



SELECT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND RECREATION

CRITICAL VIEW OF EDUCATION SECTOR WITH A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO 2014/15 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE PLAN OF THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

Introduction

Education is regarded world wide as the single most important factor in the development of any given country. Indeed, this perhaps evident in numerous international resolutions and agreements such Millennium Development Goals¹ (MDGs) of the United Nations² and Education for All³ (EFA) Dakar Framework of action (2011). The Constitution⁴ of the Republic of South Africa places education as a fundamental human right. Additionally, the National Development Plan (NDP) proposes 2030 vision for better education system. The purpose of this paper therefore, is to provide the Select Committee on Education and Recreation Members with a critical view of education sector with a special reference to 2014/15 annual performance plan of the department of basic education. This paper explores key drivers of Education sector and lenses through which Basic Education Department (DBE) can be viewed. Furthermore, critical issues related to targets and performances are discussed in order to assist Members of the committee to engage with rigorously and meaningfully.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

The Department of Basic Education was established in 2009 when Department of Education (DoE) split into Basic Education and Higher Education. It is however relevant to mention that DBE inherited a number of challenges from DoE. Some of those challenges relate to poor infra-structure, lack of resources for teaching and learning, shortage of teachers particularly for Mathematics and Science, generally poor learner performance across all grades and many more challenges. In attempt to address these challenges the Government prioritised Education in all possible ways, this includes but not limited to a substantial funding. The aim of the DBE is to develop, maintain and support a South African school education system for the 21st century; thus ensuring that all South Africans have access to lifelong learning, as well as education and training, which will, in turn, contribute towards improving the quality of life and building a peaceful, prosperous and democratic South Africa. Surely, there is a remarkable and substantial evidence to suggest that DBE has made enormous contribution in changing the lives of the South African in the last five years. Later in this paper, I will present evidence which shows considerable improvement in the system particularly in senior

¹ Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

² South Africa is part of the 189 Countries

³ Education For All is a global movement led by UNESCO (United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), aiming to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015.

⁴ Act 108 of 1996 Section 29 (a) (b)

certificate and infrastructure provision. I however present a critical view on current targets of DBE and argue constructively that there is a room for improvement.

The scope of DBE

The scope of department is very wide. DBE is responsible for the oversight function to three entities namely Umalusi which is the quality council for general and further education and training, Education Labour Relation Council (ELRC) responsible for labour relations and South African Council for Educators (SACE) which regulates, protects and promote the teaching profession. Additionally, DBE has a concurrent function with regard to the 9 provincial departments of Education. as shown in fig 1 below:

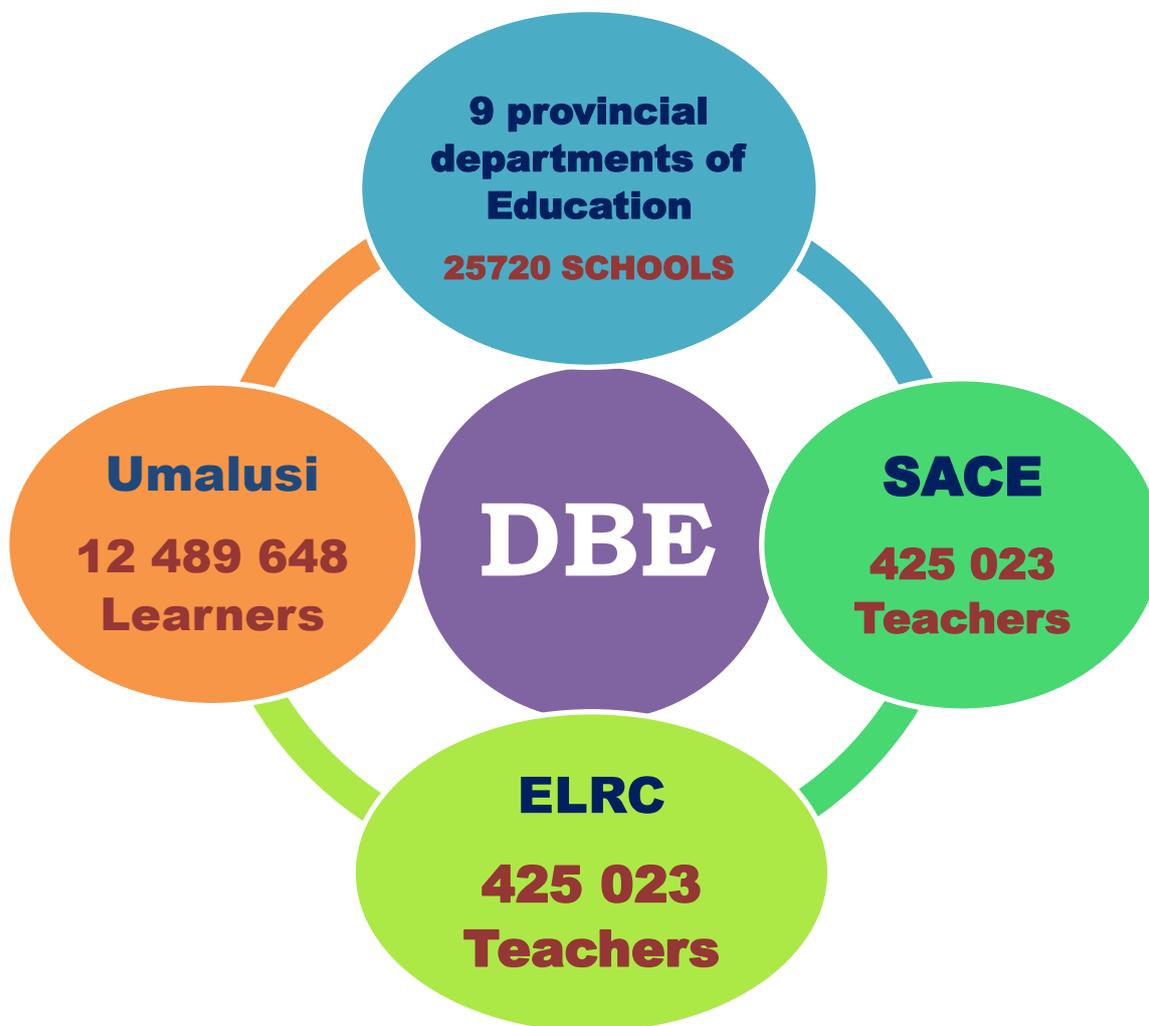


Fig 1: DBE Entities

Later in this paper, I will present evidence which shows considerable improvement in the system particularly in senior certificate and infrastructure provision. I however present a

critical view on current targets of DBE and argue constructively that there is a room for improvement.

Below I highlight the key driving forces of the department and also present lenses which serve as a framework through which the members of the select Committee could use to view the performance of the department.

Driving forces of the department

The 12 outcomes identified by government during the 4th Parliament include: Improved quality of basic education⁵. As indicated in my introduction, both the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, international agreements⁶ and NDP purport access to education for all. In that way, DBE has signed the Delivery Agreement for the attainment of improved quality basic education. As such, four critical outputs have been developed by DBE which relate to quality education. These are:-

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

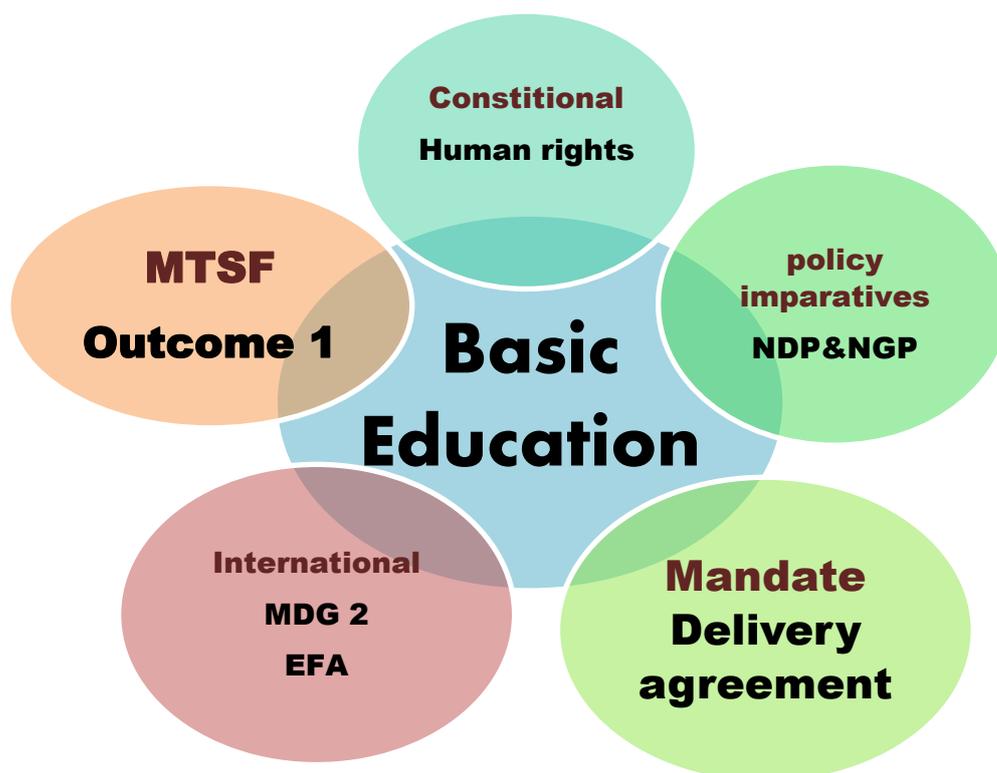


Fig 2: Driving forces

⁵ This is Outcome 1 of government (2009-2014)

