



## basic education

Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X895, Pretoria, 0001, Sol Plaatje House, 222 Struben Street, Pretoria, 0002, South Africa  
Tel.: (012) 357 3000, Fax: (012) 323 0601, [www.education.gov.za](http://www.education.gov.za)

Ref No: C-0321-24/02/2014  
Enq: M-L Samuels  
Tel: 012 357 4114/4241  
Fax: 012 323 0002  
Email: [Samuels.m@dbe.gov.za](mailto:Samuels.m@dbe.gov.za)

Dr S Phillips  
Director-General  
Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation  
Private Bag X1000  
PRETORIA  
0001

By fax: 086 683 5221

Dear Dr Phillips

### THE IMPACT OF THE INTRODUCTION OF GRADE R ON LEARNING OUTCOMES

Please find attached the management response to the recommendations made in *The Impact of the Introduction of Grade R on Learning Outcomes* which was commissioned by your department in partnership with the Department of Basic Education (**Appendix 1**).

Further to a two day workshop held in December to develop an Improvement Plan, please find attached the amended plan which incorporates comments received from the Chief Director: Strategic Planning, Research and Coordination, Ms C Nuga-Deliwe (**Appendix 2**).

We are currently finalising the Cabinet Memo to seek approval for the Improvement Plan.

I look forward to us jointly presenting the report, management response and improvement plan to Cabinet.

Yours sincerely

MR HA LESUFI  
ACTING DIRECTOR-GENERAL  
DATE 14/04/14

## **Appendix 1**

**Table 1: Recommendations and management response**

	RECORD OF AGREEMENT OR DISAGREEMENT	REASONS FOR DISAGREEMENT
1. <b>Dealing with quality</b> - It is recommended that opportunities for in-service training are increased, focused on providing teachers with <b>practical strategies</b> for supporting early learning and opportunities to see and practice best teaching, including observations, simulations, role-plays and working in contextually appropriate model environments. Importantly, this needs to be supported with on-going, on-site <b>mentoring</b> .	<b>Agree</b> The increased focus on in-service training will create an opportunity for practitioners to improve their teaching and learning with improved classroom practice.	
2. <b>Dealing with quality</b> - Linked to the above is the recommendation to <b>improve pre-service training</b> through FET Colleges. The current Unit Standards limit the extent to which teachers develop the skills and knowledge to support early learning. There is a <b>need for compulsory, evidence-based early childhood education content</b> in all ECD qualifications. <b>Revisions to Unit Standards and Learning Programmes</b> are essential to ensure that Grade R teachers are conversant with best practice around supporting early learning, and trained in the methods and approaches that have been shown to be most effective.	<b>Agree.</b> The revision of the unit standards and learning programmes are essential and therefore supported, but the facilitation of these will determine the quality of the training and not the unit standards or the programmes in itself.  Mentoring and coaching should also be encouraged to support Grade R teachers during training and in the classroom.	
3. <b>Dealing with quality</b> - It is recommended that <b>encouragement</b> , both pecuniary and non-pecuniary, be given to Grade R teachers to ensure that <b>good and qualified teachers do not aspire to move into other Grades</b> in the Foundation Phase, to the detriment of the quality of Grade R provided.	<b>Agree</b> The department can increase the funding of grade R and employ qualified educators with benefits but this is not a guaranteed solution for improved quality as is the case in the rest of the system. Moreover, such movement may be minimized but not entirely eliminated.	
4. <b>Dealing with quality</b> - Another quality dimension that requires attention is the curriculum, and	<b>Agree</b> The practical guidelines in the implementation	


