Learning for Success
DA Policy on Basic Education

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Introduction

*Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation – Nelson Mandela*

Education is a **constitutional right**, a **basic human right**, a strategic **priority** and the best possible **vehicle to empower** South Africans and to develop our country.

In the global knowledge economy success depends on quality education. Those with a quality education can fulfil their potential. Those without it are destined to remain excluded from opportunities and dependent on the state to survive.

This policy details our offer on education for jobs

**Quality education** is the key to improved quality of life. It empowers individuals to obtain a fulfilling job, contribute to the economy and utilise their talents to the full.

Education is already an important national priority. In the 2012-2013 financial year we spent R218 billion, approximately one-fifth (19.6%) of our national budget, on education.

The return on investment on the other hand has been unsatisfactory. While we have improved access to education, with the number of learners writing matric increasing from 109 807 in 1980 to 511 152 full time candidates in 2012, we have not improved the quality of outcomes.

International assessments highlight the **problems in our education system**. The 2012 *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS) report ranks South Africa third last of the 63 countries and 14 participating benchmark countries for mathematics. The 2012 *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study* (PIRLS) placed South Africa fourth last of the 49 countries and 9 benchmark countries for literacy.

Increasing pass rates for the National Senior Certificate (NSC) belie the true state of affairs in our education system. Of the 1 130 659 learners who registered for Grade 1 in 2001, 619 507 dropped out of the school system. Based on these figures, the “real” pass rate for 2012 was not the 73.9% proudly proclaimed by the ANC government, but a troubling 37.5%.

In 2012, 26.6% of candidates achieved bachelor passes; the real bachelor pass rate was a meagre 9.97%. This means that only 1 in 10 students who began schooling in 2001 had the option to go to university.

A growing lack of faith in the public education system is indicated by an almost tripling of the number of registered independent schools from 565 in 1995 to 1 571 in 2012.
It is clear that many schools in South Africa are not able to offer learners the opportunity to fulfil their ambitions.

South Africa’s ability to promote inclusive growth depends on producing successive generations of well-educated young people contributing to socio-economic development. A South African society with a large, well-educated population will overcome more easily the many obstacles to social and economic equality experienced by the majority of households.

(Forinancial and Fiscal Commission, 2012)

While spending money on education is important, it is not enough. It is what is taught, how it is taught and how the system is managed that matter.

The DA’s education policy is focused on instilling quality, accountability and strong leadership into the system. In national government we will have a sustained, focused and systematic approach to improving education. Educational budgets, policies and operational decisions will consistently be subjected to the simple litmus test of whether each will improve the educational value in South African classrooms.

We believe that only quality education will allow us to deliver on our vision of opportunities for all. A national DA government will work with provincial education departments, seeking to ensure:

- That every child has an opportunity to learn in a safe, supportive environment.
- That our children emerge from school having mastered the fundamentals of literacy and numeracy at internationally benchmarked levels, with their education having emphasised information literacy to prepare them for the modern economy.
- That our children are nurtured to become well-rounded citizens who have the discipline, work-ethic and courage to use their skills and talent to pursue their dreams.
- That our youth are inspired to contribute to the success of our country, to reach out to fellow South Africans as nation builders, to grow the economy through entrepreneurship and to tackle our social challenges.

The state, in constructive partnership with private enterprise, civil society, teachers and parents, must provide the opportunities for all to fulfil their potential.

To improve education outcomes, our focus will be on:

- establishing an enabling regulatory environment for educational excellence;
- improving school management and teacher quality;
- promoting accountability through appropriate assessment of (i) academic performance and, (ii) adherence to the principles of good governance;
- rewarding good management, teacher and learner performance;
- aligning education outcomes with the world of work by regularly reviewing the curriculum to ensure that it equips learners for participation in a competitive, global knowledge economy; and
- creating a school environment that is conducive to learning.

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1. Structuring the schooling system for performance

Quality of education, and the opportunities linked to such quality, should not be determined by a child’s circumstances of birth.

Inequality within the South African school system limits the opportunities of many young people. While some under-resourced schools produce excellent results, learners attending schools in more affluent areas are still more likely to perform well than learners attending schools in poverty-stricken areas. Similarly, learners in schools in urban areas are far more likely to be exposed to well-resourced schools and to qualified teachers for every subject than those in rural areas.

South Africa has reached high educational attainment relative to other emerging countries, but education quality has been low and very uneven. (OECD, 2013)

There are also significant regional disparities in learning outcomes, with learners attending schools in Gauteng or the Western Cape being far more likely to succeed than learners attending schools in provinces where provincial governments are crumbling, for example in Limpopo and the Eastern Cape.

1.1. An enabling regulatory framework

The DA believes that schools should be given as much freedom as possible to manage themselves, within a clear and well-managed regulatory framework provided by government.

South Africa has excellent public schools characterised by strong governance, committed teachers and highly involved parents. These schools have recognised the importance of accountability to their learners and to the parents of their learners.

Given the reality of inequality within the schooling system, we recognise that not all schools currently have inherent capacity to achieve excellence. Schools require varying levels of assistance in developing effective school-based management systems.

The capacity of a school to manage itself and the results produced at that school will determine the level of government involvement in the management of the school.

Higher degrees of autonomy must be coupled with greater clarity around the agreed parameters within which autonomy is exercised.

Higher degrees of autonomy must be coupled with greater clarity around the agreed parameters within which autonomy is exercised (for example around academic standards, accountability with regard the use of public funds, fair labour practice and guidelines on dealing with disciplinary matters).

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a. Minimising bureaucracy
South Africa spends approximately 20% of its national budget on education. The return cannot mirror the investment unless the bulk of this spending is focused on addressing the needs of learners.

Spending on administrative systems must be limited to that which is absolutely necessary to maintain good governance and to improve learning by improving schools, teachers and school management.

Administrative requirements for teachers must be kept to a minimum, with school leadership teams taking responsibility for reporting on performance and providing the information required to maintain high levels of accountability.

Streamlined online systems (such as the online School Improvement Plan management tool used in the Western Cape) should be used to minimise the administrative burden on school managers.

b. Norms and standards for school management
The national government must determine appropriate norms and standards for schools. These norms will guide the activities of schools and the metrics in terms of which they must provide management information to oversight structures.

Minimum norms and standards must include the following:

- **A code of conduct.** All teachers must know that they are subject to a code of conduct that is effectively enforced by a professional body for teachers.

- **Governance requirements.** All schools must be obliged to provide detailed financial and management information to provincial education department, set out on easily accessible pro forma documents. Schools will also be required to make financial information available at the annual budget meeting at which school fees for the upcoming year are discussed and set by parents. Parents will also be empowered to interpret this information through training and information packs.

- **The formulas for public funding for schools** based on reasonable calculations of the operational expenses involved in schooling and the implied cost per pupil.

- **Post provisioning.** The DA will work towards achieving maximum class sizes or learner:teacher ratios of 30:1 unless entirely unavoidable. This ideal ratio will be taken into account in norms and standards for post provisioning.

- **Professional development.** The DA will gazette minimum on-going professional development requirements for school managers, teachers and for office-based staff tasked with support of school activities.

- **School management tools.** All schools will be required to develop school improvement plans. These plans will be directly linked to district improvement plans. Schools will be expected to provide feedback on outcomes achieved against set targets to the relevant district office, and, indirectly, to the provincial education department. The online School Improvement Plan

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1 Whilst learner:teacher ratios in developed countries with well-performing education systems are much lower (e.g. 9.3 in Sweden and 22.0 in South Korea [OECD, 2013], our aim will be to reduce class sizes over time.
management tool will require schools to set targets for, *inter alia*, improvements for each grade, absentee rates for learners and educators and the number of learners repeating a year.

c. **Norms for a “core minimum” of resources**
Many schools still lack the facilities and resources that enable effective teaching and learning.

