

# **APPENDIX A.2**

## **MULTI-GRADE SECTOR PLAN**



**basic education**

Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

# **Multi-Grade Strategy and Basic Education Sector Plan**

**Strengthening the Provision of Quality Teaching and Learning in Multi-grade Schools**

March 2015

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## ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

**ANA** – the Annual National Assessments;

**“Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement Grades R – 12 (January 2012)”** – the policy documents stipulating the aim, scope, content and assessment for each subject listed in the *National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12*;

**EFA** – Education for All;

**FET** – Further Education and Training – means a band covering Grades 10-12;

**GET** – General Education and Training – means a band covering Grades R-9;

**ICT** – Information and Communication Technology;

**LTSM** – Learning and Teaching Support Material;

**MDGs** - Millennium Development Goals;

**Mono-grade class** – a classroom with a single teacher in which all the learners are of the same grade;

**Multi-grade class** – a classroom in which learners of more than one grade are taught by a single teacher;

**Multi-grade school** – a school in which there are some classes in which learners of more than one grade are taught by a single teacher.

## Executive Summary

In recent years, numerous studies have identified a number of challenges faced by rural and farm schools which practise multi-grade teaching. Two reports, namely the Emerging Voices report of the Nelson Mandela Foundation<sup>1</sup> and the Report of the Ministerial Committee on Rural Education<sup>2</sup> both highlighted the complexities and challenges faced by rural and farm schools.

The Action Plan to 2014 - *Towards the realisation of Schooling 2025*<sup>3</sup>, reiterates that multi-grade schools are prevalent in our education system and that multi-grade schools exist in all the provinces. The Action Plan also indicates that 13% of learners find themselves in multi-grade schools. According to the Plan, teachers who do multi-grade teaching need special guidance on the curriculum and in the in-service training they receive.

The research emphasized the importance of improving the quality of education in the multi-grade schools, focusing on:

- Improving the quality of teaching and learning in multi-grade schools;
- Attracting and retaining learners and teachers at rural and farm schools;
- Improving infrastructure at rural and farm schools; and
- Building effective school governance and management of rural and farm schools.

The purpose of this Multi-grade Strategy and Basic Education Sector Plan is to:

- Highlight the plight of multi-grade schools in South Africa;
- Make teachers and other stakeholders in education aware that multi-grade teaching is neither a deficit nor an inferior model for teaching and learning and that, with adequate support, it can help South Africa to achieve the Education For All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);
- Highlight the challenges facing multi-grade teaching and schooling;
- Provide support for the multi-grade school teachers;
- Put forward strategies to strengthen and support multi-grade teaching, learning and assessment in multi-grade schools;

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<sup>1</sup> Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF). 2005. *Emerging Voices: A Report on Education in South African Rural Communities*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Ministerial Committee on Rural Education 2005. *A new vision for rural schooling*. Department of Education, Republic of South Africa.

<sup>3</sup> The Action Plan to 2014: *Towards the realisation of Schooling 2025*. Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa.

- Enhance the professional skills of multi-grade school teachers and the development of their abilities to design didactic plans according to the needs of the specific school environment;
- Encourage teachers to make use of ICT to mediate teaching and learning in their classes; and
- Share knowledge, innovative ideas and examples of good practice on how teachers have coped with the unique challenges of the multi-grade school environment.

The Multi-grade Strategy and Basic Education Sector Plan will provide a common direction for all parties in order to support multi-grade teaching, learning and assessment in multi-grade schools. It maps out key activities in support of multi-grade schools and will also co-ordinate all activities targeting multi-grade schools across the system. The Multi-grade Strategy and Basic Education Sector Plan will strengthen reporting on progress on all activities that are implemented at provincial level in support of multi-grade schools.

The core business of the Department of Basic Education is to provide access to quality education. Multi-grade education should be effectively supported and should be viewed as an avenue that provides learners in rural areas with the opportunities to access quality formal schooling and basic education.

## **Recommendations**

The following are the recommendations for strengthening support multi-grade schools:

- Concerted efforts amongst all stakeholders, particularly the Department of Basic Education and the Provincial Education Departments, are needed to raise the status of multi-grade teaching and learning.
- Multi-grade teachers need to be aware of the extent to which multi-grade teaching is used internationally, and the evidence that it can be as effective as mono-grade teaching.
- Differentiation of the curriculum and learning materials for multi-grade classes by national curriculum developers is of critical importance if the curriculum is to be mediated effectively and efficiently.
- Further teacher education and continuing development are of utmost importance to ensure that multi-grade teachers are equipped with the requisite skills and knowledge essential for them to manage multi-grade classes and schools.

