

Policy and budget vote speech 2009/10 by MEC for the Department of Education R Mhaule, Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature, Nelspruit

25 August 2009

Honourable Speaker, Mr Jackson Mthembu
Honourable Deputy Speaker, Ms Violet Siwela
Honourable Premier, Mr DD Mabuza
Honourable members of the Executive Council
Honourable members of the provincial legislature
Acting Head of Department, Dr T Ngomane
CEO of Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust, Mr D Moropane
Members of senior management
Representatives from regions
Members of the audit committee
Organised formations
Representatives from the House of Traditional Leaders
Associations of school governing bodies
Educators
Learners
Media
Ladies and gentleman

Honourable speaker, I appreciate the opportunity bestowed upon me to present the 2009 policy and budget speech for the Department of Education. As I deliver this speech, I am reminded of the prophetic articulation of Chief Albert Luthuli in 1961 about the role of education in a free and democratic society as a tool for nation building and reconciliation:

“Education is a paramount unifying factor in building consciousness and pride, a healthy community spirit. In my non racial democratic South Africa there can be no question of a different system of education for different racial groups. Education would be free and compulsory for all in the primary stage at first, and later up to matriculation. Substantial aid would be given to universities with a generous system for bursaries and loans to students.

“Special efforts would be made to remove illiteracy. Night schools to provide working adults with facilities for part time education in any standard would be encouraged. Multi-racial schools will be demanded by the need to develop common patriotism and national solidarity” .

These issues, honourable speaker, are currently at the core of our mandate. Indeed, the populace of Mpumalanga has given this administration a mandate to ensure that education is at the centre of human capital development, that education should be a priority programme for government and moreover that it becomes a societal issue as articulated by Mr Jacob Zuma, in his capacity as

President of the ANC in 8 January statement of 2008. He said: Education must be elevated from being a departmental issue, or even a government issue, to a societal issue, one that occupies the attention and energy for all our people.

President Zuma, after assuming office as President of the country, separated education into two ministries, the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education and Training, so that we are able to focus on basic education. This, in itself, is an indication that education is indeed a priority for this government.

As the department we reiterate our commitment to making an education enterprise everybody's business. We will indeed work with educators, parents, school governing bodies (SGBs), private sector and other stakeholders to make education the priority of all in Mpumalanga.

As we begin the five year journey of this new administration, ours is to build on the successes of our predecessors and accelerate excellence in education delivery. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the foundations laid by my predecessors, Mr DD Mabuza, who laid a solid foundation by integrating the fragmented apartheid education departments into a single Mpumalanga Department of Education. Mr Craig Padayachee indeed took the baton and consolidated the gains and passed it on to Mr Siphosezwe Masango, who spearheaded the active participation of stakeholders making the education enterprise everybody's business. Lastly, Mrs Mmathulare Coleman, the first woman MEC for Education who passed this baton to me. These foundations, I will be building upon.

In this vein, honourable speaker, we want to take this opportunity to wish the honourable Premier a happy birthday! Join me as we sing happy birthday to you! Re re o gole, o gole, o be o regolele! Premier!

Honourable speaker, our view is that everything we do or say must embrace high levels of professionalism, quality and excellence. It is in that context that I take this opportunity to acknowledge the following personalities who have excelled in the performance of their responsibilities and duties. Some of which are in our midst: Ms Dolly Sono, a Bachelor of Education Student at the Fort Hare University, who participated in an exchange programme to Umea University in Sweden and obtained more than 23 distinctions in her studies, making her the best student from Mpumalanga.

Khanyisile Vilakazi, a learner from Lowveld High School, who was placed first in the national Sowetan Young Communicators Award, 2009. Nondumiso Nkosi, a learner from Stintile Secondary School, who represented the country at the Junior G8 summit in Japan last year. Ms Thandi Dialen Marupane, Principal of Clau Clau Primary School, who was placed second in the category: Excellence in Primary School Leadership at the 2008 National Teaching Awards. Khula

Secondary School obtained the Anglo American Mathematics Award of R150 000 for consistent progress and qualitative results in Grade 12.

Mr Frederick Rufetu, Deputy Principal for King Makhosonke Secondary School and 2007 Aggrey Klaaste and National Teaching Awards winner in the category; Maths and Science Teaching came back from New York City where he taught Mathematics for the whole of the 2008 academic year. Mr Rufetu is the recipient of a Fulbright scholarship honoured by the American Embassy in South Africa. Ms Paulina Mpahlaza led our schools to the National Schools Eisteddfod in July this year. Mpumalanga was declared the most organised, well coordinated and the most disciplined team. 13 of our choirs were placed in winning positions.

