

OVERSIGHT VISIT REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, CULTURE, SPORT AND RECREATION CONDUCTED AT UTHAKA SECONDARY SCHOOL AND VOLKSRUST PRIMARY SCHOOL ON 06 MARCH 2013, AND A PUBLIC HEARING ON 07 MARCH 2013, AT DR PIXLEY ISAKA SEME MUNICIPALITY, DURING THE TAKING LEGISLATURE TO THE PEOPLE (TLP) – DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

1. INTRODUCTION

The Portfolio Committee on Education, Culture, Sport and Recreation (the Committee) has a mandate in terms of Rule 112(2) of the Rules and Orders of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature to conduct oversight over the Department of Education (the department) by holding it accountable through various measures which the Portfolio Committee may undertake during the course of a financial year.

One of the instruments that enable the Portfolio Committee to execute its mandate, is to conduct oversight visits to verify the accurateness of information provided by departments, currently been the department of Education.

2. PURPOSE OF THE PUBLIC HEARING-AND OVERSIGHT VISITS

- a. The purpose of the public hearing held on 07 March 2013, which was a joint hearing of the Economic and Social Transformation Clusters, was to allow the MEC's a platform to report back to the community and the Committee on the range of service delivery concerns which had been raised in the pre-TLP public hearing on 14 November 2012. The public hearing also provided Members of the Legislature an opportunity to engage with members of the public on service delivery issues.

b. The purpose of the site visits to the two schools (Uthaka Secondary School and Volksrust Primary School) was to ascertain:

- ❖ The reasons for the poor examination results attained by Uthaka Secondary School;
- ❖ Measures in place to improve their matric results for 2013;
- ❖ The role played by parents, School Governing Bodies (SGBs), Learner Representative Council (LRC) and educators;
- ❖ To ascertain why Uthaka Secondary School was built on the wet land;
- ❖ To establish the reasons why Volksrust Primary School is renting for such a long time;
- ❖ Measures in place to start building Volksrust Primary School

3. METHOD OF WORK

In preparation for the TLP, the research section conducted pre-site visits to the Municipality late October 2012 to early November 2012. Comprehensive research reports were compiled that informed the Committee's programme for the TLP. In February 2013, researchers re-visited Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Municipality to assess the progress made by the department. The Social Cluster was briefed on the findings by the Researcher Unit.

In ensuring that public participation and involvement takes place, the Committee invited the Department of Education, Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality, SALGA, Traditional Leaders, Gert Sibande District Municipality, relevant stake holders and the general public to attend the public hearing.

On 06 March 2013, the Committee met with both Principals and educators of Uthaka Secondary School and Volksrust Primary School, both Chairpersons of the School Governing Bodies (SGB's) and Learners Representative Council

(LRC) from Uthaka Secondary School. Officials from the Department of Education and Councilors from Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Municipality were also present at the meeting.

On 07 March 2013, a public hearing was held, at Vukuzakhe community hall.

4. PROGRESS REPORT MADE BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ON THE CONCERNS RAISED ON 14 NOVEMBER 2012 AT THE PUBLIC HEARING, DURING THE PRE-TLP

Ward 1

- a. It was indicated that most schools are not in good condition and should be renovated.**

Progress report:: The MEC indicated that, the department has high infrastructure needs and cannot be able to cater for all the needs with the limited budget available, however the department has a priority list of schools that are to be renovated. The schools will however be prioritized for 2014/15 financial year for renovation.

- b. Training (FET) College is required at Volksrust because it is expensive for learners to commute on daily basis to the nearest College which is in Newcastle**

Progress report: The MEC reported that the Premier on the 18th of June 2012, supported the conversion of Perdekop Agricultural School into a Further Education and Training College (FET) as proposed by the local people. The Premier further indicated that, the envisaged college should not abandon the offering of Agriculture.

Following the Premier's announcement, a feasibility study on the establishment of the Gert Sibande College is finalized and government would establish a site at Perdekop that can offer Engineering programmes, skills programmes, Agriculture and other programmes that the community or local industry may require.

A meeting was then held with officials in the Premier's office in August 2012, to discuss an implementation plan, including funding. It was agreed that a follow up meeting will be convened by the office of the Premier early this year (2013) with all stakeholders to complete the implementation plan.

