



A 25 YEAR REVIEW OF PROGRESS IN THE BASIC EDUCATION SECTOR

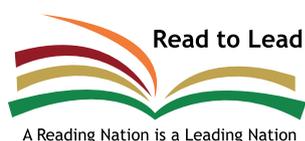
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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basic education

Department:
Basic Education
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Introduction:

April 2019 denotes the 25th anniversary of the advent of democracy in South Africa. In order to mark this significant milestone, Cabinet has directed the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) to initiate and coordinate a 25-year review of progress with service delivery at each historical epoch of our democracy. This report serves as an addendum to the consolidated DPME 25-year review. The DBE's sector plan, the "Action Plan to 2019" has 27 goals – 13 which state the educational outcomes we aim to achieve and 14 which relate to activities that must be done in order to achieve those outcomes - the structure of this review is similar. The opening section reviews the educational outcomes that have been achieved over the past 25 years, with a focus on the themes of access, efficiency, quality, and equity in educational outcomes. Thereafter, the majority of the report assesses progress in regard to key building blocks of the basic education sector, using the six sub-outcomes for Outcome 1 (Basic Education) within the government's Medium Term Strategic Framework to structure the discussion:

1. Improved quality teaching and learning through development, supply and effective utilisation of teachers;
2. Improved quality teaching and learning, through provision of adequate, quality infrastructure and LTSM;
3. Improving assessment for learning to ensure quality and efficiency in academic achievement;
4. Expanded access to ECD and improvement of the quality of Grade R, with support for pre-Grade R provision;
5. Strengthening accountability and improving management at school, community and district level; and
6. Partnerships for educational reform and improved quality.

Overview: Trends in educational outcomes

Access to school:

- The most dramatic improvement in access to education has been in the area of pre-school – driven mainly by the expansion of Grade R since the White Paper of 2001. In 2002, only about 40% of 5-year olds were attending an educational institution and this number approached 90% in 2017. Amongst 6 year-olds there is now almost universal attendance of an educational institution, and approximately 95% of children entering Grade 1 have previously attended Grade R.
- In 2017 approximately 99% of 7 to 15 year-olds were attending educational institutions, up from about 96% in 2002. Amongst 16 to 18 year-olds the participation rate is about 86%, indicating that it is within this age range that school dropout begins to occur in large numbers, although this figure has also been steadily improving over the years
- Whilst primary school completion has increased from about 85% in 2002 to about 95% in 2017, the secondary school completion rate has increased from about 40% to just over 50%.
- South Africa achieves high rates of secondary school completion relative to most African countries but lags behind many countries in Asia, Eastern Europe and South America.

Efficiency in school progression:

- Late entry into school is inefficient since crucial formative phases would have been missed and by the time these children reach secondary school they are more likely to drop out of school due to family responsibilities, pregnancy or the pressure to find work.
- An important achievement in recent years is that fewer children are entering school late. The percentage of 7 year-olds surveyed in the GHS who have already completed Grade 1 has increased from about 35% in 2002 to about 64% in 2017. Similarly, the percentages of 8 and 9 year-olds who have completed Grade 1 has increased significantly.
- SEACMEQ data indicated that in both the 2000 and 2007 surveys, smaller percentages of South African Grade 6 children had repeated at least one grade compared to the regional average. Between 2000 and 2007, the percentage of South African Grade 6 children who had already repeated a grade decreased from 42% to 29%.

- Despite the improvements in grade repetition rates, the problem is more prevalent amongst boys than girls. Boys are always more likely to repeat than girls, across the grades.

Quality of learning:

- The good news is that in recent rounds of TIMSS, PIRLS and SEACMEQ we have observed that the country's levels of learning have been on an improving trend.
 - In the TIMSS assessment (Grade 9 mathematics and science), South Africa has been the fastest improving country between the surveys of 2002, 2011 and 2015.
 - There appears to have been a significant improvement in the country's PIRLS results between 2006 and 2011, although no significant change between 2011 and 2016.
 - In SEACMEQ, a large improvement at the grade 6 level was noted between 2007 and 2013 in both mathematics and reading.
 - However, despite these important improvements, the absolute levels of learning achieved are still substantially below desirable levels.
- One important reflection of quality in the system is the numbers of NSC candidates achieving a "Bachelors-level" pass each year as this is required for access to a degree programme at university. The number of Bachelor passes has roughly doubled since 2007.

Equity in educational outcomes:

- An important trend to note is that the improvements we are witnessing are being driven by the historically disadvantaged parts of the school system.
 - The TIMSS improvements since 2002 were largest at the bottom end of the performance distribution and in poorer provinces;
 - The annual numbers of Black and Coloured NSC bachelor passes has roughly doubled since 2008, whilst the numbers of White and Indian NSC bachelor passes was stagnant over the same period.
- Despite specific barriers facing females, gender parity has largely been achieved on several measures.
 - Substantially higher literacy scores among girls across grades in PIRLS 2016;
 - Boys are more likely to repeat a grade or drop out of school prior to grade 12;
 - There are considerably more female NSC passes annually compared to male passes, for example, in 2017, 217 387 females passed matric compared to 184 048 males;
 - 66% more females complete a Bachelors degree at university relative to males.
- Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Programme intended to reduce national illiteracy by 50% in 2015.
 - 4.4 million out of 4.7 million illiterate and innumerate adults completed the programme
- Participation rates of learners with disabilities compared to learners without disabilities (which is approximately 4% of the school-aged population classified by the 2017 GHS) by province between 2017 and 2014:
 - Approaching 100% for 7 to 15 year-old children without disabilities, while for those with disabilities, the participation rate ranges between 85% and 95% depending on the province.
 - The range for 5 to 6 year-olds is between 72% and 92% for children with disabilities and between 85% and 97% for children without disabilities.
 - Participation rates for 16 to 18 year olds with and without disabilities are much lower, ranging from 39% to 87% for disabled learners and 75% and 95% for learners without disabilities.
 - The 2017 SMS shows that 78% of schools nationally complied with the set standard of having at least one educator who has received formal/informal training or an LSEN qualification to provide them with the specialisation for identifying and supporting learners with special education needs.