Daniel Vilakazi, Lerato Modise, Thokozane Mavimbela, Mandla Skhosana and Thelma Mabena from Gert Sibande region were part of the athletics national team and represented the country in the 2009 Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN) Global Games in the Czech Republic. These and many others must remain our ambassadors and true role models. We are truly proud and privileged to be associated with personalities of such prestige.

Review of the 2008/09 financial year

Honourable speaker, the last quarter of the 2008/09 financial year presented a number of challenges to the Department of Education. Firstly, Mpumalanga was one of the provinces that could not issue all its matriculates with results by the end of the year. While other provinces managed to resolve the challenge quickly, it took time for Mpumalanga to resolve the matter.

This prompted the then minister of education to establish a task team to investigate the causes of this delay. The investigation found that the delay was caused by a variety of reasons ranging from systemic matters relating to the introduction of the new curriculum, the development of the Integrated Examination Computer System (IECS) and human action or non action.

I would like to take this opportunity to assure people of the province that the department is taking action to ensure that this situation does not recur as such:

- * We have strengthened our management capacity for examinations by bringing in new managers
- * We are creating a script library and will resource it to facilitate easy retrieval of scripts and mark sheets
- * We are strengthening our security measures around examination processes and products
- * We are exploring information technology (IT) possibilities to ensure that we have a data backup system should we be in situations where the IT systems let us down.
- * We are improving communication with our stakeholders. To this effect the

department is establishing a help desk for examinations and strengthening face to face interactions with schools in particular.

Financial Management 2008/09

Secondly, honourable speaker, 2008/09 was a challenging year with regard to the management of our finances. By the end of the financial year, we were found to be wanting in this regard. This, honourable speaker, is as a result of a myriad of reasons including the absence of senior managers in this critical function. The department overspent its total budget with R3,9 million. Within this, the budget for compensation of employees was overspent with a total amount of R414 million which then led to a number of suppliers not being paid timely and funds meant for other programmes being used to pay salaries. These unpaid amounts are being carried into the new financial year.

Honourable speaker we entered this financial year with accruals and commitments amounting to R292 million and R438 million respectively. These commitments comprise contractual obligations but are also as a result of non submission or late submission of invoices by our service providers, this, honourable speaker, means that the department is beginning the financial year with reduced resources. The question to be asked then is: What are we doing about this situation? We are indeed doing something about this:

- * We have reprioritised our programmes ensuring that we focus on core activities
- * We are implementing stringent cost curtailment measures
- * We have placed a moratorium on the filling of posts, with the exception of critical posts
- * We have implemented budget cuts to ensure that we have a budget to settle our accruals
- * In addition, there is a commitment to enhance internal controls, perform proactive risk management to improve efficiency and reduce wastages
- * We have advertised the post of chief financial officer

It gives me pleasure, Honourable Speaker, to announce that invoices amounting to R292 million which were received by 31 March 2009 have been settled. I am however, concerned about the late submission of invoices by our service providers. I wish to take this opportunity to thank my colleague, Mrs Y N Phosa, MEC for Finance, for the support that her department is giving to the Department of Education to ensure that we can improve our financial management capacity.
Infrastructure Development

A conducive environment is key to successful learning. Working together with our sister department, Public Works, Roads and Transport, we will ensure that the provision of school infrastructure is accelerated. Honourable speaker, the eradication of incomplete projects was our focus last year, and it continues to be

our focus as we move into this financial year. It is imperative for us to finalise all incomplete projects so that we are able to channel our resources to new projects.

In the previous year, a total of 95 projects were closed, construction was practically completed in 530 projects. These projects need to have their final accounts prepared and approved for the administrative closure. The financial resources available to us, honourable speaker, will enable us to commence with the construction of Cyril Clarke and Khunjuliwe Secondary Schools in this financial year. We will in the 2010/11 financial year commence with John Mdluli and Kamhlushwa Primary Schools.

During this financial year we continue focusing on eradicating mud and unsafe structures, including storm damaged schools in the Gert Sibande and Bushbuckridge regions. The provision of water, sanitation, kitchens and facilities for grade R is one of the imperatives the department has to deal with during this financial year. A budget is set aside to ensure that planning and design processes are commenced with for implementation in the next financial year.

