

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION; CULTURE, SPORT AND RECREATION - EDUCATION SECTOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSION & JOINT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CLUSTER PUBLIC HEARING CONDUCTED DURING THE TAKING LEGISLATURE TO THE PEOPLE (TLP) IN NKOMAZI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, 16-20 SEPTEMBER 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

Section 118 (1) (a) and (b) (i) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa empowers a provincial legislature to facilitate public access to and involvement in its oversight processes. Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature conducted the Taking Legislature to the People (TLP) outreach at Nkomazi Local Municipality from 16-20 September 2019.

The Portfolio Committee on Education; Culture, Sport and Recreation (the Committee) has a mandate in terms of Rule 119 of the Rules and Orders of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature to hold the Department of Education (the Department) accountable through various oversight mechanisms during the course of a financial year. The Department is responsible for Outcome 1 of the Provincial Outcomes (to provide quality basic education).

The Committee conducted an Education Sector Stakeholder Engagement Session at Sidlamafa Secondary School and participated in the Joint Social and Economic Cluster Public Hearing at KaMhlushwa Stadium, both events were held on 19 September 2019.

2. METHOD OF WORK

In preparation for the TLP visit, the Research Unit conducted preliminary visits to Nkomazi Local Municipality (the Municipality) and identified five (5) schools with various issues that needed to be attended to.

The Committee used a discussion document with six (6) thematic areas to guide the discussion during the stakeholder session. This document was sent to the Department prior to the session for their preparation and responses as well as inputs by the schools. The Committee requested the Department to submit written responses by 27 September 2019.

Invitations were duly issued to the Department, school management team, school governing body, Nkomazi Municipality; Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport (DPWRT); Office of the Auditor-General SA (AGSA); Office of the Public Service

Commission (PSC); South African Local Government Association (SALGA); House of Traditional Leaders (HTL); South African Police Service (SAPS), Department of Social Development, Teacher Unions (SADTU and NATU); South African Principals' Association (SAPA); National Association of School Governing Bodies (NASGB), Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust (MRTT) and Mpumalanga Economic Regulator (MER).

The Municipality was engaged on the overall TLP programme with a request to participate in the various activities of the Portfolio Committees.

Subsequently the Committee considered its draft report and the House resolutions emanating from the report were referred to the Department for implementation and report back to the Legislature.

3. PURPOSE OF THE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSION AND JOINT PUBLIC HEARING

The Education Sector Stakeholder Engagement Session provided a platform for the Committee to interact with the main stakeholders in Nkomazi Local Municipality (the 5 identified schools as listed on page 4 of this Committee report) and the Department of Education on the challenges experienced by the schools in relation to the 6 thematic areas and the interventions put in place by the Department towards improving the delivery of quality education.

The Joint Social and Economic Cluster Public Hearings provided a platform for the community of Nkomazi to raise their concerns on cross-cutting service delivery issues.

In terms of education delivery, Nkomazi Local Municipality is one of four municipalities in the Ehlanzeni Education District. The municipality consists of 5 education circuits (Lubombo; Nkomazi East; Nkomazi West; Malalane, and Khulangwane).

It was noted that the Department has already appointed a circuit manager for a 6th education circuit to be established, which will be named Nkomazi Central Circuit.

The majority of schools in the municipality are in quintiles 1 to 3 (no-fee schools) mostly in poverty stricken areas. However, despite being engulfed by poverty, Nkomazi Local Municipality has over the past years produced very good Grade 12 results, compared to schools in more affluent areas. In 2018 the Municipality enrolled 6 109 matric learners, of which 4 862 sat for the NSC examination and 4 224 passed (86.2% pass rate).

4. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The general sense emanating from the discussion was that the Department was supporting the schools on all 6 thematic areas. However, there were gaps that needed attention.

The Department acknowledged all infrastructure backlogs at the five schools and indicated that it was trying to implement new models to address these backlogs.

The 86.2% Grade 12 pass rate in 2018 should not overshadow the importance of proper curriculum management and support at primary schools and the lower secondary grades (8-10) as the failure to focus on these phases results in many learners being progressed through the education system until it causes a bottleneck effect in Grades 10-12. Progressed learners have not adequately grasped subject content, which is a failure of the education system and also contributes to having more over-aged learners in the system.