- Recent achievements in providing support the learners with special education needs includes the following: 480 textbooks have been adapted into Braille; the DBE has Grade R, Grades 1 -6 Home Language, Grades 1 to 9 Mathematics workbooks and toolkits in Braille in all 11 languages to schools for the visually impaired; numerous concessions have been granted to NSC candidates with special needs; and the NSC examination is now available in sign language.

Equity in expenditure:

- Education spending in South Africa has become well-targeted to the poor, which can largely be attributed to the effects of non-personnel spending.
- The National Norms and Standards for School Funding (2000) and subsequently, the Education Law Amendment Act (2006) categorised schools into nationally divided poverty quintiles – where the breakdown into five quintiles is according to some indicator of poverty or socio-economic status, which made the poorest schools i.e. Quintile 1 to 3 schools “no-fee” schools (accounts for more than 60% of schools and children).
- Government targets have clearly been pro-poor, however, the amounts actually received by schools were slightly less pro-poor than intended. Potential reasons for this include funds intended for non-personnel spending being used by schools to supplement personnel spending, financial transfers coming through late, and schools receiving departmentally purchased goods and services too late.
- The resource base of quintile 5 schools is considerably better than that of poorer schools, but this is due to private spending, with public spending serving to counteract this to some extent.

Output 1: Teacher development, supply and effective utilisation of teachers

The quality of teacher development and effective teacher recruitment and management strategies are government policy priorities – as demonstrated in the NDP, the MTSF and the Action Plan to 2019. It is recognised that teacher salaries comprise approximately 80% of the education budget and that teachers are the custodians of classroom practice. Teacher development, supply and the effective utilisation of teachers are, therefore, integral to improving teaching and learning in South Africa.

Achievements and journey since 1994:

- **Redistribution of available resources:** The period between 1987 and 2007 saw a steady increase in the number of teachers in line with enrolment increases to maintain constant learner-teacher ratios. Much of the redistribution was achieved through the rationalisation period following 1994 moving teachers from oversupply to areas of need. A voluntary severance package was offered to those who were not willing to be part of the rationalisation process.
- **Post provisioning norms** evolved, with a focus on the equality of inputs and poverty ranking, weighted by the number of learners to ensure fairness in the distribution of teacher posts. The percentage of primary and secondary schools combined where allocated posts were filled in terms of categories of compliance level improved from 69% in 2011 to 78% in 2017 according to the recent School Monitoring Survey results.
- **Establishment of the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) in 1994** contributed to the redistribution of resources and benefitting teachers directly through the signing of collective agreements. In the mid-1990s, teacher salaries also rose by approximately 25% for black teachers with four years post-secondary education due to a post-apartheid equalisation which brought teachers up to the favourable level enjoyed by the minority of white teachers in the past. The increases can also be attributed to the Occupation Specific Dispensation emanating from ELRC resolutions of 2008 and 2009.
- **Teacher development** experienced major changes since 1994. Before 1994, teacher training in public institutions was generally government funded. However, from 1995 to 2005 bursaries were abandoned for teacher training resulting in financial barrier. In 2002, the 110 teacher colleges merged into the 22 higher education institutions and tuition fees were increased, creating a further barrier. This resulted in fewer previously disadvantaged African individuals pursuing teaching as a career. A further unintended consequence of the dissolution of teacher colleges in rural areas was that student teachers were less likely to return to these areas after completed their studies at universities.

- **Teacher supply** was increasing i.e. the annual supply of qualified teachers was exceeding the annual replacement demand of qualified educators. The **ageing workforce** was also evident during this period, with the average age of teachers increasing from 41 in 2004 to 45.5 in 2014. However, there has been a turning point in average age between 2014 and 2015.
- In response to this issue, government initiated several efforts to increase the development of new teachers, including the introduction of the **Funza Lushaka Bursary Programme (FLBP)** in 2007 to attract greater numbers of students into initial teacher education. FLBP awarded 120 511 bursaries from 2007 to 2017 at a cost of R7.21 billion. FLBP students constituting on average 15% of the total Initial Teacher Education student intake. Since 2005, there has also been a steady increase in the number of young joiners from around 6 000 up to almost 14 000 in 2017.
- It is important to note that approximately two-thirds of teachers currently working in public schools received their ITE before the reforms in the early 2000s. It is, therefore, especially important to offer **Continuous Professional Teacher Development (CPTD)**. This has led to a strong emphasis on evaluating existing programmes, and a keen interest in the use of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) which are needs-driven and stimulate collaborative learning.
- The DBE's **Early Grade Reading Study (EGRS)** has systematically aimed to provide evidence on alternate models of teacher support for the teaching of reading. After two years of implementation, formal impact evaluation results revealed that the largest impact on reading outcomes was observed when the form of professional support to teachers included on-site coaching.
- New and strengthened **Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, 2011 – 2025**, which puts forward improved and expanded teacher education and development opportunities to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools.
- Better compliance with, and the use of the **Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS)** comprised of the Development Appraisal, Performance Management and Whole School Evaluation.

