



MEDIA BRIEFING STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION MINISTER, MRS ANGIE MOTSHEKGA, HELD AT THE DBE CONFERENCE CENTRE

1 OCTOBER 2023

Let me acknowledge Deputy Minister Mhaule, senior managers from the Department present here and of course members of the media.

October is Teacher's Month in South Africa and we are pleased that this coming Thursday, on the 5th of October, we will be joining many other countries in celebrating World Teachers Day under the theme, "The teachers we need for the education we want: The global imperative to reverse the teacher shortage".

This day has been declared jointly by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to celebrate the critical work that our teachers do.

As a country we acknowledge with appreciation the critical role that education plays to provide our country with critical skills that will enable the country to grow its economy and to fight poverty and unemployment. Teachers are at the center of this critical imperative. UNESCO repeatedly stated that the quality of any education system is as good as the quality of its teachers. The continuous improvements that we have experienced within our education system broadly and in our schooling in particular is largely due to the efforts and sacrifices of our teachers.

Our education system is experiencing severe challenges of backlogs in infrastructure development, overcrowding and shortage of other educational resources. Under these difficult circumstances, it is our teachers who have made the center to hold. In the midst of lack of other educational resources, our teachers remain the only available and the most critical resource.

It is for this reason that our government has declared October, “The Teachers’ month”. This is meant to ensure that as a nation, we dedicate our time and resources to acknowledge the work that our teachers do, and to appreciate them in a special way.

Government through the Department of Basic Education has adopted a programme on Teacher Appreciation and support (TASP), which encourages our communities to also acknowledge and celebrate our teachers on an on-going basis. We therefore want to call upon all sections of our society to dedicate time on this day and during this month, to do something special for our teachers.

Let us do a “shout-out” to our teachers, name them and appreciate them, even if they are no longer in the profession but do acknowledge the role the teacher has played in your life.

On Thursday the 5th of October the Department will host the National Teaching Awards at the Heartfelt Arena, in Pretoria. The awards will honour teachers who have demonstrated exceptional performance and commitment in different areas of their work. Although there will be these few exceptional teachers who will receive awards on the day, we will also be acknowledging thousands of other excellent teachers who will not be part of the awards ceremony. **We are grateful that our President Cyril Ramaphosa will lead the way and also join us at the celebration.**

UNESCO HIGH LEVEL PANEL ON THE TRANSFORMING EDUCATION SUMMIT

Still on this matter of teachers; Cabinet issued a statement three days ago in which they congratulated the Minister of Basic Education, on being selected by the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr Antonio Gutterres, to serve on a global high level panel on the *Transforming Education Summit*.

The devastating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic has put many countries at risk of not achieving their Sustainable Development Goals. In responding to this challenge, the United Nations Secretary General convened a Summit of Heads Of States at the UN Head Quarters in 2022, where countries of the world pledged to make resources available to transform their education system in a manner that addresses, amongst others, challenges with shortage of qualified teachers, lack of access to quality education by vulnerable groups as well as disruptions to schooling due to pandemics, wars, natural disasters and other effects of climate change.

Post the Summit, the UN Secretary General decided to put together a panel of education experts to advise him on mechanisms that need to be put in place to implement the recommendations of the summit.

The panel of experts was chaired by **two former presidents, Her Excellency Ms. Paula-Mae Weekes, former president, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago** as well as **Her Excellency Ms. Kersti Kaljulaid, former president, Republic of Estonia**.

The following Ministers also served on the panel together with our Minister, Mrs Angie Motshekga. His Excellency Mr. Jaime Perczyk, Minister of Education, Argentina, Her Excellency Ms. Ligia Deca, Minister of Education, Romania and Her Excellency Ms. Ida Fauziyah Minister of Manpower, Republic of Indonesia.

The panel also included a renowned author, researcher and education expert, Ms. Linda Darling-Hammond, representatives from

Education International, International Labour Organization, Teacher Task Force for Education 2030, academics and researchers

The aim of the panel was to reflect on the Education Transformation summit which had taken place before

The Panel looked at following thematic areas;

- Enabling the transformation of the teaching profession
- Investing on teachers
- Promoting equity, diversity and inclusion
- Elevating the status and dignity of the teaching profession
- Improving quality and fostering innovation in teaching through training and lifelong learning
- Fostering humanity in teaching through decent work
- Developing leadership in teaching
- Advancing human-centred education technology
- Transforming teaching through a new social contract for education and social dialogue.

