



GOVERNMENT OF SINDH  
SCHOOL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Karachi, dated: 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2017

**NOTIFICATION**

No. SO(G-III)/SED/SCP/ Guidelines /3-696/2016: In pursuance of School Clustering Policy vide notification No. S.O(G-III)/E&L/School Clustering Policy/2016, dated 14<sup>th</sup> June 2016, to implement the policy in letter & spirit in the Province of Sindh: the following Guidelines of School Clustering Policy are hereby notified.

1. Introduction

School Education Department has prepared the following Guidelines to support implementation of the School Clustering Policy Framework.

The Guidelines have been prepared to elaborate and explain the key concepts used in School Clustering Policy Framework covering aspects of cluster planning, governance, management, and monitoring.

Together with SOPs and Implementation Plan, these guidelines present clarity for all the stakeholders engaged in the implementation of School Clustering Policy.

2. Policy Framework Guidelines

Reform Support Unit is to steer the process of cluster policy planning and provide support in its implementation. It will verify recommendations made for school clusters, cluster commissions, cluster hub schools, and cluster hub school heads through existing SEMIS and GIS data and field surveys and upon satisfactory verification process will recommend to concerned authorities for necessary notifications.

2.1 School Cluster – A school cluster is defined as a group of schools that are geographically close and accessible to each other, within a radius of 15-20 kms. The distance varies with respect to number of schools of various types and sizes within the cluster. The School Cluster would have a better resourced Cluster Hub School, which is central and accessible to other schools within the cluster.

The following categories of clusters will be notified:

- a) **Primary Cluster** – Given the large number (more than 90% of all the schools) of primary schools in Sindh there will be many clusters with only primary schools. A provision will be created to upgrade a centrally located and relatively well resourced primary school in every cluster where there are no middle/elementary or secondary schools. The upgradation will ensure that there is at least one school in the cluster that will provide education opportunities to children beyond primary. The upgraded school will serve as the Cluster Hub School.
- b) **Elementary Cluster** – There are approximately 5% middle/elementary schools in the Sindh province mostly in urban areas, or about 1 in 20 schools. In order to make rural clusters more inclusive of elementary schools and ensure that children within a cluster



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have education opportunities beyond primary level. efforts will be made to include middle/elementary schools on the fringes of urban areas as part of rural clusters. Additionally, a better resourced and centrally located primary school in a Primary Cluster will also be upgraded to middle/elementary school.

- c) **Secondary Cluster** – There are approximately 4% Secondary schools in the province of Sindh, mostly in urban areas. As in case of middle/elementary schools, efforts will be made to include Secondary schools located on the peripheries of urban areas into rural clusters. In order to ensure that every rural cluster should have at least one middle elementary or one secondary school, the normal cluster size will include about 14-15 primary schools, given the current proportion of about 14 primary schools for one middle/elementary or secondary school.
- d) **Campus School Cluster** – A school cluster with a campus school will be kept much smaller in radius considering that campus schools are already consolidated and sharing resources and facilities.

Some additional provisions will be made as follows when finalizing school clusters:

1. Double or multiple shift schools should continue to operate as they are as part of the school cluster. In situations where these shift schools are large and well resourced, they can be made the Cluster Hub Schools.
2. Urdu or Sindhi medium primary schools when upgraded to middle/elementary in a cluster will be made multi-lingual to accommodate all the children in the community. Necessary staff allocations will be done accordingly.
3. There will be some schools, especially those in the desert or far flung areas in some districts, such as Umerkot, Mithi, Sukkur, Khairpur and a few others that will not fit in with any cluster. These schools will still be affiliated with the nearest clusters, for benefitting from some services. However, it will not be possible for cluster Guide Teacher or Cluster Hub School to maintain a regular liaison with the far flung school(s); instead a quarterly contact will be maintained and upon each visit necessary information will be gathered and support provided.
4. Some clusters, mostly in urban areas, are likely to have more than one middle/elementary or secondary school. In such a situation, the school with more resources in terms of number of staff, facilities, rooms etc. will be notified as the Cluster Hub school.
5. Budgetary allocations will be made to accommodate mobility allowances for CHS Head and Guide teachers in the clusters as per government rules.