Scholar transport

Containing the cost of scholar transport and the quality thereof has been a long standing challenge for the Department of Education. The increase of the tariff from 20 cents to 35 cents without a budget has led to this programme overspending in the previous financial year. This year 70 481 deserving learners will benefit from this service.

Honourable speaker, I must admit that the responsibility of ensuring the success of this service lies with all of us. Rightly so, the executive council has resolved on 25 June 2009 that the functions relating to scholar transport be transferred with immediate effect to the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport. This transfer will enable the Department of Education to focus on its core business.

At the same time, the department has commenced with a process to take stock of schools with existing hostels. The department intends to utilise hostel facilities to mitigate challenges of the scholar transport service, overcrowding in classrooms, challenges of multi graded schools by ensuring that learners from poor rural areas are equally exposed to quality teaching and learning. Consultations will take place in this regard to ensure that there is a seamless implementation of this strategy.

National School Nutrition programme

Hunger, has been shown to contribute to reduced school attendance, and impaired cognitive capacity. The department will continue providing nutrition to learners in our poorest Schools Nutrition programme. A total of 574 000 learners in 1 400 primary schools will continue to receive feeding for all school days. 48

588 learners in quintile one secondary schools will for the first time benefit from the programme this financial year. This year, we will also prepare for phasing in the nutrition programme in quintile two secondary schools.

The quality of the food and the availability of cooking spaces in our schools is still a challenge. The department is putting plans to ensure that there are kitchens in place for the majority of schools and to ensure that they fully comply with health and safety standards for food preparations. A training programme for the 2 767 cooks on the programme will be delivered in this financial year.

Early Childhood Development (ECD)

Honourable speaker, our mandate is delivery of basic education and ensuring that our children attain desirable learning outcomes. We will not rest until all the children of this province can access education and perform to the best of their capabilities. Early Childhood Education remains the cornerstone of successful education systems. We agree with James Heckman, the Nobel Prize Winning Economist when he said; "It's never too early to start investing in children. It is very costly to reverse years of damage and neglect. Many of the important skills, abilities and motivations in life are set at a relatively early age".

Since 2004, the department has made tremendous strides in the provision of ECD. The number of learners accessing ECD grew from 18 301 in 2004 to 62 025 in 2009. The number of ECD practitioners increased from 750 in 2004 to 1 780 and the number of ECD centres grew from 432 to 1 047. This growth puts Mpumalanga in a better position to attain universal grade R by 2010 in line with government's commitment in Education White Paper 5.

The finalisation of the provincial integrated ECD strategy in the previous financial year is indeed a milestone which will enable us to work with our sister departments in providing a service to our children. We will in this year finalise the related implementation plan.

Honourable speaker, the challenges facing us in this sector relate to the quality of ECD provisioning and teacher competence. We have budgeted adequate funding to ensure that we can provide the required learning and teaching materials to all ECD centres, train 500 practitioners and provide the requisite subsidies towards the payment of ECD practitioners.

Increasing access to education

Not all children of school going age are attending school, honourable speaker. Our gross enrolment rate is estimated at 98 percent in the province. This means that two percent of school going children cannot be accounted for in system. We will intensify our campaign to ensure that compulsory and universal schooling is

realised. Children irrespective of their abilities have a right to basic education. When our masses met in Kliptown in 1955 they proclaimed that, the doors of learning and culture shall be opened to all, indeed they aspired that all children should be at school. They believed, and we still do, that education is the only tool for breaking intergenerational poverty.

Some of our children are not at school because our schools environments are not welcoming and thus they are disabled from accessing education. Through our Inclusive Education and Special Needs Education programmes we will ensure that the rights of all learners as enshrined in our Constitution and the education for all goals are met. To this effect, a budget within programme four has been provided for upgrading infrastructure in four special schools, provision of learning assistive devices and the appointment of 30 therapists.

Learner performance

The grade 12 class of 2008 achieved an overall pass rate of 52 percent, which is a significant drop of 9 percent from the previous year. Honourable speaker, we cannot take pride at this level of performance. The department has developed a provincial learner attainment strategy to improve performance across the system. The success of this strategy depends on all role players taking their responsibility.

