

Every child is a National Asset

# University of Johannesburg: Education Conversations

## *Improving Learning Outcomes through Curriculum Strengthening*

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# Presentation Outline

1. Purpose
2. The Vision
3. Current Context
4. Curriculum Strengthening: Goals, Scope, Approach
5. Curriculum Strengthening Framework
6. Implications across the 5 levers
7. Conclusion

# Purpose

- **Unpack** and clarify the Curriculum Strengthening process;
- **Share emergent thinking;**
- Unpack the **South African Competency Framework**
- **Receive feedback** to guide future processes

# OUR COMPASS TO IMPROVING LEARNING OUTCOMES



**CURRENT CONTEXT:** Where are we now?



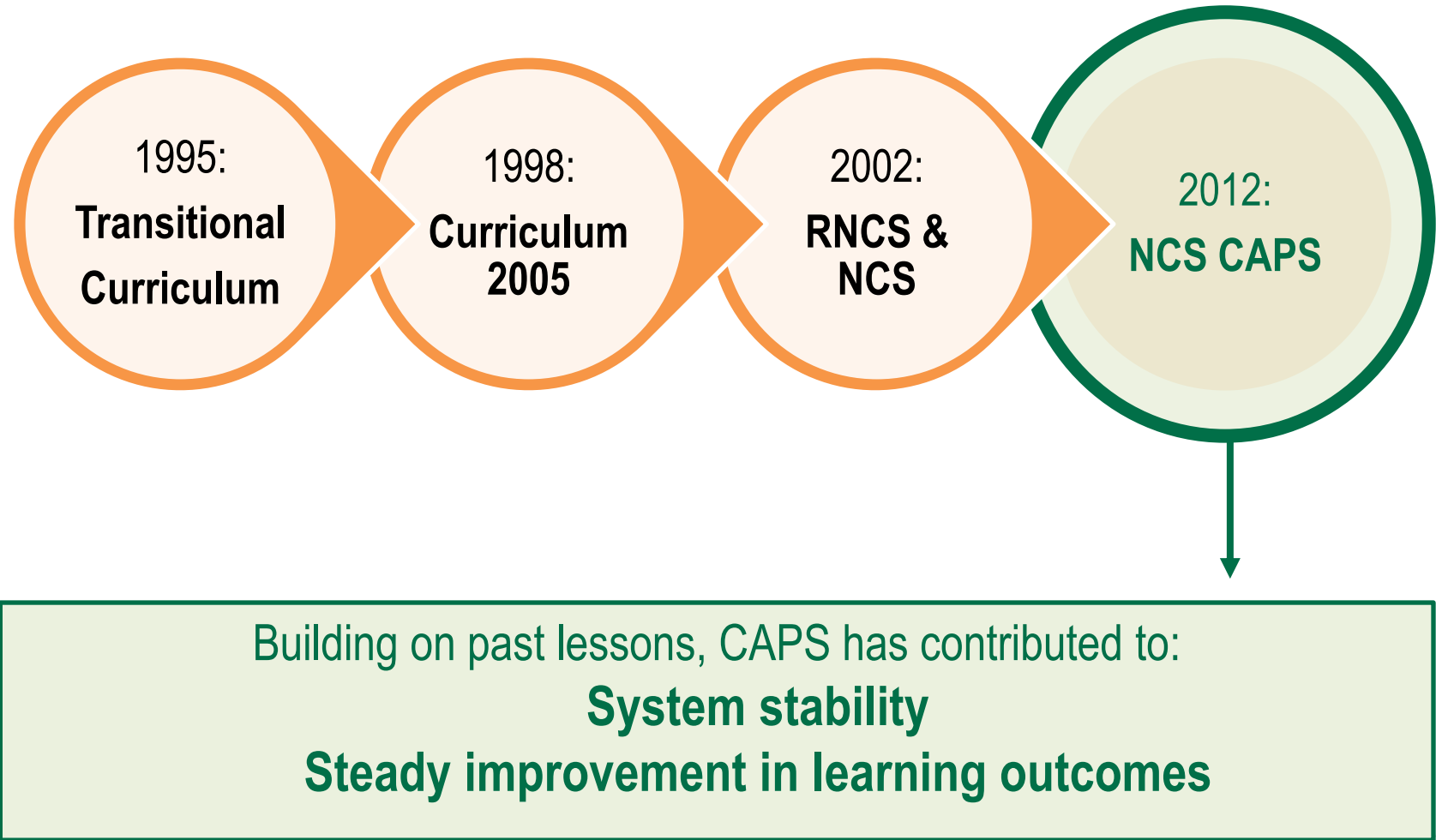
**VISION:** Where do we want to be?