The Department then met with the management of Perdekop Agricultural school, to discuss the current curriculum at the school and how other non-college programmes can be phased out. The third meeting was with officials at the Municipal office to discuss the envisaged rollout plan and programmes that communities want to access.

The Department will work with Gert Sibande FET College and the Municipality, towards starting with the offering of skills courses in the second semester depending on funding, and the students that the college and the Municipality can recruit.

- c. It was reported that Schools at Vukuzakhe Township are vandalized and that the electricity cables get stolen. A request was made that schools should be provided with security to curb the counterproductive practice that results in schools being degraded**

Progress report: The MEC reported that the department is embarking on an exercise of educating Learners, Educators and the community, through Circuit Infrastructure Forum about management and protection against vandalism. Schools that are in need of a security fence will be prioritized depending on the availability of funds.

Ward 2

- d. A concern was raised that most schools are overcrowded including Theu – Theu Primary School and that it needs to be renovated.**

Progress report: The department noted the good performance by Theu – Theu Primary School and the shortage of classrooms. The department will provide mobile classrooms to ease the challenge of overcrowding. Regarding the issue of renovation, the school is listed for renovations during 2014/15 financial year.

- e. National Certificate Vocational (NCV) not clearly understood by learners in the FET Colleges**

Progress report: It was reported that the Department of Higher Education and Training is having road shows explaining to business people, and to the community at large about what the National Certificate Vocational (NCV) is about. FET colleges are also conducting campaigns visiting to schools and producing documentation for the wider community on the value of the qualification. The industry is also starting to understand the qualification better now, that the number of students with NCV qualification is increasingly getting into the market.

- f. Learners at Secondary Schools are not attending their classes as expected, the Department is requested to come up with programs that will motivate learners to attend lessons on daily basis**

Progress report: The MEC reported that through the structural meetings that are conducted, the Department will request stakeholders to attend i.e. SGBs to motivate and encourage learners to attend classes on a daily basis.

The District office also plans to create a video which will be played during the RCLs workshops, that will motivate and encourage learners to be at school and attend classes timeously, subsequent to that, the RCL would encourage learners to attend lessons, to participate in extra mural activities, inform learners on the availability of bursaries for learners who perform optimally in their respective learning areas and ensure that they take education seriously.

Ward 3

- g. An appeal was made that at least one school must have a computer centre.**

Progress report: Regarding the above request, the MEC indicated that Elangwane Secondary school has a computer centre. The department's plan for 2015/2016 is to provide at least one Secondary School per Circuit with a computer centre.

Ward 5

- h. The community is not in support of the Combined Boarding School because learners that are still at the Primary School lose their belongings**

Progress report: With regard to this matter, the MEC indicated that while this is the only school available in the area, the Principal and the SGB will be implored to take extra care for Primary school learners in order to prevent the loss of primary school learners' belongings.

Ward 7

- i. The community reported that there is a need for a Secondary School at Amersfoort because the current combined school is overcrowded.**

Progress report: it was reported that Hlelimfundo Secondary School has been supplied with mobile classrooms to ease overcrowding. There is a new Primary school currently under construction; once it is completed, a new secondary school is planned for the subsequent years.

Ward 9

j. It was reported that there is a need for a Primary school at Daggakraal.

In response, the MEC reported that a new Primary School is planned for 2014/2015 at Sinqobile - Daggakraal.

k. A school for people with disability is far from the community.

Progress report: The MEC indicated that, children with disabilities are allowed to attend Public Ordinary schools. However those who have Intellectual disability (moderate to severe) are admitted in Special Schools. In Volksrust Circuit, there are three Ordinary Primary Schools designated as Full Service Schools. These are Amersfoort Combined, Vukuzenzele combined and Thembindlela Primary School. Educators in these schools are trained incrementally to ensure that they are able to intervene with different barriers to learning. In other Primary Schools, educators are trained on Curriculum Adaptation and also on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support strategy. Schools that have children who have severe disabilities and cannot benefit in the local schools need to refer these learners to the District Office so that they can be assessed and be placed in relevant schools. On-site, training of educators is also done where there are many learners that require additional support.

