

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE HONORABLE MEC FOR EDUCATION, MRS.
REGINAH AT THE OCCASION OF THE MEETING WITH PRINCIPALS ON 22
JANUARY 2015 AT PIENAARSDAM**

Programme Director and Acting Head of Department, Mrs. Lucy Moyane

Executive Mayor of Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, Cllr. Mike Masina

Members of Senior Management

Circuit Managers

Principals

Sanibonani

I request that today we venture into doing something that we have not done before by converting this sitting into a brainstorming session to allow a confluence of ideas to propel this province forward on issues of quality education delivery.

Those of you who had for some time bottled their ideas because there was no suitable platform to raise them should find comfort that at last an opportunity to input ideas of educational importance has presented itself.

Such a platform request that we frankly look at the situation at our disposal, analyze it in detailed using facts and begin a process to predict future prospects.

The fact is Mpumalanga Province had a steady improvement of Grade 12 results since 2009. The province is currently standing in a favourable position when you compare it with other provinces and that for the first time all our four Districts are performing above the national average.

It is also a fact that you have worked around the clock to ensure that the province obtains these results. We know for sure that if it were not your hard work and dedication, we would have been presenting a different story today. For this reason, I wish to take this opportunity to thank you dearly.

The other fact is that our learners' numbers for the grade 12 class continue to decline year in year out and do not reflect the actual number of grade 12 learners that were in grade 11 in the previous year. This means that there is an unconfirmed anomaly that is within our system holding back some of our grade 11 learners who should be progressing to Grade12.

The 2014 Grade 12 results also reflected that we are not doing well in Mathematics and Physical Science. This is based on the number of learners that are doing these subjects as well as those that are passing the subjects.

In 2013, there were **19 400** learners who wrote Mathematics, **11 301** passed it obtaining **58.3%**.

In 2014, there were **17 767** learners that wrote Mathematics, **10 050** passed obtaining a **56.6%** pass.

I hope you are noticing that this is a representation of learner enrolment decline as much as it is also a pass percentage decline.

The same happened to Physical Sciences, you will notice this when an analysis is presented by the Director of Public Examinations Mr. Chukudu Manyabeane.

Of great concern is that our province is one of the few provinces in the country that has established the Maths, Science and Technology Academy, a vehicle to ensure that there is an improvement of learner performance in Mathematics and the Sciences.

Since this is a brainstorming session, I request to forthrightly state that it cannot be accepted that when the province has increased the number of Dinaledi Schools from **48 to 100** but at the end of the year gets the unsatisfactory statistics that I have just mentioned.

I believe that this state of affairs does not only concern the MEC for Education alone but it is an issue that all principals and educators are worried about.

On the 10th of December 2014, the Department received a letter from the Mining Qualifications Authority requesting that we identify 90 learners who could be fully funded towards any field of study in the mining sector.

Guess what happened from there, the department conducted Radio talk shows, issued media statements, posted on the social media platforms and the response is not what we anticipated. We submitted that report yesterday sadly with our inside bleeding as we were unable to take advantage of that opportunity.

Just imagine of other opportunities that we are likely to forfeit as a province if this trend is not addressed. I suggest that we discuss this unfortunate phenomenon with an intention to improve the situation.

SUBJECT COMBINATIONS

The other point is that we must begin a process to look at the issue of a combination of subjects for our learners to ensure that when they leave Grade 12 they are able to further their studies with ease.

One learner came to my office last week having met the requirements to study for a bachelors degree and was pleading for a bursary.

When I looked at the statement of results, the learner had achieved:

Level **6** in Business Studies, level, **7** Dramatic Arts, Level **6** in English Home Language, level **6** in History, level **6** in Life Orientation, Level **5** Mathematical Literacy and Level **6** in SiSwati First Additional Language.

The dilemma was that we could not support the student because of the subject stream but I wondered if there was any university in this country that will admit her with such a combination.

What saddened me most is that the student was in an independent school; his parents paid a lot of money for those results.