## 1. Introduction

Multi-grade teaching refers to the teaching of learners of different grades in the same classroom setting. It is not unique to South Africa and is prevalent both in developed and developing countries (Little, 1995)<sup>4</sup>. In many African countries multi-grade teaching is seen as a key pedagogic tool that can assist teachers in the context of teacher shortages, budget constraints and other difficult situations. According to the Centre for Multi-grade Education, multi-grade teaching is used in approximately 7000 South African schools. Most of these schools are located in rural areas (Baseline Study, Centre for Multi-Grade Education 2009).

In many countries multi-grade teaching has been introduced in schools which are mostly in rural and sparsely populated areas that also have a difficult terrain. This has also been the case in South Africa. The main reasons cited for the introduction of multi-grade teaching include:

- (i) Increasing access to education provision to disadvantaged areas;
- (ii) Increasing access to learning in understaffed schools;
- (iii) Maximising the use of available teachers and classroom space; and
- (iv) Ensuring the cost effective use of available resources.

The provision of education in multi-grade schools is beset by a number of challenges which impacts negatively on the provision of quality teaching and learning in those schools. Teachers, for instance, that are situated in these schools have been trained in mono-grade teaching approaches. Perceptions of many teachers regarding multi-grade teaching in South Africa are that it is demanding and more complex than mono-grade teaching. Some of the challenges include:

- A lack of teacher training on multi-grade teaching and hence a reliance on experiential learning;
- Schools that are poorly resourced;
- A lack of curriculum adaptation;
- Planning requirements that are the same as for mono-grade classes;
- Limited exposure to suitable teaching strategies;
- An absence of specific support for multi-grade teachers;
- A low learner population in classes or overcrowded classes in certain instances;
- A low level of learner performance in certain instances;
- Inadequate infrastructure; and

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<sup>4</sup> Little, A. 1995. Multi-grade teaching: a review of practice and research. *Serial No. 12, Overseas Development Administration, London.*

- An inadequate number of teachers, especially in the “one teacher” schools.

Therefore to improve the quality of education in these schools, plans to support multi-grade schools should go beyond the delivery of the curriculum to ensure that teachers are able to deliver and mediate the curriculum to the best of their knowledge in order to enhance teaching and learning in those schools.

## 2. Background

Many learners on farms and in rural areas in South Africa access basic education through schools that practise multi-grade teaching. Multi-grade schools are widely spread throughout the country. These schools are mostly found in rural areas where the infrastructure is often not well developed and where facilities are very limited and influenced by poverty. These schools are far from towns and villages, in remote rural areas or on farms. In certain instances these schools are located on private property owned by farmers or churches. According to the Report on the 2014 Annual Survey for Ordinary Schools<sup>5</sup> there are approximately 5 153 public schools with multi-grade classes in the system as indicated in the table below.

	PROVINCE	PRIMARY SCHOOLS	COMBINED SCHOOLS	SECONDARY SCHOOLS	TOTAL NUMBER OF SCHOOLS
1	Eastern Cape	1008	758	45	1811
2	Free State	282	30	4	316
3	Gauteng	33	1	0	34
4	KwaZulu-Natal	877	176	80	1133
5	Limpopo	591	50	35	676
6	Mpumalanga	245	57	23	325
7	Northern Cape	138	10	1	139
8	North West	318	21	37	376
9	Western Cape	303	39	1	343
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>3795</b>	<b>1142</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>5153</b>

Source: Annual School Survey 2014 (Number of ordinary schools having multigrade classes, by province)

The Action Plan to 2014 - *Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025*, has identified a number of weaknesses within the system that need to be tackled in order to ensure the provision of quality education in the system. This Plan reiterates that multi-grade schools are prevalent in our education system and that

<sup>5</sup> Annual Survey of Ordinary Schools 2014. Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa.



multi-grade schools exist in all the provinces. The Action Plan also indicates that of all learners in primary schools, 13% find themselves in schools where multi-grade teaching takes place in one or more grades and that very little guidance has been given to teachers of multi-grade classes, despite the fact that such classes are a widespread phenomenon. According to the Plan, teachers who do multi-grade teaching need special guidance with the curriculum and the in-service training they receive.

The 27 national goals that lie at the heart of the Action Plan to 2014, outline all the output goals that should be at the centre of the interventions that are aimed at improving the quality of education in those schools.

### **3. Problem Statement**

Despite the introduction of new policies and programmes in various sectors of the education system since 1994, the level of teaching and learning is still adversely affected in multi-grade schools. The features of education in multi-grade schools include poverty and under-development and these must be addressed through holistic long-term and sustained interventions. Therefore a Multi-grade Strategy and Basic Education Sector Plan to improve schooling in multi-grade schools needs to go beyond “curriculum delivery”.

#### **a) Teaching and Learning**

Contrasting features of multi-grade schools are over-crowded classrooms and schools with low learner enrolment. In the case of low learner enrolment, schools are unable to provide adequate curriculum choices while in over-crowded classrooms teachers struggle to attend to individual needs. Often teachers in multi-grade schools with a limited staff establishment are required to teach classes that extend beyond two grades and sometimes across phases.