Ward 10

- I. **It was reported that Uthaka Secondary School was built on a wet land and the matter was reported to the Department of Education but to date nothing has been done.**

Progress report: The MEC indicated that the department has assigned an Engineer to investigate and advice on how to resolve the matter.

5. **PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HOUSE RESOLUTIONS REGARDING PHEMBINDLELA PRIMARY SCHOOL**

The resolutions were as follows:

- 5.1 The department must develop a comprehensive plan detailing what will be done to assist the school to overcome the challenges, particularly, in relation to:
 - a. **Raising enough money to either replace the old fence or fix it in the manner that will assist in curbing burglary that is troubling, also to protect the property of the school and kids from unnecessary intruders.**

In response, it was reported that Phembindlela Primary School was ranked in Quintile 4 all these years and was only re-ranked into Quintile 2 in 2012. Prior to this re-ranking, the school fell outside the scope of those in need (i.e. Quintile 1-3). As a result of their ranking, the school could not be provisioned at 100% of their enrolment.

- b. Providing a sustainable solution in managing the Grade R learners at the school, seeing that the school does not have adequate resources to manage/cater the grade**

Regarding the above, the department indicated that, the school is provisioned for 800 learners currently, which includes Grade R, and adjustments can only be made in the new financial year, 2013/14.

- c. What mechanism will be put in place to assist school's SMTs and SGBs with necessary and required capacity skills, especially the basic management skills, which will make them, realize their responsibilities and take the school to greater heights in the future.**

In response, the Department reported that it has transferred R34 560 for four volunteer food handlers on 03/08/2012, which translates into R720 per food handler for twelve month's as prescribed in the Conditional Grant Framework for 2012/13 financial year.

- d. Any assistance the department can provide in support of the school to better handle the school nutrition, in the manner that will also accommodate the Grade R learners and avoid treating them as an appendage, when in practice they have been made part of the school.**

Responding to the above, the department reported that the school also received R44 000 for the purchase of equipment and utensils to enhance the feeding programme. An amount R5 400 was also transferred to the school on 22/10/2012 for the procurement of fuel for cooking. The nutrition programme is meant for needy learners in primary and secondary schools, from Grade R to Grade 12, and the

Grade R learners are in no way treated as an appendage. Pre-grade R learners are however not the responsibility of the Department of Education, as these learners are catered for by the Department of Social Development. Tables and chairs will be provided in 2013/14 financial year to the school.

6. OVERSIGHT VISIT TO SCHOOLS

6.1 BRIEF OVERVIEW BY THE CHAIRPERSON ON UTHAKA SECONDARY SCHOOL

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee indicated the purpose of the visit to the school. She made reference to the research report presented to the Committee by the research unit on the status quo of the school. The SMT was requested to brief the Committee on the performance of the school, followed by the SGB, LRC and the Department.

6.2. Presentation by the School Principal on the background of the school

The Principal indicated that, the school is situated at Wakkerstroom and has 1032 learners and 37 educators, of which nine (9) are SMT members. The school caters for the Wakkerstroom learners and the surrounding farm areas, and it is classified as No-fee school. Farm learners are transported to school on daily bases. Grade 12 performance results are fluctuating, in 2009 the school achieved 50.0%; in 2010 the pass rate increased to 63.4%; the results dramatically dropped to 48.9% in 2011 academic year. During the 2012 academic year, the school results were archived to 77% in grade 12. It was indicated that Uthaka Secondary School is the only high school in Wakkerstroom

6.3. Improvement strategy

The principal of the school indicated that morning classes and afternoon lessons are conducted; extra classes are also being conducted during schools holidays to improve the results and ensure that there is a 10% improvement in each subject and 100% pass rate in 2013 at the school. It was also indicated that the school is assisted by the Department of Education on intervention strategies in improving the school results.

The principal also thanked Hon MN Mokoena for previously assisting the school with resources and by motivating educators and learners.

The Principal further indicated that, the school's grade 12 results have been fluctuating resulting in difficulty in intervening on stabilizing the results. She further indicated that the grade 12 results of the school were as follows: 2008 - 76%; 2009 - 50%; 2010 - 63.4 %; 2011 - 48.9 % and 2012 was 77.64% .

