



CLASS OF 2019 SCALES NEW HEIGHTS

ITS ABOUT RESOURCES AND COMMITMENT, NOT STATUS

By Thebe Mabanga



The results of the National Senior Certificate (NSC), which were released on Tuesday to reveal a generation of history makers who achieved a pass rate of 81, 3%, also brought forward several stark realities and uncomfortable truths about the state of education in South Africa.

Although breaking through the 80% barrier was the result of logical progression from a decade of annual average growth of about 1,6% starting from 62,6% in 2008, its still felt as if, in the words of basic education minister Angie Motshekga, a ceiling had been broken and some kind of plateau had been reached.

There was a decline in the number of full time candidates who sat for these exams, with 616 754 candidates writing, just under 8000 fewer than the preceding year. Of these, 504 303 wrote the finals, a difference of 112 451. A 170 963 candidates were registered.

The story of these results is the remarkable performance of Free

State, North West and the Eastern Cape. The Free State raised its pass rate from 87,5% to 88,4% and kick Gauteng off the top spot. The North West recorded an increase of 5,6 percentage points from 81,1% to 86,8% to crack into the top three while the Eastern Cape, while still lagging at 8th, still raised its rate from 70,6% to an impressive 76,5%.

All but six of the 75 districts obtained 70% and above with Gauteng producing six of the top ten performing districts country-wide with Tshwane South, Gauteng North and Tshwane North leading the pack. Free Sate contributed two districts in Fezile Dabi and Xhariep while the North West (Bojanala Platinum District) and Northern Cape (Namaqua) had one each in the top ten. Gauteng's other districts in the top ten are Sedibeng East, Ekurhuleni North and Johannesburg West.

This means that a child who migrates with their parents who are looking for work from a poor rural area to any of these areas in Gauteng has significantly enhanced life prospects just by moving to the right district even if his parents end up living off grants in an informal settlement or an RDP house without work.

On the other hand, Limpopo produced six of the bottom ten districts, with Eastern Cape yielding three and Northern Cap one, all with pass rates of above 60%. A rising tide lifts all ships.

The results remind us that

resources and commitment, rather than whether a school is affluent or impoverished, determine its degree of success. But they also show that while those from poor back grounds are making strides and using education to get a foothold in a changing economy, those with resources continue to enjoy an advantage, as demonstrated by Gauteng's performance by district.

Motshekga used these results to point out that some of government's interventions over the past decade or so are starting to pay off, most notably those designed to keep children in school such as the introduction of no fee schools, feeding scheme and scholar transport and social grant, a package of measures which former statistician general Pali Lehohla calls a social wage.

Motshekga revealed that 87,7% of those who wrote matric started school in 2008, a significant improvement on the high dropout rate and even lower pass rate found when tracking a generation across its schooling life.

Motshekga pointed out that as South Africa enters the last decade of the National Development Vision 2030, its still far from attaining the vision of having "access to education and training of the highest quality, leading to significantly improved learning outcomes." The action plan to realise this goal entails increasing the number of Grade 12 passes who obtain bachelor passes, as well as to increase the number of those who pass Maths and science. On the evidence of these results,



**Admission
to Bachelor
Studies
increased
from
172 043
(33.6%)
to 186 058
(36.9%)**

that goal is far from being realised. A worrisome statistic is that 12000 fewer candidates and 14000 fewer registered for accounting and maths respectively. Enrolment across all key subjects was down except for history, geography and Maths literacy.

A key feature of these results is the performance of schools from poor areas, as ranked by quintiles, with the first quintile representing schools in the poorest areas while the fifth quintiles represent those in affluent areas. For schools that obtained between 0 and 20% there are 29 schools in quintile 1 and none in quintile 5. For schools that obtained between 20% and 40%, there are 94 schools in quintile 1 and 74 in quintile 2 and only 1 in quintile 5.

For schools that obtained between 80% and 100% there are 849 schools in quintile 1 and 408 in quintile 4 and 603 in quintile 5. Of schools that obtained exactly 100% the are 126 in quintile 122 while 36 and 97 are in quintiles 4 and 5.

But a depressing reality is that 10 schools in quintile 1 obtained exactly 0% pass rate, meaning that children from a poor area remain

trapped in their conditions as they cannot even make it past the first hurdle of obtaining a matric as a ticket out of poverty.

