MEC’S CLOSING REMARKS FOR THE STRATEGIC WORKSHOP, HILTON HOTEL, 19-20 JULY 2014

Facilitator, let me greet you all using a word that seemed to become a buzz word for most presenters yesterday and say Sanibonani.

Allow me to say a few words before we go our separate ways at the end of this workshop. I want to express my sincere gratitude to all of you for having sacrificed precious time to be with your families and opted to attend this two-day workshop which, according to my assessment has been a great success. I also like to particularly thank you for the honesty with which you addressed issues during the Commissions. When I did my rounds to all the Commissions I observed that there were vibrant discussions and I was satisfied that the call I made at the opening of this workshop yesterday that we must deal with issues as honestly and pragmatically as possible, was heeded to.
Let me also thank the team from the Department who were responsible for organizing this workshop from its conceptual stages to its execution. The Head of Department Dr Sishi, in particular, was very instrumental in ensuring that we held our workshop in a decent and prestigious environment like the Hilton Hotel. Had he not taken that initiative we would have held this workshop in one of our halls that might not have brought the inspiration that a workshop of this nature requires. In this regard I would like to single out the sponsors who responded to the HOD’s request for the sponsoring of our event. To them I say that thanks a million times.

I will also like to thank all the presenters who made presentations during the workshop and enabled us to have vigorous discussions based on those insightful presentations. I am certain that many officials from different Branches spent long hours in preparation for those presentations. It was job well done.

Our guest presenters Mr Mosuwe and Mr Brooks also greatly enhanced our discussions during this workshop with their presentations which expanded our horizons regarding Curriculum Management and the PGDP respectively. I want to believe that we are going to be incorporating some of the lessons learnt from them into our departmental strategies.
Professor Metcalfe has become part of our family and continues to contribute positively to the improvement of the work of the Department, and she always responds positively when we call upon her to assist and her presentations always live up to our expectations as she has done today.

Lastly, but not least, I want to thank our facilitators Professor Nzama and Dr Dlamini for the professional manner with which they handled the workshop. Through their professionalism we were able to get value for our discussions over the past two days. There was never a moment when the workshop seemed to get out of hand. I want to applaud them sincerely for that and say to them, our sponsors, Professor Metcalfe, Mr Mosuwe and Mr Brooks *Ningadinwa nangomuso*.

Before I go to the gist of my closing remarks I would like to congratulate our Co-curricular Directorate for successfully hosting the South African Schools Choral Eistedfod competitions. This is a national competition of schools from all provinces which funded by the national Minister of Basic Education. The event was successfully hosted at the Durban ICC. Let me add that this is a very prestigious event that we should all embrace because it actually identifies hidden talent amongst our youth and also takes them away from the social ills that are proliferating within our society.
Equally sport is one of the critical tools which are instrumental in diverting our youth from these social ills and as the Department we must strengthen our programs in sports, to ensure that our learners are healthy both physically and mentally and have no room to engage in illicit activities that end up destroying their future. In that regard, I want to congratulate Siyaphumelela Primary School in iNanda, whose Under 12 Boys Soccer Team will represent South Africa at the international tournament in Brazil in November of this year.

I thought I should highlight a few things during my closing remarks which I want to give you as food for thought to digest as we drive safely to our different destinations:

- **Introduction of ICT System in the Department**

As I stated yesterday, our Department still operates manually in many areas which leads to many systemic failures. From this workshop we must all go out with a resolve to make everything possible to implement technological systems for the Department and our schools. While it has become the easy way out for us to say that we do not have money, we should also be proactive and look outside of the Department for partners who are prepared to use their CSI funds to assist us and there are many who are prepared to come on board if we
make a call. I therefore urge all of you to go out there and take an initiative, while also maneuvering internally as well.

- Development of Dokkies

We have on numerous occasions spoken about the need for Dokkies to be developed into a fully-fledged teacher-training institute but for some reason there has been a very slow pace in the realization of that goal. Yesterday we heard that there was a budget that was allocated for that purpose but was not utilized. We also heard that there is a budget of R45 million that is set aside for Dokkies this financial year.

