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NEWSLETTER

President Cyril Ramaphosa addresses Basic Education Sector Lekgotla



Addressing delegates during the 2020 Basic Education Sector Lekgotla at Emperors Palace on 16 January 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa congratulated Basic Education Minister, Mrs Angie Motshekga, teachers and the Class of 2019 for achieving a new record pass rate of 81.3%. “It is significant that our matric pass rate has breached the 80% threshold for the first time since the advent of democracy - in line with recent local and international studies that indicate that our system of basic education is on the rise.”

“We are meeting here to carve a new path of progress for our basic education sector in the last decade of the *National Development Plan* (NDP) to ensure that by 2030, South Africans have access to education and training of the highest quality, leading to significantly improved learning outcomes.” In line with the theme of the Lekgotla, President Ramaphosa said that our learners require new skills rooted in academic competencies such as literacy, numeracy and science, as well as critical thinking, communication, persistence, and creativity. He also touched on rolling out the subjects of the future, such as Robotics and Coding, to meet the demands of a changing economy and the future of work.

President Ramaphosa reminded delegates that reading for meaning has now been declared an apex priority. He commended the Department of Basic Education (DBE) for moving with speed in implementing one of our 2019 SONA commitments to: ignite a reading revolution by establishing the National Reading Coalition, as well as the finalisation of the comprehensive *National Reading Plan* to complement existing reading initiatives, such as the *Read to Lead Campaign*. In addition, the President announced the imminent launch of the President’s Reading Circle, a virtual book club, to turbocharge reading across the country to allow readers to share their views on the books with him through the chat service on the club’s website.

“Through the District Development Model, also known as the Khawuleza Model, collaboration between departments and the different spheres of government will be improved to offer multi-disciplinary solutions to community challenges that often result in the disruption of learning and teaching. The Lekgotla brought together key stakeholders in the Basic Education Sector, demonstrating the importance of partnerships in meeting the developmental needs of our country. This Lekgotla confirms that education is a societal issue,” President Ramaphosa concluded.





Equipping learners with knowledge and skills for a changing world



Basic Education Minister, Mrs Angie Motshekga, officially opened the Basic Education Sector Lekgotla that took place at Emperors Palace from 15 to 17 January 2020, referring to the main objectives of the Lekgotla including, priorities for the 6th Administration; the steps to be taken to accelerate the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Quality Education; and the goals outlined in the *National Development Plan* (NDP). The Minister identified accelerating the provision of Early Childhood Development (ECD) as a major focus area for the Lekgotla. An ECD Roundtable was therefore scheduled during the final day of the Lekgotla to garner input to strengthen the draft Framework for the implementation of the ECD function shift.

Basic Education Deputy Minister, Dr Reginah Mhlaule, reminded delegates that 2020 was the 65th year of the *Freedom Charter* that promoted compulsory, universal and equal education for South African children.

The challenges relating to the theme, “Equipping learners with knowledge and skills for a changing world,” were discussed in nine Strategic Action Hubs where delegates proposed actions for implementation. The recommendations from the forum will be taken forward in plans and interventions to improve teaching and learning outcomes.

The Minister’s address was followed by an Analysis of the 2019 National Senior Certificate (NSC) Results by Basic Education Director-General, Mr Hubert Mathanzima Mweli, as well as a Report on the Quality Assurance of the 2019 NSC examinations by Umalusi.

The Basic Education Sector Lekgotla has become institutionalised as an important annual forum that draws key officials and stakeholders together to deliberate on critical issues within the education sector. Delegates include MECs, HoDs, officials from the DBE, provincial and district offices, sister departments, social partners and stakeholders, as well as national and international presenters.

School monitoring and oversight visits ensure smooth start to new academic year



South African schools heralded the new academic year as teachers, parents and learners flocked back to schools across all nine provinces. Basic Education Minister, Mrs Angie Motshekga, joined by Basic Education Deputy Minister, Dr Reginah Mhaule, embarked on school monitoring and oversight programmes to several schools in the KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo Provinces to assess the state of school readiness.

According to the DBE, provinces are more than ready to deliver quality education in public schools during 2020. During meetings with School Management Teams (SMTs) at Lekkerbreek Primary and Hector Peterson Primary School in Modimolle, Limpopo, Minister Motshekga acknowledged the efforts of teachers, parents and members of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) for striving to turn schools into centres of excellence. The Minister also thanked parents for collaborating with teachers in improving quality education in schools, whilst urging them to prioritise reading at home to engage in reading with meaning as part of the reading revolution.

