basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

RESEARCH AGENDA
2024 - 2029

PURPOSE

1. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) Research Agenda seeks to **guide** and **coordinate** Research undertaken in the sector during the medium-term period 2024-2028.

2. The agenda sets out the main research questions which are a **priority** for the Department, and the sector as a whole in the next five years, with updates planned on a five-year cycle.

3. Education researchers such as academics, undergraduate and postgraduate students, individual research organisations, non-government organisations etc. are encouraged to consider, and engage with these research questions and provide high quality, internationally competitive research, and contribute to the dissemination of ground-breaking knowledge in the pursuit of excellence in the sector.

RESEARCH COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

1. The Research Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation (RCME) Directorate within the DBE, will be responsible for coordinating such research through the agenda, and facilitating collaboration between researchers interested in similar questions.

2. This coordination and collaboration will be facilitated in order to share ideas and resources, as well as ensuring that the broader spectrum of research questions are addressed. Note, researchers are also not restricted to the sub-questions proposed in the agenda, and have room to innovate within each of the main research areas.

3. In order to facilitate this process, researchers are encouraged to submit a short paragraph describing their potential research question to research@dbe.gov.za and indicating whether or not they would like to be put in touch with other researchers doing similar work. In addition, researchers are also invited to share any research that they have conducted within each of these main areas.

4. Once completed, researchers are also requested to share their research papers with the DBE.

RESEARCH REQUEST

1. Researchers who require information from the DBE, such as interviews with DBE officials, data, official reports etc. are required to complete the formal DBE research request process.

RESEARCH REPOSITORY

1. There is a plethora of sector-specific research commissioned and conducted within the DBE that has previously not been in the public domain. The research repository serves as a mechanism to make this information available. It contains sector-specific research that has been commissioned and conducted within the DBE and is accessible to the website.

1. EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD)

Main Research Questions	Examples of Sub Questions	Examples of research in South Africa
How do we effectively deliver the curriculum in Grade R? What is the most cost- effective way of delivering pre-Grade R in South Africa?	How do we measure schools readiness and cognitive development in Grade R and the start of Grade 1? What is the relationship between performance on the ELOM 4&5 and the years a child has been enrolled in the programme, and their average attendance per week in the term preceding the data collection? Are we preparing 4 and 5-year-olds adequately for formal schooling? How do we identify learners at risk early to provide adequate remediation? What are the long-run benefits of providing quality education prior to Grade 1?	Thrive by five report DBE & DPME. The impact of the introduction of Grade R on learning outcomes
Increasing access	What are the most cost-effective programmes to scale up access to quality ECD programmes? What are the most cost-effective programmes to scale up access to parenting support programmes? Evaluating the impact of the outcomes-based funding initiative as a mechanism to increase access? What are the demand-side constraints to accessing ECD	

	programmes? Evaluating the impact of attending ECD programmes in South Africa?	
Improving quality	What are the most cost-effective programmes to improve the quality of ECD programmes at scale? What are the most cost-effective methods of upskilling ECD practitioners? What are the long-run benefits of providing quality education prior to Grade 1?	
Leadership and governance	What are the governance structures that could be standardised across ECD programmes?	
Nutrition	What are the most cost effective nutrition models to support improved child nutrition provisioning at ECD programmes?	
Funding	What are the trade-offs that are happening at a provincial level between Equitable Share & the Conditional Grant? Are there more effective payment solutions to administering and monitoring funding at ECD programme level? In South Africa what is the rate of return on the investment in ECD?	
Areas covered by the National Curriculum Framework?	How does the implementation of the NCF enhance the quality of practitioner-learner interactions?	LEGO Deep Dive report
Number of Early Learning Programmes available?	What are the challenges of ECD namely infrastructure, funding, qualifications and government support? Learning through Play: availability of relevant materials, practitioner attitudes, dedicated time for free play and indoor and outdoor spaces for play.	ECD Census 2021

2. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION (IE)

What support services are in place for IE?	How do schools provide support for the different needs of learners with disabilities? Are learning environments safe and welcoming for learners with disabilities? Screening and identifying children with special needs	
What has been done to build the capacity of the education system for IE?	What governance and management systems are in place to support inclusive education at the district and provincial level? What professional development is provided for teachers for IE? What systems are in place for curriculum, assessment and QA?	
	What infrastructure & transport systems support IE?	

3. TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Main Research Questions	**Examples of Sub Questions**	**Examples of research in South Africa**
What is the most cost- effective way of delivering and supporting in-service training in different contexts and for different subject areas?	What are the cost implications of coaching at scale and what is the most effective way for provinces to employ teacher coaches?	DBE, Early Grade Reading Study
	What is the minimum dosage of coaching that is required?	
	What role can Communities of Practice play in teacher	

	development?	
	Can virtual coaching be an alternative to on-site coaching?	
	Can a coach be used to catalyse a Community of Practice inschools that can be sustained in the long-term using existingresources in the system, such as an DH?	
	What school conditions need to be in place to sustain these effects?	
Do the existing implementation efforts, including the various methods or models in CPTD, respond adequately to the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, 2011–2025?	To what extent are the operational procedures and resources appropriate to ensure success of CPTD at the school, district, provincial and national level? Are there any operational bottlenecks?	
	How are innovations including ICTs used to deliver CTPD? How effective are these and how could they be enhanced based on available resources and international benchmarks?	
	What informs the CPTD at the school, district and provincial level? To what extent is the CPTD reaching the intended population?	
	Are PEDs in a position to deliver the existing Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development given their budget constraints?	
To what extent are teachers adequately prepared in pre-service training?	How can teachers be adequately trained to teach reading effectively?	Early Grade Reading Study
	Are teachers trained adequately to deal effectively with diverse classrooms? more inclusive education	
	What role can internships and mentorship play in preparingteachers more adequately for the classroom? EAs	REAP Research Report:
	How can teacher development be standardised across different	DHET. Teaching and Learning

	platforms and regions?	Development Capacity Improvement Programme
	Are teachers trained adequately to deliver on the outcomes oflearner achievement?	DHET. Teaching and Learning Development Capacity Improvement Programme

4. TEACHER SUPPORT

Main Research Questions	Examples of Sub Questions	Examples of research in South Africa
Are school Department Heads (DHs) in aposition to fulfil their role as a crucial lever towards effective curriculum delivery?	Are Departmental Heads adequately prepared to support teachers effectively?	DBE Early Grade Reading Study
	To what extent do Departmental Heads supervise the subjects they have studied for?	
	What are the binding constraints preventing Departmental Heads from fulfilling their role?	DBE & DPME. 2017. Implementation Evaluation of the National Curriculum Statement Grade R to 12. DBE Early Grade Reading Programme 2023
	How effective and influential do Departmental Heads perceive their roles to be within a school?	
	How are Departmental Heads supported by the district and province?	

5. TEACHING MATHEMATICS/ NUMERACY

Main Research Questions	Examples of Sub Questions	Examples of research in South Africa
How can learners be supported in Mathematics classrooms?	How best can language be used better for the teaching and learning of Mathematics? Do learners learn Mathematics best in their Home Language or EFAL?	
	Is clustering the curriculum a better approach for deeper conceptual understanding in Mathematics than a spiral curriculum? I.e. What are the effects of resequencing the curriculum or introducing a curriculum waiver? What are the areas in which the mathematics curriculum could be strengthened? And what way could new LTSM and manipulatives be improved?	
How to effectively teach Mathematics? (Focusing on the Foundation Phase)	How can teachers be best supported to teach Mathematics in a Multilingual classroom?	

6. HETEROGENOUS CLASSROOMS AND LEARNING RECOVERY

Main Research Questions	Examples of Sub Questions	Examples of research in South Africa
What are the effects of the large disparity in performance among learners in the same classrooms?	Are teachers teaching at the level of the children or the level of the curriculum?	
	Does the existing curriculum's pacing allow for adequate remediation and catch-up instruction?	
	How effective is Teaching and Learning in multigrade settings and how can policy support improved learning in multigrade settings?	

