TETA RESEARCH AGENDA

2018-2019

Another CLEAR-AA Product

Transport Education Training Authority
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Compiled by

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ACRONYMS

AET   Adult Education and Training

CSI   Corporate Social Investment

DHET   Department of Higher Education and Training

CLEAR-AA   Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results – Anglophone Africa

HEI   Higher Education Institution

NDP   National Development Plan

TETA   Transport Education Training Authority

PSET   Post-School Education and Training

SAQA   South African Qualifications Authority

SETA   Sector Education and Training Authority

TVET   Technical and Vocational Education and Training

SLDS   Statewide Longitudinal Data System

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research agenda culminated from a need for the Transport Education Training Authority (TETA) to outline strategic areas for research for the next few years which will generate evidence to inform decision-making on skills development for the transport sector. The work was conducted by the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results – Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA) on behalf of TETA.

The research for this agenda was constructed mainly through a mixed method research design in which qualitative (namely, focus group discussions with stakeholders) and quantitative methods (in the form of a survey) were utilized. The process also included analysis of key organizational documents such as, the policy document, the Annual Performance Plan and the strategy document.

The decision to develop a research agenda for TETA is part of an ongoing process of overhauling and improving the organisation's research function. The present document builds from TETA's research strategy which was compiled by CLEAR-AA in 2015.

The key areas of focus for research, according to this agenda are as follows;

- **Sector Partnerships:** Research conducted identifies partnerships with industry employers as a significant area of improvement for TETA. Research on improved and innovative collaborative measures with employers is required to facilitate identification of pertinent skills needs and allocating funding accordingly.
- **Skills Shortage and inadequately trained personnel:** Several participants in the interview component of the research agenda argued that TETA and the transport sector at large are not training what they should be training because the information on skills shortage remains insufficient. Research could thus explore innovative and flexible approaches to understanding, measuring and forecasting demand and supply of transport sector skills.
- **Updating sector skills needs:** The most common perception from participants in this study is that the lack of value of research within TETA and its status within the organisation has huge implications on the research function. Areas of research focus include exploring ways to improve shared learning and reducing compliance-driven

action in the SSP research process. In addition TETA can ascertain chamber specific forecasting methods and supporting relevant future transport innovations through research

- **Visibility of TETA:** Many interview participants mentioned that one of the main inhibitors of SSP credibility is the poor participation of industry employers in the SSP process from submission of the WSP/ATR to attendance at SSP stakeholder workshops. Research is needed thus on innovative approaches to increase TETA's visibility amongst non- participating industry company and SMMEs as well as exploring ways to improve distribution mechanisms for research publications such as the SSP.

- **Policy and mandate appropriateness:** One of TETA's strategic goals involve 'providing administrative support services and enable TETA to deliver on its mandate and ensure compliance with all governance imperatives'. Research can focus on routine assessments of mandate relevance and relevance of service offering, and identification of obsolete policy for refinement.

- **Transformation within the transport sector:** Research can focus on ways to overcome barriers to entry and the successful operation of SMMEs, black and women-owned enterprises in transport.

As custodian of the Research Agenda, the Research and Knowledge Management Unit of TETA will ensure its implementation through several ways. Among them include, conducting of research internally within TETA, and where capacity is insufficient the research will be outsourced.

The Transport endeavors to identify various approaches to fulfill its primary mandate of skills development in the transport sector. This said TETA recognizes that research and evidence management are key to ensure rational decision making during its endeavor. It was for this reason that this document was compiled. It is also TETA's commitment to update this document annually to ensure that it is responsive to key and relevant strategic objectives of TETA.

1. INTRODUCTION

This research agenda is a result of work commissioned by the Transport Education Training Authority (TETA) to the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results – Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA). The aim of the project is to develop an appropriate and strategic research agenda for TETA, constructed mainly through a rigorous management and key stakeholder consultation process. The process also included analysis of key organizational documents such as, the policy document, the Annual Performance Plan and the strategy document.

Being one of about 21 SETAs in the country, TETA was re-established by the Minister of Labour, Membathisi Mdladlana, on 3 March 2005. The SETA's primary mandate is in education and training, with the aim to help implement the National Skills Development Strategy, and to increase the skills of people in the transport sector. TETA is led by a Board of advisors from business, trade unions and government, the strategic goals that have guided this research agenda are:

- To provide administrative support services and enable TETA to deliver on its mandate and ensure compliance with all governance imperatives.
- To establish mechanisms for skills planning and research capacity.
- To increase access to occupationally directed programmes within the Transport Sector
- To strengthen the quality assurance system

TETA operates within the following legal framework:

1. **Constitutional Mandates**

   The sections within the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996) that guide the operations of the Transport SETA include the following:
   - Promoting and maintaining high standards of ethics
   - Providing service impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias
   - Utilising resources efficiently and effectively
   - Responding to people's needs; the citizens are encouraged to participate in policy-making
   - Rendering an accountable, transparent and development-oriented administration.

2. **Legislative Mandates**

- Skills Development Act 1998 (Act No 97 of 1998) as amended

- Skills Development Levies Act, 1999 (Act No 09 of 1999)

- Regulations published in the Government Gazette, No. 35940, 03 December 2012 regarding Monies Received by a SETA and Related Matters

- South African Qualifications Authority Act, 1995 (Act No 58 of 1995)

- The National Qualifications Framework Act, (Act No. 67 of 2008)

- Public Finance Management Act (Act No 29 of 1999)

- Employment Equity Act, 1998 (Act No 55, 1998)

The decision to develop a research agenda for TETA is part of an ongoing process of overhauling and improving the organisation's research function. The present document builds from TETA's research strategy which was compiled by CLEAR-AA in 2015. Its objectives are:

Strategic Objective 1: To increase the capacity of the current research unit to cater for improved handling of technical research requirements for specific subsectors in the transport industry. This will strengthen TETA support to identification of skills gaps and needs in each subsector. This may require Chamber managers to have training in research methodologies and management to be able to guide the sector in determining research requirements.