**WAY FORWARD:** How do we get to the vision?

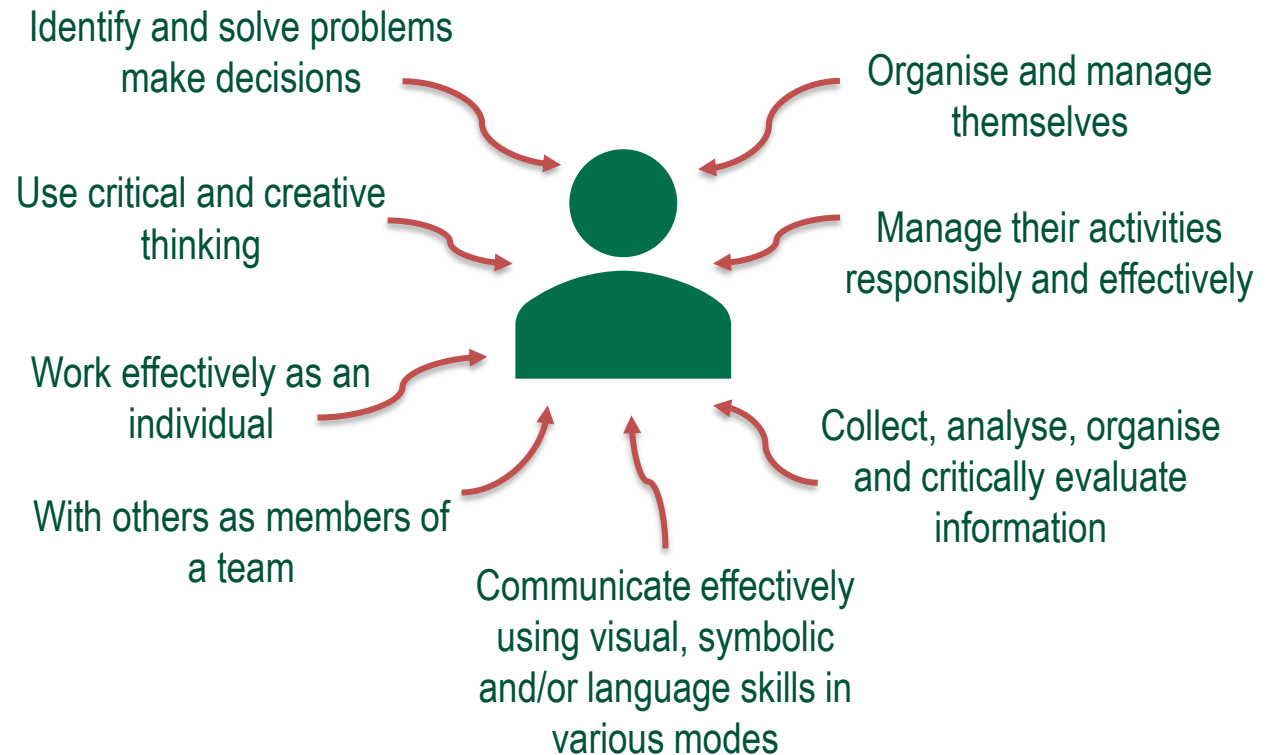
# CURRENT CONTEXT: Where are we ?

# Curriculum Evolution in Democratic South Africa



# THE POLICY LANDSCAPE: CAPS

## Section 1: General Aims



# Independent Research Reports

Report	Organisation and year	Key Findings
<i>What's in the CAPS package? A Comparative Study of NCS and CAPS.</i>	Umalusi, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CAPS contains <b>appropriate skills/content</b></li> <li>• Content in some subjects is too broad</li> <li>• Transversal and higher-order skills <b>are not systematically taught and assessed</b></li> </ul>
<i>Skills for a Changing World</i>	Brookings Institution, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Transversal skills are included</b> in the curriculum, particularly Life Orientation</li> <li>• <b>Teachers lack guidance on how to teach skills</b></li> <li>• Curriculum is perceived to <b>be assessment-driven and content-driven</b></li> </ul>
<i>Implementation Evaluation of the National Curriculum Statement</i>	DBE/DPME, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum is <b>generally appropriate</b></li> <li>• <b>Content</b> in some subjects is too broad</li> <li>• Quality of implementation is highly variable</li> </ul>
<i>International Benchmarking and Subject Analysis of the South African National Senior Certificate</i>	Ecctis, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CAPS is <b>comparable to international curricula</b></li> <li>• Some transversal skills could be more explicitly articulated</li> <li>• Some room for <b>content modernisation</b></li> </ul>



# SOME PERSISTENT CHALLENGES



Despite improvements, **learning outcomes remain lower** than many other middle-income countries. Targets remain elusive.



Low learning outcomes in early years contribute to many **learners exiting the system without adequate knowledge** and skills to succeed in life after school.

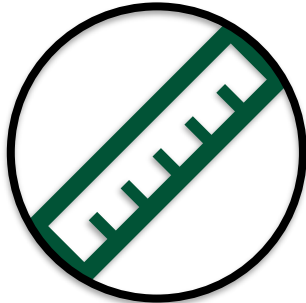


**Together** with other structural factors, this contributes to the **youth unemployment crisis** in the country.

# CHALLENGES ARE COMPLEX AND MULTI-FACETED



Curriculum  
Policy



Assessment



Teacher  
Development



LTSM



The learning  
environment  
(SMT and  
Community)

Requires a Holistic Systemic Approach

# Problem Statement

The South African education system is **not adequately preparing young people for life after school.** (OECD, 2017)



**VISION:** Where do we want to be?

# THE VISION



To equip learners with **sustainable skills and competencies** for the future, to **transition** effectively from school to work, higher education, and / or **entrepreneurial opportunities**.

# National Development Plan

Improving the quality of Basic Education has been articulated in the *National Development Plan (NDP), Vision 2030, Our future – Make it work.*

*“By 2030, South Africans should have access to education and training of the **highest quality**, leading to significantly **improved learning outcomes**.*

*The performance of South African learners in **international standardised tests** should be comparable to the performance of learners from countries at a similar level of development and with similar levels of access.”*

*National Planning Commission: National Development Plan, 2012*



## WAY FORWARD: How do we get to the goal?

*How can we **sustainably address** these challenges to improve learning outcomes for **ALL** learners?*

*We require a holistic and long-term approach to addressing the challenges related to low level learning outcomes.*

## CURRICULUM STRENGTHENING: GOALS



To enhance the relevance of the knowledge, skills, character, and values taught in the current curriculum, to prepare learners to thrive in a changing world