Challenges and how to improve:

- The continued **shortages of young graduates** available to join the system represents a serious supply problem, especially in light of increasing learner enrolment numbers. The **ageing workforce** in conjunction with the **rising unit costs of teacher salaries** has placed immense pressure on provincial expenditure- leading to the instability of provinces to spend more on learning activities. However, the expected increase in the number of young joiners will bring down the average cost of an educator in real terms as younger educators cost less than older educators (due to experience-related remuneration benefits).
- It is likely that stronger **subject knowledge** among younger teachers plays some role in improving outcomes for learners.
- Results from mathematics and language teacher tests in SEACMEQ 2007 and 2013, point to younger teachers displaying a level of subject knowledge which was considerably higher than that of older teachers. Yet the systemic impact of this would be limited as it takes time for older teachers to be replaced by younger teachers.
- Although there has been an approximate improvement from 69% to 78% in the percentage of schools that had all their **teaching posts filled**, this 2017 level is still below the MTSF target of 95%. **Teacher absenteeism** remained at 10% on average per day between 2011 and 2017.
- **Across the country, teachers spent 40 hours on average on professional development**, however, this is half the specified target of 80 hours
- **In terms of FLBP**, greater efforts needed for placement in rural areas and poor schools.

Output 2: Improved quality teaching and learning through the provision of adequate and quality infrastructure and LTSMs

The NDP, MTSF and Action plan demonstrate government's commitment to supporting the infrastructure needs in education. Notwithstanding this, the historical absence of specific norms for physical infrastructure, and backlogs in the provision of

sanitation have been an area of public contention and controversy resulting in several court cases, particularly over the past five years. The provision of Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSMs) was also initially plagued with similar controversies which have included court cases and extensive coverage in the media. However, the development of standards for textbook quality, interventions in procurement and the development of LTSM provisioning systems over the past five years have positively changed the discourse in the sector.

Achievements and journey since 1994:

Hard Infrastructure

- In 1996, the DoE launched the **School Register of Needs (SRN)** survey which indicated that the majority of learners were taught in very decrepit buildings. Their schools had no electricity, safe water, sanitation, telephones or co-curricular facilities and equipment. Based on this endowment, the key policy challenge was to deal with imbalances in the basic mix of educational resource inputs that constitute an enabling physical teaching and learning environment.
- In response, two infrastructure programmes were launched i.e. the **Provincial Schools Building Programme** funded through the Education Infrastructure Grant, and the **Accelerated School Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI)** funded through the Schools Infrastructure Backlogs Grant.
- Following the SRN, the **National Education Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS)** was developed in 2006 to consolidate information on the state of schools.
- Since the inception of ASIDI, 989 **new and replacement schools** have been built. A further 784 new and replacement schools have been built through Provincial Education Departments (PEDs). The number of schools with **electricity** has increased from 11 174 in 1996 to 99% of all schools in 2018 according to NEIMS data. Substantial improvements have also been recorded in the number of schools with **running water and sanitation**. The latest School Monitoring Survey (2017) reveals that 76% of schools nationally had running water and 80% had adequate sanitation.¹
- The country as a whole has made progress in terms of the percentage of the population accessing the internet, yet progress with regard to internet access in schools has been slow. According to the 2017 School Monitoring Survey, **access to the internet** by principals, teachers and learners in secondary schools was at 68%, 59% and 21% respectively. These figures were slightly better in primary schools at 72%, 66% and 36%. In addition, the TIMSS data reveals that South Africa was considerably behind other developing countries in 2011 at 49%, compared to 86% in Botswana, 78% in Ghana and 82% in Indonesia.

Soft Infrastructure:

- According to the 1996 SRN, **textbook provisioning** was adequate in only 50% of schools nationally and varied across provinces. When comparing the 2000 SEACMEQ II to the SRN, provisioning of textbooks seems to have largely been similar at 50% in the SRN and 46% for reading and 41% for Maths in SEACMEQ. Provisioning was below 50% across most provinces with North West having the least at 35% for reading and 25% for Maths.
- The DBE is mandated to develop the national catalogues of textbooks, while the responsibilities of PEDs are to procure for schools in their provinces as well as to ensure that the procured books are delivered to each school. The responsibility of monitoring lies with both the PEDs and the DBE, with the DBE providing support and oversight to all PEDs.
- South Africa has traditionally relied on the publishing industry for the **development of textbooks** while government maintained the role of **developing the curriculum**. The centralisation of the development of the national catalogue for textbooks, where emphasis is placed on the educational merit as well as compliance to the curriculum of textbooks, was a major development and departure from this practice. In addition, clause 11 of the Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) bill seeks to amend Section 21 of the South African Schools Act (1996) to empower the Head of Department to centrally procure identified learning support materials for public schools – after consultation with the governing body, and on the basis of efficient, effective, and economic utilisation of public funds.
- The **national workbooks initiative** has been heralded as one of the most ambitious and most successful projects ever

¹ These figures are lower than what is reported by NEIMS since it reflects the functionality of these facilities on the day of fieldwork.

undertaken by government. The number of workbooks, textbooks and study guides printed and distributed by just the national government for the 2011 to 2013 school years was around 117 million.