Whatever the reasons were for the non-usage of the budget last year, I now want to give clear instruction that the Submission that was declined last year must be reworked urgently and Teacher Development, Infrastructure and Finance must constitute a team that will work together and come up with a management plan with clear timelines for the development of Dokkies.
To demonstrate the urgency of dealing with the Dokkies matter, tomorrow I will be signing a letter to the Premier requesting his special intervention to facilitate and expedite the relocation of the Provincial Public Academy staff from Dokkies in order to fast track the urgent utilization and upgrade of this institution into fully fledged Provincial Teacher Development Institute.

- **Capacity Building around content knowledge for Educators**

  It is common knowledge to all of us that we have a number of unqualified and underqualified educators in our system. This means that we have people some of whom lack both content and methodology, and some who have content but lack methodology. This has a very negative impact on the outcome of their performance or lack thereof, because the end result is that learners fail. Our intervention in this area must come in a form of in-service training to address content and methodology issues. The implementation of Broadcast Technology should be our uppermost goal for the success and cost-effectiveness of this in-service training. This will call for maximum use of Education Centers in Districts where educators will converge to get lessons from Tutors from distant locations. That is all the more reason why we must complete the refurbishment of Dokkies to be a link with these Education Centers in Districts.
• **Eradication of Multi-grading Schooling System**

Most of you in this hall are educators and therefore would know that it is a totally undesirable situation to teach under the multi-grading environment. No quality teaching and learning can take place under such conditions. I might just add that this was a creation of Apartheid because you still find these conditions mostly among the rural African communities. It is an indictment to all of us that twenty years into our democracy we still have learners who receive their education under such conditions. We must therefore do everything in our power to ensure that we eradicate multi-grade schooling and make it a thing of the past.

• **In-house Procurement of LTSM**

Over the past years the Department has been paying hundreds of millions of Rand to procure LTSM using a middle man. The question that we need to ask ourselves is whether we have received value for money from that exercise or if we have been engaging in a costly exercise that can be avoided. It has been an annual phenomenon that we always procure books despite having conducted the very same exercise the previous year.
I want to say that, coupled with the lack of a functional retrieval system for books for our schools this yearly procurement exercise using the third party has not yielded us any value for money. It may therefore have come as a blessing in disguise that we find ourselves in the dilemma we are currently facing where we have to look for a different procurement model.

Dr Nzama’s presentation on the matter yesterday was lucid in pointing the route that we have to take in the form of In-house procurement. While the new system has many risk factors, as elucidated in yesterday’s presentation, if we all work together with all relevant stakeholders, we will not fail and we will save millions of Rand which can be channeled to other areas within the Department. I therefore want to say to all of you, let us fold our sleeves and ensure that this procurement model becomes a success. Like I said yesterday, we must expect many instances of sabotage; books dumped under bridges, in rivers etc., but if our resolve is clear we will overcome all those obstacles and emerge victorious for the sake of our children.

- Organogram

It was clear from the presentations yesterday that there is a challenge regarding vacant posts.
To expedite the Organogram process I have appointed Senior General Manager for IDS Ms Judy Dlamini to be the Convener for the Organogram Task Team to recommence with its work and ensure that the organogram process is completed expeditiously.

- **AET Provision**

According to statistics there are many people illiterate in rural areas of Mkhanyakude and Mzimkhulu who simply cannot read, write or count. What compounds the situation is the lack of AET Centers in these areas. While this may well be a consequence of budget constraints, something needs to be done to ameliorate the situation because it is the commitment of this government to eradicate illiteracy in all its forms. We therefore need to consider seriously the provision of AET across the province but with special focus in the area of Mkhanyakude and Mzimkhulu.

- **Learner Retention Strategy**

We have observed that the number of learners entering our system at Grade 1 is totally different from that which exits at Grade 12. From Grade 9 there is a noticeable decline in the number of learners who proceed to Grade 12. This situation necessitates the development of a Retention Strategy.
One way of addressing this decline is to strengthen career guidance at Grade 9 on subject packages relevant for career planning at Grade 10.

Another strategy which we need to embark on is to direct learners to technical vocational skills, because not all learners are gifted to become Doctors, Accountants etc. This means that we must strengthen technical vocational education in our schools. Learners should also be encouraged to consider FET Colleges as another area of further education to arrest the decline that we are experiencing.

