

UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO GRADE R

Policy Framework

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This document outlines the policy framework for the realisation of the goal to ensure universal access to Grade R by 2014. It covers the following focus areas: Provision, Curriculum, Teacher Training, Employment of Grade R teachers, Funding, Monitoring and Evaluation.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
POLICY FRAMEWORK: UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO QUALITY GRADE R	3
Introduction	3
Purpose of this document.....	3
Major Challenges	3
Scope of this document:	4
Grade R Legislation and Policies.....	4
Grade R curriculum.....	6
Grade R teacher training.....	6
Offering of Grade R qualifications – Possible role of FET colleges	7
Funding	7
Curriculum.....	8
Employment of Grade R practitioners.....	8
Monitoring and evaluation of Grade R.....	9
Priority Objectives.....	9
Objectives in the short-term:.....	9
Objectives in the medium term:.....	10
Objectives in the long-term:.....	10
Annexure A: enrolment from 2000 to 2010	11

POLICY FRAMEWORK: UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO QUALITY GRADE R

Introduction

Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to

- Provide the policy framework for the full realisation of universal access to Grade R
- Identify existing policy relating to Grade R
- Identify gaps in policy and make proposals

Major Challenges

1. There is a lack of clear legislation to govern the provision of Grade R. As the programme targets to provide UNIVERSAL ACCESS by 2014 and not to become compulsory, it will still allow parents to choose not to send their children to Grade R and does not place any obligation on the state to offer Grade R.
2. The current policy, White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education provides for Grade R to be located at both schools and community-based sites. There is a lack of reliable data from community based sites as the EMIS data excludes stand-alone Grade R sites (community based sites). There is no way of identifying the community-based sites offering Grade R in the data collected from the Independent Schools.
3. Grade R is part of the Foundation Phase but is not always serviced in the same way as the rest of the Foundation Phase. In the majority of provinces Grade R is managed by a separate pool of officials who do not only have the responsibility of curriculum support and implementation but are also responsible for all other areas of implementation; funding, monitoring, payment of subsidies.
4. The Norms and Standards for funding Grade R allow for the employment of Grade R practitioners by School Governing Bodies as well as posts being created by the Department of Basic Education. There is no set salary although it was recommended that all practitioners should be paid R5, 000 per month without benefits. The only Act that governs the Grade R practitioners is the Basic Conditions of Service Act.
5. The Grade R classes are not always part of the monitoring and support functions of the districts, particularly those at community-based sites as it is argued that they fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Social Development.

Scope of this document:

This document outlines the different pillars upon which the programme to universalize Grade R is based namely:

1. Grade R legislation and policies
2. Grade R curriculum
3. Grade R teacher training
4. Employment of Grade R teachers
5. Funding of Grade R
6. Monitoring and evaluation of Grade R

The pillars cover the areas that provide the framework for realizing the vision of ensuring that all children in Grade 1 have had access to quality Grade R provision. The specific outcomes focus on increasing access to Grade R and improving the quality of provision within the Grade R setting.

Grade R Legislation and Policies

White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development (DoE, 2001) has been the primary guide to the implementation of universal access to Grade R by 2010. This policy focuses on children from birth to six years of age, with the emphasis on the provision of education to Grade R. The purpose and major thrust of the policy is to ensure the phasing in of Grade R as part of the schooling system. In 2009, the President indicated that the realisation of universal access to Grade R will be extended to 2014.

There has been a steady increase in participation in Grade R from 15% of the age population in 1999 to 70% in 2010 in schools. This excludes coverage in community-based sites. (See attached table that indicates enrolment from 2000 to 2010).

According to the Action Plan to 2014, the target is to increase the percentage of children who have access to formal Grade R programmes to 80% by 2014 and 100% by 2019.

Currently, the number of primary schools offering grade R has increased from 13,964 in 2008 to 15, 096 in 2009. The goal is to have all primary schools with Grade 1 classes offering Grade R by 2014.

