

LEARNER ATTAINMENT
IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

A MASTER PLAN FOR TOTAL LEARNER
PERFORMANCE AND SCHOOL
MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT - 2010

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A Master Plan for total learner performance and school management improvement

1. Introduction

The Public Education and schooling system of our Province has experienced consistent instability over the past years which manifested itself in school dysfunctionality, underperformance, high vacancy rates and poor implementation of the New Curriculum Statements (NCS). The most glaring indicator of this gloomy scenario has been the constant dismal performance of our matric classes over the years.

This is a situation that seems to have an enormous capacity to defy all attempts that have been employed in a variety of modes every new academic year. The ideal of rendering a quality education service that meets the expectations of the entire community in the Province, as enshrined in the Schools Act and Mission Statement of the Department, has remained relatively unattainable in so far as the education outcomes are concerned.

The search and quest for the most effective strategy to bring us the desired goals continues unabated until the most viable strategy that will effectively turn the situation around, is located. This plan is a well thought strategic intervention that is informed by all of the previous experiences, findings, surveys and discussions and it is a response to the scenario that has been sketched out above.

Through this plan the Department seeks to mobilise its forces, utilise its resources in a well calculated way, pursue clear targets in the short, medium and long term and use the challenges of the past as a catapult to enable it to eventually turn the corner and sustain good performance practices throughout the Basic Education Schooling System.

2. Situational Analysis

2.1 Identified problems and findings

- 2.1.1 Weak management by principals and School Management Teams (SMT's);
- 2.1.2 Deficient curriculum implementation;
- 2.1.3 Inadequate Learner Teacher Support Material (LTSM) resourcing;
- 2.1.4 High vacancy rate in critical subjects;
- 2.1.5 Content gap among educators;
- 2.1.6 Poor Institutional Leadership;
- 2.1.7 Ineffective Subject Advisory Services;
- 2.1.8 Dysfunctionality of schools;

- 2.1.9 Ineffective Circuit Management that lacks accountability;
- 2.1.10 Role ambiguity between District and Head Office;

NB: The above list relates only to learner attainment and curriculum implementation and is not the whole list of issues challenging our Education System.

2.2 *Specific Indicators Of School Dysfunctionality*

- 2.2.1 Learner and Educator Absenteeism;
- 2.2.2 Absence of and /or non-adherence to school policies;
- 2.2.3 Erratic contact time between Educator and Learner;
- 2.2.4 Late arrival and early departure from school by Educators;
- 2.2.5 Teaching far less than NCS prescribed time (e.g 3 hours rather than 7 hours; time tabling and class attendance);
- 2.2.6 Absence of management systems;
- 2.2.7 Total breakdown of discipline at all levels of the school;

2.3 *Interventions Made To Date*

- 2.3.1 School readiness visits;
- 2.3.2 Provincial on-site school support programs;
- 2.3.3 District Multi-Disciplinary Teams annual support programs;
- 2.3.4 National interventions;

3. The 2010 Strategy

3.1 *Early Commencement of Academic Activities*

All the schools in the Province are expected to finalise their plans on 11 January 2010 including time-tabling; lesson planning and assessment planning for the year. Teaching should commence in earnest on 12 January 2010.

The District Multi-Disciplinary Teams will monitor the readiness of schools to commence the academic year with teaching and learning on the very first day and will focus on the following:

- (a) Admissions;
- (b) Time Tables and subject allocation;

- (c) Educator attendance;
- (d) Teaching and learning;
- (e) Availability of LTSM;
- (f) Basic school necessities e.g chalks, dusters, educator and learner attendance registers;
- (g) Learner Progression and Promotion;

NB: Action will be taken on irregular findings and Line Function Managers at each level should be held accountable.

3.2 *Fortnightly Syllabus Coverage Reports*

Principals of schools will be expected to submit progress reports to the Circuit Manager every fortnight indicating the extent to which they have complied with lesson plans and pace setters.

3.3 *Quarterly Analysis Of Results And Performance Festivals*

The monthly and quarterly tests will be analysed in the fashion of the end of the year results and remedial and accountability measures will apply in consequence of school performances.

Competitive performance festivals will be arranged whereby Principals, Subject Advisors and Circuit Managers will showcase their achievements and milestones of the quarter.

The Grades that will be targeted for intensified teaching will be Grade 9 to 12 and this programme will commence on 01 February 2010. Apart from afternoon and Saturday classes, there will be autumn schools since there will be no winter schools this year due to the 2010 tournament.

3.4 *Subject Advisors As Mentors And School Resources*

The Subject Advisors will be allocated the underperforming schools to monitor, support and monitor on a daily basis. They will also lead the teams that analyse and process the fortnightly reports of principals. As a Quality Assurance measure, a Subject Advisor will not analyse the reports of his/her own principals.

3.5 *Accountability Of Circuit Managers*

The Circuit managers will be held accountable for school functionality in their circuits and must specifically contract to eliminate educator absenteeism, early dismissal of schools and loss of teaching time.

All Circuit Managers will be expected to mentor the school management teams, particularly the principals, in effective school management to ensure school functionality.

3.6 *Integrated Planning and Co-ordination Of Activities Within Districts*

The planning of daily, weekly and monthly activities by IDS & G, Curriculum and ESSS in districts should be done collectively so as to deliver a united service to the school.

In order to avoid tearing school plans asunder and sending competing and conflicting messages to schools, the activities of these sections must be well co-ordinated and Multi-Disciplinary Teams must have a unity of purpose.