The teachers who teach in these schools also face a unique challenge in the sense that most of them have only been trained in mono-grade pedagogy and lack the knowledge and skills to deal effectively with multi-grade classes. In order to improve the quality of education in multi-grade schools, teachers serving in these schools need to be supported in terms of training in multi-grade teaching.

#### **b) The Curriculum**

The organization of the curriculum has implications for multi-grade teaching. The curriculum is normally organized based on the assumption of mono-grade teaching with the topics arranged in a hierarchical progression with increasingly advanced material taught to older grades. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for instance that has recently been finalized does not give guidance to multi-grade teachers on how they can approach the curriculum in order for them to be able to effectively mediate it in their multi-grade classes.

The curriculum will therefore need to be adapted for multi-grade classes through the development of:

- Multi-grade Annual Teaching and Learning Plans in Grades R to 9 in all subjects;
- Lesson Plans in all subjects;
- Exemplar assessment tasks in each subject; and
- Exemplar timetables for multi-grade schools.

### **c) Learner Performance**

The Diagnostic Report on the 2012 Annual National Assessment has identified the following areas of weakness in terms of learner performance. These weaknesses cut across all public schools which include multi-grade schools. According to the report:

- Many learners cannot read with comprehension;
- Many learners are not able to produce meaningful written outputs (i.e. they write words and sentences that are completely incoherent);
- Learners lack the ability to make correct inferences from given information in a text;
- Learners' knowledge of grammar is very limited (e.g. tenses, verb use in the singular form versus the plural form);
- Learners struggle to spell frequently used words correctly; and
- Handwriting, particularly in the Foundation Phase, still leaves much to be desired in many areas.

Interventions in all public schools, including multi-grade schools, should target improving the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom with the inherent output goals being to enhance learner performance.

### **d) Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM)**

Multi-grade schools have been largely marginalized in South Africa, especially in terms of resourcing, training and support from districts. Many materials that are provided to multi-grade schools do not support independent study and self-directed learning. In order to heighten the delivery of the curriculum, the design, reproduction and distribution of large quantities of self-study materials to support individual, peer and small group learning are essential for multi-grade schools.

### **e) Technologies to improve teaching and learning**

The use of technology to enhance teaching and learning is all but non-existent in multi-grade schools. The use of technology can help teachers to work with different levels of age and abilities in a classroom and can greatly enhance the quality of teaching and learning in multi-grade classrooms.

The strategies for the advancement of quality teaching and learning in multi-grade schools should extend beyond providing teacher development in multi-grade pedagogy to include the provision of essential resources including innovative technology and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) that will enhance the administration and management of the schools as well as the quality of teaching and learning.

#### **f) School governance**

The small number of learners attending some multi-grade schools often makes the formation of properly constituted governing bodies difficult. Furthermore the positioning of a public school on private property may complicate access to the school for many parents. The Report of the Ministerial Committee on School Governance (2005)<sup>6</sup> indicated that School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in disadvantaged communities often function poorly due to poverty and a lack of expertise and experience. For many parents in rural and farming areas sustained participation in SGBs is often difficult due to low literacy levels, a lack of time and indirect costs.

Interventions should therefore target addressing this phenomenon in order to ensure that School Governing Bodies are capacitated to participate and contribute to the running of multi-grade schools.

#### **g) The retention of learners**

The proximity and size of multi-grade schools do not always support the smooth progression of learners from the General Education and Training (GET) phase (Grade R to 9) to the Further Education and Training (FET) phase (Grade 10 to 12). This requires careful planning by provinces in order to ensure that when schools are merged or closed in rural and farming communities it does not impede learner progress beyond Grade 7.

#### **h) Infrastructure in multi-grade schools**

Multi-Grade schools are mostly located in rural areas and on farms. Some of these schools are housed in inappropriate structures and lack special rooms such as libraries, laboratories and administration blocks.

The eradication of mud, unsafe or dilapidated buildings and inadequate structures must be a priority. The planning, restructuring and improvement of infrastructure in multi-grade schools must be implemented in the context of the National Policy for an Equitable Provision for an Enabling School Physical Teaching and Learning Environment and National Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure.

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<sup>6</sup> Report of the Ministerial Committee on Rural Education 2005. A new vision for rural schooling. *Department of Education. Republic of South Africa.*

#### 4. Pillars of the Multi-grade Strategy and Basic Education Sector Plan

The successful implementation of the Strategy and the Plan is dependent on the following pillars:

- Leveraging and harnessing strategies to benefit multi-grade schools;
- Curriculum Implementation;
- Teacher development and training;
- HR Provisioning;
- Improving infrastructure of multi-grade schools;
- Concerted support to multi-grade schools; and
- Co-ordination, monitoring and reporting.

