

NATIONAL EDUCATION INFORMATION POLICY



Department of Education

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

NATIONAL EDUCATION INFORMATION POLICY

" I, Grace Naledi Mandisa Pandor, Minister of Education, after consultation with the Council of Education Ministers, hereby gives notice in terms of section 3(4)(a) of the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act No. 27 of 1996), as read with section 59 of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996), section 41 of the Further Education and Training Act, 1998 (Act No. 98 of 1998), and section 35 of the Adult Basic Education and Training Act, 2000 (Act No. 52 of 2000), of the national education information policy, as set out in the Schedule."

GRACE NALEDI MANDISA PANDOR, MP
MINISTER OF EDUCATION

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PART I:**DEFINITIONS**

“adult basic education and training centre” means a centre, either public or private, providing Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) in terms of the Adult Basic Education and Training Act, 2000 (Act No.52 of 2000).

“Council of Ministers” means the Council of Education Ministers as established by section 9 of the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act No. 27 of 1996).

“early childhood development” is defined as an umbrella term that applies to the processes by which children from birth to nine years grow and thrive, physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, morally and socially.

“e-Government” is defined as the continuous optimisation of government service delivery, constituency participation, and governance by transforming internal and external relationships through technology, the Internet and new media.

“EMIS Officer” means the official of the education department charged with certain responsibilities regarding education management information, in terms of this policy.

“further education and training” means all learning and training programmes leading to qualifications from levels 2 to 4 of the National Qualifications Framework as contemplated in the South African Qualifications Authority Act 1995, (Act No. 58 of 1995), which levels are above the general education but below higher education.

“Information Standards Sub-Committee” means the HEDCOM sub-committee, established in terms of this policy, that advises the Director-General with regard to education information standards.

“institution” is a collective term for entities engaged in the actual delivery of educational services to learners and students, and includes schools, further education and training, early childhood development, and higher education institutions and adult basic education and training centres.

“official data and statistics” means data and statistics that have been formally classified as a true record by the EMIS officer, in terms of this policy.

“provincial education department” means a department of any provincial government which is responsible for education.

“school” means an institution, either public or independent, providing schooling at some or all of the grades R to 12 levels, in terms of the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996).

“School Education Management Information System” (SEMIS) means an information system used by the school to handle administrative, management and planning functions.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of education information

1. The effective gathering, dissemination and analysis of information in the education system of any country is vital for sound education planning, monitoring and delivery. In the case of South Africa, effective use of information can greatly advance meaningful democracy, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness in the education system. The constitutional duty of the state to provide an education system that develops individual citizens and the nation as a whole is thus enhanced.

The overall goals of the policy

2. This policy creates a framework that allows for the co-ordinated and sustainable development of education information systems. Two main goals are thereby pursued. The first is the goal of an education system where information systems enhance the day-to-day running of institutions and education departments, and provide better information to the public as a whole, thereby promoting accountability. The second is the goal of an education system where information systems yield increasingly valuable data and statistics needed for planning and monitoring purposes, which occurs at all levels from the individual institution to the national Department of Education.

The parts of this policy framework

3. The main components of the framework laid down by this policy are the following:
- i. A vision for South African education information systems.
 - ii. A framework for establishing and maintaining effective and sustainable standards governing education statistics, data and information systems.
 - iii. A framework for streamlining the provision of education information by education departments and institutions to the public and all role players.
 - iv. A framework for improving the flow of data and statistics between institutions, the provincial departments of education and the Department of Education.

Fragmentation in our education information systems

4. The South African education system is characterised by a multitude of information systems, both computerised and paper-based or manual, which provide the basis for the many business procedures that the education system must engage in. This includes the function of admitting learners into schools, registering learner attendance and achievement, closing and opening institutions, appraising educators, charging fees, communicating with parents, and so on. In recent years some of these information systems have undergone major transformation, whilst others have remained stagnant and are essentially an inheritance from the apartheid past. Most role players in the education system, whether parents, employees or learners, can attest to the fact that good information systems contribute to improved service delivery, or to the fact that poor information systems disempower and marginalise, with the victims usually being

the most disadvantaged in society. It is widely recognised that the state needs to be pro-active in ensuring that information systems in education are improved in the interests of better service delivery. This requires, amongst other things, the development of, and adherence to, effective and adequate national standards governing education management information systems.

Problems around the survey approach

5. It has become the practice for education departments all over the world, but especially in Africa and other developing regions, to depend heavily on annual national censuses, also called 'surveys', in gathering information from institutions. Whilst this approach fulfils an important need, it is recognised that the current censuses can be improved on, for instance through the establishment of common information standards that are shared by the provincial and national departments, in order to generate data that is comparable and of an acceptable quality, and therefore sufficiently reliable to add maximum value to education planning. Where the annual censuses do not provide information required by the Department of Education, the national department generally makes special data and statistics requests to provincial departments of education. In the past, such requests, and provincial responses to such requests, have not been properly streamlined or standardised, resulting in information that is sometimes unreliable and not comparable.

