

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

REPORT ON

THE OPENING OF SCHOOLS

JANUARY 2005

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION
 - 1.1 The DoE teams and the schools that were visited
 - 1.2 Focus areas of observation

2. OBSERVATIONS
 - 2.1 Registration of learners for 2005
 - 2.2 Learner attendance
 - 2.3 Educator attendance
 - 2.4 Delivery of LSM
 - 2.5 Start of lessons
 - 2.6 Primary School Nutrition Programme
 - 2.7 The involvement of the SGBs
 - 2.8 Physical conditions and the tone of the school
 - 2.9 Examination performance in 2004
 - 2.10 Scholar transport
 - 2.11 Additional observations

3. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

The teams of officials from the Department of Education (DoE), and the teams of officials from the provincial education departments visited provinces to monitor the opening of schools in 2005. The schools that were visited were selected in collaboration with provincial authorities. Specific attention was paid to rural, farm and township schools and included high performing and low performing schools. Although the DoE intended to visit at least not less than **six** schools, this was in some cases impossible, due to the long distances between most schools in the rural areas.

Inland provinces were visited on 12 and 13 January 2005 and the Coastal provinces were visited on 19 and 20 January 2005. It needs to be pointed out that due to the Cabinet *Legotla*, the Minister could only visit the Western Cape on 24 January 2005 and that due to the long distances between schools it was necessary to continue with the visit to KwaZulu Natal on 3 and 4 February 2005. The latter visit coincided with the 10th day of schooling. The Deputy Minister is yet to visit KwaZulu-Natal as initially planned. This report is, therefore, based on the information that was collected from the schools that were visited, excluding those that were visited by the Minister and the Deputy Minister. In total the Department visited 65 schools across the provinces.

1.1 The DoE Teams and the schools that were visited

Inland Provinces:

PROVINCE	DELEGATION	SCHOOLS VISITED
Free State	Minister A/Director-General Mr M Fuzani Mr T Makhode Ms T Mapukata	Kgauho Secondary Samajan Farm School Setjahana Se Maketse Combined
	Ms L Pharasi Ms L Moeketsi Mr S Kgampe	Boikemisetso Combined Harrismith Secondary Iphondle Secondary Nampo Agricultural Combined Sibonakaliso Combined Tweekuil Farm School
Gauteng	Dr Nduna-Watson Mr G Jeppie Mr Matlole Mr Mosuwe	General Smuts High Lake Side Secondary Sebokeng Technical High Thuto Lore Comprehensive
Limpopo	Mr STE Mlambo Mrs C Mpati Ms NI Bikitsha Mr P Mofokeng	Legaletlwa High Mphahlele High Monamodi/Matsepe High Phoroane Secondary Ben Matloshe Secondary Tladishi Secondary
Mpumalanga	Deputy Minister Dr RC Lubisi Ms G Nxumalo Ms L Moyane Mr N Sishi Mr P Mnisi	Inkomazi High Luvulwethu Primary Magagula High Silindokuhle Special
North West	Ms M Dlomo Ms M Ramogoshi Mr WM Makgalancheche Ms K Madumo	HL Setlaltoea High Lot Mashiane High Kleinfontein High Nic Mpshe Technical High Sjambok Primary

Coastal Provinces:

PROVINCE	DELEGATION	SCHOOLS VISITED
Eastern Cape	Mr M Matthews Mr P Mofokeng Ms M Ramogoshi	Duncan Village Primary Imidushane S. Secondary Zimlindile S. Secondary Somphathiswa S. S Lamplough S. Secondary Msobomvu S. Secondary Colosa S. Secondary Kama High Amahleke High Ntsonkotha S. Secondary
KwaZulu Natal	Mr STE Mlambo Ms TNV Msimanga Mr G Martins Mr T Nkomo	Khethukuthula High Mlandowenkosi High Ncandu High Zonyana High Bhanoyi High Buhlebethu High Mayiyane High Saphumula High Qiko High
	Dr C Lubisi (Accompanied the MEC KZN)	Ohlange High
Northern Cape	Ms CP Mgijima Mr S Kgampe	Barkley West High Platfontein Combined Reakanstwe High Tlhomelang Secondary Tshireleco Secondary Vaalrivier High
Western Cape	Minister Mr M Fuzani Mr T Makhonde Mr STE Mlambo (Visit was on 24 February 2005)	Conville Primary Mzoxolo Primary PW Botha High Thembaletu High York High Cornville Primary
	Ms L Pharasi Ms L Moeketsi Ms N Bikitsha	Fezeka Secondary Groendal Secondary Simunye High Wemmerhoek Primary Zimasa Community School

