



**basic education**

Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## **MINISTER'S CLOSING REMARKS AT THE 2022 BASIC EDUCATION SECTOR LEKGOTLA HELD AT EMPERORS PALACE, GAUTENG PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA**

28 January 2022

Programme Director;

Honourable Deputy Minister, Dr Reginah Mhaule; and the Honourable MEC for Education present;

Director-General and the Provincial Heads of Departments of Education;

Honourable Minister of Education from Seychelles, Dr Valientin;

Honourable Chairpersons and the Honourable Members of the Portfolio and Select Committees of Parliament in attendance;

Our local and international speakers, researchers and education experts, who enriched us in the identified areas of the Basic Education system;

District and Circuit Officials and School Principals, who managed to join in the Lekgotla;

Leadership of our strategic partners – teacher unions, SGB associations, statutory bodies, learner formations, the private sector, non-governmental organisations, and the media;

Esteemed Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

We have come to the end of yet another successful Basic Education Sector Lekgotla, and I wish to thank everyone of you who has been part of this important three long, but fruitful days of deliberations, in

the true spirit of partnership and commitment. This gathering resonates the Setswana idiom – “*Ngwana sejo o a tlhakanelwa*”; which means “*a child belongs to the mother, the family, and the community at large*”.

It is undeniable that the very first presentations by Dr Mabogoane, Professors Tomlinson and Gustafsson, as well as Mesdames Maholwane and Mansfield, pitched our 7<sup>th</sup> Basic Education Lekgotla, to levels unimaginable. The intellectual discussions and debates which ensued, made me appreciate the different roles that all of us are enjoined by our organisations to play in the Basic Education Sector. At the outset, I wish to thank everyone who actively and passively participated in this year’s Lekgotla.

We had organised this Lekgotla under the theme – “***Equipping learners with knowledge and skills for a changing world in the context of COVID-19***” and anchored our presentations, deliberations, and debates on ten main objectives. I was particularly inspired by the national and international experiences, and innovative practices shared by many speakers on “***equipping learners with knowledge and skills for a changing world in the context of COVID-19***” and the ten objectives of the Lekgotla, including the monitoring of learner performance during the pandemic.

The issues discussed here, – just to mention a few, “*the impact and cost of COVID-19 in education and health; monitoring learning in the COVID-19 contexts; perspectives on learning recovery in the African contexts; learner assessment under COVID-19 contexts; teachers leading change in building a resilient education system – an African perspective; importance of ECD for future life outcomes; measuring progress on the implementation of inclusive education; as well as the knowledge, skills and competencies of a changing world*”, amongst others, are critical elements for successfully mitigating against learning losses.

Programme Director, Ladies and Gentlemen, a clarion call to action has been aptly amplified in this Lekgotla. We must agree that COVID-19 has taught us lessons; but the manner in which the Sector and the system responded to the challenges imposed on us by

COVID-19, should not be undermined. South Africa has been applauded in the world for its interventions to mitigate the devastating impact of COVID-19. This Lekgotla, has further reenergised us to continue rebooting, recalibrating and repositioning the Basic Education system to withstand whatever pandemic and/or life threatening challenges we may face in the future.

Programme Director, we had set up five Commissions to further zoom into the critical focus areas we had identified. These Commissions focused on the following topics – *Curriculum and assessment – transition from school to work: Developing and implementing a modernised curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Commission 1)*; *Teacher preparation, Professionalism and well-being (Commission 2)*; *ICTs, digitisation, e-education management, distance learning and online schools (Commission 3)*; *Care and support for teaching and learning – CSTL (Commission 4)*; and *Foundations for learning (Commission 5)*.

Programme Director, I had requested the Commissions to provide me with the most critical recommendations they wish me to amplify at this Lekgotla. This is what I received –

***Commission 1 on Curriculum and Assessment*** recommends that

- In order to equip learners with the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, and facilitate a more efficient transition from school to work, the Department must embark on a curriculum strengthening process. The strengthened curriculum must explicitly state the knowledge, skills and competencies to be achieved.
- In addition, to realising the vision of equipping learners with the 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge, skills and competencies, the DBE must set the minimum standards for teacher competencies, and ensure that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) adopt and comply with the standards

***Commission 2 on Teacher preparation, professionalism and well-being*** recommends that –

- The Department, in consultation with our stakeholders and partners, will strengthen measures for the recruitment of new entrants into the teaching profession. A national induction programme will be launched in 2022 to strengthen support for new teachers. Furthermore, a national protocol to guide schools in pursuit of providing quality psycho-social support for teachers will be put in place.
- A national guideline to increase school-based professional development, including Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) must be developed. The Department will also recognise the need for a systematic prioritisation of Foundation Phase and grades with the least learning time during the 2020, 2021 academic years. Therefore, a dedicated support plan will be developed to address learning losses.
- The DBE will lobby our entities, i.e., the ETDP-SETA, the SACE, and the Department of Higher Education and Training to commit in taking forward our respective mandates pertaining to Teacher Development Summit resolutions, and engagements with relevant Committees on initial teacher education and development issues that have also come up from this Lekgotla.

