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ANALYSIS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE PLAN

1. Introduction

One of the key challenges that the basic education sector is still grappling with is the general low or sub-standard quality of public school education that the system provides especially to black learners from poor home backgrounds or learners with low socio-economic status (SES).¹ This comes about despite massive gains for the democratic government with regards to improved access to education for children of school-going age. In response to this and some other pertinent challenges, the department of Basic education (DBE) has to develop a Strategic Plan and Annual Performance Plan (APP) through which it seeks to address some of the identified challenges over a long term and short term periods respectively. Through the Strategic Plans, the Department maps out key strategic priorities to be rolled out over four financial years whereas with APPS the Department outlines key strategic priorities for the current financial year.

This paper seeks to provide a brief analysis of the DBE Strategic Plan 2011-2014 and the Annual Performance Plan 2014-2015, highlighting key focus areas, and underscoring and emphasizing key issues for consideration by Parliament for purposes of its oversight function.

2. Strategic Overview

The key strategic priorities of DBE over the period 2011-14 centred around the following key improvement levers, as outlined in the *Action Plan to 2014: Towards the realisation of Schooling 2025* and the *Delivery Agreement for Outcome 1*:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning;
- Undertake regular assessment to track changes;
- Improve early-childhood development; and
- Ensure a credible, outcomes-focused planning and accountability system.

Each Output has two sub-outputs; the table below summarises the relationship between the outcome, outputs and sub-outputs.

Basic Education Sector: Framework of outcomes, outputs and sub-outputs	
Outcome 1: Improved quality of basic education	
Output	Sub-outputs
Improve the quality of teaching and learning	Improve teacher capacity and practices Improve access to high-quality learning materials
Undertake regular assessment to track progress	Establish a world-class system of standardised national assessments

¹ Van der Berg et al (2011); National Planning Commission (2011); UNICEF South Africa (2014).



	Extract key lessons from ongoing participation in international assessments
Improve early childhood development	Universalise access to Grade R
	Improve the quality of early childhood development
Ensure a credible outcomes-focused planning and accountability system	Strengthen school management and promote functional schools
	Strengthen the capacity of district offices

3. Annual Performance Plan 2014-2015

The key strategic priorities of DBE are informed by and conform to the National Development Plan (NDP) and the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2014-2019, which require the department to prioritise the following 6 key outcomes:

- Infrastructure and learning materials to support effective education
- Improved quality of teaching and learning
- Access to quality Early Childhood Development (ECD)
- Human Resource Development and Management of schools
- Capacity of the State to intervene in and support quality of education
- Increase accountability for improved learning

3.1. Infrastructure and learning materials to support effective education

According to the National Development Plan all schools should meet minimum infrastructure standards for sanitation, classrooms and libraries by 2017. As a result, the Department commits to:

- Provide safe drinking water, sufficient hygienic toilet facilities and electricity and for all inappropriate structures to be eradicated by 2014/2015.
- Print and deliver 24 780 640 volume 1 and 2 workbooks for Grades 1 to 9 to 23 673 schools.
- To provide 3.2 million Grade R workbooks in all official languages in four terms to benefit 810 000 learners in 16 189 public schools.
- To strengthen and monitor the programme to ensure the provision of nutritious meals on every school day.

Key Issues for Consideration

- The previous Committee had a workshop with the Department on school infrastructure in August 2013 and the following were some of the infrastructure-related challenges that emerged:
 - ⇒ Low competency levels of contractors and consultants.



- ⇒ Inadequate project management and quality assurance staff
- ⇒ Insufficient budgets to meet/address current backlogs.
- ⇒ Inadequate technical programme management skills
- ⇒ Capacity issues/challenges to deal with the challenges of infrastructure, especially in provinces.
- ⇒ Some provincial Education departments (PEDs) increasingly relying heavily on the Education Infrastructure Grant (EIG) and not allocating anything from their own budgets (equitable share for infrastructure development).
- ⇒ Under-spending by some provinces on their infrastructure budgets, such as Limpopo, Western Cape, Free State, etc.
- ⇒ Under-spending by some provinces on their EIGs, for example, Limpopo, KZN, Free State, etc.

