

Remarks by Limpopo MEC for the Department of Education, Mr Ishmael Kgetjepe at the Consultative Meeting with Circuit Managers, Flora Park Comprehensive School, Polokwane, Limpopo, 26 July 2018

SG of the Department

Executive Management of the Department

All circuit managers of our schools

Ladies and Gentlemen

Programme Director;

Good morning,

I am grateful that you have responded to our call for this gathering and that you have made time to be here in an effort to take education of the learners we serve forward. The last time we had this kind of an engagement was in 2015 and that time I wanted to familiarise myself with the issues taking place at a circuit level, where you ply your trades as circuit managers. I recall some of you reducing my meeting to a complaint forum than a strategic meeting where a level of thinking must be strategic and constructive. Don't miss this opportunity this time around. I am sure you know as practitioners that circuit managers are viewed as field workers of the district, agents of school development and providers of support to all schools under their control. You essentially exist to provide instructional leadership to all the schools under your control, in other words you must provide supervision, facilitate change, motivate staff, organise, plan and do other related matters depending on the need at hand.

That is why it is important that you must empower yourself with skills and if not you must be empowered with skills to be able to venture into the terrain of developing and supporting all development initiatives in your respective circuits. You are the ones who must provide that end-to-end educational and administrative support to our schools. You are further expected to support school principals, school management teams and school governing bodies in the management, administrative and governance of schools. All eyes are on you when this function is not performed.

Discharging these duties successfully does not happen without its sets of challenges and that is why I called you today so that we can assess, share and diagnose some of the challenges you come across in your line of work. We will in today's engagement have presentations after which we must allow discussions and a confluence of ideas that will propel this department forward on the delivery of quality education across the province. We need to make inputs that are of sound educational importance.

So we should use this platform to frankly look at the situation at our disposal, analyse it in details using facts and begin a process of finding permanent solutions as our closest points of contact between education institutions and the Provincial office. We must be able to say whether or not we are responding to the core functions of circuit offices which include:

- Providing a channel of communication between the district office and education institutions
- Provide management support to education institutions
- Provide administrative services to education institutions
- Facilitate training for principals, SMTs and SGBs
- Monitor the functionality of education institutions

- Provide curriculum support to Grade R practitioners and primary grade teachers
- Facilitate visits of specialist district teams to secondary schools

These responsibilities must be undertaken with commitment and dedication and furthermore in your dealings with the public, ensure that you exhibit all the principles of Batho Pele. There are still worrying challenges our circuits are confronted with:

- **Underperforming schools** – The number of public schools that underperformed in the 2017 Grade 12 NSC stands at 695, in 2016 it was 642 and 570 in 2015. Over 400 of these are located in Capricorn and Sekhukhune. There is also a concern about grade 4 learners who cannot read with comprehension, according to the 2017 PIRLS report and that many of our learners do not perform at the expected grade levels when standardised tests are administered
- **Infrastructural issues** – schools not having appropriate infrastructure, to the office accommodation or space which is not sufficient for some of our circuits. This is a challenge in the province.
- **Staff shortage** – We have made serious inroads in this regard and continue to do so, so that circuit managers do not end up being all- in- one.
- **Administration of exams** – Trial exams will be starting on the 20th of August. During an examination time, we expect the smooth running of the examination process in terms of management and administration.
- **LTSM** – With regard to this aspect, there is a serious need to strengthen the retrieval policy because at the moment the manner in which we go about retrieving learner material is very poor. We expect circuit managers to take charge in this

critical area. We also expect the LTSM requisitions to be done in time to avoid unnecessary delays on delivery, more especially the delivery of textbooks since your principals will be the first to run to the media and other platforms to complain about non delivery of textbooks. Circuit managers are the ones who must ensure that all school under their care have received LTSM and there should be evidence thereof.

- **Filling of promotional posts** - we want functional schools characterised by effective teaching and learning with stable School Management Teams in all the schools. Accountability is easy when people have been assigned responsibilities on a permanent basis.
- **Governance** – I am not sure how often circuit managers visit schools to pick up issues before they explode into our faces. We still have principals locking out learners for having not paid money for this or that. Issues that must be addressed and attended to as and when they are raised at schools. There is also a need to intensify the training of SGBs to clearly understand their responsibilities and how the department runs. At the moment, SGBs refer a lot of their issues to the office of the MEC and you wonder as to where the circuit is, as well as the district. We need to strengthen in this area.
- **Norms and standards** – schools receive 100% of the norms and standards money and we call for proper use of this allocation, more so that there are so many challenges that schools must deal with. We need to strengthen our financial management in this aspect and circuits are at the centre of ensuring that the money is properly used.
- **Small schools** – We still have communities claiming not to have been consulted in the process of merging or closing of schools. Our reasons for this process are educational and we must be

able to put them across to communities during consultations so that there is a buy in by every stakeholder where these schools are.

We must work around the clock within the resource constraints that confront us to ensure that our circuits are functional in terms of the support they provide to schools. We also know that if we do not work hard, dedicate ourselves to the work at hand, we will not get to our destination in terms of performances.

It is you who must work around the clock in ensuring that the province obtains quality results. I must hasten to say that quality education remains a target that we should always work towards. All of us here must be motivated by our vision to accelerate education delivery and like I indicated you are very central in these matters as circuit managers. I am sure that we all share a view that we must turn things around and it should start by engagement on matters of interest. We should be able to move from here knowing that we have shared the challenges. We also need to understand that there is no magic wand for turning things around other than hard work, commitment and dedication to the assignments at hand.

It is important to give you an opportunity such as today to raise them, give them proper context, so that we collectively begin a process of addressing them and begin to act in the interest of education for our learners. Let us all be free to participate so that we emerge from this meeting with circuit managers who must go back and play a pivotal role in school development and support.

Together we move South Africa Forward!

I thank you.

