TO ALL:  Senior General Managers  
General Managers  
Senior Managers  
District Managers  
CES’s of Circuit Management  
Circuit Managers  
CES’s Curriculum GET and FET  
Subject Advisors  
Principals of Schools  
Departmental officials

KZN CIRCULAR No. 10 of 2015

PREPARATIONS FOR THE ICT IN EDUCATION SUMMIT

1. The White Paper on e-Education was published in September 2003 by the Department of Basic Education. It provides a clear roadmap on how the education authority intends to use information and communication technologies (ICT) to deliver and manage curriculum in public schools.

2. A common understanding of what e-Education and/or e-Learning entails is crucial because of the potential impact (both negative and positive) of the use of ICT to deliver, manage and support curriculum. Blurton (2002) defines information and communication technologies as a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information; these technological tools and resources include computers, the Internet, broadcasting technologies (radio and television) and telephony (cellular, landline, satellite and VoIP).

The Head of Department (HoD) is mindful of the fact that the deployment of technological infrastructure and allied resources into public schools, should be guided by unassailable and uncompromising e-pedagogical considerations that take into account the inescapable features of an e-learning framework.

3. Many ICT in Education initiatives (governmental, private, NGOs, donor etc.) are implemented in an ad hoc manner, i.e. without the co-ordination, leadership and support of the education authority. These initiatives focus on hardware roll-out without any consideration for teacher professional development and support; technical support and maintenance; and pedagogical support – and thus become unsustainable.
4. There is a need for a policy framework to set norms and standards that will direct the deployment of ICT infrastructure and resources into public schools to optimise and maximise the benefits of the use of ICT to deliver, manage and support curriculum.

5. It is on this note that on the 16th of January 2015, the HoD approved that designated officials of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education should engage with significant stakeholders and role-players in preparation for an ICT in Education Summit to be held towards the end of March 2015.

6. The attached information flyer (Appendix A) provides information on the topics and themes that will be addressed by the summit.

7. The contents of this circular, and the attached information flyer, should be brought to the attention of all officials in the Department.

Nkosinathi SP Sishi, PhD
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: EDUCATION

Date: 29/01/2015
Appendix A
Towards 21st Century Learning Spaces

Even though South Africa spends over 20% of the national budget (254-billion rand in 2014) on the delivery, support and administration of education, the country has not been able to turn the tide on resource-related educational problems typical of poor and developing countries. This is manifested in the shortage of textbooks, equipment and other learning and teaching support material in the classroom.

Evidence exists that teachers could be supported using information and communication technologies (ICT) and, in that way, the resource problem that the country faces be obviated. This could further maximise and optimise what limited resources already exist. ICT are central to the changes taking place worldwide. Government’s White Paper on e-Education provides an unambiguous roadmap of introducing ICT resources and services to public schools to create new and exciting ways for learners and teachers to engage in the selection, gathering, sorting and analysis of information to create knowledge. Over and above this, ICT have the potential to enhance the management and administrative capacity of public schools.

Technology is changing the way we live, communicate and learn. It also enables teachers to reframe schooling in order to meet the needs of twenty-first century learners. It is on this note that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZN DoE) considers ICT in education as central to the realization of the country’s socio-economic development ideals as espoused in the principles of the National Development Plan (NDP).

ICT for Education and Development

The provincial government, therefore, needs to ensure that every public school has access to a variety of high-quality communication services and products which will benefit learners and teachers, as well as, the communities in which the schools are based. Such services and products are intended to enhance lifelong learning and further provide unlimited opportunities for personal growth and development in line with the third National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS3) of government.

Further, this will contribute towards the development of an information society whose members are digital natives and are able to compete globally.
Message from the Office of the MEC

The provision of telecommunications infrastructure as a platform for learning and teaching is increasing and many educational institutions, including public schools, are exploiting these benefits to heighten the quality of learning and teaching. Government is mindful of the fact that this initiative will require significant investment. We need to facilitate cost-effective and robust public-private partnerships such that government and the private sector collaborate to ensure that our children receive high quality education and further none of our people are excluded from the knowledge economy. Information and communication technologies (ICT) are central to the changes taking place worldwide. Digital media has revolutionised the way we do business and advances in technology have dramatically changed classroom praxis. New learning opportunities have been provided through access to learning and teaching resources and knowledge repositories that exist beyond the confines of the walls of the physical classroom.