And the question is: As the Department plans to improve infrastructure and learning materials to support effective education, how does it intend to address some of the challenges that emerged from the workshop?

- In practical terms, how does the Department intend to strengthen and monitor the school nutrition programme to ensure the provision of nutritious meals on every school day?

3.2. Improved Quality of teaching and learning

- The National Development Plan calls for the trebling of the number of Grade 12 learners who achieve university entrance passes with Mathematics and Physical Science by 20130.
- The number of Mathematics and Science candidates at Dinaledi schools has shown some declining trends.

Key Issues for Consideration

- There is ample research evidence that shows that teachers matter most.² While this is a fact that cannot be disputed, a number of studies have shown lack of subject content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge amongst South African teachers.³ How does the Department intend addressing some of these challenges during the course of the current financial year in order to ensure that it achieves its goal to improve teaching and learning in South African public schools?
- The previous PC on Basic Education conducted an oversight in some of the public schools in the Eastern Cape and in some of the schooling communities the Quality for Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) had not been established. What plans does the Department have to speed up the establishment of this campaign in the country

² OECD (2005)

³ Carnoy et al (2012); Leendertz et al (2013)



because this project seeks to improve quality teaching and learning in schools?

3.3. Access to quality Early Childhood Development (ECD)

- The quality of provision especially in terms of practitioner and teacher skills for Foundation Phase and Pre-Grade R teachers.
- Provision of Grade R workbooks.
- Improved monitoring of reading in the Foundation Phase in line with the National Development Plan.

Key Issues for Consideration

- The issue of lack of qualified teachers for the ECD sector has been a challenge for some time now. What plan does the Department have to address this challenge in the current financial year?
- In practical terms, how does the Department intend to improve monitoring of reading in the Foundation Phase?

3.4. Human Resource Development and Management of Schools

- The Department will develop a supply and demand model to incorporate information about teacher recruitment, attrition, exit, utilisation and migration to inform planning and resourcing of the teaching workforce especially in areas of skills shortage, as well as to inform a comprehensive national strategy for human resources in basic the basic education sector that is planned to be finalised in the medium term.
- The Department also intends to expand and strengthen the Funza Lushaka bursary scheme in line with the National Development Plan.

Key Issues for Consideration

- During an oversight visit to the Eastern Cape province by the former PC on Basic education, it emerged that there were delays in appointing or placing the Funza Lushaka graduates, which in some instances led to graduates being lost to the system. How does the planned supply and demand model intend to address this challenge?

3.5. Capacity of the State to intervene in and support quality education

- The Department intends to put in place Regulatory Frameworks and Guidelines to improve teachers' conditions of service, to improve post provisioning norms, remuneration structures and performance management of teachers.



Key Issues for Consideration

- In practical terms, how does the Department intend to improve teachers' remuneration structures and performance management?

3.6. Increase accountability for improved learning

- Schools to be monitored for adherence norms and standards.
- School principals to be held accountable for managing teacher performance.
- Accountability to be strengthened by ensuring that heads of departments (HODs), deputy principals and principals are required to sign work plans with their respective supervisors at the beginning of each evaluation cycle.
- Districts to be monitored closely to strengthen their capacity.

Key Issues for Consideration

- Monitoring and evaluation of schools, let alone the work of teachers, has been a challenging task for the Department largely because of resistance by some teacher unions. What plans does the Department have in place to deal with teacher union resistance to monitoring and evaluation of the work of teachers?
- Lack of capacity at both circuit and district levels has emerged as one of the key challenges leading to inadequate support provided to schools. In practical terms, how does the Department intend to strengthen capacity at district and circuit levels?
- The appointment of some incompetent union-connected school principals is another thorny issues that the Department should address as a matter of urgency. The Department should explain to the Department how it intends to ensure that competent and better qualified school principals are appointed to manage schools.

4. Annual Targets per Programme

It is important to note that the programmes of the Department of Basic Education remain unchanged. The following are some of the annual targets per each of the five programmes of the Department.

