



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUBJECT COMMITTEES

AND

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

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ACRONYMS

MPC	Ministerial Project Committee
HEDCOM	Heads of Department Committee
CEM	Council of Education Ministers
TDCM -HEDCOM	Subcommittee for Teacher Development and Curriculum Management.
NICPD	National Institute for Curriculum and Professional Development
CPTD	Continuing Teacher Professional Development
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
ISPFTED	Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development
DTDC	District Teacher Development Centres
PLC	Professional Learning Communities
ANA	Annual National Assessments
NSC	National Senior Certificate

1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Effective curriculum delivery is a principal indicator of quality basic education and teachers are the vehicles through which the curriculum is delivered. There is no uniform mechanism for subject teachers and other subject specialists to contribute to the continuous process of curriculum development and for teachers to participate collaboratively in professional development. This includes;

- discussion and dissemination of reports emanating from publications of research, trends and best practices in the field of curriculum development, to strengthen the implementation of the curriculum;
- analysis of the state of the subjects nationally, guiding curriculum implementation, and providing a platform for the “unfinished debates” in some subjects, and
- encouraging teachers to collaborate through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to improve their effectiveness in the classroom, leading to improved learner outcomes.

2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The establishment of Subject Committees can become the instruments for driving the implementation of the curriculum, analyzing processes, identifying challenges and presenting recommendations. Supporting and promoting Professional Learning Communities(PLCs) will assist in providing the setting and necessary support to groups of classroom teachers, school managers and subject advisors to participate collectively in determining their own developmental trajectories, and to develop and disseminate activities that will drive their professional development.

In 2010, the Ministerial Project Committee (MPC) for the Curriculum, Assessment and Policy Statement recommended the establishment of Subject Committees. The MPC was of the view that only Subject Committees for Languages, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Physical Sciences, Social Sciences, History, Geography and Life Orientation should be established. However, the Heads of Education Departments Committee (HEDCOM) meeting of April 2015, supported a decision that all 29 FET and 8 GET subjects should be catered for.

In pursuit of this objective, the Department has initiated a process of providing platforms for effective debates within the subjects (including Early Childhood Development/Foundation Phase), as well as an efficient mechanism for continuous, coherent curriculum review and delivery by establishing Subject Committees at national, provincial and district levels, and PLCs at school levels.

In 2011, the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs A Motshekga and the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr B. Nzimande launched the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development (ISPFTED) to strengthen the progress and address the challenges in improving teacher quality.

One of the provisions in the ISPFTED is the establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to strengthen teacher professionalism to promote collective participation in professional activities for professional development.

According to the ISPFTED, the key players in the establishment of PLCs will be the PEDs, districts, teacher organizations, subject-based professional teacher associations and the teachers themselves. The role of the DBE will be primarily through the National Institute for Curriculum and Professional Development (NICPD), which “will support the work of PLCs by developing activities and materials that can help stimulate their work”.

The Subject Committees are strong vehicles to promote discussion and inputs by teachers and specialists on *curriculum policy and development*; the subject committee structures are well-defined and regulated at national, provincial and district levels and they are weighted towards *curriculum policy and development* and membership is already experienced in the field. The PLCs are weighted towards *teacher professional development*.

PLCs refer to a shared vision on professional development in which teachers, school leaders and policy maker's work together in order to change professional practice in ways that improve the learning, engagement and well-being of every South African learner.

Based on the descriptions above, there are clear overlaps but also differences of emphasis in the functions of the Subject Committees and PLCS. The Subject Committees, as envisaged, are focused on *advising on curriculum matters*; they are departmentally driven, and rely on high levels of expertise mainly from outside of the classroom. PLCs, as envisaged in the ISPFTED, are focused more on *teacher level participation for own development* and they have participants who are in their earlier stages of professional development.

In order to have coherence and co-ordination between the subject committees and PLCS, the following is proposed:

The subject committees provided for at National, Provincial and District/Cluster level should draw on experienced and skilled teachers and promote PLCs.

The PLCs are primarily targeted at school level; they should provide delegates/members for the district and cluster level subject committees and development opportunities to improve classroom and school practice.

This document, therefore, provides the background and context, terms of reference, composition, structure and meeting guidelines for Subject Committees and PLCs. Further guidelines on PLCs will be provided as per identified needs.