The following cross-cutting issues were noted at all the schools interacted with, which are deemed **hindrances to the delivery of quality education** in Nkomazi Local Municipality:

- Shortage of science laboratories and resources, including subjects like EMS
- Shortage of textbooks and school furniture
- Low impact of content workshops and classroom support programmes conducted
- Over-crowding (shortage of classrooms as most are old, dilapidated and unsafe)
- Poor ablution facilities (dangerous pit latrines and shortage of water)
- Poor learner discipline (vandalism, bullying, fighting, drugs, learner pregnancy)
- No infrastructure maintenance plans (dirty toilets, poor maintenance of roofs, walls)
- Lack of admin blocks at some schools
- Inadequate management of paper budget and school finances
- Poor cooking and storage facilities for NSNP food items (unhygienic and not secure)
- Poor fencing (damaged, partial or no fencing at all) negatively affects school safety
- No sport fields - or they are available but in poor condition

It must be noted that in relation to ablution facilities, there is still a significant backlog. There is still much to be done in this rural municipality.

There are varying levels of complexity in terms of the toilet systems used. Some schools have insufficient ablution facilities to cater for the number of learners; some have pit toilets only, whilst others have water-borne toilets but the pit toilets are not yet demolished and still in use (noting the shortage of water).

5. ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS ON THE SIX THEMATIC AREAS

The following five (5) schools attended the session

1. Samora Machel MSTA Secondary School
2. Sondlovu Primary school
3. Phumula Secondary School
4. Buyani Primary School
5. Lugebhuta Secondary School (oversight visit conducted on 17 September 2019)

The following stakeholders were in attendance:

- Department of Education (Provincial and District Management);
- School principals and SGB's of the 5 invited schools;
- NEHAWU (SADTU and NATU were invited but did not attend);
- National Association of School Governing Bodies (NASGB);
- Mpumalanga Economic Regulator (MER);
- Learner Representative Council (RCL) members from Sidlamafa Secondary
- Nkomazi Mathematics and Science Centre
- Office of the Premier
- Provincial Treasury

After interacting with the Department and above-mentioned stakeholders, the Committee appreciated the various efforts and interventions by the Department, noting that there was still much to be done in the Municipality to improve the delivery of quality basic education.

Thematic areas

The following questions in the discussion document were sent to the Department and the schools, and to be discussed to during the stakeholder session and later for responses:

1. Thematic area: Teacher support and development

- How effective are HOD's in attending to the content gap, teacher qualifications and bursaries for teachers?
- What challenges do HOD's face when they have to support teachers on curriculum delivery and do HOD's supervise the subjects they have studied for?
- Are HOD's well-supported by Subject Advisors from the District?
- Are principals effective in their oversight role in terms of curriculum delivery (instructional leadership)?

How have the educator unions interacted with the schools and the Department of Education on this matter of teacher support and development towards effective curriculum delivery?

The following was noted after the discussion:

- Samora Machel MSTA Secondary School indicated that HOD's are well-supported although the Physical Science teacher is under-qualified
- Buyani Primary School is well-supported by its HOD's
- Lugebhuta Secondary has suitably qualified HOD's although some HOD's have too many subjects and teachers to support
- Phumula Secondary reflected that the Department was very supportive in terms of addressing the content gap (some teachers also received bursaries). However, there was no science laboratory at the school.

In its response to the questions the Department indicated that monitoring and support by circuit managers, subject advisors and teacher development centre managers is conducted using provincial monitoring instruments. Different monitoring instruments such as curriculum coverage, informal and formal assessment monitoring instruments are used by HOD's with the aim of monitoring whether teaching and learning is taking place. HOD's conduct classroom observation and team teaching is conducted. Quarterly workshops are conducted to capacitate teachers on challenging content to close content gaps.

One of the challenges that prevent HOD's from providing adequate support is that **some HOD's are not specialists in the subjects** they monitor. Bursaries are made available to teachers who are not specialists in their subjects.

Regarding **principals' effectiveness in their oversight and leadership role** in terms of curriculum delivery, the Department indicated that principals do craft the vision and mission of their schools and they also set performance targets for the different departments (streams). They regularly hold SMT's to account on progress on the ATP lesson plans. On the matter of **engaging unions** on teacher development programmes, it was reported that the District Task Team and Circuit Task Team do this.

2. Thematic area: Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM)

- Can the Department provide a breakdown of critical textbook shortages in this municipality, per circuit?

- Can the Department indicate its plan in Nkomazi municipality to ensure that each child per grade and per subject has a textbook in his/her hands?
- Can the schools indicate the main challenges causing the textbook shortages?
- What measures have schools used to ensure effective retrieval of textbooks?
- What role do parents play in the management of textbooks used by their children?

The following was noted during the discussion:

Schools indicated that they had submitted LTSM shortages to the District via their circuit offices. In its response the Department provided a list of the critical textbook shortages in Nkomazi Municipality, per circuit. District consolidated LTSM shortages are submitted annually, while circuit managers are to monitor the retrieval system at school level.

