



ARTICLE DETAILS

Media Statement Delivered by the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, MP, on the resolutions of the Council of Ministers' Meeting held this week, 22 September 2014

Thank you very much to the members of the media for attending this important briefing on the outcomes of the Council of Education Ministers (CEM). CEM is a body that represents all nine Education MEC's and the Basic Education Ministry.

Background

On Thursday the 18th of September the CEM held its ordinary meeting in Pretoria. The Thursday meeting was the first such to be held after the CEM Durban lekgotla which was attended by all nine Education MEC's in August. The key theme of the Durban lekgotla was about finding a common definition on the meaning of radical transformation of the basic education sector.

Key Resolutions

1. ICT

The Council of Education Ministers (CEM) has resolved that Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is to be one of key priorities for the sector to act as an anchor for the radical transformation of the basic education. The meeting received a presentation from the Presidency on its **Operation Phakisa** and agreed that we will request the Presidency to assist us in using the Operation Phakisa methodology to ensure ICT rollout across the system. We have come to the determination within the sector that ICT is crucial to improve the quality and efficiency of the system from a number of aspects including administration, e-learning and teacher training. However it will require an interdepartmental approach looking at issues of connectivity to implement our vision for 21st century schools.

2. CURRICULUM

Curriculum coverage remains the core business of everything we do in Education and therefore it is vitally important that we are all working together on the same page to deliver a quality curriculum efficiently. For this reason the DBE is currently developing norms and standards, business processes and sector plans for grade specific curriculum management and support. This is to ensure that all the deliverables are executed in an efficient manner within the given time frames that ensure accountability as all levels of the sector.

The norms and standards are being developed for:

- Leadership and governance
- Curriculum implementation and delivery
- Teacher recruitment, management, support and professional development
- Provisioning of learner teacher support material
- Education information management.

3. READING AND LIBRARY SERVICES

Developing a culture of reading amongst our learners remains a key driver in improving literacy skills such as reading and writing proficiency. The department is developing reading and writing norms and standards that will provide guidelines on the quantity of writing to be done per grade and what is expected in terms of reading ability, for example how many words read per minute to determine fluency per phrase.

A plan is also being developed to improve library services in schools with a specific focus on the Eastern Cape and Limpopo due to the lack of existing services in those provinces.



Dinaledi



4. LEARNER TEACHER SUPPORT MATERIAL (LTSM)

The meeting was presented with a plan to most efficiently ensure that every child has a text book in every subject per grade. There was broad consensus that one core text book will be identified for each subject per grade and that a transversal tender be negotiated to maximise on economies of scale.

5. PROFILING OF TEACHERS

In order to effectively deliver the curriculum it is crucial that we have the correct teacher, teaching the correct subject in front of the class. To ensure this we have begun a process of profiling all teachers within the system.

75% of **teachers have been profiled** in terms of their professional information, subjects taught and subjects qualified to teach, among other information not currently available on PERSAL. Weekly reports from all provinces are submitted on progress.

Funza Lushaka graduates allocations to provinces and districts for 2015 have been sent to provinces for proactive placements.

Work on **teacher incentives** started in the period under review to assist with stimulating positive teaching behaviours in schools and in classrooms in our country, and to ensure adherence to the provision in law and policy across the country.

The teacher mentorship programme run between the DBE and ISASA is yielding fruit, as is the targeting of community-led participants in the choice of learners to get a bursary. In the latter students chosen are a minority (100 yearly) but they are more likely to serve in a rural area with retention rates which are higher.

Teacher resource centres are being revitalised with technology resourcing and digital material to provide district level support of teachers. 40 teacher resource centres were activated nationally and 168 staff of such centres trained in a five day training programme during the first three months of the administration.

In addition to this, subject committees have been established to improve peer to specialist teacher development, and Communities of Practice among teaching professionals nationally. The NECT also assists with teacher training.

950 grade 12 mathematics teachers have been trained on new Mathematics topics including Euclidian Geometry and Probability to enable them to improve performance in the National Senior Certificate and expand post-school opportunities for study.

107 officials and partners were trained on teaching English First Additional Language in primary education in collaboration with the British Council.

6. INCREMENTAL INTRODUCTION OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES (IIAL)

The pilot is currently still underway with a report to be finalised shortly. Out of our more than 25 000 schools in the system 3700 currently do not offer an African Language and we will roll out this programme to those schools in grade one from next year, and those that participated in the pilot will continue in grade two.

7. MERGERS AND RATIONALISATIONS

In a bid to improve quality and efficiency we have identified areas that inhibit the delivery of quality education one such is small and unviable schools where teachers are expected to teach multiple grades in one class. We have set up a task team that will work with and through provinces and engage with communities on how to best merge and rationalise these unviable small schools.