Analysis of weekly progress by the schools must be done jointly and collective feedback be sent to schools via the Circuit Manager and Subject Advisor.

3.7 *Curtailment of Workshops*

The use of Workshops as a method of policy implementation and pursuit of business plans has the unfortunate effect of competing with teaching and learning for educators and school support for education management.

In 2010 the Department is putting a high premium on classroom practice.

Workshops will have to be curtailed to a bare minimum and alternative methods of pursuing business plans be employed.

3.8. *Grade 3, 6 and 9 Common Examinations*

The concentration of learner attainment improvement strategies exclusively on Grade 12 has not yielded the positive results that were hoped for. It is both short sighted and unproductive.

The Curriculum Section (Head Office and Districts) will work on and implement a project in terms of which the Grade 3, 6 and 9 classes pursue the same pace setters and similar lesson plans.

Common papers will then be set in June and November 2010 with a similar style of invigilation and analysis of results in Grade 12.

4. *Staff development*

4.1 *Course For Principals Of Under Performing Schools*

The principals of the underperforming schools that will emerge on 7 January 2010 will be put on a management course as from 01 February 2010 focusing on their role as leaders of Curriculum Implementation.

A sample of these principals will also be taken to a ten (10) day Leadership Course at the Cape Teaching Institute of the Western Cape for alternative experience.

4.2 *Motivation And Upskilling Of Teachers With Content Gap In Killer Subjects Selected From Serial Underperforming Schools*

Subject teachers of identified killer subjects in the serial underperforming schools will be put on an intensive revision course to update them in the content areas they have difficulty with.

The course will be two weeks a month commencing on 01 February 2010.

4.3 *Subject Advisors' Course In Facilitation Skills*

This course will be conducted during the March ten (10) day vacation of schools when the Subject Advisors do not visit schools.

4.4 *Remedial Courses For Underperforming Schools*

Master Plan For Total Learner Performance And School Management 2010

Targeted follow up courses for the principals attending the February course will be conducted during the June school holidays.

5. Stabilisation of the schooling system

5.1 *Dealing With The Vacancy Rate*

The Human Resource Administration Unit will do a comprehensive audit of vacancies in schools during the first ten days of the new academic year. This will form the basis of an aggressive program of filling of vacancies through Quarterly Bulletins.

The new staff establishment will be effectively implemented.

5.2 *Finalisation Of The Process Of Conversion Of Temporal Educators*

This process will be completed on 31 January 2010.

5.3 *Managing The Incidence Of Displaced Educators And Official*

A Task Team has been put in place to do an audit of displaced Educators and long standing disciplinary cases. This project will culminate in the settling of unresolved cases by 31 March 2010.

5.4 *Training of un-qualified and under-qualified Teachers*

In addressing the challenges facing the DoE in the context of skills shortage in schools in particular and priority areas identified by MEC the Skills Development Committee meeting resolved that:

1. As a principle, the skilling of un- & under-qualified educators (as per PELRC agreements) to attain REQV 13 status should be phased in for the period of three years starting in February 2010.
2. The un- & under-qualified educators must be priorities in the **NPDE Budget** for 2010 which is **R22m**.
3. In the event of insufficient funds in the targeted fund, a “tap” from the Bursary Fund should be considered.
4. Learners recruited (Grade 12’s) for the teaching profession are catered for in the B.Ed Learnership (**R10m**) and must be prioritized. The targeted no. is **263**.
5. The **23 top** students to be awarded by the MEC to be funded continuously. The training of principals on leadership and management skills is funded to the tune of **R1.1m** for the intake of **240 learners** for an ACE Learnership.

6. Quality learning and teaching campaign (QLTC)

The spirit and purport of the QLTC must pervade the whole strategy for Learner Attainment Improvement and its objectives will be the building blocks for community mobilisation and partnerships with all stakeholders.

In order for the Programme of Action to have the desired impact on the education system in our Province, all departmental officials at all levels and the stakeholders must make a commitment to Code for Quality Education. The District Education Fora will closely monitor the implementation of this project.

7. The foundations for learning campaign

The national focus on improving the reading, writing and numeracy abilities of all South African children must be put to optimum use in the under performing schools and their feeder schools. There is a general cry amongst these schools that the Grade ten learners lack the basic skills for reading, writing and for grasping the mathematical concept.

8. Learner welfare and access to schools

The bulk of our schools, especially the underperformers, are situated in rural areas where access to schools is difficult due long distances and lack of access roads. The Scholar Transport Service will have to be adjusted to assist learners to be readily and timeously available for classes.

The capacity of many learners to do well at school and their concentration span is compromised by fatigue and hunger. It is for this reason that the School Nutrition Programme and the Scholar Transport Serviced must be used collaboratively to enhance the ability of learners to benefit from the Learner Attainment Improvement Strategy.

9. The mother tongue based bilingual education

The Department will also pilot the implementation of the mother tongue based bilingual education throughout the province this year, and to that extent, a dedicated unit is being established.

10. Competency testing of officials

Certain levels of management, especially those responsible for monitoring and supporting schools, will undergo competency tests to identify gaps and compatibility.

11. Conclusion

These plans will be backed up by the **Programme of Action** that has been developed in the recent Summit. (See Annexure A)

The guiding principles for the strategy will be Discipline, Accountability, Value for Money and Efficient Time Management.