



S A C E

South African Council for Educators

Towards Excellence in Education

**Research Policy for the South African Council for Educators
(SACE)**

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CPTD	Continuing Professional Teacher Development
DBE	Department of Basic Education
ETDP-SETA	Education, Training & Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authorities
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority



Foreword

The South African Council for Educators (SACE) is a regulatory body for teachers' in South Africa. As the council for Educators, it is obligated to contribute to the development of the teaching profession in South Africa. SACE recognises that unless it initiates a process of self-renewal, its impact in the Education system will not be felt. In this regard, SACE has ensured that it continues to review its Research Policy and agenda with priorities for the next five years as a way of ensuring that its work is evidence-based to influence educational policy, improve educational outcomes and ensure that the teaching profession is regulated in a supportive way.

It is fundamental that SACE's research contribution is focused effectively on areas of national priority. The identification of priority of areas has to be performed in coordination with other strategic stakeholders at all times. Moreover, the effective contribution of SACE in the national education policy discourse requires increased internal efficiency. This requires clear mechanisms for undertaking and/or managing research with clear governance processes in relation to research. It is the objective of this Research policy to provide a clear framework for SACE's research agenda and in alignment to the Department of basic Education (DBE) research agenda.

Notwithstanding its well-known challenges, the South African education system continues to make important milestones in the delivery of quality education. Every day, an increased number of children pursue to make significant progress towards academic success. Nevertheless, the society expects much more of its educational system than it is now getting. To rise to these levels of expectations, we must develop more complex understandings of learning, teaching and the teaching profession in ways that will impact directly on educational improvement and effectiveness.



Needless to say, there are many role players in the South African educational arena. SACE is but one of them. SACE therefore presents this Research policy and a research agenda as its intention to contribute to an already existing body of knowledge in as far as education is concerned which SACE recognises. In charting forward its research agenda, SACE has forged partnerships with research agencies, institutions and individual researchers (and continues to do so) that produce relevant educational research in order to strengthen the council's research output, improve its programmes and the research results will assist in planning based on the investigation.

SACE therefore sees its role as two-prolonged, on the one hand, it is the management of existing research and utilising such for its purposes. On the other hand, because of the peculiarity of its statutory mandate, SACE also partakes in primary research in some areas. The intention of SACE's research agenda will be to ensure that SACE continues to produce research that has an impact on educational policy and on the state of the teaching profession, and the sector as a whole.

Ms Ella Mokgalane

Chief Executive Officer

SACE



1. Introduction

South Africa's education system is vital to our nation's commitment to equal opportunity. Every family should have the right to expect that its children will have a fair chance to develop the abilities they need to participate fully in the social, economic, political, and cultural richness of our society. This noble goal has not yet been fully achieved; however, we must find ways to improve our educational system to provide more equal opportunities for learning to all of the young South Africans, and in order to do so we need to ensure that the teaching profession is on is up to standard.

The SACE Act, 2000 (Act No.31 of 2000) spells out the statutory mandate of SACE. In broad parameters, SACE is responsible for regulating and supporting the teaching profession through registration, advocacy, professional development and ensuring adherence to the educators' professional code of ethics. SACE also has an advisory role to the Minister. The formulation in the SACE Act makes it mandatory rather than optional for SACE to provide advice to the Minister. Thus, it is vital that the council participates in research that informs policies, so that the council can be better positioned to advise the Minister if and when needed and most importantly research that will enhance and regulate the status of the teaching profession.

It is therefore a natural outgrowth of the totality of its mandate that SACE will produce regular position papers aimed at advising the Minister on the three aspects outlined in the SACE Act. According to the SAE Act, 2000 (Act No.31 of 2000) these three aspects are: The Council "must advise the Minister on matters relating to the education and training of educators" [RSA, 2000 (5)(b)(ii)], "on any educational aspect which the Minister may request it to advise on" [RSA, 2000(5)(e)(i), as well as "on any relevant educational aspect" [RSA, 2000(5)(e)(v)]. The SACE Act thus positions SACE as an organisation that can significantly influence educational policy in South Africa. The ability of SACE to provide informed, considered and strategic advice to the Minister will depend on its capacity to identify key issues and developments in the country's education system. In all these regards, a strong capability to undertake, analyse



and/or manage research would be important for SACE. While there is no emphasis in the Act for SACE to

undertake research, except in reference to the development of professional policy, the nature of its broad mandate and specific responsibilities implies a need for SACE to undertake research on an ongoing basis, hence a need for SACE to have a research policy.