- In response to the **Incremental Introduction of African Languages (IIAL)**, the DBE has developed Grade 1 – 3 Second Additional Language (SAL) resources which include anthologies, workbooks, lesson plans, big books, and posters in ten languages. These resources have been distributed to schools that are implementing the IIAL.
- In 2008, the Foundations for Learning Campaign was gazetted as a pivotal response to the right to resources. It stated that “Every teacher must have sufficient resources to ensure the effective teaching and learning of Literacy and Numeracy”. The policy recommended minimum resources for Grades 1 to 6, and extending it to other grades.
- In order to supplement LTSM provisioning, in 2011 the DBE developed and delivered its first set of **workbooks for Grades 1 to 9 and Siyavula textbooks** for Grade 10 to 12 Physical Science. An independent evaluation was undertaken of the two resources which showed positive outcomes. In addition, economies of scale have been achieved from central procurement i.e. the average cost of a 200 page catalogue in 2011 was R74.00 in the Foundation Phase, R60.62 in the Intermediate Phase, R96.54 in the Senior Phase and R132.89 in the FET Phase.
- The baseline figure in the Action Plan for both **textbook and workbook provisioning** was 61% in 2011 with the goal of 95% provision in 2018/19. The current figures for workbook provisioning are near 100% in delivery and coverage. The nationally representative School Monitoring Survey 2017 confirmed that the proportion of Grade 3 learners with Mathematics and Home Language – Volume 1 and 2 workbooks, has reached new universal provisioning across provinces and quintiles. It also shows a substantial increase in the proportion of Grade 6 learners in each province who have **access to Home Language, First Additional Language and Mathematics Textbooks**. The national average for each of these are above 80% and are substantially higher compared to 1996 and 2000. In addition, the School Monitoring Survey (2017) shows that the proportion of learners with **access to school or mobile library facilities** increased from 45% in 2011 to 62% in 2017.

Challenges and how to improve:

- Despite several sustained interventions, there are still substantial numbers of **schools with unsafe facilities** that do not comply with the Schools Infrastructure Norms and Standards. The greatest publically cited challenge is the large number of schools with **undignified and unsafe pit toilets, as well as non-functional or inadequate sanitation infrastructure**. There is an urgency of responding to this challenge in less resourced provinces. The response from the public and private sector has seen the initiation of several public-private partnerships to fund these specific areas of infrastructure. This includes the Sanitation Appropriate for Education (Safe) initiative by the President and Minister of Basic Education.
- There is a need for mechanisms to be in place to facilitate the **joint planning** of common programmes.
- System-wide and specific inhibitors for implementation by PEDs need to be addressed. These include providing additional **planning and monitoring tools and techniques** aimed at improving implementation of infrastructure programmes. This can only be possible with a better understanding of the implementation issues in PEDs which can only be achieved through strengthened monitoring.
- **Poor maintenance** of school infrastructure which contributes to the early deterioration of new school infrastructure, in particular, sanitation facilities. The strengthening of this area through embedding routine monitoring and evaluation as an integral part of planning and building is necessary. Furthermore, the current information systems should be updated to enable the availability and use of better information and better monitoring of the implementation of the norms and budget for maintenance at the school level through funds that have already been allocated.
- **Vandalism and theft** have also been contributing factors in the dilapidation of schools infrastructure. This requires ownership and improvements in community collaboration so that schools are seen as community assets.
- **Classroom sizes, particularly among poorer schools need to be addressed**. According to the School Monitoring Survey, only 67% of schools complied with the standard that there should be a classroom for every 40 learners enrolled in the school in Grades 1 to 12 and a classroom for every 30 Grade R learners.
- **Implementation challenged related to the poor services rendered by implementing agents**. The DBE has identified

the needs for improved record management, information sharing, administrative procedures, and planning in the area of infrastructure provisioning at the levels of the school, province and nationally.

- **The quality of LTSMs through revisions of the national catalogue but with a greater emphasis on specifications on graded readers in African languages remains an area of work.** The expected quantity of provision of these in Home Language and English requires revisiting based on developments in the understanding of resources needed for effective teaching as well as benchmarking against material resourcing in Quintile 5 schools. A further area to guide the quality of LTSMs may be developing more detailed guidelines on the content for African language material especially in the Foundation Phase.
- **Technologies are continuously changing, there are many stakeholders involved and the cost-benefit dynamics are complex.** There is a need for a national strategy to clarify the following: (i) how technological innovations should be aligned to the aim of improving learning outcomes; (ii) what are the available technologies and their likely costs and benefits; and (iii) how different stakeholders should work together to promote e-education.

Output 3: Improvement assessment for learning to ensure quality and efficiency in academic achievement

The *World Development Report 2018* highlights that education systems have little systematic information on who is learning and who is not, and as a result, it is impossible to generate an impetus for action, or simply plan. Measuring progress in learning outcomes is, therefore, an essential part of monitoring development at a country-level in the education system, and this provides the rationale for strengthening efforts to better measure progress through assessments. The consistent availability of assessment data at the learner level across selected subjects underpins several Action Plan goals.

Achievements and journey since 1994:

- With the birth of the new political administration in 1994, the 19 racially segregated education departments were integrated into a **single national Department of Education** which was tasked with establishing a **single national examination system** with common content and standards for examinations, administration, moderation, analysis and certification.
- The African National Congress's (ANC's) *Policy Framework for Education and Training* proposed a new national qualification system, and radically sought to introduce a **General Education Certificate (GEC)** which marks an exit point/completion of general education (10 years of schooling). The GEC was not implemented, however, consultations are underway to consider future implementation.
- From 1994, the provincial administrative of the Grade 12 summative assessment was effected as a feature of the education system. Between 2000 and 2007, provincially-based examinations still took place, but **standardised and centrally developed common papers** were introduced for the Matric examinations – initially for high enrolment subjects, and expanded to all subjects in 2008 through the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). There have been extensive discussions around assessments in the NDP and the Action Plan with assessment data underpinning several of the goals in the Action Plan.
- The **standard** of the NSC has improved, in which the question papers and qualifications are **benchmarked against international institutions**. There is also consensus among these institutions that the questions are well-designed by international standards and assess what they purport to assess. In 2007, 10 NSC subjects were benchmarked against those of the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA), Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) and the Board of Studies in New South Wales (BSNSW) Australia. In 2011, 7 subjects were benchmarked with the SQA, CIE, BSNSW and Higher Education South Africa (HESA). In 2016, 10 NSC subjects were benchmarked with Universities South Africa (USAF), and in 2017, 6 were benchmarked with the CIE.
- By 2016, about 58% of the youth successfully obtained the NSC or an equivalent qualification from a college. The number of **Matric graduates** had also increased from 275 000 in the late 1900s to over 400 000 in recent years. Whilst the number of Matric grew by around 50% between 1994 and 2017, **'Bachelor-level' passes** grew by around 100%.