#### 5. Leveraging and harnessing strategies to benefit multi-grade schools

**The National Development Plan 2030<sup>7</sup>**, outlines the Government's aim to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. The plan stresses that each community should have a school, teachers who love teaching and learning and a local library filled with a wealth of knowledge etc. One of the three priorities of the Plan that stands out is "**Improving the quality of education, skills development and innovation**".

At the heart of this National Development Plan is the goal of increasing the number of learners achieving above 50 percent in literacy and mathematics as well as increasing learner retention rates to 90 percent. Bolstering teacher training stands out in all the initiatives that government wants to pursue to improve communities.

In order to ensure that the Department meets the goals outlined in the National Development Plan, it has introduced a number of initiatives that are aimed at improving the quality of education in all public schools inclusive of multi-grade schools. The following strategies need to be leveraged and harnessed to improve the quality of education in multi-grade schools:

##### 5.1 The Integrated Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (Lit Num Strategy)

The integrated *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy: a whole school approach* has been developed to improve and reform the performance of schools, especially learner performance in literacy and numeracy as well as sustaining the growth and development of learners. Learners' ability to read, write and calculate are of vital importance and the strategy seeks to improve these skills. The strategy will assist teachers in multi-grade schools to:

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<sup>7</sup> National Development Plan: Vision for 2030. 11 November 2011. *National Planning Commission*.

- Identify the number of words that learners should be able to read in different grades in their schools;
- Identify what learners should be able to write in different grades in their schools;
- Ensure that teachers effectively teach all subjects in multi-grade schools to improve the numeracy and literacy skills and learners' knowledge in the schools;
- Prepare learners to ensure that they are ready to write the ANA with success; and
- Ensure placement of appropriate and suitably qualified teachers in all phases.

## **5.2 The Learner Attainment Improvement Strategy (LAIS)**

The Learner Attainment Improvement Strategy (LAIS) which has been adapted from the Department of Basic Education's National Strategy for Learner Attainment (NSLA) informs interventions in the multi-grade classes. The strategy aims at:

- Improving quality of teaching, learning and assessment in all GET schools in order to achieve the objectives of Schooling 2025;
- Ensuring effective implementation of CAPS;
- Improving basic skills and competencies in reading, writing and calculating and ensuring effective application of these skills across other subjects;
- Improving learner application of and performance in basic skills of reading, writing and speaking;
- Building mathematical and computational skills of Foundation Phase learners in all schools for ready applicability in practical situations;
- Developing the knowledge and relevant concepts, correct attitudes and the confidence of learners in Life Skills in the early grades.
- Adequately preparing learners to sit for the Annual National and Provincial Assessments so that good, solid learning is based on attaining positive results and achievement, and vice versa.

## **5.3 The National Annual Assessment (ANA)**

The Department of Basic Education introduced the Annual National Assessment in 2011 as a key strategy to annually measure progress on learner achievement towards the 2014 target of 60% achievement rate articulated in the *Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025*. The Annual National Assessment process provides pointers that should guide the actions of those involved in improving learning and teaching in the Foundation, Intermediate and Senior Phases (Grades 1 to 6 and Grade 9) of South Africa's schools. Teachers and Subject Advisors who work in multi-grade schools are also guided by the ANA process to improve learner performance and the quality of teaching and learning in those schools.

## **6. Curriculum Implementation**

The provision of quality education in all schools is dependent on the successful implementation or delivery of the curriculum. The implementation of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements and the provision of quality learning and teaching materials are at the centre of improving the quality of teaching and learning in all schools including the multi-grade schools.

### **6.1 Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)**

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) has been finalized, and is being implemented in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases and Grades 10 and 11 in 2013. The implementation of the CAPS in Grades 7-9 and Grade 12 will begin in 2014.

The CAPS documents provide the scope and depth of content and skills to be addressed each year in all subjects. The training of subject advisors and teachers, including those in multi-grade schools, aims to equip learners with the skills to:

- Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;
- Work effectively as individuals and with others as members of a team;
- Organize and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively;
- Collect, analyze, organize and critically evaluate information;
- Communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes;
- Use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others; and
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognizing that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

### **6.2 Provision of Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM)**

The availability of appropriate teaching and learning materials is important in all schools. However, in the multi-grade contexts, the importance of teaching and learning materials is greater, as learners spend more of their time working without direct teacher-led instruction. When a multi-grade teacher is engaged with a specific grade group, the remaining learners need resources to facilitate independent and productive work (Good and Trophy, 2003). The quality of activities that can be set for learners is partly determined by the supply of appropriate teaching and learning materials. The learning and teaching support materials that are provided to multi-grade schools must support independent study and self-directed learning. The available

resources need to be of a different kind. For example, they should be less teacher-centred, more interactive and should facilitate independent learner study practice to maximize instructional time.