	What approaches to remediation and catch-up are effective at improving Teaching and Learning in South Africa?	
	What factors contribute to the formation of homogeneous classrooms, and how do these dynamics influence the learning experience in such settings?	
	How do existing and changes in policies, e.g. the promotion policy, grade repetition, affect homogeneous classrooms?	Kotze and Kika, 2019
What options exist to support effective teaching in these conditions?	What modalities are available for implementing ability grouping in different contexts, such as during "Teaching at the Right Level" initiatives?	
	What options exist for catch-up programmes in the later grades and what nuances in design and implementation can we learn from them?	
	How are pre-service and in-service teachers trained to teach multigrade classrooms and what potential strategies can be implemented to develop and improve this skill?	

7. THE USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN EDUCATION

Main Research Questions	**Examples of Sub Questions**	**Examples of research in South Africa**
How can new technologies be used to improve the qualityof teaching and learning?	What are the constraints and opportunities of using technology to support teaching and learning?	DBE. 2018. Second Early Grade Reading Study;
	How can new technologies be used to strengthen education system administration, management, monitoring and evaluation?	NECT. 2016. The status of ICT in Education in South Africa and the way forward. MSDF Success by Numbers report.

	What are the risks and opportunities for online education? What sort of regulation may be needed for online schools in South Africa?	

7. SECTOR PLANNING AND BUDGETING

Main Research Questions	Examples of Sub Questions	Examples of research in South Africa
How do we ensure thatwe have a sufficient	What are the teacher supply and demand trends over time for particular subgroups (phase, subject, language, province) and where do projected shortfalls exist?	DHET-commissioned report on teacher supply and demand.
number of teachers overthe medium to long run?	What are the implications of changing teacher demographics for recruitment, post-provisioning and the budget?	DBE. 2015. Basic Education Remuneration Issues.
Sector budgeting	What are the historical trends in education spending, per category, and how do population projections affect future planning and budgeting?	Report on spending inequities across the sector
	How might the directives towards gender-responsive planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation be practically applied in the way the sector operates?	
	How do national and provincial budgets relate to education sector planning? Why do unfunded mandates persist and how should planning and budgeting processes manage such situations?	
What data are required for education policymaking and planning?	Are there any areas where insufficient data exists regarding key issues such as demand for placements, cost, financing,performance and efficiency?	
	What is the completeness and quality of existing administrative data for the purposes of policy and planning?	

	How can existing administrative data be linked, analysed and communicated to better inform planning?	
	What assessment data is necessary to understand the disparities in learning in primary schools?	Report on standardized assessment practices and thinking:

8. TRANSTION FROM SCHOOL TO PSET AND LABOUR MARKET

Main Research Questions	**Examples of Sub Questions**	**Examples of research in South Africa**
How can more youths progress through appropriate post-school pathways leading to better labour market outcomes?	What will be the (likely) impact of the new General Education Certificate on the pathways learners follow and their ultimate labour market outcomes?	
	How could the expansion of the "Three Streams Model" improve the educational and employment opportunities for young people?	
	What are the major causes of dropping out of school and what strategies/programmes/policies impact on dropping out?	DBE (2023) report on dropping out and repetition:
	What percentages of learners enter into the various paths of post-school education, training, employment and unemployment, and how has this been changing over time?	Labour Market Intelligence Research Programme publications:

9. ACCOUNTABILITY

Main Research Questions	Examples of Sub Questions	Examples of research in South Africa
How can we enhance accountability at a school level?	How well are School Governing Bodies operating and how can local accountability at school-level be strengthened?	
	How can the DBE achieve the NDP vision of mutual accountability between schools and communities through the dissemination of school performance information?	
	How can the national DBE improve its monitoring and evaluation of provinces and districts and ensure that national developmental objectives are achieved at those levels?	DBE. 2007. Ministerial Committee onSchools that work. NEEDU. 2017. Schools that Work II
	What does current practice, especially in poorer schools, tell usabout optimal management strategies at the school level?	NEEDU. 2013. National Report 2013. Teaching and Learning in Rural Schools. (https://www.education.gov.za/Resources/Reports.aspx)

