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THE TRANSITION FROM DISTRICTS TO REGIONS: A CASE STUDY OF RESTRUCTURING IN A PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor in the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my original work submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Education in the University of Pretoria.

Elijah Phukwana Mashele 30 October 2009

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ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
AGM	Annual General Meeting
CASS	Continuous Assessment
CES	Chief Education Specialist
CMT	Circuit Management Team
CODESA	Convention of the Democratic South Africa
CSR	Civil Service Reform
DDP	District Development Project
DETC	District Education and Training Council
DMT	District Management Team
DoE	Department of Education
DTSTs	District Teacher Support Teams
ERS	Education Renewal Strategy
ETC	Education and Training Council
FET	Further Education and Training
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education

GEA	Ghana Education Authority
GET	General Education and Training
HSRC	Human Science Research Council
JD	Juntas Distrial
ICT	Information Computer Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INSET	In Service Training
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
MDE	Mpumalanga Department of Education
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
MPETC	Mpumalanga Provincial Education and Training Council
LEAs	Local Education Authorities
LLP	Ley de Participacion Popular
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
NGO	Non Government Organization
NPM	New Public Management

OBE	Outcome Based Education
PRF	Policy Reserve Fund
PTAs	Parent Teacher Associations
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SASA	South African Schools Act
SEAs	Scotland Education Authorities
SBM	School Based Management
SGB	School Governing Bodies
SMT	Strategic Management Team
SRN	School Register of Needs
SSBs	School Sponsoring Bodies
UCT	University of Cape Town
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA	United States of America

USAID	United States Agency for International Development

ABSTRACT

The birth of a new South Africa in 1994 necessitated various reforms in education, and like in many other countries, decentralization was imperative in order to address, among other issues, the undemocratic governance practices and inequalities of the former apartheid educational system. This study interrogates the establishment of districts and circuits in Mpumalanga as nodes of service delivery, immediately after South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994. It also focuses on their demise in 2001 and the birth of regions.

The study investigates the rationale behind these processes that took place in Mpumalanga, through posing three main research questions:

1. Which decentralization model(s) informed the formation of districts and circuits in the Mpumalanga Department of Education?
2. What circumstances led to the dismantling of districts and their amalgamation into regions?
3. What has been the effect of this shift on service delivery in circuits and schools? (Did it lead to an improvement or decline in service delivery, education governance in the province, effectiveness and efficiency?)

The methodology used in this study is the qualitative framework. The qualitative research approach is appropriate for investigating the rationale behind the shift from the district structure to the regional structure in Mpumalanga, with the Ehlanzeni region as a case study. This phenomenon can be best understood by using a qualitative approach to investigate how those involved conceptualized and

experienced the whole process. The data collection method is face-to-face, unstructured, in-depth interviews.

The study argues that the shift from districts to regions in Mpumalanga is the result of inadequacies in the district structure which caused districts to fail. These inadequacies filtered down to the performance of roles and responsibilities which led to the demise of districts and their amalgamation into regions, which were given more powers and resources in order to fulfill their mandate.

This study uses Samoff's (1990) decentralization typologies as a lens through which the establishment of districts and circuits, their demise, and the reorganization into regions can be conceptualized. This study found that districts and circuits were established in line with the government's principle of taking government to the people; in that they were closer to the people they served. Districts and circuits were field offices that were strategically established to assist the province in delivering services to the people as well as encouraging community participation in education.

Districts and circuits failed to perform their roles and responsibilities as expected, due to lack of power and authority, resources (physical; human and financial), capacity, coordination and financial support. This led to their restructuring into regions in order to reduce costs, consolidate expertise, provide resources, and grant more powers for them to perform well and achieve efficacy. This study contributes to the body of literature and understanding of the ramifications of decentralization.

Keywords: Decentralization, centralization, district, circuit, region, alignment, curriculum implementers, amalgamation, school support, shift, power and authority