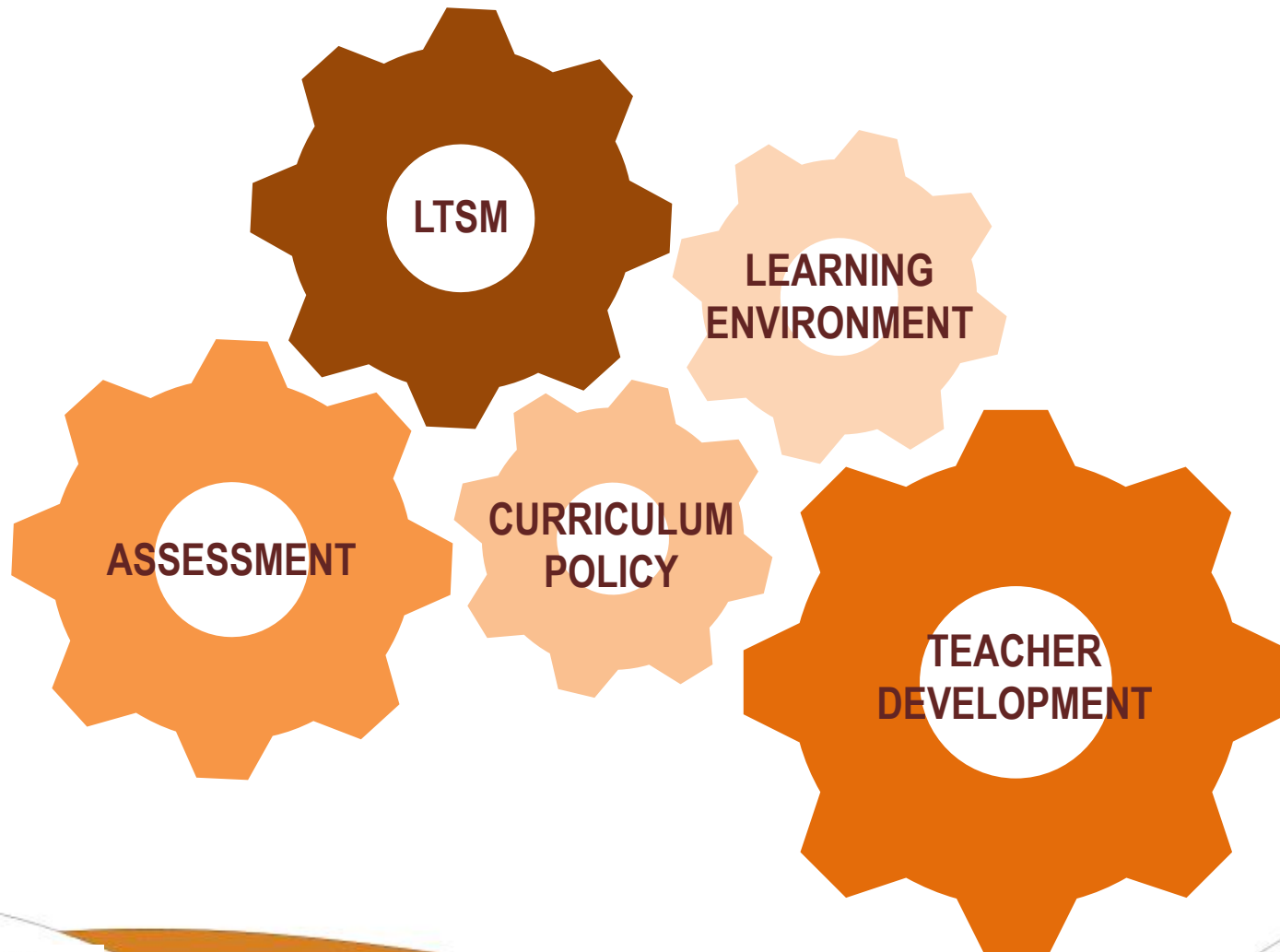
To achieve greater alignment across the 5 levers



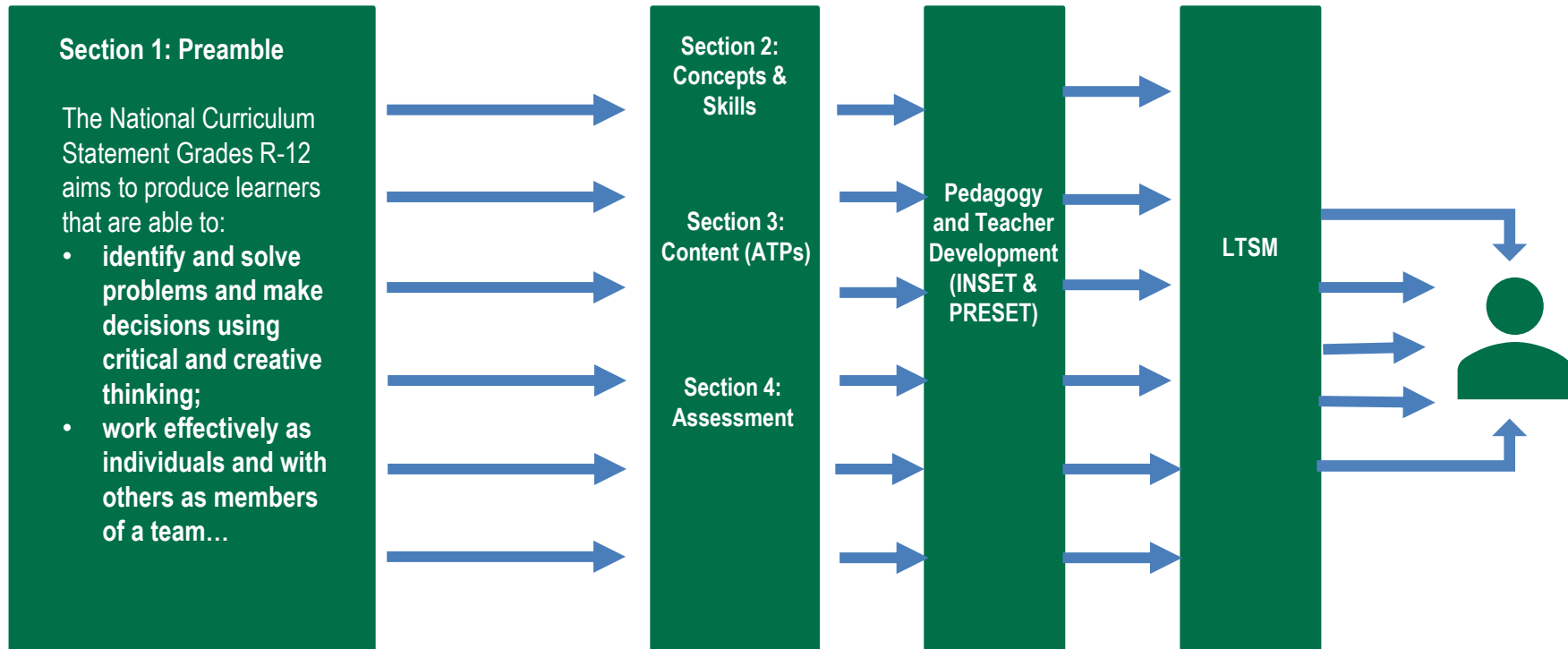
To more systematically organise the way that curriculum is written and strengthened on an ongoing basis