It is the government’s obligation to ensure that no learner’s educational advancement is prejudiced by the learning environment.

The DA will establish basic infrastructure and resource standards for schools, including (but not limited to):

- Safe and appropriate classroom structures;
- Access to utilities (such as water and electricity);
- Access to sanitation services;
- Libraries, laboratories and workshops; and
- Basic information technology and communications equipment.

The basic standards will be coupled with a time frame for achieving acceptable minima for every learner.

A commitment, coupled to timeframes, will be in place to roll out other education resources, such as libraries and science laboratories, as rapidly as is reasonably practicable. Creative mechanisms to ensure no prejudice to learning through lack of such resources in the short term will include the sharing of facilities between schools, the use of publicly available facilities (such as public libraries) and other alternatives, such as “bookmobile” vans and online library databases to provide library services.

d. **Benchmarking for excellence**
The best performing schools from both affluent and under-resourced areas must be analysed to allow for the identification of best-practice models that can be replicated in other environments.

Particular attention should be paid to recommendations made based on case studies on the management approaches of under-resourced schools that produce excellent academic results despite their circumstances.

e. **Top notch systemic support**
Provincial education departments and district offices must be capacitated to provide top notch support to schools. Provincial and district officials play a critical role in monitoring school performance, providing support where appropriate and making systemic improvements to increase the quality of education outcomes over time.

Where we govern, the DA will:
- Appoint skilled professionals with suitable experience in education environments in provincial education departments; and
- Make sure that district officials have the resources and skills that they need to be effective in their supportive role in the education system.
1.2. Effective leadership and management

a. School principals

There is increasing recognition that effective leadership and management are vital if schools are to be successful in providing good learning opportunities for students, and emerging evidence that high quality leadership makes a significant difference to school improvement and learning outcomes.

(Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011)

Studies show that school leadership is “second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning” and that schools cannot improve learner outcomes in the absence of talented leadership.

To improve the outcomes of the schooling system, the DA would therefore prioritise the development of strong school leadership through both (i) the identification of potential leaders and the provision of suitable support before they are appointed and (ii) development opportunities for practising principals.

This will be achieved through the following:

- Minimum qualifications criteria for school principals - which will include a focus on the specific management skills required for school management.
- Performance-related incentives for school management, based on (i) excellence in education outcomes as measured through national assessments, or (ii) improvement in education outcomes over time.
- Rigorous performance management for school principals as the basis for targeted support and intervention where required and for appropriate action where minimum performance standards are not met.
- Ideally, allowing school principals to focus on their management responsibilities.

b. School governing bodies

School Governing Bodies (SGBs) including teachers, school management, learners and elected representatives from the parent community of a school have important legal powers, including:

- Deciding on the admission policy of a school (consistent with constitutional principles);
- Establishing policy on the language of instruction;
- Establishing a policy on religion at a school;
- Adopting a learner code of conduct;
- Adopting a constitutions for the SGB;
- Administering and controlling the budgets and property of schools;
- Determining school fees in consultation with parents (where applicable); and
- Interviewing and nominating principals and teachers for appointment.

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5 Bush et al, 2011.
It is therefore profoundly concerning that an as much as 80% of SGBs across the country are considered to be dysfunctional and are deemed not to possess the necessary insight and skills to carry out their responsibilities.\footnote{John, V. 2012. ‘Most school governing bodies don’t work’, in Mail & Guardian. Available. [Online]: \url{http://mg.co.za/article/2012-02-02-most-school-governing-bodies-dysfunctional-say-associations} (October 2013).}

The DA will prioritise the effective functioning of SGBs by:

- Educating communities on the role of SGBs, the power and responsibilities of elected members and their own responsibility in electing representatives to SGBs;
- Establishing provincial electoral teams to ensure that all schools are adequately prepared for SGB elections;
- A national assessment of the effectiveness of SGBs and skills gaps that must be filled;
- Focussed training for SGB members; and
- A determination of financial support necessary to ensure effective SGB functioning (eg covering transport costs of indigent parents), and an investigation into how best to achieve this.

**1.3. Responsible self-management for high-performing schools**

The most constructive way to improve the accountability and quality of outcomes for individual schools is to set a sound management and performance framework on a departmental level, locate decision-making at the appropriate level and to then maximise parental choice, and increase school autonomy within this framework.

Schools that adhere to the principles of good governance and that produce good education results should receive accreditation which will allow them more powers and greater control over staff, finances and administration. They will be entitled to manage their own affairs within the framework of norms and standards legislation. The performance of schools will be evaluated in terms of Grade 12 results, performance in standardised tests for lower grades and compliance with financial requirements.

Basic principles underlying this approach include the following:

- *Leave good management teams alone.* Where management teams have demonstrated their capacity to adhere to good governance principles and produce excellent educational results they should be empowered to make independent decisions about their own schools and school environments;
- *The responsibilities of principals will be matched with an appropriate level of authority over the teachers at their schools (including greater autonomy in managing teacher performance and discipline);* and
- *Limit political interference in teacher appointments.* Where schools are producing good results, the DA will limit political involvement in teacher appointments, and will require only a basic evaluation by the provincial department of education on whether a teacher would be fit for employment in the school system. At schools that fail to deliver the required education outcomes, the department should play a more “hands-on” role to ensure appropriate appointments to improve learning outcomes.
1.4. Performance management for weak schools

Many South African schools do not currently have the required systems in place to ensure that the school is managed well, and do not produce academic results that would warrant a hands-off approach by provincial and national education departments.

Schools that do not meet minimum criteria for good governance and who consistently produce poor academic outcomes will be more closely monitored and directly supported by the district offices of the relevant provincial education departments.

Continuous systemic improvements must be aimed at ensuring that underperforming schools (with pass rates of less than 60%) do not become completely dysfunctional over time. Schools are considered to be dysfunctional if they have pass rates that are lower than 20% or have failed to produce acceptable quarterly reports for more than two consecutive quarters.

In 2012, there were 7 schools that had a 0% pass rate and 126 schools that had pass rates lower than 20%.

Under DA government, the number of underperforming schools in the Western Cape has been reduced from 85 in 2009 to 26 in 2013. The provincial education department has set itself a target to reduce the number of underperforming schools to zero by the end of 2014.

In national government, we would seek to eliminate dysfunctional and underperforming schools altogether.

To support performance improvement in underperforming schools and achieve turnaround in schools that are considered dysfunctional the DA will:

- **Use the available management tools** (such as the school improvement plan management tool used in the Western Cape) to identify struggling schools as early as possible and to provide them with the appropriate support.

- **Make the buck stop with the management team.** Principals, their deputies and heads of department, as members of school management teams, that are not succeeding in delivering good results will be supported by district officials to develop clear, realistic and customised performance targets for the school, management and individual educators as part of a holistic school improvement plan. Performance improvement will be closely monitored. If targets are not met for protracted periods, disciplinary action could be considered against management teams.

- **Provide an appropriate level of support.** Principals require support to use their authority effectively. This support could include in-service training specific to their role as senior managers in an education environment or structured assistance with labour issues (including preparing principals to take appropriate action in the event of dereliction of duties by teachers).

- **Ensuring excellence.** Poor educator selection is likely to be a factor in the poor results of underperforming schools. Appointments in these schools must therefore be closely monitored by provincial education departments. This should include (i) examining the credentials of educators whom these schools employ to ensure that they fulfil the requirements of the school,
the grade(s) and the subject(s) they are to teach, (ii) giving potentially suitable incumbents who do not meet basic criteria the option of obtaining the necessary qualifications and/or skills within an agreed time period, with failure to do so triggering disciplinary intervention.