Admission to Bachelor Studies increased from 172 043 (33.6%) to 186 058 (36.9%) which suggest there is huge room for improvement. Learners from relatively poor areas achieved 55,4% bachelor pass while their wealthier counterpart obtained 44,6%, perhaps reflecting a greater desire on the part of poor learners to earn a foot hold on tertiary education.

For Motshekga the results ticked all the necessary boxes. The system, which she described as being on the rise based on these results “demonstrated improvement in all areas relating to access, redress, equity, quality, efficiency and inclusivity” said Motshekga.

The department acknowledges there are however areas which require attention and these include enrolment and performance in gateway subjects , enrolment of learners with special needs and raising the bar in terms of learner performance levels above the old pass mark of 40%.

LEARNERS OVERCOME GREAT ODDS TO MAKE IT INTO TOP 30 MATRICS

By Lucas Ledwaba

The sight of the graves of his family members dotted around the homestead prompted Eastern Cape learner Lomso Dumezweni to enquire about the cause of their deaths.

On being told that many of them had died from chronic illnesses he resolved he was going to study medicine to ensure people in his village didn't die unnecessarily from illnesses that could be treated.

This week the matriculant from Nyanga Secondary School in Ncobo, Eastern Cape was among the top 30 matric achievers invited by Minister of Basic Education Angie Motshekga to the announcement of the national matric results at Vodaworld, Midrand in Gauteng.

Motshekga said the learners who came from public schools around the country were the pride of the nation who had excelled from 700 000 matric pupils who sat for the national exam in 2019.

The department of basic education said a total of 790 405 candidates sat for 147 question papers in 7 416 examination centres nationwide last year.

She said the country should not be afraid of the Fourth Industrial Revolution as this crop of learners was going to carry the country through the upcoming revolution through the skills they will acquire in higher education.

Dumezweni was still in bed at his

home in Sheshegu, Dutywa when the call inviting him to the ceremony came through. After his father broke the good news to him he rushed out into the street to celebrate the great news that edges him closer to his dream of being a doctor.

He is now going to study medicine at the University of the Western Cape, far away from the tough conditions of his village.

He was so determined to pass matric with flying colours he only visited his home village three times during the entire academic year, choosing to stay at the school hostel 75km from his home to put in extra work.

The Eastern Cape is one of the poorest provinces in the country, dogged by a lack of resources in schools.

Dumezweni and his colleagues were not left untouched by this dire lack of resources, having to make do with a science laboratory with barely any chemicals or tools to conduct experiments.

But this didn't deter him. He used his cellular phone to download experiments from the Internet.

Dumezweni is worried that his lack of access to computers may be a serious challenge in his first year of university study.

"That is a challenge many rural learners face. We have very little access to computers and I have heard that in varsity they use



computers every day. But I am ready for the challenge," he said.

In KwaZulu-Natal Bhakamandaba Makhonza's matric year was marred by the hospitalisation of his mother which badly affected his concentration.

"I thought we were going to lose her. The situation at home wasn't great. I still don't know how I did it," said Makhonza.

But he was not about to let this factor stand in the way of his dream to study actuarial science. His school was also dogged by a lack of resources which frustrated his efforts to master scientific experiments.

But help came through his teacher who upon recognising his burning desire to succeed and dire family circumstances, gave Makhonza his old, broken laptop. Makhonza got the old machine fixed and used it to download experiments and research information critical to his studies. On top of that he revised by tackling past matric papers.

His school Edendale Technical High School in Edendale near Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal is also afflicted by a lack of resources. But he is now on top of the world



after being among the top matric performers nationally. He is planning to study actuarial science. "My passion is in mathematics," he said.

Blessing Tsakane Chauke from Dendron Secondary School in Mogwadi, Limpopo, also overcame the odds of studying in a rural school to make the cut.

Motshekga praised the school for always having a learner in the top matriculants through the years despite their location in a rural area.

Chauke said discipline and working hard throughout the year prepared her for the tough end of year exams.

She is going to study chemical engineering "to broaden my skills and knowledge to become a professional engineer."

Greta Catharina Kupershoek from Hoërskool Middelburg in the coal mining town of Mpumalanga said she has now set her sights on studying actuarial science after acing her matric. She said her secret to success was balancing her

very active life as prefect and sports fanatic with her studies.

Mukona Martin Ranzida said being a learner at Mbilwi Secondary School in Sibasa, Limpopo, encouraged him to work hard because he didn't want to be one to dent the school's reputation as a national top performer.