4.1. Programme 1: Administration

The Administration programme is responsible for managing the Department through the provision of strategic and administrative support services. Some of the key targets for the current financial year are:

- The DBE will strengthen the use and systems associated with performance information and data, with assistance from the office of the Chief Information Officer and internal auditing procedures.



- The Department plans to improve institutional management and outcomes at national level and in provincial education departments.
- The department also plans to strengthen the management of litigation through its legal unit, which will provide the department with legal advice and monitor and support provincial education departments in the management of court cases.

4.2. Programme 2: Curriculum Policy, Support and Monitoring

The programme develops curriculum and assessment policies and monitor and support their implementation.

- The Department will prioritise monitoring the effective use of learning materials in schools.
- The Department intends to implement the norms and standards for employment of Grade R practitioners, approved programmes for a National Diploma in Grade R, workbooks and resource packs aligned to CAPS, etc.
- The Department will monitor and support provinces to manage the procurement and delivery of textbooks and stationery for the 2015 academic year through the department's sector plan for the procurement and delivery of learner and teacher support material (LTSM).

4.3. Programme 3: Teachers, Education Human Resources and Institutional Development

The programme promotes quality teaching and institutional performance through the effective supply, development and utilisation of human resources.

- The Department will ensure teacher time-on-task, teacher attendance and improving teacher content knowledge and teaching skills.
- Teacher shortages in gateway subjects such as Mathematics, Science and Technology and African languages will be the focus of the Department in the current financial year.
- The Department plans to collaborate with teacher unions in provinces to improve capacity and practices.
- The Department will also analyse District Development Plans and provide feedback as part of its monitoring and oversight function.
- A protocol to guide district officials will be developed to ensure meaningful visits to schools.
- The Support Networks for Female Principals initiated by the Minister in 2013 will also be the intensified by the Department.

4.4. programme 4: Planning, Information and Assessment

The programme promotes quality and effective service delivery in the basic education systems through planning, information and assessment.



- The Department will monitor infrastructure delivery in provincial education departments (PEDs) and the implementation of the regulations relating to the minimum uniform norms and standards for public ordinary schools.
- A total of 421 schools will be provided with sanitation facilities, 843 schools will be provided with water and 618 schools will be electrified.
- The Department will strengthen the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) at local level
- Then Department will assist PEDs to ensure that there is effective monitoring of budgets and that the provincial spending is aligned with their Annual Performance Plans and Strategic Plans.

4.5. Programme 5: Education Enrichment Services

The programme develops policies and programmes to improve the quality of learning in schools

- The Department plans to work with PEDs and relevant stakeholders to ensure care and support for learners through the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) and the Integrated School Health Programme (ISHP) in partnership with the Department of Health (DoH).
- The Department also plans to monitor and support social cohesion strategies, gender equity programmes and strengthening national identity among learners.
- The Department's focus for the current financial year will also be on the hosting of the South African School League Championships (in collaboration with the Department of Sport and Recreation).

Key Issues for Consideration

- With regards to litigation against the Department, how big is the challenge and what weaknesses need to be addressed in the system?
- The procurement and delivery of textbooks and stationery to schools has been a recurring problem in recent years. The Department should assure the Committee how it intends to do things differently in the current financial year.
- Tensions between some teacher unions and the Department have had a negative effect on the delivery of quality education in South African schools in the past. How does the Department intend to collaborate with teacher unions to address some of the challenges going forward?
- The Department plans to provide 421 schools with sanitation facilities, 843 schools with water and to electrify 618 schools. What informs these figures or targets?
- What was the main challenge or cause of delays in hosting the South African School League Championships in the previous financial year and how does the Department intend to deal with such a challenge, if any?



5. Conclusion

It is one thing making plans and another thing implementing, enforcing and monitoring their implementation. What is crucial will be effective implementation of the plans by the Department and effective reporting against each set plan at the end of the financial year. It is against delivery on these plans that the Committee will judge the performance of the Department at the end of the financial year.

6. References

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