6.4. Challenges

The principal indicated that the following challenges are facing the school;

- There is a shortage of classrooms in the school (only 16 classes accommodating 1052 learners, making the class average to be 65 or 75 learners in a class. The class average is way above the 40 learners per class. In addition, the school is the only high school in the area resulting in the shortage of class rooms;
- The school is supposed to have 28 classrooms, but it has only 16 classrooms. Previously the school had prefab classrooms which were damaged, resulting in

learners being removed from them and put in a library, laboratory and in a school hall;

- Most learners in the school are not under control of their parents and most of them are staying alone without proper guidance; this causes problems of ill-discipline amongst learners;
- The school has over 95 learners who are orphans, which create problems of poverty to the learners. The absence of parental guidance also creates problems of ill-discipline that result to high failure rate;
- Currently, the school is experiencing high rate of pregnancy, that creates problems of HIV which also result into higher failure rate
- Learners are receiving grants during school hours, and others not concentrating on the school work because they cannot receive grants due to different challenges;
- The school is also experiencing increases in gangsterism in the school, however the principal indicated that, the school has adopted two (2) police officers to assist the learners in the school with safety.

Comments by the Committee

The Committee expressed concerns that the school has turned a library and a laboratory into class rooms due to class overcrowding. The Committee was concerned that there is a need for a library in a school and the school must find alternative means to ensure that a library is functional. The Committee was further concerned that the school has replaced a laboratory and turned it into a class room considering the need for scientist in South Africa.

The Principal indicated that the laboratory equipment is moved to one office in the administration block and learners continue with their experiments and lessons in the laboratory which is now in one office in the administration block.

6.5. School Governing Body (SGB)

The Chairperson of the SGB indicated that there is no working relationship amongst educators and parents. It was also reported that the SGB is not consulted on matters relating to the school and regular parental meetings are not conducted at the school. It was further mentioned that, the SGB does not have policies and were not trained on their roles and responsibilities.

The Committee was concerned that the school was not involving SGB, and indicated that it cannot be acceptable that the school undermines its governance as the SGB was a governance structure that must constantly govern the school and hold the management of the school accountable.

The Committee was concerned that the school did not have adequate policies and requested the Principal to bring the file of policies and attendance register. When the files were finally brought, the Committee found discrepancies in the policies; some were not signed, while there were no other policies such as HIV/AIDS policy, Pregnancy policy; financial policy and SGB Constitution. The Committee also found discrepancies on the attendance register and other educators were not signing in as expected.

The Committee emphasized that there is no need of a gap between the school management, SGB, learners and parents. It emphasized that there should not be such gap because in fact the SGB encompasses all components, meaning that there is a need to further re-capacitate the SGB to discharge its responsibilities.

6.6. Tension amongst educators

The principal reported that there were tensions previously amongst educators, but the situation has improved and educators are working as a team. It was reported that quality assurance unit from the Department of Education has also played a major role in conducting sessions such as team building and capacity workshops to assist educators to improve their work.

6.7. Scholar transport

It was indicated that learners are experiencing challenges of scholar transport especially, during rainy seasons because it becomes difficult for buses to access roads due to damages caused. Therefore, those learners using scholar transport are affected during rainy seasons negatively because they are not transported.

6.8. Relocation of Educators

The principal reported that, the school's performance is partly and negatively affected by the relocation of teachers. One teacher has relocated to KwaZulu Natal, while another one, who was responsible for Mathematics and Physical Sciences, was relocated to a primary school.

The Committee noted this problem but was concerned that the school had teachers with primary education qualifications. The Committee wanted a comprehensive report on the qualifications of the teachers as to identify the number of teachers with primary education qualification who were in the secondary school

6.9. Learners Support Material (LSM)

It was reported that learners support material was previously provided on time by the Department, though there is still a challenge of shortage of textbooks for grade 8 and 9 learners.

The principal further indicated that the school has 1052 learners and 650 chairs for learners, hence other learners attend classes without chairs and desks, resulting in them writing class tasks using the floor instead of desks and chairs.

