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GENERAL NOTICE

NOTICE 300 OF 2013

**DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION
NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY ACT, 1996 (ACT NO 27 OF 1996)
POLICY ON THE ORGANISATION, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF
EDUCATION DISTRICTS**

I, Angelina Matsie Motshekga, Minister of Basic Education, after consultation with the Council of Education Ministers, hereby, in terms of section 3(4) of the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act No. 27 of 1996), publish for public notice the Policy set out in the Schedule.


ANGELINA MATSIE MOTSHEKGA, MP
MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION
DATE: 24/02/2013



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**POLICY ON THE ORGANISATION, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
OF EDUCATION DISTRICTS**

“Effective districts, better quality”

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ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------|--|
| ANA | Annual National Assessments |
| CEM | Council of Education Ministers |
| CASS | Continuous Assessment |
| DBE | Department of Basic Education |
| EEA | Employment of Educators Act, 1998 (Act 76 of 1998) |
| ELRC | Education Labour Relations Council |
| EMIS | Education Management Information System |
| HEDCOM | Heads of Education Departments Committee |
| HoD | Head of Department |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| IDP | Integrated Development Plan |
| LTSM | Learner and Teacher Support Material |
| MEC | Member of the Executive Council |
| MTEF | Medium Term Expenditure Framework |
| NEPA | National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act 27 of 1996) |
| NSC | National Senior Certificate |
| NSNP | National School Nutrition Programme |
| OSD | Occupation Specific Dispensation |
| PAM | Personnel Administrative Measures |
| PED | Provincial Education Department |
| PERSAL | The state personnel and salary information system |
| PFMA | Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act 29 of 1999) |
| PSA | Public Service Act, 1994 (Proclamation 103 of 1994) |
| SACE | South African Council for Educators |
| SGB | School Governing Body |
| SMT | School Management Team |

1. MANDATE AND SCOPE OF THE POLICY

Introduction

1. Education district offices have a pivotal role in ensuring that all learners have access to education of progressively high quality, since district offices are the link between Provincial Education Departments (PEDs), their respective education institutions and the public.
2. This policy provides a national framework for the organisation and staffing of education district offices and the delegated authority, roles and responsibilities of district officials for the institutions within their care.

Legislative authority

3. This policy is determined in terms of the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act 27 of 1996) (NEPA) which empowers the Minister to:

“determine national policy for the planning, provision, financing, staffing, co-ordination, management, governance, programmes, monitoring, evaluation and well-being of the education system ...” (s. 3(4)).
4. The Minister is required to direct such policy towards:

“achieving close co-operation between the national and provincial governments on matters relating to education, including the development of capacity in the departments of education, and the effective management of the national education system” (s. 4(o)).
5. The Minister is required to determine policy after consulting the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) (s. 5(1)(a)), which in turn is required by NEPA to:

“promote a national education policy which takes full account of the policies of the government, the principles contained in section 4 [of NEPA], the education interests and needs of the provinces, and the respective competence of Parliament and the provincial legislatures ...” (s. 9(4)(a)).

6. This policy is determined with the advice and consent of the CEM.
7. Education districts are part of the provincial sphere of government. They have no original powers or functions prescribed by law but operate in terms of national and provincial legislation and provincial delegations. They are not empowered to raise their own revenues.
8. This policy does not propose changing the legal position of education districts. Rather it provides a common approach, approved by the CEM, to the demarcation, organisation, staffing, delegation of authority and resourcing of education districts across all PEDs.
9. In each province the power to demarcate, name and organise education districts vests with the MEC for Education, who is the executive authority responsible for the organisation of the PED (Public Service Act, 1994 (Proclamation 103 of 1994) (PSA), s. 1, 3(7)(a)). The MEC also determines districts’ public service staff establishment in terms of the PSA (s. 3(7)(a)) and determines the educator staff establishment in terms of the Employment of Educators Act, 1998 (EEA) (Act 76 of 1998) (s. 5(1)). An MEC must determine the educator establishment of a province subject to national post provisioning norms. Staffing matters such as post provisioning and remuneration are subject to continuous adjustment through collective agreements in the appropriate bargaining chamber, in terms of the relevant labour legislation.