**2.1.1 CLUSTER COMMISSIONS** - Commissions of Clusters will be created at the district and division level, bringing together school clusters to give them more support. CHS Heads will be nominated to represent their clusters at the district cluster commission. Similarly, the DEOs will represent district commissions at the division commission level. The district commission will be Co-headed by the DEO (Elementary, Secondary, Higher Secondary) & (Primary) and the division commission will be Co-headed by the Divisional Director Schools (Elementary, Secondary, Higher Secondary) & (Primary). The commissions will perform various functions while also reviewing the performance of school clusters for issues and challenges. The district cluster commission will meet every month, while the divisional cluster commission will meet after every three months to review the progress of clusters, identify issues and make recommendations for better performance.



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The Divisional Cluster Commission will be Co-headed by the Divisional Director School Education (Secondary, Higher Secondary) & Director School Education (Primary) and will include civil society members including private and NGO sector education representatives, parents and community members and members from each district cluster commission.

The District Cluster Commission will be Co-headed by District Education Officer (ESHS) & DEO (Primary) and will include CHS Heads, selected parents and community members, and representatives from NGOs, CBOs and private organizations working in education.

2.2 Cluster Hub School (CHS) – The CHS is the lead or main school in the cluster responsible for leading all the cluster level activities. Selection of the CHS is distinguished by the following features:

- a) **CHS will be centrally located and be accessible for other schools in the cluster either through public transport or otherwise** – The CHS as the centre of cluster activities should be centrally located to be accessible by other schools. In urban areas the geographical centrality of CHS will be more manageable but in rural areas it can become a challenge. Selection of a centrally located CHS accessible through road network and transport will require careful planning and decision making at the provincial and district levels, including utilization of GIS school mapping data and on-site field visits.
- b) **CHS will be one level higher (at least a middle or secondary in case of primary schools) compared with other schools in the cluster. If there is no middle/elementary or secondary schools in the cluster then the main primary school will be upgraded to elementary level** – It will be important for the CHS to be one level higher than the other schools in the cluster to provide the necessary administrative leadership. In situations where there is either a higher secondary, high, elementary or middle school present in a cluster populated by primary schools, the higher level school can be designated as the Cluster Hub School. In an all-primary school cluster the largest primary school will be upgraded to middle/elementary level. In situations where there are two or more middle or elementary schools in the same cluster, the largest one should be upgraded to a secondary school. The school up-gradation initiative will ensure access to students, many of whom otherwise drop out due to absence of availability of next level of schooling. This may require bringing dropped out children back to the school, and will need close coordination between CHS and SMCs in the cluster. While upgrading, the service conditions and seniority of all those concerned should be maintained. At the same time, provision to be made to provide the necessary staffing and facilities to the upgraded school in accordance with rules.
- c) **CHS will be well-resourced in terms of number of teachers (more than 5 in case of a primary or middle school, more than 8 in case of an elementary school, and more than 10 in case of a secondary school)** – The CHS will be responsible for a number of academic activities such as:
  - Cluster based CPD for teachers
  - On the job support and mentoring
  - Follow up and monitoring



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The CHS therefore should be well resourced in terms of number of teachers so that at least two teachers can take on the role of Guide Teachers (though they can also come from other schools within the cluster), coordinates with other teachers in the cluster for various academic activities, and also coordinates with other schools for monitoring, data collection, textbook distribution, PEACE data collection, and so on. The CHS therefore, should have at least 5 teachers if it is a primary school, 8 teachers if it is a middle/elementary schools and 10 teachers if it is a secondary/higher secondary school.