MEC for Education: Hon. N.P. Nkonyeni, MPl

The Canon of ICT in Education

The White Paper on e-Education was published in September 2003 by the Department of Basic Education. It provides a clear roadmap of how the education authority intends to use ICT to deliver and manage curriculum in public schools. The core business of all education authorities is the delivery and management of curriculum. Sadly, there is this unfortunate assumption made by almost everyone, that the ICT in Education community has a shared understanding of the inescapable features of e-Learning and/or e-Education. Regrettably this is not the case. There is therefore a need for ALL stakeholders and role-players to reach some consensus in this regard. The proposed ICT in Education Indaba is aimed at realizing this ideal.

Who Should Attend

The Member of the Executive Committee (MEC) and the Head of Department (HoD) for Education in KwaZulu-Natal invite the ICT in Education community to come and dialogue with the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education on the implementation of Blended Learning and/or e-Education in the province.

Among those who should attend this summit are telecommunications service providers; suppliers of ICT resources and infrastructure (gadgets, software & firmware); higher education institutions; publishers of educational content; researchers; policy makers; ICT integration scholars; non-government organisations; organized labour; SMMEs involved in ICT technical support and maintenance; research institutions; educational content distributors; other government departments and corporate South Africa.
Insights from the Office of the HoD

If South Africans are to participate in the knowledge economy every effort must be made to prevent digital exclusion. A global revolution is currently taking place in education and training. This revolution is driven by the changing nature of work, the realities of the information age, new global partnerships and an awareness of the need for equal distribution of educational opportunities. The building of South Africa’s institutional and infrastructural capacity to support learners, teachers and administrators in the education sector, is fundamental towards the realisation of the NDP and the country’s socio-economic development. Education systems have an obligation to deliver on public expectations of a quality education for economic growth, social development and social inclusion. The South African education system faces a plethora of challenges from the lack of resources to the HIV and AIDS pandemic. It therefore becomes critical that intervention models are thought through quite carefully in order for them to produce the required results.

The KZN DoE is embarking on a social development path that intends to harness the potential of ICT to administer, deliver and support learning and teaching in public schools in the Province. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education has developed an e-Education Strategy to be used as a blueprint in respect of a strategically sound and cost-effective implementation plan for the White Paper on e-Education towards the realisation of schooling 2025.

Principles of a Good e-Learning Platform

The Head of Department for Education is inundated with requests from service providers who wish to present learner management systems and other ICT-based educational solutions to the Department. It therefore becomes important for the HoD to share with the ICT in Education community the principles of a sound and appropriate e-Learning platform which include, *inter alia*:

- platform independence
- open standards (extensible)
- safety and security
- web-delivered and/or web-based services
- single log on for users on ALL applications and services
- full accessibility
- primarily serving teaching and learning
- providing universal access for every learner and every teacher
- *Bandwidth is the lifeblood of the digital economy... The [South African] regulatory environment in the nineties got it completely wrong...*
ICT in Education - What Is and What Ought To Be?

The deployment of technology infrastructure and allied resources into public schools must be guided by unassailable e-pedagogical considerations that take into account e-learning frameworks in order to ensure that the technology installed is guided by educational tenets.

This is necessary in order to curb the litany of 'box dropping' projects that have characterized most ICT deployments and donations to public schools. This has resulted in equipment 'gathering dust' because of a lack of teacher ICT skills and proper curriculum integration.

The benefit of any investment in ICT in Education can only be realized by measuring the impact of ICT utilization by society, especially in the areas of ICT human resource skill development. All the different key stakeholders, i.e. politicians in terms of policy promises, financiers in terms of enabling seamless transactions; and ordinary citizens in terms of receiving government services in the comfort of their homes must be informed of the tangible and non-tangible benefits.

Central to the operationalisation of any ICT in Education strategy and/or model are collaboration, partnerships and linkages. This has to find expression at all levels viz national, provincial and institutional. The success of an implementation strategy and/or model depends on the collective commitment and active participation of all stakeholders and all role-players i.e. learners, teachers, parents, donors, corporate South Africa, higher education institutions, non-government organisations etc.

Many ICT in Education initiatives (governmental, private, NGOs, donor) are implemented in isolation and without any provincial coordination, support and management. Most ICT in Education initiatives focus on hardware roll-out without sustainability, teacher development and support, technical and pedagogical support. There is a need for a policy framework to set norms and standards in order to direct the deployment of ICT resources and to optimise the benefits of the use of ICT to support curriculum public schools.