Rationale for the policy

10. This policy is part of a broader government initiative to improve the capacity of the public service to respond to the challenges of economic development, poverty eradication and service delivery. The *National Development Plan 2030: Our Future—Make it Work* (2012) (NDP) (p. 399) pays particular attention to the country's need for a public service that is "more capable, more professional and more responsive" to citizens' needs. In its discussion of the priorities in basic education the NDP (pp. 295-315) makes clear that education district offices must exhibit such qualities when performing their essential function, namely to support schools to deliver the curriculum.
11. This policy also contributes to a suite of initiatives undertaken after 1994 by Ministers of Education and since 2009 by the Minister of Basic Education, advised by the Council of Education Ministers, to equip PEDs with policy tools, plans and other resources to help raise the quality of teaching and learning in schools.
12. The Constitution protects the citizens' right to education and equal access to government services. The reality is that educational opportunity and educational success are unequally distributed and the intensity and quality of service delivery varies considerably from one education district to another across the provinces. The disparities between high and low achieving districts are gross and unacceptable in democratic South Africa. The disparities are particularly severe in rural districts, especially those that for generations were part of rural homelands that lacked a secure economic resource basis. Such districts probably constitute the majority of education districts in South Africa.
13. The condition of district offices is not uniform throughout all provinces or within provinces. Some district offices understand their roles well

and perform them to a high level of efficiency, but others do not. The main limiting factors on districts' effectiveness are that:

- 13.1 Some education districts are responsible for too many education institutions and as a result cannot provide effective services to them;
- 13.2 The respective delegated authority, roles, relationships and lines of accountability of provincial head offices, district offices and education institutions are not clearly formulated, understood and exercised;
- 13.3 Some district offices do not have delegated authority to plan and develop their programmes, manage their own budgets and recruit or deploy staff members in their own offices or in education institutions. District Directors need adequate delegated decision-making authority from their respective provincial departments to effect necessary changes that are designed to improve learning performance. The absence of clearly delegated authority causes intolerable bureaucratic delays in service delivery since many decisions cannot be taken promptly but must be referred to higher authority. This creates uncertainty, impedes delivery and hampers quality management;
- 13.4 Post-provisioning is uneven and does not reflect the responsibilities entrusted to district offices. Even when posts have been established many are unfilled. Few staff members have job related training or have been required to meet skills criteria suited to the work they do. Some district offices do not have the necessary capacity to handle their current administrative, management and professional responsibilities. This situation reflects poor human resource practices relating to recruitment and appointment of key staff members. Service

delivery by many district offices, especially with respect to the vital function of curriculum support, therefore falls far short of what education institutions and the public expect.

14. In recent years PEDs have given increased priority to their district administrative and professional responsibilities. District boundaries have been changed and district offices have been restructured to make them more effective. Successive drafts of this policy have been workshopped with PEDs and district managers and have had a useful effect. Until now, however, no official national policy has guided PEDs as to what an education office should be or do.

15. PEDs agree that a national policy including indicative national norms for district offices is essential, but it must be designed with full appreciation for the individual needs and characteristics of provincial systems. While some national norms (such as nomenclature) must be applied in the same way in all provinces, others (such as district size) need to be formulated and applied in an educationally defensible manner depending on the varied conditions among and within provinces. Impoverished rural districts, especially those with small and dispersed populations, where roads and other communications are poorly developed, deserve special consideration. The key purpose of this national policy is therefore to provide the framework to enable PEDs to demarcate, structure and staff their district offices effectively, so that all education institutions receive the services they need to improve education provision and quality.

Scope of the policy

16. This policy provides:
 - 16.1 a uniform nomenclature that establishes a common basis for district norms and standards across all nine provinces;

- 16.2 norms for district and circuit size which must be applied in a manner that takes into account local circumstances and which makes educational sense; and
- 16.3 a framework within which PEDs can provide district offices with the necessary roles, delegated authority, functions, resources and skills to enable them to perform their core functions, with additional support for districts where the educational needs are greatest.
17. In conjunction with other initiatives, such measures will promote more equal possibilities of educational access, retention and success in education institutions across all districts.

Limitations of the policy

18. The district development policy will not eliminate deep-seated socio-economic inequality among the communities that district offices serve. No education measures on their own can achieve that, though well functioning schools have the historic mission of providing opportunities for learners to rise above their circumstances. On its own the policy cannot provide the conditions to ensure that all schools function well. It is not a substitute for ensuring that all schools meet national standards of infrastructure, services, equipment, learning materials, IT connectivity and teaching quality. The Minister of Basic Education is committed to helping PEDs to achieve such standards as rapidly as possible and the other initiatives referred to above deal with such matters.

