
GENERAL NOTICES

NOTICE 1438 OF 2008

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NOTICE NO OF.2008

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY ACT OF 1996

CALL FOR COMMENTS ON THE NATIONAL POLICY FOR AN EQUITABLE PROVISION OF AN ENABLING SCHOOL PHYSICAL TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

I, Grace Naledi Mandisa Pandor, Minister of Education after consultation with the Council of Education Ministers and in terms of section 3(4) of the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act No 27 of 1996), hereby declare the National Policy for An Equitable Provision of an Enabling School Physical Teaching and Learning Environment, as set out in the schedule.

All interested persons and organisations are invited to comment on the policy, in writing and to direct their comments to-

The Director-General, Private Bag X895, Pretoria, 0001, for attention: Mrs E Mamathuba, tel 012 312 5954, email mamathuba.e@doe.gov.za, fax 012 312 6058.

Comments must reach the Director-General on or before 23 December 2008.


GRACE NALEDI MANDISA PANDOR, MP
MINISTER OF EDUCATION
DATE: 14-11-2008

SCHEDULE

NATIONAL POLICY FOR AN EQUITABLE PROVISION OF AN ENABLING SCHOOL PHYSICAL TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
BMP	Basic minimum package
CEM	Council of Education Ministers
CPAR	Country Procurement Assessment Review
DoE	Department of Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ELSEN	Education for Learners with Special Education Needs
FET	Further Education and Training
GIS	Geographic Information System
GET	General Education and Training
HEDCOM	Heads of Department Committee
ICB	International Competitive Bidding
ICTs	Information Communication Technologies
IDIP	Infrastructure Development Improvement Programme
JIPSA	Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition
LPPP	Leveraging Private Purchasing Power
NEIMS	National Education Infrastructure Management System
NSNP	National School Nutrition Program
PDPW	Provincial Departments of Public Works
PEDs	Provincial Education Departments
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PPPFA	Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act
PPP	Public Private Partnerships
PRPs	Physical Resource Planners
SCM	Supply Chain Management
SGBs	School Governing Bodies
SRN	School Register of Needs
TA	Technical Assistance

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. **Historical background:** In 1994, South Africa's democratically elected government inherited one of the world's most inequitable education and training systems. Unequal education opportunities were fostered mainly through unequal distribution of education resource inputs that are known to negatively impact on student learning. Student learning outcomes were understandably acutely inequitable. The physical teaching and learning environment—school infrastructure and basic services—has historically been one of the most visible indicators of inequitable resource inputs. The majority of our learners were taught in decrepit and unsafe buildings; their schools had no electricity, safe water, sanitation, telephones or co-curricula facilities and equipment.
- 1.2. **Significance of the physical teaching and learning environment:** Yet as recent studies show, there is a link between the physical environment learners are taught, and teaching and learning effectiveness, as well as student learning outcomes. Poor learning environments have been found to contribute to student irregular attendance and dropping out of school, teacher absenteeism and the teacher and students' ability to engage in the teaching and learning process. The physical appearance of school buildings are shown to influence student achievement and teacher attitude toward school. Extreme thermal conditions of the environment are found to increase annoyance and reduce attention span and student mental efficiency, increase the rate of student errors, increase teacher fatigue and the deterioration of work patterns, and affect student learning achievement. Good lighting improves students' ability to perceive visual stimuli and their ability to concentrate on instruction. A colorful environment is found to improve students' attitudes and behavior, attention span, student and teacher mood, feelings about school and reduces absenteeism. Good acoustics improves student hearing and concentration, especially when considering the reality that at any one time, 15 percent of students in an average classroom suffer some hearing impairment that is either genetically based, noise-induced or caused by infections. Outdoor facilities and activities have been found to improve student formal and informal learning systems, social development, team work, and school-community relationships.
- 1.3. Inequalities in the teaching and learning environment may therefore frustrate core sector policies to improve education quality, equity of inputs and equity of outcomes.
- 1.4. **Prior efforts to track provision:** Cognizant of this reality, the Department of Education (DoE) set off to systematically document the extent and nature of provision of the physical teaching and learning environments that we inherited in 1994. Two years after the transition to freedom, DoE published the first ever school register of needs (SRN) that revealed stark inequalities and inadequacies in the teaching and learning environments of most our learners. Since then, the SRN had been updated in 2000 and then again in 2006. In-between these surveys, the DoE doubled efforts to close the gap in resource provision. These efforts were buttressed by the government's readiness to substantially increase resource allocations for school infrastructure and basic services from R 352 million in 1995/1996 to R500,000.00 to R 4.95 billion in 2008/2009. They were also enabled by the joint DoE and national Treasury interventions to strengthen institutional delivery capacities.
- 1.5. **Progress and persisting challenges:** Progress is evident, albeit inadequate and uneven. Inadequacies are stark in some aspects like the provision of school libraries where nearly 80 percent of schools are still without science laboratories, lack of computers for teaching and learning in 68 percent of our schools, and inadequate classrooms leading to overcrowding in nearly a quarter of our schools.¹

