CONCEPT NOTE FOR THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION: DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

In 1994, South Africans of all persuasions headed to the poll to elect a new government. Before then, South Africans who were designated “non-whites” or black in the old population register have had to endure long periods of colonial rule, and belatedly apartheid, after the National Party won the Whites-only general election in 1948. After the watershed CODESA negotiations in the early nineties and the enactment into law of the Interim Constitution, non-racial peaceful national elections were held on 27 April 1994, with the ANC under struggle colossus Nelson Mandela winning by an overwhelming majority. Thus, 2014 will mark the year of the 20th anniversary and it is fitting that there is some time and space for reflection as South Africans will ponder about the yesteryears during the struggle for liberation and the 20 years of freedom travelled.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE ANNIVERSARY PROGRAMME

In 2004, government gave South African society to pause and reflect about the democratic project as a way to remember whence we come as a nation. The Department of Education (as it was called then) played a significant part in the celebration and commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the South African democratic project. The celebration and commemoration culminated in the publication entitled: Celebrating 10 Years of Freedom: Guide for Schools. On the main, South Africa had a fitting anniversary celebration that raised the level of awareness about the genesis of the democratic project and the fact that the hard-earned freedom needed to be defended so that there is no precipitous slide to that dark colonial and apartheid past. On the same note, there were serious weaknesses with the 2004 project and chief among these were the fact that government did not engage the broader South African public meaningfully in terms of the modalities of the commemoration and celebration. In actual fact, government worked out an anniversary programme which was then communicated to the broader public as a fait accompli. As a result, commemorations and celebrations became government and / or state events as opposed to a programme conceptualised together with the ordinary public. According to the preliminary discussions with the Department of Arts and Culture, the plan with the 20th anniversary commemoration is precisely to rectify the elementary errors of the 10th anniversary.

APPRAISAL OF THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY PROGRAMME

As pointed out earlier, the then Department of Education participated in the 10th anniversary programme mainly by publishing a guide for schools on how they can mark and celebrate the anniversary. One glaring weakness with the publication, however, was that it seemed a mirror image of the commemorative calendar and not a reflective account per se of our liberation and the resultant democratic dispensation. The 20th anniversary planned for 2014 attempts to also address this gap evident in the 10th anniversary programme. Given the
difficult fiscal environment Basic Education is operating under, the strategy to be employed is that the 20th anniversary programme will be subsumed into some of the existing programmes in the Department that would lend themselves well for such an adaptation. Initial exploratory engagements have already been held with the Department of Arts and Culture (the lead Department in terms of the 20th anniversary national programme) and in due course, the necessary approval will be sought for the DBE work plan which will ultimately be subsumed into the broader programme of government through the Department of Arts and Culture.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The following are strategic objectives for DBE in terms of its outputs regarding the 20th anniversary programme:

- Adapt existing enrichment programmes so that they are aligned to the 20th anniversary project;

- Ensure mass participation of learners across various schooling contexts in the 20th anniversary project;

- Leverage on the existing working relationship with the Department of Arts and Culture, especially their infrastructure and resources; and

- Design a school calendar that maps key activities and events aligned to the 20th anniversary programme [the calendar must straddle between 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 financial years – with most of 2013 used as a build-up to the actual anniversary year i.e. 2014.

THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY PROGRAMME

Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) sent a concept note to government departments, including DBE, early in April, requesting departments to get themselves acquainted with the concept note as well as to offer critical feedback, where required. In that official communiqué, DAC had also asked government departments to make time available and invite them to present the concept note so as to generate further discussion around current government’s thinking regarding the 20th anniversary programme. As a result of the initial exploratory discussion with DAC officials, it was agreed, as had been pointed earlier, that Basic Education will ensure that its existing programmes are aligned to the 20th anniversary programme.
The Architecture of the 20th Anniversary Programme

According to the framework document received from the Department of Arts and Culture, all government departments and entities taking part in the 20th anniversary programme, there are three most important pillars within which all programmes must be framed:

The Journey to Liberation (how liberation was achieved?)

In the context of DBE, learners must be engaged in terms of the research into the liberation struggle, seeking answers to such pertinent questions as: how the liberation was achieved? What were the different roles players and for what periods in the historical timeline? How do the different historical epochs in the liberation struggle differ and what enduring lessons can be learned from these? School dialogues and debates seem the most plausible platforms to deal with this first pillar.

Achievements Attributed to the Democratic Dispensation (what are some of the tangible gains in the last 20 years of democracy)

The aim of the second pillar is to give learners an opportunity to write a counter narrative. There can be no debate that the meta narrative of our democratic project being inscribed into the nation’s psyche is that living conditions under democracy have deteriorated – as if to say life was better under apartheid oppression than it is now. This narrative is fuelled by a mainly conservative and powerful press on a day to day basis through various media platforms. The counter narrative then seeks to challenge the moral and ethical basis of the meta-narrative by foregrounding some of the notable gains of our democracy often taken for granted. The counter-narrative is meant to inspire confidence and indicate to the youth that there is future in being a South African.

