**06 March 2017**

**Overview and Analysis of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) Report on Provincial Education Departments’ Reporting Systems**

1. **Introduction**

The National Treasury has developed the Framework for Managing Programme Performance Information with the purpose of clarifying definitions and standards for performance information in support of regular audits of such information and where appropriate improving integrated structures, systems and processes required to manage performance information.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Performance information remain critical in that it indicates how well an institution is meeting its aims and objectives, and which policies and processes are working. Making the best use of available data and knowledge is crucial for improving the execution of government's mandate.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Performance information is:[[3]](#footnote-3)

* key to effective management, including planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and reporting;
* facilitates effective accountability, enabling legislators, members of the public and other interested parties to track progress, identify the scope for improvement and better understanding of the issues involved;
* essential to focus the attention of the public and oversight bodies on whether public institutions are delivering value for money, by comparing their performance against their budgets and service delivery plans, and to alert managers to areas where corrective action is required.
* plays a growing role in budget allocations and will increasingly be used to monitor service delivery.

This means the information must be accurate, appropriate and timely.

Availability of performance information allows managers to pursue results-based management approaches, such as performance contracts, risk management, benchmarking and market testing.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The Department of Basic Education is expected to provide an overview of Sector service delivery and conduct a detailed performance evaluation of policies and areas of service delivery.

Therefore, the DBE coordinates and collates information from the nine provinces on a quarterly basis to report and account.

**1.1 Policy and legal requirements**

**1.1.1 Constitution**

Section 92 of the Constitution states that "members of the Cabinet are accountable collectively and

individually to Parliament for the exercise of their powers and the performance of their functions", and that they must "provide Parliament with full and regular reports concerning matters under their control". Section 133 provides for the accountability of members of the executive council (MECs) of a province to the provincial legislature. Similar arrangements are specified for municipalities in the Municipal Structures Act (1998).[[5]](#footnote-5)

**1.1.2 Public sector management reform**

The implementation of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) (1999), the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) (2003) and the Public Service Act (1994 as amended) has enhanced control over public expenditure and empowered public sector managers. One challenge for the public sector is to use resources in a more efficient way. Further policy initiatives and legal requirements have been introduced to achieve this, including the integration of performance concepts from the *Estimates of National Expenditure* (ENE) and other budget documents.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**1.1.3 The Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System**

In 2004, the Cabinet initiated plans for a monitoring and evaluation system for government, and the Presidency subsequently developed the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

Although there are various existing systems gathering valuable information within government, there are also a number of gaps in the information needed for planning the delivery of services and

for reviewing and analysing the success of policies. The Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System seeks to enhance these systems by describing them and explaining how they relate to each other.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The system has three components:[[8]](#footnote-8)

* Programme performance information
* Social, economic and demographic statistics
* Evaluations.

This brief seeks to analyse the Department of Basic Education report in terms of the definition, collection, reporting and the use performance information.

1. **Analysis of the DBE Report**

The following are reporting areas of the Department:[[9]](#footnote-9)

* School Readiness;
* Performance against Annual Performance Plan Targets;
* Levels of funding of schools;
* Progress with transfer of funds to schools;
* Provincial Education budget and expenditure reports;
* Estimates of Provincial Revenue and expenditure for the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF);
* Monitoring of conditional grants; and
* Financial reporting of conditional grants.

The Department of Basic Education has developed tools through which data is collected from provinces.

* The fact that provinces are expected to account on the National School Learner Attainment (NSLA) strategy, create an opportunity for the DBE to collect information on regular basis as scheduled;[[10]](#footnote-10)
* Provinces are expected to account on the readiness of their schools prior to undertaking any major event such as opening of schools and writing of exams. This also afford the DBE an opportunity to collect data from provinces using questionnaire;[[11]](#footnote-11)
* Provinces are expected to account on progress made in addressing the infrastructure challenges on regular basis using the National Education Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS); and [[12]](#footnote-12)
* The DBE leverage on the Provinces analysis of ‘*In Year Monitoring Reports’*, to collect data from provinces.[[13]](#footnote-13)

The Department collect data by sending monitoring teams and sampling schools in verifying collected information especially when it comes to Conditional Grants. Provinces are expected to report at the end of each and every quarter. Oversight visits conducted to determine school readiness is another method used to collect data from provinces.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The information collected is verified by cross checking against documentary evidence, Using Branch Coordinators to rectify ensuring that what is reported matches the evidence, and cross referencing with other published documents such as National Treasury Reports.[[15]](#footnote-15)

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| **Matters for Consideration*** The PC should discuss the report reconciling it with the experiences whereby the DBE will be stating delay by provinces when information is sought in the form of Parliamentary Questions; and
* There is a need for the EMIS section of the Department to be capacitated with tools of trade and highly experienced statisticians. It is hoped that such an exercise will assist the DBE to keep information up to date, taking advantage of the available information technology.

**Suggested questions:*** The report is not reflecting the challenges and thus giving an impression that all is fine pertaining to the reliability of the information. What are the current challenges experienced by the Department on data collection especially as reported by provinces?
* The DBE receives reports on quarterly basis from provinces. Which tools are being used by the DBE to verify the information?
* Provinces have a tendency of covering their backs when reporting information. Passing the bug to schools when things do go right. How are provinces held accountable to ensure that they accept blame when their leadership fails? Similarly, with the National Office.
* The use of SA SAMS and LURITS, how effective is that?
* How is reporting of the Department standardised so that the template is the same when reporting to Parliament, Treasury and Presidency?
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1. **Reference**

Department of Basic Education, (2017). *Department of Basic Education Report on the PED Reporting Systems.* Pretoria

Department of Justice, (1996). *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996.* Pretoria.

National Treasury, (1999). *Public Finance Management Act, No. 1 of 1999.* Pretoria

National Treasury, (2007). *Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.* Pretoria

1. Treasury (2007) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Ibid* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Ibid* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Ibid* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Justice (1996) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. National Treasury (1999) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Presidency (2007) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Ibid* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. DBE (2017) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Ibid* [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *Ibid* [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *Ibid* [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *Ibid* [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. *Ibid* [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. *Ibid* [↑](#footnote-ref-15)