In the question directed to the schools where they had to indicate the main challenges causing the shortages, they indicated that delivery by the Department was not according to the schools' requisitions and that the departmental budget is limited. They also indicated that some parents fail to replace lost textbooks. The fluctuation in school enrolment also lead to textbook shortages, as well as the introduction of new subjects.

The Department responded that the textbook shortage was due to poor retrieval systems and lack of ownership and that the measure to ensure effective retrieval is to implement the retrieval policy. Parents are made to take responsibility for each textbook issued to their children.

The schools indicated that they were using the retrieval form designed by the Department, which involves parents and learners. There is a tracking number and stamp in each book, which is used to tick off when a book is returned.

3. Thematic area: Infrastructure (including progress on eradication of pit toilets and progress on the overall sanitation plan of the Department in this municipality)

- Can the Department indicate current progress on the 2019/20 Table B5 for school infrastructure and sanitation (including eradication of pit toilets) in this municipality?
- Can the Department elaborate on its mode of communication with parents and schools regarding infrastructure challenges at the schools?
- Can the 5 schools discuss the use of their paper budgets and do they have maintenance plans in place and maintenance budgets?
- Can the SGB's discuss their role in the maintenance of school buildings and sourcing of support from private businesses for infrastructure projects?

The following was noted from the discussion:

The Department submitted the 2019/20 Table B5 which reflected all funded infrastructure projects – including sanitation projects. The Committee continually oversights the Department on infrastructure progress during the quarterly report reviews. It was noted that the Department did not elaborate on its communication strategy with parents and schools regarding the infrastructure challenges.

On the issue of utilizing the paper budget, the schools responded that SGB's use the paper budget according to the PFMA and SASA (South African Schools Act) – 20% of the overall paper budget is used for minor infrastructural needs of the school and the District has capacitated schools on sourcing funds from donors. The Department indicated that schools are trained on the use of paper budget for minor infrastructural needs, which is transferred twice per year (15 May and 15 November).

However, the Committee observed that this was not being done at all schools since there were many schools with unattended minor infrastructure issues and lack of donor funds when the Committee conducted oversight visits.

4. Thematic area: Over-aged learners and undocumented learners/admissions

- Can the Department indicate its plan to ensure that schools in this municipality have budget to cater for the undocumented learners.
- What progress has the Department made from a policy perspective on the undocumented learners?
- What challenges are schools facing in relation to undocumented learners and over-aged learners?
- Can the 5 schools in attendance indicate whether they are implementing the Department's Admission Policy correctly and what are the challenges in relation to admissions? What interventions have been put in place?
- Can the principals state whether they are submitting correct enrolment figures to the Department in line with their allocated budgets?

The following was noted from the discussion:

The Department and schools are only able to provide statistics on undocumented learners, but they do not have budget to cater for them. The Department did not respond on the policy issue about undocumented learners, stating that the SASA provides for learners to provide birth certificates on admission of their children or else the parents are given three months to

submit documentation. Circular 6 of 2019 clarified admission of foreign learners who are non-citizens of South Africa. Parents do not come back with birth certificates and this continues in most cases, until Grade 12 – then learners are not issues with NSC if they cannot produce identity documents. They do however, receive statement of results.

The schools stated that the departmental admission policy is implemented correctly but parents migrate from place to place and this gives schools a challenge if the admission period has lapsed. Schools also do the 10 day survey after admissions to check statistics.

However, the Committee noted that despite all these procedures being followed yet there are large numbers of undocumented learners in the schools. The Department was urged to improve monitoring in this regard.

5. Thematic area: School safety; drugs and alcohol at school

- Can the Department indicate **progress in terms of the Provincial Integrated School Safety Strategy** to address serious school safety issues and practical steps taken at schools in this municipality in relation to the following:
 - bullying and fighting; violence,
 - dangerous weapons on school premises
 - Drugs, alcohol (conducting search & seizure)
 - Sexual harassment
- How have SGBs assisted schools with poor school fencing, which makes schools unsafe?
- How are SGBs and school management teams dealing with school safety issues? Are school safety committees and Quality Learning and Teaching Campaigns in place at the 5 schools here today?
- What contribution has Mpumalanga Economic Regulator and SAPS made on controlling liquor outlets that are situated near schools?
- What specific support has the SAPS provided to the schools?

The following was noted from the discussion:

The Department indicated that workshops on National School Safety Framework were conducted to address issues of bullying and fighting. Schools were issued with profoma on the development of school policies and code of conduct. According to the Department all schools had adopted a cop; secondary schools were issued with drug testing devices and metal detectors and also trained school safety committees on the use thereof. Random search and seizures were also conducted in collaboration with SAPS and other departments.