- 1.6. Consultations on leading to the development of this policy highlighted that a typical South African school still does not provide a physical environment that enables effective implementation of core sector policies, such as the progressive curricula, co-curricula activities and the level of quality, equity, efficiency, relevance, and values.
- 1.7. Inadequate though current provision may be, the situation has phenomenally improved over the first decade and half of freedom. However, these improvements have progressed without a clear policy framework. The risk is that more resources may be invested without a clear definition of what constitutes an enabling physical teaching and learning environment in South Africa's schools of the future, without a clear benchmarking of progress toward the attainment of that environment, and without a clear monitoring of the impact of that environment on the attainment of our core sector policy targets and outcomes.
- 1.8. **Policy rationale, goal and objectives:** The development of this policy is therefore prompted by a dual need to more clearly and systematically define what constitutes an enabling physical teaching and learning environment for all South Africa's learners, and to ensure that future investments are aligned with that definition.
- 1.9. An overarching goal of this policy is to guide the provision of an enabling physical teaching and learning environment equitably for *all* learners in South Africa.
- 1.10. Specific objectives are to facilitate the attainment of:
- broad-based access to education, training and skills development opportunities,
 - equity and redress of inherited inequities in provision and associated outcomes,
 - quality and effectiveness of education, training and skills development,
 - functional relevance / responsiveness of the physical teaching and learning environment,
 - efficiency of provision, management and usage of elements of the environment, and
 - national values (democracy, excellence, accountability, social cohesion, diversity, innovation and creativity, critical thinking and judgment, cooperation, etc.)
- 1.11. **Process followed in developing this policy:** The process of articulating this policy has been consultative and collaborative. The DoE was supported by the World Bank which worked very closely with South Africa's experts at the central level and in provinces. The DoE also worked in close consultation with other key departments such as Treasury and Public Works. Consultants included curricula experts at the national and provincial levels, physical planners at all levels, and the Council of Education Ministers (CEM). The latter accepted this policy as robust and sound enough to guide future and equitable provision of an enabling physical teaching and learning environment.
- 1.12. **Conceptualization of an enabling physical teaching and learning environment:** In the process of articulating this policy, the DoE recognized that the current conceptualization of the physical teaching and learning environment as pertaining to school infrastructure and basic services was too narrow to facilitate and even reinforce the level of education and training that reflects the needs of our economy. Over the past year, the DoE therefore elaborated its concept of the physical teaching and learning environment to include: school infrastructure, basic services, furniture, equipment, co-curricula facilities, books and instructional materials.
- 1.13. **Key areas requiring strategic and operational policy direction:** The consultative and collaborative process also identified 6 principle areas as required for a clear national strategic policy direction and 2 principle areas for a clear national operational policy direction. In that order, these are:

- the authority for setting norms and standards that should guide the adequacy, equity and fit-for-purpose of the physical teaching and learning environment,
- a system for setting priorities for provision, and in a manner that facilitates the actualization of key sector policies—which are: quality, equity, relevance, efficiency, and values,
- a system of planning to address identified priorities,
- a contextually adaptable system for standardizing architectural designs that respond to core sector policies, teaching and learning requirements, set priorities for provision, and that ensures effective cost management and cost control,
- a system for timely and cost-effective management and maintenance of assets created as part of an enabling physical teaching and learning environment that optimizes usage and longevity,
- diversification of funding sources that is financially feasible, sustainable, and that eases the burden of provision on the government,
- a system for ensuring the adequacy of capacity to deliver the required elements of the environment, and
- a system for effective management of procurement procedures required to assure time and resource efficiency, transparency, cost management, and quality of services and outputs.