3 TERMS OF REFERENCE

SUBJECT COMMITTEES:

- Subject Committees are advisory structures that will make recommendations to HEDCOM Sub-committee for Teacher Development and Curriculum Management (TDCM), Heads of Education Committee (HEDCOM)

and Council of Education Ministers (CEM) for decision-making. Each Subject Committee will be managed at three levels, namely;

- National – DBE Curriculum and Teacher Development Branches
- Provincial - Provincial Curriculum and Teacher Development sections
- District/school clusters – District Offices

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMITTEES:

PLCs refer to a shared vision on professional development in which teachers, school leaders and policy maker's work together in order to change professional practice in ways that improve the learning, engagement and well-being of every South African learner.

NATIONAL LEVEL

At a national level, the Subject Committees will:

- Serve as the instrument for recommendations on curriculum management, review and change;
- Provide ongoing curriculum expertise, guidance and leadership;
- Provide a forum for recommendations on the review of national strategies as well as national and international analyses of assessments;
- Strengthen areas of co-operation and articulation in the subject offerings in the GET and FET Phases.
- Monitor developments in the subject area, focusing on local and international best practices;
- Invite expert contributors and key subject stakeholders to the discussions on an ad hoc basis.
- Ensure a common vision for the subject and its implementation and to ensure that each province works toward the same objectives for the subject and to ensure the desired outcomes of the national examinations;
- Ensure that the principles of inclusion find expression in all aspects of curriculum implementation and assessment;
- Oversee the establishment of provincial Subject Committees and promote Professional Learning Communities.

- National Subject Associations will be invited on an ad-hoc basis to make inputs to the national subject committees

PROVINCIAL LEVEL

Provincial Subject Committees:

Provincial departments of education will:

- Establish Subject Committees in line with those established at national level, taking into account regional differences in provincial organisational structures.
- Monitor implementation of the specific subjects at provincial level and to record and convey inputs from District Subject Committees and the respective PLCs
- Inform and make recommendations to the National Subject Committee on matters pertaining to teaching praxis and curriculum development.
- Facilitate two-way communication; District Subject Committees must communicate responses from the provincial structures back to the school clusters and PLCs, and vice-versa.
- Provide quarterly progress reports of implementation of the subject to the national Subject Committee;
- Encourage existing Subject Associations to involve teachers in their own and collaborative professional development, and promote new PLCs.
- Invite Subject Associations, specialized NGOs & stakeholder groups on an ad-hoc basis to make inputs to the provincial subject committees

District/Cluster Subject Committee:

The District/ Cluster Subject Committee will:

- Highlight issues for tabling and discussion in the Provincial and National Subject Committee meetings;

- Establish district/cluster subject committees and encourage district and school level PLCs. These subject committees may be established at district cluster level, as appropriate, to monitor implementation of the specific subjects and to record and convey inputs from subject teachers. The cluster level may be constituted in the form of a circuit or a cluster of schools;
- Facilitate two-way communication: District Subject Committees must communicate responses from the provincial structures back to the circuit/school clusters and vice-versa
- Provide quarterly reports regarding implementation of the subject to the provincial Subject Committee;
- Inform the provincial Subject Committee on matters pertaining to practice and curriculum development;
- Promote the establishment of PLCS and draw members from PLCs in schools.
- Utilize District Teacher Development Centres (DTDCs) as the local central meeting venue for the PLCs.
- Support school-based PLCs with resources and expertise on various activities such as video analysis, development of teaching resources and the use of ICT.
- Highlight issues for discussion at provincial and national levels.
- Provide annual progress reports of implementation of PLCs to the provincial level.
- Develop synergies between PLCs and district subject committees

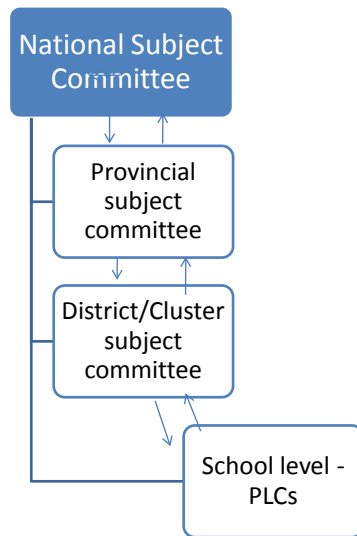
SCHOOL LEVEL:

- The key players in the establishment of PLCs will be the provinces, districts, teacher organisations, subject-based organisations and, not least, **the teachers themselves** The PLCs are the main instruments for teacher participation and development.