- **Implement appropriate improvement programmes in every relevant grade.** Such improvement programmes could include: (i) providing learners with study guidelines, (ii) providing learners with previous examination papers, (iii) regular visits to the school by officials to provide curriculum support and monitoring, (iv) extra tuition for learners, (v) subject-specific support to educators, (vi) telematics projects which broadcasts lessons via satellite, (vii) personal mentoring for teachers of learners at risk, and (viii) providing learners with safe homework and study spaces.

### 2. Teaching excellence

*Teacher quality is the most important lever for improving pupil outcomes*°.

International experience shows that the most effective way to improve education outcomes is to improve teacher quality°.°

South Africa faces challenges both with regard to the quality and quantity of teachers. Research by the Centre for Development and Enterprise shows that South Africa’s teacher training system is producing only a third of the country’s requirement of around 25 000 teachers a year, that the teacher age profile suggests that we may soon face a teacher shortage (more than 2/3 of teachers are over the age of 40) and that many of the country’s existing teachers are poorly trained – especially in critical subjects like mathematics, science and technology°.

Government should work towards:

- attracting and retaining talented, committed teachers;
- ensuring that teacher training supports better learner outcomes;
- providing teachers with appropriate support and opportunities for continued professional development;
- rewarding good teachers for performance; and
- terminating, through due process, the employment of teachers who do not meet quality criteria.

Because the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers°, teacher quality must be the first priority of our education system.

#### 2.1. Attracting great teachers

To attract good teachers and increase the output of the teacher training system by around 15 000 per year, the DA will:

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° Centre for Development Enterprise, 2009.


• Promote careers in education through a “become a teacher campaign” focussed on the top cohort of learners and through which teachers are encouraged to identify learners with potential as teaching professionals to guide them in accessing funding and choosing between training options.

• Devise more appropriate training programmes for teachers: As most of the current programmes are highly theoretical, the DA proposes a combination of academic and practical training. We support programmes that enable trainee teachers to serve in classrooms with master teachers in order to acquire the practice and ethos of their profession at a high level.

• Investigate the possibility of employing teacher assistants in difficult-to-manage classroom environments (such as multi-grade classes), with Grade 12 as a minimum qualification, with the aim of supporting such assistants to study towards a professional teaching qualification.

• Broden access to bursaries for teacher training. Bursary schemes will be modelled on the Funza Lushaka programme in terms of which bursary holders are required to teach at a public school for the same number of years for which a bursary was received. The selection process will include screening to ensure, as far as possible, that candidates are people of integrity, with strong moral codes and high levels of commitment to their chosen future profession. The bursary scheme will also be utilised to contract graduate teachers to teach in rural areas.

• Professionalise the teaching profession by requiring teachers to be registered with a national professional body (such as the South African Council for Educators) and to be licenced in the jurisdiction in which they wish to teach. Basic minimum requirements for licensing could be set by the national government, but licencing will be managed by provincial education departments (who are the employers) and could include competency testing.

• Actively look beyond the borders of South Africa to attract foreign skills to our educational system and collaborate with the Department of Home Affairs to streamline applications for work permits from teachers with identified scarce skills.

• Promote short term teaching contracts to recent university graduates in subjects in which there is a shortage of teachers. These students will be offered two-year teaching contracts conditional on the student doing a truncated teacher training course and being mentored by an experienced teacher at the schools where they teach. Graduates participating in this programme will qualify for partial re-funding of their university fees. Efforts can be made to attract private sector funding for the top-up of salaries to graduates with scarce skills who get involved in this programme. By exposing graduates to teaching, more highly qualified people could be attracted to the profession.

• Enabling excellent teachers to advance their careers in the classroom. Currently, in order to qualify for promotion and salary progression, teachers are required to go into school (and eventually departmental) management. The DA will enable outstanding teachers, particularly in subjects where there is a teacher shortage, to progress up the career and remuneration ladder without having to abandon teaching.

2.2. Training for excellence

Teaching excellence requires excellence in the training of teachers.

The DA believes that teacher training should be predicated on the following principles:
• Broaden training opportunities for teachers by establishing dedicated teaching colleges which may be linked to universities.
• Access to teacher training opportunities in poorer and more isolated areas of the country can be facilitated through satellite campuses linked to established universities.
• Teacher training courses must be academically rigorous, intellectually challenging and wholly focussed on producing graduates who have the requisite subject knowledge as well as the ability to impart that knowledge effectively: such courses must be developed through intimate interaction between the Department of Basic Education and colleges or universities, and must be regularly reviewed and improved to ensure quality teaching and optimal learner outcomes;
• There must be an appropriate balance between subject knowledge, pedagogical methods and management skills in support of good educational governance.
• There must be a strong focus on classroom experience, with a minimum level of practical experience being required for registration as a teacher - such practical experience must be obtained in a school accredited for teacher training.
• Universities should be encouraged to use interviews and character references as a screening tool for potential students.
• Computer literacy must be a compulsory part of all teaching qualifications and should be prioritised in all subsequent training programmes.
• New teachers should be appointed on a one year probation. Probation can be extended if a teacher does not meet minimum performance criteria. There will be a responsibility on the employer to support new teachers through the probationary period to address performance shortcomings. Permanent appointment should be conditional on a confirmation of the performance record of a new teacher by the leadership team at his/ her school (including the principal, deputy principal and relevant head of department).
• Teacher training curricula must make provision for the fact that up to 26% of South Africa’s schools make use of multi-grade classes and that teachers should be equipped to deal with the unique challenges faced in multi-grade teaching scenarios.

2.3. Maintaining teacher quality
Many teachers do not have the skilled and detailed knowledge they need to give their learners the education they need. Teacher training is vital, but it must take teachers out of the classroom for as little time as possible, if at all.

* Sustained teacher support and on-going professional development makes a difference, as teachers learn to be teachers by teaching and learning from more experienced peers. (Centre for Development Enterprise, 2009) 

The DA supports the following measures to maintain and improve teacher quality:
• The development of a system of Continued Professional Development (CPD), including standardised knowledge assessments, through which a minimum number of credits must be earned over a three year period for a teacher to retain his or her licence to teach in a particular jurisdiction.
• The use of competency tests for the markers of all public exams, including Grade 12 markers (as per the Western Cape model).
Where teachers fail to attain the minimum required credits through the CPD system, they will be supported through access to subject coaches who will help them improve their learning methods and develop their skills to the point where they are able to pass standard assessments. If the minimum credits are, however, not obtained within an agreed timeframe, teachers will lose their licence to teach in the relevant jurisdiction. Re-training could require teachers to spend longer periods away from the classroom, with continued employment being subject to competency tests.

Information on teacher qualifications and data from assessments will be collated in a comprehensive database of teacher capabilities, which will determine training, skills development and hiring needs.

**Strengthening the role of district officials** in monitoring whether teachers are in fact qualified to teach the subjects which they are responsible for and to recommend CPD courses where concerns arise around teacher quality.

**Smart use of information technology** to provide comprehensive support to teachers. Training material on subject-related content as well as pedagogical and management skills should be made available through internet-based resources. Knowledge sharing can be facilitated through online coaching and discussion forums with peers.

### 2.4. Rewarding performance

Effective schooling systems need to attract and retain talented teachers, and improve their knowledge and teaching skills. Teachers should be adequately supported, and their performance should be closely monitored. Teachers who do not meet required standards must be encouraged to leave the system, thus making way for others. Teaching must be regarded as a prestigious profession, and good teachers should be rewarded.

(Centre for Development Enterprise, 2009)

Teachers should be rewarded for performance. Performance evaluation is currently limited to peer-review systems with minimal impact on teacher remuneration, or indeed, independently assessed learner outcomes.