Amongst others, the panel made the following key recommendations:

1. Governments should develop economic and social policies that support teaching and learning through adequate and equitable funding for education and lifelong learning;
2. Governments should fully implement enabling rights for education and decent work for teachers, in line with international standards, including freedom of association and collective bargaining, freedom of expression, freedom of thought, and academic freedom;
3. Governments should establish mechanisms which should include relevant financial authorities, representatives of

teachers' organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, to assess and tackle shortages of adequately trained teachers;

4. The status and dignity of the teaching profession needs to be protected and elevated, and
5. Governments should develop policies which should ensure teacher agency and autonomy based on knowledge, competence, and responsibility within education goals and should foster a climate of trust and respect between school authorities, communities, learners, and teachers.

The report with the full set of recommendations will be made available on the Departments website.

As the South African government, in addition to a various programs on teacher support, collaboration and development, we are committed, working with our partners in education to implement these recommendations.

I wish to remind young people aspiring to be teachers to apply for the Funza Lushaka Bursary, which opens next week. Funza Lushaka targets youth that are below age 30, that have passed matric or grade 12 with bachelors pass or who meet the requirements for entry to university.

In the recruitment process DBE works with provinces, districts, circuits, schools and community leaders that work with youth programmes. The supply is determined by the need on the ground, based on retirement patterns, strategic direction of the country

Most universities close the applications end of October. Funza Lushaka Information System online application opens on 8 October for everyone that qualify to apply to be funded to study teaching.

The youth that are recruited by the districts are then requested to apply for FLB online <https://www.eservices.gov.za>,

Whilst in today's briefing we wanted to highlight matters relating to teachers, I thought I could also just update the nation on a few immediate things before our final end of year briefing.

National Senior Certificate Examinations

As of today, we are 30 days before the start of the National Senior Certificate examinations for the Class of 2023. This year we have more than 723,000 candidates registered to sit for the final examinations in 6 800 centres. The examination will start on the 30th of October and conclude on the 5th of December.

Once again we urge parents, guardians and caregivers and the community as a whole to support our Grade 12 learners who will be writing the final examinations. As a sector we have done our best to prepare the system, we now need to work together to ensure that our learners are equally prepared and ready for the examinations.

Research into unusual behavior in schools

Over a three thousand schools in South Africa, especially in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Western Cape and Gauteng, have been increasingly reporting unusual behavior among learners leading to highly emotional outbursts and physical harmful practices. The exact reasons for these 'strange' experiences are not quite established but it seems to be beyond simple matters of ill-disciplined pupils at schools.

While the Department of Basic Education has established policies like the Code of Conduct to address issues related to the behavior of pupils in schools.

We call upon parents, caregivers, community leaders, the religious fraternity, traditional leadership and all school communities and members of society in general to join us to work together to address the social challenges that we face.

The violence, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy and bullying all have a negative impact on the growth and development of children. These social ills do affect the performance of learners in school. Our duty as society is to support our children and remove all barriers and distractions that will impede their progress in life.

Adoption of BELA BILL

As the Basic Education sector we welcome the Adoption of the *Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA)* Bill by the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education. This is an important milestone in the process which began 10 years ago.

The aim of the Bill is to bring about certain technical and substantive adjustments in the South African School Act and the Employment of Educators Act. The Bill also seeks to clarify certain existing provisions and to insert certain provisions to cover matters which are not provided for in the existing legislation.

Some of the amendments came about as a result of court cases which have meant that we align our laws accordingly.

The education landscape has also changed and systems of learning needed to be put in place in accordance with the right to basic education as enshrined in the *Constitution* of the Republic of South Africa.

Reading Literacy Strategy: 2024 - 2030

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has revised the Reading Sector Plan and we have developed a national Reading Strategy that position African language epistemologies as the basis for reading literacy instruction and pedagogies in South Africa. The implementation plan is being widely consulted upon and is being costed.

The new Reading Literacy Strategy: 2024-2030 recognises, in line with the PIRLS 2021 recommendation of the IEA that South Africa needs to focus on using the logic of indigenous African Languages for reading instruction.

The DBE is in the process of unpacking the PIRLS and what its recommendations mean for our specific context. The IEA report is clear that we need to treat the South Africa PIRLS results with caution due to the verification process that is still being done by the University of Pretoria. Once a full assessment and internal discussion of the verified data and PIRLS process has been concluded a decision will be communicated to the public.

I will be engaging with the Minister of Higher Education on how to best ensure that Initial Teacher Education and professional development address this shift. Publishers, literacy organizations and partners must gear towards ensuring that we have age-appropriate reading resources that reflect the cultural diversity of South Africa. Active engagement of parents, partnerships and community members are pillars of the revised Reading Literacy Strategy. Everyone has a role to play.

The PIRLS report triggered in the DBE a sense of urgency in dealing with the issue of Language in Education.

