

SECTION 1

OPENING OF SCHOOLS IN JANUARY 2002

The report is based on contributions from Members of the Executive Council (MECs) responsible for education in the provinces and the observations of the Department of Education during visits to schools to monitor the opening of schools. Provincial authorities had made arrangements and structured their own programmes for monitoring the opening of schools. Visits by the Department of Education were additional to and supportive of provincial efforts. Officials from the Department of Education visited at least fifty-five schools across the provinces. Delegations from the Department of Education that visited schools were in most cases accompanied by members of provincial legislatures, local government, school governing bodies and members of civil society. This section of the report, therefore, includes an analysis of submissions by the MECs supplemented by information gathered by the Department of Education.

Areas that were monitored included the following:

- Impact of the modified admission policy at Grade 1
- Percentage of learner and educator attendance
- Procurement and delivery of Learner Support Materials (LSM)
- Start of lessons
- Physical conditions and tone at the school.

1.1 IMPACT OF THE MODIFIED ADMISSION POLICY

In November 2001, the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) decided to reduce the age of admission of learners into Grade 1 from seven to six years. The decision was taken as a result of the Constitutional Court decision with regard to the age of admission in Grade 1. The decision meant that if a parent could prove that his/her child was ready for Grade 1 at the age of six, such a parent could apply for the child's admission in any public school. All provinces, except Gauteng and Western Cape, reported that the number of learners who applied for admission at the age of six was insignificant.

Gauteng received 6439 learners and the Western Cape received approximately 6000 learners. Gauteng reported that this number resulted in additional costs in human resources, physical resources and learner support material. The province estimated the financial implications to be approximately R30 million. The Western Cape reported that the increase in the numbers did not have any impact as the province had procedures in

place to receive the learners, and principals had been adequately briefed and informed before the opening of schools.

1.2. LEARNER AND EDUCATOR ATTENDANCE

All provincial education departments (PEDs) reported an estimated 90% - 98% educator attendance and 78 - 98% learner attendance. Provincial departments reported very few schools with 100% attendance for both educators and learners. There were some schools where attendance was reported to have been less than 25%. With regard to learner attendance, PEDs reported that learners failed to report for the first day because they were still seeking admission in schools other than those they attended the previous year.

There were instances where educators failed to report for duty. The attendance of educators during the first week was reported to have varied between 100% and less than 65%. It was observed that schools that are well managed had reported 100% attendance and those that are not, reported less than 65% attendance. Absenteeism among educators fell into two categories. The first category comprised of educators that had official leave of absence. The major reasons for not reporting for duty in this category was that most were either writing examinations or on sick leave. In both cases the leave was of short duration and there was therefore no provision made to employ replacement educators.

The second category comprised of educators that were absent without leave. It has to be noted that educators were required to report for duty two days before learners reported. Gauteng, for example, reported that 37 out of 40 educators in one secondary school had not reported for duty on 15 January 2002, the second day when educators were supposed to have been on duty. This may have been an extreme case, but from observations made by the Department of Education during the visits, such high rates of absenteeism were closely linked to and symptomatic of poor management.

1.3 PROCUREMENT AND DELIVERY OF LEARNER SUPPORT MATERIALS (LSM)

1.3.1 Introduction

The procurement and delivery of LSM at the beginning of the school year is an indicator of how well schools and provincial departments manage their systems for LSM procurement and distribution. The report summarises information supplied by provincial departments of education and supplemented with information obtained by the

Department of Education during monitoring. During one of the monitoring exercises, the Department of Education conducted a survey in November 2001 to assess:

- whether PEDs had made adequate budget provision for LSM for the beginning of the 2002 school year;
- whether PEDs managed the process of LSM procurement so that books could be delivered to schools on time at the beginning of 2002; and
- the extent to which LSM budgets for the 2000/2001 financial year had been utilised.

In this section of the report the above three issues are examined and the extent to which PEDs have succeeded or failed to supply learning support materials in January 2002.