### **a) Workbooks**

In addition to commercially produced textbooks, teacher guides and reading material that are procured for multi-grade schools, the Department of Basic Education provides schools with workbooks for Languages in Grades 1-6 and Mathematics in Grades 1-9.

The vision behind the provision of workbooks is based on the premise that it touches on the core three Ts of schooling, namely textbooks, teachers and time. Workbooks complement a textbook for learners; they assist teachers in teaching content knowledge; they enable the teachers to monitor the tasks that learners do in the workbooks, and they promote effective and efficient use of teaching time. The workbooks are designed to assist busy teachers who have large classes and who don't necessarily have resources like photocopiers or adequate stimulating reading materials for children to read.

The Department, though, underlines the point that workbooks do not replace textbooks and other resources, but should be regarded as additional to these.

### **b) Learning Guides**

Graded learning guides to support the implementation of CAPs need to be developed.

These would be *self-directed, interactive* learning guides for each grade that are given to learners to work through systematically. The guides will be complete modules of work, with assessment included, and will enable learners to pace their own learning by working sequentially through the modules. They will be *activity-based* and written in a way that takes the learner step-by-step through each activity.

Each module will be organized against the work schedules provided in the CAPS, and lead learners to work through the content and skills at their *own pace* and in a flexible way that supports the way in which the learner learns. At the same time they will support teaching across different grades, and ensure that the required conceptual progression is managed. Assessment tasks are integral to the learning activities, and teachers can monitor performance and progression of learners through the assessment done.

While the guides will be pitched at the expected level of performance of learners against CAPS, the teacher will be able to adapt teaching to learner's individual needs.

### **6.3 Curriculum adaptation for multi-grade schools**

The organization of the curriculum has implications for multi-grade teaching. The curriculum is normally organized based on the assumption of mono-grade teaching with the topics arranged in a hierarchical progression with increasingly advanced material taught to older grades. The curriculum can be adapted for multi-grade classes through the use of:

#### **a) Curriculum differentiation**

In this strategy the same topics are taught to all learners at the same time but the conceptual level of the tasks and activities are differentiated and pitched at the appropriate level for the respective grades and the development level of the learners. (Little, 2004)<sup>8</sup>.

Teachers and the school management in multi-grade schools should also be familiar and conversant with curriculum differentiation. Curriculum differentiation allows for the effective mediation of the National Curriculum Statement at an instructional, content and materials level to accommodate learner diversity and as well as those learners who experience barriers to learning. Teachers and the school management should be able to adjust or modify the following to enhance teaching and learning:

- The teaching and learning environment;
- Teaching and learning techniques;
- Teaching and learning support material to ensure learner performance or allow at least partial participation in a learning activity;
- Learning programmes; and
- Assessment.

#### **b) Multi-Grade Annual Teaching Plans**

In this strategy the curriculum is adapted and the different concepts in each subject arranged across two or more grades rather than being constrained within the one grade so that learners cover common topics and activities during that period. Ideally, the concepts will be arranged in terms of the phases that obtain in the system from Grades R to 9.

### **6.4 Information and Communication Technology**

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a tool that will be introduced to schools that practise multi-grade teaching. The purpose of the introduction of ICTs to these schools would be to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in multi-grade classrooms.

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<sup>8</sup> Little, A. 2004. Learning and teaching in multi-grade settings. *Paper prepared for the UNESCO 2005 EFA Monitoring Report.*



The availability of ICT can enhance and facilitate communication and collegiality between teachers at multi-grade schools, especially against the background of the long distances between schools in rural areas. ICT skills in the classroom can enhance the quality of teaching and learning through access to teaching materials such as lesson plans, worksheets, reports and multimedia instructional materials. To remove some of the administrative burden, ICT can be used as a tool to generate mark sheets, schedules and class lists. The Internet (where connectivity is available) presents opportunities for multi-grade teachers to enrol for online learning courses.

ICT in multi-grade schools can be used to enhance school management and teaching:

- For **management and administration** purposes e.g. the SA-SAMS programme that is freely available to all schools can be used to carry out many of the paper rich administration tasks such as generating mark sheets, schedules and reports;
- To **mediate professional isolation and communication challenges** e.g. the challenges of long distance travel can be addressed by using email, teleconferencing, 'Skype technologies' and social network platforms such as twitter; and
- To **enhance teaching and learning in multi-grade classrooms**. For example, when teaching the *History of Transport* in Geography, learners can gather around the computer screen and access content, both text and pictures, from *Microsoft Encarta*. When teaching the section on *Vertebrate & Invertebrate Animals* in Natural Sciences learners could even see the creatures in action as well as hear the sounds of the wild. These experiences can be amplified by using a data projector.