Deputy Minister Mhaule visited Havenpark Secondary School in Phoenix in Durban in the KwaZulu-Natal Province to establish school readiness in the Province, as well as the provision of teaching aids.

The Ministry commended Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) on their commitment and support in ensuring that schools were fully prepared to kick-start the academic year on the first day of schooling.



Improving the effective implementation of ECD



Government is making progress in ensuring that the ECD function is officially shifted from Social Development to the DBE. Basic Education Minister, Mrs Angie Motshekga, addressed delegates during the ECD Roundtable at the 2020 Basic Education Sector Lekgotla.

“Since President Cyril Ramaphosa made the announcement about the migration, we have collectively, as the affected departments put shoulder to the wheel. There is no better way to start building the future we imagined than to focus on early learning. By its very nature early childhood education is the foundation for cognitive development. For us to realise our mission of achieving a high performing and quality basic education system in our lifetime, we must re-imagine the whole concept, definition, curriculum and funding of ECDs. Research concludes that access to ECDs for learners improves learning outcomes and the overall quality of education. Access to high quality ECDs is a social equaliser. If we succeed in early learning it will further result in higher school enrolment rates, retention and improved academic performance,” said Minister Motshekga.

The Minister further added that, “our role as a lead department is to conceptualise a fit-for purpose curriculum for a much improved, integrated and re-imagined ECD sector. We will do so by redefining the roles of each affected department, also focusing on our core business; developing minimum norms and standards; and curriculum redesign and implementation. Our master plan must define quality across the system and we must invest resources to develop qualified ECD practitioners. In short, we must broaden access, increase scale and invest in quality fit-for purpose curriculum across the board”.

Click on the below link for the Minister’s speech:

<https://www.education.gov.za/Newsroom/Speeches/tabid/950/ctl/Details/mid/8848/ItemID/7781/Default.aspx>



Teacher empowerment – moving beyond rhetoric



Dr Paula Rebolledo, a Teacher Consultant from Chile, presented an insightful paper on *Teacher Empowerment: Moving beyond rhetoric*, during the Basic Education Sector Lekgotla. Dr Rebolledo defines Teacher Empowerment as a process whereby teachers develop autonomy to make decisions and exercise their professional judgment about how and what to teach. She explained that for teacher empowerment to be strengthened, the following six dimensions need to be addressed: Impact and a sense of making a difference; professional growth and professionalism; autonomy; self-efficacy; status and respect within the school and community; and decision-making.

On the one hand, teachers need to feel that what they do in the classroom has an impact, whilst accessing opportunities for professional growth. This is in line with the 3rd international Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), released during June 2019. TALIS, which is administered by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), is the first international survey to focus on the learning environments and the working conditions of teachers in schools. TALIS Volume II will be released during March 2020. On the other hand, teachers feel disempowered in respect of input made into the curriculum, and often view consultation processes as cosmetic. Relating stories from teacher surveys indicate that teachers want to be involved in democratic decision-making processes; risk-taking; collaboration; and teacher-led professional development.

A panel discussion followed with Mr Paul Colditz from the Federation of Associations of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FEDSAS) saying that, “as the role and responsibility of teachers will be changing rapidly in the 21st Century, teachers must remain lifelong professional learners”. Ms Ella Mokgalane from the South African Council for Educators (SACE) explained that, “teacher professionalisation enhances the status, standing and regard for the teacher profession to empower teachers towards professional accountability. Similarly, the professionalisation of Early Childhood Development (ECD) must be taken seriously”. “Resources and financing for teacher development is crucial for us improve on the 81,3% pass rate,” said Mr Mugwena Maluleke from the South African Democratic Teachers Union. In conclusion, Dr Rebolledo advised that teachers must be able to improve autonomy and enhance creativity, flexibility and innovation to use their professional judgement “because what teachers do and think is important”.

Implications of Neuroscience Education for teaching and learning



Educational neuroscience seeks to translate research findings on neural mechanisms of learning to educational practice through understanding the effects of education on the brain. One of the objectives of the Basic Education Sector Lekgotla was therefore to enhance the implementation of methods and techniques to promote neuroscience education in the teaching and learning of foundational skills. As the first 1000 days, as well as the impact in the first six years in the development of the child's life is crucial, Dr Melodie de Jager from the Babygym Institute shared techniques to stimulate the whole brain function and touched on the importance of learning through play.