1.3.2 Budget allocations in readiness for the opening of schools

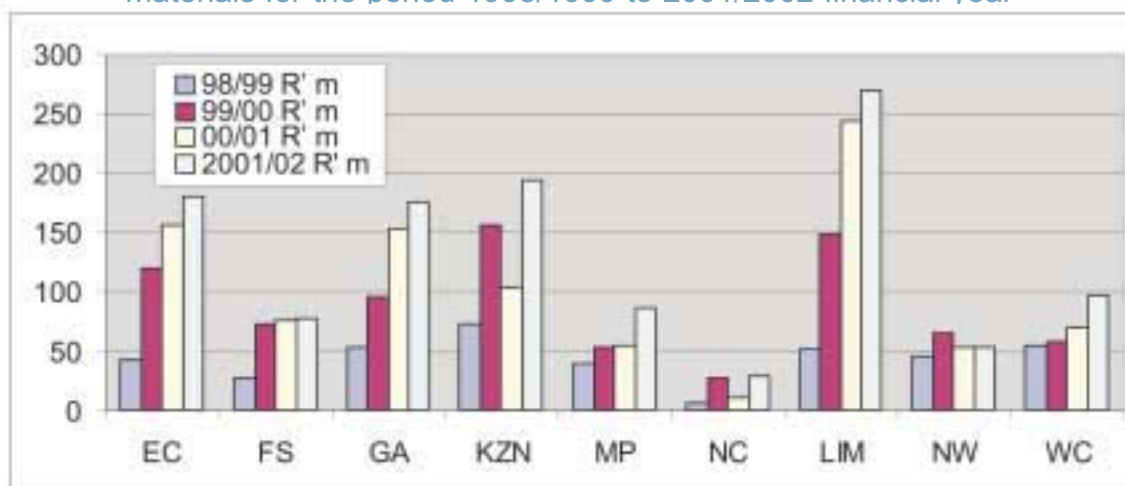
The LSM budget allocations reported by (PEDs) over the past four financial years are shown in Table 1.1 below:

Table 1.1: Budget allocations reported over the past four financial years

Province	Year 1998/99 R' millions	Year 1999/2000 R' millions	Year 2000/2001 R' millions	Year 2001/2002 R'million
Eastern Cape	42.1	120	155.5	180.0
Free State	26.9	72.1	75.7	77.8
Gauteng	52.3	95.4	153.4	176.0
KwaZulu-Natal	72.6	156	103.3	193.9
Mpumalanga	39.8	53	54.4	86.5
Northern Cape	6.6	27.7	10.7	28.9
Limpopo	51.5	148.3	244.2	269.4
North West	45.9	65.2	53	53.6
Western Cape	54.9	57	70	96.8
TOTAL	392.6	794.7	920.2	1162.8

The information reflected in Table 1.1 is also represented in graphical form in figure 1.1

Figure 1.1: Graphical representation of the provincial allocations for learning support materials for the period 1998/1999 to 2001/2002 financial year



The steady increase in the budget allocations as reflected in Table 1.1 and Figure 1.1 is a result of collaborative efforts between the national and provincial departments of education. The Department of Education had set a minimum target of R1.2 billion for the procurement and delivery of learning support materials. The calculations that were done at the time excluded costs incurred in logistical arrangements and were limited only to the actual cost of LSM. Each province had to allocate a budget for LSM to ensure that the learning support material requirements of learners were met. The total LSM allocation for the school year 2002 calculated from the individual budget allocations of all the provinces amounted to approximately R1.2 billion. The target has been reached after a period of three years. The challenge in the coming years will be to maintain this level of funding. A further marginal increase is still required to cater for associated expenses.

