**13 March 2017**

**Analysis of the Department of Basic Education Progress Report in the Implementation of Rural Education Policy**

1. **Introduction**

The South African underdevelopment of the rural areas can mostly be attributed to the apartheid mode that aimed to build a first class capitalist economy for a few, leaving the majority and creating a legacy of underdevelopment and poverty in the rural areas. Geographic differentiation “apartheid system” effectively defined three kinds of spaces in South Africa, each with its own political, social and economic systems: the major urban areas; the commercial farming regions and the associated small towns; and the so-called Homelands.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Efforts made since the dawn of democracy in 1994 have been geared towards ameliorating the negative consequences of economic, social and political exclusion and marginalization of the rural dwellers. Many policy and institutional measures have been put in place in order to improve the lives of the rural communities and regenerate rural economies but have had limited successes.

The ruling party’s (African National Congress’s) 2009 Elections Manifesto promised a renewed focus on rural development through the:[[2]](#footnote-2)

* Creation of sustainable livelihoods and decent work in rural areas, largely but not solely within agriculture. In this context, the land reform programme should be intensified in ways that ensure more land in the hands of the rural poor, together with the skills, financial resources and organisations – especially co-operatives – needed for them to use it productively;[[3]](#footnote-3)
* Improvement of government services, especially education, health and sanitation; and [[4]](#footnote-4)
* Introduction of measures to improve conditions for farm workers, both by improving their security of tenure, housing and living conditions and by supporting their organisation including unions.[[5]](#footnote-5)

This led to the introduction of the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) with a clear vision “creating vibrant, equitable, sustainable rural communities and food security for all”.

The urgent need to improve and advance the quality of education in all schools, including rural schools, is clearly pronounced in the 27 national goals of ‘*The* *Action Plan To 2019, Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030’*.

Since the advent of democracy the Department of Basic Education took several initiatives aimed at improving the quality of education in previously disadvantaged schools, including rural schools.

These involved, among others:[[6]](#footnote-6)

* Closing the resource gap between schools;
* Providing more Learning, Teaching and Support Material (LTSM) to poor schools;
* Introducing measures to equalise and redress funding in all schools;
* Improving infrastructure of poor schools;
* Providing scholar transport;
* Providing school nutrition through NSNP; and
* Developing intervention programs and strategies for improving learner attainment.

1. **Australian Perspective on Rural Education**
   1. New South Wales: Rural Teachers Reactions

The following are the findings of the Committee on the Review of New South Wales Schools:[[7]](#footnote-7)

* Rural schools were staffed by teachers who were either unable to secure coastal teaching positions;
* Rural schools staffed by inexperienced teachers or teachers who accepted the post as a holding position until something else comes;
* 45 per cent of teachers predicted rural teacher recruitment challenges;
* The loss of committed and experienced teachers from rural schools was likely to see the demise of specialised programmes for exceptional children – This led to more children sent to private or boarding schools;

It was mentioned that the sustenance and development of rural communities was dependent upon:[[8]](#footnote-8)

* Provision of quality education;
* Commitment of teachers to students, the school and its community;
* Retention of teachers; and
* Participation of teachers in rural communities.
  1. Education in Rural Victoria[[9]](#footnote-9)

Rural people believe that that their access to education is restricted by:

* Distance and additional costs emanating from such distances;
* Inadequate information services;
* Inappropriate programmes;
* Lack of self-confidence;
* Low self-esteem;
* Lack of child care;
* Lack of student support;
* Difficulty on finding accommodation;
* Lack of work and career role models;
* Inadequate staff development.

Initiatives to overcome the challenges included: [[10]](#footnote-10)

* Government providing transport;
* Introduction of Technology enhanced learning and teaching initiatives; and
* Introduction of Mobile child care project.

1. **Analysis of the Basic Education Report**
   1. **Rural Education Landscape**

Table 1: Reflection of Rural schools to the entire Public schools

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Province** | **Number of Public Primary Schools** | **Number of Rural Primary Schools** | **Percentage of Rural Schools** |
| **Eastern Cape** | 5 527 | 1832 | 33.1 |
| **Free State** | 1 260 | 480 | 38.1 |
| **Gauteng** | 2 080 | 155 | 7.5 |
| **KwaZulu-Natal** | 5 899 | 4040 | 68.5 |
| **Limpopo** | 3 893 | 3342 | 85.8 |
| **Mpumalanga** | 1 744 | 317 | 18.2 |
| **North West** | 552 | 387 | 70.1 |
| **Northern Cape** | 1 490 | 180 | 12.1 |
| **Western Cape** | 1 460 | 519 | 35.5 |
| **TOTAL** | **23 905** | **11 252** | **47.1** |