- d) **CHS will have sufficient number of rooms to be able to make available at least one room for cluster activities** – The CHS will take on a central role for the cluster activities, planning, coordinating and holding many events and interventions for teachers, parents and community members. The availability of physical space is therefore, very important for the CHS. At least one room will be made available for the following activities:
- Teacher training
  - Parents meetings
  - Community dialogue
  - Resource centre
  - Storage for material and textbooks
- e) **CHS will have better facilities such as a boundary wall, drinking water facility, electricity, toilet, furniture for teachers and students** – The CHS will be the central school in the cluster, and a centre of many activities for cluster level teachers, students, parents and community members. It is therefore important that the CHS has relatively better physical facilities in terms of number of rooms, furniture, boundary wall, electricity, fans, drinking water and toilets. There will be many activities like teacher training, teacher meetings, parents and community member dialogues, textbook distribution, student events to name a few, and for all these activities access to physical facilities will be required.
- f) **Requisite Administrative staff will be made available to the CHS to allow it to function as a Cost Centre** – CHS will be declared as a Cost Centre since there are a number of tasks that are delegated to the CHS that involve financial matters. A senior clerk, an accounts officer, and other concerned administrative staff **will be made available** to the CHS to facilitate its functioning as a cost centre. Appropriations should be sought for the cost centre staff for CHS in the annual budget. Depending on the number of primary, middle/elementary and secondary schools in the cluster and their activities related to SMC funding, repair and maintenance funds, school specific budgeting and any other funds - if all of this is to be handled cumulatively for the cluster, capable administrative staff will be required at the CHS.

2.3 CHS Head – The CHS will be headed by a head master or principal depending on the level of the CHS. The CHS Head will have a minimum academic qualification of a bachelor degree and at least 10 years of experience as a school head, and be ideally within the age group of 40-45. The Head will belong to school management service (SMS) cadre and should be a seasoned professional managerially. The Head will have the following authorities and functions:

- a) **The Head will be at least of Grade 17** – The CHS Head will at least be a BS-17 officer with the authority to implement cluster level activities. Where the CHS is a primary, middle or elementary school and may not have anyone at BS-17, and/or not fulfilling



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other requirements, the position will be opened up to other SMS cadre officers within the taluka or district and will be filled through transfers.

- b) **The Head will ensure availability of sufficient number of teachers within cluster** – The Head will have the administrative powers to recommend transfer of primary level teachers within cluster for which he/she should have good reasons to be recorded, and that unless the situation warrants, the usual tenure of a school teacher in a school within the hub should not be less than 2 years. For teachers teaching in elementary or secondary schools in the cluster, the Head will prepare a summary request for transfer for the District Cluster Commission. For any transfers, outside of the cluster but within the same taluka or district, the CHS Head will make recommendation to the District Cluster Commission: who will issue the notification after fulfilling the due diligence process.
- c) **The Head will have DDO authority** – The CHS Head should have DDO authority to implement cluster level activities. For facilitation of the DDO, necessary staff will be provided to the CHS to work under the Head's supervision. The staff will include accounting, procurement and administrative officials. They will facilitate the Head carry out financial and administrative tasks relating to:
- Repair and maintenance of school buildings
  - Support for SMC's fund management cumulatively for procurement function
  - School specific budgeting (SSB)
  - Teacher training
  - Textbook distribution
  - Cluster level monitoring and data collection
- d) **The Head will gather and furnish data for cluster monitoring** – The CHS Head will gather and furnish monitoring data to the provincial monitoring wing. The Head will deploy senior teachers for data collection. Teachers and CHS head will be trained by monitoring officials on monitoring tools and data collection. The monitoring data will be sample verified monitoring officials before being included as a final version in the provincial monitoring database.
- e) **The Head will facilitate textbook distribution for the cluster** – The CHS Head will organize textbook distribution at the cluster level with support from senior teachers. Textbooks will be delivered by the STBB to the CHS and will be stored there. Cluster schools will make their collections from the CHS. Designated staff member(s) at the CHS will maintain an account of textbook distribution.
- f) **The Head will manage repair and maintenance budget for cluster schools** – The repair and maintenance budget is currently managed by the Education Works Department at the provincial level. This budget will be decentralized to the CHS level and managed by the Head. The decentralization of repair and maintenance to the CHS will not only help direct funds to where they are needed most, but can also increase ownership and spending efficiency as local communities can provide manual support to the school renovation work.
- g) **The Head will guide teachers for cluster based teacher professional development** – The Head in coordination with the Guide Teachers will steer all teacher professional development activities with the cluster teachers, will occasionally get involved



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him/herself in a session or two, and will seek regular progress updates from the Guide Teachers. The Head will also support the Guide Teachers in their coordination with specialized teacher training institutions for seeking longer duration interventions during school vacation periods.

