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TO: DEPUTY DIRECTORS-GENERAL
CHIEF DIRECTORS: HEAD AND CLUSTER OFFICES
DIRECTORS: HEAD OFFICE AND DISTRICTS
PRINCIPALS OF ALL SCHOOLS
CHAIRPERSON'S OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES
SECRETARIES OF TEACHER UNIONS

FROM: (A) SUPERINTENDENT- GENERAL: EDUCATION

DATE: 10 NOVEMBER 2015

**SUBJECT: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATION
POLICIES IN THE EASTERN CAPE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY
SCHOOLS**

A. INTRODUCTION

This circular outlines the process of starting conversation and discussions about the impact, challenges and suggested improvement strategies of the implementation of education policies in the schooling system.

B. BACKGROUND

South Africa has a high-cost, low-performance education system that does not compare favourably with education systems in other African countries, or in similar developing economies. There is a multitude of well-publicised problems, including a shortage of teachers, underqualified teachers and poor teacher performance. In the classroom, this results in poor learner standards and results, a lack of classroom discipline and is exacerbated by insufficient resources and inadequate infrastructure.



Ikamva eliqaqambileyo!

On a government level, difficulties have been caused by a failure of appropriate inspection and monitoring, and confusion caused by changing curricula without proper communication and training. All this has led to massive demoralisation and disillusionment among teachers and a negative and worsening perception of the teaching profession.

In response to the above outlined situation the director at the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) Martin Prew, had this to say, "We have to go back to basics," he insists. "Getting the teachers in to teach and the learners back to learn.

The Department of Education has been inundated with complaints and concerns around some education policies which they claim are either difficult to implement or unrealistic. This state of affairs manifests itself in various forms, including eroding of culture of teaching and learning, non-compliance on a number of policy imperative, low staff moral and dysfunctionality of schools.

The schools are the key delivery sites of education globally. It is an undeniable fact that there are still home schools, distance education schools, e-schools and many other education provisioning media, but physical schools remain the conventional education delivery sites across the world. It is also important to note that the delivery of education operates within a highly legislated environment. There are various pieces of legislation that regulate the schooling system across the world and South Africa is no exception to this phenomenon. These policies affect the delivery of effective and efficient teaching and learning as well as the achievement of stable school functionality in a number of varying degrees. Stephen Taylor (2011) in his paper, 'Uncovering indicators of effective school management in South Africa using the National School Effectiveness Study' concludes that:

- ♣ Teacher knowledge is not consistently associated with achievement of learners.
- ♣ Weak evidence was found that school resources such as pupil-teacher ratios and school facilities are associated with student achievement - more important than the mere presence of resources is how well they are managed.
- ♣ The results pertaining to variables that can be considered indicators of management effectiveness were clearer.

- ♣ An organised learning environment signified by curriculum planning for the full year, a functional timetable, good quality inventories for LTSM, low teacher absenteeism and up-to-date assessment records were all strongly linked to better student achievement, even after accounting for differences in previous student performance.

Furthermore, the National Policy on Whole-School Evaluation (WSE) (Government Gazette Vol. 433, No. 22512, 26 July 2001) identifies nine key areas that require special focus when evaluating a functional school as:

1. **Basic functionality** – which is the ability of the school to realise its educational and social goals. It focusses on establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment and dealing with absence, lateness and truancy.
2. **Quality of teaching and learning, and educator development** – it involves curriculum planning and time management; creating a positive learning environment; teachers' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum; lesson planning, preparation and presentation; conducting and managing assessment; and promoting and managing teacher development.
3. **Curriculum provision and resources** – involves implementing the curriculum as well as extra- and co-curricular enrichment programmes. It emphasises compliance with the CAPS curriculum and providing and managing teaching and learning resources.
4. **Learner achievement** – encompasses academic achievement in internal and standardised assessment as well as participation in sports and cultural activities. It includes learner ability in Mathematics and the school's Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT), and the school's ability to support learners with barriers to learning.
5. **Leadership, management and communication** includes - providing direction to the school; managing the curriculum, staff and physical resources to promote quality learning and teaching, and promoting stakeholder involvement through communication strategies.
6. **Governance and relationships** refers to the School Governing Body's responsibilities in terms of establishing a purposeful and disciplined school environment, including providing strategic direction and performing legally mandated financial and human resource functions.

7. **School safety, security and discipline** embraces providing a healthy, safe and secure environment for learners, staff and others at the school, including complying with relevant legislation; managing learner discipline and contributing to emotional, social and physical well-being of learners.
8. **School infrastructure** refers to the provision and maintenance of school buildings, equipment, furniture, facilities and services needed to support a positive teaching and learning environment.
9. **Parents and stakeholder involvement** prescribes communicating with parents; promoting parental and community involvement in learners' education; and using their contributions to support learners' progress

The above nine key elements if all or about 75% of them are fully complied with can shift a school from a brink of dysfunctionality to an effective and fully functional school.

C. PROBLEM STATEMENT

There is a public and media perception that the education sector is saturated with policies but dry on the implementation of these many policies, regulations, frameworks, guidelines, circulars, manuals, toolkits that the sector has developed some were reviewed even before they were even implemented.

Some policies are world class education policies but very difficult to implement due to a number of reasons such as socio- economic conditions of our societies, literacy levels of the communities, cultural issues and the disjuncture between development levels of some communities and the education policies that are supposed to be implemented – using world class policies to solve developing world challenges in a short period of time.