2. THE CONCEPT OF AN EDUCATION DISTRICT

Nomenclature

19. A standard nomenclature will apply in all provinces in order to provide a uniform and consistent basis for policy:

19.1 Education district. A “district” is an area of a province which is demarcated by an MEC for administrative purposes. The district is thus the first-level administrative sub-division of a PED. Depending on the context, the term “district” is used to describe either the geographic area or the administrative unit.

19.2 District office. A district office is the management sub-unit of a PED. It is the headquarters of its district which is responsible for the Basic Education institutions in its district.

19.3 District Director. A District Director is the head of a district office and executes prescribed functions using authority delegated by the Head of the PED.

19.4 Education circuit. A circuit is an area of an education district which is demarcated by an MEC for administrative purposes. It is the second-level administrative sub-division of a PED. Depending on the context, the term “circuit” is used to describe either the geographic area or the administrative unit.

19.5 Circuit office. A circuit office is the management sub-unit of a district which is responsible for the Basic Education institutions in its circuit.

19.6 Circuit Manager. A Circuit Manager is the head of a circuit office and executes prescribed functions which have been allocated by the District Director or the Head of the PED.

19.7 Subject Adviser. A Subject Adviser is a specialist office-based educator in a district office or circuit office whose function is to facilitate curriculum implementation and improve the environment and process of learning and teaching by visiting schools, consulting with and advising school principals and teachers on curriculum matters.

Role of education district offices

20. District offices are local hubs of PEDs and provide the vital lines of communication between the provincial head office and the education institutions in their care. Subject to provincial plans, their task is to work collaboratively with principals and educators in schools, with the vital assistance of circuit offices, to improve educational access and retention, give management and professional support, and help schools achieve excellence in learning and teaching. District offices, supported by their circuit offices, have four main roles which they must execute with due priority being given to the schools most in need of their services:

20.1 Planning

1. Collecting and analysing school, circuit and district data to inform planning;
2. Assisting schools with compiling school improvement or development plans; and
3. Integrating school improvement or development plans into district plans.

20.2 Support

1. Providing an enabling environment and targeted support for education institutions within the district to do their work in line with education law and policy;
2. Assisting school principals and educators to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their institutions through school visits, classroom observation, consultation, cluster meetings, suitable feedback reports and other means;
3. Serving as an information node for education institutions on education law, policy and administration;
4. Facilitating ICT connectivity in all institutions within the district; and
5. Providing an enabling environment and organising provision and support for the professional development of managers, educators and administrative staff members.

20.3 Oversight and accountability

1. Holding principals of education institutions in the district accountable for the performance of their schools;
2. Accounting to the PED for the performance of education institutions in the district; and
3. Accounting to the PED in terms of performance agreements that stipulate the roles, functions and responsibilities of district officials in line with relevant policies.

20.4 Public engagement

1. Informing and consulting with the public in an open and transparent manner; and
2. Upholding *Batho Pele* principles in all dealings with the public (see para. 63 below).

3. EDUCATION DISTRICT BOUNDARIES AND NORMS

District and circuit boundaries

Sensible alignment

21. Cabinet resolved in 2007 that all service departments should endeavour to align their functional boundaries to the constitutionally proclaimed municipal boundaries as determined by the Municipal Demarcation Board, and the Board is charged to assist the process.
22. Although municipalities have no responsibility for education provision, such alignment of district education boundaries is in keeping with the government's wish to streamline and co-ordinate service delivery across the three spheres of government, national, provincial and local.
23. It is essential that the educational needs and interests of the community are taken into account when local government Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) are designed or amended. Education district offices have an obligation to contribute as stakeholders in the local government planning process, and to take the local IDP into account when making their own plans for the district. Inter-governmental and inter-departmental co-operation are mandated by our Constitution, and cooperation between district offices and municipal governments is particularly important in such areas as school infrastructure planning; provision of municipal services to schools; early childhood development; health promotion; combating gangs, crime, alcohol and drug abuse in schools; and disaster management.
24. The alignment of education district boundaries with municipal boundaries is not a simple mechanical process. Alignment for alignment's sake may be counter-productive. Alignment must make educational sense. This implies that education district boundaries must

meet the test of efficient education service delivery. In particular, education districts must not exceed the maximum permitted size provided for in this policy, which is expressed in terms of the number of schools within the district.

25. The appropriate alignment with municipal boundaries in each province will also depend significantly on local conditions such as settlement patterns, social history (including the impact of apartheid Group Areas legislation), terrain, distances, rurality, and road and rail links.

