

2019

**Worse Academic Performance as a result of
Lack of Scholar Transport in the Northern
Cape Province**

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Summary

In 2016, approximately 100 000 children of school-going age did not attend public schools due to lack of transportation. Non-attendance for these reasons had peaked in 2010 and 2014, reaching almost 150 000. There were huge gaps in the statistical information available, which made it impossible to assess the extent of policy implementation. Nevertheless, the average number who did not attend due to remoteness and lack of school transport was alarming, and access to safe transport could make a big difference to attendance. In addition to the lack of transport is also unsafe and unreliable transport.

This is a serious crisis and needs to be addressed.

Majority of learners walked to school and obviously are exposed to dangerous environments on their way to school.

There are reports of millions being spent on few people, millions being spent on fewer children.

Some companies claimed lots of amounts for children that did not exist, and took advantage of the system.

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1. Introduction

Scholars in the Northern Cape Province face serious challenges on their commute to and from school, including long distances, the environment, personal safety, worse academic performance due to fatigue.

The right to education is an integral part of South Africans' constitutional rights, which cannot be realised without adequate and reliable scholar transport.

The Department had an accumulation of more than 11 million learners on their national database which had been verified by Home Affairs, 24 741 learners are from the Northern Cape province.

To address the issues listed above, the national learner transport policy was drafted and approved by Cabinet in 2015, currently it's being implemented. Its establishment was in response to a policy gap concerning the provision of transport services to scholars.

The objective was to deal with the management and operational matters in learner transport, key elements are institutional framework for the implementation of learner transport, learner safety and security, procurement thereto, funding, law enforcement and monitoring and evaluation.

The main challenge was the location of the function, either the Department of Transport (DOT) or Department of Basic Education (DBE). There was no clear policy direction on which department should be solely responsible for the programme. As a result, it was difficult to ensure proper coordination between the departments. Other challenges highlighted included insufficient funding, road safety and the lack of uniformity in contracting and remuneration.

Concerns about the lack of progress in solving challenges that the policy was designed to overcome included the provision of transport to learners with a disability, ensuring the safety of learners and inefficient funding for the programme in many provinces.

2. Policy and Institutional Information

The National Policy was developed with the understanding that there are regulations and legislation that governs the implementation of scholar transport.

1. National Land Transport Act, which regulates the provision of public transport.
2. National Road Traffic Act, deals with the fitness of vehicles and drivers
3. constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 deals with children rights.
4. The National Learner Transport Policy for the success of learner transport provision.

Beneficiaries must be needy learners from grade R to 12 'as prescribed', Learner transport must be subsidised to the nearest school and not to a school of parental choice
Priority must be given to learners with disabilities primary school learners who walk long distances to schools

Existing learner transport services must be taken into account when identifying beneficiaries, as no learner transport services will be provided in areas where public transport is available.

5. Institutional frame work for the implementation of learner transport

The framework for the implementation of learner transport was an element of the policy.

Currently, the function is split between the two departments DBE and DOT,

Regarding policy implementation progress, actions completed include:

- The finalization of norms/standards and operational guidelines for learner transport;
- The development of a standardized model to guide contracting authorities;
- Instituting the National Inter-Departmental Committee (NIDC) and facilitating the provincial interdepartmental committees.

Ongoing actions are:

- The assessment of costing and funding for policy implementation;
- Developing and implementing a targeted National Learner Transport Road safety programme;
- Monitoring of the implementation of learner transport programmes.