The education information policy gap

6 Attempts to generate information systems standards at the national level have been hampered by the absence of a policy framework that would lay down the structures and procedures to be followed in the generation of such standards. This policy gap has posed problems not just for the Department of Education, but also for the provincial departments of education, other government departments and service providers working in the education sector. A lack of properly mandated standards has often prevented the development of systems, and where systems were developed in the absence of standards, the result has been systems that could not be integrated with related systems, and systems that were not thoroughly informed by the educational context.

A VISION FOR INFORMATION SYSTEMS IN SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION

Principles guiding our vision

7. Since 1996 the principles governing the vision for the South African education system have been, and continue to be, the following:

- i. The national Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) should be a well co-ordinated system of education management information systems that facilitate planning and management at institutional, circuit, district, provincial and national levels.
- ii. The ultimate aim of an information system is to improve the efficiency in the management of the education system, to introduce more transparency in the activity of the education departments and ensure greater accountability on the use of scarce public resources.
- iii. Any EMIS must facilitate public access to accurate, timely and relevant information within the legal framework to all role players. Information on education inputs, processes and outcomes at all levels of the system should be accessible to the public, with the exception of personal information where confidentiality should be ensured.
- iv. The national EMIS should be an integrated system, providing data and/or information for use at all levels of the education system.
- v. The national EMIS should be flexible to accommodate the changes taking place within the education system and the new priorities at all levels of the system.
- vi. The national EMIS should be needs driven with the needs of the different users informing the data to be collected.
- vii. The national EMIS should be open-ended with input and output at all levels.
- viii. Data flow should be bi-directional both vertically and horizontally.
- ix. Ideally data should be processed, analysed and published close to the collection point.
- x. The system should be simple, accessible, accurate and standardised.
- xi. EMIS should facilitate capacity building, support and training on collection, processing, analysis dissemination and use of information at all levels of the education system.
- xii. There should be a mechanism for co-ordination between the national and provincial levels to accommodate the diverse needs of the provinces, especially in establishing a core data set and the use of appropriate and compatible technology.
- xiii. The national EMIS should link up with other education and training systems, including the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the Sector Education Training Authorities (SETAs) and the Department of Labour.
- xiv. The national EMIS should be able to interface with other data sets both within and outside the education management establishment including PERSAL and Census data.

It is also recognised that with better operational systems in place, education planners at all levels would have access to greater volumes of reliable data for planning and

other purposes on condition that these operational systems adhered to national standards that ensured compatibility at a national level.

Benefits for parents, learners and educators

8. A situation is envisaged in which participants in the education system, be they learners, students, parents, educators or other employees, will have access to education information systems that greatly facilitate good education service delivery. Parents will have access to reliable and understandable information relating to the schools of their children, and of other schools. Information systems will contribute towards the more effective implementation of admissions procedures for learners and students, and will empower people with information on the educational choices available. Essential information on education as a whole will be available in all institutions, and in all departmental offices. Educators will be in a position to make more informed decisions about their careers and lifelong-learning paths on the basis of better information regarding in-service training and institutions offering employment. Overall, information systems will contribute to a better-run education system, where less time and other resources are wasted in inefficient practices.

Information systems in institutions

9. Schools will benefit from the use of School Education Management Information Systems (SEMIS) that will facilitate school administration, management and planning. Historically disadvantaged schools will receive support from the state to assist in the establishment of SEMIS. Information systems in departmental offices, schools and other institutions do not need to be part of a single product, but they should be unified by common design and data standards, making interaction between systems possible. The systems of the education departments will extract data from systems at schools and other institutions, which will allow for more effective planning and administration in the departments.

The need for inclusiveness

10. Transformation in terms of education information systems should be inclusive. Parallel to the development of improved computerised systems and the diffusion of 'e-Government', should be the ongoing improvement of manual systems in line with the design of computerised systems, so that elements of the education system are not excluded, and the transition from manual to computerised systems can be streamlined.

Improved education management

11. Planning and monitoring, at all levels from the institution to the Department of Education, will be improved through the greater availability of accurate and relevant information on the education system. This will result in better-informed implementation and resource allocation strategies, which will improve the overall performance of the education system. Through access to this information, legislators and other publicly elected officials will be in a better position to serve their constituencies in education related matters.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK THAT INFORMS THE POLICY

12. This policy is closely linked to other legislation and government initiatives.

13. It is the duty of institutions to provide information to the education departments and the public in terms of section 59 of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996), section 41 of the Further Education and Training Act, 1998 (Act 98 of 1998), and section 35 of the Adult Basic Education and Training Act, 2000 (Act 52 of 2000). This provision of information needs to occur in a manner that is efficient and allows for the proper archiving of institution data in the education departments. This policy creates a framework that improves the processes by which institutions provide information. In terms of the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act No. 27 of 1996), the Minister of Education must monitor and evaluate the standards of education provision, delivery and performance, to a large extent through the use of national education statistics. This policy promotes the processes required to ensure that reliable national education statistics are available.

