



School Monitoring Survey Policy Brief 2017/2018

School management documents



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



School management documents as an indicator for quality school management

1. Introduction

The value of good school management to a functioning school environment has become an undisputed fact and school leadership is often considered a necessary requirement for a good functioning school. School management is therefore one of five priorities in basic education that has been identified in the National Development Plan (NDP)¹ as key to improving educational outcomes. Establishing the importance of strengthening school leadership and management in South Africa further, the Action Plan to 2019 concretizes the school management priority through the 2030 goal to “Ensure that the basic annual management processes take place across all schools in the country in a way that contributes towards a functional school environment”.²

Quantifying the quality of school management and measuring progress towards achieving this goal is particularly difficult. The complexity and administrative burden of creating a comprehensive measure of school leadership and management will render the measurement of this priority unfeasible at a national scale and therefore necessitates the use of a less complex measure. As a more feasible alternative, the Action Plan to 2019 therefore puts forward an indicator measuring the percentage of schools that can produce a minimum set of management documents.

The 2017 School Monitoring Survey (SMS) collected information on the presence of these documents in schools to allow us to evaluate the trend in this indicator over time. Furthermore, since this measure only considers the availability of certain documents and not the quality and use of the documents, this indicator was also looked at through qualitative case study interviews.

2. How is this indicator measured for annual reporting?

In 2017, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) specified 15 school management documents as the building blocks for effective school management.³ These documents are: (1) an Annual Academic Performance Report; (2) a School Improvement Plan; (3) a School Development Plan; (4) a School Timetable; (5) Classroom Timetables; (6) Teachers’ Personal Timetables; (7) Quarterly Learner Achievement Data; (8) an Admission Register; (9) Learner Attendance Registers; (10) Period Registers; (11) Educator Daily Attendance Registers; (12) a School Assets Register; (13) a LTSM Assets Register; (14) Approved School Budget and; (15) Audited Financial Statements.

For the Annual Performance Plan, compliance to this indicator is measured by an annual survey conducted by the DBE which assess the availability and implementation of these documents in 2,000 schools. A scoring system ranging from zero to three is then used to take into account the level to which a school has complied on each of the documents. For instance a school will be scored 0 for the Annual Academic Performance Report if the document was not available, 1 if the document has been tabled to the School Governing Body, 2 if the document has been approved by the District and 3 if the

¹ NPC (National Planning Commission). 2012. National Development Plan 2030

² DBE. 2015. Action Plan to 2019: Towards the realisation of Schooling 2030.

³ DBE. 2017. Building Blocks for Effective School Management.

document is being implemented by the school. Using this scoring system schools then receive a percentage score to indicate their degree of compliance on the indicator.

3. Using the School Monitoring Survey to measure compliance over time

The SMS has undertaken the monitoring of the building blocks of effective school management to allow for an independent perspective on the levels of compliance with this indicator. The method used to monitor compliance with this indicator in the SMS is different to the method used for reporting by the DBE. For the SMS a fieldworker was expected to observe the actual documents, but were not requested to classify the degree to which the documents is compliant. The SMS therefore only reports on the schools that could produce the required documents.

In 2011, the SMS evaluated the presence of a set of 11 school management documents. It was found that 52% of the schools complied with having had the full set of required management documents. The 2017 SMS evaluated the presence of 10⁴ of the same set of school management documents to be able to make comparisons over time. It was found that only 31% of schools had the full set of management documents.

To better understand this apparent decline, figure 1 shows the changes over time for each of the required documents. It is clear that there has been no significant changes over time in the presence of five of the management documents in schools. However, an academic improvement plan, quarterly academic performance reports, a non-textbook register and School Governing Body (SGB) minutes for all three quarters were less likely to have been seen by the fieldworkers in 2017 than in 2011. The decline in the Academic Performance Report is concerning, specifically since this report is mandatory for all schools to produce as set out in Section 58b of the South African Schools Act. Only schools that performed below a certain level on the Academic Performance Report are required to submit an Academic Improvement Plan, it is therefore not expected that all schools will have this document.