- 1.14. **Policy statements:** The 6 strategic and 2 operational policy statements are summarized as follows:

Policy Statement # 1: Nationally established norms and standards for an enabling environment

- 1.14.1. Effective from 2008, norms and standards for the physical teaching and learning environment will be set at the national level by the Department of Education. National norms and standards will set and express in terms of minimum and optimum provision. Along this continuum, norms and standards for school safety, functionality, effectiveness and enrichment will be explicitly defined at a national level by the Department of Education. The DoE will also set clear target dates by which a set proportion of schools will meet each level of enablement in its environment. The DoE will also set a clear date by which all South Africa schools will meet norms and standards for effectiveness.*
- 1.14.2. National norms and standards will be developed during 2008, and fully adopted by the end of 2009.*
- 1.14.3. Provinces may adapt national norms and standards to their contexts without prejudice to set minimums. Effective from January 2010, all provinces will have aligned their provision programs to national norms and standards and set targets. By the end of the current strategic plan period—2008 to 2012—all schools will meet inputs and process norms required for safety, functionality and effectiveness.*
- 1.14.4. As need arises, national and/or sector strategic development priorities will be translated into enrichment norms and standards as defined by the Department of Education. These norms will be defined in response to current national and sector development imperatives. Such dictates may be the need to ramp up certain outputs such as in the Dinaledi project. It may be to fast track reaching international benchmarks*

required to be competitive. It may be 'catching up with international developments' such as the mooted 'schools of the future'. It may be to create regenerative capacity that can later be applied to ramp up equitable quality such as in the creation of pockets of excellence. It may be to ride a global market tide as in the case where a certain skills mix is required within a short period of time. It may be the need to level the playing field where the floor is too low relative to the ceiling and needs to be raised within short time spans, etc.

- 1.14.5. The national Department of Education will execute the meeting of enrichment norms and standards.*
- 1.14.6. Access to and benefits from enrichment norms will be equitable. In real terms, if going beyond the norm is creating justified inequality, the justification has to be explicit, transparent, and owned by a reasonable threshold of stakeholders. Such strategic inequalities should therefore be "mandated inequalities". The process and decision on who has the mandate or how the mandate is created will be transparent. Such a mandate will vest in the Office of the Minister of Education—because it is responsible for overall sector development.*
- 1.14.7. Because even "mandated inequalities" may violate the national and sector "norm of equal opportunity" the distribution of opportunities to schools and/ or programs that go beyond effectiveness criteria will itself be explicitly and transparently equitable. Criteria will therefore be equity based. Proposed principal criteria are aptitude, exceptional achievement, and redress.*

Policy Statement # 2: Systematized establishment and prioritization of infrastructure needs

- 1.14.8. Effective from 2010—criteria and procedures for the identification and prioritization of the teaching and learning environment needs will be nationally standardized by the Department of Education. Provinces may adapt national procedure to reflect their unique contexts. Provincial adaptations may not lower the national minimum criteria, but may only pertain to enrichment but not diminution. Irrespective of the source—individual school funds, donor funding, public funds—all resources available to Provinces have to first be applied toward meeting nationally set priority needs. Except where nationally set priorities are fully met, Provinces may not apply funds for enrichment purposes.*