6.10. Non-attendance of Educators

The Committee requested the attendance register for educators, when the attendance register was perused, the Committee found that Ms Mbete has been absent more frequently and wanted a clear explanation to this effect.

The principal indicated that the educator implicated, was on sick leave since January 2013. During her absence from work, the SMT has tried calling her but she could not answer her phone, thus this was reported to the Department for intervention. However, the principal put to the attention of the Committee that the teacher concerned had on the first day of absence sent the Principal an SMS indicating that she has family problems hence she would not attend. However, she absconded until she came with a doctor's note indicating that, she is sick and booked for a lot of days.

The Circuit indicated that they are dealing with the matter because the doctor who issues this sick note is found to have been issuing irregular sick notes. The doctor in question was found to be Dr Salvo.

The Committee advised the circuit to report Dr. Salvo to the relevant board dealing with the conduct of health professionals. However, the matter of the

teacher must be pursued further, because learners must not suffer. The educator must not rely on catch up plans because these will have a negative effect on the ability of the learners, for them to pass though were taught a lot of lessons on a short space of time.

6.11. Ranking of the school

The Committee was concerned that the school was not placed in Quintile 1 considering its situation. The Principal indicated that they have applied to be incorporated as a quintile 1 school but failed on the basis that the school is next to the tarred road, post office and magistrate court.

The Committee received this explanation with shock and concerned that the department used the tarred road, post office and magistrate court not to place the school under quintile 1 and instructed the district to take this matter further.

6.12. Report by Department Engineers

The Committee also received an engineering report on the school and it was presented to them by the engineers which are working for the Department of Education. Amongst other issues, they emphasized that they made the following findings;

- That the school is located/build on the wet land
- Poor drainage system around the school
- Land build on the school is not proper
- Subsoil drainage system was not installed or have blocked due to insufficient maintenance.

After the presentation, the Committee was concerned that learners are not safe in the school and that the Department of Education must speedily ensure that measures are in place of building a new school and it must be on the priority list for 2013/14 financial year.

7. FINDINGS

The Committee found that:

- 7.1. The Department is not supporting Uthaka Secondary School properly;
- 7.2 There is no working relationship amongst educators, principal and SGB;
- 7.3 The SGB is not recognised and is not functional;
- 7.4 LRC is not active in the school and learners are not discipline;
- 7.5 The school environment is dirty and not safe for learners;
- 7.6 Teenage pregnancy is high at the school;
- 7.7 The turnaround strategy on improving results is not in place;
- 7.8 There is no sport field at the school
- 7.9 There is a doctor alleged to be selling sick notes to educators
- 7.10 Ms Mbethe absenting herself from school without genuine reasons
- 7.11 uThaka School is not on the priority list for 2013/14 of schools to be built by the department, though the current structure is on a wetland
- 7.12 The Department did not rank the school at quintile 1, because it is near a tarred road, post office and magistrate court.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommended that the Department should:

- 8.1 Put measures in place for proper management and provide effective support to the school;
- 8.2 Continuously conduct workshops on governance to educators, and SGB; to strengthen the good working relationship

- 8.3 Ensure that the SGB is capacitated with its roles and responsibilities for good governance at the school;
- 8.4 Ensure that LRC is capacitated with leadership skills for active participation on the school's programs;
- 8.5 Ensure that the school environment is clean, safe and conducive for learners;
- 8.6 Ensure that the school comes up with programs that will encourage learners not to be actively involved in sex;
- 8.7 Ensure that the matric improvement strategy is in place, implemented and monitored;
- 8.8 Report the alleged doctor that is selling sick notes, to the relevant board dealing with the conduct of health professionals;
- 8.9 Take disciplinary measures against the ill-discipline educators, particular against Ms Mbethe;
- 8.10 Prioritise building the new school that will replace the current structure of Uthaka Secondary School during the 2013/14 financial year, to ensure the safety of the educators and the learners;
- 8.11 Re-visit its decision for not placing the school at quintile 1; and constantly monitor performance at the school for effectively learning and teaching.