⁶ Section 231 (4) the Republic of South Africa is bound by international agreements

It is from this background that DBE works tirelessly and diligently to achieve the above outputs. Notably, the targets reflected in the Annual Performance Plan (APP) 2014/15 are derived from these outputs and inspired by the overall strategic goal of DBE of improving the quality basic education.

A FRAMEWORK TO VIEW PERFORMANCE OF DBE

Constitutional mandate of the Committee

From the Constitutional view, Section 69(b) gives directives to the NCOP Committees to require any institution or person to report to it thus enable the Members to exercise an appropriate oversight role. Similarly, Section 55(2) (b) asserts that Parliament has “to ensure that all executive organs of state in the national sphere of government are accountable to it; and to maintain oversight of the exercise of national executive authority. The sections quoted above provide a legal framework and authority to the Committee to exercise oversight role and as such, DBE is aware of its accountability and responsibilities provided in Section 92 (b) of the Constitution⁷. It is thus within the provisos of the Constitution that the Select Committee Members exercise their oversight role by engaging DBE, make constructive critics and seek clarity from DBE where it is necessary.

Strategic plan of department as a tool

In the beginning of the 4th Parliament the department developed a strategic plan which entails all strategic objectives of the five year period (2009-2014). The 2014 is a critical year on which all targets of the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) should be achieved accordingly. The Committee is thus having a critical role to play in determining whether the department has achieved the strategic goals and objectives set in the strategic plan. In the last five years DBE presented APPs annually and below I reflect on the current APP 2014/15 and comment on the targets.

Annual Performance Plan 2014/15

The APP of the department has different targets across the departmental programmes⁸. It is commended that almost all targets presented in the APP are aligned to the strategic plan 2011-2014. It is however important to indicate that there are concerns with some of the targets presented in the 2014/15 APP. The Select Committee should pay a special attention to the following issues emanating from the APP targets.

(i) Performance in Grade 12

While it is applauded that the overall pass rate in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) has increased from 60.6 % (2009) to 78.2 % (2013); it is however questioned why DBE is targeting 75% for 2014. The department has already managed to achieve above 78 % yet is targeting 75 %. Ideally, one would expect the department to target 80%. Members of the Committee should engage DBE and seek further clarifications on the implication of targeting

⁷ Section 92 (b) states that Members of Cabinet must provide parliament with full and regular reports concerning matters under their control.

⁸ DBE has five programmes: (1) Administration, (2) Curriculum policy, Support and Monitoring (3) Teacher, Education Human Resources and Institutional Development, (4) Planning, information and Assessment and (5) Educational Enrichment

75 %. Furthermore, it would be for the best interest of the Members to seek clarity from DBE if there are any targets set for respective provinces.

Again, there is no target on the number of *Bachelor passes*. The department should be clear on what is target of Bachelor passes. This target is essential as it is part of the key goals and priorities for basic education and promoted by NDP. The Committee should require DBE to commit itself on this important target.

A relevant question related to the performance of Grade 12 concerns with those schools obtaining 0%. What is the response of the department to those schools obtained 0 % in Grade 12? For example in 2012 they were 7 schools and 2013 there are 9 schools obtained 0 %

(ii) Mathematics and Science

The performance in science and mathematics has been the order of discussion in news and public. The APP is silent on the targets for mathematics and science. The strategic plan of the department states the intention of the department to improve performance in these critical subjects unfortunately there are *no predetermined targets* for Mathematics and Science. A relevant question to be asked by Members: What are targets of the department for Mathematics and Science in the National Senior Certificate 2014?

Apart from the targets on learner performance in Mathematics and Science it is necessary that DBE targets the number of learners who are doing Mathematics and Science in Grades 10-12. The NDP and Action Plan to 2014 require that DBE to increase the number of learners who are doing Mathematics. There is much evidence to suggest that the number of learners who are doing Mathematics is decreasing from 2009. For example, the statistics shows the following:

Subject	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Mathematics	290407	263034	224635	225874	241509	?
Maths Lit	277677	280836	275380	291341	324094	?