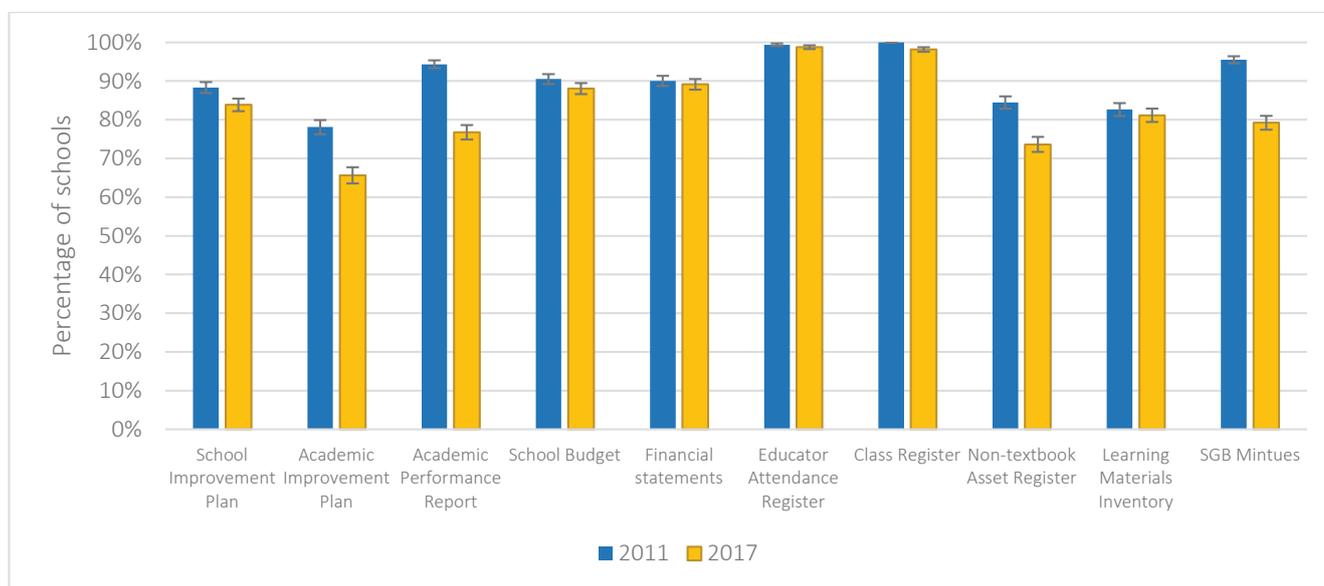


FIGURE 1: The percentage of schools that could produce each individual school management document in 2011 and 2017.

Source: Calculations by the DBE using the 2011 and 2017 School Monitoring Survey data. Notes: A school had to produce evidence of academic reports for all three quarters, and SGB minutes for all three quarters.

⁴ The presence of class timetables were not asked again in 2017 as these were found to be ubiquitous.

4. Provincial inequalities in compliance

Schools in some provinces were more likely to have had a higher number of these documents present on the day that the survey was conducted than in other provinces. Figure 2 shows that only 13% of schools in the Eastern Cape could produce the full set of required documents and 58% could produce at least 8 of the 10 documents. In the Western Cape, 66% of schools could produce the full set of documents and 89% could produce at least 8 of the 10 documents.