Education districts within metropolitan municipalities

26. Metropolitan municipalities are fully responsible for all municipal functions within their respective areas. They cover major, densely populated conurbations which are served by a large number of schools that fall under the respective PED.
27. It follows that within a metro there must be several education districts, none of which must exceed the upper limit of the norm for district size. In terms of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act 117 of 1998) metros are sub-divided for purposes of public consultation and efficient administration into wards or sub-council areas as the case may be. Education district boundaries should be aligned with ward or sub-council boundaries, as the case may be, to the extent that it makes educational sense.

Education districts within district municipalities

28. A district municipal area encloses several local municipal areas, and a district municipal council is primarily responsible for district-wide planning and capacity building for the local municipalities within its area. District municipal areas typically cover large, predominantly rural geographic areas including small towns and sometimes cities, with

large but often dispersed populations which are served by large numbers of schools that fall under the respective PED.

29. It follows that a typical district municipal area must be sub-divided into several education districts, none of which must exceed the upper limit of the norm for district size. Since district municipal areas are already sub-divided into local municipal areas, the appropriate principle would be for a PED to demarcate education district boundaries according to local municipal boundaries, to the extent that it makes educational sense.
30. Education district boundaries and alignment may be reviewed from time to time by PEDs to take account of changing circumstances.

Circuit boundaries

31. The demarcation of education circuit boundaries in relation to municipal ward or sub-council boundaries may have certain functional advantages such as those suggested above. Like district boundaries, however, alignment for alignment's sake may be counter-productive. Alignment must make educational sense. This implies that education circuit boundaries must meet the test of efficient education service delivery and in particular must observe the national norm for circuit size.

Circuit and district size norms

32. In order to ensure effective service delivery and an appropriate span of control for circuit and district offices it is necessary to establish national norms that regulate the respective size of an education circuit and an education district.
33. The appropriate size of an education circuit is best expressed in terms of the number of schools for which a circuit office has responsibility. In

turn, the appropriate size of an education district is best expressed in terms of the number of education circuit offices for which a district office is responsible.

34. Taking all relevant factors, including geographical, staff and financial implications into account, the national norms are as follows:

34.1 An education circuit office must be responsible for no less than 15 and no more than 30 schools; and

34.2 An education district must comprise no less than 5 and no more than 10 education circuits.

35. It follows that no district should have fewer than 75 schools or more than 300 schools.

36. However, to guard against the maximum limit becoming a *de facto* norm, two other norms will apply:

36.1 In any district the average number of schools per circuit must not exceed 25; and

36.2 In any province the average number of schools per district must not exceed 250.

Implementing district alignment and district size norms

37. When these norms are applied across all districts the result will be that district sizes, expressed by the number of schools for which a district office is responsible, will vary far less than at present. Mega districts with many hundreds of schools will be cut down to size. In any province the average number of schools in a district will not be more than 250; but some districts in the same province may have as many as 300 schools while others may have as few as 75, depending on geographic

circumstances and population density. Similarly, in any district the average number of schools in a circuit will not be more than 25; but some circuits may have as many as 30 schools and others may have as few as 15, depending on the conditions. Other things being equal, it is better for districts to manage fewer rather than more schools, especially where populations are sparsely settled over wide rural areas or where populations are dense as in metropolitan areas and each school has large numbers of learners and teachers.

38. If a PED currently has on average fewer than 250 schools per district (or fewer than 25 schools per circuit and 10 circuits per district) and no circuit or district exceeds the respective maximum, no advantage may be gained from altering the size of districts or changing district boundaries, provided that district and circuit offices are sufficiently staffed and resourced and effectively managed. However, if a PED has many districts with relatively few schools it may be difficult to recruit sufficient capable staff members to manage all its district offices. In order to use scarce staff resources efficiently it would be sensible to reduce the number of districts or enlarge certain districts to take in more schools.
39. In brief, the application of the alignment policy and the national norms for circuit and district size must be done by each PED with educational considerations uppermost taking into account contextual, staffing and equity factors.
40. Circuit and district size norms may be reviewed from time to time by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) with the advice of PEDs.