Policy Statement # 3: Planned development of an enabling environment

- 1.14.9. Effective from 2010, the DoE will adopt a "planned development" of the physical teaching and learning environment. A national strategic plan will be developed in line with critical sector and thematic policy priorities. The national plan will be prepared on a long term—20 years—medium term—5 years—and short term basis—1 year. It will set national and provincial strategic objectives and targets to be achieved within each plan period. The strategic plan will provide the substantive base for investment planning. Irrespective of the source, the financing of the physical teaching and learning environment will be provided within the framework of the strategic plan.*
- 1.14.10. In addition to the strategic plan, the development of the physical environment will be guided by mandatory recurrent planning instruments vis annual implementation plans, procurement plans, financial and disbursement plans. The national department will also develop mandatory medium term and short term results frameworks that will guide the monitoring and evaluation of the development of the physical environment.*

1.14.11. *Consistent with the national approach provinces will adopt a “planned development” of the physical teaching and learning environment. Provincial plans will be set within the same terms as the national plan. They will reflect strategic objectives and targets as set in the national plan. Likewise financial provision will be provided only within the framework of the provincial plan.*

1.14.12. *Provinces will also develop all plans that are mandatory at the national level. Their provision program may not be funded before clearance of mandatory plans by a set authority.*

Policy Statement # 4: Standardized architectural designs

1.14.13. *Effective from the new strategic plan period, all new construction and extensions will follow standardized designs. To the extent possible, major rehabilitation will integrate key elements of the standard designs—e.g., accessibility. The national department of education will produce prototypes of standard designs to match the typology of schools. The designs will be a product of a clear analysis of key education functions and activities to be carried out within proposed physical spaces. Design prototypes will respond to core activities and facilitate them. Standard designs will also be guided by core sector policies such as physical access and substantive relevance. Provinces may adapt standard designs to specific geographical contexts and to specific construction sites. Such adaptations will not digress from the essence of the design, and especially not reduce responsiveness to policy priorities and sector needs.*

1.14.14. *Standardized menu of prototypes will be used to create cost maps and to control construction costs. An allowable margin of variance from the cost maps should be determined and circulated. Any new construction that goes beyond allowable variance will be subject to prior review—by proposed head of provincial department—and clearance. The clearance system will be embedded in the procurement process and become part of the criteria for bid evaluation.*

Policy Statement # 5: Management and Maintenance

1.14.15. *By the end of 2010 the DoE will have developed a national policy on the management of immovable assets. Minimum parameters of that policy will include: standardized acquisition of assets; standardized and current register of assets, current information and data base; standardized recording and tracking of the value of assets; insurance of the assets; efficient usage, timely and adequate maintenance, rehabilitation, and disposal. This policy will be under implementation by provinces and schools by the start of the new strategic plan period.*

1.14.16. *Within the same time span, the department of education will also develop a comprehensive maintenance policy for school infrastructure, basic services, furniture and equipment. The policy will entail norms and standards for preventive and corrective maintenance as well as replacements. It will entail the allocation of responsibilities for certain types of maintenance in terms of financing, execution and quality assurance. Thresholds for certain types of maintenance will also be included. This policy should be effective from 2010.*

Policy Statement # 6: Diversification of funding sources

1.14.17. *The department will institute a differentiated diversification of funding for the physical teaching and learning environment with a target to source a minimum of 25*

percent of the current capital fund from non-public sources by 2010. A range of non-public financing mechanisms will be tapped and mapped to appropriate contexts. Among the range of financing mechanisms, we will consider: private public partnerships (PPPs), leveraging private purchasing power (LPPP); international donors, securitization, guarantees for commercial banks lending to schools; privatization of the management of public schools; national lenders and international lenders. Provinces will also aim to reach the same level of national target using similar approaches.