1.2 Focus areas of observation

- Registration of learners
- Learner attendance
- Teacher attendance
- Delivery of learner support material
- Start of lessons
- Primary school nutrition programme
- The involvement of the SGB
- Physical conditions and tone of the school
- Examination performance in 2004
- Scholar Transport
- Additional observations, including societal challenges

2. OBSERVATIONS

2.1 Registration of learners for 2005

At least 99% of the schools that were visited were still busy with registrations. Although the schools indicated that they always try to register new learners in the preceding year, it is still very difficult to achieve this. The main reason cited is that parents are usually reluctant to register their children until they have been unsuccessful in securing admission in other schools. This practice is more common in the rural, peri-urban and township communities. In most of the schools it was observed that late registrations are dealt with by the SGB while teachers are teaching. In some schools registrations are done during breaks or after school.

A serious shortage of classrooms was observed. In many of the schools the enrolled learners exceeded by far the school capacity per grade. At Sjambok Primary School (North West) there are four (4) classes that are taught outside under trees, due to lack of classroom accommodation. There are 768 learners in the school. A similar situation was observed at Mphahlele High School (Limpopo), where the enrolment

was 660, whereas the school has a floor space of 310 learners. This was particularly disturbing because the school is situated in a Nodal Area.

2.2 Learner attendance

Overall attendance of learners was estimated at 85%. Some schools, notably in the Western Cape and the Northern Cape recorded 100% attendance. It was observed that low attendance in some schools was as a result of expected learner movement from one area to another. One school in KZN (Mlandowethu High School) needs specific mention. At Mlandowethu High only eight (8) learners were present out of the expected 66 learners. This school dropped its Grade 12 results from 36% to 0%. It was feared that parents wanted to remove their children from this school.

2.3 Educator attendance

In all provinces an estimated 90-98% educator attendance was recorded. In all circumstance educators had reported their absence. The reasons vary, from study/examination to sick/maternity leave. In the North West, the whereabouts of two educators were not known. These educators are from Kleinfontein and HL Setlalentoa High Schools. Both of them had gone for vacation in India and had not reported for duty. Reasons for their absence were not tendered, as they never bothered to report to management.

2.4 Delivery of Learner Support Material

Stationery

The percentage rate of delivery of stationery varies from province to province. Gauteng, the Northern and Western Cape do not appear to be experiencing problems in this regard. Other provinces indicated that they expected to have completed the delivery of stationery at the end of January 2005. It must be pointed out, however that in KZN, one school (Khethukuthula High School) reported that stationery for last year

(2004) was only delivered in May 2004. In another school in KZN (Mlandowethu High School) it was reported that the principal had not ordered any stationery, instead he had ordered sports equipment. In almost all the schools that were visited in the Eastern Cape no stationery had been delivered.

Textbooks

The delivery of textbooks is still a serious challenge in most of the schools. None of the schools reported to have received all their textbook orders. In some schools it was reported that there has been no textbook delivery for the past three years. One school in the Free State (Boikemisetso Combined School) reported that they do not buy textbooks. Instead they use the RNC computerized manuals that get printed from CDs for each learner. The principal explained that he is using the model that is used by former 'model C' schools and it 'works' as his school is the best school in the district.

In the North West (Lot Mashiane) it was reported that textbooks are only supplied to high schools in exceptional cases, for example, when performance is poor, as was in the case of Lot Mashiane High school (13,4% pass). Otherwise the norm is that learners purchase their own textbooks. Nic Mpshe Technical High School had performed poorly in 2003; and was therefore also supplied with textbooks in 2004.

2.5 Start of lessons

Although most schools that were visited appeared to have started with their classes on the first day of school, it was clear that some were expecting the visits and as a result teachers pretended to be teaching. This became evident when classrooms were visited and the fact that there were usually no timetables. The start of the lessons on the first day remains a challenge in many of the schools, particularly in senior phases (Grade 8 to 12). This is due to the fact that many of the schools distribute LSM on the first day and there is general chaos with some parents bringing their children to schools for admission. Some schools in the Northern Cape reported that the first day is used to orientate new learners.