"Our teachers also pushed us to work hard. We went to school on Saturdays and during holidays and that really helped," he said.

FREE STATE EDUCATION MEC NOW GUNS FOR 90%

By Charles Molele



Buoyed by the improved performance, which saw the Free State province retaining the top spot during the 2019 matric examination, education MEC Tate Makgoe has put his head on the block and vowed to obtain 90% during the 2020 matric examination.

“We are excited about reclaiming our position as the leading province in education. The debate between Free State and Gauteng province has now been closed. Our next target is 90%, an ebullient Makgoe said.

This is not entirely farfetched. The Free State is the only province that has ever broken the 90% target in past. In a wide-ranging interview with Inside Education soon after the announcement of the national senior certificate examination, Makgoe said the achievement of obtaining a pass rate of 88,4% was the result of sheer hard work. Makgoe, who is serving his second term as MEC for education believe that it is only through quality education that South Africa can

meet its developmental goals and confront head-on the complex challenges presented by the digital economy and the fourth industrial revolution. He said while the Free State is not well resourced due to the legacy of apartheid, his department will continue to prioritise education.

“We are going to try to maintain the top spot going into the future and ensure that education remains our key priority despite the historical challenges. He said his immediate task in 2020 and beyond was to put more emphasis on mathematics and various technical subjects.

“We are going to focus on mathematics and other technical subjects such as engineering in order to be able to attract skills in the province.

We need to strengthen mathematics from the foundation face upwards, said Makgoe. The MEC also added that the Free State would support more progressed learners in 2020.

“Our weakness is in the progress learners. This year we are number three or four in terms of supporting progress learners. Our target to reach 90% would depend largely on progressed learners,” said Makgoe.

Makgoe said the Free State will continue to promote the culture of academic excellence by conducting a special distinction camp for mathematics, physical science, accounting, life sciences and

business studies. He said in 2016, the Free State implemented a turnaround strategy which included the recruitment of excellent teachers supported by parents, members of governing bodies, mayors and councillors. To achieve the best results, the Free State provincial government in partnership with community radio stations conducted matric revision programmes in the afternoons discussing different topics on how to best to approach matric exams. The subjects usually included maths, English and Physical Science. This is why compared with other provinces, Free State is on the top spot on the crucial subjects of accounting, physical sciences, life science and geography,” said Makgoe. He thanked the business community in the Free State, parents, teachers, universities and NGOs for their unwavering support on education and the learners.

A total of 616 754 full-time learners and 170 963 part-time learners wrote the final year exams, with all 75 national districts achieving more than a 60% pass rate. According to the Free State Premier’s coordinating forum, the Free State has increased its pass rate by almost 20% points from 69,4% in 2015 to the current 88,4% in 2019. Under Makgoe, Free State had claimed the top spot for three consecutive years in 2015, 2016 and 2017. Basic Education Minister congratulated Free State for reclaiming their top position after it lost the spot to Gauteng in 2018.

MATRIC RESULTS 2019 - SOME PRECIOUS MOMENTS



Well Done Class of 2019!

By Thebe Mabanga



Gauteng's performance in the 2019 Matric results can be attributed to the improved performance of its township schools as a result of investment by government and the commitment of learners. This is according to the Gauteng MEC for education, the popular Panyaza Lesufi, who spoke on the side lines of the release of the National Senior Certificate in Midrand on Tuesday.

The province produced results reflective of its status as the country's economic hub and relatively better resourced. Gauteng lost its position as the top performing province to the Free State as its pass rate dipped from 87,9% to 87,2%. But Lesufi was unfazed nor disheartened by the performance and heartily congratulated his Free State counterpart Tate Makgoe on his province's performances.

Lesufi said the dip in performance was probably due to former Model C reaching their maturity after years of carrying their system with township schools improving their

performance. He pointed out the province's dominance in the top performing district, as well the highest proportion of bachelor passes as an indicator of the province's performance.

Gauteng produced six of the top ten performing districts countrywide with Tshwane South, Gauteng North and Tshwane North occupying the top three spots with pass rates of 93,3%; 90,7% and 90,6% respectively. Free State contributed two districts while the North West and Northern Cape had one each in the top ten.

Of the province's 97 829 candidates, 44,5% obtained bachelor pass, the highest proportion in the country, 30,3% obtained diploma passes while the remaining 12,5% obtained a Higher Certificate pass. Lesufi pointed to a school in Diepsloot that returned a 100% pass rate and 70% bachelor's pass rate and a technical school in Atteridgeville that also achieved a 100% pass rate.