The purpose of this policy is therefore to provide a framework within which SACE will manage and/or undertake research. It is also intended as a means of communicating that framework to the professional community, including researchers, teachers, higher education institutions, the Department of Basic Education and Higher Education and training and other stakeholders who may have an interest in the work of SACE and educational research broadly.



2. Purpose of a Research Policy for SACE?

There are evidently many organisations who undertake research in education and are well positioned to share and advise SACE on their research findings. These include for example, Universities through their faculties of education and education policy units (EPUs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP-SETA), and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) to name a few. With that said the Council aims to revolutionise the teaching profession into a research-informed profession, that will further inform educational policy. Thus, it is important that SACE also partakes in primary research and ensures that the Council's decision-making processes are research led.

If SACE's statutory mandate includes influencing educational policy through its advisory function, the fact is that regularly, a number of policy decisions (including those in the realm of education) are taken based upon research findings. In many instances, these decisions have a major impact on the education sector as a whole and specifically for the educators. This makes research in an educational context very crucial. It is our contention that research is no longer a domain exclusively reserved for university academics, but that it has found a role beyond informing theoretical debate. It now plays a vital contribution in providing evidence to support ideas and opinions in order to inform public policy. SACE must therefore be able to respond to the particular policy context within which the education system finds itself and within which teachers operate.

The connection between research and knowledge is almost undisputed. Due to the rise in the value of knowledge, the role of research in policy debates and policy making is crucial. Research is thus used to identify gaps with current policy and suggest alternative viable options. Over the past few years' governments have become more receptive to evidence-based policy solutions and as a result there is an increased demand for primary research and analysis. To facilitate this process of policy evolution and improvement of planning, assessing and



monitoring of the South African education system, it is essential that policy makers and other actors in society (including SACE) possess reliable information on teachers, schools, students and resources gathered during the research processes. The ability of SACE to conduct research potentially brings together in a dynamic way three components, i.e. research, policy and the practice of teaching. This nexus is critically important if we are to have an adequately nuanced view of our education system in South Africa. Research is crucial to the development of teaching and the quality of learning; thus, both education policy and educational practice should be informed by the best available evidence. The undertaking of research by SACE will potentially result in research-informed professional practice.

An effective system to link research and practice is needed because of the scope and magnitude of educational problems needing attention in South Africa. It is expected of SACE to raise the profile of the teaching profession. Central to the standing of any profession is the commitment to maintain and improve practice and, in the case of teachers, the ability to share good practice to help improve education.

A number of evidence-based research has shown that teaching should be a research-informed professional practice. Therefore, one of the ways in which SACE can enhance the profile of the teaching profession is by undertaking research that will enable teachers to participate and reflect critically on their practice, participatory research being one of those methods. The more the practice of teaching is informed by research, the better the teachers can contribute to school improvement for their benefit as well as for the benefit of their pupils.

The research policy will also guide the council and its research partners in conducting research with integrity, meaning following protocol on research procedures and matters pertaining to ethics. This will guarantee the credibility, reliability and validity of the council's research process and output.



3. Collaboration with Research Partners

SACE is committed to engaging in high quality, evidence-based research that is locally and internationally competitive. In addition, SACE thrives in participating in the dissemination of ground-breaking knowledge in the pursuit of excellence. In meeting its research goals, SACE is dedicated to providing an environment that encourages research activities which are in line with the development of the teaching profession, specifically the vision and mission of the Council. Therefore, the Council aims to encourage, support and enable all research activities in line with the SACE mandate. It is thus important that SACE collaborates with research partners and institutions in order to widen its capacity in disseminating relevant and impactful research that will inform and enrich educational policy.

Any organisation or individual that wishes to undertake research with SACE or request data from SACE will have to follow due process. All research must be conducted taking into consideration section 24 of the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of South Africa, which necessitates that all research must not result in an environment that is harmful to the individual's health or well-being and that their environment must be protected.