Attendant Challenges to the Democratic Project and Future Plans

While there is sound basis for taking stock of some of the achievements of the post-apartheid dispensation, it will be disingenuous not to acknowledge the shortfalls of our democratic project. Thus, the last pillar is meant to provide learners with an opportunity to take stock of some of the shortfalls as well as posit strategies for government, civil society, the private sector, among others, in dealing such shortfalls. It is expected that some of the posited strategies will be framed within the thematic schema of the National Development Plan (NDP) which pays particular attention to the youth and development, hence the reference to “youth lens” in the DDP. School essay competitions and dialogues will be most suited platforms for this last pillar.
# Programmatic Response to the 20th Anniversary Project

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<th>Programme</th>
<th>Description / Narrative</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Annual National Schools Moot Court Competition</strong></td>
<td>Moot Court Competition is an annual competition for high schools on matters pertaining to the Constitution and its application to “real life” cases. In the Moot Court Competition, competing school teams prepare written arguments both as applicants and respondents to a case study. After a thorough essay adjudication process, nine (9) best successful school teams are then invited to take in a provincial elimination round wherein they will make oral arguments both as defendants and then as applicants to the case. As far as possible, a real life courtroom is used in the provincial elimination rounds with national finals between two best provincial teams to be hosted at the chambers of the Constitutional Court – with some of the esteemed justices of the Constitutional Court presiding over the case. It is expected that in the context of the 20th anniversary, the case for 2014 will be accordingly aligned. DBE and University of Pretoria will work on the case study for 2014 mindful of the 20th anniversary project.</td>
<td>Since it is understood that 2013 will be used as a build-up to 2014 - DBE and the University of Pretoria will, upon conclusion of the 2013 finals commence with research on the case study for 2014 – the work must commence soon after 11 August 2013 and be concluded by 31 October 2013.</td>
<td>Advocacy work, including media blitz, commence in November 2013 – 31 March 2014</td>
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<td><strong>Annual Nkosi Albert Luthuli Oral History Programme</strong></td>
<td>The programme aims to encourage learners to appreciate the value of history and its relevance to day-to-life. It also highlights history as a contextual and contested topic.</td>
<td>As the build-up year, topics will be determined soon after 22 September 2013 but no later than 31 October 2013</td>
<td>Scheduled workshops in the provinces will commence from 01 February 2014 to 30 April 2014 (a minimum of 3 districts must be represented at the</td>
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The Oral History programme is important as it unearths local histories and knowledges which may not be part of the broader mainstream historical lexicon. Further, the Department uses the Oral History programme as a strategic vehicle to impart certain crucial skills in learners such as research, qualitative analysis, report writing, editing, design and layout – skills which would be invaluable in the future years as they progress through the educational system. Thus, apart from the competition component, there is an educational value in the oral history project. Learners are usually given a choice of five topics for their oral history project. In view of the 20th anniversary, the Department will ensure that all topics are attuned to the 20th anniversary thematic schema and DBE will engage DAC on the 2014 project as custodians of the 20th anniversary project on behalf of Government.

2013 – and 31 October 2013, DBE will engage the panel of adjudicators and the DAC on the range of topics for 2014. It is expected that necessary internal approvals will have been sought and granted by 30 November 2013 for the 2014 programme after which all guidelines for learners and educators for the 2014 programme will be posted on the South African History on Line website, the Oral History Association of South Africa website, the UCT Centre for Popular Memory website.

All information about the 2014 programme will be aired in community radio stations that are part of the Young Reporters Network, which is training learners in the business of broadcasting and media and is being supported by UNICEF – briefings with the Young Reporters Network community radio stations must commence after 30 November 2013.

National Finals will commence on 03 October 2014 (arrival) – adjudication over 2 days (04-05 October) and departure (06 October 2014)

The GBEM is a gender empowerment programme supported by UNICEF. It aims at providing a dialogic platform for boys and girls to work together since the overriding principle is that young people have agency and can best diagnose and offer solutions to challenges inhibiting proper teaching and learning. The GBEM clubs are school based and dictate their own agenda dictated by the

The GBEM workshops / camps / conferences will be targeted for November – December 2013

