

EDUCATION BUDGET VOTE 8, 2011

I S MFUNDISI

(UCDP)

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The department of education continues to strive to produce citizens the country should be proud of but there are hurdles strewn on the course. Schools are full of mannerless children, indolent teachers and in some cases unco-operative parents who hardly attend to school functions even meetings convened at schools to discuss issues around their children.

It has to be borne in mind that educators need the support of both parties, the parents and the learners. Teachers stand in the place of parents and must be treated as such and they too must live up to that call. They should not feed among the flock by turning girls into their life partners.

We in the UCDP note with elation that the department of education walks tall that there are no mud schools in the province and this is because of the legacy we left when one compares with the situation in the Eastern Cape, Kwa Zulu Natal, Limpopo and the erstwhile Easter Transvaal. There is therefore no reason that there should be backlogs in school facilities.

The issue of ablution blocks for schools needs urgent attention. It is a great pity that in these days children have to go to schools carrying bottles of water because there is no water to drink at their schools.

One wonders to what extent is our education department ready to meet the second millennium development goal which is to ensure that we as a province attain universal education is 2015. We in the UCDP yearn and crave to hear such music that speaks to United Nations prescriptions, Honourable Speaker. We argue that for South Africa to meet that goal, the provinces have to live that ideal and walk the talk.

It is unfortunate that the department admits that in the past two years they have not been able to appoint Professional Support staff at districts and circuit offices to strengthen school support. This should not be allowed to continue unabated.

We cannot expect to have good results and produce men and women of substance from our schools while we treat education in such a lackadaisical manner.

There is no remedy to continuous learning. This goes even for teachers or educators as they are called these days. It is hypocritical for the department to complain these people are not as well trained as they should. To quote the words used in the annual performance plan 2011/2012, 2013 to 2014 the department states that some are faced with "content knowledge". It is not surprising that in a recent test in mathematics across the Republic it was found that teachers obtained less marks than their students after they were caused to sit for the same examination.

We argue it is not a shame; it is bound to happen. We all know that scientific and electric appliances even the cellular phones we use are put to better use by our children and grand children. The only way to remedy this knowledge gap is to institutionalise in-service training for teachers so that each teacher can be assisted to keep pace with developments in their field on an on-going basis. There was is still there is no wisdom in having closed down the In-service Training Colleges when the Teacher Training Colleges were closed under controversial circumstances. To have good teachers we have to go back to the basics.

We have noted that our Grade 12 learners in 2010 did well as they came out the third best out of the nine provinces. We however still maintain that they can be the best as we view ourselves as the no1 province. This year's matrics should not give us anything less than position one.

The Department of education in the province will have to tread with great caution in order to retain teachers in the system. The appropriation of teacher appointments by the regional and education officers leaves much to be desired. The process is open to abuse.

This ineptitude in departmental offices can accelerate teacher attrition. Research by Drs Diko N and Letseka M of the HSRC conducted in 2009 shows that in the North West teachers quit for promotion posts elsewhere and those who remain hanging on simply because they have no offers elsewhere and if they got offers they would not hesitate to leave teaching in the North West Province. We better be warned and refrain from reserving posts for undeserving cadres ad comrades. We should not forget the words of Alan Paton In his book *Cry the Beloved Country* when he said, “When we want them, they don’t want us; the time will come when they will need us and we shall not be interested in them”. The department has to be on the lookout.

When I grew up at home in Seolong, there was a wedding song “*O mo tshware hantle, ke galase ea thubega*”. Let us treat teachers in that way. They have to work on the innocent and tender minds of our children. If they are not happy they will transmit that bitterness to our children and we shall have a society of bitter people.

One matter that does not escape my mind is that all Heads of Department from Mayet to Mwelil left the department in disgrace. We need to bring an end to this. Our appointments must have integrity.

That the department of Education received the worst opinion, a disclaimer, from the Auditor General is cause for concern when we take into account that it is this department that receives the biggest chunk of the provincial budget. One wonders whether we have to support this vote as a matter of habit or conformity.

It cannot be that public money is doled out to people who care less about what they do with money and go on to appeal against high court decisions after they had summarily suspended senior officials of the department without following proper disciplinary steps. This country has laws that protect the weak against those who flex their muscles without taking into consideration the rights of others.

The rule of law has to be respected. It cannot be right that after officials had been in limbo for over a year a denied the right to go back to their desks even after an order by the High Court.

The ideals set by the department are laudable. We take note that they want teachers in class; they will provide learning/teaching materials; ensure school safety, will put a strategy in place to reduce learner-pregnancy and also massify school sports.

We hold our breath and we shall watch the space.

The UCDP supports the Education Budget vote 2011/2012