- Schools are encouraged to set up PLCs based on subject, phase and professional development related issues in order to have collaborative programmes to improve teacher and learner performance.
- PLCs can assist teachers to integrate their own professional knowledge with the latest research-based knowledge about content and practice.
- PLCs will allow groups of teachers to engage in a variety of activities including:
 - Developing expertise in the analysis of evidence-based assessments such as the results of the Annual National Assessments (ANA), National Senior Certificate (NSC) results, and others, in order to determine their own development trajectories.
 - Curriculum orientation activities, for example activities to develop understanding of, and ability to use, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS).
 - Learning how to interpret and use curriculum support materials such as the workbooks currently being developed and distributed to teachers and schools by the DBE.
 - Working together to learn from video records of practice and other learning materials.
 - Teachers will earn PD points for participation in and contributions made to PLCs and Subject Committees.

A diagrammatic sketch of the envisaged levels and relationships for Subject Committees and PLCs is presented below:

Structure and relationship between Subject Committees and PLCs (Participation and Communication flow)



4. COMPOSITION OF THE SUBJECT COMMITTEES AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMITTEES

At national level, functioning as a HEDCOM sub-committee working group, each subject committee is to be chaired by a national co-ordinator and will be comprised of the following:

Standing members:

- DBE official (Chair)
- DBE subject specialists
- Provincial officials x 2 (One each for FET & GET as appropriate for the phase and subject), both of whom must serve on the executive of their respective Provincial Subject Committees.
- Teacher Unions as per TDCM HEDCOM Sub-Committee representation
- Inclusive Education Rep

Rotating members: (for term of contract only)

- National Moderators
- National Examiners

Invited Stakeholders

- Ad hoc, co-opted/invited members such as Subject Associations based NGOs, HEIs.

At provincial level, the nature and composition of the provincial subject committees will be determined by the organizational structure and needs of provinces. Each subject committee is to be chaired by a provincial co-ordinator and comprised of the following:

- PED official (Chairperson)
- District officials as appropriate for the phase and subject and the organizational structure of the PED. They should be members of the District level committees.
- Teacher union representatives
- HEIs in the province – subject specialisation
- Ad hoc, co-opted/invited members such as Subject Associations, Subject based NGOs, HEIs.
- Provincial level PLCs will be invited on an ad-hoc basis to make inputs to provincial level Subject Committees.

At district level, each subject committee is to be chaired by a district co-ordinator (as per the subject groupings), nominated by the District Directors. The chair must be at the highest rank available and the committee to be comprised as follows:

- District official (Chair)
- Phase Co-ordinator, Subject Advisors, First Education Specialists (and other officials of equivalent responsibility level) are expected to be members of their respective Subject Committees as appropriate for the phase and subject and the organizational structure of the district office. They should be members of the District level committees.

- Lead teachers (FET & GET) from school based PLCs
- Teacher Union representatives
- Ad hoc, co-opted/invited members such as Subject Associations, Subject based NGOs, HEIs
- PLCs may be invited on an ad-hoc basis to make inputs to district level Subject Committees.

At circuit cluster level, where the cluster is formed according to the circuit structure, the appropriate level official or subject head from a school must chair the committee, and comprised of the following:

- Phase Co-ordinators, Subject Advisors, First Education Specialists (and other officials of equivalent responsibility level) are expected to be members of their respective Subject Committees as appropriate for the phase and subject and the organizational structure of the circuit. They should be members of the School level PLCs.
- Lead teachers (FET & GET) from school based PLCs
- Teacher Union representatives
- Ad hoc, co-opted/invited members such as Subject Associations, Subject based NGOs, HEIs
- PLCs may be invited on an ad-hoc basis to make inputs to circuit /district level Subject Committees.