The DA will prioritise the development of a comprehensive performance management system for teachers. The system will:

- Be integrated with information systems on teacher training and assessments through the Continued Professional Development programme;
- Balance performance criteria pertaining to subject knowledge with other qualities, including enthusiasm, teamwork, creativity and adherence to the teacher Code of Conduct;
- Have a strong focus on the learner outcomes (against set targets) achieved by individual teachers;
- Be used to identify training needs and development areas; and
- Give recognition for involvement in extramural activities beyond a minimum requirement.

Information from the system will be used in decisions on promotions and performance-related incentives. It will also be considered, alongside learner outcomes, in decisions on provincial or district-level teacher awards linked to monetary incentives. Priority will be given to incentives that
can further improve teacher or learner performance – for example study tours to successful school districts or countries that follow innovative education models which could be relevant to South Africa.

The DA would separate schools into two categories with different levels of responsibility for implementing performance management systems.

- All secondary schools which achieved a matric pass rate of less than 60%, and all primary schools which reached less than a predetermined level of achievement in national assessments in Grade 3, 6 and 9, will be subjected to external review by the provincial department of education. This will involve visits by departmental representatives to classrooms, interviews by departmental representatives with teachers, principals and learners, and the compilation of a detailed report on each of these schools analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the school as a whole, as well as the people within it. In these schools, performance assessments may be externally reviewed.
- Schools with satisfactory academic performance that adhere to minimum requirements in terms of governance and financial management will be given more authority to manage performance assessments and the related rewards and incentives within clear guidelines provided by the department.

2.5. Supporting quality teaching

Teaching quality can also be supported through other interventions aimed at relieving the pressure on teaching professionals.

Consideration will be given to:

- Maintaining reasonable class sizes and aiming to reduce class sizes over time. Teacher: learner ratios will be determined by dividing the number of learners by the number of active teachers, and will not include education officials who do not directly engage with learners. Cognisance will be taken of the need to deviate from the initial ratio calculation in cases where classes are unusually large or small for specific subjects or grades.
- Using roving teachers who will not be employed at a specific school, but will serve a number of schools within a district, teaching a single subject in which they have particular expertise. This will reduce pressure on teachers in smaller schools who are compelled to teach a number of different subjects and are therefore unable to maintain a high level of subject knowledge in all the subjects for which they are responsible.
- Maintaining a hands-on role for subject advisors. Subject advisors should be experts in their particular subject fields and should be able to attain recognition as master teachers based on proven success in their pedagogical techniques. This could provide an alternative career path for teaching experts who do not wish to assume management positions. Classroom-based learning should be prioritised in interaction between subject advisors and teachers. These subject experts can also be involved or used in the development of ICT-based learning solutions (e.g. satellite lessons, lesson DVDs or social media town halls for teachers).
- Making provision for teacher assistant posts. These assistant teachers will be paid at a lower rate than qualified teachers. A dedicated budget will be given to each school to create such posts. Teacher assistants will generally be matriculants who have completed a short training course in
education techniques. Provision can also be made for parents to volunteer as teacher assistants. This group will provide help to teachers in the classroom and ensure that teachers can focus their energy on learning and learner outcomes. Matriculants who have worked as teacher assistants can get preferential consideration when applying for further studies as teachers through the Funza Lushaka scheme.

- Implementing meaningful incentives to encourage quality teaching in rural and “difficult-to-teach” environments;
- Encouraging teachers with similar challenges or interests (e.g. subject-related or with regard to specific social challenges in school areas) to form associations or support groups where ideas and support mechanisms can be shared in informal discussions.

3. Categories of schooling

3.1. Pre-school and early childhood development

Early childhood development commences at birth, and is currently the responsibility of the departments of education from the year prior to Grade 1, currently known as the “reception” year, when young learners enter Grade R. The DA would, over a reasonable period, extend the department of education’s responsibility for early childhood education to incorporate the two years prior to Grade 1.

Early childhood education is crucial in preparing children for school, particularly where children come from environments of low stimulation.

*The support to Grade R is consistent with the idea of building early learning foundations and minimising the wastage associated with ill-prepared learners.*

(Wildeman & Hemmer-Vitti, 2010)\(^{11}\)

In government, the DA would improve collaboration between the Departments of Basic Education and Social Development to develop a national network of early childhood education centres for children aged 0 to 4. Public-private partnerships and partnerships with community-based and non-governmental organisations will be explored and encouraged to achieve access to these centres for all children.

To ensure that learners are appropriately prepared to enter the foundation phase of their schooling, the DA supports the following:

- Formal Grade R classes at every public primary school (shared classes can be used in cases where learner numbers do not allow for a full post of a Grade R teacher).
- A per-child Grade R subsidy from the state to all public schools, allowing fee-free access to Grade R at fee-free schools.
- A formal curriculum for Grade R teaching, based on a thoroughly researched understanding of the cognitive development required to prepare a child for success in Grade 1 and beyond.

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• A strong focus on language acquisition to ensure that learners enter Grade 1 with the necessary linguistic skills to process learning and learning materials.
• The acceptance of school readiness criteria, which, if not met by the completion of the Grade R programme, will require the learner to remain in Grade R for a further year. Such repetition will trigger automatic individualised intervention by master Grade R subject advisors.
• A formal qualification for Grade R teachers.
• The recognition of qualified people as Grade R teachers, and the registration and compensation of these professionals as such.

3.2. Public schools
A public school is provided by the government, and is either an ordinary public school or a public school for learners with special needs. The school is a juristic person with its rights and powers exercised by a school governing body. Infrastructure, resources and staffing must be supplied by the government according to the norms and standards for each. This can be supplemented utilising funding raised by the school governing body.

The government should provide funding for fee-free public schools. School governing bodies, in consultation with parents, should be empowered to decide to charge fees to realise the desired resourcing level.

The greater the degree of excellence achieved by a public school, both in terms of learner outcomes and of evidence of good governance, the greater the degree of autonomy a public school should enjoy. Inadequate performance should, however, trigger more direct involvement by district and provincial officials in the management of a school.

3.3. Independent schools
South Africa must mobilise all available resources to increase the number of children who have access to quality educational opportunities.


\textit{The majority of learners at independent schools are now black, while the majority of schools are young (established since 1990), and charge low to mid-level fees. While many of the new black elite are sending their children to high-fee independent schools, the majority of learners are drawn from the black middle- and working-class and families in the informal-sector.} \cite{Hofmeyer & McKay, 2009}

Between 2000 and 2012, the growth in independent schools has increased from 2% to 6% per year and the number of learners in independent schools has more than doubled (from 256 283 to 504 395)\(^{14}\). Learners in independent schools now make up 4% of all learners, and 73% of learners in independent schools are black\(^{15}\).

Various institutions in South Africa have established independent schools that cater mainly for learners who would otherwise have had to attend fee-free public schools. Companies are entering the education business by establishing school chains. They are able to set up the administration systems efficiently for large numbers of schools. They develop a central curriculum and teaching and learning materials which they make available at an affordable unit cost to all the schools in the chain. Funding is facilitated through fees, donations and shareholding.

However, the DA recognises that some independent schools are set up by individuals who are unable to provide the requisite quality of education or infrastructure, and whose outcomes fall far below the required benchmark. It is therefore essential for outcomes to be monitored carefully across the system.

The DA would:

- **Acknowledge that independent schools relieve the burden on the state** to provide schooling for all.
- **Simplify the legal requirements for the registration of independent schools** including proposing amendments to the South African Schools Act to include provisions for interim registration status.
- **Promote excellence in independent schools** by making continued registration dependent on educational results and not just access to specific resources and facilities.
- **Support independent schools financially** upon successful application by the schools. Continued funding would be linked to evidence of excellence in learner outcomes and in school governance.
- **Recognise that independent schools expand choice available to all learners**. Independent schools broaden the choice of parents in terms of the kind of schooling they want for their children. Appropriate levels of public funding for various categories of independent schools will make it a more affordable option for all learners and save taxpayers’ money in broadening access to quality educational opportunities.
- **Support the competitive environment** that would be created by increasing choice, and increasing access to excellent schools.

