



SPEECH BY HEAD OF THE KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT DR. K.B. MBANJWA AT THE ABET GRADUATION CEREMONY HELD ON FRIDAY, 7 APRIL 2006.

All Protocol Observed.

There is no doubt that learning how to read and write opens the door to many possibilities. Some of these possibilities include knowledge about how to stay healthy and prevent HIV/AIDS, knowledge about reducing violence through encouraging understanding, tolerance, and self reliance, as well as knowledge about several other related issues.

Basic literacy and life skills are fundamental to an individual's ability to be self supporting and can help prevent poverty, sickness and conflict. Basic education can also help individuals reach their full potential as productive members of society.

It is said that 13, 2 million people in South Africa have less than a Grade 9 education. A further 4, 2 million adults have no schooling whatsoever. Most South Africans are unable to perform basic day-to-day life activities such as opening a bank account, signing, reading a pay slip, operating an auto teller machine, reading a newspaper and so on.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport nurtures a culture of lifelong learning amongst its staff, and to this end, the department supports the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programme. The Department commenced with this programme during May 2003 to cater mainly for illiterate and semi-illiterate employees with education levels below Grade 10 (Standard 8).

ANNUAL EXPENDITURE TRENDS

The expenditure trends since the introduction of this programme are as follows:

YEAR	ANNUAL EXPENDITURE
2003 – 2004	R663 183.20
2004 – 2005	R3 783 138.40
2005 – 2006	R3 015 310.20

Fluctuations in the abovementioned figures (particularly 2004/2005) is due to the fact that, in that financial year, this Department fully hosted the ABET graduation ceremony without any financial assistance from other stakeholders whilst in 2005/2006, the Office of the Premier co-hosted the graduation ceremony.

ABET was introduced to address the problem of illiteracy among employees who are important resources of the department as well as citizens of our country. Moreover, ABET was undertaken with a particular focus, including the following:

- To provide general education as the basic foundation that enables learners to develop their full potential, and to engage in opportunities for further education and training and lifelong learning.
- To develop a framework for the recognition of prior knowledge, skills and abilities gained through life experience.
- To develop a curriculum framework that will equip learners with the knowledge, attitude, skills and capacity to fully participate in all aspects of society.
- To develop literacy, language and communication skills in one or more languages.

- To develop numeric and mathematical skills.
- To develop a critical understanding of the society in which learners live.
- To develop a critical understanding of the context in which learners live, work and interact with others at local, national and global level.
- To develop technical and practical skills, knowledge and understanding.
- To develop an understanding of the world of science and technology.
- To address past inequalities and contribute towards the building of a truly democratic society.

This programme was not only aimed at enabling employees to progress to higher educational levels, but to also equip them with day-to-day life skills in order for them to participate fully in the whole spectrum of social, political and economic development.

The mandate to pursue ABET was derived from the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, Chapter 2, section 29(1) which reads: “everyone has the right”

- to a basic education, including Adult Basic Education, and
- to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible”.

In the past, education was only accessible to certain people who could afford it. After the new Constitutional dispensation, the bill of rights ensured that all South Africans gain access to education.

The KZN Transport Department’s Human Resource Development Strategy aims to provide a skills development mechanism affirmative of sustainable growth, development, equity and capacity building.

ENROLMENT TRENDS

Since 2003 there has been an increase in the number of ABET learners as follows:

YEAR	LEARNERS' INTAKE
2003 - 2004	850
2004 - 2005	1018
2005 - 2006	1350

ABET EDUCATORS

At present the department has 29 qualified ABET Educators who are based at the Regions and are responsible for teaching ABET in those respective Regions. They are employed on an annual contract basis. Their employment contracts may be renewed as deemed necessary.

The total number of ABET educators per Region is as follows:

REGION	NUMBER OF ABET EDUCATORS
Pietermaritzburg	4
Durban	7
Ladysmith	7
Empangeni	11

ACHIEVEMENTS

a) Pass rate

Since learners wrote the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) examinations, the pass rate for March 2005 was 75% and it increased to 85% in December 2005. In certain regions a noticeable impact in improving learners' communication skills has been reported.

b) Number of ABET learners

In each financial year the number of new learners who join the programme is increasing and we will continue to encourage employees to study further.

c) Attendance rate

The ABET monthly reports indicate good attendance by learners. This indicates some improvement, when compared to previous years, which is symbolic of a keen interest that has been instilled into learners since the start of the programme.

An approach of conducting all classes in one day has been implemented in some regions. This enables all learners to attend on one day and be conveniently available to perform interdependent functions at their respective work stations.

In closing, I would like to congratulate all those who passed their examinations. I commend you on your hard work. To those who did not make it, please remember that nothing is impossible.

When I look at you, I can see success glittering in your eyeballs symbolising your potential and the possibility of what is mistakenly referred to as the impossible. However, I salute you for your efforts. Though some of you did not make it, you are far better than those who failed to try. To those of you who have not embarked on any form of learning, I want to encourage you to do so as education is a fundamental right and a basic human right in South Africa.

Lastly, may I remind you that the socio economic well-being of our country and the struggle to meet global challenges and competition, calls for your energetic and tireless efforts and courage. The sky is the limit and it is up to you to choose how far you can go. As it is written, “the difference between the possible and the impossible lies in a person’s determination.”

Thank you.

