

REPORT OF THE SITE VISITS CONDUCTED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON WOMEN, YOUTH, CHILDREN AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S SPECIAL AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS (THANDUXOLO, JEREMIA MDAKA, WH DE KLERK) IN NKANGALA DISTRICT, EMALAHLENI MUNICIPALITY 05 SEPTEMBER 2014.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Select Committee on Quality of Life and Status of Women, Youth, Children and People with Disabilities (the Committee) was established in terms of rule 135 (h) of Rules and Orders of the Mpumalanga Legislature. The mandate of the Committee is to conduct oversight over the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature, government departments and Public entities on compliance with the Employment Equity Act (AEE) and the progress made to improve the Quality of Life and Status of Women, Youth, Children and people with Disabilities (PWDs) in the province.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the site visits were:

- To assess the effective utilization of government funding and resources;
- To determine the achievements and challenges faced by Inclusive and Special schools in the province;
- To assess the implementation of policies.

3. METHOD OF WORK

The Select Committee met with the Department of Education Senior Managers from Head Office, District Senior Managers and the Principal of Thanduxolo. They were afforded an opportunity to brief the Committee on the status of inclusive and special schools in the province as well as their achievements and challenges. The briefing was done collectively through the presentation of a written report to the committee.

4. SITE VISIT AT THANDUXOLO SPECIAL SCHOOL

The briefing of the select committee by the department of education took place at Thanduxolo Special School whereby a report on the status of inclusive and special schools in the province was presented. A list of full service and inclusive schools per district was presented as indicated in the table below:

Full-Service (Inclusive) Schools	
District	Total Number of designated School
Bohlabelo	40
Ehlanzeni	30
Gert Sibande	30
Nkangala	40
Total	140

The Committee wanted clarity on the distinction between a full-service and an inclusive school; as whether are they looking in terms of ability or disability and the provisioning equal to the needs in terms of type of the disability and the number of learners that they may have. Does it mean a full service school is one that takes care of all levels of learners as opposed to special schools that may not take care of all categories of learners and does Thanduxolo not fit the level of a full service school.

The committee noted that there are four (4) full service schools within the district which is two (2) for each circuit. The full service is a school that caters learners who experience various challenges at a moderate level that requires remedies specialist, that's why in each School there are school based support teams established and those teams are looking at the types of necessity to learning and with the teams there are specialists that can be able to handle different types of challenges.

Further to that, learners who require severe levels of support are put in special schools serve as resource centers to full service school and well-resourced in terms of the human resource and workshops.

SPECIALIZED SUPPORT SERVICE IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Post Description	Bohlabela District	Enhlanzeni	Gert Sibande	Nkangala District
Therapist	1	2	4	2
Psychologist	0	0	3	1
Professional Nurse	1	1	0	1
Remedial Teachers	0	4	4	13
Special Needs Teachers	0	4	4	13
Teachers Assistan/Aides	23	9	10	14
Total	25	20	25	44

The committee wanted clarity in terms of human resource in Bohlabela District as there is high number of vacant posts as compared to all other districts and what plans to address such as this disadvantaged them.

The department indicated that a psychologist was appointed at Bohlabela; and will resume when the school open as there was no special school in that district as it was former Limpopo province.

Further to that, the department does not have a qualified psychologist, but only have officials with psychology three (3) and some went to an extend of getting masters degrees with one doing a doctorate attached to a psychological unit that support the schools . They are the ones who assist learners with counseling and other traumatic experiences. However, they also have an agreement with the department of Health for an intake of psychologists.

The committee wanted to know on whether the department is not experiencing a challenge in attracting specialists because of the remuneration packages in the public sector, and how the department is navigating a way to address such a challenge.

The committee noted that the post establishment with teachers to special schools is not different in such a way that it can attract special teachers.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

ON PROVISION OF TRANSPORT TO SPECIAL SCHOOL			
Name of Special School	Description	Financial Year	Amount
Mantjedi Masinakane Wolvenkop Pelonolo	4x50 Seater Adapted Buses	2012/13	R4,3 m
Thanduxolo Silindokuhle Kamagugu	3x23 Seater Buses	2013/14	R2 125 112.76
Estralita	1x14 Seater Quantum	2013/14	R334 616.22
Kamagugu Mariatjie Osizweni	3x Sedans	2013/14	R524 648. 52

With regard to the stolen bus at Masinakane the committee wanted to be furnished with a progress report on steps taken to deal with the matter; as well as the report of the investigation by police. In view of what happened to Masinakane the committee wanted to know the criteria used to employ the bus drivers and whether the drivers are being vetted considering the incident may recur and result in the loss of more busses though they are equipped with sophisticated tracking devices.