# IMPROVING LEARNING OUTCOMES: FIVE LEVERS FOR CHANGE



# What does "strengthening" mean?



# Are we adopting a Competency-based curriculum?

## ~~Competency-based~~

~~Organised around  
competencies~~

~~Content de-prioritised~~

~~Low to no content  
specifications~~

## Subject-based,

Content remains core

Competencies developed  
through content

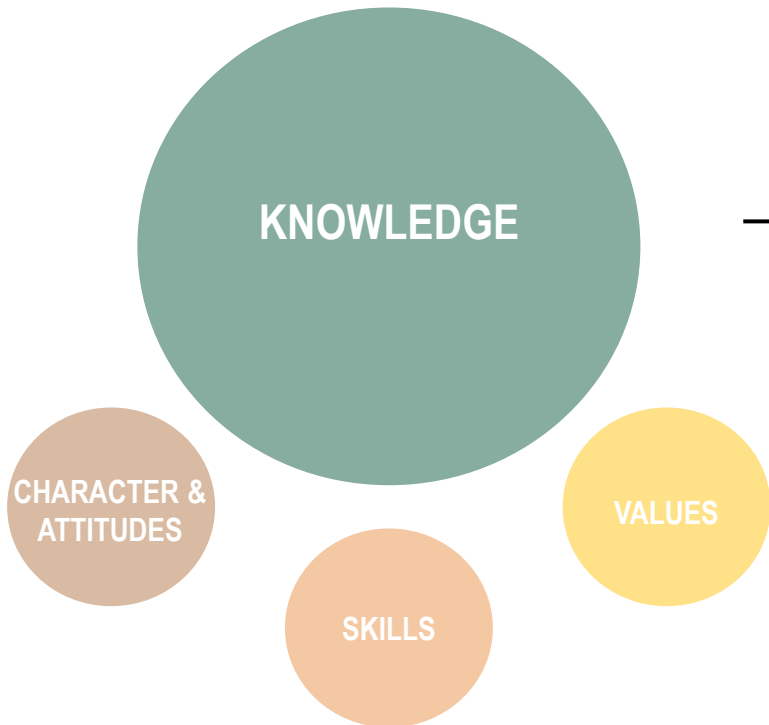
Content specifications remain

A competency is defined as: ***“the mobilisation of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to meet complex demands”***