When connectivity is made available to multi-grade schools various educational portals, such as *Thutong*, will be accessed by teachers. This will contribute significantly to staff development and growth. Subject knowledge will be enriched by accessing the educational sites on the internet. Even planning and preparation can be done by the teacher on a laptop computer. The portability of the laptop means that teachers can be productive wherever they are. Curriculum statements, policy documents and circulars can be electronically stored on the computer and can be easily accessible when needed. Technology in the multi-grade class will make the use of many printed documents redundant – this will in turn bring about savings in terms of money and space, with the added advantage of being good for the environment.

Therefore, teachers must be supported and be very well trained to be able to use ICT effectively. The use of ICTs in the classroom does not diminish the role of the teacher; neither does it automatically change teaching practices. Experience has shown that a variety of support and enabling mechanisms must be implemented to optimize teaching and learning through the use of ICTs.

The suitability of potential ICT solutions must take into account the conditions of small farm and multi-grade schools. All suitable ICT solutions must have the following attributes:

- They can be used in schools without electricity since they can be operated on a battery or generator;
- They require minimal ICT skills to operate;
- They require minimal security since they can be stored in the strong room or the principal's office;
- They can be easily managed and used since they constitute a single unit;
- They are rugged and versatile; and
- They can be shared between classrooms since they are mobile. Suitable ICT solutions and resources can be deployed and used to support the various critical functions of teachers in small rural and farm schools. These include teaching and learning as well as management and administration.

**a) Infrastructure in relation to ICT Support**

The following should be considered when exploring the use of ICT in multi-grade schools:

- The state of the existing school infrastructure, safety and security;
- The extent to which current classroom design and layout will optimally facilitate the use of ICT;
- The availability of a safe and reliable electricity supply;
- Teacher apprehension of engaging with new technologies;
- The availability of good teacher training and sustainable support beyond training;
- Cycles for hardware replacement and software updates;
- Regular and sustainable maintenance and servicing of hardware components; and
- Connectivity.

**b) Provision of Technology Solutions to Multi-grade Schools**

The following technologies will be provided to multi-grade schools to support them in their classroom activities.

**Audio Life Players (Solar powered MP3 recorders)**

The Department of Basic Education in partnership with the British Council will provide **Life Players**, solar powered radios, to multi-grade schools and additional **Life Players** will be distributed to **subject advisors** who will also be trained on their use. The Audio Life Players will be preloaded with audio based materials that are aimed at improving the language proficiency and communication of learners in multi-grade schools.

The purpose of this intervention is to improve and support English at a First Additional Language level within the Department's literacy and numeracy strategy.

To derive the maximum benefit from this intervention, teachers and subject advisors will be trained on the use of the life players.

## **7. Teacher development and training**

The Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa<sup>9</sup> published on 5 April 2011 indicates that in all rural primary schools where multi-grade teaching is the norm, teachers will be targeted for the development in multi-grade teaching strategies, with a particular focus on literacy and numeracy.

### **7.1 Teacher Training**

Teacher training for multi-grade should include different components. First, multi-grade teachers need to be aware of the rationale for multi-grade teaching, the extent of its use internationally, and the evidence that it can be as effective as mono-grade teaching. Second, they need to be aware of the range of options that can be used to deal with more than one grade within the classroom, including the option for teaching some topics to both groups at the same time. Third, they need to have the skills to manage a class where different groups are working on separate tasks. Fourth, where learning materials are to be used to support multi-grade teaching, teachers need the skills to evaluate and use learning materials, and in some cases to develop and produce their own materials.

There are few formal programmes offered by HEIs or training institutions that prepare teachers adequately for teaching in a multi-grade situation. Teachers in multi-grade schools need to be trained on appropriate methodology, effective teaching approaches, assessment and management. For many teachers in those multi-grade schools, no or little training was done on teaching, learning and assessment required by the curriculum. Teachers have mainly navigated their own way through the curriculum or gone back to their old, familiar practices in the classroom.

The unique situation in multi-grade schools, as well as the fact that the majority of multi-grade schools are in the rural areas, requires a different process for the delivery of training and provision of support than is currently offered in these schools. The assumption that teachers are actually given effective, ongoing support by districts or that face-to-face training happens in these schools is problematic. It may be

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<sup>9</sup> Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, 2011 -2025. *Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa.*

necessary to pursue the use of e-learning as a possible alternative to face-to-face training, given the distances and logistics in getting teachers in multi-grade schools together in one venue.

It is necessary for a module on multi-grade teaching to be developed and instituted in all teacher training programmes. More importantly, all district officials supporting multi-grade schools need to be trained as a matter of priority. A content framework for a module on multi-grade teaching needs to be developed. HEIs need to be brought on board with proposals around the training of teachers in the approaches, methodology and management of multi-grade schools.