On 17 April 2009, the department launched the Quality Learning and Teaching campaign. At this launch, all role players signed the code of quality education comprising the non negotiables. They pledged to play their part:

- * Teachers committed to being in class, on time, teaching with no abuse of learners
- * Officials committed to supporting schools and ensuring that schools receive the necessary resources
- * Parents committed to supporting their children at home with their school work
- * Learners committed to being at school on time, learning and being disciplined
- * Communities committed to ensuring that every school going child is at school and ensuring a safe and crime free environment for schooling, and to protect the school and its assets from vandalism

In his address to the principals, President Jacob Zuma, reiterated these non negotiables. We will indeed strengthen our monitoring efforts, including constant engagements with principals, organised labour and school governing bodies to ensure that these non negotiables are implemented.

Honourable speaker, primary schools require our focus. The national systemic evaluation report of 2007 indicates that performance of Mpumalanga grade three learners is below the national average and stands at 32 for literacy and 31 for numeracy. This requires our urgent intervention. So far, the department has

targeted 353 primary schools for the provision of literacy and numeracy resources within the Quality Improvement, Development, Support and Upliftment programme (QIDS-UP). Furthermore 800 schools will receive library materials for the promotion of reading. We will continue to monitor and support the implementation of the Foundations for Learning programme in our schools.

School sport

Indeed, the FIFA 2010 Soccer World Cup will leave a legacy in school sport. We are using this opportunity to provide our learners and teachers with an opportunity to be excited about soccer and sport in general. 997 schools participated in the provincial FIFA tournament.

We have managed to train 513 educators in soccer coaching and development last year. This year we will train an additional 500 through the Youth Empowerment Scheme through Sport (YESS) project, which is a partnership programme between Mpumalanga and the province of North Rhine Westphalia in Germany. To this end, I want to extend my appreciation for the cooperation that exists between the Department of Education and the Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation.

Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET)

The department was able to train 543 adults on construction and 379 adults on basic electricity in the past year. Our enrolment in formal ABET programmes are standing at 23 667. We managed to increase the number of teaching hours to at least 24 hours per week in 40 of our public centres. This, in itself provides expanded opportunities for our adult learners to participate and perform. The recruitment and retention of teachers has always been a challenge in this sector. To create a pool of qualified, educators we managed to enrol 200 practitioners towards an ABET teaching qualification through the National Institute of Higher Education.

Through the mass literacy campaign, Kha Ri Gude, 31 534 adults were enrolled in literacy classes in 2008. For this year, the target is set at 54 000 learners for Kha Ri Gude and 30 000 for public adult learning centres. Honourable speaker, it gives me pleasure to indicate that the target for Kha Ri Gude has already been exceeded as enrolment is standing at 54 325 as we speak. We are indeed committed to breaking the back of illiteracy! In this regard, I am making a clarion call to all adults to seize the opportunities that government is affording them.

Repositioning of FET Colleges

Honourable speaker, 2008/09 financial year was the last year of the FET Recapitalisation programme. Through this programme, our colleges managed to upgrade and acquire new infrastructure and state of the art equipment. Our colleges continue to be counted amongst the best in the country. 2008/09 saw

the successful implementation of the national curriculum vocational at National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level four in all our colleges. The demand for vocational qualification is increasing with student enrolment growing from 1 901 in 2007 to 8 119 in 2009. 4 953 of these students are enrolled in engineering, information technology (IT), business studies, tourism and agriculture, which are areas key to the economic development of the province. We will continue supporting these colleges until the processes for transferring these to the Ministry of Higher Education and Training have been finalised.

Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust

The Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust (MRTT) is the only parastatal attached to the Department of Education. Honourable speaker, MRTT is standing out as a training institution in the province. It is making significant strides to provide for the development and improvement of the skills of the South African workforce as well as learnerships that leads to recognised occupational qualifications.

In the past financial year, MRTT was accredited as a centre of excellence in construction related trades, the third of its kind in the country. For this financial year, we will focus on getting accreditation as a centre of excellence for energy related trades. The department will allocate a budget to MRTT to enable it to continue doing outstanding work.

Human resource development

Education is a labour intensive commodity. Teachers remain at the heart of its delivery and are irreplaceable. Therefore, their competence, quality and capacity should always be at the cutting edge. The department, in its quest for providing quality teaching enrolled its teachers on various courses; 413 of our teachers enrolled towards maths and science continuous professional development qualification, 189 student teachers enrolled towards an initial teacher qualification.