Expanding the independent schooling sector presents a solution to both the access and quality challenges, especially in the case of low-fee schools that can reach un- and underserved children. However, there are several levers that need to be addressed if the sector is to grow in the most effective way. Increasing the available income to low-fee private schools through review of subsidies, finding new financing models and building


\(^{15}\) Dardagan, 2013.
The existence of independent schools will not in any way reduce the responsibility of the state to ensure that affordable, high quality school education is available to every learner.

3.4. Special and remedial education

The DA recognises the importance of addressing the education requirements of learners with special or remedial education needs, and will seek to meet them efficiently and effectively. Every child matters and the life opportunities for a child with special education needs must be maximised.

Informed parental choice is the key to a pragmatic and flexible policy. While some parents favour special schools, or special classes, others prefer their children to be integrated into mainstream schools. Parents of children with special educational needs must be comprehensively counselled on the options, and the implications of each.

*Children should not have to wait to fail before they are helped.*

(Fabbri, 2013)

The DA will place a strong emphasis on ensuring that the requirements of special-needs learners are adequately met, whether through dedicated schools, through special needs classes in mainstream schools or through support for accommodation of learners with special needs in mainstream classes. It is equally important to ensure that special needs pupils are taught by teachers who are properly trained.

We will:

- Introduce *sight and hearing tests* in schools to ensure that learner problems are identified early and managed appropriately – as per the model of mobile school health clinics being piloted in the Western Cape as a partnership between the Departments of Education and Health.
- Ensure that, as far as possible, schools and school infrastructure are *accessible* to learners with physical disabilities.
- *Ensure that state-provided schooling options are available for learners with a range of special needs.* Where these needs are not met, the DA will allow for a subsidy system to ensure that their needs can be met through the private or NGO sector.
- *Ensure that special needs schools and classes are staffed by teachers who are trained* to manage their particular needs.
- *Ensure that there is at least one school catering for special needs learners in every school district* within a determined period and that learners are directed to the schools that can best support their unique needs.
- *Encourage parents to have appropriate testing done as soon as possible* when they suspect that a child may have unique learning needs and ensure that all teachers are well-informed on how to access testing and support services.

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• Make a concerted effort to intervene in the Grade R, foundation and intermediate phases in respect of special needs issues and remedial issues. If a learner can be guided along the correct path during these phases, it will set a good precedent for his or her future scholastic/academic prospects, hence the emphasis on special needs/remedial issues.

• Strongly encourage, and facilitate the establishment of more remedial classes within schools. Learners who are weak academically for whatever reason, but who do not need specialised schooling, or whose parents do not want them to receive specialised schooling, must have an alternative to improve their performance within mainstream schools.

• Ensure that social workers are available to these schools. Parents, learners, staff members and the community surrounding these facilities need to have help to manage their problems and respond to the stigma that faces many of these children.

• Ensure that sufficient appropriately-trained and skilled therapists are available to support the development of learners with special educational needs. Roving therapists, either employed by the education departments or contracted individuals or companies, would maximise the care available to learners.

• Ensure that all learners with special education needs are taught by appropriately-trained and skilled teachers. The DA will cooperate with universities to develop appropriate courses for special needs teachers, including courses covering Braille and sign language.

• Ensure that appropriate teaching resources and necessary assistive devices are available, maximising the use of information technology to achieve this.

• Recognise that exceptionally gifted children have similarly unique needs and ensure that these children are adequately supported and stimulated to make the most of their time in the formal education system.

3.5. Independently-managed public schools
The DA believes that it must be the first priority of government to make quality public schooling available to all South Africans.

In addition, we believe that it is possible to create a legislative and policy framework that allows for alternative models.

This could include providing public funding to private organisations delivering quality schooling outside of the public education system, whilst maintaining public accountability.

This could include models such as (i) the Charter school model used in Washington and Boston in the United States, where non government-run public schools can operate on the basis of charters determining service level and performance commitments, (ii) partnerships between the department of education and private entities - a model currently being promoted in India as a means of broadening access to quality education, or (iii) appropriately supported home schooling.

3.6. Vocational schools
The DA is cognisant of the need, within the country’s economy, for persons with practical skills, and of the entrepreneurial opportunities linked to the acquisition of such skills. We also recognise that
not all children are academically inclined, and are disadvantaged by the paucity of alternatives to academic schooling in South Africa.

There is no reason why schooling in traditional trades and modern practical subjects should be offered only via Further Education and Training Colleges. Indeed, such schooling should be available from Grade 8 in South Africa’s schools.

The DA will facilitate aptitude tests for all learners in Grade 7, to guide their choice between academic and vocational curricula. Learners will then have defined opportunities to re-enter the academic stream.

Education-industry partnerships will be developed to inform appropriate curricula. Learners must be able to choose subject packages that constitute specific vocational fields, such as the technological, hospitality and tourism, information technology and agricultural fields.

The apprenticeship model that was extremely successfully implemented in South Africa will be utilised to guide the effective, early and extended implementation of vocational training in our schools.

Learners with special educational needs will be offered the same choice, through dedicated schools of skill, with offerings such as massage therapy, beadwork, hairdressing, carpentry, catering, etc.

4. Funding school education

The funding model for schools must seek to promote equity in educational quality over time and to incentivise both learner and school performance.

4.1. State subsidies

a. Equitable funding
Public schooling must be affordable to all.

A basic minimum per-learner subsidy will be calculated annually. This subsidy will be adequate to cover basic operating costs of a school, and will be available to all public schools and qualifying independent schools.

The DA will allocate further funding to public schools on the basis that schools serving disadvantaged learners must receive more than schools serving affluent learners of which parents have greater capacity to contribute towards improvements and upkeep and where access to resources and facilities is already relatively good.

The DA supports the designation of certain schools in serving disadvantaged learners as fee-free or no-fee schools and will continue to fully subsidise these schools. We will, however, require these schools to account properly for their finances.
In addition, we believe that schools can continue to be supported financially through:

- Compensation for fee exemptions;
- Bringing support to quintile 1 to 3 schools to the same level as soon as possible (there was initially significant variation in the subsidies paid to no-fee schools in different quintiles); and
- Assistance to fee-paying (quintile 4 and 5) schools where the school fees plus the public funding is less than the benchmark allocation to no-fee schools. Over time, this can ensure that no learner receives less financial support than the benchmark contribution for no-fee schools.

b. **Paying for performance**

Schools that have met or exceeded agreed targets should benefit through additional resources.

The DA will assess schools on the basis of both learner outcomes (results in Grade 12 and other national assessments) and adherence to governance requirements. Performance will be assessed over a five year rolling period. Both excellence in results improvements over time will be recognised.

Schools that meet listed criteria will be accredited for the purposes of the training of teachers (during the practical component of their studies.) Training schools will be compensated, per trainee teacher, for undertaking this critical guidance of future educators.

c. **School vouchers**

The DA would facilitate public debate on the potential of a school voucher programme to facilitate greater school choice for all learners and the possibility of piloting voucher programmes to test its efficacy in the South African context.

Voucher programmes allow learners to exchange government-issued vouchers for all or part of the fee required at high-performing independent or public schools.

By establishing a “market for education”, voucher systems can provide an incentive for all schools to improve their performance in order to attract learners. Accountability can also be improved as learners who are dissatisfied with the education quality at a school will more easily be able to choose to attend an alternative school.