2.6 Primary School Nutrition Programme

Although there is obviously a desperate need for the programme, not all schools that qualify benefit from the programme. Schools that were visited and are not benefiting from the programme include Ncandu Combined School (KZN), Vaalrivier Combined School, (Northern Cape), Tweekuil Farm School (Free State) and Zimasa Community School (Western Cape). In the Eastern Cape the supply of food is reported as not regular.

In the Northern Cape Platfontein Combined School reported that their program is operational and is well managed. The problem that they encounter is that of the high rate of vandalism. The hooligans that are looking for food always break into the school. In the other schools the programme was operational and there were no problems.

2.7 The involvement of School Governing Bodies (SGBs)

All schools that were visited have SGBs. However, the participation rate differs from one school to another, with most schools citing the problem of illiteracy among the parent component of the SGBs. The noted difficulty was in the Northern Cape. It was reported that the parent component does not understand the medium of instruction in the school. It is therefore difficult to hold meetings, as their language is Khwedan. The other difficulty was noted in the Farm Schools where parents are unable to attend meetings regularly due to long distances that they must walk to schools. One other difficulty in holding regular meetings was observed in KZN (Zonyama High School) where the Principal is not a local person and the parents are not always readily available to attend meeting during weekdays.

Most of the SGBs have a Constitution, Mission Statement and School Policy and are fully involved in school matters. It was, however clear that many of the SGBs need training. This was particularly observed in KZN and Limpopo where most of the schools did not have a Constitution and/or School Policy. In the Acornhoek Circuit

(Bohlabela District) in Limpopo it was found that there is a serious problem relating to SGB capacity as governors of schools and what their roles should be. They seem to interfere a lot with management issues like admission of learners and redeployment of teachers.

2.8 Physical conditions and tone of the schools

Vandalism and fighting in the school premises was reported in the schools in the Northern Cape Province. It was further reported that educators and learners do not feel secured within the school premises. In Limpopo most of the schools that were visited had a problem of tall grass, which needed attention. Phoroane High School was severely vandalised, with all windows broken and some doors missing. Most of the schools in the Free State are well kept and some of the schools have hired more than one cleaner. It is at Tweekuil School, where educators and learners were found overcrowded in one classroom, sitting on the wet floor, because during the heavy rains the walls for the second classroom fell.

Iphondle Secondary School (Free State) used to be a combined school that started from Grade 1 to 12 but due to complexities of managing the school with such a variation of age groups and learning areas, the school was split into two schools and the primary school is platooning on the same premises. The management team expressed a concern that this is very disruptive and creates tensions between the two school management teams. The payment for basic services is complicated and the host school has had to take responsibility for the payment of all services. It was reported that the other school is not looking well after the school property, as it does not belong to them. There were visible differences in the conditions of the buildings used by the two schools, the platooning one having many broken windows. There are 6 toilet seats for girls and 4 for boys and the ratios are too high.

In North West (Sjambok Primary School) pit toilets are still used and there is a shortage of toilet seats, for example there are six (6) seats for girls and four (4) seats for boys at a school accommodating 768 learners.

2.9 Examination performance in 2004

Although the overall performance in all Grades is good, there are some cases where performance across the grades is very poor. In KZN (Qiko Secondary School), for example the following trend emerged:

Grade	Entries	Pass	Fail	% Pass rate
8	84	9	75	10.7
9	79	23	56	29
10	85	20	65	23
11	67	6	61	9
12	37	15	22	41

In most schools the percentage pass rate in junior classes range from 72 – 100%. Many schools cited the challenges of the implementation of OBE as a cause for poor performance in certain grades. In the Free State it was also reported that the transition to OBE in Grade 10 is problematic, a high failure rate was also reported for the grades 8,9 and 10. A high failure rate was reported in Limpopo and the reason for this high failure rate was reported to be lack of LSM in grade 11 and teenage pregnancy was a contributing factor. The trend in the high schools, across provinces, is that many grade 11 learners perform poorly.

