

MEDIA ADVISORY

BASIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT BRIEFS PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON THE GENERAL EDUCATION CERTIFICATE

The Department of Basic Education briefed the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education this morning on the General Education Certificate (GEC) and General Occupational Certificate (GOC) for Grade 9.

The misinterpretation and reporting of the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga's speech at the SADTU National Congress on 26 September, sparked a huge public debate on the General Education Certificate. Contrary to media reports that "learners would finish school in Grade 9," **the GEC is not an exit certificate**. The GEC and GOC will enable learners to elect various pathways and in fact continue with their education at different institutions where they will be exposed to skills training in available trades.

The Minister for Basic Education Mrs Angie Motshekga led a delegation of senior managers to Parliament earlier today. The Minister told members of the portfolio committee that the GEC was part of a skills revolution and a response by the sector to create an enabling environment for an integrated approach to education and training.

"Currently, there is a high dropout rate before Grade 12, peaking in Grades 10 and 11 (15.2% in 2012). Approximately a third of young people aged 15-24 years (3.4 million), are not in employment, education or training (NEET) and 2 million of whom have not finished Grade 12. Collectively this points to the need for a standardized assessment and a qualification to usher learners into different pathways at the end of compulsory schooling in the form of the GEC," said Dr Reginah Mhaule.

Learners drop out of school for various reasons, for which the department does not condone. The GEC is aimed at better positioning learners to take advantage of further education opportunities that exist as the GEC also provides a standardized benchmark against which schools can compare their internal assessments while bringing these qualifications to parity with the South African National Qualifications.

"This will allow for the enhanced quality of education and training while facilitating smoother access, mobility and progression within education, training and career paths," emphasized Chief Director for Curriculum Dr Moses Simelane.

The GEC aims to address the mismatch between the available Skills and Competencies against the expectations and requirements of the Labour market. The Department has worked closely with industries from aviation to maritime to develop the curriculum for these subjects that will assist learners to enter the job

markets that lack skilled workers to service these industries formalize the work that has been done, this is with the purpose of ensuring that the courses offered will be relevant and add value to industry.

South Africa is refocusing the curriculum towards a competence-based approach integrating the 21st century skills and competencies across the subjects and introducing new subjects and programmes that are responsive to the demands of the changing world, these include *Coding and Robotics, Marine Sciences, Hydro/Aquaponics, Aviation Sciences, Design across the Curriculum, Mathematics and Science as well as Aviation studies*. It is envisaged that these will create interest among young people and encourage them to stay in school. The department is working closely with industry in this regard.

The primary purpose of the GEC is to equip learners with the values, knowledge and skills that will enable or enhance meaningful participation in society, contribute towards developing sustainable communities, provide a basis for learning in further education and training, and establish a firm foundation for the assumption of a productive and responsible role in the workplace.

The GEC certificate is predicated on the 3-Stream Model, which has the academic pathway, the technical vocational pathway and the technical/occupational pathway.

The objectives of the Proposed Three Stream Model are as follows:

- To implement learning pathways that meet the diverse needs of the young people in the country;
- To empower learners to be creative and organised system thinkers;
- To promote the acquisition of skills and competencies for a changing world;
- To focus on the foundational skills of reading, writing and counting (arithmetic); and
- To improve the quality and efficiency of learning outcomes throughout the sector.

The sector has unveiled the following schools of skill and specialisation:

- Σ Mathematics & Science
- Σ Agricultural Science
- Σ Engineering
- Σ Aviation
- Σ Mining
- Σ Media
- Σ Innovation Centers/Hub
- Σ Maritime
- Σ High Tech

- Σ Commercials
- Σ Hospitality/Services
- Σ Schools of Skill
- Σ Arts
- Σ Sports School of Excellence

The 1995 White Paper on Education acknowledges that curriculum choice can be diversified. Moreover, the system must increasingly open access to education and training opportunities, provide means for learners to move from one context to another, and increase the range of learning possibilities.

The three Stream Model will provide reliable data for articulation of learners into Academic, Technical Vocational and Technical Occupational pathways in FET band (both schools and TVET colleges).

It is also important to note that this is in line with International Best Practice. A survey of 18 countries, Asian Tigers (Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong), administer an exam at the end of primary and secondary school. Asian Tigers are the four East Asian economies that underwent rapid industrialisation and maintained exceptionally high growth rates (>7%) between 1960s and 1990s). In addition, most African countries administer an examination at the end of primary and secondary schooling.

In summary, the Minister, Mrs Angie Motshekga said: “The proposal of the GEC and three stream model is not new. The sector is now moving towards implementation, as this will not only fundamentally/radically change the Education and Training Landscape, but will contribute immensely to the skills revolution desperately needed by the country.”

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