4. EDUCATION DISTRICT ORGANISATION, FUNCTIONS AND DELEGATIONS

Support, co-ordination and monitoring of districts

41. The roles and functions of a district office have one overriding purpose, which is to help all education institutions to deliver education of high quality. Provincial Heads of Department (HoDs) are accountable for the performance of their district education offices. HoDs must therefore ensure that district and circuit offices are progressively organised, staffed and resourced to undertake the functions envisaged in this policy.
42. District Directors occupy positions of significant responsibility and importance to the mission of PEDs. They manage a large multi-disciplinary staff complement; have oversight over many circuits and large numbers of educational institutions; engage directly with the principals of schools and chairs of School Governing Bodies (SGBs); advocate and implement national and provincial policies and programmes; advance the educational interests of thousands of learners; and are accountable for the performance of the learners and institutions under their care.
43. PEDs must therefore ensure that District Directors are highly competent managers who are equipped by training and experience to lead their districts well, and that they are given suitable opportunities for professional and managerial development.
44. As heads of their district offices, District Directors operate in terms of delegations and administrative instructions from provincial HoDs. Such delegations and instructions must be clear and appropriate to the District Director's level of responsibility. In particular District Directors

must be given sufficient discretion to make decisions quickly and execute their mandates efficiently.

45. In addition, provincial HoDs must ensure that district offices receive timely and effective administrative and professional support from the relevant line and staff functions in the provincial head office. PEDs have a particular responsibility to support poorly-functioning district offices, if necessary with multi-disciplinary support teams, in order to improve their capacity for robust and responsible management.
46. Given the front-line importance and professional responsibilities of the district office, a simple hierarchical relationship between head office and district office is not appropriate. Since the relationship between them is inherently complex, clear and efficient organisational links and channels of communication between provincial head offices and district offices are essential. The precise nature of such links must respond to provincial circumstances and cannot be uniformly prescribed in a national policy, but some principles must be observed.
47. Firstly, a strong planning culture must be exhibited by provincial head offices and district offices alike. This has several dimensions.
 - 47.1. Electronic connectivity between provincial education department head offices and district offices and between district and circuit offices and schools, and the use of electronic administrative tools and professional resources must become the rule not the exception.
 - 47.2. PEDs and district offices must put a high value on the collection and verification, analysis and application of educational data from annual school statistical surveys, Annual National Assessments (ANAs), National School Certificate (NSC) results and other sources.

- 47.3. District plans need to reflect national and provincial policy priorities while being responsive to school priorities and plans based on an analysis of up-to-date school and learner data. While school plans are the essential drivers of district plans, the latter must function within a provincial system of coordination and support.
- 47.4. PEDs and district offices must operate according to predictable work programmes. Regular meetings must be scheduled at provincial, district and circuit levels for consultation with managers, specialists and staff in functions, school principals, SGB chairpersons, and representatives of stakeholder bodies. Such meetings need to be open and inter-active in order to encourage meaningful feedback, exchange of views and, where appropriate, collective decision-making.
48. Secondly, the organisational culture of PEDs and district offices (including their circuit offices) needs to encourage, expect and reward collaboration across functional areas. Colleagues in different line and staff functions must work co-operatively in order to respond effectively to the needs of SGBs, school principals, parents, teachers and learners. A culture of inclusion is required rather than a culture of differentiation. Horizontal, task-oriented working groups are therefore more appropriate than static, hierarchical silos in carrying out district functions. Skilful, flexible project management is particularly necessary.
49. Strong planning and collaborative cultures will enable both provincial and district offices to optimise their performance. Monitoring of school and district performance and timely reports will become a routine aspect of district operations, feeding back relevant and reliable information to decision-makers at all levels from school to circuit to district, and from district to PED and DBE. Increasingly, electronic reporting and communication will speed such processes.

District organisation and functions

50. Each district office should be organised in teams to deliver and report on a core basket of services. The precise composition of each team and its functions may vary from district to district but they will tend to resemble the following:

50.1. District Curriculum Support Team

Core functions:

- (a) Informing schools about national and provincial policies, and assisting schools to implement them appropriately;
- (b) Managing curriculum support including consultation with and advice to teachers, facilitating inclusive education and reporting on school visits;
- (c) Promoting and organising provision of professional development of educators in co-operation with the South African Council for Educators (SACE); and
- (d) Providing correct and timely Learner and Teacher Support Material (LTSM).

50.2. District Management and Governance Support Team

Core functions:

- (a) Supporting and advising school principals and School Governing Bodies;
- (b) Monitoring and reporting on school performance; and
- (c) Advancing installation and application of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for communication, e-education and administrative support.

50.3. District Learner Support Team

Core functions:

- (a) Facilitating and coordinating Education Specialised Programmes including psychological, social work, career

guidance, remedial and therapeutic services for all learners;

- (b) Advancing learner health and well-being;
- (c) Managing the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP);
- (d) Advancing school safety and security; and
- (e) Managing learner transport.