The schools indicated that they are implementing the departmental profoma (template) on development of school safety policies; they are implementing the Schools Code of Conduct and they have adopted a cop per school. SBST (school based support teams) are also in place to support affected learners.

According to the schools responses, SGB's make means to provide fencing for schools and they also renovate vandalized fences. In addition they confirmed that QLTCs were in place as well as safety policies and safety committees.

The Department stated that the budget transferred to the school has provision for maintenance, which the SGB should develop maintenance plans that should include the fencing. The Department reiterated the responses of the schools, stating that school safety issues were dealt with through development and implementation of school policy and code of conduct, and that school safety committees and QLTCs were in place at the five schools.

Mpumalanga Economic Regulator (MER)

The MER was represented by Mr. Nivard Lubisi. He indicated that MER has a database of schools that were close to taverns. According to the responses from schools and the Department, there are 29 liquor outlets that are close to schools in Nkomazi Local Municipality.

According to the schools, MER has not assisted at all to close down the liquor outlets.

MER indicated that in 2018 they piloted an under-age drinking programme in Bushbuckridge in collaboration with Aware.org. It was hoped that the Department of Education would implement this programme in all municipalities as it could help the schools a lot. **In the meantime MER made a commitment to increase monitoring of compliance regulations.**

South African Police Service (SAPS)

Regarding support from the SAPS, the schools indicated that they are implementing the adopt-a-cop programme and that random search and seizures are conducted.

The Department reiterated that the specific support provide by SAPS related to the adopt-a-cop programme, awareness campaigns on drugs, child trafficking and sexual harassment, as well as conducting of search and seizures of dangerous weapons and substances.

6. Thematic area: Learner pregnancy and dropouts

- What is the Department's plan, working together with the schools and SGB's to reduce learner pregnancies in this municipality? (Nkomazi East & West circuits and Lubombo circuit have the highest number of pregnancies in the province).
- Can the Department provide progress on its plans to address learner dropout rate?
- What interventions have the schools, SGB's and RCL's implemented to tackle the high pregnancy rate?
- What role do stakeholders such as DSD and NGO's play in assisting to minimize the learner pregnancy and to support learners in various socio-economic challenges?

The following was noted from the discussion:

According to the schools, the introduction of more extra-curricular activities would help to **reduce learner pregnancies**, as well as involvement of other departments such as the Department of Health.

The Department also indicated the following programmes were implemented:

- Peer education programme for learners
- sporting programmes and competitions
- LoveLife programmes
- GBEM clubs (Girls and Boys Education Movement)
- LRC (Representative Council) programmes in secondary schools and Learner Support Agency (LSA) programmes in primary schools support learners on life skills
- Support from religious leaders and the Ayihlome Izazi Girls and Boys Project
- Education sessions by local clinic staff and doctors
- Involvement of Life Orientation teachers

The schools indicated that Department of Social Development (DSD) and NGP's do play a supportive role by offering life skills lessons and donations to needy families.

Regarding learner dropout rate, the schools and the Department indicated that the NSNP (school nutrition programme) was in place to assist in this regard.

Other programmes were the scholar transport programme, second chance for Grade 12 learners. The DSD YOLO (You only live once) programme and the NGO LoveLife also supports schools in this regard.

6.1. FINDINGS IN RESPECT OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSION

After interacting with the stakeholders, the Committee made the following findings:

- (a) The Committee noted the serious and long-standing infrastructure challenges at Sidlamafa Secondary School, which was the venue for the stakeholder session. The Committee resolved that it would come back for an oversight visit to the school but in the interim the school should make a submission on its infrastructure challenges.
- (b) The 5 schools experienced textbook shortages mainly due to poor implementation of the Department's textbook retrieval policy, coupled with negligence and theft of textbooks.
- (c) The challenge of over-aged learners and undocumented learners persists at these 5 schools and in Nkomazi Local Municipality at large.
- (d) The pregnancy rate is alarming, especially at the primary schools.
- (e) The Department submitted the 2019/20 Table B5 which reflected all funded infrastructure projects in this municipality, including sanitation projects.
- (f) Sondlovu Primary School has no proper structure for Grade R and no kitchen and storeroom for NSNP; the toilets are also in a poor condition.
- (g) Buyani Primary School is an unsafe structure; it is 50 years old (since 1969) and has all the expected infrastructure challenges, including poor sanitation and termite infestation. The rate of cigarette smoking by primary school learners was alarming.
- (h) Samora Machel MSTA Secondary School has many progressed learners in Grades 8-9, over-aged learners, drop-outs and 5 pregnancies in 2019. As an MSTA school it is not correctly staffed and 4 teachers are still on REQV 13. There is also a high rate of vandalism by learners, shortages of learner furniture and textbooks, as well as dilapidated building infrastructure in need of renovation. Other infrastructure issues are lack of special classrooms (library, laboratory, hall and technical classroom facilities).
- (i) Phumula Secondary School has many over-aged learners, the SGB is not functional and there are textbook shortages. Regarding infrastructure, there are 6 classrooms that are very unsafe (poor construction) and the school only has pit toilets which are not enough for learners.

