Job Title   :   Research Manager

Location   :   Department of Basic Education, 222 Struben Street, Pretoria, South Africa

Department   :   Reading Support Project

The position will be seconded to DBE. The incumbent will report to:
Director of Research Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation (DBE); and
Chief of Party Reading Support Project (FPD)

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Summary
The Department of Basic Education is expanding its research into alternative ways to strengthen the teaching and learning in Foundation Phase, through the Early Grade Reading Study (EGRS). Based on the initial impact evaluation conducted in the North West Province between 2015 and 2017, a number of key recommendations were made and the DBE has committed to an improvement plan. Part of this improvement plan includes expanding successful components of the EGRS reading interventions in the North West Province and continuing to evaluate program effectiveness. The extension of these interventions on a larger scale in the North West Province is known as the Reading Support Project.

Motivation
The majority of South African children transition to English as language of instruction in Grade 4, therefore making a certain level of competence in English foundational to all subsequent learning. The SACMEQ study of 2007 indicates that roughly 1 in 3 South African children do not reach grade 6 having acquired even basic reading literacy in English. Yet the majority are being taught using English as the Language of Learning and Teaching from grade 4. This no doubt feeds into the substantial inequalities in educational achievement which are established early in primary school. Research also indicates that learning to read in one's home language is a vital learning foundation which enables subsequent learning, including the acquisition of a second language. Early interventions to improve both home language and English reading and literacy among poor children can, therefore, be expected to have larger effects than interventions later in the school program.

Overview of the Reading Support Project and Evaluation
There are two main components to the work planned for the North West Province in 2019 and 2020: the implementation of the Reading Support Project, and the evaluation thereof.

A number of activities are planned to strengthen the teaching and learning of home language literacy and English FAL in the Foundation Phase. These include the provision of daily lesson plans aligned to the curriculum, additional reading support materials, the provision of on-site specialist reading coaching to teachers, and the implementation of a School Management Team

support program. Altogether just under 300 non-fee schools in the districts of Ngaka Modiri Molema and Dr Kenneth Kaunda will be supported.

There will also be a number of evaluation activities to unpack the effectiveness of the various aspects of the Reading Support Project. These include quantitative surveys of reading achievement to facilitate a formal impact evaluation, classroom observation studies and detailed school case studies.

MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Project management and monitoring (35%)

The successful candidate will not be solely responsible for all aspects of project management but will provide assistance to the project management team.

The Research Manager will be responsible for coordination and communication amongst all stakeholders in the project: Donors, the data collection agency, the service provider for the interventions, and the provincial education departments as well as schools where necessary.

Illustrative responsibilities include:
- Arranging project management meetings, steering committee meetings, and other meetings with stakeholders;
- Trips to project sites (schools and training venues) to monitor project activities, about 2 days a month;
- Drafting letters and completing calls between stakeholders, e.g. from DBE to provincial education departments, or to school principals;
- Monitoring contractual obligations between various stakeholders and service providers and advising the project management team of any arising issues to be aware of;
- Ensure all documentation is filed correctly and timeously;
- Conducting routine monitoring and evaluation of project compliance, progress by reviewing work plans and reports, conducting site visits, and maintaining ongoing contact with implementing partners;
- Undertaking regular analyses of the financial information of project activities, including disbursements from donors to the fund management facility and from the fund managers to the service providers;
- Planning and organizing activities for fieldwork: including scheduling, booking accommodation and car hire, arranging contracts and payments to fieldworkers;
- Financial management of the project in conjunction with research team;
- Asset record keeping.

B. Report writing and communication (20%)

The Research Manager will be responsible for drafting project progress reports to donors, partners and the Project Management team to satisfy each organisations particular reporting requirements.

Responsibilities in this area will include:
- Assisting with applications for funding;
- Drafting progress reports to donors, partners and the Project Management Team;
- Summarizing financial reports obtained from the fund manager and incorporating these into reports to donors;
- Contribute to writing the research reports on data collected from the project;
- Lead a communication plan on the various components of the work including drafting pamphlets and other promotional content, developing and updating the DBE website on the project; and initiating and participating in advocacy efforts with various campaigns including the Read to Lead campaign.

C.   Data cleaning and analysis (10%)

The evaluation side of the project will generate a considerable amount of learner performance data and background information about schools, teachers and parents. This will inform the research and evaluation component of the project. The DBE in collaboration with external researchers is responsible for the data analysis and impact evaluation reports. However, support is required with the data cleaning and analysis from the Research Manager.

Illustrative examples of tasks include:
- Transferring data between statistical packages, such as Microsoft Excel, STATA and SPSS;
- Deriving new variables, such as reading test scores;
- Conducting data integrity checks, e.g. investigating patterns indicating fieldworker fraud;
- Analysis of data, ranging from descriptive analysis to running multivariate regression;
- Preparing data and user manuals for public release of the data;
- Investigating various platforms and formats for the public release of the project data.