50.4. District Examination and Assessment Team

Core functions:

- (a) Administering Annual National Assessment (ANA);
- (b) Administering National Senior Certificate (NSC); and
- (c) Administering Continuous Assessment (CASS).

50.5. District Operations Team

Core functions:

- (a) Administering the Education Management Information System (EMIS);
- (b) Managing human resources; and
- (c) Managing financial and supply chain services.

Note: Operational matters are essential back office functions of a district. It is desirable that they are all managed by the district office directly in terms of delegations. If the requisite specialist capacity is not yet available in a district office the PED may retain the relevant function at head office until the district is capacitated to handle it.

51. Each PED head office is responsible for planning the deployment and operation of these core services in consultation with District Directors so as to optimise the district's main roles of planning, support, accountability and public information. District teams need to work collaboratively, especially in planning, executing and reporting on school visits in co-operation with circuit offices. District offices have a

special responsibility to advise and support educational institutions that are performing poorly and are therefore most in need of its services.

Delegations

52. Delegation is the appropriate legal instrument, subject to s. 42A of the PSA and s. 44 of the PFMA, with which a Provincial HoD entrusts a District Director to execute the functions ascribed to a district office. A District Director is accountable to the provincial HoD in terms of such delegations (as well as the District Director's performance agreement) and must report to the HoD on the performance of the delegated functions. A delegation does not divest the HoD of responsibility for the delegated function, and an HoD may confirm, vary or revoke any decision taken by a District Director as a result of such delegation, subject to any rights that may have become vested as a result of such delegation.
53. Five principles are paramount:
- a) Each delegation must be made and executed subject to the Constitution, the applicable laws and collective agreements.
 - b) No function must be ascribed to a District Director without an accompanying delegation of authority.
 - c) The competence of a District Director to undertake a delegated function must be ascertained ahead of time and where necessary linked to specific training or professional development (see also the note at para. 50.5 above).
 - d) A function which is ascribed or a delegation which is assigned to a District Director must be accompanied by appropriate funding and other relevant resources such as personnel, ICT connectivity or access to PERSAL, which will enable the District Director to execute the function.
 - e) A District Director must undertake the delegated function diligently and must monitor and report regularly to the provincial HoD on the performance of the function.

54. The following delegations are essential for district effectiveness. They must be assigned by the provincial HoD to a District Director subject to applicable legislation, fair labour practice and collective agreements as the case may be, in accordance with the principles enunciated in the previous paragraph:

54.1. Human resource management

- a) Authority to appoint any person or to promote or transfer any educator (including substitutes) or public servant under the District Director's area of jurisdiction;
- b) In the case of a new school, until the relevant SGB is established, authority to appoint, promote or transfer a staff member in a temporary capacity to any suitable post on the school's establishment; and
- c) Authority to institute disciplinary proceedings and impose a sanction on an educator or public servant within the District Director's area of jurisdiction in accordance with the relevant disciplinary code and procedures.

54.2. School governance

- a) Authority to dissolve an ineffective SGB; and
- b) Authority to allocate or withdraw, on reasonable grounds, a function from a SGB.

54.3. Financial management

- a) Authority to manage the assets and liabilities of the PED in the district, including the safeguarding and maintenance of assets;
- b) Authority to procure goods and services, including equipment, up to a value of R500 000;
- c) Authority to take appropriate disciplinary steps against any official under the District Director's authority who commits an act of financial misconduct in terms of the PFMA.

55. Delegations must be:
- (a) Communicated by letter to the delegate;
 - (b) Circulated within the PED, published on the PED's website and made available, on request, to a principal, SGB chairperson or member of the public;
 - (c) Clear and precise;
 - (d) Appropriate to the function concerned;
 - (e) Consistent with the appropriate legislation;
 - (f) Accompanied by sufficient resources;
 - (g) Subject to appropriate limitations; and
 - (h) Accompanied by a reporting schedule.

Circuit office organisation and functions

56. The circuit office is a field office of the district office headed by the Circuit Manager. It is the closest point of contact between education institutions and the PED. Principals depend on the circuit office for information, administrative services and professional support.
57. Circuit Managers, like District Directors, are expected to exercise significant authority in their dealings with their own staff, principals of schools, chairpersons of SGBs and the public at large. PEDs and District Directors must therefore ensure that Circuit Managers are capable managers who are equipped by training and experience to lead their circuits well, and that they are given suitable opportunities for professional and managerial development.
58. As heads of their circuit offices, Circuit Managers operate in terms of allocated functions and administrative instructions from District Directors. Such functional allocations and instructions must be clear and appropriate to Circuit Managers' level of responsibility and must allow Circuit Managers an appropriate level of discretion.