The Norms and Standards for Funding Grade R (DoE, 2008) has primarily guided the funding of Grade R which included norms for implementation as well e.g. Practitioner: Learner Ratio; Targeted provisioning; Admission age and Standards.

a. Practitioner: Learner Ratio

The recommended practitioner: learner ratio as articulated in the Guidelines for Costing Basic Minimum Package of Grade R inputs (2008) is 30:1. According to a recent Public Expenditure

Tracking Study conducted in 3 provinces, more than 40% of the Grade R classes have more than 40 learners per practitioner.

b. Targeted provisioning

The approach favours the most disadvantaged in society. This approach is informed by two factors:

- It costs more to educate poor learners and
- Non-poor communities are in a better position to supplement the state's resourcing.

c. Admission age

The compulsory age of admission to schools in S A was 7 years until in 2000 when the Department of Education was challenged by a parent in court and lost the case (Harris vs the Minister of Education- 2001). The South African Schools Act of 1996 as amended states that the admission age of a learner to a public school is:

1. Grade R is age 4 turning 5 by June in the year of admission
2. Grade 1 is age 5 turning 6 by June of the year of admission.

This is subject to the availability of suitable school spaces and other educational resources approved by the Head of Department.

d. Standards

Provincial departments must formulate roll-out plans informed by grade R eligibility, management readiness, and physical space, budgets, per learner cost, learner coverage per school and the pro- poor funding gradient. A planning tool was developed for utilisation by provinces which is not used in all provinces.

Standards for Grade R classes were developed to provide for minimum quality. The standards cover the following key areas: Facilities, Indoor and outdoor spaces, Environment, Curriculum, Activities, Qualification and professional development of teachers, Teacher Child Ratio, Parents/Caregivers and families, Programme and staff evaluation, Legislation and regulations, Special Needs, and Administration. The standards have been developed to guide Grade R teachers as well as their institutions on the minimum elements essential to the provisioning of a quality Grade R programme.

The curriculum related policies in the General Education and Training (GET) Band has included Grade R e.g. National Curriculum Statement Grade R – 9; Assessment Policy Grade R – 9 and is described in the following section.

Policy option:

- a) Develop an interim Grade R policy towards universal access by 2014 and
- b) Amend legislation for schooling to make Grade R compulsory by 2019.

Grade R curriculum

The Grade R curriculum is part the Foundation Phase curriculum as outlined in the Revised National Curriculum Statement R-9 (2002). This has been strengthened (2010) through the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) to be implemented in the Foundation Phase in 2012.

A resource pack has been developed to support teachers in the implementation of the NCS. The pack includes the following items: 20 posters with different themes, a story book with 20 stories, a teacher's guide, lesson plans and an assessment framework with milestones for each quarter of the school year. The pack is aimed at supporting Grade R teachers/practitioners in developing day to day teaching and learning activities. It covers a period of forty weeks.

A DVD with 12 episodes demonstrates how the materials can be used in the classroom. This DVD will be used by district officials when orientating Grade R teachers on the use of the resource kits. The resource pack and workbook will be amended to be aligned to the National Curriculum Statement: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for implementation in 2012.

Policy options:

- a) Retain Grade R within the Foundation Phase curriculum and all related policies.
- b) Include Grade R in the Foundation Phase catalogue and all related processes for the resourcing of Foundation Phase classes.
- c) Include Grade R in all the training of Foundation Phase teachers on the curriculum and related matters.

Grade R teacher training

The new draft policy on Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications aligned with the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) provides for qualifications in Grade R Practices. Due to the diverse qualification levels of current Grade R Practitioners, various qualifications for Grade R Practices have been considered - Higher Certificate in Grade R Practices (NQF level 5, 120 credits), Advanced Certificate in Grade R Practices (NQF level 6, 120 credits), Diploma in Grade R Practices (NQF level 6, 360 credits).

The Diploma in Grade R Practices is the proposed initial qualification for this sector. All new entrants to the sector without prior ECD qualifications would need to enroll for this qualification.