The Promotion to Access to Information Act, 2000

14. This policy complements the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act No. 2 of 2000). Whilst the Promotion of Access to Information Act deals mainly with access to individual records, this policy deals mainly with access to data and statistics as a whole. Moreover, where the Act focuses mainly on action to be taken by the state in response to requests for information, this policy focuses to a large degree on the pro-active steps the education departments must take in order to ensure wide access to information, which will reduce the need for individual requests. This policy directly complements the Promotion of Access to Information Act, by specifying the level of the education system at which specific information is made available in the first instance.

The Statistics Act, 1999

15. This policy complements the Statistics Act, 1999 (Act No.6 of 1999). Section 14 of the Statistics Act deals with the obligation of government departments to work closely with the Statistician-General in, for example, maintaining national standards of statistical reporting and co-ordinating the statistical collections of the country. This policy creates a framework for the national Department of Education and the provincial departments of education to comply with this obligation in a more organised and effective manner through improved procedures for ensuring the accuracy and proper presentation of education statistics.

Batho Pele public service delivery

16. This policy complements the Batho Pele strategy of Government to improve service delivery to the public. By creating a framework for systems development, this policy will facilitate the improvement of the education information systems which will, in turn, improve the lives of those who participate in education.

South African Qualifications Authority

17. This policy complements the initiatives of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) to create a National Learner Records Database (NLRD). By specifying that the development of learner records for the use of the education departments should be in line with the NLRD initiative, optimum use of resources in Government, and unified data sets are enhanced.

Focus on education-specific information

18. This policy complements state regulations and standards governing financial and personnel systems used in all sectors of Government. Whilst the framework presented in this policy may influence the usage of the multi-sectoral financial and personnel systems in education, the framework is intended to influence design directly where systems are specific to the education sector.

PART II: GENERAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

DUTY OF EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC

Need to pro-actively respond to the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000

19. In terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act No. 2 of 2000), education departments and education institutions, whether public or private, have an obligation to provide information to a variety of interested parties. To comply effectively with this obligation, education departments must ensure that the most appropriate points of access for particular types of information are made clear to the public. Moreover, the education departments must be pro-active in satisfying the information needs of the public by distributing commonly requested information to potential requesters. Such a pro-active approach can reduce the need to respond to individual requests, and can ensure that more disadvantaged communities, who may normally not make formal information requests in terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act, are empowered with the information they need. Sections 20 to 26 below stipulate some of the specific actions education departments must take.

Information on where to get information

20. Education departments must make publicly available information of the type contained in Appendix 1 of this policy, which specifies where different kinds of information are most readily available. Moreover, where information requests pertain to one province only, but the information is available at both the national and provincial departments, education departments must encourage the submission of such requests to the relevant provincial department. Whilst this will facilitate the implementation of the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act No. 2 of 2000), this does not absolve information officers from the obligation, stated in section 20 of the Promotion of Access to Information Act, to transfer information requests to other information officers more suited to responding to the request.

Registers of institutions

21. In order to cater for the information needs of parents, learners and students, the national Department of Education and the provincial departments of education must maintain updated registers of institutions. These registers must include the basic contact details of institutions, as well as the curriculum and language information reasonably required by the information user. A national register must be available in the national Department of Education and in the head offices of each of the provincial departments of education. The provincial register for that particular province must be available in all the offices of the provincial departments. Subject to the availability of resources, the relevant provincial registers must also be made available progressively in institutions, beginning with those institutions serving the most disadvantaged communities. The registers must also be published on departmental websites, if available. In addition, other means of dissemination, such as newspapers, must be considered. In order to facilitate ongoing merging of the provincial registers into a national register, all education departments must compile their registers in accordance with national standards established in terms of this policy. Education departments may combine the register with the manual envisaged by section 14 of the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act No. 2 of 2000).

Operational information to be made available to parents

22. Education departments must also make available to the public, in particular parents, operational information relating to institutions. Considering that this operational information in many cases changes annually for each institution, education departments may decide not to include this information in the register stipulated in section 21, and may, instead, select another means of communication, on condition that this is adequate for the information needs of the public and parents.

Institution details for use by third parties

23. Third parties often wish to distribute particular information to institutions. The education departments must facilitate this by making postal addresses of all institutions, and, if possible, telephone numbers available. This information must, if possible, be available electronically on departmental websites. In the case of an education department not having a website, an adequate alternative means of distribution must be used. Education departments may not make facsimile or electronic mail addresses of institutions available for the purposes of mass distribution. This is to protect these means of communication and the institutions concerned from abuse. Education departments may use the register stipulated in section 21 to distribute this data to third parties.