At school level, PLCs/Subject Committees can be comprised as follows:

- Teachers in the respective subject, phase, grade or area of specialization.
- Ad hoc, co-opted/invited members such as Subject Associations, NGOs, HEIs, etc.
- School level PLCs may be invited on an ad-hoc basis to make inputs to district/cluster level Subject Committees.

5 STRUCTURE OF SUBJECT/PHASE COMMITTEES

The subjects and languages have been clustered according to subject fields to form manageable groups. The Subject/Phase clusters are an interim measure and will at some point be reviewed and become stand-alone Subject/ Phase Committees as the system matures and more funding is allocated. Due consideration will be given to areas of priority as this process unfolds.

SUBJECT CLUSTER	SUBJECTS/ CURRICULUM¹ REPRESENTED
Foundation Phase/ ECD	Home Language
	First Additional Language
	Mathematics
	Life Skills
Mathematics	Mathematics
	Mathematical Literacy
Computer Studies	Computer Applications Technology
	Information Technology
Agriculture	Agricultural Sciences
	Agricultural Management Practices
	Agricultural Technology
Sciences	Life Sciences
	Natural Sciences
	Physical Sciences
Economic and Management Sciences	Accounting
	Business Studies
	Economics
	Economic and Management Sciences
Social Sciences	Geography

¹The term “curriculum” applies mainly to areas of specialization where subjects do not apply, namely as in the case of ECD (0-4 years)

	History
	Social Sciences
	Life Orientation
	Religion Studies
Services	Consumer Studies
	Hospitality Studies
	Tourism
Arts	Creative Arts
	Dance Studies
	Design
	Dramatic Arts
	Music
	Visual Arts
Technical / Technology	Civil Technology
	Mechanical Technology
	Electrical Technology
	Engineering Graphics and Design
	Technology (GET)
LANGUAGES	
Languages Group 1	IsiZulu
	IsiXhosa
	SiSwati
	IsiNdebele
Languages Group 2	Setswana
	Sesotho
Languages Group 3	Sepedi
Languages Group 4	Xitsonga
	Tshivenda
Languages Group 5	English
	Afrikaans

6 SUBJECT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

National Meetings

Meetings will be held centrally at DBE and should be scheduled for one day (09:00-15:00).

Provincial, District and Circuit Meetings.

Provincial, District and Cluster Meetings will be held at suitable venues and at a convenient time in the province, district and circuit respectively.

Frequency of Meetings

National meetings will be held twice a year. Provincial /District/Cluster meetings will be decided at those levels.

6.1 AGENDA FOR NATIONAL SUBJECT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Subject Committee meetings should be driven by the following items:

- Recommendations for Policy review and strengthening
- 'Early Warning' identification of policy/practice gaps with pre-emptive proposals for immediate, intra-year remediation;
- Support for Curriculum Implementation and Assessment
- Where weak links exist, provide implementable support solutions to strengthen curriculum delivery
- Research on curriculum policy and implementation

6.2 AGENDA FOR PROVINCIAL, DISTRICT AND CIRCUIT SUBJECT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The agenda for provincial, district and circuit meetings will flow from the national agenda as well as from the needs of provinces, districts and circuits.

7. REPORTING

- The role of the subject committees in respect to reporting must be clearly understood. Each level of Subject Committees report to the next level e.g. the

School Subject Committee will make recommendations to the District Subject Committee. The **District Subject Committee** will make recommendations to the **Provincial Subject Committee**. The **Provincial Subject Committee** will make recommendations to the **National Subject Committee** and the **National Subject Committee** will make recommendations to the **Teacher Development and Curriculum Management Committee** for taking forward to **HEDCOM and CEM**.

- Consequently the meeting schedules must be determined by all levels such that reporting to the next respective level is synchronized with the schedule of meetings of the next level of structures. The collated inputs must reach the respective National Department Subject Committee Chairpersons timeously.

9. CONCLUSION

- The establishment of Subject Committees and PLCs would make provision for a uniform mechanism for curriculum review and development, and for teacher driven professional development; they will provide a formal, seamless conduit between classroom practitioners and national curriculum managers.
- By operating at four distinct levels within the system, communities of practitioners will be capacitated to contribute to their professional fields of interest. Inputs escalating through to the National Committees enable DBE to fulfill its curriculum leadership role and create opportunities for all levels of the system to make inputs on curriculum matters and promote professional development.