The Higher Certificate and Advanced Certificate are proposed as access qualifications for current Grade R Practitioners. The Grade R Practitioners with ECD level 4 and 5 qualifications (on the 8-level NQF) have an option to complete either or both of Higher Certificate in Grade R Practices (NQF level 5, 120 credits), Advanced Certificate in Grade R Practices (NQF level 6, 120 credits) before enrolling for the Diploma in Grade R Practices. However, it is possible to

enroll for the Diploma in Grade R Practices without enrolling for Certificates prior to the Diploma. All the above qualifications can provide access to the Bachelor of Education (Foundation Phase) qualification, with possibilities for credit transfer.

Policy options:

- a) Place a moratorium on the employment of Grade R practitioners with Level 4 qualifications only
- b) Introduce the Diploma in Grade R practices as the initial minimum requirement for employment of Grade R teachers in 2014
- c) Offer all practicing Grade R teachers the opportunity to obtain the initial qualification by 2019

Offering of Grade R qualifications – Possible role of FET colleges

Offering teacher qualifications is currently legislated as a higher education competence. Thus, institutions that offer qualifications in the draft policy should be accredited as higher education institutions by the Council on Higher Education (CHE). FET colleges are not higher education institutions. However, their competence and capacity is acknowledged and there could be possibilities for the FET colleges to partner with accredited higher education institutions to offer the Higher Certificate and the Advanced Certificate. These options must be fully explored.

Policy options:

The new Diploma in Grade R Practices is the proposed initial qualification for Grade R teachers and is offered by:

- a) FET colleges and registered private providers
- a) HEI's and registered private providers.

Funding

The funding for Grade R is pro poor governed by the Norms and Standards for Funding (2008). This covers personnel and non-personnel costs. The norms outline the main areas of responsibilities as follows; Inclusion of Grade R as part of the resource targeting list; Formulation of MTEF budgets for Grade R; Determination of per learner cost; Determination of coverage per school; Determination of pro-poor gradient; Use of establishment posts for Grade R; Payment of fees by Grade R learners in no-fee schools and community-based sites; Poor implementation of community based classes as independent schools; Lack of financial management capacity by SGBs in poor schools; Classification of community-based sites with Grade R as Independent Schools as per the NSF for grade R; Per learner cost (75% of the grade 1 learner) to be reviewed; The coverage of personnel costs in funding grade R (while it is not the case in the system) complicates the process;.

Given that the majority of provinces have not fully implemented the Norms and Standards for Funding Grade R as well as the need to ensure that the funding allocation provides for all the recommendations made for Grade R, a review of the NSF for grade R must be conducted to address the challenges.

Policy options:

- a) Review the Norms and Standards for Funding Grade R towards the following:
 - a. Uniform implementation of 70% of Grade 1 learner cost in year 1
 - b. Increase per learner cost to that which is equal to Grade 1 learner cost in year 2
 - c. Fully inclusive Norms and Standards for funding schools, inclusive of Grade R in year 3.

Employment of Grade R practitioners

There is no legislation that governs the employment of Grade R practitioners. The employment needs to take into account three main areas:

- Qualifications of Grade R practitioners
- Employment modalities for the employment of Grade R practitioners
- Learner: Teacher Ratio

The proposal to pay R5, 000 per month without benefits does not provide an adequate response to the current situation where not all practitioners are paid this amount.

Table 1: Gross annual pay of SGB-employed Grade R teachers (2009)

	<i>Average pay</i>	<i>Schools with data</i>
EC	42,000	1
FS	94,662	10
GP	50,568	12
KN	26,712	4
LP		
MP	29,940	7
NC	52,861	8
NW	60,191	5
WC	60,772	15
SA	50,579	62

Policy options:

In line with the proposal to review the Norms and Standards for funding to employ Grade R practitioners to stagger full employment as follows:

- a) Year 1: Employ Grade R practitioners at R5, 000 per month with no benefits
- b) Year 2: Employ Grade R practitioners and educators at appropriate REQV level with all benefits
- c) Year 3: Employ only Grade R educators at appropriate REQV level with all benefits

Monitoring and evaluation of Grade R

The monitoring and evaluation of Grade R must be part of the overall monitoring and evaluation system designed to ensure quality in the Foundation Phase. The allocation of human resource must be considered.