Information for research purposes

Education departments must anticipate the needs of researchers to analyse data on the education sector and must be pro-active in preparing standard and typical data files, in

particular enrolment data, for use by researchers. This data must be available timeously and in the current term. Such files must adhere to national standards, established in terms of this policy, with regard to definitions and formats. In the case of a researcher requiring data not included in the standard and typical data files, and where the research is not officially mandated within the education system, the education department concerned must assess the possible value of the research against the departmental resources required to prepare the data, and should respond to the request accordingly.

Standardisation of statistical tables

25. Education departments must include in their annual reports key statistical tables that contribute to the accountability of education departments to their respective legislatures and the public in general. Nationally agreed upon standards governing these tables must be adhered to.

Protection of private information

26. In providing information to the public, education departments must ensure that procedures exist which prevent the release of information considered private or protected in terms of Chapter 4 of the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act No. 2 of 2000).

Warehousing of education data

27. Education departments must safely and accessibly store data reflecting the current education system, and historical profiles of the education system from the past, in accordance with nationally determined standards. The data that must be stored will include data relating to the following aspects of institutions and the department(s):

- i. Basic details, including names of institutions
- ii. Curriculum offerings
- iii. Personnel details
- iv. Basic learner details
- v. Learner performance details
- vi. Building and infrastructure details
- vii. Financial records

DUTY OF PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENTS TO PROVIDE STATISTICS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Need for reliable provincial information

For planning and monitoring purposes, it is necessary for data and statistics to be provided on a regular and cyclical basis by provincial departments to the Department of Education. The data and statistics must be reliable and in accordance with national standards. It is also necessary, on occasion, for the Department of Education to request special submissions of data and statistics from the provincial departments, where the information need is not fulfilled by the regular information reporting and submission cycles. Provinces have a responsibility to supply data and statistics to other educational statutory bodies, upon request.

EMIS Officers

National EMIS officer

29. The Director-General of the Department of Education must designate a national EMIS officer, whose basic functions will be as follows:

- i. To co-ordinate and control the release of official statistics and data to other national government departments, statutory bodies such as Statistics South Africa, and international organisations.
- ii. To ensure that statistics and data released according to section 29 (i) comply with national and general standards with regard to accuracy and presentation.
- iii. To act as the only departmental official, apart from the Director-General of the national Department of Education, also known as the information officer in terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act (Act No. 2 of 2000), with the authority to classify Department of Education statistics and data as official accordance with section 14 of the Statistics Act No. 6 of 1999.
- iv. To act as the only departmental official, apart from the Director-General of the Department of Education, with the authority to approve a national data collection project, for example a survey of schools, conducted by the Department of Education.
- v. To, on an ongoing basis, synthesise the analyses, reports and recommendations of provincial EMIS Officers, designated in terms of section 30 below, on provincial information systems, so that appropriate national standards and strategies can be formulated that contribute to the vision of education information systems explained in this policy.
- vi. To monitor compliance with national information systems standards where education information systems are being developed at the national level.
- vii. To promote the adequate standardisation of SEMIS used by institutions, in accordance with section 43 of this policy.
- viii. To organise regular meetings with all provincial EMIS officers in the furtherance of the education information systems vision at the national level.
- ix. To ensure that there is adequate communication between EMIS officers and the Information Standards Sub-Committee to ensure delivery.
- x. To liaise with the Statistician-General and Statistics South Africa to promote the aims of the Statistics Act, 1999 (Act No.6 of 1999), to ensure that section 14 of the Statistics Act, requiring the Minister of Finance to approve the undertaking of a new statistical collection, or the substantial changing or discontinuation of a statistical collection, is adhered to.

Provincial EMIS officer

30. Each provincial department head must designate an Education Information Officer, whose basic functions will be as follows:
- i. To co-ordinate and control the release of official statistics and data to other government departments and educational statutory bodies, but in particular the Department of Education, in accordance with established information reporting cycles, but also in response to special information requests.
 - ii. To ensure that statistics and data released according to section 30(i) comply with national and general standards with regard to accuracy and presentation.
 - iii. To act as the only departmental official, apart from the head of the provincial department, also known as the information officer in terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act, with the authority to classify statistics and data of the provincial department as official in accordance with section 14 of the Statistics Act No. 6 of 1999.
 - iv. To act as the only departmental official, apart from the head of the provincial department, with the authority to approve a data collection project, for example a survey of schools, conducted by the provincial department.
 - v. To work with the EMIS officer of the Department of Education in ensuring that the requirements of section 14 of the Statistics Act, governing the role of the Minister of Finance in determining statistical collections, are fulfilled the particular province.
 - vi. To analyse, report on, and make recommendations on an ongoing basis for improvements to the electronic and non-electronic information systems of the provincial department and its institutions so that these systems can contribute to the vision of education information systems explained in this policy.
 - vii. To monitor compliance with national information systems standards where education information systems are being developed in the province.
 - viii. To collaborate with the other provincial EMIS officers, and the national EMIS officer designated in terms of section 29, in the furtherance of the education information systems vision at the national level.