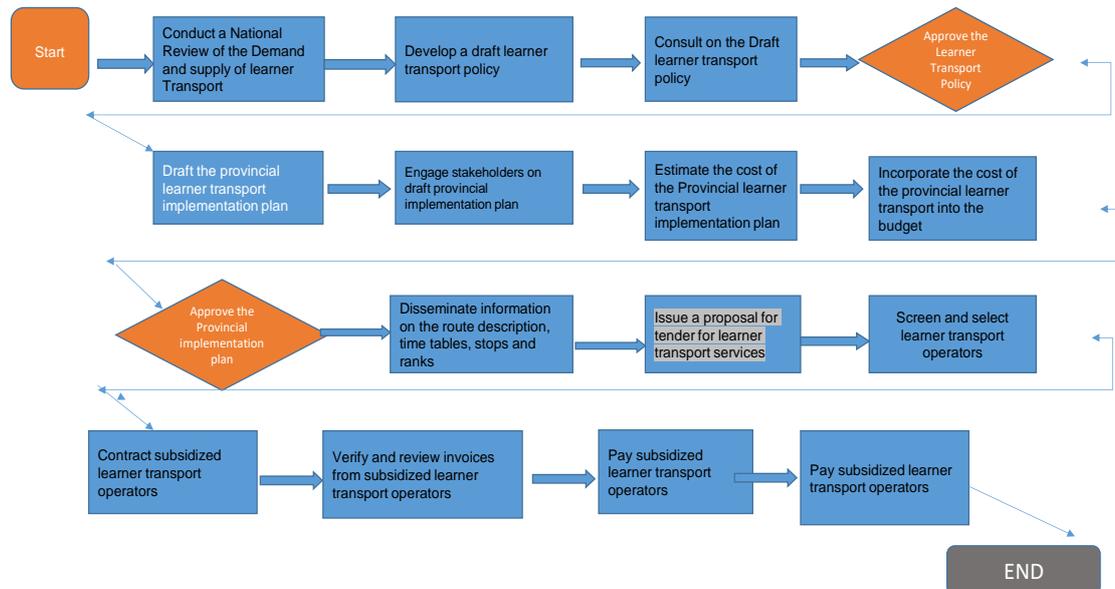
National Departments Transport, Department of Basic Education(Drafters of policies)

Provincial Departments of Transport , Education(Implementors of Policies) this function was with the Department of transport and has relocated to Transport in the Province

The relationship is that National Departments Approve the policies once they have gone through the stages.

The policies put in place by provincial and national government is in charge for the development of the policy and provincial departments implements these policies. If the provincial departments opt to develop their own policies, then there should be alignment to the National policy.

6. Programme Chain of Delivery



The National Policy recognises that planning is fundamental to the success of learner transport provision.

According to the National Policy, learner transport plans are developed at the provincial level.

- Implementing departments, municipalities in consultation with relevant stakeholders do learner transport planning
- A 'joint planning committee' with representatives of the provincial departments of transport and education, as well as representatives of municipalities have been established
- Provinces develop provincial learner transport 'implementation plans and strategies' in line with the National Policy.
- Departments are primarily responsible for initiating planning at the provincial level, and establishing the 'joint planning committees'.
- The National Interdepartmental Committee (NIDC) is reporting to the Ministers of Transport and Basic Education on the implementation of learner transport programmes. The benefits of multi-stakeholder collaboration between the Departments of Transport and Basic Education and other stakeholders are fully realised.
- .
- The National Policy simply provides that Learner Transport Planning must 'start with determination of transport needs', which includes safety, infrastructure and drop-off/ pick-up points. Apart from safety, there is no further guidance in the National Policy on the basic requirements or considerations that should be taken into account in respect of transport-planning needs. As it stands, the National Learner Transport Policy remains very much a work in progress, and the learners of South Africa continue to wait. In the absence of proper government intervention, it currently falls to a few civil society organisations and community activists to bang on the doors of the departments and the courts, to ensure that learners who deserve and have a right to scholar transport are provided with Insufficient scholar transport places difficulties on learners to such an extent that learners are unable to attend class regularly, and/or drop out prematurely. In addition, the above provisions

may lend support to the fact that the state has a duty to take steps to address the obstacles learners face while travelling to school, such as dangerous terrain.

4. Expenditure Observations

The Learner Transport function was successfully migrated from the Department of Transport, Safety and Liaison to Department of Education on the 1st April 2018.

24 741 learners from 267 schools are benefitting from this programme.

Through this initiative, the department has contracted and created a stable income to 224 Operators who are servicing 414 routes across the Province.