Strategic Objective 2: To establish a research and knowledge information management repository to cater for the needs of the industry, the information repository would provide access to information on developments and advances in skills and capacity building in the transport sector from within and outside the country.

Strategic Objective 3: To develop a prioritized research agenda to ensure undertaking of research that will provide evidence based information for decision making in the determination of industry based skills development and training. Current research activities undertaken by TETA are not immediately directed at providing solutions to operational challenges in the sector.

Strategic Objective 4: To develop research tools and systems for effective management of research. Development of research guidelines and tools will enable the research unit to standardize management of research activities and ensure quality of research results.

The research protocols will comprise of the following:

- Research guidelines for commissioning of research, including the determination of competences and experience of service providers.

- Guidelines for preparing research proposals and evaluation of proposals

- Guidelines for management of research implementation and submission of deliverables.
- Guidelines for authorization of payments for achieved deliverables.
- Guidelines for standardization of research reports

Strategic Objective 5: To develop a basic tool for accurately determining skills needs and gaps at the organizational level to guide the development of appropriate skills training programs.

Strategic Objective 6: Institute changes in the TETA organogram to reflect the elevated responsibility of the research function over all the Chambers in the organization. The suggested changes in the organization organogram is guided by the realization that TETA's main mission is the development and management of skills development and therefore the organization structure has to take into consideration the pivotal role that a technical department needs to guide the process with critical inputs from the research unit. We envisage the role of the research unit to be responsible for technical oversight and monitoring of quality and relevance of skills development trainings. The elevated level of responsibility will require increased authority to implement structured data collection on skills needs and gaps across all the chambers.

2. IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH

The function of research is well respected and well recognized in the academic space. In fact, one can go as far as to say that research is the main driver of knowledge creation within the academic space. However, in the same light, the notion that knowledge and knowledge production is a key driver of innovation and technology advancements in technical industries and social development has been growing in popularity.

Prideaux (2012) points out and explains an important fact regarding the use of research. He points out that the reason for conducting research and therefore the type of research conducted differs depending on the intended use of research. In his study, he identifies three categories of commissioners of research, namely; Universities, Business, and Government. In his finding, he analyses the unique reasons for investing in research. Prideaux (2012) retorts that business invests in research for the purpose of increasing revenue and so its esearch objectives can be narrowed down to sales and technological projections, invention and innovation. In essence, business usually conducts applied research with high levels of immediate usability. On the other hand, since government does not have the expectation to produce revenue, its research purpose is driven by knowledge building in the country and the desire to support and optimize national economic, social, cultural, educational and political agendas. The state conducts both pure and applied research. Lastly, academia is driven by knowledge creation and cutting edge innovation. Their research can also serve application purpose, especially when conducted on behalf of business or government. However academia is driven by pure research with multiple research interests (Prideaux, 2012).

In agreement to the above sentiments Veugelers (2014) concludes that research and research agenda should be driven by its intended purpose thus, implying that all research should serve some form of purpose. Bjørndal, Herrero, Newman, Romero and Weintraub (2012) in their study on operational research conclude that research is becoming increasingly prevalent in the natural resource sectors. They further explain that research has been applied and used differently in the various sectors and thus resulted in varying impacts on operations. This further insinuates that a mere investment in research by industry organizations without a strategic application does not necessarily lead to operational benefit (Bjørndal, Herrero, Newman, Romero, & Weintraub, 2012). Research must therefore respond to organizational

strategic focus i.e. it must fulfill the purpose of supporting organizational strategy (Kulatunga, Amaratunga, & Haigh, 2006).

In conclusion, research is an essential input to growth, innovation, and invention and performance management at all level. However, objectives can only be achieved if the research is coordinated and aligned to operational and strategic foci. Thus, it follows that an organization is compelled to adopt a specific research agenda. For any SETA, the importance of research can be seen in the compilation of a Sector Skills Plan. An SSP relies heavily on research to establish the key change drivers in that sector, the jobs which are in high demand, hard to fill vacancies etc. in order to inform its sectors of areas were skills development must be prioritised.

