



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OPENING ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION AT THE 7TH BASIC EDUCATION LEKGOTLA HELD AT EMPERORS PALACE, KEMPTON PARK

26-18 January 2022

**THEME: “*Equipping learners with knowledge and skills for a
changing world in the context of COVID-19*”**

Programme Director;

The Honourable Minister of Education and esteemed guest from
Seychelles;

Honourable Deputy Minister of Basic Education, Dr Reginah Mhaule;

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

Honourable MEC for Education and your Heads of Departments;

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

Academics, researchers and education experts;

Members of the media, Esteemed Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good Morning.

Let me also welcome and thank all attendees for heeding to our call and graced us with your presence at one of the DBE's important calendar events – the 7th Basic Education Sector Lekgotla. Some of you, have joined us physically here at the Emperors Palace, and the majority are with us virtually.

Programme Director, this year's Lekgotla, is organised under the theme “***equipping learners with knowledge and skills for a changing world in the context of COVID-19***”!! We chose this theme, as it aptly illustrates the main objectives of this Lekgotla, namely –

- To assess the mid-term performance of the 6th Administration in basic education;
- To interrogate the impact and cost – both materially and humanly, of COVID-19 on learning losses, learner drop-out, and basic education broadly;
- To discuss and present a comprehensive recovery plan to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and recover the learning losses;
- To deliberate on the utilisation of assessment practices and data to develop strategies to improve the quality and efficiency of learning outcomes and to bolster monitoring and evaluation oversight;
- To assess the progress made in the implementation of programmes and mechanisms to equip learners the with knowledge and skills for a changing world;

- To elucidate the critical elements of strengthening the foundations for learning, as well as the efficiency and accountability in the system;
- To strengthen the use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) to support the delivery of our curriculum;
- To strengthen the package of care and support for vulnerable learners, especially the boy child, in the COVID-19 context and future pandemics;
- To discuss mechanisms to enable all teachers to engage in professional continuous learning, and to ensure that they are equipped with knowledge and skills to deliver the curriculum within the context of a changing world; and
- To interrogate mechanisms for meaningful and sustainable community mobilisation and partnerships in education.

We have invited academics, scholars, researchers and renowned speakers from our South African shores, the African Continent and diaspora, and abroad, to address us on a variety of critical topics that will further amplify the importance of the theme for the Lekgotla and its objectives. Mine Programme Director, is to set the scene, and allow the programme to flow. Later in the day, we will be joined by His Excellency, the President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa, who has graciously agreed to make our Basic Education Sector Makgotla, amongst other flagship events, part of his annual programme.

Programme Director, we hold this Lekgotla at an important time in the psyche and history of our country. Historically, we have used the opportunity to share information. and we continue to emphasise this

in our work, but we are in a different mode today. We are in planning and systems strengthening mode.

We have assessed where we are in government's Sixth Administration, we have estimated the huge impact that the pandemic has wreaked on our Basic Education system and other education systems globally, and we seek to strengthen our response to the learning losses, and the psycho-social impact on our learners, educators and school communities in general. The foundations for learning, especially in reading with meaning as well as numeracy, and in the preparation of our learners, are critical. We will therefore be drawing on international and national expertise within and outside our system, to reflect on the national and international development goals we set for 2030 through our system.

We are keenly aware of how much more urgent inclusive education is in overcoming the learning losses our children have experienced. We wish to use this Lekgotla to share ideas and plans to improve the quality of learning outcomes, to become more cost efficient in the way we monitor our programmes, and to strengthen the way we use technology to strengthen professional development, classroom instruction, and learning to support the development of skills for a changing world through our Basic Education system.

In spite of the pandemic, we have prioritised the care and support of all learners, and particularly for the more vulnerable learners. We want to use the data and information we have on how learning is happening, to improve how we target scarce resources, build resilience, and support our teachers, parents and learners through our Basic Education system.

We have to wrestle with what accountability for learning outcomes means in our context. As a system, we want to apply evidence and

information we have on what works to enable us to achieve the goals we have set ourselves, well before the pandemic came into being. That goal has not changed. We want to account to our communities that we are building a South African education system, which will assure quality for all who participate in it.

We managed a successful vaccination programme, through partnerships and community and social mobilisation that are part of the fabric of the system, and we were able to contain the ravaging effects of the pandemic on our country.

Programme Director, our priorities for future policy & programme evolution and support, include though not limited to the following –

- Continuing to improve learning foundations by instilling a model of pedagogy that improves early learning outcomes literacy and numeracy;
- The strengthening of our Three-Streams Curriculum Model;
- Implementing a General Education Certificate (GEC) in Grade 9;
- Re-developing national assessments to send strong signals to primary schools, especially at Grades 3, 6 and 9; while continuing to participate in regional and international benchmark assessment studies;
- Improving Early Childhood Development service delivery after the function shift from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education from 01 April 2022; and
- Strengthening our programmes to further develop knowledge and skills for a changing world, and effective use of new technologies in schools.

The Education sector has identified the following emerging priorities due to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Dealing with learning losses among our learners;
- Dealing with the dropout and repetition rates through the system, but particularly in Grades 10 and 11; and
- Dealing with the effects of lockdown directly, especially psychosocial, mental health and wellness in general.

Programme Director, Ladies and Gentlemen, we know from international evidence, that education systems will contribute to development only when they function optimally, and their component parts are focused on quality improvement, and aligned to ensure accountability for learning outcomes from early childhood and foundations to the more senior Grades. This Lekgotla will help us to strengthen our efforts in doing so, and we are grateful to see our national, regional and international experts, partners, and comrades present here – from the teacher unions, governing body associations, development agencies, business, international and multilateral organisations, as well as governmental and non-governmental organisations present here.

Programme Director, we implore everyone present at the Lekgotla to roll-up our sleeves, get into our cornfield, and work. We have confidence that we will succeed in addressing the objectives of the Lekgotla.

I thank you