"Our investment in township is

really paying off" he said, pointing to an ICT investment to a school in Tembisa where the investment also led to a dramatic rise in its pass rate. Lesufi said Investment in Gauteng schools has covered all areas including infrastructure through new and refurbished schools as well as learner and teacher support.

Under former Education MEC and now environment minister Barbara Creecy, the province put in place the Schools Enrichment Programme, which was designed to assist schools that had obtained a pass rate of between 0% and 10%. The programme offered extra lessons through Saturday classes and dedicated camps among a range of interventions.

Lesufi said that the programme remains in place and currently benefits about 1700 learners. Lesufi says the programme also benefitted schools in areas such as Olievenhoutbosch and parts of Centurion which in turn helped their districts become the top performing districts country wide. Lesufi will release Gauteng results on Wednesday.

TEACHERS MAY SOON MARK MATRIC SCRIPTS FROM THE BEACH

By Lucas Ledwaba

South African teachers could soon mark matric exam scripts from the comfort of their homes or even while relaxing on the beach if the Basic Education department's plan to introduce electronic marking system comes into effect.

Basic Education director general Hubert Mathanzima Mweli revealed during the presentation of his overview on matric results that the department was moving ahead with plans to introduce the electronic marking system that will see the department saving millions of rands printing materials.

Mweli said the department was currently spending a lot of resources on the exit point of the schooling system on markers, invigilators and printing of question papers among others. During the 2019 matric exams 8 million question papers were printed and 7,5 million scripts were marked in just 10 days.

Mweli believes interventions through the fourth industrial revolution could help save time, resources and money.

He said the department piloted electronic marking in Gauteng last year and this had been successful. "That's where we are going," said Mweli emphasising the significance of the project.

"You could mark the script in your home or even on the beach. You won't need to come to a marking centre. That would reduce the time



[and] costs and so on," he said.

Meanwhile, Mweli said the secret behind the improved performance of the class of 2019 was partly due to the spirit of team work in the department, which ensured the minister and MECs holding each other accountable.

He said president Cyril Ramaphosa expressed his support for the department to provide extra lessons to learners during his meeting with the minister and her team ahead of the announcement of the results on Tuesday night.

He said interventions through such programmes ensured that learners whose parents or guardians can't afford extra lessons receive such support. Mweli said this sort of intervention and commitment from the department was necessary because "extra tuition is making education extremely unaffordable."

Mweli said the president made an undertaking to ensure that treasury makes provision for such interventions not to be disrupted through budget cuts and cost containment. He said so far the learner support programme has

covered up to 300 000 learners. Minister Motshekga said the department was "increasingly prioritising interventions, improvement programmes, and policies that target improved quality of learning and teaching; and implementing accountability systems to ensure that quality outcomes are achieved right through the basic education system."

Mweli said the programme has received support from unions and that the department wouldn't succeed had it not been for support from the unions.

Mweli said he has asked the SA Democratic Teachers Union which holds forums for performing and underperforming principals in KwaZulu-Natal to ensure the programme extends to other provinces.

He said the class of 2019 saw an improvement in the standard of question papers and cited an example in which economics learners were asked to solve for x in respect of the problems currently experienced by Eskom. History learners had been asked

about the formation of the BRICS bank in an exam as part of ensuring that the subject includes contemporary and practical issues.

Motshekga said the Class of 2019 was offered targeted support aimed at ensuring that all learners receive maximum opportunities to succeed.

She said the 2019 learner support programmes “encompassed a broad collection of educational strategies, including supplementary materials, vacation and after school classes, teacher content, pedagogical and assessment support, mobilising volunteer tutors, as well as alternative and differentiated ways of grouping and teaching learners.”

“Schools also provided learner support programmes to address specific performance results or trends. NGOs, corporates, institutions of higher learning, community groups, and volunteer-based learning programmes, often worked in partnership with schools and provided highly valuable support to our learners...”



THREE PERCENT INCREASE FOR LIMPOPO BUT STILL LOTS TO BE DONE

By Lucas Ledwaba



Limpopo MEC for education Polly Boshielo is not fazed by the fact that her province scored the lowest in the 2019 matric results.

The province improved by 3% with a total average of 73%. In 2018 the province's matric results improved by 3,8% a marked improvement from 65.6% in 2017 to 69.4%.