3 METHODOLOGY

The diagram below captures the processes involved in collection of evidence that was used in formulating the key research themes that stakeholders in the transport sector would like TETA to focus on in the next few years.
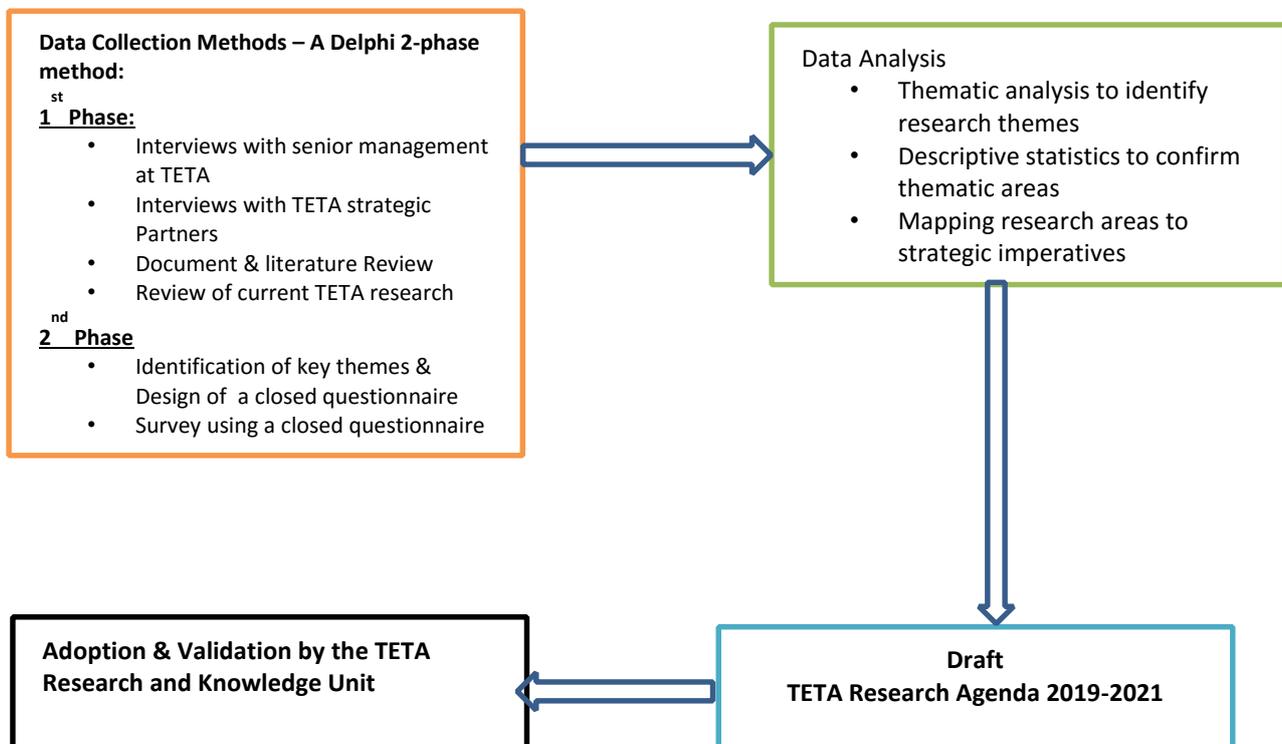
Data Collection Methods – A Delphi 2-phase method:
1st Phase:
- Interviews with senior management at TETA
- Interviews with TETA strategic Partners
- Document & literature Review
- Review of current TETA research

2nd Phase
- Identification of key themes & Design of a closed questionnaire
- Survey using a closed questionnaire

Data Analysis
- Thematic analysis to identify research themes
- Descriptive statistics to confirm thematic areas
- Mapping research areas to strategic imperatives

Adoption & Validation by the TETA Research and Knowledge Unit

Draft
TETA Research Agenda 2019-2021

As shown in figure 1 above the research process was rigorous and systematic in ensuring that stakeholders from various sectors were consulted in production of this research agenda. Below is a description of the research design and other critical aspects of the research process that was followed.

a) The Research design

The development of the research agenda involved the use of a mixed methods research in which both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to collect and analyse the data. Qualitative research is a form of social research which entails the collection of non-numeric data with the intention of interpreting the meaning of the data in order to understand various aspects of social life and behaviour through the examination of a targeted population or place (Crossman, 2017; Silverman, 2013). Quantitative research is the other form of social research and it involves explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data which will be analysed using statistical methods (Golafshani, 2003; Sukamolson, 2007).

The qualitative data collection method that was utilised was the Focus Group Discussion (FDG). A focus group discussion is essentially a group interview which is unique in the sense that it enables the exchange of stories and ideas between participants, and allows them to comment on each other's view points and experiences (Kitzinger, 1995).

The quantitative method to be utilised for data collection was a survey methodology. There are different types of surveys however for the purpose of this study, cross- sectional surveys will be utilised. Survey research is a form of field study which entails the collection of data from a sample drawn from a clearly defined population utilising a paper- based or electronic survey. A cross- sectional survey study involves the collection of data at a single point in time from a sample drawn from a targeted population (Visser, Krosnick & Lavrakas, 2000).

b) Research plan

- **Approach Design and Research Instrument Development**

This phase involved project and approach design, was informed by a combination of knowledge gathered from literature and contribution from the client during the first inception meeting. The design outlined the project activities and the sequencing thereof; it also defined expected outputs and offered a logical flow of the work. The result of the approach thus directly informed the design and development of all research tools that were used. This included focus group discussion guides and survey instruments. In this phase, the sampling framework for stakeholder consultation will be defined.

- **Stakeholder Consultation**

In this phase, all research instruments produced in the previous phase were utilized to collect relevant data from key stakeholders. This phase involved conducting of four FGDs in four main provinces and one FDG with internal staff. The rationale behind the selection of only four provinces in which focus group discussions was partly due to the budgetary constraints of the project but also these four provinces have been dubbed the economic hubs of the transport sector.

Figure 2: TETA's Research stakeholders

The stakeholders were sampled for the consultation process included levy payers and support structures in the following four provinces and cities: Eastern Cape (East London), Western Cape (Cape Town), Gauteng (Johannesburg) and Kwa- Zulu Natal (Durban).

c) Key Document and Current Research Review

In order to ascertain strategic focus and key areas of research, key documents were reviewed. These included but were not limited to; NSDS IV, TETA Strategic document, TETA operational Plans and Annual Performance Plans.

d) Analysis

In this phase, all collected data during stakeholder consultation were manually coded and analysed to ascertain and identify research gaps. A comprehensive analysis of current research output was conducted and all results were compared to converge into an accurate and comprehensive report.

e) Report Writing

This phase involved write up of this research agenda as well as a PowerPoint summary of the findings. After approval of the agenda by senior management of TETA the contents of its findings would be used to design an operational plan and design a workshop aimed at capacitating key staff to implement and manage the research agenda.

4. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH AGENDA

While there is no universal definition for the concept of research agenda, Keller-Margulis (2014) suggests that research agenda is defined as a **roadmap** or **framework** that **guides inquiry**, used to specify **gaps in knowledge** in a specific area and serves to guide the direction and development of new projects and research questions. Meanwhile, Amor (2017) defines research agenda as focal point for activities within a research–practice, she elaborates that research agendas are shaped around problems of practice, policy, and implementation, and are co-shaped by partners to fit priorities. This definition is complementary to the definition provided by Department of Higher Education which defines its research agenda as a set of "research areas and topics that enable the production of knowledge for evidence-based decision-making on key areas of weakness where intervention is required, and key success areas where replication is possible and would be beneficial" (DHET, 2015)

Lastly, the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) describes a research agenda as a plan that focuses on issues and ideas that are of greatest current interest or need. A good research agenda is shaped around challenges of practice, policy, and implementation; helps staff and stakeholders understand research goals; guides priority areas for conducting and reporting on research; and changes over time as interests, priorities, and needs shift, as knowledge increases, and as new research questions emerge.

In light of the definitions provided above, some few key elements of the definition of a research agenda are emerging. Such key elements include words such as ***focal point; shaped around problems of practice, policy, and implementation; partnership; areas and topics; plan; current interest or need; understand research goals; guides priority; new research questions.***

This said, a working definition offered by TETA through this project is as follows:

"The TETA research agenda is defined as a list of research questions, topics or themes; originating from specific areas of work of the Transport SETA which are aligned to organizational strategy, and serve to close identified knowledge gaps material to the progress of skills development in the Transport sector"

The Research Agenda sets out the research needs of the Transport SETA for the period 2019 to 2021. It has been developed to support research planning in the Transport SETA, and to signal to stakeholders the areas of research that the Transport SETA has identified as being important.

5. CONCEPT OF RESEARCH

For the purposes of the Research Agenda, the term "research" is taken to mean rigorous and systematic enquiry and analysis. Such research may be empirical or theoretical, quantitative or qualitative, applied or basic. It may involve the critique of policy; in-depth analysis of regularly compiled data sets and explanations of trends; observation; case studies and other research investigations, or meta-reviews and analyses. Rigorous evaluation studies of

educational and training programmes or interventions, including cost-benefit analyses and impact studies, fall under the research umbrella, as do high level analyses of statistical data.

6. TETA RESEARCH-POLICY

Prior to commissioning the development of the Research Agenda, TETA had embarked on formalising procedures and protocols for research management. In 2015, TETA adopted a draft document for managing research internally. This document therefore forms the basis for organisational research policy. While the current document does not provide the full details of the research guidelines, a brief synopsis of the policy document is herein provided.

The TETA research policy and guidelines document was developed for the purpose of providing formal standard guidance to the management and conduct of research commissioned or sponsored by TETA. The guidelines are intended to ensure that TETA investment into research is directed to providing information that is utilized by stakeholders to improve some aspect of skills development in the sector, and that research studies are conducted with the necessary professional rigor to provide credible results that qualifies for publication in respectable local and international journals.

This document is intended to act as a guiding companion to the management of all research studies managed by the TETA Research and Knowledge Manager or any person given the responsibility to manage the undertaking of research in TETA.

This policy document is developed under the following premises

a) Recognizing that TETA Research and Knowledge Management Unit is the only legitimate authority to coordinate and supervise all research studies commissioned by TETA; and is able to make requisition for data/information from all Chambers and seeks to establish harmonized and standardized data collection, processing, analysis and reporting of scarce skills information from all stakeholders in the transport industry in South Africa.

b) Recognizing that all stakeholders in the transport sector are required to cooperate with TETA to provide information on their skills requirements needs and gaps when requested to do so.

c) Recognizing that improvement and maintenance of staff skills depends on regular monitoring of skills needs and gaps and results used to improve skills development training and other skills capacity building initiatives.

d) Recognizing that skills needs and gaps information requires continuous monitoring given the need to keep abreast of new technological development and changing management environment in the sector.

e) Recognizing that TETA needs to establish a repository for information and data on transport sector research and development, and make it accessible to all stakeholders in the industry.

f) Recognizing that current approaches to research management is inadequate and does not provide for credible outcomes and not fully addressing particular skills requirements in the industry.

g) Recognizing that unstandardized management of research studies has led to poor and not so credible outcome of most of the research studies carried out previously.

h) Recognizing that TETA has the opportunity to lead developmental and evaluative research to provide solutions to development of effective skills development programming in the transport sector in the country.

Guiding Principles

The basis used to develop this Research Policy is based on the following guiding principles:

TETA as a national institution mandated to manage the development and provision of skills development initiatives believes in and undertakes to do the following:

a) Provide tools for identification of skills needs and gaps to ensure that all skills requirements in the industry are addressed.

b) Ensure that current and future skills development and training programs are appropriate and relevant to the needs of the industry; and that they are of acceptable quality and efficacy.

c) Ensure that all skills development related information is collected, stored and disseminated to stakeholders without restriction.

d) Ensure that skills development information generated and/or disseminated is relevant and appropriate to the industry.

e) Ensure that all stakeholders coordinate with the relevant chamber managers to ensure that they identify skills needs and gaps accurately before submission of SSPs to TETA.

f) Contribute to the monitoring and map out skills requirements and needs.