Relationship between EMIS officer and Information Officer of Promotion Of Access To Information Act

Relationship between EMIS officer and Information Officer of Promotion Of Access To Information Act

31. Heads of Provincial Education Departments and the Director-General of the Department of Education must establish the function of the EMIS officers in such a way that confusion around the relative roles of the information officers determined by the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act No.2 of 2000) and the EMIS officers is minimised. The point should be emphasised that information officers' functions as determined by the Promotion of Access to Information Act are mainly related to dealing with individual records and information about the services offered by the organisation. Their functions are less related to statistics, data information systems, and standards. The EMIS officer may be the head of the EMIS unit or directorate, if this is considered to enhance effectiveness. It is not a requirement that the EMIS officer carry line responsibility for designing and implementing information systems in view of the fact that the focus of the EMIS officer could become too broad.

However, in the case of line responsibility for information systems residing separately from the EMIS officer, the Director-General of the Department of Education or the head of provincial education department must ensure that adequate reporting and communication channels are established between the two line functions to promote functionality.

Availability of EMIS officers

32. Heads of provincial education departments and the Director-General of the Department of Education must ensure that the function of the EMIS officer can be performed on all working days, even in the temporary absence of the person designated as EMIS officer. The EMIS officer has to be easily contactable, and his/her office's contact details easily available and regularly updated.

Availability of resources for the EMIS officer

33. The Director-General of the Department of Education and heads of provincial departments must ensure that staffing norms are regulated such that the EMIS officer has sufficient staff and resources at his/her disposal in order to perform his/her duties. Despite the specific obligations of provincial EMIS officers to provide the Department of Education with data and statistics, the provincial EMIS officer must also fulfil a range of information needs of the provincial education department itself.

Resources required by EMIS officers

34. There must be adequate resources for the EMIS officer to perform his/her duties, in terms of funding, human resources, and equipment. The duties of EMIS officers include the following:

- i. Design and planning of school surveys and censuses in accordance with prescribed standards.
- ii. Management of data capturing processes, both manual and automated.
- iii. Data analysis, manipulation and dissemination.
- iv. Assessment of data accuracy and quality.
- v. Compilation of statistical reports, with statistical and qualitative analysis.
- vi. Archiving of key historical data in accordance with national standards.
- vii. Systems analysis, including the analysis of the effectiveness and standards compliance of management systems.

National EMIS officers and the Statistician-General

35. Section 14 of the Statistics Act, 1999 (Act No.6 of 1999) requires the Statistician-General to ensure the maintenance of national standards in official statistical

collections, and to co-ordinate statistical collections. The EMIS officer in the Department of Education must actively support the Statistician-General in this obligation.

EMIS officer as designator of official statistics

36. Only data and statistics formally certified as a true record by the head of a provincial education department or Director-General of the Department of Education or an EMIS officer, may be regarded as official. In determining whether data or statistics can be certified as a true record, the EMIS officer must ensure that a reasonable level of analysis and verification has occurred. The EMIS officer must be informed by the purpose for which the data or statistics will be used when determining whether the data or statistics can be regarded as a true record. The EMIS officer must be guided by generally accepted practice, and general government standards, in particular those issued by the Statistician-General in terms of the Statistics Act, 1999 (Act No. 6 of 1999). Where problems or possible problems exist in official data or statistics, the EMIS officer must make this clearly known through adequate explanatory notes. Moreover, the EMIS officer must clearly state the source of any data or statistics that have been certified as official. Reasonable consistency between different releases of official data and statistics must be maintained.

Informal exchange of data and statistics

Section 36 above should not preclude departmental officials from exchanging data and statistics informally where there is no need for the data or statistics to be declared a true record. This uncertified data has to be referred to as estimates. However, only data and statistics that have been certified a true record may be used in final reports and in final decisions.

The process of providing data and statistics

38. The EMIS officer in the national Department of Education must clearly specify what data and statistics are required from provincial departments on a regular basis. Specifications must be sufficiently detailed to minimise ambiguities and misunderstandings, and must be stated in terms of national standards governing definitions and formats. Dates of submission, determined after consultation between the national and provincial departments, must also be specified. Only the provincial EMIS officer, or the provincial head of the education department, may officially hand over the requested data or statistics to the national EMIS officer. The provincial EMIS officer must state formally any conditions regarding the information. Informal exchanges of data and statistics between the provincial and national departments may occur, but for preliminary analysis and reporting only, as prescribed in section 37 above.

Special requests for statistics

39. The EMIS officer in the national Department of Education may make special requests for additional data and statistics, where these are not covered in the regular cycles of submissions. In making special requests, the national EMIS officer must

supply clear specifications for the request, and timeframes that are reasonable relative to the nature of the request. The national EMIS officer will specify the reason for the special request. Only the provincial EMIS officer, or the provincial head of the education department, may officially hand over the requested data or statistics to the national EMIS officers. The provincial EMIS officer must state formally any conditions regarding the information.