1.3.3 Performance in the delivery of LSM

The procurement and delivery of learning support materials is the responsibility of provincial departments of education. The Department of Education can only monitor progress and advise in that regard. During January 2002, the Department conducted a further survey to assess progress made by provincial departments of education in the delivery of learning support materials in preparation for the opening of schools during the weeks beginning 14 January and 21 January 2002. The information required with respect to the delivery of stationery and textbooks to public schools covered the following aspects:

- (a) Percentage of textbooks delivered;
- (b) Percentage of number of schools to which deliveries were made;
- (c) Reasons why textbook deliveries could not be completed before the schools opened;
- (d) If not all deliveries had been made, the expected date by which all textbooks would have been delivered.

The discussion that follows focuses first on public schools that have not been allocated functions (non-section 21 schools) in terms of Section 21 of the South African Schools' Act, 1996 and secondly on schools that have allocated functions. The information received with respect to textbook deliveries to non-section 21 schools is summarised below.

Table 1.2: Performance in the delivery of textbooks to public schools excluding schools which have been assigned functions in terms of Section 21 of the South African Schools Act, 1996

Province	% textbooks delivered	% schools covered	Expected date of completion of outstanding deliveries	Comments made by PEDs to explain lack of delivery on target dates
Eastern Cape	Varied according to District from 33% to 65 %	Information not available	Information not available	Most rural areas registered low returns. Suppliers tend to prioritise urban areas and stocks run out before they supply rural areas. Furthermore, publishers (suppliers) who started printing the material late did not have enough stock to supply to distributors.
Free State	98% (Gr. 5 and 9)	100%	31 January 2002	Deliveries could not be completed because of delayed orders from publishers. It was expected that all deliveries would have been completed by 31 January 2002.
Gauteng	88%	100%	Information not available	The outstanding 12% comprises out of stock/ and print books
KwaZulu-Natal	88%	100%	28 Feb 2002	The PED reported that it did all it could to ensure that the remaining 12% was delivered before the end of February 2002. The Department has a contract with suppliers who in turn purchase books from the publishers. Titles that come from overseas countries cause delays as it takes time for them to reach the publishers.
Mpumalanga	50% (Gr. 5 and 9)	100%	31 March 2002	The remaining 50% of the textbooks for GR 5 and 9 and workbooks for Grades 1, 2 and 3 had been ordered. It was expected that these would have been delivered by 31 March 2002.
Northern Cape	91%	100%	31 January 2002	Some titles were still out of print or in reprint.
Limpopo	30%	45%	31 January 2002	Most publishers started printing the required textbooks in October 2001 and only started to distribute to suppliers during December 2001. Suppliers who were successful are mostly SMMEs and take long to comply with publishers' requests resulting in a delay in processing their orders.
North West	90%		31 January 2001	Textbook orders were placed later than the targeted date due to delays in capturing the data. Also heavy rainfall delayed deliveries during December 2001. Some of the textbooks ordered were withdrawn from the market and schools had to order replacements.
Western Cape	79.2% by 7 Dec 2001	77.2%	23 January 2002	Extent of coverage could not be determined precisely. This was scheduled for the second quarter of the 2002/2003 financial year.

Performance with regard to the delivery of stationery is generally better than the delivery of textbooks. The table below gives details of the performance by province:

Table 1.3: Performance in the delivery of stationery

Province	% stationery delivered	% schools covered	Expected date of completion of outstanding deliveries	Comments by PEDs to explain lack of delivery on target dates.
Eastern Cape	Varied according to District from 45% to 88%	Information not yet available	Information not yet available	Most rural areas registered low returns. Suppliers tend to prioritise urban areas and stocks run out before they supply rural areas. Furthermore stationery manufacturers and publishers who started printing the material late did not have enough stock to supply distributors.
Free State	100%	100%	25 January 2002	Deliveries could not be completed before the opening of schools because of delayed orders from suppliers.
Gauteng	Varied according to District from 45% to 88%	100%	Information not yet available	
KwaZulu-Natal	97%	100%	28 Feb 2002	Most regions received 100% of the stationery, except for Port Shepstone (97%) and Pietermaritzburg (75%).
Mpumalanga	100%	100%	Not applicable	Not applicable.
Northern Cape	100%	100%	Not applicable	Not applicable.
Limpopo	90%	96%	31 January 2002	Orders were issued in October 2001 and deliveries started late in November 2001. Deliveries continued during school holidays. At some schools, however, there was no teacher/officer to receive stationery.
North West	100%	100%	31 January 2002	Some of the successful transport tenders could not be reached on time and they only started deliveries to schools later than originally scheduled. Heavy rainfall also delayed deliveries.
Western Cape	85.9%	84.66%	23 January 2002	Some of the schools did not order stationery as they had enough stock at hand. The WCED was confident that all stationery ordered was to be available in schools during the opening week.

