



4. CURRICULUM

FRAMEWORK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUBJECT POLICY

Note: It is practically impossible to provide a detailed subject policy that is suitable for all subject, phases and school types. This framework is aimed at assisting the head of department or subject head to develop a subject policy for the school.

The framework has been developed in terms of the current policy documents of the Department of Basic Education (the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and related documents). It will be revised and replaced as soon as the new CAPS and related documents have been released for implementation in 2012.

NAME OF SCHOOL _____

SUBJECT AND GRADES _____

1. INTRODUCTION

Formulate the purpose of the subject policy – why must there be a subject policy? The subject policy provides a guideline to all teachers in the school who teach the specific subject. It covers all aspects of the subject and the teaching thereof, including planning, methodology and assessment.

It also indicates where the subject policy is kept and how it should be utilised, e.g. copies are kept in the school's office, by the head of department and in the personal portfolio of each of the teachers who teach the specific subject.

2. DEPARTMENTAL POLICY DOCUMENTS ON WHICH THE SUBJECT POLICY IS BASED

2.1 National documents

All national policy and guideline documents that are in use and are applicable, must be listed here. These documents can be selected from the lists in Units 3.1 and 4.1 in this manual.

2.2 Provincial documents

These are provincial policy documents signed or announced by the Head of the Department. Circulars are normally the means of communication, but in some provinces policy is announced at press conferences or even as part of speeches which are delivered and is then not formally confirmed by means of circulars. Regulations announced by subject advisers are only applicable if they have direct bearing on the application of the official policy. A district office does not have the competence to determine policy and can only expect schools and teachers to comply with requirements in terms of provincial and national policy.

3. RELEVANT SECTIONS/PARAGRAPHS IN THE SCHOOL POLICY OF THE SPECIFIC SCHOOL

Here it must be explained how the subject policy ties in with the school policy. For example:

This subject policy has been formulated in accordance with the school policy as filed in the school's office. Where applicable, the relevant paragraphs in the school policy are referred to and the teacher must ensure that he/she is up to date with all the specific regulations and requirements.

4. PURPOSE OF THE SUBJECT

This must be taken from the relevant NCS document with a page reference provided, and it must preferably be briefly stated in the teacher's own words - not quoted verbatim from the document.

5. TEACHING APPROACH

A brief summary of the teaching approach that is followed in the teaching of the subject, e.g. the balance of knowledge, skills, values, learner involvement, place and role of assessment, practical work and homework.

6. USE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING SUPPORT MATERIALS (LTSM)

LTSM includes all support material such as textbooks and reference materials. The subject policy must include at least the following two aspects in this regard:

6.1 The way in which textbooks and other support material are used in the teaching of the subject.

The generally accepted approach is that each learner should have a textbook, while the teacher uses and consults various textbooks to enable him/her to supplement the learners' textbook with additional content and assessment exercises. The supplementary textbooks must form part of the classroom library which should also include other reference books.

When formulating assignments for assessment tasks, the teacher provides examples of additional sources that may be consulted: reference books in the library, web pages, etc.

6.2 The way in which textbooks and other materials are purchased

It must be indicated here, in accordance with the school's policy, how the books/material are evaluated and purchased and from what source the funding is derived.

7. ASSESSMENT

7.1 The concept assessment

A definition of the term is provided with reference to policy and other official documents.

Example:

Assessment implies

- the gathering and interpretation of information (evidence) to determine the learner's progress in terms of predetermined outcomes and judge the learner's achievement;
- and
- reporting of progress to the learner, parent, education department and other interested parties (e.g. potential employers and institutions where the learner might continue his/her studies, such as colleges and universities).

7.2 When to assess

7.2.1 Baseline assessment

This implies assessment done at the beginning of the year in order to determine the level of the learners' knowledge. Learning area/subject policy must indicate how this assessment is to be managed, e.g. whether or not it is compulsory.

7.2.2 Diagnostic assessment

This assessment is aimed at determining the nature and reasons for barriers to learning which learners may experience. As a result of this, appropriate assistance is planned. In this case also, the learning area/subject policy must provide the necessary guidance, e.g. the specific way in which it must be done.

7.2.3 Continuous assessment (CASS) and summative assessment

Continuous assessment (CASS) is mainly formative by nature, therefore assessment actions aimed primarily at determining the learner's progress, providing the learner with feedback and indications for further improvement (formative assessment).

