

Towards evidence-based Smartphone management in SA High Schools

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Can students get involved?

Postgraduate students interested in the research focus for their Honours, Masters or PhD thesis work can contact the researchers about possible involvement in the project on smartphones in South African high schools.

Programme Information

Over the past decade, ownership and use of smartphones have increased significantly among adolescents, many of whom take their phones with them to school. An emerging challenge resulting from this trend involves the management of smartphone use in school contexts.

While some studies suggest that smartphones have the potential to enhance teaching and administrative functions, others raise concerns over the negative impacts they may have on students' concentration and interaction patterns. Educational authorities at national, provincial, and school levels face the difficult challenge of developing appropriate guidelines and policies to manage this emerging phenomenon. Within this dynamic context, this social impact project sets out to support South African high school educators and policy makers by advancing our understanding and evidence base of the effects of smartphones by investigating:

- The policies and strategies that high schools

- adopt to manage smartphone use by learners.
- Learners' engagement patterns with smartphones during and outside school hours.
- The potential effects of smartphone use on learners' attention and academic performance.
- Teachers' and parents' attitudes towards and concerns over smartphone use among learners.

The social impact project process involves the collection of data from multiple high schools across South Africa. At each school, a range of data collection techniques are utilised, including surveys, interviews and focus groups. The researchers engage with learners, teachers, parents, and school management teams to develop a holistic understanding of each school's experiences and challenges to provide feedback to the school on their data set as well as comparative data across different school contexts.

Upon completion of the data collection activities, the researchers analyse the collected data and produce a report that outlines their findings at the school. This report is presented to school staff, and, where appropriate, recommendations for interventions are discussed. Parent, educator and learner feedback sessions to discuss the data are also facilitated by the researchers.