Boshielo, who was appointed to the post in July last year said she was satisfied as the 73% average was the province's new record since 1996.

"It gives us hope. We are very happy. It shows that 80% is coming," she said after the matric results announcement at Vodaworld in Midrand on Tuesday night.

Boshielo said as part of her interventions to help improve results in the province she had visited more than 70 schools to encourage learners. She said they have also partnered with the SABC to provide learners with extra lessons and she also rebuilt her

team within the department. Boshielo said one of the challenges facing the province is a lack of resources in terms of infrastructure, ITC and general levels of poverty.

"The first problem is the level of poverty [and] the quality of our teaching but learners must also do their part. We need commitment from both teachers and learners," she said.

Although the province performed poorly, it featured in the top 10 districts. The Vhembe East district scored an impressive 81.5% with Club 100 school member Mbilwi Secondary and Dendron Secondary featuring prominently among the top achievers.

"I didn't expect less of Mbilwi. They also supported other schools around them to achieve better results," she said.

The province also produced a best overall performer in the special needs schools with visually

impaired learner Tiyani Mbendzani of the Revoni School for the Blind acing the category.

Mutshidzi Alucia Ganyane of Patrick Ramaano Secondary, also in Vhembe emerged as top performer in the quintile 2 category.

Lutendo Mulaisi of Thengwe Secondary scooped the top spot in the physical science category. Limpopo also produced 13 312 bachelor passes.

"It is remarkable to note that the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo – the three most rural provinces in the country, produced a combined total of 70 967 distinctions, which is equivalent to 45.2%. In the 12 key subjects (including Accounting, Business Studies, Economics, Mathematics, and Physical Science among others), the total number of distinctions stands at 60 870 – an improvement of 3.5% from 2018," Motshekga said in announcing the results.

By Thebe Mabanga



The Western Cape's slightly different approach to school funding and quality assurance of its public schools appear to be yielding results as the province maintained its high performance standards in the National Senior Certificate. Debbie Schaffer, the MEC for Education in the Democratic Alliance run province said:

"This is a result of dedicated hard work by many people over many years." Schaffer said following the release of the National Senior Certificate results in Midrand on Tuesday.

The Western Cape increased its pass rate from 81,5% to 82,3 % but saw its ranking slip from third to fourth due to the improved performance of the Free State and North West, who took up the first and third spot respectively. If progressed learners are excluded, the provinces pass rate moves up to 84,1%.

Of the provinces 50 404 candidates, 21 981 or 43,6% obtained bachelor passes, the second highest proportion behind Gauteng, 25,8% obtained diploma

passes while 12,9% or 6477 obtained a higher certificate pass. Of the provinces eight districts, only one obtained between 70 and 79% pass rate while the rest obtained 80% and above.

Schaffer says her departments approach has been pro poor for a long time and this has gone some way to enhancing performance. She says that schools in the first to the third quintile, which are the poorest to working class areas all receive the same amount of funding. The higher the quintile a school is in the more affluent the area.

Schaffer says schools also have a n opportunity to apply to become a no fee school, which influences the amount of funding per learner allocated to a school while schools can also apply and motivate to be moved across quintiles, which also influences funding allocation.

The province currently has about a third of its schools are no fee schools. Schaffer notes that the demand for more resources is higher but it is become increasingly difficult as her department budget "is being continually cut" by national government.

Schaffer says their next challenge is allocating more resources to improve the quality of teaching as

well as the functionality of the school to improve areas such as access, infrastructure and other areas, again with a bias to towards schools in poorer areas.

Schaffer says she has passed through the Western Cape legislature a bill to establish School Evaluation Authority as an independent body. This will allow public schools to be assessed and have results published regularly. This allow parents, both prospective and current, to be able to make an informed decision about a school's performance.

Schaffer notes that while it is true that the Western Cape has a high number of good public schools, this does not tell the whole story as Gauteng and Kwa Zulu Natal also has many good public schools.

Schaffer expressed doubt whether this year's overall performance of 81,3% can be maintained. This is partly because of the pending phasing out of the Multiple exam opportunity which allows a candidate to write their exams over two sessions at different times of the year and in last year's exams benefited about 20% of candidates and without these, more would have struggled.

The Western Cape results will be released at the Paarl Gymnasium

RAMAPHOSA HAILS IMPROVED MATRIC RESULTS AS A SIGN SA IS ON AN UPWARD TRAJECTORY

By Riyaz Patel

President Cyril Ramaphosa has hailed the 81,3% 2019 matric pass rate, saying its a “clear signal that government’s substantial investment in education, in pupil and teacher support and in educational infrastructure is yielding results.”