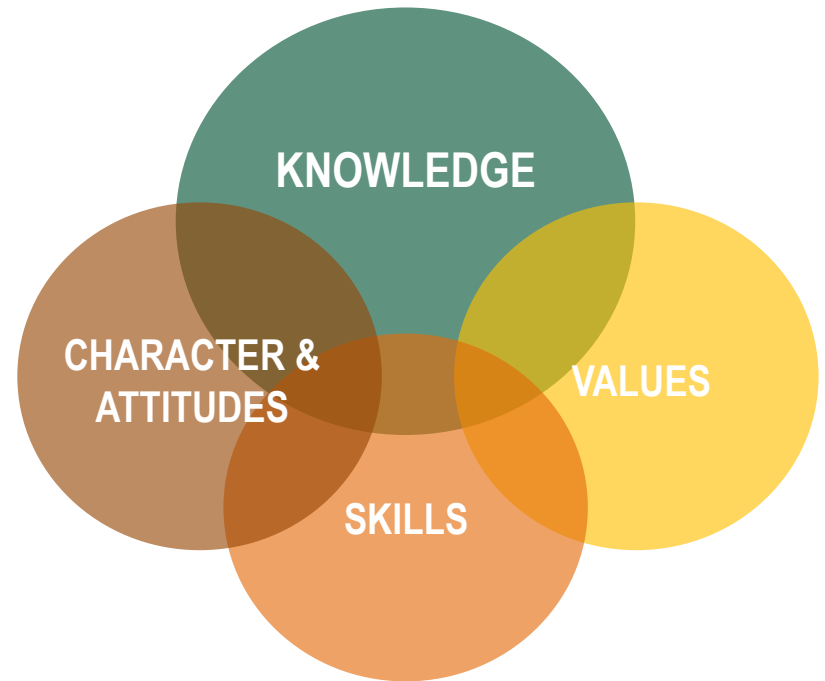
OECD, 2019

# THE PROPOSED SHIFT

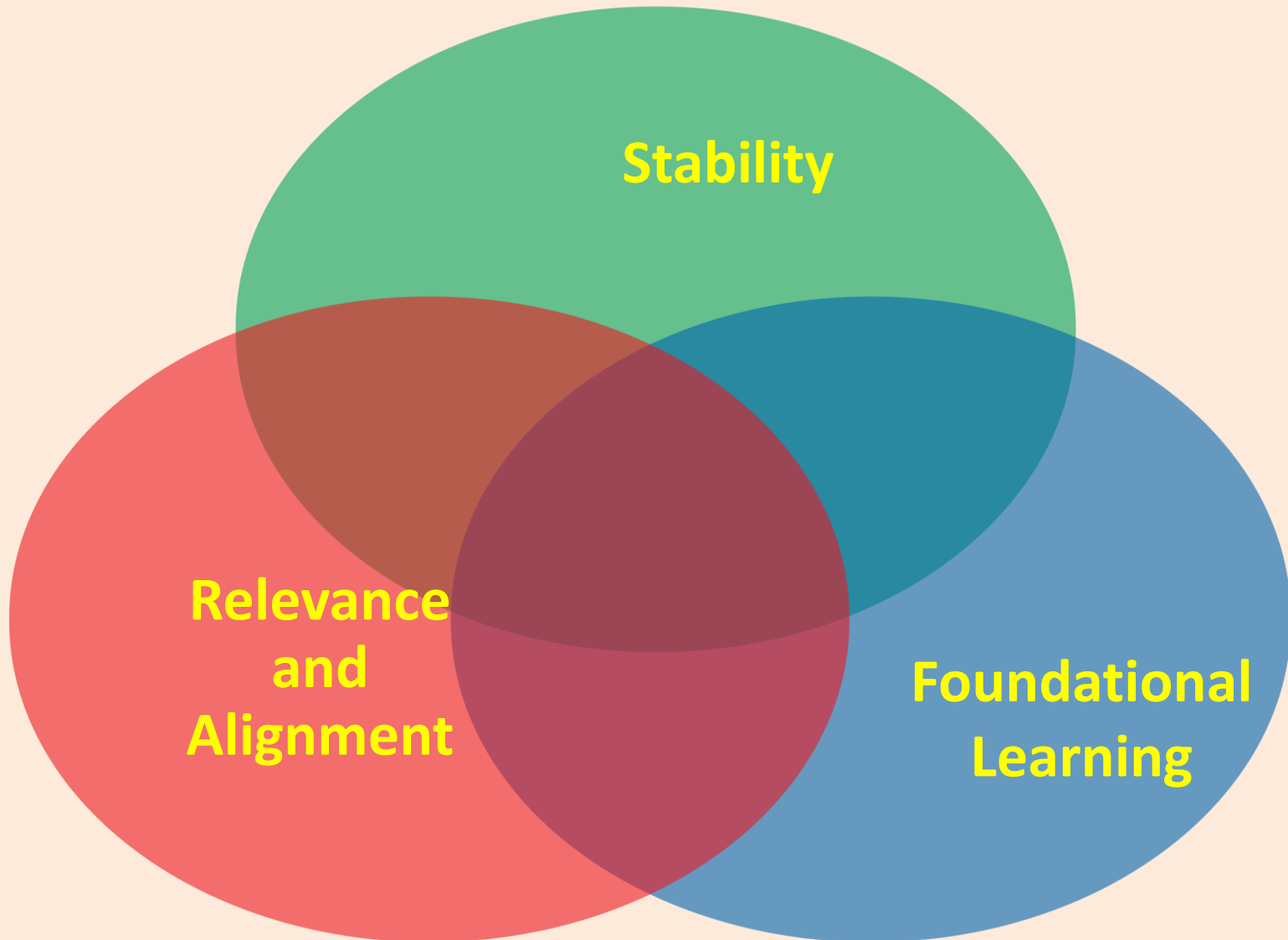
## CURRENT EMPHASIS



## REVISED EMPHASIS



# CURRICULUM STRENGTHENING OBJECTIVES



# WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

## South African Competency Framework

### Why a framework?

- To **align on, prioritise and define** the competencies/capabilities that learners all should have the opportunity to develop whilst at school
- To **guide strengthening** activities across all subjects and phases
- To **enable alignment** across:
  - Curriculum, Assessment, Teacher Development, LTSM, Learning Environment
  - Research, policy, practice, and evaluation