Summative assessment is primarily aimed at determining and recording a learner's competence or achievement at a specific point in time. It is therefore usually conducted at the conclusion of a learning activity, a unit, term or year. Therefore it is always a planned activity and implies the use of a variety of assessment instruments and strategies.

Assessment can be formal or informal. Informal assessment occurs daily and takes place by means of observation, discussion and general classroom interaction. Formal assessment is conducted systematically and includes projects, tests, exams, presentations and demonstrations. While CASS can be either informal or formal, summative assessment is always formal. The policy places great emphasis on formal assessment and stipulates specific regulations in the form of assessment tasks that have to be carried out.

7.3 Forms of assessment and assessment tasks

The following are examples of forms of assessment:

- Tests and exams
- Projects
- Research reports
- Case studies
- Demonstrations
- Role play
- Interviews
- Functional and creative writing

Subject policy must highlight the most suitable forms in terms of the nature of the learning area/subject.

7.4 Class work and homework

The policy and guideline documents do not provide significant guidance on these important aspects. It is therefore essential that the learning area/subject policy treat them as an assessment matter and provide the necessary guidance.

The following questions must be answered:

- Should learners be given the opportunity in class to do class work? Should it be assessed? How?
- Should learners be given homework? Should it be assessed? How?

7.5 Assessment programme

The assessment programme comprises a description of all the assessment activities planned for a specific year. This broad definition must be particularised in terms of the specific subject. National policy is very prescriptive in this regard (see Chapter 3.1 in this manual).

7.6 Recording and reporting

Subject policy should give clear directives concerning the recording of marks, the storing of evidence and reporting to the parents and department.

7.7 Inclusive assessment

The principle underlying inclusive assessment is that, as far as possible, all learners must be assessed within the same curriculum and assessment framework. Learning barriers do not only comprise learner disabilities, but can also be system-related (shortcomings within the system), society-related (poverty, backlogs) and education-related (incompetent teachers).

Therefore, barriers to learning are situation-specific and vary from school to school and from learning area/subject to learning area/subject. The learning area/subject policy must provide guidance and directives in this regard. Alternative activities may be suggested, or activities may be adapted. The type of concessions applicable for a specific learning area/subject must also be highlighted.

7.8 Multi-level and multi-grade teaching and assessment

Multilevel teaching and assessment applies to all classes. Firstly, even in a relatively homogeneous group, learners operate on different levels and they must be met and accommodated on their various levels. Secondly, the new progression policy for Grades R-9, results in a situation where many learners progress to a next grade, even if in at least some learning areas, they have not achieved the required level for the new grade. This means that the differences between learners in the same class are even greater than in the past.

The learning area/subject policy must give clear guidance on how to handle this aspect. It applies in Grades R up to 12, although it may be argued that due to the progression policy, the challenge would be experienced mainly up to Grade 9.

Multi-grade teaching is applied when learners from more than one grade are grouped together in the same class because of small numbers. If the school policy makes provision for multi-grade teaching, the subject policy of the affected subjects must give subject specific directives in this regard.

8. SUBJECT CURRICULUM

8.1 Format of the teacher's year programme and lesson plans

Subject policy must provide directives on the way in which teachers must convert the departmental policy for the subject into their own year programmes. A year programme could for instance comprise a year plan (the learning contents structured in a specific sequence), a work schedule (time schedule, methodology, resources/support materials) and assessment programme).

The subject policy could also provide guidance on the extent to which contents additional to the prescribed contents could be used to provide in the needs of the learners. In a school for learners with special educational needs for example, the work schedule for the subject Technology might have to make provision for additional opportunities for the learners to master job related skills such as welding, metal processing etc.

8.2 The development of lesson plans

It is important that the subject policy provide guidance on the way in which the teachers must do their lesson planning. A lesson plan might for instance be done in terms of topic and cover a fairly long period, e.g. three or four weeks. In such a case the subject policy might determine that the teacher must do daily planning as well and keep proof of such planning.

9. ORGANISATIONAL

This important aspect of subject policy must be dealt with within the context of the specific school and is therefore not discussed in detail in this document. Subject heads might find the following list of possible headings useful:

- 9.1 Functions of the subject head
- 9.2 Meetings
- 9.3 Teacher file
- 9.4 Control and reporting
- 9.5 Management of the classroom as a workplace
 - 9.5.1 Classroom organisation
 - 9.5.2 Classroom decoration