- An analysis of Grade 12 **Mathematics and Physical Science** examinations data in 2016² revealed an increase in the number of learners reaching **critical performance thresholds**, such as scores of 50, 60 and 70 percentage in either subject. In addition, the number of Black learners obtaining a mark of 60 in Mathematics increased by as much as 65%. The DBE also initiated the **Second Chance Programme** which provides support to learners who have not met the requirements of the NSC or extended Senior Certificates.
- South Africa also participates in **three regional and international assessments** i.e. the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in Grade 8 Mathematics and Physical Science in 1995 and 1999, Grades 8 and 9 in 2002 and Grade 9 in 2011 and 2015 (including TIMSS Numeracy in Grade 5 in 2015); the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SAECMEQ) for Grade 6 literacy and numeracy undertaken in 2000, 2007 and 2013; and the Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS) in Grade 5 in 2006 and 2011, and following on from 2011, PIRLS 2016 in South Africa included Grade 4 learners taking the pre-PIRLS assessment.
- The introduction of the **systemic evaluations** (SE) conducted on a five-year random sample of public schools at either Grade 3, 6 or 9 came in response to low, but improving performance in cross-national and regional studies. The SE was a pre-cursor for what emerged as the **Annual National Assessment (ANA)** in 2011 in Grade 3 and 6, and Grade 9 in 2012. The ANAs were conducted between 2011 and 2015 and sought to provide valuable information on the performance of individual learners, and served as an accountability tool at a national level, and played more of a diagnostic role at the ground-level.
- The ANA programme was discontinued in 2015 due to disagreements between education departments and teacher unions over the purpose and way forward for the programme. The ANA is now evolving into what is known as the **National Assessment Programme (NAP)** which is using a sample-based systemic evaluation tool to measure progress and report against indicators. The NAP is comprised of three distinct tiers: (i) systemic assessments which are sample-based and administered in Grades 3, 6 and 9 once every three years; (ii) diagnostic assessments administered by teachers in the classroom for learning; and (iii) summative assessments which are national examinations administered in selected grades and subjects and will also be used for promotion/progression purposes. The new national assessment system is currently under development and is planned to be administered in 2019 for the first time. However, this will at least initially be conducted in a sample of schools, which will serve certain important national and provincial monitoring and evaluation functions, but there remains a need for better information and accountability for learning at a school level.
- The **significant role of Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training** needs to be acknowledged since its establishment in 2002. The main functions of the assessment unit are to set standards for assessment of qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework and to ensure that assessment for certification in schools, Further Education and Training Colleges and Adult Education and Training Centres is of the required standard.

Challenges and how to improve:

- The **United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** formalised a strong global commitment to tracking progress over time in the learning outcomes of children, and to having evidence inform education quality interventions. The SDGs were adopted by United Nations members in 2015 and the SDG indicators in 2017. A key indicator in relation to assessments is “4.1.1. Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex” – there is a **clear need for innovations to monitor progress against this indicator**.
- A **world-class national assessment** is required to gauge whether the desired improvements in learning outcomes are being achieved. This needs to involve sophisticated planning and management, specifically in relation to sampling, test design, using secure anchor items which are repeated across years, and generating meaningful reports which bring about better education policy discourse
- The **weaknesses in the design of the ANA need to be carefully considered if innovative ways of tracking progress in learning outcomes are to be realised**. There is a need for clear policy, how the information emanating from such assessments should be used, sufficient contextual and background information, as well as comparability over time.

² Adjusted for changing levels of examination difficulty over time

- The NAP will also include the **re-introduction of the sample-based Systemic Evaluation** as a focal tool for measuring progress and reporting against national targets and the SDG target on learning proficiency. However, there were also problems with the Systemic Evaluation which should not be repeated. The **time lag between assessments of the same grade** were long and the **depth of analysis in the national reports was insufficient**. Many of these problems can be traced to **limited capacity** to run assessments.
- **Accountability mechanisms**, such as school report cards should be informed by the experiences of other countries and tailored to the South African context, while also being carefully negotiated with teacher unions. School-level reliable measures should be taken into consideration together with the socio-economic background of the school in order for accountability to be seen as being fair and effective. In addition, the **burden of ‘assessment overload’** in schools should be avoided
- In addition, the Grade 12 pass rate has been subjected to mounting criticism, since the pass rate can be widely distorted by differences across schools in terms of who becomes a candidate i.e. those who make it to Matric and do not drop out before. There is an innovation need in relation to **how statistics are presented and used**, something which the DBE’s new inclusive basket of NSC indicators is intended to address

Output 4: Expanded access to Early Childhood Development (ECD) and improvement in the quality of Grade R, with support for pre-Grade R provision

The early years of a child’s life are critical for the acquisition of concepts, skills and attitudes that lay the foundation for lifelong learning. Explicit mention is made in SDG Target 4.2 which states that by 2030 countries should: ‘ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education’. The NDP outlines the vision for Early Childhood Development (ECD) in South Africa as high quality, universal ECD for the two years preceding Grade 1. In order to achieve this vision, the NDP emphasises the need for increased resources in the sector, as well as increased investment in training ECE practitioners. The Action Plan concretises the NDP through making “Improved access of children to quality Early Childhood Development below Grade 1” a specific goal. To ensure that the DBE systematically moves towards achieving this goal, the MTSF measures four indicators pertaining to both the access and quality of ECD provided through Grade R.

