

# IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM STATEMENT (NCS) GRADE R TO 12 FOCUSING ON THE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENTS (CAPS)



## THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM STATEMENT

Following the recommendations of a Ministerial Task Team in 2009 to investigate the challenges experienced in implementation of the school curriculum, the modified National Curriculum, articulated in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), was implemented in schools from 2012.

In 2016, the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) commissioned an implementation evaluation of the NCS with a particular focus on the CAPS in order to establish whether and to what extent the curriculum has been implemented as specified in the CAPS and how implementation may be strengthened.

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

To what extent has CAPS been implemented?

1

Do teachers understand CAPS and do they have the necessary capabilities and motivation to implement the NCS according to CAPS and associated policies?

2

Are the support systems to support CAPS implementation working?

3

Is the theory of change (TOC) working as expected? Based on how the TOC is working, are the planned outcomes of CAPS likely to be achieved?

4

Based on the likelihood of achieving the outcomes, is the conceptualisation of CAPS and the systems for implementing it relevant and appropriate for the context in which CAPS operates?

5

Are there any gaps and challenges in the CAPS design and content? If any, are they hampering implementation?

6

How should the CAPS design and the systems for implementing CAPS be strengthened?

7



## DESIGN OF THE EVALUATION STUDY

The evaluation took the form of case studies in 12 Quintile 1-3 primary and 12 Quintile 1-3 high schools in 4 provinces. These were supplemented by engagements with curriculum officials at national, provincial and district levels. The small and unrepresentative nature of the sample precludes the findings from being representative of the South African teacher population. However, the findings confirm those of other many other research studies which have emerged in recent years.

# KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

**CURRICULUM DESIGN** CAPS is recognised as being superior to any of its predecessors in terms of the guidance offered to teachers. The design should be considered for minor revision, but the overwhelming problem lies in implementation.

**TIME-MANAGEMENT (BLOCKAGE 2)** While the majority of primary schools plan their timetables according to CAPS requirements, most high schools do not and adhering to the timetable is problematic. Around one-fifth of the school day in most schools is lost due to teacher absenteeism or teachers not going to class.

**TEACHER KNOWLEDGE (BLOCKAGE 1 AND BLOCKAGE 4)** Teachers are struggling with the fundamental basis of Mathematics and English. They do not have enough content knowledge. This is the result of poor initial teacher education and ineffective in-service training.

**FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT** The majority of heads of department (HODs) are not exercising adequate instructional leadership regarding assessment, and there is little coherence within most schools concerning the use of assessment to improve teaching and learning.

**SUPPORT BY SUBJECT ADVISORS AND SCHOOL HEADS OF DEPARTMENT** Support for teachers is not optimally provided by districts and schools. The expectation that subject advisors should visit schools and support teachers directly in their classrooms is quite unrealistic, given the large numbers of schools allocated to each subject advisor.

**PROMOTION PRACTICES** Current promotion practices hinder efficient curriculum delivery, since this is a process highly dependent on the expertise and motivation of educators.

**PRESENCE AND USE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING SUPPORT MATERIALS** DBE workbooks were available, and generally there are sufficient numbers for each child to own one and were being used in half the lessons observed. However, teachers and HODs reported a dearth of other learning and teaching support materials (LTSM) at schools throughout the sample.

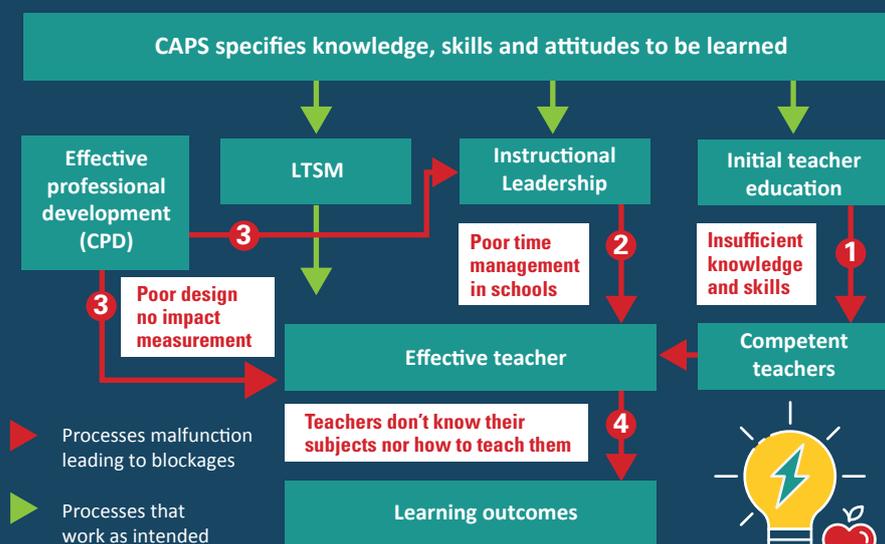
**LEARNER WRITING** At both primary and high school level, the high variation in quantity of writing produced by schools in the same district shows weak instructional leadership with respect to writing emanating from the district. The relative neglect of certain types of writing on important topics may also be related to teacher knowledge weaknesses.

**PEDAGOGY** Teachers manage time and learner behaviour relatively efficiently in their classes. Learners are not set sufficient quantities of individual tasks to engage them fully, while teachers' explanations of concepts and procedures generally lack clarity and detail.

**CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (BLOCKAGE 3)** There was unanimity at national level that current approaches to educator development are not working. The CPD offered by provinces and districts is working only to a limited extent.

## CONCLUSION

Significant blockages to the implementation of the NCS occur at key points in the curriculum cycle:



## RECOMMENDATIONS

DBE, Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), South African Council for Educators (SACE), and universities should devise curriculum and practice standards to guide the education and work of teachers, with a view to very significantly improving the quality of initial teacher education.

DBE must review and apply merit-based appointment and promotion policies and processes for educators.

DBE must work with universities, NGOs, and corporate partners to conduct research on effective in-service education and training for educators.

DBE, in collaboration with Provincial Departments of Education, must develop an effective programme to achieve school functionality.

DBE and Provincial Departments of Education should develop an effective programme to support school leaders and teachers in curriculum implementation.