- **ECD**

We must give attention to Early Childhood Development to ensure that we address developmental aspects from an early stage. In this regard we must ensure that we maintain the gains we have achieved in the universalization of Grade R. However, we also have to make sure that we improve quality of teaching and learning at Grade R. This must be monitored continuously. We must further ensure that we revive inter-departmental collaboration with DSD so that we can implement the provision of pre-Grade R by January 2015. DOE must ensure that we guide the curriculum to be offered to this group of learners.
• Collaboration with various Stakeholders

I also want to stress the importance of collaborating with our stakeholders. Our stakeholders are very important to the success of the Department and should therefore be handled with care and taken seriously. These will include labour unions, SGB Associations, Parent Organisations, Business and other state organs. Taking them seriously means responding to them when they want to engage us because we also need them as partners in the execution of our mandate which the provision of quality teaching and learning.

• Therapists

Of late I have received a number of complaints from various people complaining about the fact that we as the Department use our Specialists such as Therapists for other duties for which they were not employed. This, it is said, diverts them from their core functions. We are also losing many to the Department of Health where they are used mainly for their professional skills. Having received these complaints I instructed that the HOD writes a Circular to the District to desist from doing this. This was indeed circulated to all Districts but the complaints have not stopped because apparently the Circular does not go far enough in instructing that these Therapists must be allowed to perform only their professional duties.
I therefore want to state categorically that the Department must henceforth refrain from allocating any duties to the Therapists which is outside their professional purview, and this instruction must be communicated to everyone in the Department.

- **School Health Program**

  During her Budget Vote Speech 2014/15 at the National Assembly on the 15th of July 2014, the Minister Basic Education, The Hon. Angie Motshekga, although the Department has made strides to meet the basic right to nutrition to millions of learners in schools, it has become necessary to consider a National Deworming Program linked to the NSNP, to maximize the health and cognitive benefits of in school meals. DOE will collaborate with the Department of Health to launch this program.

- **Financial literacy**

  To inculcate the culture of good financial management for our young people DOE has partnered with Provincial Treasury to initiate a program on financial literacy for learners in school. There is a program called Teach a Child to Save which Treasury takes particularly to Primary Schools to talk about the importance of saving money. At Secondary level there is an annual Grade 11 Financial Speech Contest which starts at Circuit level until the winners compete at provincial level.
The rationale behind this financial literacy is that if you teach a child to manage finances at an early age, when that child gets to adulthood he/she will be able to manage his/her finances and lessen the burden on the government. We need to support and elevate these programmes as DOE because we are the main custodians for in school youth.

- **Entrepreneurial education**

  We have identified lack of entrepreneurial skills amongst our youth which is one of the reasons for lack of interest in business by our young people. Many who have interest in business fail in their endeavors because of lack of the required skills in this field. To address that situation we have to collaborate with the private sector which will assist us to transfer such skills to our young people. This will be our way of responding to the President’s call for radical economic transformation.

- **Gender equity**

  On gender equity I want to say that I have heard cries for lack of gender equity in the Department of Education. Indeed we are doing very badly in this area as the Department of Education, particularly at senior management level. I want to commit that as MEC and a gender activist I am going to ensure that we adhere to the principles of gender equity.
This will also extend beyond gender and include employing more people with disability, which is another area in which we are performing dismally.

- **Green Energy in Schools**

  It is no secret that many of our schools simply cannot pay for their exorbitant electricity bills, simply because they are charged as business entities even though they do not generate any profit. With this in mind we should consider ways of gradually introducing green energy in our schools. Green energy is the most cost-effective way to reduce energy consumption. This would support a cleaner environment while saving our schools a lot money. This is one avenue that we as the Department need to explore while also initiating discussions with our municipalities to consider putting our no-fee paying schools under the indigent list. We will need to also consider partnering with the private sector to realize this goal of implementing green energy.
Conclusion

With these few remarks I wish you a safe journey home and urge all departmental officials to come back after this workshop with renewed resolve and determination to turn our department around. Let us do this for the child.

I thank you