The Grade 12 results also vary, with some schools recording a 0% pass rate while others recording 100%. In Limpopo (Phoroane High School) recorded a 100% pass rate for the third time in a row. Incidentally, this is the same school that was the worst vandalised as described in paragraph 2.8 above. In the Free State (Boikemesetso) recorded a 100% pass rate despite having presented 110 learners for the examination. Buhlebethu High School (KZN) also recorded a 100% pass rate. It was noted that Grade 12 learners in the schools that were visited in Port Shepstone region do all their subjects in Standard Grade. The good performance is attributed mainly to stable and effective leadership.

In KZN (Mlandowethu and Zonyama) had 0% pass rate. In the case of Mlandowethu the result reflected a drop from 36% in 2003 and Zonyama dropped from 68% for the same period. Generally the reasons given for poor performance across provinces were the following:

- Lack of qualified and competent science and commercial subjects teachers;
- No moderation and monitoring of internal exams results;
- Schools with acting principals;
(In Limpopo, Mphahlele Secondary School, there were twenty educators, nine of whom are temporary. In addition the Principal's, Deputy Principal's and two HOD posts are vacant.)
- Lack of strong leadership, which result in lack of discipline;
- Lack of parental involvement;
- Lack of dedication and motivation on the part of teachers and learners;
- Educators declared in addition imposed on other schools without a thorough check on the receiving school's curricular needs.
- Post provisioning model (PPM) poses challenges to schools.
- Lack of support and response from relevant offices when approached for assistance.
- Inability to recruit or replace teachers when teachers leave or get sick.
- Large percentage of condoned learners in Grade 11 who fail to cope with the work requirements at Grade12.

2.10 Scholar transport

Although there was a clear indication that there is an urgent need for scholar transport none of the schools that were visited have scholar transport. Learners walk very long distances to and from school. Many of these learners are as young as seven years of age. Learners at Ncandu Combined School in KZN walk up to 30km to school on daily basis. A number of learners hire shacks and stay nearer to the school. Some parents have organised transport for their children and they pay up to R160 per month for that transport.

2.11 Additional observations

School Development Plans (SDP)

All schools that were visited in KwaZulu Natal (Okhahlamba Region) do not have school development plans. In fact, all the principals did not appear to even understand what the SDP is.

Teenage Pregnancy

Most high schools are faced with this challenge. In some provinces the exact figures were not available but it was confirmed in one school in the Northern Cape that at least twenty learners dropped out as a result of pregnancy. In one school in the Free State (Iphondle) eleven learners, six in Grade 10 were reported to have fallen pregnant last year. In Limpopo about 24 learners fell pregnant. All KZN schools reported that the pregnancy rate is very high. They could not provide the exact figures.

HIV/AIDS Prevalence

All the visited schools indicated that a large number of young adults, that happen to be the parents to the learners, are HIV positive. The risk of illness, death and trauma exists among the children. Learners are very much in need of support systems that will help them handle grief and death of their parents. In one school in the Free State (Harrismith Secondary) there are fifteen known cases of learners living with the HIV ranging from 14 to 17 years of age. The school has a teacher who has been trained as a counsellor and they have a HIV/AIDS policy in place. There are two known cases in the Northern Cape. It is reported that one of these learners was diagnosed HIV positive after she was raped outside the school.

Most of the principals refused or were reluctant to discuss this subject. Almost all the schools that were visited do not have any policy dealing with HIV/AIDS.

Use of Drugs and Criminal activities

Criminal activities were reported in some of the schools that were visited. In Limpopo, for example, learners at Mphahlele High School adopt wrong role models. This results in learners being arrested on a regular basis as a result of criminal activities, with some being arrested on the school premises.

In North West Province it was reported that 5 grade 11 learners were arrested for theft and hijackings and sentenced to one year's imprisonment. Some learners are also experimenting with drugs (dagga) even though the situation is said to be under control. One learner disclosed his HIV/AIDS status and has since passed away.

The delegation that visited Gauteng Province reported incidents of drug abuse in some schools. At Thuto Lore Comprehensive School for example, dagga is a problem. Educators and district officials support learners in this regard. Although there is a shortage of psychological support staff at the district office, 3 educators are involved in guidance and support. In one of the schools in the Northern Cape the learners are reported to be smoking dagga in the school premises with some members of the community.

3. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- (a) This Report has found that in the Northern Cape some schools conduct orientation of the new learners on the first day of school. Because it is necessary to have orientation programmes in schools, it is recommended that these be conducted during the two days in which educators report at the beginning of the year. This may assist the school to account for all school days as determined by the school calendar.
- (b) The Report further established that a Principal in KZN ordered sports kits instead of LSM. This was picked up at the Circuit office and the school was

advised to order LSM, as this is a priority. Although this Principal has since been removed from the school, his actions may be an indication of a serious lack of capacity among some of the principals and therefore a need for further training and continuous support. It may, however be just an isolated case.

- (c) Although it appears that Boikemisetso Combined School in the Free State is doing well with regard to performance, the use of the RNC computerized manuals that get printed from CDs for each learner does not appear to have taken into account the socio-economic differences between the learner and parental population of the two types of schools, that is 'former model C' and the 'ordinary school.' Obviously learners in this school do not have access to a library and books at their homes. The provincial education department may consider advising the principal to also take into account the possibly poorer learners.
- (d) All schools that were visited in KwaZulu Natal (Okhahlamba Region) do not have school development plans. In fact, all the principals did not appear to even understand what the SDP is. Urgent intervention for provincial authorities is required. A major reason for poor performance in these schools is that there is no sense of direction. Good results are usually by coincidence. They are not planned for.
- (e) In the Bohlabela District (Limpopo) there is a serious absence of support of schools. The reason for this is that relevant officials have not yet been appointed. The department uses seconded officials who are former lecturers from closed colleges of education and these officials do not feel empowered to do the work to which they are seconded because they are appointed at lower ranks. The best they can do is to abstain from visiting and supporting the schools. Such behaviour by district offices fails the school to such an extent that a principal claims, "I do not know what to do". For an example, a teacher who refused redeployment assaulted the principal of Ben Matloshe Senior Secondary, the case was reported to the district office, the teacher is still at that school and the disciplinary procedures have not taken place yet. The

principal is fearful of everything. Instead of instructing children to get to assembly he begged them. They stood at assembly with hats on and nobody reprimanded them until the DDG stood and told learners to behave like learners and they responded accordingly.

- (f) Although all schools have SGBs many of them seriously lack capacity. Some do not even appreciate their involvement in school matters. For instance, the Principal of Khethukuthula high School in KZN indicated that the parent component of the SGB does not attend meetings because they don't get paid for their role and function in the SGB. Intense training for the SGB members on their roles and responsibilities are critical. These should be conducted on an ongoing basis to among other things fully appreciate their role in the schools and to possibly eradicate the old school committee mentality of "bossing" school principals.
- (g) One of the major challenges facing schools is human resource capacity. Many schools complained about the post-provisioning model. They are of the view that it disregards curricular at schools with low enrolment. Some principals complained about teachers that are forced on them. It was clear that some of the principals do not fully understand these processes.

There is an urgent need to fill vacant posts, particularly school management post. The situation at Mphahlele High School (Limpopo) requires immediate attention. All management posts, except one HOD, are vacant. It is rather unrealistic to expect schools to perform well under these circumstances. Schools in the nodal areas need to be treated differently in all respects of service provisioning.

- (h) Follow up visits to particular schools to be conducted during the year to check issues of concern; once a school is visited its concerns should be taken up and the following year be used to check if changes have been implemented otherwise the "Opening of School Visits" will be perceived as part of a public or political performance exercise.

- (i) A possible case of fraud was discovered at Kleinfontein High School. It was reported that a teacher who was declared additional in one school (Bakwena High School) was redeployed to this school to offer commercial subjects. Although his certificates indicated that he had majored in commercial subjects and passed them in “flying colours”, he allegedly admitted to the principal that he could not teach the subjects. In checking his qualifications and identity documents it seemed that they had been forged. The team took copies of the key documents from the teacher’s file, who seems to be unqualified. It is recommended that the copies should be handed over to the appropriate authorities to investigate this matter further with a view of prosecuting the suspected perpetrator.

- (j) With regard to the society related challenges it would appear there is a need for counseling, psychological and social work services in schools where there are serious social problems, in addition to the Guidance teacher.