4.2. **School fund-raising**

All schools should be encouraged to improve their conditions and facilities, through either fund-raising or through using the “sweat equity” of parents and the community. NGOs, churches, businesses and other organisations with a stake in a particular community will also be encouraged to involve themselves in fund-raising or to provide associated services directly.

All schools are classified as Public Benefit Organisations. This allows them to receive tax-deductible donations.

There is, however, scope for greater alignment between private sector expertise and needs and the nature of funding for schools through charitable or corporate social investment programmes. This could be facilitated through a programme equivalent to the United Kingdom “Teach First” initiative which funds graduates in scarce skills areas to teach for two years before they commence their
chosen careers. Participants also benefit from a leadership development course during the two-year period. This both attracts highly-skilled graduates to teaching and benefits employers as quantity and quality of graduates with critical skills can increase over time.

4.3. A national bursary programme

It must be a priority of education policy to give poor but talented learners the means to follow their dreams.

The DA will establish a nation-wide bursary programme aimed at giving the most academically promising learners from low-income families the opportunity to receive a better school education.

The bursary scheme will initially assist the top cohort of academically talented learners from low-income families to access high quality primary and secondary school education.

- Eligibility: All children from Grade 4 attending a quintile 1 to 3 school.
- Selection: Selection will be made on the basis of academic performance in standardised national tests at the end of Grade 3, 6 and 9.
- Benefit: Qualifying pupils will funded to attend any school of their choice. The bursary may be used for school fees, or any other education-related expenditure. The bursary will follow the child depending on the resources of the state and the sustained performance of the pupil.

The bursary scheme will mobilise teachers and parents to support pupils in the earliest years of their schooling, and it will encourage schools to work hard to retain good pupils by offering higher quality education.

4.4. A top schools bursary fund

To encourage excellence in schooling the DA will support government financing for bursary funds in the top 10% of South African schools in terms of performance. Government should match whatever schools are able to raise on their own initiative for a bursary fund for disadvantaged learners.

This would target the best academically promising but impoverished learners. It would also create an incentive for schools to both get into the top 10% and to raise funds for bursaries (while also encouraging greater integration in South Africa’s top performing schools).

5. What we teach, how we teach it, and how we measure success

The classroom must be the centre of all policy.

5.1. What we teach - the curriculum

The basic principles of the DA’s approach to learning content are as follows:

- We must establish a dedicated forward-looking curriculum unit to ensure that curricula are properly researched, remain relevant and are consistent with international best practice.
- We will introduce necessary curriculum change incrementally to ensure that teachers are always confident of their grasp of what must be taught.
• **Supporting effective curriculum roll-out.** We will develop simple, specific guidelines and clearly defined outcomes for the curriculum at each level. This will make the impact of any curriculum more easily measurable and its objectives clearer to teachers and pupils.

• **Designing curricula in terms of market requirements.** The curriculum must be relevant and constructive. Pupils must leave schools with skills that are appropriate for managing their own lives, to access further education or to get a job.

• **Resources,** such as textbooks, must be in place prior to any curriculum changes being made, and adequate time must be allowed for the development of such resources.

• **Back to fundamentals:** We support a move away from a system based purely on memorising content, and towards a combination of learning content and knowledge application. Classroom-based assessments and observations will be used to determine whether learners are simply covering the curriculum, or whether they are achieving the ideal of discovering the curriculum. Teachers will be supported to assist the achievement of the latter.

• **Focus on maths, science, language and technology.** It is impossible to compete in a globalised world without ensuring (i) that all learners have the language skills to comprehend tests and work materials and to communicate their learning (ii) that they have basics skills in terms of maths and science, and (iii) that are able to use the technologies that permeate every aspect of the world of work.

• **Expanding choice.** Independent schools should have the option of opting out of the national curriculum if there is a demand for an alternative curriculum. Alternative curricula must be registered by the Basic Education Department, it must meet certain core requirements (including coverage of languages, maths and science), it must be of an equivalent or higher educational standard and it cannot create an additional cost to the state.

• **Coherent subject choices.** Learners will receive guidance on the impact of subject choices on admission for further or higher education, and on their eligibility for employment.

5.2. **How we teach**

a. **Effective use of information and communication technologies (ICT)**

> Advances in technology are enabling dramatic changes in education content, delivery, and accessibility. Throughout history, new technologies have facilitated the exponential growth of human knowledge...Innovators have seen technology as a way to improve communication, learning, and the mastery of instructional material.

>(West & Bleiberg, 2013)

South Africa is facing deeply entrenched systemic challenges to provide quality education for all. Innovative and creative solutions are needed to bridge the gaps. The paradoxical nature of ICT innovation is that it not only reflects the developmental gap between societies but simultaneously provides the best hope for bridging these socio-economic divides.

ICT can improve education through various means including increasing the efficiency of school systems, providing diverse and extended life-long learning opportunities, expanding educational

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access and innovative curriculum delivery. It is also enabling learner information to be integrated into school management, intervention and assessment systems.

Survey results show that the most important reasons why technology is not integrated in everyday teaching, learning and management in South African schools are (i) the lack of computers (75% of respondents), (ii) a lack of software (48.3%) and the lack of internet connections (43.9%)\(^\text{18}\).

**To broaden access to ICT resources the DA will:**

- **Develop ICT norms and standards.** The DA will include basic information technology and communications equipment when establishing basic infrastructure and resource norms and standards for schools.
- **Set targets for access to ICT goals.** The DA will set itself the target of ensuring access to ICT in each school including providing wireless hotspots for broadband connectivity such as that being rolled out in the Western Cape.
- **Reduce the cost of ICTs.** The requirement contained in the Telecommunications Act that schools must receive a fifty percent discount on telephone costs and connections to Internet service providers must be put into operation and strictly enforced. The DA will reduce the cost of ICT hardware and software for schools by negotiating discounts with suppliers for school purchases.
- **Provide maintenance back-up.** The local community will be supported to develop ICT maintenance centre to service schools. The maintenance centres will also house back-up file servers and include facilities for teacher training.

**To harness the potential of ICT in support of teachers and management the DA will:**

- **Focus on ICT training for teachers and school management.** The importance of ICT in a global knowledge economy and the manner in which it has shifted ways of thinking, ways of working and ways of learning must be entrenched through professional development of teachers and school management. The DA will ensure ICT training forms an integral part of teacher and management training setting clear national competency goals of improving efficiency and quality.
- **Utilise ICT as a platform for teacher professional development.** Online curriculum support materials and teacher training tools will be provided to facilitate onsite teacher development. Online platforms will provide a space for teachers interact and facilitate knowledge-sharing.
- **Utilise ICT in management and monitoring.** ICT tools and platforms will be utilised for management and administration processes. ICT systems will improve efficiency and service delivery by ensuring relevant data is captured and shared in real time.

**To utilise technology to broaden learner access to information and support, the DA will:**

- **Use radio and television to increase access.** The DA will explore the establishment of a dedicated radio and television channel to transmit pre-recorded lessons throughout the year.
- **Make online support available to learners.** The DA will develop websites that will serve as knowledge databases containing relevant curriculum materials and access to online research and informational databases for learners.

- **Develop an online portal for learners.** The DA will investigate the establishment of personal learner portals that are tailored to learners’ subject choices where course materials are uploaded, results are recorded, tests and assignments are submitted and it provides chatroom platforms to engage with other learners.

- **Develop Interactive E-textbooks.** Education experts in various fields will be engaged to produce interactive e-textbooks and teacher guides that will be made available to learners and teachers.

- **Utilise mobile technology.** The DA will actively encourage and make use of mobile cellular ICT platforms for educational purposes. Examples include Mxit applications such ‘Dr Maths’ and ‘Quizmax’, which offer real-time tutor support and revision tools respectively.