Policy Areas

These policy guidelines shall apply to the following areas:

1. Guidelines on collection of necessary data on skills needs and post training tracer studies.

2. Guidelines on accessing of research information on various topics of skills development in TETA.

3. Guidance on modalities of collection information on identification of scarce skills and forecasting of skills development resulting from technological advancements.

4. Governing collection, use, storage and dissemination of research information on skills development training in the industry.

5. Governing the ownership and use of data from research studies commissioned by or through TETA.

7. TETA AND THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

The research community surrounding the work of the Transport SETA is wide with different research and practice areas affecting both skills development and transport economics specifically. As such, it is compelling to recognise that the SETA can only increase its research output through a collaborative and/or co-creation approach with member of the research community. It should therefore follow that that TETA should show sound intelligence in how it conducts its stakeholder analysis in order to identify key partners and ascertain how it [TETA] works with each stakeholder. This said, the following is a synopsis of the various stakeholders TETA has identified as direct contributors to the implementation of the research agenda:

- **Cohorts of post graduates funded by TETA** whose research interest is directly linked to TETA's research agenda, or who can be incentivised to take on research which responds to TETA's research agenda.

- **Private Research Institutions** which have invested heavily in research areas which are specific to a subsector of the transport sector (taxi, Maritime, Road Freight etc.), while at the same time having direct linkage to TETA's research agenda

- **National Research Institutions which are funded by government** to produce development research. Example of such institution is the HSRC (Human Science Research Council). Such institutions have research foci which may be responsive to TETA research agenda

- **Research Universities and Dedicated research centres.** An evolving trend across public universities is the idea of setting-up centres of excellence with a dedicated research area, conducting research on a specific sector. Such centre can also be a result of a proactive approach by TETA through setting up of a research centre specifically taking on a subset of the research strategy.

- **International Associations and Journals.** There is a growing community of international research institutions with special sectoral focus. These can be professional bodies with a strong research function and investment, or alternatively, this can be in the form of an arrangement between TETA and journal publisher whose focus is specifically in transport economy, or vocational skills development.

8. RESEARCH PRIORITIES

8.1 Key Policies and Strategies

The research agenda identifies research priorities which are derived from government policies such as the National Development Plan (NDP), National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS III), Human Resources Development Strategy for South Africa, Strategy Infrastructure Programmes (SIPs), and White Paper on Post-school Education and Training as well as the latest TETA Strategic Plan 2015 – 2020.

Policy/Programme	Description
National Development Plan (NDP)	Long-term plan for South Africa that aims to eliminate poverty and reduce unemployment to 6% by 2030 through: ➢ An expanded skills base through better education and vocational training; and prioritising business incubation for SMEs and the expansion of business services.
New Growth Path (NGP)	The NGP envisages addressing skills shortages through training, facilitated by improved education and bridging programmes as well as training of artisans.
Human Resources Development Strategy for South Africa	The Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa (HRDS-SA) (2010-2030) locates education and training within the broader developmental agenda of the country to addressing human development challenges. Broad outcomes of the strategy are equitable access to education and training and the development of skilled people for the economy.
White Paper on Post-school Education and Training	This White Paper provides a coherent vision of an expanded, effective and integrated post-school system in South Africa. The expansion is premised on: ➢ Expanding access to TVET and university education; ➢ Establishing community colleges and skills centres to mainstream vocational education and training; ➢ Establishing a national skills planning mechanism within DHET; ➢ A strengthened National Skills Authority to monitor and evaluate the skills system; and

	➢ Creating more opportunities for work integrated learning
National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS III)	The NSDS III provides an overarching framework for sector skills planning and the implementation of skills development. The Strategy provides eight goals that should inform the development of sector skills plans. Sector skills plans should be aligned to government and industry development initiatives, address the needs of unemployed youth, provide for new occupational qualifications, address the challenges within TVET colleges and build strong partnerships to deliver on the strategy.

Source: Department of Higher Education and Training (2015)

These policies are focused on alleviating poverty, reducing inequality and unemployment. They are critical to TETA's strategic direction.

8.2 Research themes/topics

The themes/topics under each focus area are complementary and not exhaustive. They vary in scale and complexity according to their subject-matter, and some require more than one study. The theme/topic descriptors are meant to be indicative. In order to become operational, each theme/topic will require a fully-worked research proposal. Whether or not a project becomes operational will depend on a variety of factors, not least the availability of resources and research partners.

It is understood that both financial and human resources are limited and choices have to be made by both TETA and associate research organisations. It is therefore particularly important to build synergies and research partnerships in order to conserve resources, focus on agreed priorities and maximise research impact. Consultation, networking and information-sharing will help decision-makers to focus on what is both important and do-able.

Each focus area could generate an indefinite number of themes and topics, and many cross-theme permutations are possible. TETA has, however, identified specific themes and topics that are of particular priority for its needs, for the next three years.

The following broad focus areas are particularly important to TETA. The focus areas are inter-related. They are not in order of precedence and are not an exclusive list.

a) Sector Partnerships

The National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS III) identifies partnerships as crucial for achieving development goals such as higher economic growth, as well as higher productivity, and a skilled and capable workforce. The NSDS III indicates that priority should go to strengthening partnerships between industry employers, public higher education institutions and SETAs. In order to align itself with national government priorities, TETA has established partnerships with TVET colleges as a primary means of addressing challenges of technical and vocational skills gaps. Similarly, TETA has developed partnerships with universities with the aim of enabling previously disadvantaged learners to pursue junior and higher level degrees in the transport sector. Additionally, TETA has partnered with industry employers, through employer associations, with the aim of addressing workplace skills challenges.