D.   Implementation of the Improvement Plan (20%)

The implementation and evaluation components are the core components of the Research Manager position, however, in addition to these the DBE will be implementing a Cabinet approved Reading Improvement Plan which includes additional tasks and activities.

Illustrative examples of tasks include:
- Supporting the overall improvement plan implementation including supporting the development and implementation of a coaching course;
- Conducting required literature reviews, sourcing expertise and providing overall support of the development of reading norms;
- Coordinating and liaising with various stakeholder in the development of a national set of lesson plans;
- Conducting desktop research on the factors, influences and options for subject advisor support to teachers.

E.   Other Duties (10%)

The Research Manager will respond flexibly to various other work-related tasks at the discretion of the supervisor. These may include, amongst other miscellaneous tasks:

- Attending meetings related to the project;
- Making presentations on behalf of the project team;
- Reading and summarizing literature relevant to the EGRS

F. Capacity building of DBE staff (5%)

The Research Manager will work in the Research Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit and will work closely with other members of this unit. The Research Manager should assist junior research staff of the DBE with research and/or writing skills on an informal basis and through formal sessions on data analysis methods.

G. Personal research output (Optional; in personal time)

The Research Manager may, with the consent of the DBE and subject to the Ethical Approvals and Intellectual Property agreements pertaining to the EGRS, use data and experiences from the EGRS for his/her own research work if, for example, the Research Manager is studying towards a Masters or Doctoral degree.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

Education:
A Bachelor's Degree or equivalent formal education qualification. Qualifications in a field relevant to development, public management, education, or applied linguistics will be an advantage. An Honors or Master's Degree in a related field is highly desirable.

Prior Work Experience:
At least three years prior work experience is required. Work experience in research institutions, universities, NGOs working in the education sector, or working with or for the South African government is preferable. Experience in research, project management and/or administration will be an advantage.

Language Proficiency:
Excellent written and oral communication skills in English are required. Proficiency in other South African official languages is desired, but not required. English language written skills will be evaluated in the initial review of an applicant's submission by a review of the Cover Letter and of the CV itself as well as through the submission of a sample report or research paper produced by the candidate which should be submitted with the CV. In addition a written assessment will be administered as part of the interview process. In addition, oral English skills will be evaluated in the interview phase.

The Research Manager must be able to analyze and evaluate complex data to prepare precise and accurate reports and oral briefings of information received. They should be able to communicate complex technical issues to diverse audiences.

Knowledge:
The successful candidate must demonstrate a good understanding of the education sector in South Africa. The candidate should also be able to demonstrate understanding of social research methods such as sample surveys and impact evaluation methods.

Skills and Abilities:
The successful candidate should have excellent organizational and planning skills, and display attention to detail in all aspects of work.

The Research Manager should at least have some experience working with statistical software used for analysis of large datasets. A broad knowledge of basic computer applications, such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint and email software is necessary. The ability to work in Microsoft Excel is required. The ability to work in other statistical packages such as SPSS or STATA will be strongly advantageous.

They should have skills sufficient to consult with and lead, orally and in written form, a wide variety of professional leaders in the academic, public and private sectors. The candidate should have skills sufficient to interact productively with individuals of diverse cultural, socio-economic and educational backgrounds.

The Research Manager must be capable of working independently on a number of tasks simultaneously with minimal supervision.

The Research Manager should have a valid driver's license and access to their own car with which to make trips to the field for monitoring purposes. Travel costs will be compensated for.

Evaluation Criteria and Weights:
1. Education/Weighted 10% based on initial application review;
2. Prior Work or Research Experience/Weighted 15% based on application review and interview;
3. English Language Skills/Weighted 15% based on sample of writing, written assessment and interview;
4. Knowledge/Weighted 30% based on sample of writing, written assessment and interview; and
5. Skills and Abilities/Weighted 30% based on sample of writing and interview.

Selection:
The successful candidate will be selected based upon the following:
1. A preliminary review of the applicant's submitted package (which includes the Cover Letter, sample of writing and CV); and
2. A personal or telephone/Skype interview; and
3. Reference checks, at least two contactable references should be provided in the CV.

For an application package to be considered complete, please submit the following:

1. Ensure that your application is accompanied by a Cover Letter,
2. Include a CV of no more than 3 pages with certificates and academic records attached;
3. Include a sample of your writing, such as a research paper or report. If you do not already have a suitable piece of writing, then you may write a short essay (700 – 1000 words) expressing your opinion on the following topic: "What is the main challenge South Africa faces in providing quality education for all?"

Closing Date: 13 March 2019 at 16:00

Applications should please be submitted to **recruitment@foundation.co.za** or faxed to 081 680 0736.

For enquiries please contact Mr Tshililo Pharamela/ Ms Tammy Bates on 012-816- 9000.

NB: Only applicants shortlisted for interviews will be contacted. If you have not been contacted within 1 month after the closing date of this advertisement, please accept that your application was unsuccessful.