In terms of our footprint, John Taolo Gaetsewe District has the highest number of learners (9 354), followed by ZF Mgcawu (6 534), Frances Baard (5 475), Pixley Ka Seme (2 150) and lastly, Namakwa (1 228)

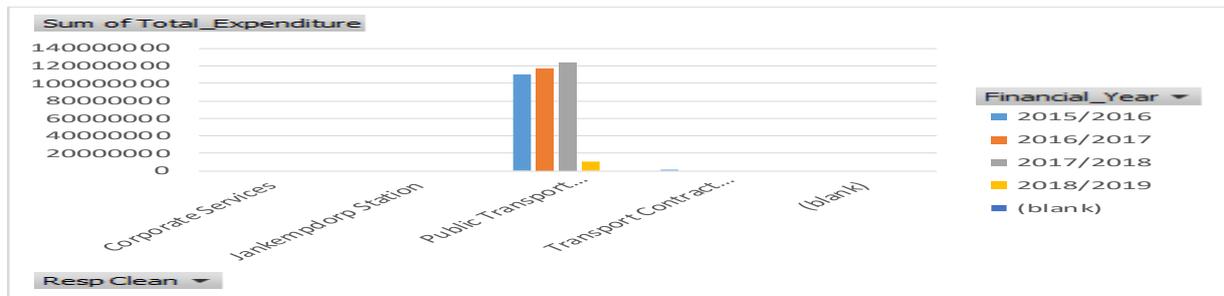
Responsibility_Lowest_Level	Resp Clean
DIV:PUBLIC TRANS PROMOTIONS *P	Public Transport Promotion
SUB DIV:TRANSP CONTR MANAGEMNT*P	Transport Contract Management
JAN KEMPDORP STATION *P	Jan Kempdorp Station
DIR:CORPORATE SERVICES *P	Corporate Services

Item_Lowest_Level	Exp Bucket
TRANSPORT OF SCHOLARS	Scholar Transport
TRANSP FOR PUBLIC EVENTS	Other

The Department of Transport was working with the National Treasury to establish a way forward around the funding of learner transport.

2015/16			2017/18			Change		
Need	Target	Rands /Learner		Target	Rands /Learner	Need	Target	Learner
27526	22665	5219	26853	24750	5063	-2%	9%	-3%

Sum of Total_Expenditure	Column Labels				(blank)	Grand Total
Row Labels	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019		
Corporate Services			R	-		R -
Jan Kempdorp Station			R	-		R -
Public Transport Promotion	R 110 170 008.16	R 116 912 300.99	R 123 992 719.29	R 11 118 650.96		R 362 193 679.40
Transport Contract Management	R 394 282.42					R 394 282.42
(blank)						
Grand Total	R 110 564 290.58	R 116 912 300.99	R 123 992 719.29	R 11 118 650.96		R 362 587 961.82



This function has been incorporated into one of the existing programmes in the Department of Education. It does not have its own subprogramme. During the relocation stage only the function was transferred and not the warm bodies. There is no complete transfer of function which poses serious challenges such as proper functioning of the unit.

The expenditure in the programme has been growing over the years, also reflected is that the expenditure is classified as current under the goods and services. For 2015/16, the expenditure was R 110 million, in 2016/17 it amounted to R 117 million, in the last year there was a drastic decrease in the expenditure because the function was finally relocated to the Department of Education. The payment is mainly the accruals of the previous financial year.

The fund is allocated under the equitable share which is unconditional allocations from National Treasury, allowing provinces to use their own discretion in their allocations of the budget. The budget for learner transport was often the first to be cut when provinces faced budgetary pressures.

5. Performance

There is learner transport in the province and payments are forwarded to the contractors on a monthly basis as depicted by the expenditures, however there is a lot of challenges:

- ✓ insufficient funding for learner transport,
- ✓ funded from the provincial equitable share and
- ✓ The province did not budget sufficiently for all learners that needed transport.
- ✓ The location of the function had been a challenge between the DoT and the DBE, finally it has been relocated to Department of Education.
- ✓ Unreliable transport mode
- ✓ road safety,
- ✓ lack uniformity in contracting.
- ✓ At times no services at all,
- ✓ unsafe and insecure methods,
- ✓ uncoordinated services,
- ✓ unscrupulous operations and non-standardization of operations across the Province.