Collaboration between EMIS officers for development purposes

40. The provincial and national EMIS officers must work together to improve the efficiency and value of statistical collections.

DUTY OF EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS TO DEVELOP EDUCATION INFORMATION SYSTEMS

EMIS officers' responsibilities in terms of systems development

41. Both the provincial and the national EMIS officers must actively contribute to the development of education information systems, through the co-ordination of relevant line functions, development work within departments, and promoting the compliance of systems with national standards.

Efficient utilisation of state resources

In recognition of the fact that information systems are costly to develop, and the fact that needs across provinces and institutions are often similar, the EMIS officer in the Department of Education must encourage national systems development projects, in response to national, provincial and institutional needs, to avoid duplication and the inefficient use of state resources. S/he thus has to undertake cost-benefit analyses which will inform the development of systems.

Evaluation of privately developed SEMIS

To facilitate the acquisition of appropriate information systems by institutions, the relevant EMIS officers in the Department of education must assist in the evaluation and acquisition, by institutions, of appropriate systems, which conform to national standards. The EMIS officer may also collaborate with the South African Bureau of Standards, in establishing a system of certification indicating compliance with national standards.

DUTY OF INSTITUTIONS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION

44. As stated in section 13 above, it is the duty of education institutions to provide information to the education departments. Sections 45 to 48 below elaborate on this duty of institutions.

Supplying information to private organisations

45. Where the provision of information by an institution involves an activity such as a survey within the institution, the school may only provide the information if the activity does not obstruct the educational process of the institution in any way, and if it does not infringe on the rights of learners, students, parents or employees. If there is any room for doubt in this regard, the head of the institution must seek advice from the relevant provincial education department.

Completion of education census forms

46. The education departments administer a number of regular education surveys. It is the duty of all heads of institutions to complete education survey forms to the best of their ability, in the knowledge that the deliberate distortion of information constitutes fraud. Where an education census requests details with regard to the race, gender or disability status of persons, for the purposes of tracking redress of apartheid inequalities, it is the duty of heads of institutions to comply with the request. In the case of schools, both public and independent, all provincial education departments must administer an Annual Survey of Schools according to the specifications of the national Department of Education.

Adequate definitions of terms in education census forms

47. In order to facilitate the collection of accurate and comparable information from institutions, the departments of education must ensure that all data collection tools include clear and precise definitions of terms used, to prevent ambiguities and misinterpretations. These definitions must conform to national standards in this regard.

Feedback on analysed information to respondents

48. The departments of education must take active steps to supply institutions with relevant statistical and analytical results of education censuses and other data collection surveys, which these institutions participated in. This will make participation in education censuses more meaningful to institutions, and will encourage future participation.

DUTY OF PARENTS AND LEARNERS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION

49. Parents of learners in schools have a duty to provide information on both learners and parents to the school where this information is required for the normal running of the school. This information would include, for example, name, date of birth, home address, home language and basic health information, though not necessarily HIV/AIDS status. There is no duty on parents to provide information on income or wealth status, unless parents wish to apply for full or partial exemption from the payment of school fees, in terms of section 39(4) of the South African Schools' Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996).

POWERS TO SET STANDARDS

50. In terms of section 3(4)(a) of the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act No. 27 of 1996), the Minister has the power to determine the standards referred to in section 52 below insofar as they affect the education departments and institutions comprising the South African education system.

Consideration of the broader information systems environment

51. Processes used to arrive at information standards must reflect the complexity of the information systems environment itself, and of a system of provincial departments and institutions with varying degrees of autonomy. Processes should strike a balance between the urgent need for standards to be generated, on the one hand, and the constitutional rights of departments and institutions and the need for consultation, on the other. Moreover, processes should be sensitive to the reality that some provincial departments and institutions have, largely for historical reasons, not been in a position to invest as much in information systems as others. In this regard, it must be ensured that processes empower the historically disadvantaged, whilst at the same time valuable lessons gained from systems where considerable investment has taken place, are made to benefit the country as a whole.

Types of standards

52. For the purposes of this policy, different types of standards can be identified. There are standards governing:

- i. **Descriptors and definitions of education terms.** Terminology and classifications used in the administration and planning of the education sector needs to be uniform across the country. This terminology should be captured in a national education dictionary, which should also be a point of departure for specifying the inter-relationships between terms that systems designers require, as well as the data field names that would correspond to particular terms.
- ii. **Statistical tables.** Key statistical tables produced by the education departments, for instance in annual statistical reports, must be standardised for national planning to be possible. Standards in this regard should consider and incorporate official and emerging education indicators for South Africa and the United Nations Organisation. In the case of SEMIS, it is necessary for each product to produce a minimum set of standardised school tables reflecting the data of the school.
- iii. **Information publications.** In the interests of user-friendliness, and comprehensiveness, it is important for certain information publications to be standardised across all provinces, for instance lists of institutions made available to the public.
- iv. **Unique identifiers.** Identifiers that are unique at the national level are required for a range of people and items, for example learners, educators, whether publicly or privately employed, curriculum offerings and institutions. Standards governing the generation of such unique identifiers are required.
- v. **Data file layout.** Where different systems exist that must be integrated, the standardisation of data files is essential.