Achievements and journey since 1994:

- The 1995 the White Paper on Education and Training recognised early childhood as the foundation for human development and committed Government to provide **free and compulsory schooling, starting at the reception year for 5-year-olds**. For 0 to 4-year-olds, the White Paper prioritised the development of a strategic plan for **inter-sectoral collaboration**. This collaboration was incorporated into the National Integrated Plan for ECD 0 to 4-years published in 2005. Following the Integrated Plan, the **National Early Learning Development Standards (NELDS)** were developed and released in 2009.
- Drawing from the NELDS, in 2015, the DBE released the **National Curriculum Framework (NCF)** for 0 to 4-year-olds children. During the same period, the 2015 **National Integrated Policy for Early Childhood Development** was developed and released.
- Over the last decade, the main ECD policy priority for the DBE has been providing Grade R to all 5 to 6-year-old children. The policy was implemented in 2001 which saw **the expansion of the Grade R programme** from 241 525 enrolments in 2001 to 839 515 in 2017. In recent years, we have witnessed a fairly consistent percentage of Grade 1 learners who have attended Grade R which has remained above 90% for the past 8 years. Overall, education participation among 5 to 6-year-olds has also increased substantially i.e. the proportion of 5-year-olds attending an educational institution increased dramatically from 40% in 2002 to just under 90% in 2016.
- A further priority for the DBE has been the **training of practitioners** in terms of the implementation of the NCF, as well as upgrading the qualifications of Grade R practitioners. The DBE started to monitor and support the training of Pre-Grade R practitioners towards NQF Level 4 from 2014. The provinces were given a mandate of training the Pre-Grade R practitioners, and by March 2019 20 102 Pre-Grade R practitioners have at least obtained a NQF Level 4 ECD qualification.

Challenges and how to improve:

- An impact evaluation of the introduction of Grade R was conducted in 2013, which found that **the effects of attending**

Grade R were quite small and also **differentiated across the system**. On average, the effect found was equivalent to only 6% of a year of learning in Mathematics in 25% for Home Language. These effects were also strongest in wealthier schools and traditionally stronger provinces, particularly quintile 5 schools. Learners attending schools that have the largest deficits do not gain as much from attending an additional year of schooling.

- Despite the successful roll-out of Grade R, the challenge remains in the **quality of provision**. There are two key quality drivers that may differ across different parts of the system. The first relates **to teacher training**, the quality and support they receive from both the department and their schools, their qualifications and the pedagogical rigour of these, and their knowledge of how children learn and how to facilitate learning through structured play in order to achieve Grade R learning outcomes. The second quality dimension pertains to the **curriculum**, and specifically, practical curriculum guidelines and standards, and confidence in teachers' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. That is, the practical implementation of 'how' to achieve the learning outcomes stipulated in CAPS.
- Using data from the 2013 ECD Audit, it is evident that almost **half of ECD practitioners nationally have not completed Grade 12, and that a further third of practitioners have obtained Grade 12, but has no further qualifications**. Only 2% of ECD practitioners have any post-Matric qualifications and only 1% have a degree. Further, 70% of practitioners nationally do not have any specialised training in working with children.
- Tied to low levels of qualifications among practitioners, **wages and benefits for ECD practitioners** are also particularly low in South Africa. This in turn contributes to a host of problems that impact the quality of services such as high turnover rates and low educational levels among teachers.
- There is also a **lack of credible information systems** relating to ECD. This challenge is characterised by weak information for both monitoring and planning purposes, as well as deficient information on learners' early learning outcomes.

Output 5: Strengthening accountability and improving management at school, community and district level

Although learning happens in classrooms throughout the country as learners engage with teachers and their peers, the extent to which this interaction can happen effectively is influenced by the quality of support provided by the state in numerous ways and at various levels – legislation, policies and plans and the way these are implemented by national, provincial and district-level administration as well as within schools themselves.

Research shows that the quality of administrative support provided to schools matter. One particular challenge to navigate in the area of state capacity to support education is related to the fact that, according to the constitution, national government and provincial governments are concurrently responsible for the provision of basic education. This leads to coordination challenges and makes good planning systems imperative. There are six specific concurrent functions: (i) Curriculum and assessment management and delivery; (ii) Supply, monitoring and professional development of education personnel; (iii) Provision of teaching and learning support materials and equipment; (iv) Leadership and management at school, district and head office level; (v) Financial management at school and provincial level; and (vi) Provision and management of physical infrastructure.

Achievements and journey since 1994:

- When South Africa became a democracy, it inherited a racially fragmented education system. A vast majority of policy development work had to be done in the early years of democracy. There are **three key pieces of legislation governing basic education** that have been passed and amended since 1994: (i) the National Education Policy Act of 1996 (NEPA), (ii) the South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA), (iii) and the Employment of Educators Act of 1998 (EEA). The development and subsequent amendments of this legislation as a key component of the state's capacity to support quality education represents an important achievement within the sector.