Deliveries to Section 21 (South African Schools Act, 1996) schools

The South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996) makes provision in section 21 for the Head of a Provincial Department of Education to allocate functions with financial implications to schools that are deemed to have the capacity to handle financial matters. Schools that have the capacity are given a school budget from which they make allocations at school level for different services. The provision of learning support materials to learners is one such service. Provincial departments of education were required to report on deliveries made to such schools. Only the Northern Cape and Western Cape provided reports. The other seven provincial departments did not report on the performance of the schools that had been assigned functions in terms of section 21 of the South African Schools Act. The Northern Cape reported that schools with assigned functions had provided approximately 97.82% of all LSM required. The

percentage includes Grade 5 and 9 requirements and a top up of LSM in the remaining grades. The Western Cape reported that some of the schools did not order stationery as they had enough stock available from the previous year.

Expenditure trends on provision of LSM in the 2000/2001 financial year

Provincial education departments have, in the past year, demonstrated their commitment to ensuring that they provide LSM within their budget allocations. Although there were deviations from the budget allocations in the 2000/2001 financial year, the level of spending was not affected. Instead, some provinces spent more than they had initially budgeted. Table 2.4 compares budgeted amounts, the level of spending and deviations from the budget.

Table 1.4: LSM budget and actual expenditure for the opening of schools in 2000 and in 2001

PROVINCE	Financial Year 1999/2000			Financial Year 2000/2001		
	Budget R' millions	Expenditure R' millions	Difference R' millions	Budget R' millions	Expenditure R' millions	Difference R' millions
Eastern Cape	120.0	129.4	+9.4	155.5	147.9	-7.6
Free State	72.1	72.1	0	75.7	90.0	+14.7
Gauteng	95.4	84.0	-11.4	153.4	176	+22.6
KwaZulu-Natal	156.0	129.1	-26.9	103.3		
Mpumalanga	53.0	64.0	+9.0	54.4	57.2	+2.8
Northern Cape	27.7	10.7	-17.0	10.7	10.7	0
Limpopo	148.3	152.1	+3.8	244.2		
North West	65.2	68.0	+3.2	53	50.0	3.0
Western Cape	57.0	60.0	+3.0	70	70.0	0
TOTAL	794.7	769.4	-25.3	920.2	651.5	

The figures in Table 1.4 show that if the trend continues, as provincial departments finalise their expenditures for the financial year 2001/2002, the expenditure on LSM for the 2002 school year is expected to match or even exceed the budgeted amount of R1.2 billion.

From the information presented above it can be concluded that the delivery of textbooks has not been managed as well as it should have been in most provinces. Only three provinces Free State, Northern Cape, North West and Western Cape appear to have reached the 75% level of delivery by the time schools opened. All the provinces except Eastern Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal delivered more than 90% of the stationery before the schools opened in January. In comparison to previous years, the reports show an improvement in the delivery of learning support materials in the six provinces. However, there have been reports in the print media alleging that some schools did not receive LSM on time or did not receive any LSM at all. This has been the case in the KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces. The affected PEDs responded to such allegations by stating that among other reasons, delays were caused by logistical

arrangements imposed by tender boards, through the tender process, books that are sometimes out of print or have to be reprinted. There have also been cases where reports in the print media have not been accurately presented. Only Northern Cape and Western Cape responded to the question on the delivery of learning support materials to schools that were assigned functions in terms of section 21 of the South African Schools Act. The Department will continue to monitor the performance of this category of schools to ensure that funds are utilised appropriately.