Dr Daniel Ansari, from the Western University, Canada, who presented a paper on Neuroscience Education and its implications for teaching of foundational skills, touched on neuromyths which impact on learning styles saying, "There is no adequate evidence base to justify incorporating learning styles assessments into general educational practice. Thus, limited education resources would better be devoted to adopting other educational practices that have a strong evidence base".

"Poor literacy and numeracy have consequences outside of the classroom. Learning to read is difficult because it requires to co-opt neuronal territories originally dedicated to other functions. Reading involves domain specific processes such as grapheme-phoneme mapping that needs to be explicitly taught in a language such as English with irregular grapheme-phoneme mapping. Reading also involves a wide range of domain-general processes that should also be trained," explained Dr Grégoire Borst from the Université Paris Descartes on neuroscience and reading.

On neuroscience and numeracy, Dr Dénes Szucs from the University of Cambridge explained that, "there are both cognitive and emotional factors related to Mathematics teaching and learning. Mathematics anxiety impacts on Mathematic performance, as well as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subject choices. Teachers also show levels of Mathematics anxiety and teacher training in the relevant knowledge and skills are therefore critical.

Neuroscience is shedding light on brain functioning and learning in addition to environmental factors. This enables us to identify key indicators for educational outcomes, and provides a scientific basis for evaluating different teaching approaches.

Entrepreneurship, Employability and Education – the E3 solution

The E³ (Entrepreneurship, Employability, and Education in Schools) solution will assist learners to develop skills for a changing world as per the theme of the 2020 Basic Education Sector Lekgotla. The methods and techniques to promote Entrepreneurship Education (EE) in the teaching and learning of all subjects can therefore not be overlooked. All public schools will be implementing Entrepreneurship and Employability Education from Grades R – 12 by 2024.

Dr Adri du Toit from the University of the North West evaluated the value of entrepreneurship in education, as well as the inclusion of EE in the current school curriculum. EE assists in combining knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes for self-directed employment with economic, social and environmental value. It prepares the youth to be responsible, enterprising individuals who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers by immersing them in real-life learning experiences where they can take risks, manage the results, and learn from the outcomes.

Dr du Toit presented findings on the importance of EE in the Senior Phase before learners prepare for Further Education and Training, benchmarked against African countries such as Botswana. In South Africa, only Agricultural Management Practices, Business Studies and Consumer Studies subjects include elements of EE. The suggestions were for EE to start earlier in the curriculum, and for progression and sequencing in subjects across phases. Entrepreneurship theory content and practical skills should be linked with real-life learning and extrinsic motivation. In addition, teacher training in respect of content and pedagogy is essential.

Dr Ria de Villiers, from the Maharishi Institute agreed that entrepreneurship should be expanded across all subjects for learners to become employable or self-employable from an early age. She also cited the importance of experimental and new pedagogies, as well as project-based learning: “Teachers will have to be problem-solvers”.



Coding and Robotics curriculum workshopped at Microsoft South Africa

As the Coding and Robotics Curriculum Development Workshop, this week, drew to a close, Basic Education Minister, Mrs Angie Motshekga and Basic Education Director-General, Mr Hubert Mathanzima Mveli, visited Microsoft South Africa in Bryanston for a briefing session on the progress made in the development of this new and exciting curriculum. The drafting of the Coding and Robotics Curriculum for Grade R - 9 concluded on 17 January 2020.

Minister Motshekga expressed her gratitude towards Microsoft, Africa Teen Geeks and various other partners who support Government in the improvement of quality education in schools. The Minister said that Government values contributions from the private sector as South Africa advances towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution. “Through your expertise in the digital space, I am convinced that the Basic Education Sector will develop a world class curriculum, which will prepare learners with skills for the future.”

DG Mveli remarked that the Coding and Robotics Curriculum has been long overdue and thanked partners for having made resources available to assist the DBE in accelerating the process. After the drafting process has been completed, the Draft Curriculum will be subjected to approval processes within the sector, after which the Minister will gazette the curriculum for public comment. Engagements with key stakeholders such as Umalusi, the University Dean’s Forum and labour formations will precede the planned piloting of the curriculum in 2020.



South Africa hosted UNESCO's Regional Review Meeting on Sustainable Development



South Africa hosted UNESCO's Regional Review Meeting at the Holiday Inn Hotel, Johannesburg, from 9 to 11 December 2019. The aim of the meeting was to track progress in aligning policies; coordinating modalities; and monitoring mechanisms in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the upliftment of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) through regional integration and cooperation.