- vi. **Data coding.** Codes used to refer to attributes must be standardised for data integration to be possible.
- vii. **Data quality.** The processes of data capturing and cleaning by education departments must be governed by minimum quality standards in order to ensure that data accuracy is of an acceptable level.
- viii. **Platforms of systems.** Minimum standards must be set for hardware and software insofar as this is required for integration of systems and transfer of data.
- ix. **Performance of systems.** Certain aspects of the performance of systems should be standardised, in particular aspects relating to efficiency, timeliness, quality of data, the protection of privacy and the backing up of data.
- x. **Communication between systems.** Network protocols must be standardised for the effective transfer of data between systems to be possible.
- xi. **Data archiving.** Minimum standards for the archiving of historical data in education departments and institutions are required to ensure that individual histories, and the history of the system as a whole are available in the future.

Information Standards Sub-Committee

Functions of the sub-committee

53. The Director-General will establish and appoint members to a sub-committee of the Heads of Education Departments' Committee (HEDCOM) called the Information Standards Sub-Committee to advise him or her in the information standards generation process. The functions of this committee will be to:
- i. Conduct research into the area of education information systems standards.
 - ii. Co-ordinate consultation on standards between key role players.
 - iii. Receive and evaluate written inputs from role players, including members of the public and IT firms.
 - iv. Advise the Director-General on standards to be made official policy, after careful consideration of the options.
 - v. Be the custodians of the definitive and most recent set of approved information standards for the education system.
 - vi. Make standards widely known and available.

Composition of the sub-committee

54. The Information Standards Sub-Committee will consist of between 10 and 15 permanent members appointed by the Director-General and will include representation from:
- i. The national Department of Education
 - ii. The provincial departments of education

- iii. Statistics South Africa
- iv. The Department of Public Service and Administration
- v. SITA
- vi. The Department of Communications
- vii. The Information Technology industry
- viii Educational statutory bodies

The Director-General may appoint departmental Education Information Officers described in sections 29 and 30 to represent the national Department of Education and provincial education departments. Representation from the provincial education departments will be collective in nature, and individual members of the Information Standards Sub-Committee from provincial departments will represent provincial interests as a whole and not the interests of their respective individual provincial departments. Representation from the Information Technology industry shall not represent the interests of any particular firm, but the industry as a whole. It is not the function of the Information Standards Sub-Committee to be a fully representative body with decision-making power. It is instead a specialist advisory body that makes recommendations to the Director-General and HEDCOM. Appointment to the Information Standards Sub-Committee should be considered in this context.

Procedures for the sub-committee

55. The Director-General must consult with the role player groups listed in section 53 above in deciding the appointments to be made to the Information Standards Sub-Committee. The Director-General must appoint a chairperson of the Information Standards Sub-Committee. The chairperson shall determine frequency of meetings and meeting protocols in consultation with the Director-General. Only the Director-General may terminate membership of the Information Standards Sub-Committee.

Co-option of members to the sub-committee

56. The Information Standards Sub-Committee may co-opt members for limited periods in order to obtain certain expertise, for instance expertise specific to a particular education sector, like Adult Basic Education and Training.

Process for generating information standards

57. The research conducted or commissioned by the Information Standards Sub-Committee must apply international best practice, local education priorities and trends in the information technology industry to influence the standards generating process. Thorough and ongoing analysis of systems and censuses not directly controlled by the education departments but that may influence the development of education information systems must take place.

Consultation and dissemination of information by the sub-committee

58. Regular and adequate consultation must occur between members of the Information Standards Sub-Committee, but also between the Information Standards

Sub-Committee and other role players. Considering that provincial representation is general and not done through the membership of representatives from all the provinces at once, the Information Standards Sub-Committee must update provincial departments in writing on work in progress once a month, or whenever there are new developments. Moreover, regular updates of ongoing work must be submitted to HEDCOM.

The sub-committee and role players in general

59. The Information Standards Sub-Committee must attempt to make its work known to all potential role players, and must ensure that it is easy for role players to submit recommendations regarding information standards. The Sub-Committee must respond to every submission received within two months of submission.

Use of industry conventions

60. The standards themselves generated by the Information Standards Sub-Committee must be understandable, yet should adhere to conventions that are familiar to actors in the systems development industry, considering that these actors will constitute important beneficiaries of the standards documentation.

Format of the standards documentation

61. The standards generated must be documented in a format that makes the process of periodical revisions clear and manageable. The format must, for example, make it clear when previously existing standards have been withdrawn or modified.

Final approval

62. When the Minister is satisfied that new standards have been generated and serve the interests of the education system, he or she must officially approve the standards concerned. The approval will be in the form of a Government Notice referring to the latest amended collection of all standards generated in terms of this policy.