1.4 START OF LESSONS

Approximately 70% of the schools started with the lessons on the first day, even though in some cases schools were still busy with registration. This was particularly reported to be the case in Mpumalanga, some parts of KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape. The affected PEDs reported that the delays were largely due to both external and internal factors. Some of the internal factors were the distribution of LSM during schools hours and absence of timetables. These internal factors have to do with poor planning on the part of the schools. Some of the external factors were due to parents not adhering to the requirement to register their children in the year preceding the year of admission to school. As policy, the departments decided that if there are learners who need to be registered on the day of the opening of schools, these should be done after school hours. This was generally observed, though in not all cases. On the one hand this non-adherence may be a reflection of the lack of the effectiveness of communication with parents on the part of the schools and the individual PEDs. On the other hand the majority of parents, particularly, in township and rural communities appear to be still adhering to old practices, that of registering children when the schools re-open. Although there has been a slight improvement in this area, there is still much to be done to improve the situation. Areas of improvement include intensifying communication with communities, parents and learners, and proper planning on the part of schools.

1.5 PHYSICAL CONDITIONS AND TONE OF THE SCHOOLS

Many schools need urgent refurbishment, particularly in the rural and township areas. The extent of the refurbishment required in each PED is well recorded in the 2000 School Register of Needs (SRN). Among the most common problems are falling ceilings, broken windowpanes, missing doors, leaking roofs and vandalized electrical fittings. The Eastern Cape reported that the condition of some of the schools has been worsened by tornadoes, particularly those that had mud structures, while in the Free State some schools were affected by floods. Mpumalanga reported vandalism of schools

as a major factor. Only three provinces Gauteng, Northern Cape and Western Cape reported satisfactory conditions, highlighting largely refurbishment and maintenance of buildings that was required. All provinces, except the Western Cape, reported that the general condition of the grounds was not adequate. Most of the schools still had very long grass showing that no preparation for receiving learners had been done.

One of the priorities set by the Council of Education Ministers and the Heads of Education Departments Committee, for the 2001 school year, was the beautification of schools. Provincial departments were required to use part of the conditional grant for financial management and quality enhancement to make schools attractive to learners by painting buildings and improving the school premises. Provincial departments of education do not appear to have made adequate arrangements for that to be done. Only few provinces reported on using the conditional grant in this way. More detailed discussion on the improvement of school infrastructure will be presented in section 3 of this report.

1.6 DISRUPTION OF SCHOOLS IN TSAKANE TOWNSHIP (GAUTENG) AND BALFOUR (MPUMALANGA)

The accounts given in the provincial reports regarding the opening of schools are proof that there has been a great deal of improvement in the past two years compared to the earlier years of a single education system. However, there were incidents of disruption of schools spearheaded by the Pan Africanist Student Organisation (PASO), in the different provinces, notably Gauteng, Mpumalanga, North West and Limpopo, one week after the opening of schools on 16 January 2002. The incidents soon subsided in the other provinces but PASO sustained them in Gauteng and Mpumalanga.

The Council of Education Ministers held a meeting on 18 February 2002. At that meeting the opening of schools was discussed. None of the MECs in both provinces made mention of the disruptions. The Department visited the affected schools in both provinces. One of the findings in Balfour, Mpumalanga was that parents in one of the affected schools had demanded a refund of the fees they had paid. However, the MEC appeared not have been briefed about such a serious matter. A second important common factor that was reported, by both educators and members of the South African Police Service, was the extent of intimidation of learners, educators and school principals and in one case violence was used. This contributed enormously to the disruption. The Ministry of Education is of the view that there are political motives behind the disruptions. The Ministry is planning to hold discussions with the PAC if the disruptions continue.