Policy options:

- a) Include Grade R as part of the monitoring and evaluation framework in the Foundation Phase
- b) District and provincial officials to include Grade R as part of the Foundation Phase

Priority Objectives**Objectives in the short-term¹:**

1. Finalise the Grade R policy and develop full costing for implementation to secure additional funding and ensure equity if required.
2. Revise the Grade R resource pack and workbooks in line with the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements in preparation for distribution to schools for 2012.
3. Establish an ECD training forum to finalise a training and development strategy for the finalisation of all relevant qualifications to ensure Grade R practitioners attain the minimum qualification for employment in the Department of Basic Education.
4. Finalise an implementation plan for the employment of Grade R practitioners as part of the teaching corps in the provincial departments of education.

¹ By March 2012

5. Conduct research to establish the impact of the Policy on Admissions on both Grade R and Grade 1 admissions with a view to provide evidence on the learner's readiness in relation to the teaching strategies used as well as access to the curriculum.

Objectives in the medium term²:

1. Consultation on the revised system of funding for Grade R, including the funding for special and additional needs, designed to promote early intervention.
2. Raising the attainment of access to Grade R and learner attainment in line with national, provincial and district targets.
3. Support schools' efforts to develop learning networks to provide effective local solutions while contributing to the objective of providing all children with access to high quality curriculum and support across the country.
4. Consolidation of activities of the Department of Social Development and the Department of Basic Education to finalise the role of the Early Childhood Development sites in the provision of Grade R.
5. Further consolidation of the training initiatives to ensure that there is a qualified cadre of Grade R teachers, including new teachers and those who have been teaching as unqualified teachers in Grade R.
6. Roll-out of the employment of Grade R teachers in all provinces.
7. Establishment of a system to monitor and quality assure the provision of Grade R programmes.

Objectives in the long-term³:

1. Raised achievement and improved outcomes for children in Grade R classes with particular progress amongst the lowest attaining twenty per cent and those groups of children at the greatest risk of non-achievement.
2. Consolidation of Grade R as part of the Foundation Phase as it relates to the regulatory framework, curriculum implementation, resourcing, employment of teachers and monitoring of the impact and implementation of Grade R.

² By March 2014

³ 2014 and beyond

Annexure A: enrolment from 2000 to 2010

Province	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
EC	164, 803	154, 514	133, 249	112,889	96, 384	105 231	75 571	46 371	23 562	18 873	19 555
FS	27, 209	23, 767	23, 699	22,429	20, 072	18 449	16 482	16 323	17 220	16 002	15 025
GP	76, 460	64, 935	54, 979	49,931	47, 314	41 073	34 690	31 666	28 189	23 920	21 368
KZN	175, 541	154,666	129, 742	118,884	92, 948	79 276	73 098	75 996	72 312	73 993	66 031
LP	113, 432	97, 570	98, 963	93,030	102, 969	98 273	89 725	89 790	90 332	84 243	75 219
MP	51, 758	46, 194	40, 671	34,962	25, 734	14 171	23 695	13 884	12 148	5 803	10 922
NW	42, 010	30, 174	22, 294	8,423	15, 311	9 737	5 625	4 325	3 142	3 176	3 193
NC	12, 387	11, 508	9, 575	16,143	7, 259	6 598	5 875	5 500	3 744	4 042	3 972
WC	43, 603	36, 895	30, 627	30,834	33, 650	32 389	31 726	31 532	28 077	11 473	11 346
TOTAL	707, 203	620, 223	543, 739	487,525	441 641	405 197	356 487	315 387	278 726	241 525	226 631

Sources: Department of Education publications, *School Realities* (2001 – 2010)