- h) **The Head will coordinate with SMCs in the cluster for effective management and for progress updating on the children** – Parents and school communities are the largest stakeholders in the education of their children. The Head will coordinate regularly with SMCs within the cluster, directly as well as through other schools, to keep them informed about their children’s progress and opportunities for future. At the same time, the Head will coordinate with SMC for better and efficient working. The funds will be spent separately for each school as per their SMC fund quota, but will be managed cumulatively by the cost centre.
- i) **The Head will represent the cluster as and when required at the district and division levels** – The CHS Head will represent his/her cluster in the cluster commissions at district and division levels as and when required. The district cluster commission will have the representation of all CHS Heads, while at the division level the DEOs will represent the district commissions and will have one or two CHS heads to accompany them for each division commission level meeting.

The CHS Heads will undergo specially designed programs and courses for their capacity building before taking on the role, and will receive ongoing professional support throughout their appointment. For performing additional tasks the CHS Head will be offered some additional allowance as permissible under rules.

2.4 Guide Teacher – The Guide Teachers will be identified from within the CHS or any other school in the cluster by the CHS Head and notified by the concerned DEO on recommendation of concerned District Cluster Commission. The Guide Teachers will have a minimum academic qualification of a bachelor degree along with required professional qualifications, and more than 10 years of teaching experience. The Guide Teacher should also have attended training programs offered for master trainers and teacher educators to be able to better understand the role and requirements of a Guide Teacher, and what entails mentoring and supporting other teachers in the cluster. Ideally the Guide Teachers should be between 30-40 years of age group. The Guide Teachers will have the following roles and responsibilities:

- a) **The Guide Teachers will facilitate all the teachers in the cluster for their professional development** – The Guide Teacher will work out his/her own arrangement for regularly coordinating with all the teachers in the cluster for their professional development at the cluster level. Teacher professional development can take many forms including focus groups discussions, a workshop or seminar, or any other approaches to respond to teacher needs.
- b) **The Guide Teacher will facilitate teacher learning circle in the cluster** – Teacher Learning Circles (TLC) will be a useful activity bringing together all the teachers in the cluster once every fortnight, or once every month. The purpose of the TLC will be to provide an opportunity to teachers to have a professional exchange about their teaching experiences, talk about issues and challenges and explore solutions together. The Guide Teacher will facilitate the TLCs by framing agenda, moderating the discussions and helping record decisions.



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- c) **The Guide Teacher will provide mentoring support to teachers in the cluster** – The Guide Teacher will be required to provide mentoring support to teachers in their schools, as well as during TLCs. Mentoring will essentially involve guiding the teachers through their classroom teaching behaviours and practices, and outside of the classroom in their interactions with parents, community members, and in matters relating to student motivation and school uplifting. Mentoring will be provided while observing teachers in their teaching (on the job support), and holding individual as well as group sessions with them about outside of the classroom issues. Mentoring is a very important task, and will require the Guide Teacher to be extremely sensitive to teachers' needs, and yet very responsive to the issues and challenges that they face. It will require for the Guide Teacher to develop a relationship of trust with the teachers and convey a role of support rather than administrative policing, which then becomes monitoring as opposed to mentoring.
- d) **The Guide Teacher will coordinate with the teacher education institutions on behalf of the CHS Head for any teacher training activities for cluster teachers** – Teacher professional development at the cluster level will take many forms – TLCs and teacher mentoring are approaches mentioned earlier. A third and more structured approach will have to do with formal face to face workshops and courses offered by expert institutions in the province, such as PITE and Bureau of Curriculum. The Guide Teacher will keep him/herself informed about the calendar of activities at teacher training institutions to be able to inform teacher of any relevant upcoming opportunities. At the same time, the Guide Teacher, on behalf of the CHS Head will also seek tailor-made programs for cluster teachers from the training institutions – depending of course on the availability of resources.
- e) **The Guide Teacher will coordinate with all the school in the cluster to gather necessary data about teachers, students and schools and hand over to the CHS Head** – Collection of timely and accurate data is a challenge not just in Sindh but in other provinces as well. A cluster-based approach for data collection can be better managed, and can be timely also. With as many as 10-15-20 schools in a cluster, depending on the cluster location, the Guide Teachers will take on the role of coordinating with all the schools in the cluster and gather data as and when required by the provincial or district authorities. The data can be collected through physical visits, but can also be gathered through mobile technology and later verified through personal visits. The collected data will be handed over to the CHS Head for further verification and handing over to the concerned officials (monitoring assistants – MA). The MAs will carry out their sample based verifications as guided by Directorate General (Monitoring & Evaluation) before handing forwarding the data to the province.