The terms 'needy learners' who walk 'long distances' are not defined. In addition, the distance that learners walk should not be the only determining factor in deciding who is entitled to scholar transport. The kind of ground and natural obstacles that learners face are also important, as is weather, terrain and safety. Further, the criteria don't emphasize that plans need to account for the best interest of each individual learner. The Policy also provides that school principals must select qualifying learners. It does not allow for parents and learners themselves to take their cases to the department, in instances where they are unfairly left out by principals.

Principals are often overworked, and do not have enough time or resources to look at each child individually. For that reason, they sometimes perform a general assessment of distance from the school to the centre of a village, and use that as the distance for all learners who call

that village home. This does not take into account that villages can be quite large, adding kilometres to learners' walks. Even if transport is provided for the village, learners often have to walk long distances to get to the village centre in order to catch a ride.

The National Policy also only seeks to provide transport to the nearest grade-appropriate school, and will not pay if parents choose a different school. In certain circumstances this could be problematic, especially when there is a valid reason for walking past the closest school, such as overcrowding, lack of resources or poor performance.

Furthermore, the National Policy seems to be strict about not providing scholar transport in areas where public transport is available, completely ignoring the role of poverty. It excludes learners who live in areas where public transport is available but come from poor households unable to afford public transport. This prohibition is also problematic because it overlooks the fact that public transport, though theoretically 'available', might be inappropriate for or inaccessible to learners. The National Policy envisions multistakeholder collaboration (dialogue between the provinces and different government departments). According to the Policy, a National Interdepartmental Committee (NIDC) must be established consisting of representatives from the national Departments of Transport and Basic Education

Finally, international legal instruments show that South Africa has an obligation to provide learners with adequate transport due to the dangers and travel distances they face. Scholar transport is an important right for every learner

7. Options

There was a bicycle programme called the Shova Kalula bicycle programme that was run by the DoT. Its objective was to augment-Scholar transport, which was provided only for learners traveling 5km and above. The bicycle programme was for those that travelled between 3km and 5km initially. However, due to the high demand for scholar transport, some learners traveling more than 5km also used the bicycles. The Department would help the province and the schools to maintain the bicycles. This was because the households that received the bicycles were poor, and it was difficult for them to maintain them.

The demand of the bicycles would assist if 1000 more bicycles are procured over the 3 years to alleviate the plight of learner transport to spread across the 5 district municipalities in the province, each getting 200 bicycles. A budget of **R 4. 8 million** is required over the MTEF as depicted below.

Northern Cape						
SHOVAKALULA	Full Cost Scenario			Current Reality	Preventative Scenario	ToTal
Year	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2019/20	2019/20	MTEF
Goods and Services	R 1 500 000	R 1 575 000	R 1 653 750	R 1 500 000	R 1 500 000	R 4 728 750
Total	R 1 500 000	R 1 575 000	R 1 653 750	R 1 500 000.00	R 1 500 000	R 4 728 750

Number of Bycycles	1 000	1 000	1 000	1 000	1 000
Number of District Municipalities	5	5	5	5	5

Inflation	5%		5%		
Cost of Bicycle	R 1 500.00	R 1 575.00	R 1 653.75	R 1 500.00	R 1 500 000

Number of bicycles per municipality					
At District Municipalities	200	200	200	200	200

Department does not have a functional structure. it is important to ensure that we there is an effective structure that will specifically with the scholar transport.

The costing below is what we would like to establish.

to address the shortfall. A Supervisor is needed for inspection to deal with complains are registered. To validate and authenticate the claims received from operators there needs to be physical verifications, inspect the points and investigate the issues and discomforts raised by learners and parents.

Costing for warm bodies.

the establishment of a scholar transport would need an assistant director and a senior administration officer, these warm bodies would also need resources to fulfil their responsibilities.

Assistant director at level 9
Senior Administration Officer level 8
Included is also a budget for goods and services.

In the costing we have also included the inflation.

