



SPEECH NOTES BY KWAZULU-NATAL TRANSPORT HEAD MR CHRIS HLABISA AT THE ABET GRADUATION CEREMONY HELD ON FRIDAY, 30 JULY 2010.

All Protocol Observed.

South Africa is a democratic country, characterized by inequalities which require redress, equity and reconstruction and indeed all of us are in agreement that education is an essential component of the reconstruction of the South African society.

As South Africans, and employees in this Department, I am of the opinion that our wish is that we develop a skilled and literate South Africa where all citizens will receive education which will enable active participation in socio-economic processes that will contribute to reconstruction and economic development.

Adult Basic Education and Training provides adult learners with a stepping stone in their path in lifelong learning and development. ABET programmes open the doors of learning to the previously disadvantaged communities. ABET empowers them with relevant skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that will equip them to cope with the global challenges of the 21st century.

Adult learners will be empowered to also enjoy a certain degree of independence and can learn how to apply for such facilities like telephones, ID, pension, licence etc. They are able to identify road signs/ signals and save their own lives as well as others.

As part of broad government intentions, ABET addresses the following:

- The vigorous fight against unemployment in the Province;
- The alleviation of poverty;
- Fighting against crime;
- Accelerating economic growth; and
- Uplifting the standard of living which will impact in the reduction of dreadful diseases including HIV/AIDS.

A particular image of an adult learner holds many of us captive. It is a picture of a gogo (granny) or a mkhulu (grandfather) whose sole purpose of learning is to be able to read his/her bible, sign his/her name for the government old age grant and measure correctly grandchildren's medication. However many of the adult learners found at workplace classes do not fit the image of a gogo or a mkhulu. And of course there is nothing wrong with that.

The role of ABET in the workplace is viewed as a means to increase productivity and eliminate poverty. It has an intrinsic value in terms of empowering individuals to keep up with the changes in the economic, technological, political, social and cultural aspects of life.

Each individual has the potential to be whatever they want to be and the programme assists people to either improve or excel at what they do at their workplace. The aim is to ensure that we have more informed learners because we believe that when workers are more informed, their performance will improve.

We know that employees who have joined the programme are able to perform various functions in their stations, for example,

- Record all work-related data accurately.
- Literate workers can plan their work better because they understand time management.

- A literate workforce improves productivity because instead of spending time trying to explain how things are done or even how machinery works, employees will be able to follow written instructions on their own.
- Literate workers can read work circulars and therefore access information independently.
- The Department has introduced new learning areas to learners i.e. Agriculture, Travel & Tourism, SMME etc to assist learners who are reaching retirement to be able to continue earning an income and ensuring a sustainable livelihood.

An example of the problems created when a workforce is not well informed would be an instance where a certain workplace was at some stage threatened with a looming industrial strike. The issue was around a wage increase. Employees had been promised a 10% wage increase across the board. When payday came workers discovered that the increases were not equal and this did not go down well. Why was there 10% difference amongst all of them? Their argument was that if 10% equals R100 for one worker, it should be the same for everyone. The ABET Programme will ensure that all number-related issues on which lessons are used based are used in a relevant context.

Among the South African Population, only 14% of Blacks have an education of high school or higher, whereas 40% of Indians and 65% of Whites have an education of high school or higher. The percentage of population aged 20 years and older with no schooling in the province of KwaZulu-Natal was 22.9% in 1996 and it has since decreased to just below 20% according to statistics in 2006. The fact that there are now over a million adults with no schooling at all in KwaZulu-Natal suggests that this province still needs to do more.

We will recall that the ABET Programme started in the Department of Transport in May 1997 as a pilot project through the Office of the Premier. It was carried over to the Regions in 1998. In-house tutors were used to facilitate the programme. In 1999 there were 9 ABET classes.

Concentration was mostly on Mother Tongue Language 1 and English Second Language 1. Graduation ceremonies were held in 2000 and 2001.

In 2002, 21 learners were registered to write exams through International Examination Board (IEB) of which 17 passed. In 2004 the Department employed qualified educators on a contract basis.

The current status of ABET in the Department's Regions is as follows:

| REGION | NO. OF EDUCATORS | NO. OF CENTRES | NO. OF LEARNERS |
|---------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| EMPANGENI | 11 | 10 | 215 |
| DURBAN | 7 | 5 | 147 |
| PMB | 4 | 4 | 107 |
| LADYSMITH | 6 | 5 | 103 |
| TOTAL | 28 | 24 | 652 |

The progress of learners since 2005:

In 2005 the pass rate was 90%, 2006 – 93%, 2007 – 97%, 2008 – 92% and 2009 – 89%.

A total of 5 learners from Empangeni region have successfully completed and passed ABET Level 4 and obtained the General Education and Training Certificate. One learner in 2008 and 4 learners in 2009.

Five Learners have been promoted to become Field Support Officers in the Empangeni Region. In the Pietermaritzburg Region, 6 learners have been promoted to become Field Support Officers.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage each and every learner to strive to achieve whatever they want in life remembering that with education they will be able to achieve far more.

We want to see all learners in the Department acquiring their General Education and Training Certificates and Learners being recognized and promoted to higher positions or levels in the Department.

I would like to thank each and every educator who worked effortlessly to ensure that these learners are prepared for examinations. We expect them to go through all levels successfully. We want to say “job well done” to Ms Zwane and her team who have ensured that the effective running of the Programme through the years.

I Thank you