The results, described as a “triumph” by the President, are the highest since the advent of democracy in 1994, and the first time the combined matric pass rate has breached the 80% threshold.

“South Africans can be proud that education, like most aspects of our nation’s development, is on an upward trajectory which should inspire all of us to work together to accelerate and maintain excellence,” Ramaphosa said.

Minister of Basic Education Angie Motshekga announced Tuesday evening, that 787 717 candidates sat for the 2019 National Senior Certificate Examinations countrywide.

The 2019 pass rate represents a 3,1% improvement from 2018 when the national pass rate stood at 78,2%.

The Eastern Cape recorded the highest improvement in the matric pass rate, and not one of the country’s 75 districts performed below 60%.

“These are stellar achievements,” said President Ramaphosa.



Announcing the results at Vodaworld in Midrand, Motshekga pointed to the increase in specialized schools offering subjects like agricultural studies and maritime studies as well as the introduction of subjects such as entrepreneurship into the national curriculum.

“These are critical subjects that will enable us to meet the needs of our economy and prepare our young people for the workplace of the future: in this regard the Class of 2019 are pioneers,” Ramaphosa said.

“To the Class of 2019, you have done yourselves proud and returned the investment made in you by your families, teachers,

communities and mentors.”

The President also had consoling words for those candidates who did not perform well.

“Do not be discouraged, but courageously persevere towards your goals,” Ramaphosa said; adding that government would continue to provide support to learners to complete their education as well as to address weaknesses in the system.

The President urged learners across all grades to embrace learning as a lifelong and pleasurable pursuit that not only adds economic value and enhances employability, but which also “enhances people’s outlook on life and their contribution to society beyond the world of work.”

WE'RE THE BEST IN TERMS OF QUALITY OF MATRIC, SAYS EC MEC

By Charles Molele

The MEC for Education in the Eastern Cape, Fundile Gade, said the Education Transformation Plan, adopted by the executive council three years ago, is now bearing fruit.

Gade, speaking to Inside Education at the breakfast held in honour of top achievers hosted by Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga, said with the implementation of the plan, the Eastern Cape Education Department was not surprised that the province improved its matric pass rate by 5.9% for the Class of 2019.

This means the province has achieved overall pass rate of 76.5%.

Eastern Cape has had the worst matric results in the last five years.

The provincial education plan includes the provision of support for the 12 education districts, including reducing the number of districts from 23 to 12, filling of vacant posts, and the regular monitoring of progress in schools using technology.

"The transformation plan has yielded results. During the 2017, 2018 and 2019, we have seen the ascendance. We have close the gap with other provinces and we have now improved bachelor passes by 34%," said Gade.

"We are the best province in terms of quality of matric results in South Africa, which is basically our strategy." He reiterated his predecessor's grand vision for the



Eastern Cape, saying the long-term goal for the province is to reach an 80% matric pass rate.

He said the transformation plan has contributed to the improvement not only of the matric pass rate, but of the entire schooling system from grade one.

Gade said he was deeply concerned by the Eastern Cape's position of always being at the bottom of the list, but acknowledged that the problems affecting his province were historical, citing infrastructure development as one of the biggest challenges.

"The issue of pit latrines is also one of the problems in our province. However, we have set aside R700 million to deal with pit latrines," said Gade.

He added that the province was also phasing out unviable schools and reducing them from 5 400 to only 3000 schools.

"We are ready for the 2020 academic year, and we are planning to fill all vacant positions for senior managers," he said.

The Eastern Cape Education department will also introduce e-learning programmes in order to deal with the challenges brought about by the Fourth Industrial Revolution 4IR.

The e-learning programme will include providing every learner in the Eastern Cape with an iPad because the days of the simple chalk and blackboard are rapidly becoming history with the digitization of education.

VODACOM PASSION FOR EDUCATION SHINES THROUGH ITS FOUNDATION

By Thebe Mabanga

Vodacom, South Africa's largest mobile network by subscribers, believes in using its Information and Communication Technology (ICT) capabilities to improve South Africa's education by empowering learners from early childhood development throughout their schooling years as well as teachers and communities.