The Guide Teachers will be provided special training prior to their appointment, covering teacher professional development to be able to effectively coordinate and mentor teachers at the cluster level. During the course of their employment the Guide Teachers will undergo ongoing professional development at specialized teacher education institutions. For taking on the role of Guide Teacher, the individuals will be paid an additional allowance as permissible under rules, in addition to covering any travel related costs.

## 2.5 Cluster Based School Management (CBSM)

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CBSM will devolve some activities and functions to the cluster level for better efficiency and improved functioning. Following activities will be implemented under the CBSM:

- a) **Clusters will be aligned with the provincial monitoring system** – Clusters will be aligned with the provincial monitoring system, feeding directly into the provincial monitoring data through monitoring assistants (MA) at the district level. The CHS will take the responsibility for gathering information from all other schools in the cluster and providing this information to the MAs for onward submission to the provincial monitoring wing. The MAs, guided by the DG (M&E) will carry out sample based verifications before making their final submissions to the province. The collection of monitoring data at the cluster level will make the system more responsive and efficient, ensuring timely availability of data with greater reliability given the small scale of a school cluster. For his purpose the CHS Head and Guide Teachers will be provided specific training from the provincial monitoring wing.
- b) **Clusters will help facilitate textbook distribution** – Currently textbooks are received at the taluka level from where all the schools collect them. However, a number of problems are reported in textbook distribution at the tauka level. Textbooks for cluster schools will be received at the CHS, and from there heads of other schools in the cluster can collect the books. Cluster level distribution will facilitate better management of the whole process, making it easier for the collectors and also providing closer monitoring for the actual number of books required and eventually distributed.
- c) **Clusters will help improve the diagnostic assessments carried out by PEACE** – Clustering can improve the diagnostic assessments done by PEACE by making the sample more representative. PEACE can select 1-2 schools from each cluster (depending on the number of clusters in the province) for PEACE testing, making the distribution more representative and the results more reliable. At present, while the PEACE sampling is able to collect data from every district, it is not necessarily down to the taluka, union council and village level – collecting data from every cluster will increase reliability of PEACE results and make them more representative of the actual on ground situation.
- d) **Clusters will manage repair and maintenance budget** – The repair and maintenance budget will be provided to the CHS. The funds will be better managed at the CHS level through its cost centre and can be more easily diverted to where they are needed. This is very important given the current dilapidated state of buildings and classrooms. Management of repair and maintenance function (including its budget) at the cluster level will not only ensure that funds are transferred to where they are needed most in a timely manner, but can also increase community participation in the process through their manual involvement in the repair and maintenance function.
- e) **Clustering and School Based SNEs** – Under the CBSM, school based SNEs will be done to ensure rationalized supply of teachers to all schools, as opposed to the existing taluka/district level SNEs that place teacher deployment under the ADO and DO, not necessarily responding individual school needs. Cluster and school based SNEs will ensure that teachers are posted to where they are needed most, and will help overcome teacher shortage and surplus issue. Cluster/school based SNE policy will work best after the government has ratified and implemented a teacher rationalization policy.