Policy Statement # 7: Demonstrated delivery capacity

- 1.14.18. The DoE will intensify the devolution of responsibility, authority and accountability for the provision of school infrastructure to the lowest feasible level in the education system which is the school. The definition of functions to be devolved will be explicitly and uniformly specified based on best practices for effective delivery and not on current capacities of levels of devolution. A capacity development program will be developed and implemented to ensure a roll out of the devolution process in accordance with the plan. Full implementation of the plan should be completed by 2012.
- 1.14.19. The DoE will integrate all infrastructure delivery functions which are currently carried out by different agencies and unify responsibilities and accountabilities. All infrastructure provision operations managed and coordinated under Treasury, other than the actual provision of funds, should be moved to the DoE. Equally, all infrastructure operations managed by the DoPW should be moved to the DoE. At provincial level, the coordination and management of all operations should be in the hands of the PEDs.
- 1.14.20. A comprehensive capacity development program should be developed and implemented immediately to enable the DoE and PEDs to effectively and efficiently deliver key elements of the teaching and learning environment.
- 1.14.21. The DoE and PEDs should retain full authority to appoint agents to augment their delivery capacity for key elements of the teaching and learning environment. Such agents should be under the full supervision of the DoE and PEDs.
- 1.14.22. During peak periods, the DoE may create an agency centrally to manage the delivery of key elements of the teaching and learning environment. Such an agency should report to the national and provincial departments of education. The agency will be dissolved at the end of the peak period and full responsibility for delivery will revert to the national and provincial departments of education.

Policy Statement # 8: Systemised procurement management and procedures for the sector

- 1.14.23. Effective from 2012—procurement of all elements of the physical teaching and learning environment will comply with the standardized sector-specific procurement procedures. These procedures will be developed by the DoE, in compliance with the overall national procurement policy and procedures. All provinces will comply with set sector-specific procedures.
- 1.14.24. Effective from the new strategic plan period 2010—responsibility and accountability for the actual execution of procurement procedures will be with PEDs and not with a multiplicity of agencies as is currently the case.

1.14.25. Effective from the new strategic plan period 2010—authority for procurement execution will be devolved to the lowest appropriate operational level.

- 1.15. This rest of this document presents the country and sector context of this proposed policy, its rationale and strategic direction, objectives, 6 strategic policy statements, and 2 core operational policy statements essential for effective implementation of the 6 strategic policies.
- 1.16. For each policy statement, key challenges that it seeks to address are presented, prior and ongoing efforts to address these challenges, persisting challenges that provide the justification for that specific policy statement, policy actions required to enable the implementation of that specific policy statement, expected benefits of each policy statement, expected costs, key risks and strategies that have to be put in place to mitigate those risks.
- 1.17. The DoE is pleased to present this proposed *national policy on equitable provision of an enabling school physical teaching and learning environment* for public comment.

CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Introduction

- 1.1. The 1994 transition to freedom came with as much opportunities as it did with challenges. Among key challenges that we inherited was an education, training and skills development system (ETSDS) that was designed to provide the majority non-white population with inferior education opportunities and experiences. One of the forceful tools the apartheid regime used to foster unequal education opportunities was the unequal and unjust distribution of fiscal resources. For instance, prior to independence in 1991, per capita spending on a white child was 350 percent more than on a black child.¹ For the majority of learners, this skewed financing translated into acute shortage of resource inputs that are known to impact teaching and learning. Examples include inappropriate and ill-balanced curricula, unqualified and ill-prepared teachers, ill-prepared school managers, inappropriately used school inspection, limited books and instructional materials, overcrowded and unsuitable teaching spaces to name a few. As a consequence of inferior education opportunities, the majority of learners realized much lower learning outcomes than their well-resourced and well-catered-for counterparts.
- 1.2. This situation could not continue under a democratically elected government that espoused the norm of equal opportunity for *all*. Equality of education opportunity was, and is still deemed critical, not only because it is one of the constitutional rights, but also because education is the single most powerful determinant of other life opportunities, including the opportunity for education itself! For that reason, equity and redress rank high amongst principles that permeate our sector policies, strategies and programs.
- 1.3. During the first decade of freedom, the Department of Education (DoE) focused mainly on the development of overall sector policy, legal, institutional and financing frameworks that give effect to the norm of equal opportunity. Significant progress has been registered. A unitary ETSDS was established from the fragmented apartheid system; access was broadened at all levels of the ETSDS; provision of resource inputs has become more equitable; and progress toward equity of learning outcomes is evident. By 2006, per capita spending on a white child had declined to 22 percent more than on a black child.²
- 1.4. With the basic frameworks in place, during the second decade of freedom, the focus of attention turned to the development of specific sub-sector, thematic and topical policies. As a result, there are now policies on early childhood development and pre-primary education, ABET and inclusive education, to name a few.
- 1.5. This policy addresses one of the thematic areas that has historically been one of the most visible indicators of unequal resource provision: *The physical teaching and learning environment*.
- 1.6. For purposes of this policy, *the physical teaching and learning environment* is broadly conceived as comprising school infrastructure; basic services; furniture; equipment, books, teaching and learning materials, and co-curricula facilities and equipment. School infrastructure is broadly conceived to include the physical teaching and learning spaces (classrooms, laboratories, computer laboratories; workshops and other specialized teaching rooms); spaces that support teaching and learning (media rooms, multi-purpose resource centers, multi-purpose school halls, gymnasias, libraries, counseling centers, health centers); sport facilities; school administrative facilities; facilities for school nutrition and feeding