In his opening remarks, Mr Bheki Mpanza, Chief Director of Financial Planning, Information and Management System at the DBE, reminded the participants that UNESCO drives and leads the global coordination of SDG4, and supports the international community and its member states to achieve this goal through partnerships; policy guidance; capacity development; monitoring; and advocacy.

The previous review meeting, which was held during September 2018, raised concerns about the lack of understanding of SDG4 by political heads, the academic community and teachers, as well as the existence of several parallel governance structures, and the need for alignment of policies to address tensions between local and global frameworks. The review meeting analysed and reviewed the SDG4 implementation progress across the SADC region; discussed and reviewed monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; discussed ways for data collection to address data gaps, as well as existing mechanisms for coordination for the implementation of SDG4 at national and regional level. The alignment of SDG4 Education 2030 and the *Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016-2025)* in the national education system was also under discussion.

Ms Rirhandzu Baloyi, Deputy Director from Education Management Information Systems, presented the progress report on the alignment and coordination of SDG4 in South Africa. In his closing remarks the Secretary-General of UNESCO in South Africa, Mr Carlton Mukwevho, emphasised the importance of collaboration amongst SADC states and highlighted the need for the UNESCO office to rotate amongst the SADC member states.

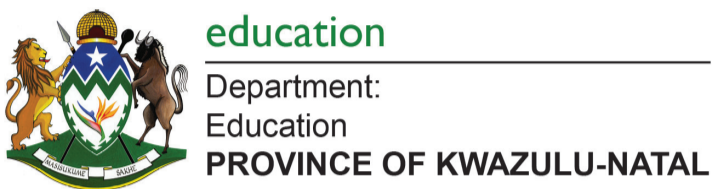
Provincial Round-up

Gauteng Province



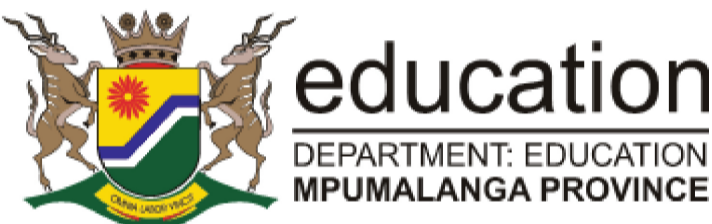
Delighted parents welcomed the opening of the new Noordgesig Primary School in Diepkloof on the first day of school on Wednesday 15 January 2020. The R110 million school was opened by Gauteng Premier Mr David Makhura and Gauteng Education MEC, Mr Panyaza Lesufi, as part of the Department's programme to eradicate mud schools and those built with inappropriate substances. The original school, built with asbestos, was demolished to make way for the more environmentally-friendly structure. "Whoever thought that in our lifetime the school can improve results from 80% in 2018 to 92.4% in 2019, this means our children can get quality education at their doorstep," said MEC Lesufi.

KwaZulu-Natal Province



KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Education, Mr Kwazi Mshengu said that communities should stop involving schools in protest actions, damaging school infrastructure and burning classrooms. Mshengu accompanied Basic Education Deputy Minister, Dr Reginah Mhaule during her oversight and monitoring visit to Havenpark Secondary School in Phoenix, which achieved a 98% pass rate during the NSC examinations. MEC Mshengu said that the department will continue to ensure that education remained a priority in the province: "We will support our schools with every resource at our disposal."

Mpumalanga Province



The Mpumalanga Department of Education was confident about the smooth reopening of schools as it had put systems in place to ensure that it was all-systems go on Wednesday, 15 January 2020, when the schools reopened. The Department had already delivered Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM), finalised post establishment, delivered furniture to schools and admitted 96% of learners. The Department confirmed that it had already delivered stationery by the end of November 2019 and retained the 33,000 teaching posts they had in 2019. This will ensure that there is a teacher in every classroom for all subjects. The Department ensured that there will be a classroom, a desk, stationery and textbooks for each learner. To this end, additional furniture was delivered last year to prioritised schools.

Upcoming Events

- 20 – 28 January 2020: Basic Education Director-General, Mr Hubert Mathanzima Mweli, will be embarking on various engagements with provincial and district officials across provinces
- 26 January – 01 February 2020: The International Moot Court Competition will be held in the City of Gdynia, Poland
- 05 February 2020: World Read Aloud Day will be commemorated
- 15 February 2020: The National Teaching Awards (NTA) Gala will be taking place in the Gauteng Province

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