- Historically, there were massive differentials in spending on children from different race groups, however, analysis of fiscal incidence has demonstrated that most of these **spending differentials have been eliminated** by 2000 and there were virtually no spending differentials remaining by 2005. Since then, the picture has become more **pro-poor** with the introduction of non-fee paying schools. Personnel spending, however, has not been pro-poor given the salary scales and post-provisioning policies.
- The introduction and development of an **Education Management Information System (EMIS)** in the late 1990s was an important component in building that capacity of the state to monitor and support education provision. In particular, the Annual Schools Survey and the SNAP surveys were run for the first time in 1997 and these have provided critical system information. More recently, the development of a Learner Unit Record Information Tracking System (LURITS) has increased the analytic capability of the state.
- The **Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS)** has gradually expanded and strengthened since its inception in 2003, and has an important role to play in promoting teacher professionalism. School leaders are made aware of which teachers have the strongest need for further professional development, which is a prerequisite for effective teacher development programmes.
- A prerequisite for a capable state and effective accountability system is **good planning through government**. This includes the production of the National Development Plan, the Medium Term Strategic Framework and the Action Plan. Following good legislation, policies and plans, an effective accountability system requires good monitoring and evaluation systems. This includes the development of the National Evaluation System by the DPME in which the DBE has been an active participant.

Challenges and how to improve:

- **Weaknesses in School Governing Bodies** includes corruption linked to promotion posts. Although there have been improvements in the functionality requirements of SGBs, it remains an important component to improve the capacity of schools.
- The School Monitoring Survey (2017) looks at the percentage of schools with the **minimum set of management documents** at the required standard. A school is only compliant when a specified set of 10 management documents are available. Even though each individual document was observed in majority of schools, full compliance was only recorded in 31% of schools.
- In addition, the percentage of schools where the **School Governing Body meets the minimum set of criteria of effectiveness** was at 62% nationally, with compliance in Quintile 1 schools having improved most substantially. Nationally, 84% of schools had been visited at least twice a year by district officials for monitoring and support purposes. Although this indicator seems to have improved, improving the functioning of SGBs should remain one important part of improving the capacity of schools to support quality.
- The **appointment of principals** is a critical aspect of school capacity. A large number of South African principals are approaching retirement which means that we are entering a window period in which many new appointments need to be made. The South African standards for school principals is an important contribution. However, as per the NDP and DBE Action Plan commitments, competency assessments of school principals have been delayed due to negotiations with teacher unions.
- A high proportion of principals rated the quality of **district support** as satisfactory in the 2017 School Monitoring Survey, however, key components such as the **proportion of Foundation Phase teachers receiving curriculum-level support** is considerably lower. There also appears to be fairly substantial within-quintile and across-district inequalities in expenditure (largest in the Eastern Cape). This reflects that some districts are less successful than others in filling posts. There is also a need to strengthen the capacity of district officials to effectively use data for their planning, monitoring and evaluation purposes.

- The NDP envisages strengthening of the **two-way accountability between districts and schools**. Districts need to provide support and services which schools find useful, and schools need to account to districts for the quality of schooling offered to the community. Moreover, **two-way accountability between schools and parents** are also needed. Schools need to report in better ways to parents on how well children learn, and parents need to demonstrate that they provide support in the home. These lines of accountability are crucially dependent on having **reliable measures of learning outcomes** in schools which everyone can use to gauge progress.
- While schools are accountable through various means to districts and provincial authorities, there is a need for a **holistic school accountability framework** to bring together the various strands, and identify critical gaps. Existing accountability elements include the annual school improvement plan, each school's annual report, the increasing use of the web-based South African School Administration and Management System (**SA-SAMS**), and the **Whole School Evaluation (WSE) programme** run in certain provinces.
- **Better monitoring and guidance** should be provided by the DBE in terms of monitoring education expenditure trends, educational personnel, and learner enrolments; implementation of PPMs; implementation of other norms and standards – all of which are partly achieved through improved data systems and extending connectivity to schools.
- Significant growth has been reported in the **use of SA-SAMS by schools**, as well as better organised provincial and national warehousing of SA-SAMS data. The Data Driven Districts (DDD) initiative, involving education departments, developed by the New Leaders Foundation with support from the Dell Foundation and other stakeholders has provided valuable lessons on harnessing technology in the sector. The DDD dashboard provides data and information down to individual learner levels, thus giving School Management Teams as well as district and provincial officials' essential information to give learners the support they need.
- A number of responses to the need **for better capacity** are clearly needed, including **better monitoring activity**. However, in doing so there may be a risk of overburdening officials and imposing compliance-oriented accountability systems that end up distracting from core functions. The sector would benefit from a shared understanding of **planning, monitoring and reporting processes** between the ten education departments, the DPME (custodian of the NDP) and the Auditor-General (which audits reporting on performance indicators and targets). These processes can be extremely time-consuming, are fraught with technical and coordination challenges, and can ultimately distract from the core functions of education departments.

Output 6: Partnerships for educational reform and improved quality

Education in South Africa is founded on the premise of a 'social compact' between the different spheres and departments of government, higher education institutions, teacher unions, teacher training institutions, parents and School Governing Body (SGB) organisations, business and civil society organisations, and local and international agencies, governments and donors. The strength of these partnerships has direct implications for whether the goals of education may be realised and how soon this may happen.