Research conducted identifies partnerships with industry employers as a significant area of improvement for TETA. Improved and innovative collaborative measures with employers are required to facilitate identification of pertinent skills needs and allocating funding accordingly. Research further indicates that despite concerted efforts to partner with industry employers, the results have often proven less fruitful seeing that employers consider partnerships with TETA a means to access funding, as opposed to a means of confronting skills development challenges in the transport sector. In addition, many levy paying companies are not responsive to the collaboration opportunities availed by TETA.

Furthermore, although TETA currently provides access to occupationally-directed programmes such as learnerships, apprenticeships, workplace experience, cadetships, leadership development programmes, candidacy programmes etc., there continues to be a disjuncture between the skills of these learners and the skills required by industry. This is largely due to the unstructured nature of these programmes (DHET, 2015) and the lack of monitoring and evaluation (NDP, 2012) to ensure that learners are receiving the training for which they were placed. This is ultimately the challenge that the SETA has to meet. It is not

enough for TETA to increase access to programmes, but it is also equally pertinent that it increases the quality of these programmes as well (as is stipulated in the White Paper for Post- School Education and Training). TETA also relies heavily on a small number of industry companies and associations for information affecting the entire transport sector. The latter has major implications for accurately identifying the skills needs of the transport sector.

Key themes/topics on Sector Partnership

- Exploring mechanisms for improved collaboration strategies with industry employers
- Exploring Alternative funding models for skills development
- Aligning internal processes and turnaround times to industry requirements and time frames to facilitate implementation of quality skills programmes by employers
- Exploring an appropriate role of TETA in the strategic direction of industry employers (bilateral partnerships) for improved skills development in the transport sector
- Innovative approaches to enhance industry participation levels in skills planning
- Monitoring and evaluation of training programmes implemented by employers
- The role of enterprise development as a strategy to facilitate the sustainability of skills development and job creation in the transport sector
- Exploring collaboration strategies with small, rural and black- owned businesses to increase participation and competitiveness of companies owned by historically disadvantaged groups
- Assessing Impacts that the 4th industrial revolution will have on skills demand and retention and implication on skills planning

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b) Skills Shortage and Inadequately trained personnel

One of the most pressing challenges identified by the NSDS III has impeding economic growth and employment opportunities is the "continuing skills shortages in the artisanal, technical and professional fields" (DHET, 2011: 6). Addressing skills shortages equally constituted one of the main commitments of the Human Resources Development Strategy for South Africa (HRDS- SA). The HRDS- SA indicates that there is empirical evidence of skills shortages in several economic sectors. The challenge is that skills shortages in the country exist

concurrently with high unemployment rates. This is a reflection of mismatch between the supply and demand of skills in the country (HRDCSA, 2017). Various publications within the transport sector further corroborate the existence of skills shortages as well as the inadequately trained and competent personnel within various industries of the transport sector such as Road Freight, Rail, and Maritime industries. One publication states that "one of the severe pressures the road freight industry is currently experiencing is the skills shortage and lack of adequately trained and competent personnel" (DoT, 2017: 7).

The White Paper for Post- School Education and Training states that the primary reason for the establishment of SETAs was to improve knowledge and information pertaining sector skills needs and opportunities. In addition, SETAs were tasked with planning for skills development, increasing training opportunities in workplaces, particularly for previously disadvantaged groups including black people, women and people with disabilities. Furthermore, the White Paper for Post- School Education and Training placed the onus on SETAs to enhance the quality of formal education and training which is aimed at preparing learners for work (DHET, 2013). The role of the Sector Skills Plan (SSP) is to identify and quantify specific transport sector skills shortages and hard-to-fill positions, and thus, to guide required skills development interventions. Due to the limitations of the SSP approach and poor participation of industry companies in the SSP process, the accuracy of skills needs is compromised. Several participants in the interview component of the research agenda argued that TETA and the transport are not training what they should be training because the information within the SSP is inaccurate even after 20 years SSP research. Participants stated that TETA consistently experiences challenges with matching demand and supply, mainly due to research methodology utilised for identifying demand and supply, and buy-in from key stakeholders on research within TETA.

Key themes/topics on Skills Shortage and Inadequately trained personnel

- Innovative and flexible approaches to understanding, measuring and forecasting demand and supply of transport sector skills
- Determining Levels of employment of new trainees and graduates within the transport sector, and drivers of trainee employment

- Identifying good research practice in skills planning and techniques to improve current methodologies
- Evaluating success with which access to occupationally- directed programmes has addressed the skills shortages issue in the transport sector
- Exploring quality in occupationally- directed programmes
- Evaluating success with which Mandatory and Discretionary Grants have addressed skills shortages in transport sector
- Exploring perception of skills programme implementers and quality implications
- Assessing Impact of technology and innovation within transport on skills demand and supply

c) Updating Sector Skills Needs

An important goal of the NSDS III and as a result, TETA is the objective to 'establish mechanisms for skills planning and research capacity'. According to the NSDS III, the main responsibility of SETAs is to develop the Sector Skills Plan (SSP), it is core to their mandate. This strategy requires SETAs to be the authority on labour market intelligence and sector skills needs. The NSDS III states that the SSP should provide an overview of current and future educational and training needs of industry companies and their employees, and develop skills interventions to address demand and supply. Although the NSDS III was drafted in 2011, its remark regarding the lack of an institutional mechanism which provides credible information regarding the demand and supply of skills remains relevant today, particularly within TETA.