Sourced from the DBE (2017) and modified

* The province with the highest number of rural primary schools is KwaZulu-Natal (4040);
* Limpopo province seems to have the highest percentage of schools (85 per cent);
* The province with the lowest number of rural primary schools is Gauteng (155); and
* The is high likelihood that these schools are conducting multi-grade teaching.
  1. **Support provided to rural schools**

The report indicated the following as initiatives:

* Provision of Multi-Grade Tool kit;
* Training teachers on multi-grade teaching;
* Training on School Based Assessment;
* Provision of LTSM; and
* E-Learning support.
  1. **Teacher Recruitment Strategies**
* The Department uses the District-Based Teacher Recruitment strategy which is targeting learners coming from rural and poor communities to assist them to access the bursary in order to teach in their local rural areas;

Table 2: Funza Lushaka Bursary allocation across the country per province[[11]](#footnote-11)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **PROVINCE** | **TOTAL NO OF**  **QUINTILE 1-3 SCHOOLS** | **NO OF BURSARIES ALLOCATED** |
| Eastern Cape | 4870 | 488 |
| Free State | 1331 | 134 |
| Gauteng | 1048 | 106 |
| KwaZulu-Natal | 4760 | 478 |
| Limpopo | 3777 | 378 |
| Mpumalanga | 1424 | 142 |
| Northern Cape | 485 | 48 |
| North West | 1599 | 160 |
| Western Cape | 653 | 66 |

Sourced from the DBE (2017) and modified

* Eastern Cape has the highest number of allocation (488);
* The lowest number allocation is in the Northern Cape (48);

What could be challenging and that which could defeat the ends of the allocation, could be in cases where there are still small non-viable schools.

* 1. **Teacher Rural Incentives**

The policy on incentives for educators was declared in December 2007 and published in the Government Gazette No. 30678. The main aim of the policy is to assist rural schools to attract and retain teachers in subject areas of need.

Since its inception the policy has been implemented rather inconsistently across the nine Provincial Education Departments (PEDs). Reasons for delays in implementation included:[[12]](#footnote-12)

* financial constraints; and
* delays in reaching consensus on the criteria for identifying posts for incentives within the provincial bargaining chambers.

Table 3: Country-wide Implementation of Teacher Incentive[[13]](#footnote-13)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Province** | **Incentive Type** | **Educators benefited** |
| Eastern Cape | Remoteness | 6 280 |
| Free State | Remoteness | 686 |
| KwaZulu-Natal | Remoteness | 3 012 |
| Limpopo | Remoteness | 6 425 |
| Mpumalanga | Scarce Skills | 249 |
| Northern Cape | Remoteness | 2 310 |
| Western Cape | Remoteness | 1 092 |
| **Total** | | **20 054** |

Sourced from the DBE (2017) and modified

* Six (6) provinces have implemented the remoteness incentives; and
* Only two (2) provinces i.e. Gauteng and North West are not implementing the policy at all due to financial constraints.

|  |
| --- |
| **Matters for consideration:**   * The initiative by the Department in supporting rural education development is a step in the right direction; * Dealing with the inequalities in rural areas created by years of apartheid, would need a concerted effort and resources that could result in the eradication of influx to urban areas. Budgetary constraints and a weak economic growth, could lead to DBE requesting for extension of number of years as opposed to targets set in the NDP;   **Proposed Questions:**   * How has the DBE ensured that provinces are also in the same wavelength as the DBE on Rural Education? * How frequent are meetings held with the provinces? Is there a HED-COM Sub-committee dedicated to deal with these issues? * Given the Nine provinces, which of the provinces has best practice when it comes to the implementation of the Rural Education policy? * Is there a possibility of introducing a Grant that will assist in facilitating implementation plans for addressing the inequalities? * How is the policy linked with the initiatives of government on Rural Development? Is there some form of collaboration with the Department of Rural Development and Land Affairs? |

1. **Reference**

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1. Rural Development & Land Reforms (2010) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ANC (2009) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Ibid* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Ibid* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Ibid* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. DBE (2017) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Boylan, C (1989) The Report on the Committee on Review of New South Wales Schools [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Ibid* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Robson, M (1989) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Robson, M (1989) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. DBE (2017) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. DBE (2017) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *Ibid* [↑](#footnote-ref-13)