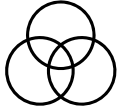


## The road towards the South African Competency Framework





# FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT INPUTS



– Review of global competency frameworks



– Research from the science of learning



– Primary research on competencies in South African schools



– Technical inputs from local and international experts



– National consultations with 1200+ education stakeholders

– Series of expert working groups



# Competency Framework Development

Start of **primary and secondary research** into competencies

**Mandate** to proceed with development of competency framework

2018

2020 - 2021

2022

2019 - 2020

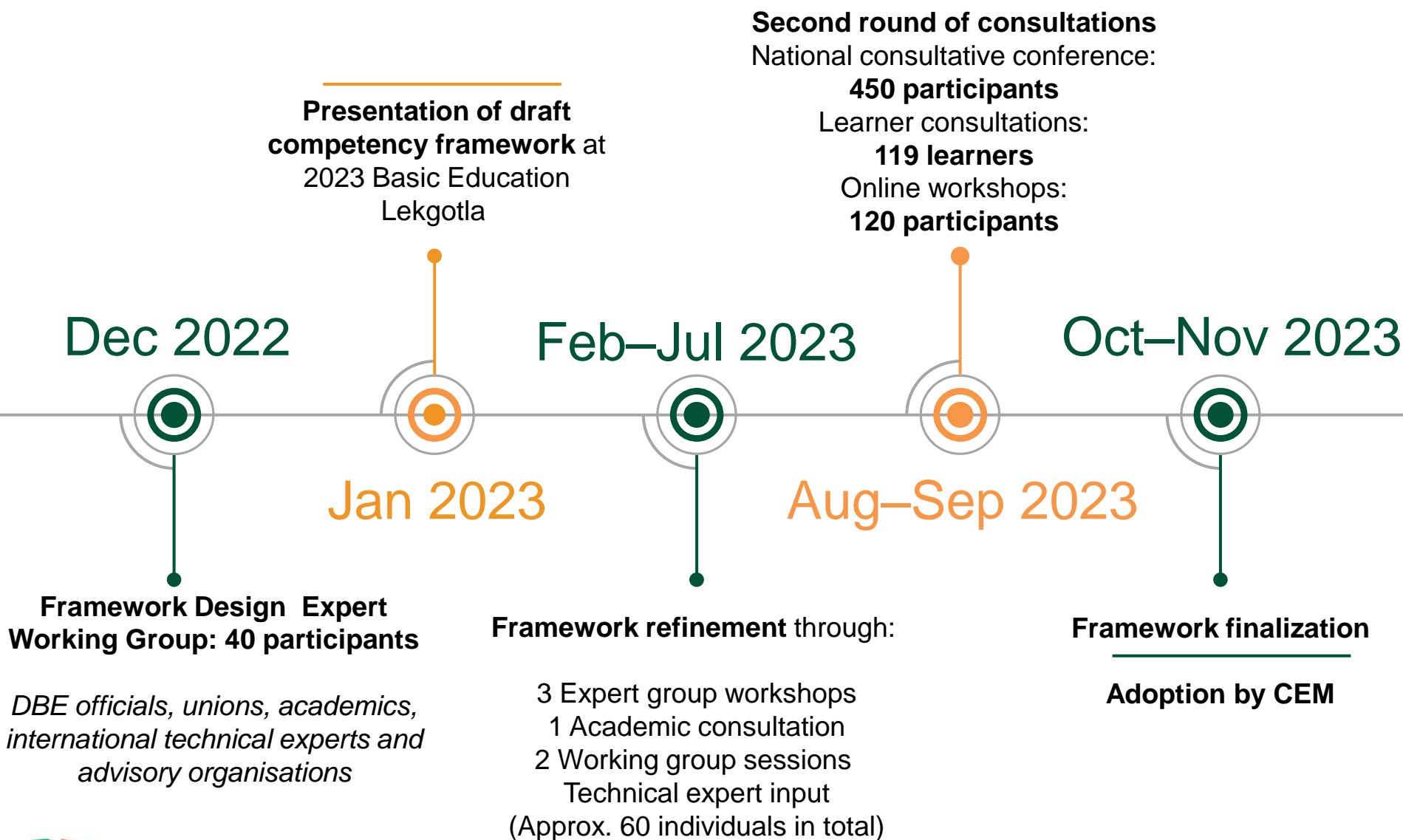
Jan 2022

2018 Basic Education  
Lekgotla: Decision to move towards a **curriculum with competencies for a changing world**

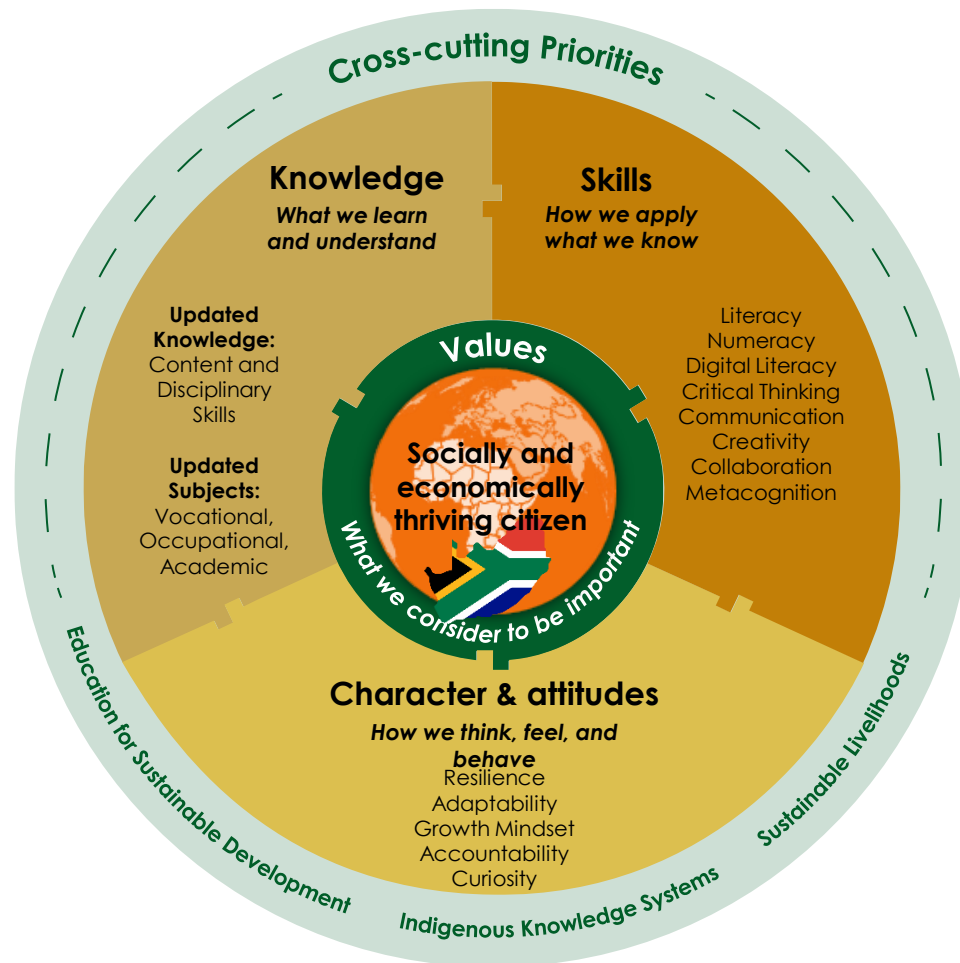
**Streamlining of curriculum:**  
Revised and Trimmed ATPs  
  