Furthermore in order to ensure that the sourced training is achieves the desired outcome in terms of empowering teachers and subject advisors in multi-grade teaching, the selected programme should strive to achieve the following objectives:

- Familiarizing teachers with multi-grade teaching methods and empowering them to apply those methods.
- Ensuring that the schools replace a teacher-centred, mono-grade approach with learner-centred approaches that meet the multi-grade learning needs of learners in a multi-grade environment.
- Enabling teachers to manage instructional resources and the physical environment in order to facilitate children's learning, independence and interdependence.
- Enabling teachers to plan, develop and implement instructional strategies and routines that allow for maximum co-operation and self-directed learning.
- Enabling teachers to choose and use appropriate tools for assessment and evaluation to assess and evaluate all aspects of a learner's work and keep a record of work that will provide reliable evidence of all aspects of their attainment.
- Enabling teachers to select or develop appropriate instructional and learning resource material that can be used independently by different grade groups.
- Enabling teachers to construct a suitable time-table for the class to provide an effective teaching and learning programme for multi-grade classes.

## **8. Human resources provisioning**

The biggest challenge that is facing multi-grade schools is the meagre number of teachers appointed at each school to teach all the subjects from Grade R to 9. There are multi-grade schools that are known as one teacher schools. These schools have only one teacher that has to teach all the subjects in each grade from

R to 9. The prevalence of this situation compromises the provision of quality teaching and learning. The provision of human resources in these schools needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

### **8.1 Recommended staff provisioning in multi-grade schools**

The following post provisioning model in the multi-grade schools should be adopted to ensure that schools have an adequate numbers of teachers:

- a) In a primary school offering Grade R to Grade 7 with a population of 100 learners, the school should be furnished with at least a total of four teachers:
  - One teacher for the Grade R class,
  - One teacher for the Foundation Phase (Multi-grade class),
  - One teacher for the Intermediate Phase (Multi-grade class),and
  - One teacher for the Grade 7 Class.
- b) In cases where the number of learners in each of the above classes is above 50, such classes should at least be provided with two teachers to avoid overcrowding in the classrooms.

### **8.2 District Support to Multi-grade Schools**

The training of provincial and district officials will empower them to conduct in-service programmes on multi-grade approaches for teachers in rural areas. Empowered provincial and district officials will be able to attend to the multi-grade teaching challenges currently experienced by teachers.

- Subject Advisors at district level will be trained in multi-grade pedagogy to ensure that they learn the skills and knowledge that they require to be able to support multi-grade schools.
- The British Council will train multi-grade education subject advisors on the use of Life Players to improve and support English as a First Additional Language within the Department of Education's literacy and numeracy strategy.
- A tool will be developed that will guide subject advisors on how to support multi-grade schools and teachers working in those schools.

## **9. Improving infrastructure at Multi-grade schools**

The eradication of mud and unsafe or dilapidated buildings must be a priority. Multi-grade schools often cannot offer the full range of subject choices, have limited potential to service specialised educational needs,

and may have a poor range of learning and teaching support materials. The planning, restructuring and improvement of infrastructure at rural and farm schools must be implemented in the context of the National Policy for an Equitable Provision of an Enabling School Physical Teaching and Learning Environment and National Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure. The following could be done to addresses issues of infrastructure:

- Eradication of mud and unsafe-dilapidated buildings;
- Continued implementation of the guidelines for the rationalisation of small or non-viable schools including closures, mergers and expropriations, monitoring these and giving support to provinces;
- Monitoring the signing of section 14 agreements, monitoring these and giving support to provinces; and
- Improving rural schools' infrastructure through the rehabilitation of existing buildings and utilities, and, where necessary, the construction and equipping of new facilities and including these into District Integrated Development Plans.

## **10. Concerted Support to multi-grade schools**

The challenges cited in the introduction to this Multi-grade Strategy and Basic Education Sector Plan indicate that in order to provide quality education in the multi-grade schools, the support that is needed in those schools extends beyond the support provided to teachers on curriculum delivery.

### **10.1 Multi-Disciplinary Committee to support multi-grade schools**

Branch C which is responsible for curriculum delivery in the system, recognizes the limited capacity of a single unit to effectively address the multi-faceted challenges facing multi-grade schools. As such, Branch C will involve a broad spectrum of role players within the Department to support multi-grade schools.

The Multi-Disciplinary Committee that will be formed will meet frequently to discuss the provision of support to multi-grade schools and it will ensure that all strategies that are implemented to support all public schools are also harnessed to support multi-grade schools. The committee will deal with the following matters:

- Resourcing of multi-grade schools,
- Infrastructure,
- Teacher and subject advisor training, and
- Staff provisioning.