	RECORD OF AGREEMENT OR DISAGREEMENT	REASONS FOR DISAGREEMENT
specifically, <b>practical curriculum guidelines and standards</b> , and confidence in teachers' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. Here, <b>on-going structured curriculum support for teachers</b> is recommended with regard to the implementation of CAPS, particularly with practical ideas on ' <b>how</b> ' to achieve the learning outcomes stipulated in CAPS. It is essential that <b>schools that are DSD registered</b> (i.e. community preschools that are currently only registered to provide ECD with the Department of Social Development and are working towards registration with DBE) <b>receive support</b> to deliver CAPS.	<p>of CAPS with additional teacher resources including multi-media can improve the quality of teaching and learning.</p> <p>The close collaboration between DBE and DSD and the improvement of data collection as well as on-site monitoring, will increase the curriculum coverage and the support to grade R in community centres to allow all 5 year old access to Reception Year.</p>	
5. <b>Dealing with quality</b> - There is a need to <b>evaluate the delivery of the curriculum</b> – do teachers show fidelity to <b>both</b> the 'structural aspects' of curricula (e.g. using specified materials, following lesson plans) and 'process-oriented' aspects (e.g. quality of the interaction and relationship between child and caregiver)? In the South African context, quality of provision is also affected by the availability of materials that support the implementation of the curriculum	<p><b>Agree</b></p> <p>The continuous monitoring and evaluation of curriculum coverage will provide us with informed strategies to continue offering relevant support to grade R teachers towards improved quality of teaching and learning. Moreover, there is a need to ensure provision of basic teaching-learning resources.</p>	
6. <b>Dealing with quality</b> - It is also recommended that <b>common tools are developed</b> that can be used by teachers and researchers to assess children's language, literacy and mathematics development and to track progress in learning outcomes. The <b>establishment of quality criteria, including indicators and measures</b> , that enable both schools and ECD centres to self-assess, and which can be used for M&E at provincial and national level is vital, as is provincial and district	<p><b>Agree</b></p> <p>Integrated monitoring tools with agreed upon standardised indicators should be developed to assist grade R classes and centres to improve service delivery and inform the system accordingly.</p> <p>Draft criteria for measuring quality has been developed and needs to be finalised.</p>	

	RECORD OF AGREEMENT OR DISAGREEMENT	REASONS FOR DISAGREEMENT
support staff. Criteria for evaluating the suitability of potential interventions could include evidence-based content that has been written for the local context, addresses the needs of disadvantaged children and children learning in a second language, and whether interventions or tools can be used effectively by educators with little training, are compatible with a variety of delivery contexts, and are relatively inexpensive.		
7. <b>Dealing with quality</b> - It is recommended that <b>recognition, resources and funding</b> be given to <b>support</b> the significant role played by <b>home-learning environments</b> , including potential awareness-raising campaigns to help parents/caregivers understand and value their role in supporting early learning in the home. To this end, <b>culturally relevant storybooks</b> in all South African languages should be made more widely available to parents/caregivers, in particular <b>through community libraries</b> .	<p><b>Agree</b> The children's context in the development of resources is critical and should also include other resources (not only books) to promote language development and the introduction of new concepts. Books must be provided in all languages.</p> <p>Community and toy library associations and the use of technology should play a role in supporting the interventions.</p>	
8. <b>Coverage</b> - The DBE should actively pursue the target of 100% Grade R <b>coverage</b> while simultaneously addressing issues of <b>quality</b> . Given the evidence on the importance of early learning and the long term impact of not investing in the early years, one cannot be prioritised over the other.	<p><b>Agree</b> The draft policy (out for public comments) on grade R proposes full coverage in public schools by 2019. The access target is much easier to achieve than the quality of teaching and learning. The quality issues like the curriculum coverage, training, infrastructure, resource provisioning and others should be maintained to ensure improved learning outcomes.</p>	
9. <b>Coverage</b> - A <b>relaxation of the 85/15 split</b> between public and community provision of Grade R towards more community sites, and the <b>active support of quality community pre-schools</b>	<p><b>Agree</b> A good database of community based centres will assist with planning to maintain/increase the split towards full coverage.</p>	

	RECORD OF AGREEMENT OR DISAGREEMENT	REASONS FOR DISAGREEMENT
could serve both quality and access goals simultaneously.		
10. <b>Researching Grade R</b> - There is currently little systematic evidence on teaching and learning in Grade R and the quality of Grade R in terms of developmental needs (see Chapter 2 in this regard). DBE should <b>encourage research</b> in these matters, including funding of independent classroom based research in Grade R, and of the progression of children from Grade R to Grade 1. Such research would <b>improve the evidence base for policy and interventions to enhance quality</b> .	<b>Agree</b> Research must be encouraged not only in grade R but should be extended to other grades in the Foundation Phase to provide useful information for the system.	
11. <b>Data needs</b> - It is essential to <b>improve the data and knowledge base</b> for the provision of Grade R. This requires more attention to population estimates and projections, improvements to but especially greater use of the official enrolment data (EMIS) to address under-age enrolment, and especially attention to the accounting procedures and classification relating to the cost of Grade R provision.	<b>Agree</b> Integrated data gathering tools will improve the collection and knowledge towards measuring progress.	
12. <b>Data needs</b> - The dataset created from administrative data has shown the power of the Grade R testing as a way of measuring performance throughout the education system. It is crucial that the <b>Annual National Assessments</b> should be <b>testing accurately over time</b> as well. This requires more attention to equating of the difficulty level of these tests over time, utilising advanced techniques to ensure proper calibration and measurement of progress.	<b>Agree</b> Integrated testing tools to be used to measure development and progress per grade and phase.	
13. <b>Data needs</b> - Though cognitive testing at Grade R level is complex to do for large numbers of children (individual testing may be required) and	<b>Agree</b> Whilst systemic testing is supported, it must be noted that readiness should not only be based	