9. OVERSIGHT VISIT TO VOLKSRUST PRIMARY SCHOOL

9.1 Background

The school is situated in town at Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality, under the leadership of Ms SC Hlatshwayo (Acting Principal) as the former principal passed on in 2011. The school was established in April 1934 and was called Volksrust Indian Primary. The name was changed in 1991, after Black learners were admitted at the school, and then changed to Volksrust Primary School. The school has rented the place in Volksrust Muslim Jamaat in an Indian

community. During the oversight visit it was discovered that the landlord has no yet signed the new lease agreement with the department.

9.2 Challenges identified by the school

The school is faced with the following challenges:

- Classrooms are overcrowded and currently accommodating more than 40 learners
- Classrooms are very old
- The school is in a private property and the monthly rental is expensive
- English is only the medium of instruction (spoken language)
- The school premises is also occupied by residents renting family units
- There is no playing field for learners
- The school is situated next to the main busy road in town
- There is a sheeben next to the school
- There is not enough toilets at the school
- The school is without a kitchen

9.3 Achievements

The school managed to achieve the following:

- Learners are participating in sport at provincial level;
- The school is excelling in sport in particular soccer and netball;
- For choral music competition, the school participated in the national competition and obtained position 4.

9.4 School Governing Body (SGB)

The SGB indicated that the school is functional and they have a good working relationship with educators. In the past, it has fundraised for the school and the money was used for renovating the privately owned school. The SGB further requested assistance from municipality to assist with new building, but there was no positive response.

The Committee, after the various presentations, was concerned that the Department was irregularly occupying the school in the Muslim Church, considering that the HOD has not signed for the utilisation of the building. The Committee was further aggrieved by the over 100% rent increase imposed by the land lord.

The Committee was concerned on the misused of the money fund raised by the SGB on renovating class rooms for a privately owned school. The Committee was of the view that renovations and development of class rooms is the responsibility of the land lord.

The Committee was further unhappy that, the school operated for a long period with an Acting Principal, noting that the principal passed on in 2011, hence instructed the department to speed up the process of appointing the principal of the school.

10. FINDINGS

The Committee found that:

- 10.1 There is poor support and monitoring by the department, thus the school is still renting even to date; and money fund raised by the SGB was used to renovate class rooms, hence it is the responsibility of the land lord.
- 10.2 Monthly rental paid by the department is too expensive and has increased by 100%;
- 10.3 Department is irregularly occupying the school in the Muslim Church, because the HOD has not signed for the utilisation of the building.
- 10.4 The school does not have proper administration block, and classrooms are not enough while others not safe for learners;
- 10.5 The school building is very old and proper learning and teaching does not take place effectively;
- 10.6 The school premise is occupied by people, rented family units;
- 10.7 The School environment is not conducive for learning;
- 10.8 The position of the principal is vacant since 2011;

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommended that the department should:

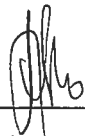
- 11.1 Constantly provide effective support to the school, while; urgently considering building a new school for Volksrust Primary within the 2013/14 financial year; to address the following findings: 10.2; 10.3; 10.4; and 10.5.
- 11.2 Currently negotiate for the decrease of rental payment with the land lord
- 11.3 Provide mobile classrooms to the land identified for building the school, as a temporary measure;
- 11.4 Ensure that the position of the school principal is urgently filled within this current financial year 2013/14;
- 11.5 In the interim, put measures to ensure that the school is not in close proximity to a sheeben and/ or tavern, because the licensing process of taverns provides that they must not be close to a school and/or church.
- 11.6 Address all the challenges reflected at 9.2, as presented by the school.

A progress report should be submitted to the Legislature not later than 30 September 2013.

12. CONCLUSION

The Chairperson thanked Members of the Portfolio Committee on Education, Culture, Sport and Recreation, Principal, SMT and SGB of Uthaka Secondary School; Acting Principal of Volksrust Primary School and its SGB, officials from the Department of Education for participating during the site visits. The Chairperson further thanked Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality, Gert Sibande District Municipality and all stake holders that were part of the oversight visits, including the Legislature support staff for their professional support provided to the Committee in order to achieve its objectives.

Lastly, on behalf of the Committee, the Chairperson requests the House to adopt the Committee Report with its findings and recommendations.



HON NC MAMABOLO

**CHAIRPERSON: PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION;
CULTURE, SPORT AND RECREATION**

21/06/2013

DATE