## **10.2 Multi-grade Coordination Team**

Each province has a provincial official who is responsible for the co-ordination of all multi-grade activities ranging from teacher training to providing support to the schools. Though these officials are committed to multi-grade education, a formal structure will need to be set up that will oversee and coordinate multi-grade education in the provinces. This structure or forum will also need to meet on a quarterly basis to discuss and report on interventions that are aimed at supporting multi-grade teachers and schools.

## **11. Co-ordination and reporting**

The accompanying plan on page 23 provides a tool to co-ordinate the curriculum-related activities contained in the Strategy. In this tool provinces are to ensure that they clearly indicate the performance indicators that they will strive to achieve on the key deliverables that are indicated in the plan.

### **11.1 Co-ordination**

Co-ordination within the Multi-grade Strategy and Basic Education Sector Plan will ensure that the different activities that are implemented in provinces are properly adjusted and interlinked. The provincial coordinators will be encouraged to work together to ensure the delivery of programmes initiated at national level.

The sharing of best practices amongst provinces will also be co-ordinated to ensure that all provinces are elevated to perform at an acceptable level.

### **11.2 Monitoring and Support**

Monitoring and evaluation should follow a bottom up approach, from district-level to the Department of Basic Education based on the initiatives being implemented to improve the quality of education in multi-grade schools.

### **11.3 Reporting**

All activities that are undertaken in support of multi-grade schools in provinces would need to be reported on a quarterly basis. The reporting will enhance the sharing of best practices amongst provinces and thereby improve the delivery of quality education and training in every province. The proposed template for reporting is attached as **Annexure A**.

## 12. BASIC EDUCATION SECTOR PLAN FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF CURRICULUM OUTCOMES IN MULTI-GRADE SCHOOLS

PROVINCE: .....

KEY DELIVERABLE	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	TIME-FRAMES	RESPONSIBILITY
<b>Teacher development and training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers trained in multi-grade teaching and the use the multi-grade toolkit.</li> </ul>	April 2014 – March 2019	GET Curriculum, Rural Education and Teacher Development
<b>Technology and ICT Support to multi-grade schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multi-grade schools provided with ICT solutions.</li> <li>Teachers trained on the use of the ICT</li> </ul>	April 2014 – March 2019	Rural education and Curriculum Innovation
<b>Curriculum Implementation (CAPS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curriculum delivery monitored.</li> <li>Curriculum coverage improved.</li> </ul>	April 2014 – March 2019	GET Curriculum and Rural Education
<b>HR Provisioning small and multi-grade schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural schools and multi-grade schools provided with adequate staffing.</li> </ul>	April 2014 – March 2019	GET Curriculum and Education Human Resource Planning
<b>Improving infrastructure of multi-grade schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infrastructure improved in identified schools</li> </ul>	April 2014 – March 2019	GET curriculum and Physical Planning
<b>Provision of Learning and teaching support materials to all multi-grade schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Toolkit implemented in all multi-grade schools.</li> <li>Learner performance improved.</li> </ul>	April 2014 – March 2019	GET Curriculum and Rural Education
<b>District support to multi-grade schools.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subject advisors providing more visible support to rural and multi-grade schools</li> </ul>	April 2014 – March 2019	Rural Education and Provincial Education Departments



### 13. Conclusion

The existence of multi-grade teaching in the system should not be viewed in deficit terms but as a pedagogy that can contribute to the Department's role of providing access to children who reside in those remote, rural and farm areas.

Support to multi-grade schools should be reinforced to ensure that the learners in those schools have access to better quality education in the system. Therefore the following recommendations are made in an effort to strengthen interventions in multi-grade schools:

- Concerted efforts amongst all stakeholders, particularly the Department and the Provincial Education Departments, is needed to raise the status of multigrade learning and teaching, which is often considered as a last resort where resources are short and an option for the poorest schools in the poorest places.
- Multi-grade teachers need to be aware of the rationale for multigrade teaching, the extent of its use internationally, and the evidence that it can be as effective as mono-grade teaching.
- Teacher development and training of teachers both at pre-service and inset levels in positive multi-grade pedagogies is of utmost importance to ensure that multi-grade teachers are equipped with the requisite skills and knowledge essential for them to manage multi-grade schools.

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**ANNEXURE A: REPORTING TEMPLATE**

**PROVINCE:** .....

No.	Deliverables	2013.14 Target	Actual performance	Reasons for variance	Attach supporting documents	Status
1.	Teacher development and training (for example)		Quarter 1:			
			Quarter 2:			
			Quarter 3:			
			Quarter 4:			

No.	Deliverables	2013.14 Target	Actual performance	Reasons for variance	Attach supporting documents	Status
2.	Technology and ICT Support to multi-grade schools (for example)		Quarter 1:			
			Quarter 2:			
			Quarter 3:			
			Quarter 4:			