- **Develop and use ICT technology to provide tailored support to students with special needs.**

- **Explore the available e-schooling options** which can be used to broaden access to education in remote rural areas.

### b. Making room for language choices

The DA supports the constitutional provision that “Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable”. Where children are too young to make an informed choice, their parents have the right to make that choice.

Basic principles of our approach to language choices include the following:

- The decision on which language of learning and teaching will be used in a school should be made by the school governing body.

- The Grade R curriculum must include a strong focus on learning the language of instruction for the foundation phase at that school.

- Recognition that the success of any education programme is heavily dependent on the quality of teaching. We will therefore concentrate on meeting language needs with appropriately trained and suitably resourced teachers. We will ensure the development of teaching materials and programmes in all the required languages in schools, and we will make use of civil society organisations and public bodies tasked with protecting multilingualism to do research on changing language needs and to assist in the development of materials for multilingual schooling.

Multilingualism will be entrenched in schools by the following:

- Until grade 7, learners will be required to learn three official languages, of which one must be English.

- After grade 7, two official languages will be compulsory.

### 5.3. How we measure success

Learner outcomes must underpin every determination of success. On exiting the schooling system, learners must be able to effectively participate in society, particularly economically. The schooling system must equip every learner with the foundational skills and knowledge to allow skilling within a workplace, further study and/or entrepreneurial endeavours. All assessments will take into account these desired outcomes of education.
Effective assessment is vital to (i) ascertain whether pupils understand material, and (ii) to monitor achievement at a system level to provide a factual basis for identifying problems and targeting interventions\(^\text{19}\).

\textbf{a. Continuous learner assessments}

The DA will make on-going use of national assessments to diagnose potential problems with teaching and learning as early as possible and to ensure that that they are addressed timeously.

We will continue to use Annual National Assessments in Grades 1 to 6 and Grade 9 and will ensure that assessments in Grade 3, 6 and 9 are (i) internationally benchmarked, and (ii) independently marked. All assessments will be effectively analysed to support system-wide improvements where necessary.

National exam results at both Grade 9 and Grade 12 level will be monitored closely to identify subjects and areas requiring targeted intervention.

\textbf{b. Ensuring high quality exams}

The DA will ensure that National Senior Certificate exams are:

- subjected to rigorous review by subject experts;
- benchmarked against international assessments for secondary schooling;
- workshopped with tertiary institutions to ensure that it sets a sufficient standard for admission to the first year of post-school qualifications.

Markers for the National Senior Certificate exam and all public exams will be required to pass competency tests.

National standards will not be lowered to boost matric pass rates. There must be appropriate minimums, and proper grading according to clear marking requirements.

\textbf{c. International benchmarking}

In addition to formal examinations, the DA will encourage international benchmarking, for example through participation in international comparative studies. This will allow improvements in standards to be monitored over time and ensure that our top schools remain at the cutting edge of developments in the global knowledge society.

\textbf{6. A safe and nurturing school environment that is conducive to learning}

*Every child must be provided with an opportunity to learn in a safe and nurturing environment to develop and reach their potential.*

Changes in the demography of the school-going population will demand interventions, such as transport or hostels. Appropriate options will be properly researched and carefully implemented to ensure, as far as is possible, that every child remains safe outside of the classroom.

\(^{19}\) Centre for Development Enterprise, 2009.
6.1. Establishing an education culture of respect and discipline

Learners cannot fully develop their potential in chaotic and dysfunctional environments.

South Africa has a diverse and complex social system however our education culture, while striving to encourage the growth of the individual and valuing diversity, must be founded on respect and discipline.

The approach to enable an education culture of respect and discipline must be holistic and learner-centred, with an emphasis on pragmatic intervention initiatives and diversionary programmes to enable learners to remain in the schooling system and fulfil their potential.

It is critical that schools and educators must be empowered with the necessary tools and authority to ensure that they are able to fulfil their education mandates.

To promote a respectful and disciplined education culture, the DA will:

- **Review regulations and codes of conduct.** The policies governing learner conduct must allow for a range of appropriate and pragmatic actions for different types and levels of disciplinary challenges faced in schools.

- **Empower school management and educators.** The DA will introduce regulations to provide school management, governing bodies and educators with appropriate tools and the necessary training to ensure that they are empowered to fulfil their responsibilities with regard to student discipline. This could include a range of intervention initiatives and diversionary programmes.

- **Minor behavioural issues.** Some behavioural issues can be dealt with by innovative methods. An example is a ‘Blue Room’ policy. In many schools misbehaving learners are asked to leave and sit outside the classroom where they miss out on work and, with no incentive or guidance, their behaviour often deteriorates further. An alternative approach currently used by schools is to direct problematic learners to a dedicated classroom, the ‘Blue Room’, where the principal, deputy-principal and a selected senior teacher will rotate during the day. The leadership team ensures that the learners continue with the required classroom work and use motivational and guidance tools to inspire or instil behavioural changes. Schools will be encouraged to develop models for dealing with minor behavioural issues that meet their specific needs.

- **Early interventions for youth at risk.** Many learners face serious life challenges, mental health issues or exhibit chronic disciplinary problems. Multi-disciplinary counselling teams will be available for educators to refer these learners to for the appropriate support and interventions. These teams will also guide caregivers, teachers and community organisations on an on-going basis about appropriate interventions.

- **Establish learner support centres.** The DA will allow for the establishment of support centres, to be funded by provincial education departments and run by appropriate organisations with the necessary child behaviour and development expertise. Learners should ideally be treated with remedial intervention while remaining in their current school. Depending on the severity and nature of the problem however learners may be redirected to the support centres for a short period where they will be provided with the support they need while they continue with their school work.
• **Allow for expulsion and remedial schools.** If the ill-disciplined behaviour of a child is so severe and chronic that it precludes others from learning and continues after receiving remedial intervention there must be clear and fair processes in place to allow for the expulsion of the learner. The learner will then be diverted to specialised remedial schools that will have the required long-term child behaviour and development expertise, facilities and security measures to begin the process of using techniques and interventions to remediate the learners.

• Where possible, *use schools sport programmes* to build a culture of discipline and value-based social interaction.

### 6.2. Reducing the drop-out rate

In South Africa, labour markets returns on schooling is very high. In 2012, nearly 60% of the unemployed in South Africa did not complete their secondary education\(^20\).

*It seems that the average young South African must acquire at least complete secondary schooling, to be rewarded in the labour market.*  
* (Branson et al, 2012)\(^21\)

Learners must be encouraged to continue their education until Grade 12 in order to maximise opportunities for gainful employment, entrepreneurship or further study.

In the current education system, too many learners either drop out or fail before they reach matric. As mentioned above, 55% of learners registered for Grade 1 in 2001 did not reach matric in 2012.

The most common reasons for leaving school in the 7 to 18 age group have been found to be\(^22\):

- Household poverty;
- Teenage pregnancy;
- Disengagement from/lack of interest in schooling; and
- Repetition and being older than most peers in the grade.

The DA will reduce drop-out rates by:

- **Training teachers to spot potential drop-outs.** Teachers must be trained to identify at-risk learners and problems pro-actively. High-risk learners must be referred to the relevant social services to ensure that their problems are identified and managed and that they are kept in school whenever possible. The DA will implement a training programme, specifically aimed at schools with high drop-out rates, to help teachers identify students at risk of dropping out early on.

- **Conditional grants.** To qualify for child support grants, guardians must prove that the children of school-going age whom they care for have attended school at least 85% of the designated time. This will provide a strong incentive to encourage guardians to keep learners in school.

- **Collaborating with youth shelters and soup kitchens** to gather information on children who should be integrated in the school system.