Implementation of Learning Recovery Framework

**National consultative workshops – 9 provinces:**  
**314 adults**  
**117 learners**  
  
*Teachers, Learners, Districts, Provinces, National DBE, unions, civil society organisations, business, higher education, students, NEET youth*

# Competency Framework Development



# South African Competency Framework



# Impact of the Framework on Curriculum Policy

## Strengthening Competencies

Deliberate strengthening of **social, emotional, and cognitive competencies** in curriculum, pedagogy, teacher development, assessment, and LTSM

## Reinforcing Cross-cutting Priorities

Incorporation of selected **“cross-cutting priorities”** across subjects and grades

## Modernising Knowledge

**Content Modernisation:**  
Reviewing, updating, trimming and streamlining content in existing subjects

**Subject Modernisation:**  
Reviewing current subject offering and introducing new subjects, in line with TSM and future needs

# What are the implications for each lever?



## Teacher Development :

- Teacher training to include critical and active learning pedagogies to aid competency development ( PBL , Problem based learning Approaches, Role play, case studies, Discovery learning etc.
- **Collaborative and cooperative** learning –
- **Open-ended learning** – no one fixed solution, exploration is encouraged
- **Formative assessment (AfL)** – more creative, practical and growth-oriented approaches, and pedagogies that focus on **learning** vs knowledge
- Understand and **apply the framework to teaching, learning and assessment.**



## LTSM:

- **Revise textbooks** including workbooks and state-owned textbooks to include activities that develop competencies in the framework.
- **Revise teacher guides** to include subject specific **pedagogical guidance** for teachers.



## Learning Environment:

- Initiate a **robust advocacy and Change Management** programme to all stakeholders including school leaders (SMT /SGBs) Parents and Community).

# CAPS and the Framework

CAPS General Aims: Section 1	Competency Framework
Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Critical Thinking</b></li> <li>✓ <b>Creativity</b></li> </ul>
Work effectively as individuals and with others as members of a team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Collaboration</b></li> </ul>
Organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Accountability</b></li> </ul>
Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Critical Thinking</b></li> </ul>
Communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Communication</b></li> </ul>
Use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Education for Sustainable Development</b></li> </ul>
Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Critical Thinking</b></li> <li>✓ <b>Education for Sustainable Development</b></li> </ul>

# Teacher Development: Shift in Pedagogies:

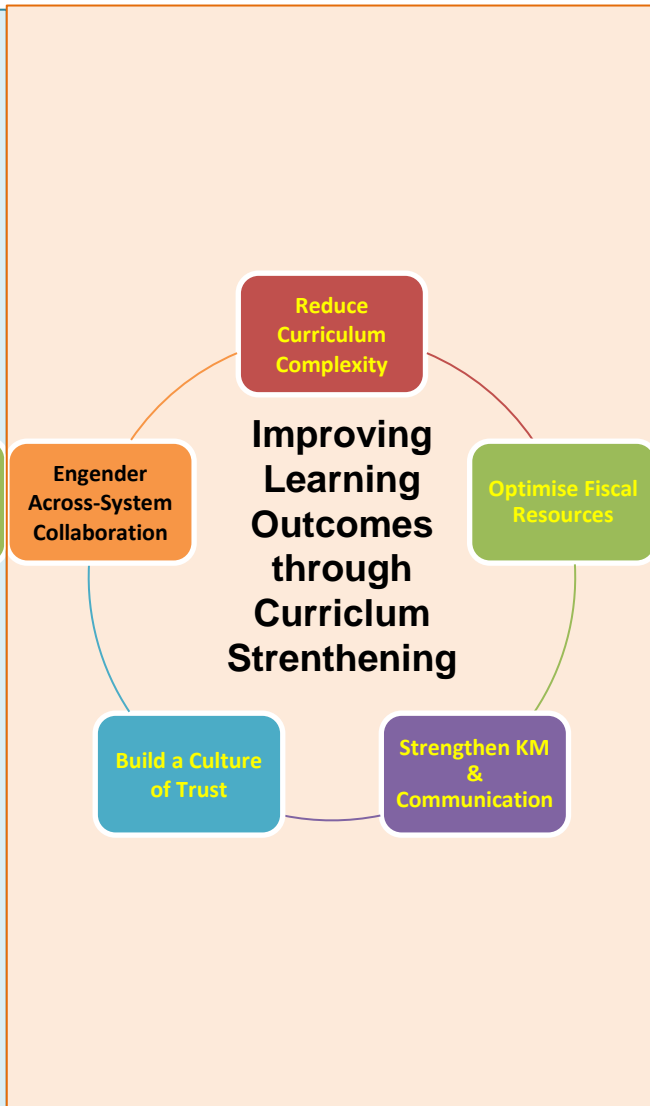
From an over-emphasis of...	To including more of...
Teacher-centered, passive learning (recipients of knowledge)	<b>Active</b> learning – making meaning, interpreting, applying
Individualistic	<b>Collaborative and cooperative</b> learning – with classmates, community members etc.
Content-based learning	<b>Experiential</b> and <b>practical</b> , problem-based and solution-oriented learning
Closed-ended learning (one clear answer)	<b>Open-ended learning</b> – no one fixed solution, exploration is encouraged
Summative assessment (test and exam driven)	<b>Formative assessment (AfL)</b> – more creative, practical and growth-oriented approaches, and pedagogies that focus on <b>learning</b> vs knowledge only

# Curriculum Strengthening Implementation Strategy

What problems are we tackling?