The costing below relates to the structure we are aspiring to have over the MTEF (3-year cycle)

Assumptions						
	Full Cost Scenario			Current Reality	Preventative Scenario	budget choices
	2020/21	2020/22	2020/23	2020/21	2020/21	2020/21
Financial Assumptions						
Change on 2020/21 in Scenario 1						
Inflation		5.0%	6.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Salary increases in base line budget per annum		5.0%	6.6%	7.0%	0.0%	0.0%
General Assumptions						
Operational expenses as a per cent of total salary costs - where not specified elsewhere		25%	25%	25%	25%	25%
Capital expenditure as a per cent of total salary costs - where not specified elsewhere		5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Salary levels of key staff						
Baseline Salary						
Assistant Director	R 356 289	R 374 103	R 398 794	R 381 229	R 356 289	R 356 289
Administrative staff (level 8)	R 227 802	R 239 192	R 254 979	R 243 748	R 227 802	R 227 802
						R 0
General Assumptions						
<i>per year</i>						
Work days per annum	215	215				
Non core work days per annum	10%	22				
Core work days per annum		194				
Work hours per day	8	1 548				
Minutes work per year		92 880				
Travel and Accommodation						
One night accommodation	R 1 350	R 1 418	R 1 503	R 1 350	R 1 350	R 1 350
Domestic Economy Flight	R 3 500	R 3 675	R 3 896	R 3 500	R 3 500	R 3 500
Car Hire per day	R 800	R 840	R 890	R 800	R 800	R 800
Cost per km travelled	R 5.25	R 5.51	R 5.84	R 5.25	R 5.25	R 5.25
Workshops and meetings						
For interactions with industry role players						
Participants per workshop	100	100	100	100	100	100
Venue Costs per participant/day (including catering)	R 2 000	R 2 100	R 2 226	R 2 000	R 2 000	R 2 000
Audio-visual equipment hire per day	R 8 000	R 8 400	R 8 904	R 8 000	R 8 000	R 8 000
Cost per workshop per day	R 208 000	R 218 400	R 231 504	R 208 000	R 208 000	R 208 000

7. Recommendations

- ✓ Deficiencies identified in the National Policy should be addressed to give clear guidance such as. the criteria that states that beneficiaries must be 'needy' learners from grade R to 12 'as prescribed', but it does not define who a 'needy' learner is.
- ✓ A favourable aspect of the criteria is that primary school and learners with disabilities 'who walk long distances' are to be prioritised, as they are the most vulnerable and in the most desperate need.
- ✓ An increase in the equitable share would be allocated in the same manner as the rest of the equitable share by the equitable share formula, instead of being in proportion to each province's learner transport needs. A conditional grant would match financial allocation to need.
- ✓ Existing learner transport services must be taken into account, and no learner transport services will be provided where 'public transport is available'. Many families struggle to afford public transport; and as a result, learners make long and unsafe journeys to school on foot.
- ✓ A conditional grant would prevent the diversion of funds allocated to learner transport and would allow for a level of oversight by National Treasury and other stakeholders. Most provinces did not have programme for learner transport, so the budget amounts were not recorded separately. This made monitoring very difficult. A conditional grant would ensure that allocations and expenditures could easily be traced and monitored.
- ✓ A lot of the responsibility rests with the principal and the SGB to ensure that an application is made on behalf of all learners who require transport. It may be good because principals and SGBs may know the needs of their school better than a department official.
- ✓

8. Action

Work study to determine staffing needs

The Education Department has acquired the services of a consultancy firm to conduct a work study exercise to determine the human resources that will be needed to manage learner transport services in the Department. This is in line with the EXCO Resolution that the full assessments and analysis of the function be done by the Department of Education to determine the financial and human resources and other matters incidental to the transfer of the function.

This process is still continuing and the proposal of the consultancy firm is expected soon.

Since the function has been successfully migrated it is also important to start immediately to request National Treasury to ring-fence the fund to make it a conditional grant since it is solely vested in the Department of Education

A Draft Provincial Learner Transport Policy to be developed for circulation within the next coming three months;

The Standard Operating Procedures for Managing Learner Transport must be developed and circulated for comment a month thereafter

Draft Memorandum of Understanding between the Northern Cape Department of Education and the Department of Transport, Safety and Liaison was developed and in the process to be submitted for comment.

The non-functional routes that were not implemented by DTSL must still be implemented. The Department is monitoring the financial effect of the tariff increases on the current budget to determine how the non-functional routes will be implemented. The districts have already been informed to verify the information of the non-functional routes in the mean time to prepare for implementation

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