agreement**

LETTER OF AGREEMENT

I, \_\_\_\_\_ agree to be interviewed for purposes of the evaluation. I agree, too, that the interviews may be used for purposes of the evaluation.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_