programs; and teacher housing etc. Basic services include clean and safe water, electricity, access roads, sanitation, telephone and/or other communication systems.

Systematic tracking of the state of provision

- 1.7. From the onset, it was recognized that accurate and reliable data is critical for tracking progress toward *equitable provision of an enabling physical teaching and learning environment*. In 1996, two years after the democratic transition, the DoE launched the first ever school register of needs (SRN) survey. The survey covered the conditions of school buildings, and available facilities in all the 26,734 ordinary schools. The 1996 SRN provided an invaluable baseline database on the provision of school infrastructure and basic services. Since then, the data was updated and elaborated on in 2000 and again in 2006.
- 1.8. The 2000 SRN covered 27,148 ordinary public and independent schools. It went further than the 1996 survey to include 3000 institutions previously not covered and 390 schools for learners with special needs.
- 1.9. In addition to public schools, the 2006 survey (referred to as the National Education Infrastructure Management System [NEIMS]) covered public early childhood development (ECD) centers, adult basic education and training (ABET) centers, centers for the education of learners with special needs (ELSENs), and education offices operated by the DoE.
- 1.10. Other than broadening coverage of the series of SRNs, the DoE has continued to refine the methodology and scope of the surveys. Reflective of its label, the NEIMS adopted a systemic approach that differs from the first two surveys. Its invaluable additions include standardized assessment instruments; a web-based database from which data on the overall national education asset register can be imported; and a GIS-based infrastructure management system that will become an integral part of the overall facilities management system. It also took a more specific approach to assessing the condition of each element of the infrastructure. This specificity allows for better estimates of the investment required to address the poor condition of infrastructure, estimates of condition backlog values and estimates of replacement values.
- 1.11. The NEIMS also included information and functions that enable timely and sustained monitoring of the state of provision. These functions allow for immediate remedial action which was not possible based only on the 1996 and the 2000 surveys. For instance, the 2000 survey showed a substantial increase in the construction of classrooms and the delivery of basic services since 1996. However, it also documented significant deterioration in the conditions of schools owing to poor maintenance. With the functions provided in the 2006 survey, such deterioration might have been remedied on time; had the same functions been available earlier.
- 1.12. Collectively, the three surveys provide for the tracking of improvements in *equitable provision of an enabling physical teaching and learning environment* over the decade (1996 to 2006). Table 1 presents highlights of progress made; albeit inadequate and uneven.

Table 1: Trends in Provisioning School Infrastructure and Basic Services

Year	Total Ordinary Schools Surveyed	Schools without Electricity	Schools without water on site or near	Schools without toilets on site	Schools without telephone	Schools without computers for teaching & learning	Schools without library	Schools without labs	Classrooms with 45 or more learners
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1996	26734	59.2%	34.1%	12.2%	60.6%	68.6%	82.1%	75.6%	56.6%
2000	27148	44.6%	28.8%	9.2%	35.5%	67.0%	81.2%	75.9%	42.2%
2006	25095	17.1%	12.6%	6.1%	9.1%	68.0%	79.6%	60.5%	24.3%

