

BUDGET VOTE ON EDUCATION 2010

SIPHO MFUNDISI

UCDP

The department of education continues to try to improve results by holding Saturday classes the benefit of which is very doubtful taking into account that the department did not cover itself in glory in last year's results.

Corrupt tendencies in appointments in some districts have been highlighted by the Human Sciences Research Council. Diko, N N and Letseka M in their report: *Policy appropriation in teacher retention and attrition: the North West perspective*, state it unequivocally that: "The greatest threat to the retention of teachers in the teaching profession appears to be ways in which provincial and regional education offices appropriate teacher appointment policies and procedures." They argue that teacher recruitment and appointment procedures are open to abuse.

The Bojanala District seems to take the lead in this manner. The teacher union SADTU has a field day and they do as they please to influence appointments and promotions. Proof of this lopsided promotion process was made when subject advisers appointed in the Intermediate Phase by the North West all members of SADTU were found to be unsuitable for such posts by Gauteng after incorporation and were instead appointed to be in charge of subjects for which they are qualified.

Grade 12 results are so far the main yardstick to prove the success of education. Last year's results proof that much still has to be done in schools run by blacks.

Out of the twenty top candidates last year only one, Ipeleng Thato Malope, came from a previously disadvantaged school, J M Ntsime. We in the UCDP argue that schools are given an equal opportunity to perform but only those under the headship of whites mainly do well; this is an indictment on the dedication of some principals and their learners.

We pride ourselves over the 35 schools that attained 100% passes last year, especially Sol Plaatjie, Charora and Tiger Kloof because they are in deprived areas.

Teaching is a labour of love. Teachers have to do their work with the greatest passion while learners and parents should also ensure that they play their part.

There are concerns however. Schools that were ruined by storms on 20 December 2009 have yet to be repaired. After six months with no move in this matter we cannot hope to have quality education. To mind comes Motsisi Primary School in Mabeskraal, Bojanala district, where almost all the entire roof of a block was blown off. Learners have been combined and are huddled in unmanageable groups for Foundation and Intermediate Phases.

No effort has been made by the department to explore a Public Private Partnership with the community on how to repair the school. If such a deal were sought I have no doubt that Batlhako Ba Matutu would have consented and the government would repay once they got their act together. If a PPP can be clinched with the Royal Bafokeng and Bakgatla ba ga Kgafela why not with the other traditional authorities especially Batlhako ba ga Matutu.

The J C Legoale High School at Sichar also in Bojanala has a similar experience but as fate would have it all students have been moved some 70 km away from their place of abode to Rakoko High School in Mabeskraal without any transport subsidy. Some who could not afford the bus fare to Mabeskraal have decided to stay with relatives at Mmatau while attending school at Herman Thebe High at great cost too.

While the department was trying to solve the problem of running schools with dwindling enrolments problems have been created for parents in transport costs and residence fees.

It is quite clear that the amalgamation of schools in an effort to maximize quality is not as cost effective as intended. The result is chances of illiteracy taking root in the North West abound. We should not be surprised if four years down the line the North West is reported as the province with the highest percentage of illiteracy.

The department would do well to judiciously spend the budget allocated to them and not pride themselves with under spending as was the case last year.

The UCDP will support the budget vote.