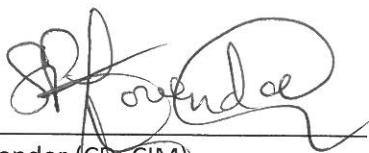
	RECORD OF AGREEMENT OR DISAGREEMENT	REASONS FOR DISAGREEMENT
it is therefore not yet desirable to expand the ANA tests to Grade R, <b>systemic testing</b> is required to understand more about the quality of Grade R and the learning deficits that many children experience at the beginning of their school career. Such testing should be on a <b>large</b> enough <b>scale</b> to measure performance and progress across the system.	on the child but the community and the school (readiness) is equally important.	

Submitted by:

  
 Ms Marie-Louise Samuels (Director: ECD)


Date: 16/04/2014

Recommended by:

  
 Mr SP Govender (CD: CIM)


Date: 16/04/2014

Recommended by:

  
 Mr HM Mveli (A/DDG: C)

Date: 05/05/2014

Approved by:

  
 Mr HA Lesufi (A/DG)

Date: 14/04/14

## **Appendix 2**



## 1<sup>st</sup> Draft Improvement Plan for Grade R Evaluation – The impact of the introduction of Grade R on learning outcomes

### Introduction:

The Department of Performance Monitoring Evaluation (DPME) commissioned a study on the Impact of Grade R on Learning Outcomes conducted by the University of Stellenbosch. The project was funded by the DPME and co-managed by a project team consisting of officials from both departments (DBE and DPME). The researchers used the re-estimation of models using existing data from the National Income Dynamic Study (NIDS), Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) and the General Household Survey (GHS) which broadly confirmed *suggestive* evidence of an impact on learning, but no *causal* links could be established.

The report has made it clear that there are significant, though not very large, effects of the introduction of Grade R on learning performance throughout the primary school grades, and that this effect does not appear to decline with time. Grade R further extends the advantage of more affluent schools, rather than reducing inequalities. Below is an Improvement Plan in response to the recommendations of the report and includes the development of the Grade R Policy.

## 1 Legislation & Policy

<b>Recommendation 7A</b>	It is recommended that <i>recognition, resources and funding</i> be given <i>to support</i> the significant role played by <i>home-learning environments</i> , including potential awareness-raising campaigns to help parents/caregivers understand and value their role in supporting early learning in the home.
--------------------------	---

<b>Recommendation 8</b>	The DBE should actively pursue the target of 100% Grade R <i>coverage</i> while simultaneously addressing issues of <i>quality</i> . Given the evidence on the importance of early learning and the long term impact of not investing in the early years, one cannot be prioritised over the other.
-------------------------	---

**Recommendation 9**

*A relaxation of the 85/15 split* between public and community provision of Grade R towards more community sites, and the *active support of quality community pre-schools* could serve both quality and access goals simultaneously.

**Intervention  
Objective 1  
(improvement area)**

**An interim Grade R policy is developed to submit to Cabinet and all relevant legislation is amended to ensure that all aspects of Grade R implementation has a solid legislative basis and fully integrated into the schooling system. The policy should cover amongst others: i) Age of admission/ school readiness; ii) Role of Community-based sites; iii) Funding; iv) Employment of Grade R teachers; v) Infrastructure; vi) Learners with disabilities**

Outputs to achieve the objective	Priority L/M/H	Activity to achieve output	Person/institution responsible	By when? (Deadline)	Target	Embedded where	Budget available	Current situation/ Progress Report
1. 1 Interim policy including quality criteria	H (2014)	1.1.1 Establishment of a technical team chaired by the Deputy Director General, Curriculum Policy Support and Monitoring or the Chief Director in the DBE (HOD in prov) (inter-departmental, inter-branch, inter-sectoral) to inform the interim policy that will be drafted by DBE (perhaps two teams – size and effectiveness)	DBE (DG, Branches C, T, P and R); DHET, SAQA	March 2014	Grade R Technical Team established	Legislation and Policy		Grade R policy framework gazetted for public comment, comments received and analysis done.
		1.1.2 Establishment of technical task teams per element led by members of the technical committee (i-vi above) - (inter-departmental, inter-branch, inter-sectoral) to inform the overarching technical team (1.1.1)	DBE	March 2014	6 technical teams	Legislation and Policy		

