"We are seriously operating under pressure", Mchunu said

On his last district oversight visit, the MEC met with the District Management Committee of Uthungulu at Empangeni. In his opening remarks, he said he has been around the province and has been made aware of challenges faced by various officials some of which point to how curriculum is managed. "We are seriously operating under pressure from parents who want the best for their children and also the outside world that looks at how we provide for our learners. I know you have been to different workshops but we do not want to take for granted that you know all the things you were told"; he said.

The MEC said that it is his responsibility to assess whether districts are doing what is expected of them and if not, guidance must be given. He further said that he has particular interest to know whether schools are structured to be proper centres of excellence. "I have been to districts where I have been told that certain educators have been on prolonged leave dating back more than three years, but I am not happy with what HR people at districts are doing to verify that, so should this district have similar cases I want you to give me reasons why you have not acted on such matters"; Mchunu said.

In his report regarding the organogram, the District Manager, David Chonco, told the meeting that arrangements have been completed to house the personnel coming from the Ulundi Service Centre. This includes office space and network points which are a key requirement to service centre operations since they primarily work on persal and other network dependent activities.

Having listened to the report by the district saying that certain schools have still not completed the syllabus, the MEC stated that serious interventions must be carried out to ensure that no learner writes an examination without having completed the year's work. In his own words Mchunu said, "We are dealing with a sensitive area when we talk about the completion of the syllabus therefore we cannot afford to ignore this at the expense of
our learners”. He further said that educators who attend workshops every year must show signs of professional growth otherwise our efforts are futile.

He also advised the curriculum management team to maintain lists or records of attendance to workshops and use it the following year to check whether there has been any professional growth. The MEC told the meeting that our job in the main is to improve school functionality which means that when a school continues to perform below 60% every year, it points to instability in the system. He said that the reason can be poor management of curriculum by officials, principals and also disruptions by learners from time to time.

In his closing remarks, the MEC said it is a worrying phenomenon that both Grade 10 and 11 reflect a decline in performance for the March/June results and that there are subjects generally showing a remarkable number of learners failing. Making an example of Dlangezwa High School with a previous rich history, Mchunu said there is a problem with how we are managing but we still can turn things around. "My own view is; there seems to be longer lists of worrying areas showing that we may not improve the way we would like as far as the general pass rate is concerned. I therefore want the Curriculum Team formed by Head Office and District to zoom into such schools during the holidays and provide all possible interventions"; he said.