Reducing the incentive for schools to keep learners from writing matric exams by broadening performance criteria to include learner outcomes in at least Grades 3, 6 and 9 in addition to outcomes in Grade 12. The strong focus on matric results provides a possible perverse incentive to schools to encourage learners to leave the education system once mandatory schooling (up to Grade 9) has been completed.

6.3. Keeping learners healthy
Child learn better if they are not hungry or sick.

While it is primarily the responsibility of a learner’s parents or guardian to ensure that a learners basic needs are met the reality is that there are extreme socio-economic disparities that must be considered. Many learners do not receive adequate nutrition or health treatment despite the best efforts of parents or guardians.

The DA knows that we must invest in our children today for a better tomorrow and will therefore:

- **Ensure that every child exercises regularly, under the supervision of a trained teacher;**
- **Institute school visits by nurses.** Learners with health problems will be identified and have these problems addressed onsite or referred to appropriate professionals or clinics.
- **Build health partnerships** by working together with the Department of Health to identify state health facilities closest to each school and work in collaboration with these facilities for the treatment of learners and educators.
- **Implement a pro-active communicable diseases strategy** by working with the Department of Health to ensure that partner health facilities conduct **HIV and TB testing campaigns** at each school bi-annually. We will also aim to provide antiretroviral and TB treatment points (either a private pharmacy, a clinic or a hospital) where drug treatments can be easily obtained by teachers and learners.
- **Expand the school nutrition programme.** The school nutrition programme will cover all learners in need (up to Grade 12) and will include both meals for both breakfast and lunch meals. Roll-out can be expedited through Public-Private Partnerships. The performance of contractors will be monitored closely.

6.4. Safety
Every child must be able to learn in an environment which is safe and where he or she is not exposed to violence, abuse or drugs.

A reality in South Africa is that schools are places of fear rather than learning for many children.

A 2008 Human Rights Commission report found that school was the “single most common” site of crimes such as assault and robbery against learners, and nearly half of the children interviewed in a recent investigation by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention had been victims of some form of crime.
Although security at some vulnerable schools has been improved, little has been done about the underlying problems, and schools are largely left on their own to cope with the violence that plagues them.

The DA will:

- **Improve security at school.** The DA would budget for security measures for every vulnerable school. Security experts would advise on appropriate security enhancements depending on the specific context of the school.

- **Turn schools into community resources.** Schools would become community resource utilised by the broader community. For example, they would be possible sites for Adult Basic Education and Training, ICT training sites or knowledge resources after school hours. Encouraging schools to become a valuable part of the community would provide a measure of protection as the community would become protective of the schools and its safety. Vandalisation and break-ins would be deterred if community members acted in unison to stamp out such activity.

- **Information on violence in schools.** The DA would develop a searchable database of all crimes and incidents of violence at schools. The logging of all incidents must form part of each principal’s monthly reporting duties. This would assist in analysing the causes and methods of school-based violence so that corrective measures can be instituted.

- **Establish school liaison officers at all police stations.** Every police station must have a liaison officer that specialises in school-based crime who can ensure that policing resources are dedicated to schools in the area according to their needs. Resources would include vehicle patrols and foot patrols and searches. A School Resource Officer programme, such as the programme initiated by the Western Cape Education Department, would be rolled out in all provinces. A law enforcement officer would be assigned to schools in high crime and gang violence areas to provide law enforcement services, relevant advice and support, and develop and implement school-based crime prevention programmes.

- **Support Walking Bus routes.** The Walking Bus programme initiated by the Western Cape Education Department is a voluntary programme where school safety volunteers, who have received neighbourhood watch as well as road safety training, escort groups of learners on foot to and from school.

- **Permit searches for weapons and drugs.** In an environment in which all children should be able to feel safe, no one should feel able to carry dangerous weapons or drugs on school premises. Searches for weapons and drugs would take place within a legal framework with the assistance of the South African Police Service (SAPS).

### 6.5. Protecting learners from bullying and abuse

Every child must be able to learn in an environment free from bullying and abuse.

Crimes against children in South Africa are rampant. According to the South African Police Services there were 25 862 reported sexual offences and 23 275 reported assaults against children for the 2011-2012 year.

It is a heart-breaking reality that many of our children are being violated by educators in a position of trust and care and that it is not being dealt with effectively. A reply to a DA parliamentary oral question 54 on 14 March 2013 revealed that the South African Council of Educators (SACE) has
permitted 45% of teachers found guilty of sexual misconduct against learners, between 2009 and 2012, to continue teaching our children.

UNISA’s Bureau of Market Research, through its Youth Research Unit, showed that nearly 35% of learners in Gauteng schools have been bullied in the past two years, with 42% of this group being Grade 8 learners and a third having experienced bullying throughout their secondary school lives. The research spans from 2011-2012 and was conducted on 3 371 learners in Grades 8 to 12 in 24 Gauteng schools. It showed that 1 158 learners have been bullied in the past two years.

Cyber-bullying is also becoming a growing problem with learners using social media and other communications platforms to launch personal attacks against their peers. A study by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention found that 37% of young people admitted to having experienced some form of cyber aggression, either at home or at school.

Schools must be places of trust where our children can learn and grow to adulthood in safety.

The DA will:

- **Develop a national school abuse policy:** The DA would develop and implement a national school abuse policy that requires immediate reporting of physical and sexual abuse to the SAPS. The policy will also appoint a point person, the schools vice-principal, for reporting and managing the school’s response to abuse. The point person’s responsibilities will include pro-active follow-ups of investigations.

- **Make effective use of a code of conduct for learners.** School governing bodies are responsible for developing codes of conduct for learners. This can be an effective tool to combat bullying if it is developed in a consultative manner, clearly identifies unacceptable conduct and is applied in a fair and consistent manner.

- **Consolidate the role and capacity of the South African Council of Educators.** The SACE is the primary statutory body tasked with ensuring accountability and good ethical practice among educators. The council would be reconstituted with expertise in various fields and provided with sufficient funding to ensure it can fulfil its mandate. This will include ensuring that teachers that are registered or apply for registration are vetted for convictions or pending proceedings of child abuse. SACE will also be mandated to ensure that teachers conform to the codes of conduct.

- **Provide a learner helpline.** Provide a dedicated learner helpline for learners to call for support for bullying or abuse.

- **Promote early identification of bullying.** Policies and training will be put in place to identify bullying in schools.

- **Work in partnership with social media companies to combat cyber bullying.** Schools and education departments should partner with social media companies to raise awareness on cyber bullying through workshops and schools and advising learners on how to protect themselves.

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7. Conclusion

Education lies at the heart of empowerment. It is an enabler for effective poverty reduction, for reducing inequality, for job-creating economic growth and to equip individuals to use the opportunities available to them.

“The education system will play a greater role in building an inclusive society, providing equal opportunities and helping all South Africans to realise their full potential...”

(National Development Plan, 2012)

The DA believes that the institutional framework for educational excellence is in place.

There is, however, significant scope to improve education outcomes by:

- Creating clear norms and standards for the management and resources in our schools;
- Prioritising accountability in educational governance and management;
- Minimising political interference and maximising the management prerogative of those entrusted with educational governance;
- Encouraging communities to become active stakeholders in their schools;
- Learning from successful models and intervening where the system is failing learners;
- Leveraging technology to streamline governance processes and to make education resources more accessible;
- Making certain that the curriculum prepares learners for the professional demands in a global economy;
- Ensuring that teachers and school management teams are rewarded for performance and disciplined for failures; and
- Empowering parents to seek the best possible educational opportunities for their children.

We believe that the policy proposals outlined here can set the education system and South African learners on the road to success and can deliver learners that are prepared for the challenges of a modern economy and that are equipped to use the opportunities available to them, to pursue their dreams and ambitions and to contribute to a successful South Africa.