For the 2009/10 financial year, bursaries will be awarded to 243 student teachers. We will continue to implement teacher development initiatives including upgrading of unqualified and under qualified teachers and the training of principals on School Leadership.

Indeed, honourable speaker, the President, in his address to school principals on 7 August 2009 confirmed the commitment of government in making education priority number one, when he said: "We will work even harder to support our educators, parents and learners in a way that will make them proud that indeed there is a change of attitude and a renewed way of doing things".

I wish to call on all the people of our province to heed the call made by the President when he said: "We must today dedicate ourselves to put the past

behind us and to make education an instrument of freedom and sustainable development.

It must be a weapon of liberating the minds of our children for the common good of our country. It must empower the nation to move forward to prosperity.

Honourable speaker, the Council of Education Ministers (CEM), has isolated specific key deliverables on the mandate of ensuring that all citizens of this country embrace education as a societal matter. These are non negotiables for teacher development and performance:

- * integrated rural school infrastructure development for better access; and
- * information communication technology (ICT) in education for 21st century curriculum delivery.

The timing is ideal for us to collectively mobilise communities to rally behind the professionalised educator fraternity, to hike the morality bar for our educators as stipulated in our code of conduct, to reward excellence and do away with mediocrity.

Mpumalanga Education Development Trust (MEDT)

The Mpumalanga Education Development Trust (MEDT) provides impetus for the enhancement and provisioning of education infrastructure development, career guidance, skills development, learner support and ICT advancement initiatives. We will strengthen this collaboration with MEDT and ensure that the majority of business community actively participate in the MEDT so as to enhance our public private initiatives.

Establishment of a university for Mpumalanga

Notwithstanding the fact that provision of higher education rests with the national Department of Higher Education and Training, our duty, honourable speaker, will be to ensure that the call by structures to have a university in the province does not fall on deaf ears. In this context, we will lead a team that will interact with the Ministry of Higher Education and Training to achieve a university for the Province.

School Governance

Honourable speaker, I want to congratulate all members of the school community and civil society who participated in the school governing body elections held during June and July this year. These elections were indeed a success as all our schools have concluded the process which would enable parents to exercise their democratic rights and to actively become involved in the transformation and sustenance of quality education.

I want to take this time, to extend my profound appreciation to all former members of school governing bodies and wish them the best of luck in their new responsibilities. At the same time I stand to congratulate the newly elected members and urge them to work harder in ensuring that our schools become areas of community development.

Budget breakdown

Honourable speaker, below is the budget breakdown for 2009/10. I am therefore requesting this august house to support it:

- * The total budget is R10.073 billion.
- * The personnel: Non personnel split is 83:17
- * Conditional Grants are R490 million

Programme by programme breakdown

- * Programme 1: administration, R981 489
- * Programme 2: public Ordinary Subsidies, R8 405 087
- * Programme 3: independent Schools, R11 275
- * Programme 4: public Special Schools Education, R160 262
- * Programme 5: further Education and Training, R222 634
- * Programme 6: adult Basic Education, R90 451
- * Programme 7: early Childhood Development, R96 922
- * Programme 8: auxiliary Associated Services, R105 079
- * Total: R10 073 199

Word of gratitude

Honourable speaker, the acting head of department and her team, played a pivotal role in enhancing the administrative capacity of the department in the past four months. To this end, I take this opportunity to extend my appreciation for the role she played. At the same time, I take this opportunity to congratulate Mrs Mahlasedi Mhlabane, who will assume duty as on 1 September 2009 as the Head of Department (HOD). Her overall mandate will be to accelerate the implementation process for the realisation of our new vision, which is; accelerating excellence in education delivery.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to extend my profound appreciation to the honourable Premier, Mr DD Mabuza, my colleagues in the executive council, members of the portfolio committee, senior management and staff in the Department of Education including organised labour and other formations for their ongoing support. Your benevolence goes a long way.

Honourable speaker, I wish to end with the words of our icon, Nelson Mandela, spoken in 1996: "Investment in our human capital through education is one of our highest priorities. It will help unleash the potential squandered by the neglect

of apartheid and in doing so it will equip our youth to become builders of our nation's wealth.

I thank you!

Issued by: Department of Education, Mpumalanga Provincial Government
25 August 2009

Source: Department of Education, Mpumalanga Provincial Government
(<http://www.mpumalanga.gov.za>)