Takalani Netshitenzhe, The Chief Officer for Corporate Affairs at Vodacom and Head of the Vodacom Foundation said Vodacom is driven by the belief that Vodacom's existing technology can be an enabler to the provision of quality education. The Foundation dedicates about 60% of its annual budget of R 110 million, or R 66 million, to education across six areas, or pillars, of support.

Netshitenze notes that Vodacom's education support has evolved into a multifaceted education ecosystem model in partnership with the Department of Basic Education (DBE), the Nelson Mandela Foundation, UN Women and Global Citizen. Aimed at supporting education from childhood through to adulthood, the system uses technological innovations to promote digital literacy.

One of the areas in education that Vodacom lends support to is Early Childhood Development, now recognised globally as an important stepping stone to successful schooling. This year Vodacom collaborated with the Nelson Mandela Foundation to make a difference in ECD Centres.

Vodacom spent R4 million renovating and upgrading five ECD centres located in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu Natal the Western Cape, Mpumalanga and Gauteng. The refurbishment entails renovation of buildings and elimination of pit latrines, the supply of for learning, playing and the preparation of meals.

Abbey Mokgwatsane, the executive manager for brand and Marketing at Vodacom notes that one of the critical pillars of the foundation's work is the complete digitisation of the South African public education syllabus by partnering with Department of Basic Education to provide free unlimited internet access to quality digital Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) aligned content through e-Schools

The education ecosystem is based on a school of excellence model, supporting 12 schools from each official language group across the country, and selected from the 3000 schools that Vodacom has supported with Information Communication Technologies since 2008. The resource is currently being used by 1 million learners. Mokgwatsane notes that some of the learners who are in the top 30 achievers nationally are active users of the tool.

Another critical and probably natural area from Vodacom to support is the provision of ICT infrastructure. The 12 schools of excellence have been provided with fully equipped computer centres and enhanced securities

and also has sanitation facilities upgraded.

One of South African government's biggest improvement areas in 25 years of democracy has been that of teacher development, which now represents Vodacom's third area of support. Through programmes such as the Fundza Lushaka Bursary programme government has succeeded in attracting and retaining younger teachers into the system.

These teachers receive training in traditional school subjects and not enough training in Information and Communications Technology. Thus teacher development requires even more attention than ever before, especially as the world is leaping into the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The objective of the teacher development program is to provide teachers with ICT training so that they can confidently use digital technologies and impart digital content.

Vodacom connected 92 of the 147 Government Teacher Centres across the country. This is a partnership driven by the Department of Basic Education. Mokgwatsane points out since the inception of the teacher training program, 250 000 teachers have been trained in ICTs and 14 000 teachers were part of a diagnostic assessment for Maths and English.

Vodacom recognises that communities play an important role in sustaining an education system and must in turn benefit from any investment in education.

The Teacher Centres that Vodacom helped established are also accessible to the communities as public libraries through which the community can access the internet. These have been used to train about 450 female farmers in Information and Communication Technology.

At a media breakfast hosted by Vodacom and the education department to honour the top achievers from the Class of 2019, Mokgwatsane urged the bright sparks to approach their post matric, early adulthood life like entrepreneurs, who identify a societal problem or a gap in the market and service that gap with innovation. He urged the youngsters to be driven by a sense of purpose and remain curious throughout their lives.

NW PROVINCE CHALKS UP HIGHEST EVER MATRIC PASS RATE AND BREAKS INTO TOP 3

By Riyaz Patel

North West education MEC Mmaphefo Matsemela was visibly delighted on Tuesday when Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga announced her province's massive improvement of 5,6% in its matric performance, which saw it climb up the standings and made it into the top 3 behind Gauteng and leader Free State.

The Province registered 33 014 full time and 6 940 part time candidates with a total number of 39 954 candidates who sat for the 2019 examinations in 435 centres, and chalked up an impressive 86.8% overall pass rate.

"We are very happy about our improved learner performance as this is the highest achievement we have registered. This year, 2020 we want to improve our performance even more than now," said an elated MEC Matsemela.

She said her department experienced some challenges in Bloemhof where the community denied learners the opportunity to sit for their final examinations, as well as in the Matlosana area where service delivery protests threatened to torpedo the examinations.

Matsemela said part of their strategy to overcome this challenge



was to establish study camps for all the Grade 12 learners who were from areas threatened by exam disruptions.

"All learners accommodated in the camps for the examinations, after writing they were transported and returned home safely.

"We pulled strides in ensuring that study camps were held at the end of each quarter to capacitate these results," said the MEC.