Further to that, the committee wanted to know security measures in place to prevent these types of criminal activities and where was the security on the day of disappearance as should take responsibility for the loss.

The committee noted that the department has not yet appointed drivers but use the drivers within the institutions where there is a need and at the moment the department has taken all the buses and places them at district premises for safety. In relation to a stolen bus, security were held at gunpoint and ordered to lie down and there was nothing they could do and the department has not yet come up with a concrete plan on security measures.

The committee noted that the kitchen at Thanduxolo was not included in the initial building plan and as a result the school improvised by turning the hospitality classroom into a place where they prepare food for learners.

The committee wanted to know the plan to overcome the challenge of occupational therapist and the level of package of social workers within the department; and how are they supervised and managed as there are lots of changes within the profession.

The committee noted that within the district there is a sub-directorate and within the sub-directorate there are divisions and divisional heads who manage social workers. Social workers report to the deputy chief education specialist within the division. However in terms of development there are supervisors in the department of Social Development where they meet as they don't have senior social workers.

The department does also have a challenge of remuneration to compete with the packages of the department of Health, but last year the OSD for other special schools was approved at national level and people were upgraded. As advertised there is a reasonable number of applicants, however there is still packages like rural allowance that still widens the gap between the Department of Education and Health in terms of remuneration packages.

The committee noted that a site that was once given for construction of a school for deaf learners in Mbombela that is still under planning and design, which was later taken back and the committee wanted to know plans the department have in getting another site to build this highly needed school as it's long overdue.

The department indicated that a move towards building a big comprehensive school started in 2011 and a task team was put in place in 2012. A site was allocated in 2013, the whole year they were writing to the Mbombela Local Municipality and all they received were promises for the request of the site. Due to changes of Municipal Managers no one wanted to be in charge or take the responsibility up to this year.

Further to that, it has been dragging for too long and the learners have a challenge as the schools that accommodate them for now are primary schools and when they reach the High school level they have to go to other provinces particularly Gauteng.

The committee noted that a team of Mr. Maloba wrote to MEGA as they have a site that was initially reserved for the University and because of the disbandment of the board the new interim board was put in place but it is still a challenge for now though they indicated that they are looking into the matter. However last month responsibility was given to Ms. Khumalo in the department of Public Works so that she can liaise with the interim board failing that the department has to look for other site.

Special Schools

The department indicated that:

- There are 18 Special Schools in the province excluding the newly established Tsakane Special School in Bohlabela District.
- 03 Child & Youth Care Centres
- 04 Moderates intellectual Disability
- 11 Severe Intellectual Disability

The committee inquired the location of the three Child & Youth Care Centres for oversight purpose and the department indicated that they are Thokomala under the child justice act; George Mayor in Standerton and Osizweni in Ogies. These schools are managed by two departments due to prescripts of the new children's act as social development is responsible for residential facilities and education and there is a center manager and the principal but they are able to work and support one another.

The following were questions raised by the committee and requested the department to respond in writing due to time constraints:

1. In terms of the white paper 6 (WP6) of inclusive and special education school, the department tends to intergrade education that's why the department have full service schools. What is the department doing in order to raise public awareness, as there is still a challenge of community members who don't want to bring their children.

In response, at the level of districts, campaigns are coordinated within a cluster of schools from time to time using the health calendar.

2. After post-schooling what is it the department want to achieve, whether they get self-employed or economically sustainable, what programmes does the department have in ensuring sustainability?

In response, all the special schools have numerous business partners and the learners are constantly exposed to the world of work. Certain Special schools e.g. Kamagugu, Marietjie and Estralita allow creation learners to spend time on certain days during the week (normally on Fridays) at a business for example a printing firm where they can experience how the business functions and what role they can play.

Practical training takes place during these visits to ensure later employment at the relevant firm. Certain business are willing to accommodate the severely intellectually disable in a field of protected labor in a field of protected labour. Special Schools are also inconstant contact with other stakeholders such as skills centered, Dept. of Labour and training institutions and the possibility of learnerships.