10. INFRASTRUCTURE

Main Research Questions	Examples of Sub Questions	Examples of research in South Africa
Financial implications	What are the key cost-drivers related to the building of schools?	
	What are the alternative funding modalities for school infrastructure?	

	The role of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in the provision ofschool infrastructure	
	Undertake a post-occupancy evaluation of recently built infrastructure	
	Unpack the impact of school designs on learner performance	

11. LEARNING AND TEACHING SUPPORT MATERIAL (LTSM)

Main Research Questions	Examples of Sub Questions	Examples of research in South Africa
Content and use	What does the LTSM landscape look like in South Africa?	DBE.2023. Primary Mathematics LTSM & Assessments Review Summative Report
	How can LTSM promote diversity and inclusion?	1. DBE. 2016. Textbook Evaluation Report of the Ministerial Task Team.
	What are some of the best practices of using LTSMs for learning and teaching?	DBE. 2020. NEEDU. Teaching Every Learner To Read At An Age - Appropriate Level.
	What does a minimum package for effective teaching look like for the Foundation Phase?	DBE. 2017. Early Grade Reading Study; DBE. 2018. Second Early Grade Reading Study; 2. NECT. 2018. Primary School Reading Improvement Programme
	How can technology be effectively integrated in resource constrained classrooms?	DBE. 2017. Early Grade Reading Study; DBE. 2018. Second Early Grade Reading
Cost and Management	What are the cost of retrieval and the top-up of textbooks vs new textbooks supplied each year?	
	What are cost effective approaches to providing sufficient	

	classroom materials?	

12. TEACHING LANGUAGE / READING

Main Research Questions	Examples of Sub Questions	Examples of research in South Africa
How to effectively teach Home Language in African languages?	What are effective models for implementing mother tongue instruction in the intermediate phase, Grade 4 to 6?	DBE.2023. African Languages for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing Beyond Grade 3: A National Rapid Assessment Study
	What is the extent of multilingualism in South African schools?	DBE.2012. The Status of the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) In Schools: A Quantitative Overview 2. DBE.2023. The Status of the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) in Schools: A quantitative overview: 2008-2016
	What are the fluency reading benchmarks for African languages for the intermediate phase?	1.DBE. 2020. Setting reading benchmarks in South Africa 2. DBE. 2020. Technical Report: Benchmarking early grade reading skills in Nguni languages 3. DBE. 2022. Benchmarks Report: Afrikaans early grade reading 4.DBE.2022. Benchmarking Report: Sesotho-Setswana Early Grade Reading 5.DBE.2023. Technical Report: Tshivhenḓa Home Language 6.DBE.2023. Xitsonga learning brief
	What are the key factors to increase internal validity in cross-language assessments in a South African context?	
	How to teach sound decoding skills in African languages during thefoundation phase?	DBE.2020. National Framework for the Teaching of Reading in African Languages in the Foundation Phase
	What is an effective phonics approach for African languages?	

	How are lexicons built up in agglutinating languages?	
	What do vocabulary development trajectories look like in African languages?	
	What kinds of word knowledge do African language children develop in the preschool years, the Foundation Phase and the Intermediate Phase?	
	What is the role of morphological awareness in the development of reading in African languages	DBE.2023. South African National Literacy Strategy and Plan: 2024-2030
How to effectively teach English as a second language	When and how should EFAL be introduced?	DBE. 2018. Second Early Grade Reading Study
	What are effective transition of the language of instruction practices?	
	What are appropriate reading benchmarks for second language speakers?	DBE.2022. Technical Report: English First Additional Language