## 2 Human Resource Development

<b>Recommendation 1</b>	It is recommended that opportunities for in-service training are increased, focused on providing teachers with <b>practical strategies</b> for supporting early learning and opportunities to see and practice best teaching, including observations, simulations, role-plays and working in contextually appropriate model environments. Importantly, this needs to be supported with on-going, on-site <b>mentoring</b> .
<b>Recommendation 2</b>	Linked to the above is the recommendation to <b>improve pre-service training</b> through FET Colleges. The current Unit Standards limit the extent to which teachers develop the skills and knowledge to support early learning. There is a <b>need for compulsory, evidence-based early childhood education content</b> in all ECD qualifications. <b>Revisions to Unit Standards and Learning Programmes</b> are essential to ensure that Grade R teachers are conversant with best practice around supporting early learning, and trained in the methods and approaches that have been shown to be most effective.
<b>Recommendation 3</b>	It is recommended that <b>encouragement</b> , both pecuniary and non-pecuniary, be given to Grade R teachers to ensure that <b>good and qualified teachers do not aspire to move into other Grades</b> in the Foundation Phase, to the detriment of the quality of Grade R provided.
<b>Intervention Objective 2 (improvement area)</b>	<b>A Human Resource Development Strategy is developed to ensure optimal and expanded capacity of public and private training institutions to offer appropriate in- service training and pre-service training for grade R practitioners (ensuring meeting the minimum requirements for employment as Grade R teachers and implementing an inclusive education system – schools for all).</b>

Outputs to achieve the objective	Priority L/M/H	Activity to achieve output	Person/institution responsible	By when? (Deadline)	Target	Embedded where	Budget available	Current situation/ Progress Report
2.1 Development of a HRD plan / strategy including the models of supply of teachers (including Output 2.2-2.	H (2014) parallel processes to 1.1	2.1.1 Develop the TOR for look at alternative scenarios for models of HRD	DBE (Branches C and R)	June 2014	Approved Terms of Reference	HRD		
		2.1.2 Commission a task team to develop alternative scenarios for models of HRD	DBE	Aug 2014	Alternative scenarios developed and approved	HRD		
		2.1.3 Set up a reference team (task team) to manage this	DBE with DHET	Aug 2014	Reference team established	HRD		

Outputs to achieve the objective	Priority L/M/H	Activity to achieve output	Person/institution responsible	By when? (Deadline)	Target	Embedded where	Budget available	Current situation/ Progress Report
		process, select most feasible scenario						
		2.1.4 Development and finalisation of the HRD plan	DBE and DHET	Sept 2014	HRD plan developed	HRD		
		2.1.4 Consultation with key stakeholders	DBE and DHET	Oct 2014	9 provincial consultations	HRD		
		2.1.5 Follow the process of approval and adoption	DBE and DHET	Nov 2014	Approved HRD Plan	HRD		

### 3 Curriculum implementation

#### Recommendation 4

Another quality dimension that requires attention is the curriculum, and specifically, *practical curriculum guidelines and standards*, and confidence in teachers' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. Here, *on-going structured curriculum support for teachers* is recommended with regard to the implementation of CAPS, particularly with practical ideas on '*how*' to achieve the learning outcomes stipulated in CAPS. It is essential that *schools that are DSD registered* (i.e. community preschools that are currently only registered to provide ECD with the Department of Social Development and are working towards registration with DBE) *receive support* to deliver CAPS.

#### Recommendation 7B

To this end (see 7A), *culturally relevant storybooks* in all South African languages should be made more widely available to parents/caregivers, in particular *through community libraries*.

#### Intervention Objective 3 (improvement area)

A programme to support curriculum implementation in all Grade R classes, including those at community-based sites which involves teaching, learning, assessment and Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM) with a special focus on curriculum differentiation

Outputs to achieve the objective	Priority L/M/H	Activity to achieve output	Person/institution responsible	By when? (Deadline)	Target	Embedded where	Budget available	Current situation/ Progress Report
3.1 Investigation into the structures required to support curriculum implementation in Grade R classes at public and independent schools (including Community-Based sites)		3.1.1 Set up a technical team led <b>by the DDG: C or the Chief Director: C</b> develop scenarios for the support required to ensure effective curriculum implementation	DBE	Nov 2014	Scenarios developed to support curriculum implementation	Curriculum Implementation		
		3.1.2 Present scenarios to the DG Reference Group for approval	DBE	July 2014	Approved scenarios for implementation	Curriculum Implementation		
		3.1.3 Pilot the support strategy in selected districts	DBE	Jan 2015	Strategy piloted in selected districts	Curriculum Implementation		
		3.1.4 Track implementation of support through on-going monitoring	DBE		Monitoring reports on implementation	Curriculum Implementation		
		3.1.5 Roll-out to rest of districts	DBE	2016		Curriculum Implementation		