- (j) Under-age drinking and taverns close to schools is a challenge. The Mpumalanga Economic Regulator has compiled a database of schools that are in close proximity to taverns; they have also launched a programme that deals with the issue of under-age drinking in collaboration with Aware.org.

6.2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSION

Based on the findings above, the Committee recommended that the Department must implement the following and provide a **progress report by 20 November 2019**:

- (a) Submit an infrastructure plan for Sidlamafa Secondary School to the Legislature and prioritize this school on the departmental 2020/21 infrastructure plan (Table B5).
- (b) Strengthen implementation of the departmental textbook retrieval policy at all 5 schools and provide a progress report on the Department's plan (with timeframes) to provide the requisite textbooks to these schools.
- (c) Implement a plan to deal with the high rate of over-aged learners and undocumented learners at the 5 schools interacted with and Nkomazi Local Municipality at large.
- (d) Implement a plan to engage stakeholders towards combating the causal factors of the high pregnancy rate at the 5 schools and Nkomazi Local Municipality at large.
- (e) Provide a progress report on the implementation of the 2019/20 infrastructure plan (Table B5) for school building infrastructure and sanitation projects.
- (f) Prioritize Sondlovu Primary School to receive adequate sanitation services and also the infrastructure requirements such as proper Grade R classroom, kitchen facility and storeroom for NSNP.
- (g) Provide a progress report with clear action items (with timeframes) to address the issues raised at Buyani Primary School in terms of unsafe building infrastructure, poor sanitation and termite infestation. The report must also indicate measures in place to combat the cigarette smoking by the primary school learners.
- (h) Attend to the issues highlighted at Samora Machel MSTA Secondary School in the finding above and provide a progress report on the interventions made at the school.
- (i) Attend to the issues highlighted at Phumula Secondary School in the finding above and provide a progress report on the interventions made at the school.

- (j) Engage the MER to strengthen monitoring of taverns close to schools in Nkomazi Local Municipality, which have potential to disturb teaching and learning due to learners engaging in under-age drinking especially during school hours. Ensure that the Aware.org under-age drinking programme is implemented at schools in Nkomazi Local Municipality.

7. JOINT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CLUSTER PUBLIC HEARING

The Committee attended the Joint Social and Economic Cluster Public Hearing held at KaMhlushwa Stadium on 19 September 2019.

In attendance were Honourable Members of the Legislature, Members of the Executive Committee (MEC's), the Executive Mayor of Nkomazi Local Municipality and councillors from different political parties.

Community members were given the opportunity to raise their concerns about service delivery issues in their respective wards. The Public Participation and Petitions Unit and government officials from the various departments interacted with the petitioners, noting their issues to provide feedback to the community. The Municipality also had an opportunity to respond to the community.

7.1. Issues (Education) raised by the community during the Joint Public Hearing

Community/Ward	Issue
Ward 22 Phosa village	There was a request to build a new school (at Eastgate). The land was identified already.
Ward 18	There was a delay in the construction works at Magogeni Primary School
Aniva	There was a request for a school
Mgobodzi	Poor school safety of learners walking along the road

7.2. RECOMMENDATION IN RESPECT OF PUBLIC HEARING - (EDUCATION)

The Department must investigate the above issues which were raised at the public hearing during the public hearing and provide a progress report by **29 November 2019**.

8. CONCLUSION

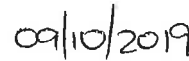
The Committee expressed its gratitude to all the stakeholders who attended the Education Sector Stakeholder Engagement Session on 19 September 2019 during Taking Legislature to the People (TLP) in Nkomazi Local Municipality.

The Committee also appreciated the Department of Education and the schools for the inputs and responses to the questions raised in the discussion document. The stakeholders were acknowledged for their constructive engagement with the Committee. The Committee also thanked its support staff for their assistance during the TLP.

The House is requested to adopt this report with its findings and recommendations. The Department must implement the House Resolutions contained in this Committee report and submit a **progress report by 29 November 2019**.



HON. NE HLOPHE (MPL)
CHAIRPERSON: PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION; CULTURE, SPORT AND RECREATION



DATE