Achievements and journey since 1994:

- The **private sector's engagement** in the education sector in South Africa has deep historical roots which are linked to the key role that education plays in the country's social and political transformation, and in providing the critical skills required for economic growth. An example of a civil society organisation that demonstrated the corporate sector's contribution to education was the Urban Foundation established in response to the Soweto uprising. 180 business leaders gathered and pooled resources from 80 corporations to provide housing and schools for poor communities.
- Three local organisations stand out as pivotal partnership mechanisms during or immediately after the transition to democracy. The first is the **Joint Education Trust (JET)** established in the early 1990s which spent over R1 billion on educational programmes by 2015. Second is the **South African Grant-Makers Association (SAGA)** established in 1995 at the transition to democracy with a budget of R1, 2 million. Unfortunately, it was closed in 2006 due to a lack of funding. Third is the **National Business Initiative (NBI)** established in 1995 by former President Nelson Mandela to support Government. The membership consists of 100 national and multinational companies. The NBI works in housing, local development, schooling and further education and training.

- A well-documented alternative form of partnership has been the **Oversees Development Aid (ODA)**. The aid provided increased between 1994 and 1997 peaking at R3.8 billion to strengthen government's ability to transition at the start of a democratic South Africa.
- In light of the various partnership mechanisms, the DBE has consolidated the coordination of partnerships through the establishment of a **Partnerships Directorate at the national level**. The directorate is mandated to close the gap of inequalities in education and supporting the DBE by sourcing, negotiating and managing funding and sponsorships directed to the department; coordinating and monitoring local donor funded education projects and partnership programmes – both nationally and provincially; and developing and facilitating feasible partnership business plans and monitoring respective spending.
- The DBE has adopted a **multidimensional approach to partnerships**, including the following non-mutually exclusive pillars: (i) volunteering and technical capabilities; (ii) monetary support through purely financial contributions; (iii) focus on priority pillars through monetary and non-monetary contributions to key DBE programmes, such as infrastructure, teacher development, curriculum support, early childhood development, school safety, school sport and enrichment projects, the National School Nutrition Programme as well as Special Ministerial Projects, such as the National Teaching Awards, Mandela day, the annual announcement of Matric Results and disaster relief in schools; (iii) research, innovation and support; and (iv) advocacy.
- The establishment of the **National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT)** in 2013 is another more recent development. The NECT is intended to strengthen partnerships within civil society and between civil society and government in the basic education sector. The scope of work for the NECT has been set out in an Education Collaboration Framework which was developed in consultation with partners. The NECT's point of departure is that **government and civil society have different but complementary roles to play in relation to education**. The NECT, therefore, receives financial support from a range of funding partners, including government, business and philanthropic trusts and foundations. It channels its efforts into six themes for collective action i.e. (i) professionalisation of the teaching service; (ii) supporting courageous leadership; (iii) improving government capacity to deliver; (iv) involving parents and communities in education; and (v) enhancing support from learners and promoting their well-being. The NECT's footprint has reached five provinces i.e. Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape through the provision of Structured Learning Programme toolkits and has reached all nine provinces through the Primary School Reading Improvement Programme (PSRIP) which focuses on improving the teaching of English as a First Additional Language (EFAL). Four years since its inception, the NECT has reached 14 769 schools and trained 600 Subject Advisors across 24 districts.
- The significant contribution to the education sector through **Corporate Social Investment (CSI)** needs to be acknowledged. In 2018, the total estimated CSI expenditure was R9.7 billion – a 2.5% real increase from the R9.1 million estimated spend in 2017. Across several development sectors, education received support from 92% of companies and received 44% of CSI expenditure in 2018.
- **National Association of Social Change Entities in Education (NASCEE)** was established in 2018 as a voluntary member-based collaborative structure of education non-profit organisations (NPOs), which are working towards maximising the contribution of NPOs towards the NDP goals relating to education.
- At a continental level, a particularly noteworthy development has been the strengthening of regional and continental partnerships for education. South Africa has been a member of the **Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)** since 2006. ADEA is a policy dialogue forum meant to improve coordination amongst development agencies and the continent. Similar efforts have been undertaken through collaborations with the **Southern African Development Community (SADC)** and the **African Union**.
- Internationally, the **European Union** has continued to provide support to the DBE. One of the main financing agreements was negotiated and signed in 2010, entitled **Primary Education Sector Policy Support Programme (PrimED SPSP)**. The agreement was intended to offer sector budget support in line with the basic education sector plan. The overall objective of the programme was to contribute to improving learner performance in literacy and numeracy at primary school level.

- The United Nations also provides support to the DBE, largely through a rolling work-plan with the **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)**. With the acknowledgement that significant progress has been made in improving access to education, UNICEF's support to the DBE is centred on improving learning outcomes through improving the quality of education, reducing inefficiencies and inequity in the system and promoting innovation. There are three components of the programme i.e. Early Childhood development; quality education and adolescent development.
- Furthermore, in terms of international partnerships, the DBE has established **bilateral agreements** with several countries, including China for the teaching of Mandarin in South African schools, and Cuba for the recruitment of Cuban Mathematics and Science specialists, focusing on teacher training and support material for the DBE. Other partner countries with which the DBE has bilateral agreements include Venezuela, France, Angola, Sri Lanka, Korea and the United States of America. The DBE also has a range of **multilateral agreements** with organisations such as the World Bank, Japan International Cooperation Agency, and United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Challenges and how to improve:

- The improved coordination and standardising processes within the DBE, through the establishment of the Partnership Directorate, is an important development in the Department. However, there are **internal coordination** mechanisms within the department which need to be improved.
- An area that could be enhanced would be greater specification of areas that require funding through **systematic reviews of current and possible programmes** with clearer alignment to the basic education sector plan. There is also generally a gap in **evaluating the implementation or impact** of the various funded programmes, reporting generally focuses on inputs.
- There is also a need for better information sharing to establish **funding coalitions** in specific areas and leverage the allocated funds by pooling them together.
- The establishment of bilateral agreements across different countries and continents provides an opportunity to learn from other education systems, however, the exact activities and modus operandi has not been clear.



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