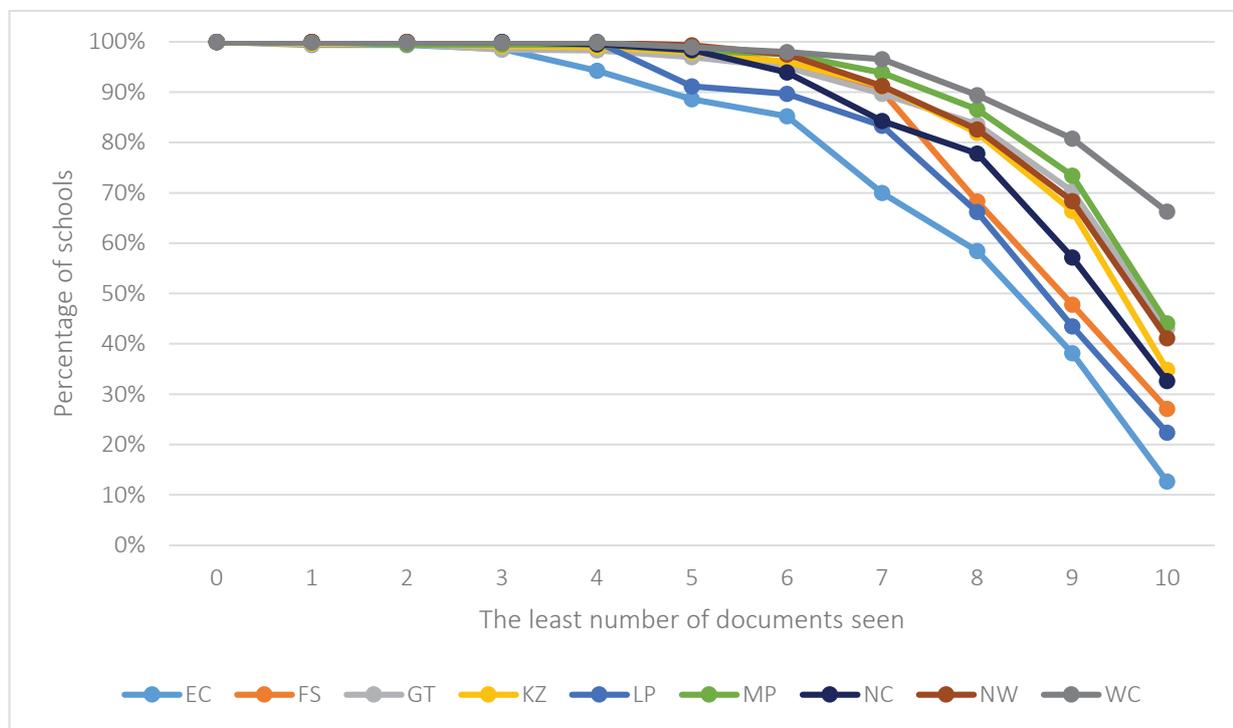


FIGURE 2: The least number of documents that schools could produce.

Source: Calculations by the DBE using the 2017 School Monitoring Survey data. Notes: This graph shows the least number of documents that could be produced by schools. For instance, 90% of schools in Limpopo could produce at least 5 documents.

5. Policy in practice

Although it is evident that the implementation of this goal differs between provinces, the qualitative study could not find any evidence of the presence of management documents being related to district functionality⁵ within provinces. The case studies further revealed that apparent well-functioning schools could not always present all the documents, but acknowledged that the required documents are used informally, but in different formats and are tailored to the specific needs of the school.

Buy-in from educators in the school was recognised as important to the successful implementation of these plans. In some schools, however, educators reported feeling alienated from decisions that are being taken based on these documents, which ultimately affect their day-to-day management of their classrooms.

⁵ District functionality was determined by considering the item scores from the quantitative survey on the questions that looked at the school ratings of district functioning and satisfaction, information on school management functioning as well as information on SGB functioning. Please see the Qualitative Report for further details.

Many Principals and Deputy-Principals noted that they referred to the Annual Plan in order to check the school's progress. However, a point of frustration that emanated with the Annual Report is that the same information are often required by different stakeholders in different formats.

6. What is being done to strengthen progress on this indicator?

Easier processes

Currently the Department is working towards a system that will make the process of completing the documents easier. This entails a new annual academic report template which has been approved for implementation through SA-SAMS. This will provide a central database in which all management documents can be stored and in turn be accessed by the interested stakeholders.

Training

One strategy that has been identified to strengthen school leadership and management is an updated national training programme for school managers. The Framework for the Induction of Newly Appointed Principals has been developed and aims to train principals to develop the necessary management documents in a manner that their use will lead to improved learning outcomes.

Competency Testing

Competency testing of principals has been put forward by the NDP as a further initiative to strengthen school management. The purpose of the assessments will be to ensure that everyone who is appointed into a school principal post fulfils at least the minimum requirements for the position. A further purpose of the assessment will also be to identify capacity gaps which will allow for more strategic and targeted training of principals.





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