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59. A circuit office is generally a small unit comprising a Circuit Manager, professional and support staff. Each PED, in consultation with District Directors, must organise its circuit offices according to their needs and circumstances in the light of the national district staffing norms, in order to achieve the optimum number of site visits by circuit and district staff to education institutions within the circuit. Circuit offices have a special responsibility to advise and support educational institutions that are performing poorly and are therefore most in need of its services.
60. In view of the vital importance of the early years of schooling, circuit offices need their own specialist Subject Advisers to support teachers in the primary school phases. Generally, a circuit office will not have its own secondary phase Subject Advisers but will facilitate visits by specialist district teams to secondary schools within the circuit. In some cases PEDs may establish specialist secondary teams at circuit level, depending on local needs and the availability of the appropriate secondary Subject Advisers and financial resources.
61. A District Director must ensure that a Circuit Manager receives adequate support and resources to fulfil the functions entrusted to the circuit office. The Circuit Manager is accountable for the performance of such functions to the District Director and must report to the District Director at specified intervals.
62. The core functions of the circuit office are to:
- a) Provide a channel of communication between the district office and education institutions;
 - b) Provide management support to education institutions;
 - c) Provide administrative services to education institutions;
 - d) Facilitate training for principals, SMTs and SGBs;
 - e) Monitor the functionality of education institutions;
 - f) Provide curriculum support to grade R practitioners and primary grade teachers;

- g) Facilitate visits of specialist district teams to secondary schools; and
- h) Report to the district office.

Batho Pele

63. In their dealings with the public the staff members of district and circuit offices are required to exhibit the *Batho Pele* principles. These involve consultation with clients, setting and observing service standards, increasing access to services, ensuring courteous behaviour, providing the required information to the public, acting openly and transparently, redressing sub-standard performance and ensuring value for money.¹
64. In undertaking their responsibilities, district staff members are subject to the Code of Conduct for Public Servants or SACE's Code of Professional Ethics for educators, depending on their employment category. In common with all other public servants and educators, district office staff members are expected to fulfill the requirements of their code with dedication and commitment, making their services available to the schools and the public even-handedly, without bias or preference, upholding the values of the Constitution and serving the public interest in all they do.

¹ Department of Public Service and Administration, *Batho Pele – People First: White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery* (Pretoria: 18 September 1997). The eight principles of *Batho Pele* are: 1. Consultation. Citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of the public services they receive and, wherever possible, should be given a choice about the services they are offered. 2. Service standards. Citizens should be told what level and quality of public services they will receive so that they will know what to expect. 3. Access. All citizens should have equal access to the services to which they are entitled. 4. Courtesy. Citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration. 5. Information. Citizens should be given full, accurate information about the public services they are entitled to receive. 6. Openness and transparency. Citizens should be told how national and provincial departments are run, how much they cost, and who is in charge. 7. Redress. If the promised standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation and a speedy and effective remedy; and when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response. 8. Value for money. Public services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give citizens the best possible value for money.

5. STAFFING DISTRICT OFFICES

Principles

65. The Minister's legislative authority to determine policy in relation to education districts, including staffing matters, has been explained above in paras. 3-9. The MEC in a province determines staff establishments for district offices subject to the PSA and the EEA, as the case may be, and implements staffing policy subject to the relevant labour law and collective agreements.
66. The main consideration in establishing district post provisioning norms is to ensure that each district has the capacity to bring effective professional, management and administrative services to educational institutions in order to help them improve the quality of teaching and learning. Districts vary in their educational needs as well as in their physical and social characteristics. Equity in the distribution of staff support to institutions is therefore a principle that must guide the norms in order to achieve quality education for all learners.
67. This will be achieved in two ways: firstly, by ensuring that all education districts in all provinces have at least the minimum staffing level required to effectively deliver essential support to educational institutions, thus setting minimum standards; and secondly, by taking into account contextual factors that impact differently on different districts.
68. The essential level of support is described by the basket of educational services that a district must provide to the institutions under its care.
69. The model of post provisioning must incorporate the norms governing the sizes of districts and circuits. It must benefit from good practice in successful education districts. The proposed norms must be tested

against provincial realities with the advice of knowledgeable provincial and district managers and must be intelligible, credible and affordable. Part of the methodology must involve calculating the staff complement required to enable the optimum number of visits to be made by teams from the district or circuit offices to an institution per term, taking into account that poorly performing institutions need the most support.