3. The committee requests a progress report on what transpired in the stolen bus at Masinakane.

In response, the incident was reported to saps (Case no: 33/01/2014). The department has been informed there is an alleged suspect and the investigation is still on. In addition, Masinakane Special School submitted specification of the bus to the Department of Community Safety, Security and Liaison (Nkangala District) as they were informed that the responsible security company (MCC Security Company) that was on duty on the night when the bus was stolen should take responsibility.

4. Are there any programmes for the MEC of education and Health in ensuring that as province bursaries are given to deaf teachers, psychologist, specialist teachers to close the gap as there was none in the advertisement bursary 2013/14?

In response, No, however 07 posts were created in 2010 for Deaf Teachers Assistants and appointments were made for the following schools:

- Marietjie Special School
- Father Charles Full -Service School
- Mareleng Full -Service School
- Masinakane Special School
- Silindokuhle Special School
- Kamagugu Special School
- Bukhosibetfu Full -Service School

Furthermore, the department indicated that they provide for people with disabilities though it's Bursary Scheme.

A) FINDINGS

- 1) The department does not have a concrete security plan in place for buses.
- 2) There was not much commitment in ensuring that the stolen bus is recovered.
- 3) The initial plan of the Thanduxolo School having no kitchen.
- 4) Does not have a strategy in attracting and keeping social workers
- 5) Getting a site for building a school for the deaf learners still a challenge.

B) RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) The department must come up with a comprehensive security plan for the buses to avoid further loss.
- 2) The department must provide a comprehensive report of the stolen bus and follow-ups made from the police in recovering the bus.
- 3) Must ensure that when designing plans of Special school kitchens must be included.
- 4) Advise the department to try and look at the social workers package versa-via of Social Development so that there is sustainability of social workers.
- 5) The department must ensure that follow-ups are made in getting the site as it is long overdue.

4.2.1 Site Inspection conducted at Jeremia Mdaka Inclusive School

The department accompanied the Committee to Jeremia Mdaka where it interacted with the Principal Mr. Mnguni E.L. The committee wanted to know how many general workers are within the school as the school yard and toilets were not conducive and how is the working relationship between the principal and the management board in terms of dedication of powers.

The committee noted that 3 males and 2 females are working for the school as general workers and (two) 2 acting HOD's.

SIDE INSPECTION FINDINGS

After the discussions between the select Committee and the district management together with the Head of Department, the select Committee found the following:

- 1) The garden of the school is too small to cater the number of children in the school.
- 2) There is no delegation of powers between the principal, HOD and the management
- 3) The school was not conducive for learning as it was dirty
- 4) The kitchen was not hygienic
- 5) The school does have general workers but the yard and toilets not conducive for learners.

A) RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) The School should extend the garden so that it will produce enough for the use of learners in the kitchen.
- 2) The Principal must delegate powers and responsibility to the HOD and management committee in managing the school.

- 3) The Principal together with the District must ensure that the school is clean and a progress report in this regard should be provided within 7 days after the site visit. learners should be part of the cleanliness of the school
- 4) Environmental Inspectors should be involved in ensuring that the school is always clean.
- 5) The principal must ensure that the school kitchen is painted with brighter color to avoid cockroach and germs in such dark environment.
- 6) The principal must involve the general workers as per their job description and monitor the cleanness of toilets.

4. SITE VISIT AT WH DE KLERK

The Committee appreciated the fact that the HW de Klerk had a full service workshop and welcome the commitment shown by the principal and his management in establishing a kitchen and the dining hall as their initiative. The principal requested that Technical Teachers training be provided.

A) SITE INSPECTION FINDINGS

- 1) The school workshop in orders but first aid kit is kept far from the workshops
- 2) The committee welcomes the initiative made by the school management in ensuring that a dining hall is in place for the learners.

B) RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Ensure that first aid kits are in place all the time
- 2) The Principal and the Committee should keep up the good work and set a precedence that will be left as a legacy and encourage the ones after him to take it forward after his retirement.

The Chairperson thanked all the Honorable Members who took part in the site visits and further extended his words of gratitude to the department of Education; Senior Managers as well as the support staff. Therefore, on behalf of the Select Committee, the Honorable Chairperson hereby implores the august House to endorse the report and all the recommendations thereof.

HON. CG SHABALALA [MPL]
CHAIRPERSON: SELECT COMMITTEE ON
WOMEN, YOUTH, CHILDREN AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

DATE