For organisations or persons requesting data from SACE, the SACE Research protocol document can be accessed from the SACE website. This protocol clearly spells out procedure to be followed when requesting data. Research partners will have to ensure that they conduct Research with integrity and make results available to SACE. Ethical consideration to take into account include:

- a. Research should be conducted with integrity and honesty.
- b. Researchers are required to abide by the relevant professional and ethical guidelines and code of conduct for their respective sectors and professional bodies.
- c. Researchers should gain approval from ethics committee where necessary, prior to commencing with any research



Accountability of data:

- a. All names of individuals in datasets used will be kept anonymous and participants should also be acknowledged.
- b. Researchers are entitled to keep data sets confidential before publication.
- c. Once research is completed, a summary of the final research findings should be presented to SACE and a copy of the full research report be made available to SACE.
- d. If necessary, the researcher will be requested to present the findings in oral, written or visual form in any of the SACE forums.

It is envisaged that all research collaborations will be conducted in good faith and that any intellectual property that is developed by personnel and the parties involved shall be owned jointly by the parties.



4. The scope and focus of SACE's Research Agenda

One of the main conceptual and methodological issues that SACE will have to tackle in giving effect to this policy is to define the scope and focus of its research agenda. Firstly, there is the specific advice required by legislation in relation to the education and training of educators. This is very broad and could include areas such as professional development, the quality of education and training and by extension the quality of teaching and learning.

Secondly, there is the "blank cheque" external education policy environment from which SACE is enjoined to advise the Minister of Education upon the Minister's request. This kind of research is referred to as a "blank cheque" because it has been left broad enough to include anything and has two parts, namely the part where SACE would need to respond to the Minister to request advice on a particular aspect of the education system as well as where SACE could give proactive advice to the Minister on any aspect of the educational system.

Thirdly, there is a need for SACE to determine whether it is making any impact on the education system and the behaviour of the educators through its many areas of responsibility. In other words, this kind of research is both inward-looking and out-ward looking, it looks outside in order to improve what is happening on the inside. Fourthly, SACE is professionally obliged to undertake research that will improve the actual practice of teaching, including sharing of good practices among teachers. Finally, there are pieces of research that SACE should ordinarily undertake because of the nature of its mandate as a professional council. For instance, there is no organisation that is better placed to produce periodical reports on the state of the teaching profession than SACE.



The council will call for internal requests for research within the organisation. Internal requests will be conducted as follows:

- In November of each year, all divisions will be requested in writing to provide topics of interests within their area of work that the research division can assist in.
- These topics will then be discussed with each Manager, taking into consideration their feasibility, capacity to carry out the research and the duration of the study.
- On an annual basis, the research division will compile the Council's research needs for the year and further conduct the research depending on its feasibility.
- Please see annexure 1 for SACE's research agenda for 2020.



5. Research priorities for SACE according to the SACE Act.

SACE aims to conduct research in line with its Annual performance plan and strategic plan and it is thus important that SACE also develops research priorities for the next five years.

Research for self-renewal

Before SACE embarks on research programmes that are out-ward looking, it is important that SACE first conducts research that is aimed at improving its own internal functions in order to sufficiently contribute in other research areas. This is the kind of research that is found in organisations that are typified as learning organisations which are constantly engaged in a process of self-renewal based on findings from impact studies or satisfaction surveys for example. As a first step, it is important that SACE looks at the totality of its mandate and commission a series of impact studies in relation to registration, Legal and Ethics, Professional Development and Professional Standards.

- In relation to Registration of Educators, it would be important for SACE to explore any challenges/ barriers faced by Educators in relation to registration and how SACE can enhance the quality of the registration of teachers by introducing standards.
- Legal and Ethics, how best can SACE facilitate interventions and support for schools, educators and school communities on ethical matters.
- Professional Development, SACE has a responsibility to manage a system for continuing professional teacher development with the support of the Department of Basic Education and the nine provincial Education Departments, SACE needs to look at how best they can engage educators in life-long learning throughout their career and ensure that educators' classroom practice and professional competence are improved through the provisioning of quality SACE approved providers and endorsed professional development programmes.



- Professional Standards, SACE would need to explore how best it can enhance and support teacher preparation and professional practice.

The general goals of research should be to strengthen knowledge and understanding of:

- How changes in teaching practice can bring about improvements in students learning
- How teachers' professional development can bring about improvement in teaching practices; and
- How the work of teaching and activities aimed at professional development can be organised to support improvements throughout teachers' careers.

This research policy document will be underpinned by the perspective that teaching is a complex practice and consider the continuous learning of teaching across the teacher's career as an integral part of that practice and hence the SACE research policy will be reviewed annually, at the beginning of each financial year.

APPROVAL:

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