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- f) **School Clustering and CPD Strategy** – A working committee will be formulated at STEDA for development of the CPD strategy. PITE, BOC and other non-government provincial level institutions and international teacher development projects should be co-opted on the working committee that STEDA can lead for developing the CPD strategy, covering an approach for school clusters.

A teacher management information system (TMIS) will be developed that maintains a professional profile of every teacher, including a record of all training programmes that he/she has attended. The TMIS will ensure that all teachers go through CPD as per their requirements, and will be useful for developers designing subsequent programmes based on what were they offered previously, and what should be logically sequenced next.

A cluster based approach for CPD of teachers does not necessarily have to be a formal or structured face to face intervention; it can rather take other shapes and approaches as follows:

1) Teachers within a cluster will be grouped together under a professional development forum (PDF) or teacher learning circles (TLC). The PDF/TLC can meet regularly providing opportunities to teachers to share experiences, seek support, and adopt successful practices. There can be a district level PDF/TLC bringing together representatives from cluster level PDFs/TLCs, and a division level PDF/TLC representing district PDFs. The district levels TLCs/PDFs can meet quarterly while the division level PDFs/TLCs can meet once every six months. A culture of professional peer networking or communities of practice can be initiated at the cluster level, district level and division level, allowing teachers the opportunity to meet and make professional exchanges.

2) A second approach under cluster based CPD will include a more structured mentoring provided through senior teachers/head teachers and academic supervisors. Classroom observations can be made purely from an academic angle by senior teachers, head teachers and academic supervisors and necessary support provided accordingly.

3) Teacher professional development (PD) days can be allocated on the first and last day of each term, and structured refresher programmes can be offered on these days. Cluster head and senior teachers can either offer such refreshers on their own, or may seek outside support through BOC and PITE.

## 2.6 Performance Monitoring for CBSM

A Performance Monitoring Plan will be developed by the RSU for assessing the impact of CBSM against objectives, activities and results on a regular basis. The following template provides an illustration of possible objectives, activities and results under a PMP and can be used for gathering performance data in the field:

Indicator	Definition and Unit of Measure	Data Source and Collection Method	Data Collection Frequency	Baseline and Target	Analysis and Assumptions
Overall Objective: Improve overall school management and performance through clustering					



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% of children receiving textbooks within one week of distribution to schools					
Availability of monitoring data from clusters within xxx days/weeks of collection					
PEACE sampling framework covering xx% UCs and yy% tehsils					
Number of schools receiving repair and maintenance budget					
% of teachers at the cluster level meeting improved performance standards					
% of Guide Teachers able to effectively mentor and support teachers					
Number of teachers recruited under school based teacher SNEs					
Number of fresh enrolment in schools subsequent to school upgradation at the cluster level					
Intermediate Result 1: Improved Textbook Distribution					
Activity 1					
Activity 2					

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Activity 3				
Intermediate Result 2: Improved Monitoring and Data Collection				
Activity 1				
Activity 2				
Activity 3				

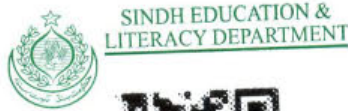
-SECRETARY TO GOVT. OF SINDH-

No. SO(G-III)/SED/SCP/Guidelines/3-696/2017

Karachi, dated: 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2017

A Copy is forwarded for information & necessary action to:

1. The Chief Program Manager, Reform Support Unit, School Education Department.
2. P.S to Secretary, School Education Department, Government of Sindh.
3. The Director School Education (Elementary, Secondary & Higher Secondary). All
4. The Director School Education (Primary). All
5. The District Education Officer- (Elementary, Secondary & Higher Secondary). All
6. The District Education Officer- (Primary). All
7. Deputy District Education Officer- (Elementary/Secondary/Higher Secondary). All
8. Deputy District Education Officer (Primary). All
9. Taluka Education Officer- (Elementary/Secondary/Higher Secondary). All
10. Taluka Education Officer (Primary). All
11. Head Master: Cluster Hub Schools (All)
12. Guide Teacher (Administration) (All)
13. Guide Teacher (Academic) (All)
14. Official Website



**SINDH EDUCATION &  
LITERACY DEPARTMENT**



  
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