Table 1: Enrolment in Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy from 2009 to 2013

The decrease in numbers of the learners doing Mathematics should be a special attention by DBE. It is thus essential that strategically DBE sets targets related to the number of learners doing Mathematics and Science. Member should seek clarity from DBE on why this was not part of targets.

(iii) Performance in the General Education and Training Band (GET)

The GET band is the foundation of the Further Education and Training (FET) band. A solid background is required in order to achieve good results at FET phase. While the Goals⁹ of the department and NDP emphasise good performance in Mathematics and Languages in Grades 1-9, the target set by DBE does not reflect that. The Annual National Assessment (ANA) results on learner performance in Grade 9 in mathematics for the last two year were between 13% and 14 %. The DBE should be concerned about this performance as it impacts negatively on the FET band. One would expect DBE to set specific and measurable targets on learner performance.

⁹ Goals 1-3 & 11 Action plan 2014

In addition to the targets, DBE should provide the Committee with clear strategies to resolve poor performance in mathematics across all grades. Moreover, the department should provide explanation on how it responds to the findings and recommendations of the MST Task Team¹⁰ and National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU)¹¹.

(iv) Targets with respect to Resources.

Numerous targets related to resources have been predetermined by DBE. These include recruitment of new and young teachers in the profession, staff development activities, provision of learner support material. The following questions emerged from targets set by the department.

- To what extent has the issue of textbooks delivery has been resolved?
- What is the state of supply and demand of teachers in relation to the new teachers joining the system and those leaving the department?
- To what extent are the teachers and subject advisors prepared in pedagogical content knowledge and ready to deliver curriculum?

(v) Accelerated School Improvement and Development Initiative (ASIDI)

The Accelerated School Improvement and Development Initiative (ASIDI) for the eradication of inappropriate schools has shown a significant progress in the previous financial year. The 2014/15 APP shows that 150 schools will be built during this financial year. The experience has shown that there were delays in handing over of completed schools. The Committee should seek clarity from DBE if capacity and resources available will enable the department to complete these 150 schools targeted? How many have been completed so far?

ADDITIONAL ISSUES FOR MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE TO NOTE

The following issues require attention of the department and as such have impact on the performance of the department hence I have brought them to the attention of the Select Committee to seek clarity from the department

(a) Auditor General's (AG) Comments

In the previous reports of the department AG raised some concerns with regards to the following:

- Some of the predetermined objectives were not well defined 64% of the indicators were not well defined.
- Supply chain management: Resources regulation of Preferential Regulations of 2011, 11(13)(a) was not followed during the appointment of the implementing agents for ASIDI
- Compliance: financial statements submitted for auditing were not prepared according to requirements of PFMA 40(1).

It is highly appreciated and commended that DBE has been receiving unqualified audit outcome in the previous years, it is however noted that there were matters of concerns Supply chain

¹⁰ Mathematics , Science and Technology Task Team appointed by minister in Feb 2013 to investigate the implementation of maths, science and technology

¹¹ NEEDU investigated poor performance in mathematics and science in school.

management and predetermined objectives as shown previously. A relevant question to be asked by Members is: To what extent has the DBE addressed these concerns raised by AG?

(b) Interventions of section 100 (1b)

In 2011 the Cabinet took a decision to invoke section 100 (1b) of the Constitution to resolve the challenges in the Eastern Cape Department of Education. Section 100(2b) of the Constitution empowers NCOP to review the intervention regularly and make any appropriate recommendation to the national executive. Thus, the Department is required to provide regular reports on progress made with regard to the intervention. The Members of the Select Committee should engage the department vigorously on the status of the two Provinces with regard:-

- To what extent do the Departmental interventions produce intended outcomes in the two Provinces concerned?
- In spite of the intervention made by the National Department of Education since 2011, the matric results in the Eastern Cape remain the lowest, and how to turn this situation in 2013 and beyond?

Furthermore, the Department should highlight the strategic plan for the sustainability of the Provinces after interventions and explain the nature of the exit strategy should the department decide to downgrade the intervention. The Committee should require Department of Basic Education to have mechanisms in place to ensure that provinces improve their fiscal and performance management responsibilities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to emphasise that the primary aim of the DBE is to develop, maintain and support a South African school education system for the 21st century; thus ensuring that all South Africans have access to lifelong learning, as well as education and training, which will, in turn, contribute towards improving the quality of life and building a peaceful, prosperous and democratic South Africa. There is indeed much evidence to suggest that Education system is improving. There is however a room to improve particularly on targets set by DBE and the actual delivery of those targets set. The inputs from the Select Committee therefore would ensure that the interest of respective provinces is catered at all levels of planning.

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