Dissemination of approved information standards

63. The Information Standards Sub-Committee must ensure that the standards documentation becomes as widely accessible as is necessary. Copies of the documentation should be available on a website.

APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

	<i>National Department of Education</i>	<i>Provincial departments of education</i>	<i>Institutions</i>
Lists with basic institution information for parents, learners and students.	✓*	✓	✓ (subject to sufficient resources)
Operational data on institutions, for instance pass rates and poverty data, for parents.		✓	✓
Standard databases for researchers	✓*	✓	
Contact details of institutions for use by third parties	✓*	✓	
Official annual statistical reports for the public in general.	✓*	✓	

* If only provincial information is needed, then the requester is encouraged to contact the relevant provincial department of education, even if the national Department of Education also keeps the information.

Diagrammatic Representation

The following pages provide two diagrams to assist in understanding the policy.

DIAGRAM 1: ROLE PLAYERS AND PART II OF THE POLICY

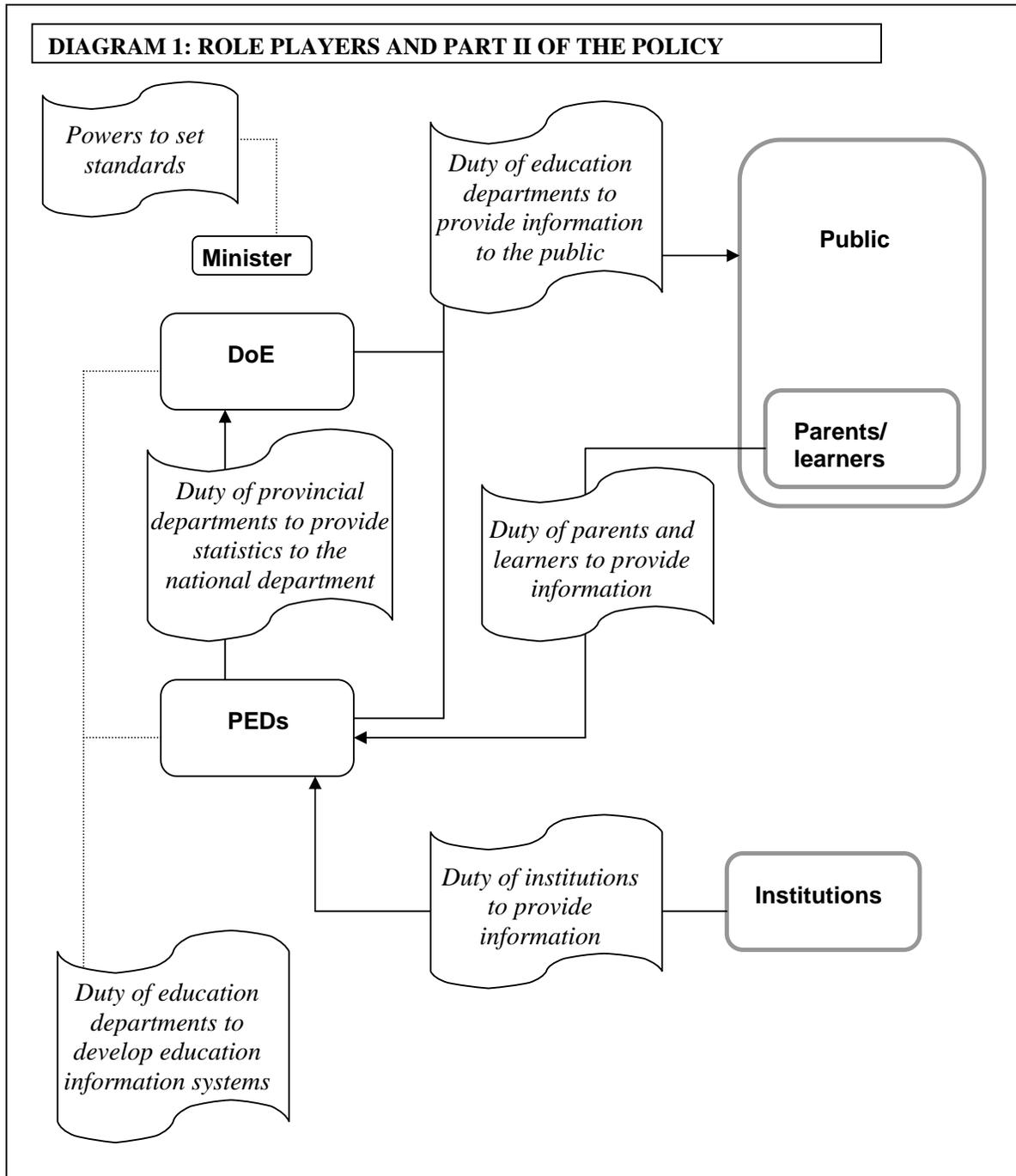


DIAGRAM 2: DECISION-MAKING LANDSCAPE SUGGESTED BY THE POLICY