- 1.13. The progress in Table 1 is attributable to a combination of factors; including overall economic growth, government readiness to significantly increase budget allocations for school infrastructure, and institutional capacity strengthening. The budget allocation for school infrastructure increased from R 352 million (0.06% of the GDP) in 1995/1996 to R 4.95 billion (0.24% of the GDP) in 2008/2009. This constituted an increase from about 1.67 percent of the total capital expenditure in the sector in 1995 to 5.22 percent in 2008/2009.
- 1.14. Increases in budget allocations were not always met with commensurate absorptive capacity at the provincial level. In response, the DoE strengthened institutional delivery capacity by establishing the Physical Planning Directorate in 2001, and established designated positions of Physical Resource Planners (PRPs) in PEDs. In 2005, the National Treasury established the Infrastructure Development Improvement Project (IDIP) to augment efforts of the DoE and further strengthen the delivery and absorptive capacity of the PEDs.

Rationale for policy and strategic direction

- 1.15. The progress as outlined above was realized without specific national or provincial policies or strategies to guide and support the development of the physical teaching and learning environment. Because of unclear policy and strategic guidance, objectives and targets, it has been difficult to assess the current environment as adequate or inadequate against clear benchmarks which had been pre-set. It has also been difficult to find robust evidence against which an assessment of the technical efficiency and substantive responsiveness of the current environment can be made. This has made it difficult to clearly and operationally define what constitutes an enabling physical teaching and learning environment for South Africa's future schools.
- 1.16. Evidence collected during the process of developing this policy suggests that the environment is neither technically efficient nor substantively responsive. In addition, current provision of the physical teaching and learning environment remains uneven and inequitable. A current average school in South Africa does not provide a physical environment that facilitates effective teaching and learning; effective curricula delivery, effective implementation of key sector policies and programs, or promotes adequate student health and safety. It is even more doubtful if the environment provided by our schools can efficiently enable South Africa to take its ETSDS to the level of quality, equity, efficiency, cultural and value sensitivity, and development responsiveness of countries of comparable economic stature, let alone facilitate the transition to such levels.
- 1.17. While during the past decade enormous progress was recorded toward improving provision and redressing inequalities, substantial effort is still required to transform South Africa's schools into enabling physical teaching and learning environments.
- 1.18. The NEIMS showed that in 2006, a substantial proportion of schools could not be classified as providing an enabling physical teaching and learning environment. Nearly 15 percent of learners were taught in environments that expose them to danger and to potential health hazards. About a quarter of classrooms were overcrowded. Intolerably high proportions of schools lacked facilities that are critical to teaching and learning such as libraries, science laboratories, computers and other ICTs. Data on the adequacy of books and instructional materials is at best scanty. About 62 percent of schools had no arrangements for sewage disposal. Nearly 80 percent of schools had more than 50 learners per toilet. Of the schools that reportedly had a source of safe water, 56 percent were served by the municipality of which nearly 17 percent experienced unreliable water supplies. Unreliable supply of electricity was

also common among schools that reportedly had it. While school construction had increased, maintenance had deteriorated. In 1996, 11 003 schools were reportedly in excellent to good condition. By 2000, the number had dropped to 5 078. In 2006, 26 percent of schools were in either poor or very poor condition.

- 1.19. Not surprisingly, persisting inadequacies in the physical teaching and learning environment have gained significant media and political attention, even prominently featuring in the Presidential State of the Nation Address of February 2005.
- 1.20. In response, the 2008/2012 strategic plan of the System Planning and Monitoring branch of the DoE identifies the development of norms and standards as well as the Basic Minimum Package (BMP) for the provision of school infrastructure as a first priority policy issue. It also identifies the development of “physical resources for quality education especially school infrastructure” as a second strategic priority action. One of the key actions under this strategic priority is the development of a comprehensive investment plan “based on agreed norms and standards...”
- 1.21. This policy responds to persisting challenges in the provision of an enabling physical teaching and learning environment. It builds on successes of the past decade and endeavors to address persisting gaps. It takes the future development to the next level that should enable South Africa to equitably and efficiently provide high quality learning environments, culturally sensitive values and development-related education, training and skills development experiences for *all* its learners. The policy seeks to transform the environment into an enabler for effective implementation of sector policies, effective curricula delivery, and effective teaching and learning processes.