70. Where functions delegated to a District Director are not covered by the model, PEDs could allocate additional staff members based on the same principles.
71. The district post provisioning norms for educator staff must be established using tools provided in the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) determined by the Minister in terms of the EEA and the Occupation Specific Dispensation (OSD) agreed in the ELRC (Collective Agreement No. 1 of 2008).

The model

72. The model has two components: the *parameter* by which the staffing level of a particular function is expressed, and the *factor* that takes into account the context or circumstances of a particular district.

Parameters

73. The nature of a function will determine the parameter that will be used to express staffing needs of that function. Since districts exist to serve schools, staffing needs will be expressed in terms of the number of learners, educators or schools to be served, depending on the function. For instance staffing needs for curriculum services are best expressed by the number of learners or educators to be served. Functions relating to school governance and management are better expressed in terms of the number of schools to be served.

Factors

74. Factors are expressed as weights to ensure that the distribution of staff among districts is equitable. A number of potential factors have been considered and two salient factors have been selected in order to keep the model simple and functional without compromising the equity principle:

74.1 Distance. The distances that district officials need to travel to schools. This factor takes into account the geographical features and population density of different provinces. This factor will contribute a maximum of 10% additional posts.

Distance factor

| Average distance from the district office to schools* | |
|---|-----------|
| Range (kms) | Weighting |
| 121 and above | 1.10 |
| 91-120 | 1.08 |
| 61-90 | 1.05 |
| 31-60 | 1.02 |
| 0-30 | 1 |

*The "average distance" is the sum of the distance of each school in a district from the district office divided by the number of schools.

74.2 Poverty. Schools serving extremely poor communities require additional support from their district offices to promote quality education. The poverty factor, related to the proportion of non-fee schools, will contribute a maximum of 5% additional posts in a district office.

Poverty factor

| Range | Weighting |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| 70% or more no-fee schools | 1.05 |
| Fewer than 70% non-fee schools | 1 |

75. The tables show the different weights allocated to each factor in relation to the magnitude of their potential impact on the staffing needs of districts.
76. The model may be reviewed from time to time by the DBE in consultation with PEDs taking into account contextual and equity factors.

6. CONCLUSION

77. Education district offices are the indispensable local hub of service provision to education institutions in a province. Their role is well recognised in education policy documents and departmental programmes, including *Schooling 2025*, and in the *National Development Plan*. Much is expected of them. Unfortunately many district offices have disappointing service records. This policy is designed to enable all district offices to perform according to expectations. This will happen only if the policy is implemented purposefully and progressively according to each province's needs and circumstances.
78. District offices cannot do what is expected of them if they remain responsible for excessive numbers of education institutions, if they are poorly staffed, if their district and circuit personnel are required to travel unreasonable distances to their schools, if transport is insufficient, if they are inadequately accommodated and if they have rudimentary means of communication, especially electronic communication, with schools and head offices. Nor can district offices do what is expected of them in the absence of appropriate delegations, a planning culture and a culture of collaboration between a PED and its district offices, or between a district office, its circuit offices and the education institutions they serve.
79. This policy is designed to enable PEDs to correct such deficiencies and provide district offices with the means to do their work well. A planned programme of implementation is required. Some actions must be undertaken before others can become effective. This suggests that the policy needs to be implemented in accordance with short, medium and long term plans.
80. The national department will work with PEDs (individually and through HEDCOM) on the implementation of the policy and will monitor their progress. The most effective way to do so is for each PED to report annually to DBE on how they are implementing district development in line with this

policy. PEDs need to incorporate district development improvements in their strategic and operational plans and MTEF bids. This will enable the appropriate managers in DBE to advise on provincial plans and support provincial bids for the budgetary allocations PEDs need in order progressively to house, staff and supply their district offices according to the national norms in this document. In some provinces the deficits in physical, personnel and financial resources will take longer to overcome than in others, but in all provinces there is need for purposeful planning towards the achievement of the national norms including the qualitative changes in PED/district/circuit operations envisaged in the policy.

81. The policy's impact will be evaluated over time and where necessary adjusted. The true test of success will be the steady realisation across the nation of district offices that are fit for purpose and that deliver excellent service to their education institutions.

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