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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OFFICE OF THE MEC

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INPUT BY THE MEC FOR EDUCATION AT THE LIGBRON e-LEARNING PROJECT- MRS EM COLEMAN (MPL)

DATE : 19th JUNE 2008

VENUE : LIGBRON ACADEMY, ERMELO

Executive Mayor of Msukaligwa – Cllr BM Vilakazi
Head of Department – Mr MR Tywakadi
Representative from the ABSA Foundation
Different partners and Sponsors of the programme
Principals, SGB's, Educators and Learners
Officials of the Department
Members of the Media

We are gathered here today, to celebrate the innovative ways in which technology continues to enhance the lives of our people. This is our contribution towards the creation of a better life for all.

This high-tech project implores us to explore concrete ways to increase our school's participation and leadership with Information and Communication Technology in order to effect economic, social, and technological change.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has proved itself to be increasingly fundamental for social and economic development. Access to basic ICT infrastructure is a key to increasing the flow of information and improving communications. It incorporates the area of education, healthcare, agriculture, commerce, business, etc

Education being the building block for social and economic development, and one of the decisive factors in life chances, equal opportunity and enhancement, ICT has assumed such importance in the school curriculum and delivery method.

Although this is still a challenge in South Africa, it is definitely one of the many developmental areas that our Government continues to explore, together with our partners in the academia and in the private sector.

There is now 'Open and Distance Learning' (ODL) programs (e-education) to compliment the conventional educational system (face to face delivery system). For life-skills, the national curriculum development should effectively include the inculcation of life skills and values education.

In his state of the Nation Address, President Thabo Mbeki spoke of the 24 Apex Priorities. Project 3 of the priorities, says:

“Speed up ICT interventions to provide cheap platforms”

Our Government has set as a priority to increase usage of broadband and other ICT by addressing infrastructure development, cost, and access related issues including Infracore, Sentech and undersea cables.

ICT development is a direct contributor to our Country's economic development, and not only does it contribute to growth, but it contributes in accelerating economic and social growth, thus it being an Apex Priority.

It is important for us as a Department of Education, to correctly gear ourselves up to meet this challenge. I think you have indeed been honored by the President, for in being given this huge responsibility.

I wish to congratulate the role players in this project, for taking up this challenge and for understanding the role that they have to play in human capital development and social development in general.

Efficient use of ICT will place us as a province at a global stage, it will enhance our participation at all levels, it will make us much better informed contributors to the world agenda, and this is important for South Africa as a Developmental State, we will be a Empowered people.

The great revolutionary, Karl Marx, refers to empowerment as **“a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making power and control, and to transformative action”**.

Empowerment could also be said to be “an upliftment from negative feelings of helplessness to positive feelings of self confidence, and the ability to get on with the process of living”. It is quite hopeful that ICT could achieve such empowerment for our learners from an early age.

Indeed it s imperative that we empower our schools to be centers of excellence, to serve as information portals for our communities, and to teach and train learners effectively and efficiently. The results of that which we learn in schools should be available immediately.

Of the many research findings that have been discovered regarding the use of ICT and Interactive White Boards in Schools, I am particularly fascinated by the following three:

IWB(Interactive White Board) and ICT use at schools can help minimize the social divide by reducing the digital divide

As a Developmental state, we have humongous challenges in bridging the social divide in all its forms. This is the one area of our social existence that needs to improve, and through the narrowing of this gap, we will be able to address many challenges that affect us as social beings.

With efficient ICT programmes, we have a chance to meet the ever increasing demands that our social infrastructure must have, our public health systems could be improved to respond to the everyday health care challenges we face.

ICT increases efficiency in planning and preparation of work due to a more collaborative approach between teachers

This is an important aspect, it tells us that our educators can share knowledge, transfer of information from one to the other. To this end, I refer with pride to the slogan of the **Congress of South African Students (COSAS), EACH ONE TEACH ONE!!**

We must inculcate in our educators, the culture of efficient planning and time-ous preparation of work.

This will contribute to effective delivery of teaching, prompt management of the syllabus, enhance curriculum development and assessment. A better prepared educator, is not only active in the classroom, but is also able to engage with the Department and offer fruitful curriculum implementation advice.

The impact of ICT is highly dependent on how it is used. The impact of a specific ICT application or device depends on the capacity of the teacher to exploit it efficiently for pedagogical purposes.

Teacher Development is one area that we need to invest on as a department. If we want to increase the quality of our output, we must equally increase the capacity, and effectiveness of our input.

Teacher training and development should be on-going, with tangible results, both on the learner and on the educator.

Professional Development time is especially important if we are to meet the objectives of this project consistently. Remember we have a duty to sustain this programme, not only as a department but more so as the community.

In Conclusion chairperson,

Let me take this opportunity to especially recognize the community of Ligbron Academy, under the Leadership of Principal JJ Van Rensburg for they're outstanding contribution in making this project a reality. When the congress of the people in Kliptown in 1955 pronounced through the **FREEDOM CHARTER, I quote,**

“THE DOORS OF LEARNING AND CULTURE SHALL BE OPEN TO ALL” unquote

This kind of a learning environment was envisaged, an environment that recognizes that in order for me to prosper, my sister must prosper.

We encourage Camden Combined, Umzimvelo Agricultural School, Ermelo Combined to be true agents, fellow implementers and able delivers of the programme, and to equally reach out to their counterparts in sharing on this resource.

We applaud the good work that you have done, and we further urge and encourage you to be good leaders in the delivery of quality education in our Province, we are eagerly anticipating results on the effect of this programme on the overall performance of our learners.

A Special word of gratitude to all our Sponsors and partners. We value your immense contributions in the conceptualization and implementation of this project. We will definitely rely on your expertise in monitoring and evaluating the impact hereon.

Consistent with what we mentioned when we delivered the 2008 Policy and Budget Speech, we called on the private sector and the business community to partner with us in our quest to deliver quality public education, we believe that this is an imperative, and we congratulate the institutions that have already responded to this call. Indeed together we can make **EDUCATION, THE JEWEL OF SOCIETY!!**

As to what we make of this project, its impact on our society, whether we are able to change the learning methods of our learners, improve on the delivery of lessons, whether we were able to change the lives of our people in general, entirely depends on the receptiveness and the extent thereof of the knowledge recipients, thus we are boldly asserting, in this Youth Month of 2008,

“INKUNZI ISEMATHOLENI”

Learners, as the youth of our country, you are the future, we have no option as a nation, but to invest in you, you also have no option but to make us proud, to ensure that our investments yield good and quality returns, we rely on you for the quality and sustained implementation of this programme, and remember always, that EACH ONE MUST TEACH ONE!!

Thank you!!