***Commission 4 on ICT, digitisation, e-education management, distance learning and online schools –***

- noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has dictated a review on how we conducted our business. Indeed, we cannot go back to methods of teaching that we used before COVID-19; we cannot develop educators on skills that we prioritised before COVID-19. Therefore, it is critical to strengthen coordination of Teacher Development Programmes, including working with Higher Education Institutions to develop both in-service professional development programmes and initial teacher development programmes, that would address the new needs. This will include ICT skills, vocational skills, technical skills, engineering skills, etc.
- The Commission also noted that we cannot afford to replace the current workforce, but what we can redirect their skills and

competencies. Indeed, teacher development should be a priority moving forward, to equip learners with the skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Clear action plans, with timeframes, should be put in place, to indicate how this will be achieved in the next three years; and the number of teachers that will be developed in various priority areas, per province, district and circuit.

- The Department will strive to put a laptop in every teacher's hands in the next five years. In order to broaden access to learning and development, online programmes will also be available in sign language. To ensure sustainability of e-Education delivery, dedicated ICT support will be available to all schools. All future infrastructure plans to have in-built ICT requirements. Schools will be guided on how to use norms and standards to procure ICT resources.
- Together with ICT companies, we must increase connectivity in schools. However, as a department, we cannot do this alone. Partnership with relevant government departments is crucial. Broadband must be strengthened to accommodate all schools to benefit from ICT connectivity. We also have to finalise the framework on online schooling.

***COMMISSION 4 on Care and support for teaching and learning (CSTL)*** recommends that –

- The Department should recognise that the CSTL Conceptual Framework, is becoming outdated, and unfairly focuses only on learners. To address this, we commit that the CSTL Conceptual Framework will be revised to incorporate contemporary realities, and situate the care and support needs of educators. A final revised conceptual framework should be in place by July 2022.
- Secondly, the HIV and AIDS Lifeskills Conditional Grant Framework will be revised to maximise its benefit for a broader care and support agenda, by including structural interventions that support learner health and wellbeing – such as learner social support programmes, including safety and sport. To address

institutional funding mechanism for CSTL, we will make sure that this is done by November 2022.

- Thirdly, it is widely known that many intervention and support programmes are biased towards the girl child, and more and more, we are realising the vulnerability of adolescent boys and young men. In acknowledging this, we will produce a dedicated programme for adolescent boys and young men, and coordinate custodians and stakeholders in the men's and boys' sector to support the Basic Education Sector in determining focus areas or approaches for adolescent boys and young men by July 2022.
- Finally, the DBE will mainstream and institutionalise learner voices and youth agency. By November 2022, we will implement a pilot called the Ubuntu Youth Leadership Programme through Representative Council of Learners in KwaZulu-Natal.

**COMMISSION 5 on Foundations for Learning** recommends that –

- The migration of ECD, which is set to happen from 01 April this year, provides us an opportunity to craft and implement innovative strategies to strengthen **foundational learning**, looking at the continuum from birth to early grades. In order to achieve this-
  - we need a **national plan** on strengthening Foundations for Learning. An **inclusive reference group will be set up in this regard**. The reference group will be tasked with developing a plan that will look at all the cross-cutting issues in foundational learning, with a focus on the provision of **access to quality learning opportunities in early years and early grades**, including strengthening family support for early literacy and numeracy;
  - we need to implement **a systems approach to strengthening foundational learning**, by determining quality indicators at all levels, building capacity, and strengthening governance structures and funding arrangements.

As the Basic Education Sector, we wish to assure this Lekgotla that we commit to recalibrate, reboot, and reposition the Basic Education system in line with the recommendations of the 7<sup>th</sup> Basic Education Sector Lekgotla. We do not see this Lekgotla as another talk shop. In order for us to achieve the ideals of “**equipping learners with knowledge, skills and competencies of a changing world in the context of COVID-19**”, Government, the Basic Education Sector in its totality, must commit to collaborate and jointly operationalise the recommendations of this Lekgotla.

We are indeed appreciative of the input made by the Honourable Minister of Education in Seychelles, Hon. Dr J Valentin, on Early Childhood Development. Making ECD compulsory has indeed long-term benefits. The relocation of the ECD programme from the Department of Social Development to Department of Basic Education, is one of the necessary steps to declare ECD as compulsory. I am excited to announce that the Basic Education Amendment (BELA) Bill, which has been tabled in Parliament for consideration, does pronounce Grade R as compulsory.

Programme Director, the DBE will factor the recommendations of this Lekgotla, in our strategic plans, programmes, and interventions. The Makgotla we have coordinated from the first one, have turned out to be reservoirs of wisdom, knowledge and experiences. Hence the Basic Education system has been seen as a stable system on rise.

The Matric Class of 2021 have clearly demonstrated that with dedication, focus and resilience, the sky is indeed the limit. The number of qualitative and quantitative passes the Class of 2021 has attained, is an indisputable testament of the intervention programmes. The growth we continue to observe in the regional and international assessment studies, though not at the pace we want, is a further illustration of the system’s improvement. This year, we have introduced assessment studies in the system, which focus on assessment for and of learning, as well as the system itself. All these endeavours are intended to equip learners with knowledge, skills and competencies of a changing world.

I thank you