In 2014, all school vacations will be used for school dialogues – a compendium of the narratives coming out of the conferences / workshops / camps will be compiled as part of the Department’ contribution to the 20th anniversary
specificities of their schooling context. All GBEM Conferences / workshops / camps will have a dialogic component wherein learners will engage one another about the content of the three pillars of the 20th anniversary (a) how democracy was achieved (b) what are some of the gains of democracy (c) in the context of the NDP, what plausible strategies can be introduced so as to bring about youth development and empowerment

| **South Africa Schools Choral Eisteddfod (SASCE)** | The SASCE project forms an integral part of the Department’s enrichment programme. With learners participating en masse, it thus promotes social transformation, reconciliation and social cohesion. The programme affords learners the opportunity to showcase their talent, thereby affirming the role of the creative arts in the improvement of educational outcomes. All branding for the 2014 edition will foreground the 20th anniversary commemoration and celebration. For SASCE, 2013 will be a build-up year for the competition, with music prescriptions and compositions being attuned to the goals of the 20th anniversary project. This work will commence soon after 15 July 2013 when the national finals will have drawn to a close. | Music workshops from 20 January 2014 and 09 March 2014. Farm Schools Music Training between 25-27 April 2014. Provincial Music Eliminations 01 May 2014 – 24 May 2014. National Finals 04-06 July 2014. |
| **Basic Education in post-apartheid South Africa: How far we’ve come and how to get to 2030. A Colloquium to be organized by the DBE in the provinces** | It is proposed that a colloquium be hosted by the DBE in the provinces, in collaboration with our provincial officials. Each province will have one colloquium wherein learners will be given the opportunity to deliberate on their knowledge of how freedom and democracy were achieved. Learners will also deliberate about the journey travelled since. Provincial coordinators to be informed to include the provincial learner colloquium as part of the work plan for 2014/2015. 2013 will be used as a build-up to the anniversary year. | The Colloquium must be held during June/July vacation in 2014. |
| 1994 (focusing on education policy and implementation – with particular emphasis to resultant achievements and pitfalls and how such pitfalls can be mitigated. DBE and provincial officials will document all the proceedings, which will then form part of a special publication of the 20th anniversary for schools. |

| In 2014, the colloquium and other content received from other national programmes that will have embraced the 20th anniversary project e.g. the national schools moot court, the Nkosi Albert Luthuli Oral History Programme, youth dialogues etc. [a multi-grade publication for learners in Grade 8-12] |

| **Intradepartmental Programme on the 20th anniversary project and communication (stakeholders: Branch R and Branch P)** |

| Branch S: Social Mobilisation and Support Services will ensure that there is interdepartmental communication on the 20th programme and that the whole Department is mobilized to make a contribution to the project which will be attuned to the many different areas of work and specialty in the Department, Branch R (Ms Vivienne Carelse and Ms Carol Nuga-Deliwe) and Chief Directorate: Communications (Mr Panyaza Lesufi) will form the core team together with DDG – Branch S: Ms Gugu Ndebele, in coordinating internal communications and directing internal departmental responses to mark the 20th anniversary. The intra-departmental programme |

| In respect of external communication regarding the gains of democracy in the first 20 years, Communications will lead by developing key messages ["punch lines"] as a build-up to 2014 |

| Special Issue is required on an array of activities within the DBE to mark the 20th anniversary – how has Curriculum adapted to use the 20th anniversary – how has infrastructure adapted to use the 20th anniversary – how are enrichment programmes embracing the 20th anniversary etc [this will not be a classroom publication but a general publication for the broader public interested in education – it is also meant to be a marketing tool for the Department. The other content source will be the key messages from Communications – these would catalogue key achievements in the first 20 years of democracy. The following, though not an exhaustive list, will be important to highlight as achievements: |
- ASIDI project
- Dinaledi Schools
- Matric pass rate since 1994 (has been appreciating since 1994)
- Universal access to primary school education
- National School Nutrition Programme (pro-poor and keeping poor learners in school)
- The workbook project (one of the most innovative – supplementing the conventional textbooks)
- Annual National Assessments (innovative – setting performance benchmarks and acting as a diagnostic tool in the system)
- Integrated School Health Programme (ISHP)
- Creation of a single national Department of Education, and then belatedly, Department of Basic Education – out of several Bantustan departments of education and others during the apartheid era
CONCLUSION

Apartheid saw education as the most potent and enduring weapon in subjugating blacks to third tier status. Thus, any project that aims to alter exiting social relations in furtherance of social transformation must use education as its launching platform. It is therefore apt that the Department of Basic Education is playing a significant role and has been involved in exploratory discussions with the Department of Arts and Culture – the lead Department in terms of the government-wide anniversary programme. It is important for the younger generations to remember from whence we come as a nation so that the gains of the liberation struggle are safeguarded and not taken-for-granted. There is a ring of wisdom too that has some special appeal, and that is, the recognition that young people are not just simply passive recipients of charity – instead, they have agency and they too can play a pivotal role in shaping the future of this country.