What are our strategic goals?

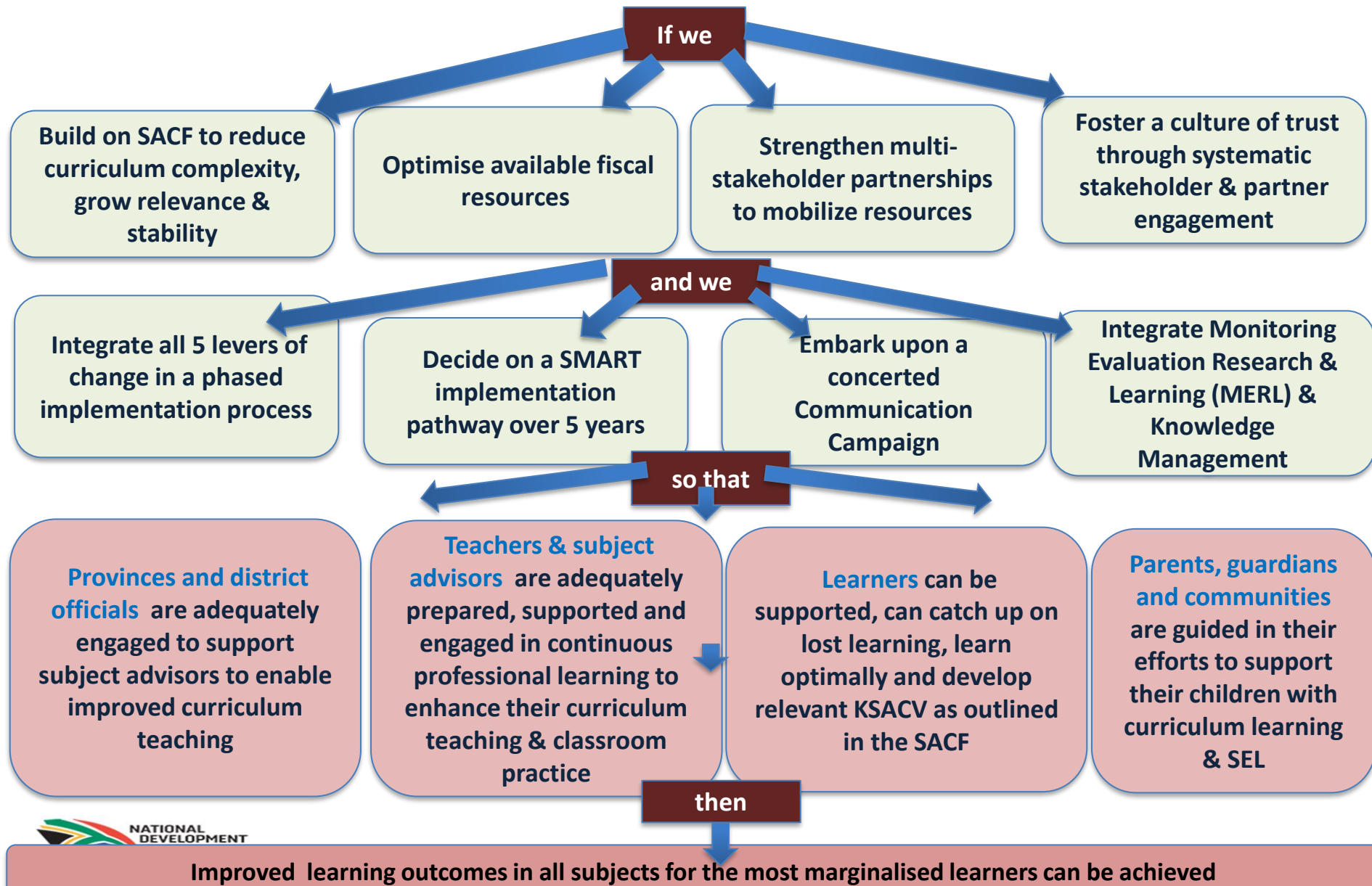


What is our implementation strategy design?





# Curriculum Strengthening Theory of Change

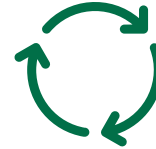


# PHASED IMPLEMENTATION AND ONGOING STRENGTHENING

Timeline

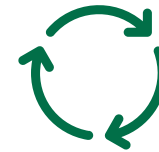
2023

Conceptual Development  
and System Preparation

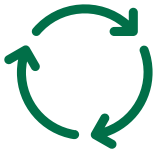


Continuous feedback  
and revision

Curriculum Development,  
Piloting, and Feedback



Incremental  
Implementation



Continued Curriculum  
Strengthening

# CONCLUSION

- The competency framework is the **first step** of a much larger process to **build on the gains of the past** , whilst addressing the **needs of the future**.
- All 5 levers to be prioritised simultaneously to ensure alignment and coherence between, curriculum policy, assessment, teacher development, LTSM, Learning Environment.

*Every child is a National Asset*

*Thank you!*

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