## 4 Monitoring, Evaluation & Reporting

<b>Recommendation 5</b>	There is a need to <i>evaluate the delivery of the curriculum</i> – do teachers show fidelity to <b>both</b> the ‘structural aspects’ of curricula (e.g. using specified materials, following lesson plans) and ‘process-oriented’ aspects (e.g. quality of the interaction and relationship between child and caregiver)? In the South African context, quality of provision is also affected by the availability of materials that support the implementation of the curriculum
-------------------------	---



<b>Recommendation 6</b>	It is also recommended that <b>common tools are developed</b> that can be used by teachers and researchers to assess children's language, literacy and mathematics development and to track progress in learning outcomes. The <b>establishment of quality criteria, including indicators and measures</b> , that enable both schools and ECD centres to self-assess, and which can be used for M&E at provincial and national level is vital, as is provincial and district support staff. Criteria for evaluating the suitability of potential interventions could include evidence-based content that has been written for the local context, addresses the needs of disadvantaged children and children learning in a second language, and whether interventions or tools can be used effectively by educators with little training, are compatible with a variety of delivery contexts, and are relatively inexpensive.
<b>Recommendation 10</b>	There is currently little systematic evidence on teaching and learning in Grade R and the quality of Grade R in terms of developmental needs (see Chapter 2 in this regard). DBE should <b>encourage research</b> in these matters, including funding of independent classroom based research in Grade R, and of the progression of children from Grade R to Grade 1. Such research would <b>improve the evidence base for policy and interventions to enhance quality</b> .
<b>Recommendation 11</b>	It is essential to <b>improve the data and knowledge base</b> for the provision of Grade R. This requires more attention to population estimates and projections, improvements to but especially greater use of the official enrolment data (EMIS) to address under-age enrolment, and especially attention to the accounting procedures and classification relating to the cost of Grade R provision.
<b>Recommendation 12</b>	The dataset created from administrative data has shown the power of the Grade R testing as a way of measuring performance throughout the education system. It is crucial that the <b>Annual National Assessments</b> should be <b>testing accurately over time</b> as well. This requires more attention to equating of the difficulty level of these tests over time, utilising advanced techniques to ensure proper calibration and measurement of progress.
<b>Recommendation 13</b>	Though cognitive testing at Grade R level is complex to do for large numbers of children (individual testing may be required) and it is therefore not yet desirable to expand the ANA tests to Grade R, <b>systemic testing</b> is required to understand more about the quality of Grade R and the learning deficits that many children experience at the beginning of their school career. Such testing should be on a <b>large enough scale</b> to measure performance and progress across the system.
<b>Intervention Objective 4 (improvement area)</b>	<b>Monitoring and evaluation system integrated with the other objectives developed at all levels, including inclusion of Grade R in the Annual National Assessment system.</b>

Outputs to achieve the objective	Priority L/M/H	Activity to achieve output	Person/institution responsible	By when? (Deadline)	Target	Embedded where	Budget available	Current situation/ Progress Report
4.1 ANA system (School Readiness) established for Grade R (benchmarks) – to help track learning outcomes at Grade R over time and to strengthen school based assessments for improving the learning process	(2014)	4.1.1 Develop appropriate school readiness assessment	DBE (ECD and Examinations)					
		4.1.2 Pilot the school assessment for Grade R as part of the ANA in selected schools (2015)	DBE (ECD <b>Directorate in collaboration with ANA, and IQMS Examinations)</b>		Selected schools	M&E		
4.2 Monitoring and support system established which feeds into support (include curriculum coverage)		4.2.1 Incorporate Grade R into the integrated M&E/IQMS system	DBE ECD DSD and IQMS	2015	Grade R Classes	M&E		
		4.2.2 Develop appropriate indicators for the IQMS process	DBE (ECD and IQMS)	2015	Grade R Classes	M&E		
4.3 Key benchmarked milestones published on quarterly basis		Support existing research proposals aimed at testing school and learner performance.	DBE (ECD and Research)	2015	Grade R schools	M&E		