This also talks to our career guidance programmes and about the effectiveness of our Life Orientation Subject delivery.

I think we must look at this and begin a process to act in the best interest of our children.

LEARNERS WHO FAILED

The other reality is that out of the 45 081 2014 grade 12 full time candidates, **9 466** did not make it.

Some of these learners are expected to write the supplementary examination that is scheduled to start from 16 February to 24 March 2015.

When I announced the results on the 6th of January 2015, I requested that these learners must be fully supported. At that time I was thinking that we must ensure that all learners who qualifies to write should be encouraged to register on time to receive support from their respective schools and will ensure that they sit for the examination and benefit from it.

I wish to hear how each school or circuit is intending to assist in this regard.

Equally, there are learners that failed for the first time. I have issued a directive that these learners should be re-admitted to our schools without fail.

So far I have not received a report that says there are schools which are refusing to comply with this directive. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for having allowed these learners space in our schools.

SCHOOLS PERFORMING BELOW 60%

In 2014 we declared that the 94 schools which performed below **60%** will be declared dysfunctional and we also said that there must be no such school in 2015. This number was reduced to **84** but of concern is that we had **52** new entrances to this category.

Our view is that had it been that these 52 schools obtained their previous results, the province would have attained its **10%** target.

Now we must established on what happed for us to be in this kind of dilemma. I request that we look at this phenomenon with the intention of not having such a repeat this time around.

We must find out on why do schools decline their results when there has been a consistent improvement in the province for the past six years. I saw a schools that declined by 58%, Esibusisweni Secondary School in Amsterdam. I do not think that that community is happy with that state of affairs.

We need to do something about this.

It is encouraging that we only have seven out of the 68 circuits that are performing below 70%. I will also engage the circuit managers on how are they going to improve this.

IMPROVEMENT PLANS FOR 2015

At the occasion of the announcement of results I stated that that this time around there will be a need to intensify school based intervention program, meaning that schools will be supported in accordance to the specific circumstances in an effort to ensure that all schools improve their results and no school drops its results.

I will be comforted is you could indicate the kind of support that you will prefer so that we could improve our results in a qualitative manner.

The Department will still offer other support programme that are of direct support to learners.

We will also be receptive to your suggestions which may add impetus to our quest to improve the results. I will be happy to hear from schools that obtained 100% on what is it that they have done differently to have these results. It is an issue of sharing good practices.

The Department will also engage principals of primary schools to look at issues relating to the Annual National assessment results and to discuss efforts to improve at that level.

It is our firm believe that it's only a solid foundation that may yield sustainable positive outcomes.

I am happy that that the department has stated operationalizing the Early Childhood development Institute on 19 January 2015. It is the first of its kind and will assist us to improve teaching and learning at an early childhood Development level. I am praying that we must all take advantage of this institute.

ELECTION OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

I request that we make every effort to work collaboratively with parents and the communities that our schools are serving.

We must win the hearts and soul of all our parents and involve them in the education of their children in a way that has not been seen before.

We need to rid out this emerging phenomenon were some who claim to be parents will unliterary close gates of schools in order to address certain community matters. I believe that it is only when gates of schools are opened that communities may acquire growth and development.

I request that you from your side start to put systems in place in preparation for the elections of school governing bodies that will take place this year in February and March.

Please make it your obligation to ensure that the election process progress in a fair and transparent manner.

CONCLUSION

I am a firm believer that principals should have similar traits as Chief Executive Officers.

The CEO of a company demonstrates leadership skills necessary to make the organization's mission a success.

This therefore means they play a major role in creating, communicating, and implementing the organization's vision and overall direction.

They also assess the principal risk of the company and ensure that these risks are being monitored.

If as leaders in our schools we are equipped with these qualities, we can surely go very far in leading our schools into victories such as producing learners that have sound knowledge of their subject content and can hold their forth when they graduate to tertiary.

I have confidence in you and I trust that working together we may build a nation we can be proud of.

Ngiyabonga kakhulu!