"I would like to thank all stakeholders who supported learners during the examination period. Our examinations were conducted and managed with extreme integrity. Our officials and invigilators ensured that learners followed the policy of the exam throughout until the last day of writing.

"As a province we are very excited that there were no incidents that could have jeopardised the credibility of the examinations," said Matsemela.

Amid the success and accolades, Matsemela echoed President Cyril Ramaphosa in issuing an appeal to those learners who received unsatisfactory results, imploring them not to lose hope.

"I would like to further appeal to all learners who wrote their examinations not to think about taking their lives when they get bad results. I want them to know that, failure does not mean it's the end of their lives. They should be patient and try again next year. Failure is only giving you a chance to try again and they will make it," said Matsemela.

The MEC also commended the management of the marking process.

The North West Education department will release the Class of 2019 matric results on Wednesday 08 January 2020 at Fields College Secondary school hall in Rustenburg at 09:00.

KZN VOWS TO BEAT THE ODDS DESPITE DAMAGED SCHOOLS

By Lucas Ledwaba

KwaZulu-Natal MEC for education Kwazi Mshengu says the province which has more than 70% of schools in rural areas is working on plans to ensure learners are not disadvantaged by a lack of resources.

KwaZulu-Natal scored 81,3% in the 2019 matric results, standing at position five. In 2018 KwaZulu-Natal scored 76.8%, an improvement of 3.2% from the 73.6% it scored in 2017. The province was fifth after Free State at 88.4%, Gauteng at 87.2%, North West at 86.8% and Western Cape 82.3%.

“Whenever there is a lack of resources, it will impact on the results,” said Mshengu who studied in a rural area in the Harry Gwala District of the province.

“We didn’t have anything except the walls, the black boards and the teacher. The first time I touched a computer was when I got to university. All those things we used to imagine them. You can't expect a better performance in maths and science technology with imagination. Learners must be given resources to do practicals and ready to have first time experience,” Mshengu said.

He said the department has launched the e-learning project in rural schools and it is being rolled out “with a clear direction that we need to upgrade the rural schools so that they are on par with those in urban areas.”

“So we are trying our best with limited resources that we have to ensure that each and every school have better resources. We are also encouraging shared services amongst the schools because it is not possible to give all resources to 6 000 schools that we have in KwaZulu-Natal,” said Mshengu. The province was hit by storms towards the end of last year which left 104 schools destroyed. But Mshengu said this will not deter the province from commencing with teaching on the first day of the first term.

He said the department is in the process of deploying mobile classrooms.

“I can say with certainty that there will be no school that will not be teaching and learning at the first day because of storm damages. We are working with the national department of education as well as Cogta to ensure that we get some relief in terms of disaster funding so that we are able to rebuild this schools,” said Mshengu.



MPUMALANGA, NC BOTH ACE THEIR MATRIC RESULTS

By Thebe Mabanga



Both Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape achieved a pleasing set of results from the National Senior Certificate released on Tuesday, both managing to increase their pass rates despite a slide or no change in ranking and increased their number of bachelors passes.

Mpumalanga recorded a 1,4 percentage point increase from 79% to 80,3%. The province slipped from number 5 to 6 due to improved performance of provinces such as the Free State the North West and Kwa Zulu Natal, which pushed Mpumalanga down the rankings.

The Northern Cape kept its ranking of 7th after increasing its pass rate from 73,3% to 76,5%. Mpumalanga had 43 559 candidates compared to the Northern Cape's 9138.

Mpumalanga notched 32,7% bachelors pass, slightly up from 29,6% last year; 30,1% diploma pass and 17,5% higher certificate. The Northern Cape came in with 30,3% bachelors pass, significantly

up from 26,1%; 28,7% diploma pass and 17,5% Higher certificate passes.

The Northern Cape produced one of the top ten performing districts on the country in Namaqualand with an 89,9% pass while also having the misfortune of producing one of the bottom ten in Pixley ka Seme district, although with an impressive 72,3%. Both provinces also managed to roughly match the national average of having just over half their candidates who are grant recipients (53%) pass their exams.

Both provinces are predominantly rural with a rich mining and agricultural economic base. Mpumalanga mines coal and grows maize while the Northern Cape is rich in iron ore, zinc and manganese and has a wine growing region.

The provinces will be slightly encouraged by the matric results as they both need to retain skills to grow their economies and both provinces have been endowed with new universities in the past ten years.