D. OBSERVATIONS

The plethora of policies that are being implemented in the education sector are affecting schools in different ways, some positively and others negatively. The levels of policy understanding, mediation and implementation at various schools is as divergent and different as the schools themselves. This is a recipe for misinterpretation, deviations and poor implementation of the uniform norms and standards that the various policies are trying to strengthen and achieve.

There are several policy changes that have taken place since 1994 to date. The travel from the merger of the various ex- departments to the phasing out of NATED 550, the advent of Curriculum 2005, the taking over of RNCS and currently, and hopefully the final stay of CAPS can never be forgotten.

The Department is mindful of the fact that all the changes have been accompanied by a series of policies, regulations, frameworks, guidelines, toolkits, circulars and many more documents all intended to mediate policy implementation.

In all these cases, what has been glaringly weak and sometimes absent in a structured way, are the voices of the members of the school governing bodies, school management teams, learners about the impact of implementation or lack thereof of these policies in schools.

It is against this observation that MEC for Education in the Eastern Cape would like to start a process of formal conversation and consultations with the following:

1. Principals of Public and Independent Primary and Secondary Schools
2. Members of the School Governing Bodies and Board Members in Public and Independent Primary and Secondary Schools
3. Learner Representative Councils in Public and Independent Primary and Secondary Schools
4. Members of School Management Teams in Public and Independent Primary and Secondary Schools.
5. The Circuit Managers and Subject Advisors at District and Circuit Levels
6. The District officials for MANGO and CURRICULUM

E. EXPOSURE OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

1. The conversation and consultation with the MEC for Education will be about understanding and discussing the challenges that the Education Policies are posing at implementation level and also invite suggestions from the stakeholders of the desired changes to be made in these difficult to implement policies, regulations, guidelines, frameworks etc.
2. It is important to note that the inputs to be made, will not necessarily lead to short term policy review process but shall assist the department to gear itself up for the policy review eventuality.
3. But more critical and urgent is to design interim measures to mediate on the policy implementation challenges identified and raise levels of understanding of these policies by the implementers at school level.

F. METHODOLOGY

These conversations are led by the MEC for Education and conducted with various critical stakeholders in schools. The Principals of schools shall lead the discussions in their respective schools which will culminate in Circuit and District discussions with representatives at all those levels.

The district representatives and delegates shall meet with the MEC at Cluster level to fully engage on these policy matters and posit suggestions and recommendation on improving implementation at the school level. The final product of these engagement shall be the provincial policy mediation guideline that will be distributed to schools at the beginning of 2016 academic year as part of the school opening packs.

G. THE ACTION PLAN OF THE MEC'S CONVERSATION WITH SCHOOLS ON THE IMPACT OF EDUCATION POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN THE SCHOOLING SYSTEM

ACTIVITY	PURPOSE	TIME FRAME	RESPONSIBILITY
The development of the Circular on Discussion document to be sent to Districts and Schools.	To outline the approach and methodology to be used in launching and starting the conversations on Policy Implementation challenges and improvement recommendations	16 November 2015	ADDG: IOM and the Task Team
The presentation of the Draft Circular on Discussion document to SLMC	To seek the approval for the distribution of the Discussion document.	11 November 2015	ADDG:IOM
Presentation of the approved Circular on discussion document to the MEC	To secure MEC endorsement on the discussion document before its distribution.	13 November 2015	AHOD and ADDG:IOM
Distribution of the Circular on Discussion document	Ensure that the Circular on discussion documents are received by all districts and schools	20 November 2015	Cluster Offices
In- house workshop of the approved Circular on discussion document	To solicit common understanding of the approved Circular on discussion document	23 November 2015	IOM Branch

ACTIVITY	PURPOSE	TIME FRAME	RESPONSIBILITY
Workshop with District Directors and District CESs on approved Circular on discussion document	To capacitate the District officials to roll out the Circular on discussion document to schools.	24 November 2015	ADDG: IOM, Cluster Chief Directors and IOM Branch Chief Directors and Directors.
Districts roll out of the Circular on discussion document	The start of the district meetings with district officials, schools and SGBs to outline the process of starting the conversations at district and school levels.	25-27 November 2015	Cluster Chief Directors and District Directors
The MEC conversation sessions with districts and school representatives.	In depth discussions and conversation with districts and schools representatives.	30 Nov – 04 Dec 2015	MEC, AHOD, ADDG: IOM
The collation of the MEC conversation and discussion inputs	To present the recommendations for implementation to SLMC for approval.	9 December 2015	ADDG: IOM
The Development of the Policy mediation guideline.	To be part of the schools opening pack for the academic year 2016.	15 January 2016	ADDG: IOM, Task team members.
Printing and Distribution of the Policy Mediation Guidelines	Guidance to schools on how to implement the existing policies that are difficult.	30 January 2016	ADDG: IOM Branch

H. CONCLUSION

It is envisaged that the district representatives and delegates shall meet with the MEC at Cluster level to fully engage on these policy matters and posit suggestions and recommendation on improving implementation at the school level. The final product of these engagement shall be the provincial policy mediation guideline that shall be distributed to schools at the beginning of 2016 academic year as part of the school opening packs to improve the efficiency of the whole schooling system in the province.

Yours in Quality Education

27/11/2015

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DATE