

**OPENING REMARKS BY THE MEC OF KWAZULU-NATAL
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, MS MBALI FRAZER, ON
THE OCCASION OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING
WORKSHOP HELD AT THE COASTLANDS HOTEL IN
UMHLANGA, DURBAN, ON 09 FEBRUARY 2023**

Programme Director, DDG: Corporate Management, Advocate
BM Masuku

Head of Department, Mr GN Ngcobo

DDGs

Head of Ministry, Mr Vincent Myeni

Senior Management and all the officials working for the
Department of Education

Our guest speakers

Leaders of organised labour

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning

I would like to start by extending my appreciation to all of you for
availing yourselves to be part of this critical strategic planning
workshop.

The resolutions from this workshop will help strengthen the
Department's efforts to provide quality teaching and learning
across our great province of KwaZulu-Natal.

Programme Director, education remains an apex priority of our
ANC-led government because it is one of the greatest tools we
have to eradicate the inequality and poverty currently gripping
our society.

This calls for us to consistently reaffirm our commitment and invest resources towards ensuring equity in our education system – something we all know was denied to our people by the apartheid regime.

Indeed, ladies and gentlemen, this task might be daunting at times but there's no doubt in my mind that all of you are more than capable to see it through.

As I stand here, I'm reminded of the words uTata Nelson Mandela, who once remarked; ***“What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.”***

The historic milestone of an 83% matric pass rate that was achieved by the matric Class of 2022 is evident of the sterling work of each and every employee of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

Your dedication and commitment to serving our learners and educators, in spite of the numerous challenges, is truly commendable. On behalf of the people of this province, I thank you!

Programme director, the theme for this workshop - exploring the risk adjusted approach to strategic planning - was formulated with the aim of reviewing the current trajectory of the Department so that we can ensure that our policies, plans and interventions are aligned with the needs of our learners and educators.

It is part of human nature to try by all means to avoid risks in whatever we do in life.

However, the reality is that we cannot ignore the risks that come with our respective duties. If we do that we will be shooting

ourselves on the foot because those same risks will come back to haunt us later.

Therefore, our planning must also be informed by the risks that all our policies and interventions potentially attract so that we are better prepared for them.

Consequently, this workshop has been convened so that we can collectively look into innovative ways to mitigate those risks.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you all know, the Department is facing a number of pressures ranging from the demand for more educators to the crumbling infrastructure, provision of learner transport as well as curriculum development and delivery.

Many of our schools also do not accommodate the diverse sports codes and we must, therefore, come with plans on how we can address so that all our learners can get an opportunity to showcase their talents on the fields and courts.

As the Department of Education, we also need to look into building more schools which provide boarding facilities and proper transportation for learners with special educational needs. These schools must also be capacitated with critical staff.

Last year we also saw a shift of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) function from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education, which requires extensive teacher development in order to get this right and do justice to the education our young get from these centres.

It is true that the Department is working tirelessly to address the challenge of overcrowding in our schools but there is still a lot that needs to be done order to completely resolve this problem.

This Department also has a mandate to effectively respond to the country's socio-economic needs. This requires us to consistently strengthen our curriculum as well as increase access to vocational and technical education by rolling out the relevant subjects to more schools. The plan is also to establish at least one Focus School or academy of excellence in all our districts.

All of these programmes, and many others I did not mention, require substantial funding.

The question on the HOD's and CFO's minds must be; where is this money going to come from?

We are all aware of fiscal constraints faced by the Department resulting from relentless budget cuts.

However, having limited resources to carry out our duties does not absolve us of our Constitutional responsibility to provide quality teaching and learning.

This means we have to find innovative ways to maximise every cent or risk reversing the gains already made by the ANC-led government since 1994 in effort to eradicate a glaringly inequal education system.

The resolutions from this workshop will, therefore, provide a critical guide on how we can effectively carry out our mandate of

provision of quality education and a conducive environment for teaching and learning to take place.

The reality is that we can't always look outside to ease the burden of the challenges we face. That calls for us to think out of the box and find our own solutions.

For this to happen we must firstly get rid of our biggest threat which has a potential to cripple this Department. That, ladies and gentlemen, is the silo mentality.

We must capitalise in our collective strengths but that can only happen if we have more synergy between the various branches.

Working in silos is detrimental to the development of the Department. It has a potential to severely compromise service delivery and waste much needed resources as a result of one hand not knowing what the other is doing.

In the words of the Mother of Black Freedom, uMme Charlotte Maxeke I wish to remind you that; ***“This work is not ourselves. Kill that spirit of 'self' and do not live above your people. If you can rise, bring some with you. Circulate your work and distribute as much information as possible”***.

As managers you are each responsible for supervising a group of staff. In order to ensure that they are effective and efficient at all times you must play your oversight role. This, I'm afraid, is not optional.

Our oversight role must be intensified to ensure that we fully grasp all the challenges faced by our educators and learners at school.

If you don't play your oversight role, the media and members of the public will play it for you. As a result, the reputation of the Department could end up being tarnished in the media because someone failed to do what they were supposed to do.

Senior managers, I'm sure you'd concur with me that the cost of delays in filling posts is too high on our education system and a grave injustice. Once a funded post is declared vacant it must be advertised and filled timeously.

If, for example, you leave a school without a departmental head for a lengthy period, you are not only compromising the management of that school, but it means other educators have to take on an additional load or that school risks leaving some of the learners without an educator. Either way, that is unfair.

Another issue that is of great concern to me is the trend of appointing people to position that do not exist on the organogram.

This is Constitutionally flawed and highly exploitive. The victims are given false hope that they will be fully appointed when the positions become available and that is illegal.

Of course, most of the issues I've just highlighted and many others, can be swiftly addressed by adhering to the ethical standards and policies that the Department already has in place.

In this regard, we must also capacitate our respective teams as well as stakeholders, such as school governing body formations, with the relevant policies before cases of non-compliance surface.

Accountability, across all levels, is something that we cannot afford to compromise on, or we risk finding ourselves with a highly unstable system. We must, therefore, jealously guard the integrity of the Department and maintain high standards of professionalism at all times.

Ladies and gentlemen, school safety is one of the issues that keep me awake at night. Almost every single day we receive reports of criminal activities, such as violent attacks on educators and learners as well as theft and vandalism of school infrastructure.

We cannot expect academic excellence in schools where our learners and educators are living in fear because they are constantly terrorised by criminals.

My appeal is for this workshop to also consider how we can strengthen the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) and ignite a sense of patriotism where every person in KwaZulu-Natal starts viewing both education and the safety of our schools as societal issues.

When we build new schools and renovate the old infrastructure, it is important to ensure that local communities benefit also these developmental projects.

Programme director, before I conclude, I wish to thank our guest speakers as well as representatives of organised labour who are joining us today. Their invaluable contributions to the commissions and resolutions of this workshop are critical for the betterment of our education system. Our collective struggle for educational equity is one that neither of us must give up on.

I now leave you with the words of the late U.S. Senator, Margaret Chase Smith, who once remarked; “***Public service must be more than doing a job efficiently and honestly. It must be a complete dedication to the people and to the nation***”.

I wish you fruitful deliberations in your commissions. May this workshop provide us with the roadmap this Department needs to truly become the hub of innovative hub for quality of teaching and learning.

I thank you!