African Languages have not been used as languages of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LoLTA) beyond Grade 3, like English and Afrikaans. The PIRLS results demonstrate empirically the advantage

that Mother Tongue Education has given for English and Afrikaans learners consistently. It is time that the Sector extends that to African languages to achieve parity of esteem.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 and the Language in Education Policy (LiEP, 1997) provide the necessary framework to promote and implement multilingual education. The journey of this seismic shift must be appreciated and supported by all.

Plans are underway to roll out Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education (MTbBE) incrementally per grade each year, at least up to the end of primary school (Grade 6) in all the nine provinces. In 2025 provinces will implement in Grade 4 in the majority indigenous African languages spoken in respective provinces.

The DBE will launch MTbBE in the Eastern Cape on International Mother Language Day (21 February 2024). Through an MTbBE pilot (2012 to 2019) the Eastern Cape Education Department (ECDoE) made notable progress in ensuring that IsiXhosa and Sesotho, the two predominant indigenous languages in the province were used as mediums of instruction for Mathematics and Science in some schools beyond Grade 3.

We will be preparing the system in 2024, for implementation in 2025 and beyond. The DBE appointed a Language-in- Education Specialist in the Office of the Minister to advise holistically on all ***linguaging*** matters in the sector; appreciating the complexities.

Heightened support, research, feedback, monitoring and evaluation to identify gaps and strengthen implementation will play a key role as we move forward. This new opportunity for South Africa requires an augmentation of our Curriculum to be language specific in addressing challenges in reading; it signals an opportunity that validates what children bring from home as the basis for schooling.

Early Childhood Development

I thought that it was also vital to update the nation on the progress regarding the work we do in Early Childhood Development.

Since receiving the ECD function on 1 April 2022, the Department and the Provincial Education Departments have worked to ensure the smooth functioning of current service delivery, while identifying areas where service delivery can be strengthened and improved to ensure better developmental outcomes for our children.

This has meant working on developing a new service delivery model that intends to provide all children in South Africa with access to a comprehensive basket of services to enable them to thrive.

This entails having a planned and coordinated, mixed provisioning model that enables families and caregivers to access age and developmental stage-appropriate services to meet the needs of their children.

Furthermore, the DBE is also busy with the streamlining of registration requirements to ensure that quality is fore fronted, while taking a developmental approach to supporting ECD programmes to enter the government support net.

School Infrastructure

The Department is working together with Provincial Education Departments to intensify the all-important work of delivering school infrastructure.

The Department is confident that the annual performance plan targets will be met and that the budget allocated will be used. The Department has developed detailed tracking tools and monitoring is

taking place daily to ensure that implementing agents deliver as expected.

At the moment 2 871 schools have been provided with sanitation facilities through SAFE programme.

511 schools are at various stages of implementation and DBE plans to provide these with sanitation facilities by end of the financial year, that is 31st March 2024.

We are doing all that we can to ensure that we provide a conducive environment for teaching and learning in all our schools.

Ending of PYEI in the Basic Education Sector

The Basic Education Sector has successfully implemented four (4) phases of the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative (PYEI), under the banner of the Basic Education Employment Initiative (BEEI). The PYEI-BEEI is a flagship programme of the Presidential Employment Stimulus, which was established in 2020 as part of government's response to the devastating economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Phase IV of the PYEI-BEEI began on Wednesday, 1 February 2023. Through the PYEI-BEEI more than 1.1 million job opportunities were created for youth. Between ages 18 and 35 across the nine provinces in +/- 20 000 public ordinary schools and LSEN schools.

Phase IV will officially has come to an end as of yesterday, 30 September 2023. The PYEI-BEEI is the largest public employment programme of its kind. One of the significant achievements of the PYEI-BEEI is that it has achieved spatial equity in that the employment opportunities were distributed across every community in the country, regardless of rurality or proximity to urban settings. The initiative brought employment opportunities to young people in

communities where under ordinary circumstances they would have to travel long distance to access jobs. In addition to this, 67% of the participants were young women.

Throughout all the phases of the PYEI-BEEI there has been a great emphasis on providing the youth with high quality training which is meant to improve their skills. The formal training, some of which was self-paced and accessible through online platforms, was augmented by on-the-job skills transfer. In particular, the participants gained soft skills such as time management, team work, collaboration, and communication skills. The youth have also been able to create meaningful networks with their peers and with various stakeholder within their schools' communities.

As a sector we would like to thank all the young people who have participated in the PYEI-BEEI from its inception for their commitment and dedication. They have made a meaningful contribution towards the attainment of quality education for South African learners and for betterment of the communities.

Schools have continuously communicated positively about the value that the assistants have added.

In conclusion, in our commitment to improving our National school nutrition, in the near date we will be announcing the modernization changes that we have been busy working on as a department.

Thank you

Ends