8. NSC TASK TEAM REPORT

The meeting discussed a presentation delivered by the NSC Ministerial task team covering many aspects outlined in the report. It was decided that while some of the recommendations could be immediately implemented others required further deliberation. These will go back to provinces for further round table discussions will take place at a provincial level.

9. NSC MARKERS

In this area, we have again come up with radical comprehensive plan to overhaul the whole marking system over the next five years and beyond. The quality of marking is fundamental to the value of the NSC Certificate.

Short term measures include:

- Strengthening moderation and ensuring that national standardized marking guidelines are applied accurately and uniformly across all provinces.
- Implementing a tolerance range – this will be the range between markers and moderators.
- Authorisation of Chief Markers and Internal Moderators
- Authorisation of Markers to mark.
- Centralised marking of small subjects.

Medium term

- Implementation of competency test for Markers and the Amendments of the PAM

Long term

- Electronic marking

We have also decided that the appointment of Chief Markers and Moderators will be taken away from PEDs and transferred to DBE.

These measures have been canvassed at the National Examinations and Assessment Committee (NEAC) which includes all PED's, HESA, Umalusi, SAQA, Labour unions and other private assessment bodies.

CEM has approved the short term enhancements to be piloted in this year's examinations and has called for a detailed proposal on the medium and long term options.

10. 2014 NSC

The 2014 NSC examinations are fast approaching with just 36 days to go before this year's matrics sit for their first examination.

We can confirm that preparations for the conduct of the examination in all nine provinces have been completed. A total of 688 660 candidates are registered to write the examination this year, of which 550 127 are Full Time candidates and 138 533 are Part Time candidates. These candidates will write their examination across 6 740 examination centres where invigilation will be conducted by an estimated 65 000 invigilators who will be responsible for ensuring that the examination is written under conditions that are free of any malpractice.

Final preparations are being made for the 7 million answer scripts to be collected on the day it is written and placed into secure storage and then shifted to the 117 marking centres across the country for marking by a selected team of 41 564 markers, who will commence with marking on 1 December 2014

The DBE together with the provinces will strengthen its monitoring of the 2014 NSC examination processes so as to ensure that the integrity and credibility of this exit examination is upheld at every examination centre. I will officially announce the outcome of the 2014 NSC examinations on 5 January 2015 and the results will be released to candidates on 6 January 2015.

11. MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (MST)

The Department presented work in progress on a revised MST strategy that sets out clear targets for increasing the uptake in pure Mathematics by learners. The MST office is now fully operational and the department is looking at ways to better utilize the Dinaledi and Technical grants to benefit more learners in resourcing MST education.

The strategy also includes plans to ensure all schools offer mathematics as a subject as well as ensuring that if learners take certain gateway subjects they may be mandated to take pure mathematics to complement those subjects in terms of specific subject package offerings.

12. LEARNER HEALTH AND WELL BEING, SAFETY AND SOCIAL COHESION:

A comprehensive plan has been developed to help address areas of learner retention, work against social ills (substance abuse, pregnancy and violence), improving school safety and sport, culture, arts, music and heritage.

13. INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUIPMENT

A school build programme will be accelerated through improved cost management, implementation of norms and standards for infrastructure development and maintenance, as well as coordination of infrastructure provisioning in all nine provinces to cater for rural schooling challenges.

14. COMMUNITY PROTESTS

The meeting was extremely disturbed by the number of community protests that have negatively impacted on education in various parts of the country including Kuruman, Grabow, and Sterkspruit among others. The meeting strongly condemned these actions and is urging communities to take ownership of schools and protect them no matter what. Education must be prioritised above all else as it is the greatest weapon that can be used to ensure radical social economic transformation and change the lives of our people.

15. WORLD TEACHERS DAY

In conclusion we would like to note the upcoming World Teachers Day on the 5th October and thank the dedicated men and women for their selfless service to the betterment of our country. Under the theme "Invest in our Teachers, Invest in our Future", we would like to re-emphasise our commitment as a department to the continuous professional development of our teachers.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Definition of terms

1.1. Operation Phakisa:

'Operation Phakisa'. Phakisa is a Sesotho word, which means "Hurry Up", this highlights the urgency with which government wants to deliver on some of the priorities encompassed in the

National Development Plan (NDP). The President said the methodology was designed to answer fundamental implementation questions and find solutions, as the country tries to address poverty, inequality and unemployment, among other challenges, as stipulated in the NDP 2030.

1.2. Profiling of teachers will include:

ID number, Citizenship, Nationality, Job Title, Rank, Contact details (As per SARS requirements), Qualification, and Subjects qualified to teach and subjects the teacher is currently teaching.

2. Acronyms

DBE: Department of Basic Education

PED: Provincial Education Department

MST: Mathematics, Science and Technology

NSC: National Senior Certificate

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