The NSDS III alludes to the research function of TETA as it states that "SETAs play an important role in gathering statistics and other relevant information on labour market skills needs and training provision" (DHET, 2011: 11). Another strategic document, the Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa further states that SETAs were established to ensure the flow of information between key role players. To date, however, research has found that SETAs have not been very successful in achieving these goals and thus, have received considerable criticism as they have "neither produced good information about skills needs, nor increased provision and quality of provision of education and training in areas needed by the economy" (DHET, 2013: 56 -7). To corroborate the statements in these policy frameworks, findings from the interviews and survey conducted with key stakeholders in the transport

sector suggest that there are fundamental issues with the methodologies utilised by TETA to collect, analyse and write up Sector Skills Plans (SSPs). In addition, research capacity issues have existed and despite great improvements, continue to exist within TETA.

The most common perception from participants in this study is that the lack of value of research within TETA and its status within the organisation has huge implications on the research function. One participant stated;

"if research was taken seriously, given the place or the authority and a budget then they should be able to resolve the skills mismatch. And if we are not going to take research seriously as TETA then the skills mismatch will continue".

Another participant stated;

"the SSP information is not commonly used by TETA because I haven't heard people talking about it a lot. So people don't use the SSP even for allocating funds and grants".

Furthermore, in the survey participants were requested to state the level with which they agree with the statement **'Research is given sufficient status and authority within TETA'**, this was the response:

Response	%
Agree & Strongly Agree	30%
Disagree & Strongly Disagree	70%

When survey participants were requested to state the level of agreement if the statement **'Research produced by TETA is given sufficient status and authority by transport sector companies/organisations'**, this was the response:

Response	%
Agree & Strongly Agree	23%
Disagree & Strongly Disagree	77%

When asked whether they agree that **'The research TETA produces on the demand and supply of transport sector skills is reliable and credible**', the participants responded:

Response	%
Agree & Strongly Agree	30%
Disagree & Strongly Disagree	70%

One of the major concerns pertaining to the SSP is the effectiveness of the methodologies used, particularly the main data collection tool which is the Workplace Skills Plan (WSP). Below is an excerpt from an interview which is representative of the general sentiment regarding current research conducted by TETA as well as the mechanisms used:

"...when it comes to the SSP, it takes a lot of its guidance from the Workplace Skills Plan (WSP). The WSP is the biggest load of garbage under the sun. It is purely compliance. The people who complete the WSP are administrators, they thumb suck what they think the organisation needs, and there is no strategic intent from the leadership of industry to assist. And all these SDFs (Skills Development Facilitators), and I'm not being facetious, I don't want to be disrespectful towards them, but the SDFs do not get the bigger picture, they are not in touch with the realities of business. When you talk to the CEO of a multi- million dollar company, they are already five years ahead of you so that's the information we want to know. I don't want to be developing curriculum for the now or what's already gone past, do you understand what I'm saying. And this is the mistake that we keep on making, if you look at the WSP as the point of departure of the SSP then your SSP is going to be a lot of crap as well, with all due respect. So for me, number one it's actually WSP the tool that I have a problem with because it is not asking the right questions. The second issue I have is with the people that complete the WSP. For me, if DHET doesn't change the WSP template as a research tool then we're wasting our time even contemplating the data that comes from there. Then we have to get a different approach to how we're going to do the research because at the moment I'm not convinced that we're on the right track".

One of the recommendations for improvement of the TETA research function is that Sub-sector/Chamber Skills Plans would be more appropriate for such a complex and dynamic sector. Several excerpts regarding the need for sub- sector research are presented below:

"Subsector research is needed. We have to have a more focused approach to research. I have already spoken to the Research Unit about this, but we have to have a Subsector Skills Plan which then culminates into a SSP. The current SSP is limited because of the 62 page limit

> *given by DHET, do we really want to add value to society out there or are we merely doing research to comply"*
>
> *"Another thing is that each chamber must produce its own researched SSP and it must produce the entire information, even if it means that people make comparative studies for the SSP because chambers know what's needed in their subsectors"*
>
> *"There are a lot of priorities, we've got 8 chambers so whatever we do in a chamber or a unit has to involve research from the industry/sector. I believe that if this happens then we will be more focused and more direct in terms our interventions"*

There is clearly general consensus regarding the limitations of the current SSP and the need for eight different sub- sector skills plans, which can be collated into one. The perceptions are the depth of the information for each subsector will facilitate more accurate identification of skills needs and more effective skills interventions.

Key themes/topics on Updating Sector Skills Needs

- Chamber or Subsector specific trends and issues
- Exploring ways to Improve shared learning and reducing compliance-driven action in the SSP research process
- Ascertaining Chamber specific forecasting methods and supporting relevant future transport innovations through research
- Exploring and supporting knowledge economics within the transport

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d) Visibility of TETA

According to TETA's strategic plan 2018 – 2019, the participation of transport companies in the WSP/ATR remains a challenge. In addition, the proportion of levy paying companies need to be increased, particularly SMMEs. The NSDS III mentions the issue of low stakeholder participation in skills development when it states that "To give greater effect to these programmes and ensure greater employer participation, a PIVOTAL grant has also been incorporated into NSDS III". Many interview participants mentioned that one of the main inhibitors of SSP credibility is the poor participation of industry employers in the SSP process

from submission of the WSP/ATR to attendance at SSP stakeholder workshops. The survey findings present a slightly nuanced understanding of the poor participation in that many of the sampled registered companies had never heard of TETA prior to receiving the survey invitation. When asked, 'Why do you not read and/or use the Sector Skills Plan (SSP)?' Participants responded as follows:

Reasons Industry Employers do not read and/or use the Sector Skills Plan (SSP)?	Percentage of Employers
Our company has never received a copy of the SSP and does not know how to access it	23%
I do not need to use the information in the SSP	6%
The information provided is not relevant to my industry/company	5%
The information provided does not provide detailed information on each sub-sector/industry, it is too generalised	2%
It is not well researched	2%
It is difficult to understand the information presented in the SSP	2%
The same information is presented in the SSP each year and thus, providing no new insights	2%
The data presented is of poor quality	2%

One participant elaborated by saying that "TETA relies on a small number of companies and associations for information affecting the entire transport sector". The findings showed that many company employers in land transport especially Road Freight, but also Freight Handling, Road Passenger, and Forwarding and Clearing have not heard of TETA. One interview participant explained that TETA is aware of the issue of low participation and has included it as a performance indicator within their strategic plan. TETA is also aware of its visibility issues which are mainly attributable to human resources however TETA is formulating ideas about how to make itself visible, particularly to non- participating transport companies and SMMEs.

Key themes/topics on Visibility of TETA

- Innovative approaches to increase TETA's visibility amongst non- participating industry company and SMMEs
- Exploring ways to improve distribution mechanisms for research publications such as the SSP

e) Policy and Mandate Appropriateness

One of TETA's strategic goals involves 'providing administrative support services and enable TETA to deliver on its mandate and ensure compliance with all governance imperatives'. The purpose of this strategic goal is to improve public service delivery by TETA. According to TETA, mismanagement and administrative malpractice in government hinder service delivery. It is therefore crucial to develop well-structured improvement plans and monitoring of management practices in order to resolve issues. Furthermore, TETA believes that more aligned corporate services interventions instil a culture of improved performance in organisations. Due to its dynamic and technology-oriented nature, the transport sector warrants skills planning and skills programmes which are equally technical to ensure that the skills needs of the sector are met. According to the White Paper for Post- School Education and Training, SETAs are mandated to develop the "skills of those in existing enterprises and the development of a skills pipeline to such workplaces. Their focus will be narrowed to engaging with stakeholders in the workplace, establishing their needs, and ensuring that providers have the capacity to deliver against these" (Government Gazette, 2015: 36).

Key themes/topics on Policy and Mandate Appropriateness
- Routine assessment of mandate relevance and relevance of service offering, and identification of obsolete policy for refinement
- Routine identification of unintended policy overlap and areas of synergy with other key stakeholders for improved partnership strategies
- Search for appropriate policy positioning within national plans and imperatives

f) Transformation within the transport sector

The objective of the National Development Plan is to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by the year 2030. The government has committed to investing in the transport sector as part of its Nine Point Plan to stimulate development and create employment. One of the key

vehicles identified for achieving this initiative is the improvement of skills development. It is believed that the latter strategy will result in an increase in employment, an increase in productivity, improved standards of living and a reduction in inequality (NDP, 2012). The NSDS III is guided by seven developmental and transformational government imperatives including race, class, gender, geography, age, disability and HIV/AIDS. The NSDS III requires special focus on skills provision for these demographic groups.

Key themes/topics on Transformation within the transport sector

- Overcome barriers to entry and the successful operation of SMMEs, black and women-owned enterprises in transport
- Supporting innovation toward transport skills development in rural areas
- Support of Black- female entrepreneurs, especially from rural backgrounds
- Supporting economic activity and accommodation of People with Disabilities (PWDs) within the education system from primary school to tertiary so that they are given the same opportunity in the transport sector
- The effect of aging on knowledge retention and the implication of skills planning

9. RESEARCH FUNDING AND PROCUREMENT

There is wide scope for partnerships in research projects between the TETA and research organisations or institutions — whether local, regional or international—that have a direct interest in advancing access, equity, quality and efficiency of TETA. The TETA will initiate such partnerships and will welcome proposals from prospective partners.

Given the limitations of its internal research capacity, the SETA has taken a strategic approach of conducting research collaboratively. While most of the research projects will be outsourced by TETA, TETA will continue to identify and facilitate arrangements where commissioning of research can be shared with a potential partner.

All procurement of research, including research collaborations are to be guided and governed by the TETA research policy described above. The SETA is committed to exploring all avenues of research production that will enhance both the production rate and quality of relevant research.

The TETA research policy is in direct recognition and alignment with the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act 1 of 1999) and Treasury Regulations. Therefore, procurement decisions on research provision will combine considerations of cost, functionality and quality. TETA will ensure that its research procurement processes are informed by the advice of credible evaluators.

TETA intends to fund research within the scope of its own financial resources, as follows:

a) **Commissioned research**. Research topics, whose terms of reference are specified by the Department as part of this agenda, will be commissioned and funded by TETA.

b) **Calls for proposals**. Applications by external researchers for funding to undertake projects on topics in this agenda will be invited on the basis of a TETA proforma. Approved applications will be funded by the Department.

10. CONCLUSION

The Transport endeavors to identify various approaches to fulfill its primary mandate of skills development in the transport sector. This said TETA recognizes that research and evidence management are key to ensure rational decision making during its endeavor. It was for this reason that this document was compiled. It is also TETA's commitment to update this document annually to ensure that it is responsive to key and relevant strategic objectives of TETA.

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