

## **Plans to formalise Grade 9 as the second exit point of schooling.**

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Opinion Piece by: Edgar Legoale

*“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.- Nelson Mandela”*

South Africa our beloved country is where it is today because of the sacrifices many fallen and still living heroes made, even during hard times of the atrocious apartheid regime, they fought while studying because they understood the value and importance of Education.

Going through school was never a mistake given the challenges we are faced with today, except that the system at that time made it difficult for a section of the South African population, specifically Africans, to get a proper quality education because of the syllabus and system they imposed on them.

Despite biased, harsh conditions under which they studied, the oppressed majority still remained firm and consistent on Education. That culture of learning has brought us many Black Graduates and an ever increasing rate of registered students in various institutions of higher learning than any other race.

The gains of those fallen and living heroes and heroines could be rendered useless today if we shift the goal posts another inch, so to speak, by entertaining the widely reported proposal of the Minister of Basic Education of South Africa. First it was the lowering of the pass mark down to 30% and now she is considering Grade 9 being the second School Exit with a General Education Certificate.

In era where teachers fail grade 3 English, the Basic Education Minister had the gall to be quoted as saying: “Dealing decisively with the quality and efficiency through the implementation of standardised assessments to reduce failure, repetition, and drop-out rates, we are also working on the introduction of multiple qualifications such as the General Education Certificate before the Grade 12 exit qualification. The NDP aims for a ‘world-class assessment system’ involving reliable measures of learning for every primary school.”

I understand the plan has always been there without a formal implementation but it will have a negative impact on many things and will increase a number of people who still feel its unnecessary to further their studies and acquire skills. This move by the department will have a negative impact on the economic growth of south Africa in some way, government needs to create the culture of learning among the youth.

“ Nelson Mandela: The power of education extends beyond the development of skills we need for economic success. It can contribute to nation-building and reconciliation. Our previous system emphasized the physical and other differences of South Africans with devastating effects. We are steadily but surely introducing education that enables our children to exploit their similarities and common goals, while appreciating the strength in their diversity.”

There is no logic behind all her reasoning and certainly no justification in effectively “toying” around with the African child’s education as they are the ones who bear the brunt of a practically dysfunctional curriculum. If implemented, her proposal could potentially cripple the school system as we have come to know it and further exacerbate the problems of unemployment that we are already struggling with in the country which will eventually lead to the rise of gangsters, alcohol and substance abuse.

Surely one would be forgiven for wondering if the Minister isn’t somehow dictating to everyone at Basic Education Department on matters of national importance or maybe those who are supposed to be working with her are simply unqualified. How else would this lunacy get to this advanced stage because I don’t think this issue would have even reach a stage.

Laziness, mediocrity and sheer incompetence must never be tolerated. Proper planning and execution must be the order of the day if we are to tackle all the challenges that are purported to have prompted the Basic Education Department to consider lowering the bar, as it were.

Failure rate, repetitions and drop-out rate cannot be dealt with through degrading our education to that level, if Madam Motshekga is tired or feel the heat in the kitchen because of many drop-outs, failure and repetitions, she must just excuse herself in that office and allow young and still relevant MECs of Education like those ones from the Free State and Gauteng to take over.

We are in 2019, where we feel everything is getting out of hand because of 4th Industrial Revolution, instead of talking and planning around changing the system to accommodate this stage, our Minister is here disgracing the nation.

Coding as well as robotics curricula should be included in GET [general education and training] from Grade R-9 and this should be where the full and uninterrupted focus should be, though it’s very late for us also but at least we will know that from now onwards we are building a bright future with learners who will be trying to keep up with the world pace.

I want to believe that the system has been problematic for all the challenges they are stating here, as it has an element of discouraging our learners to give all their best. They see many of the graduates unemployed and boring system which lead to them being tired of attending school as all the things they are doing are not appealing to what the world is now showing them in real life.

Our Teachers must be retrained re-skilled also to keep up with the pace, because I can tell you now that a child who was born after 2000 is being taught by the person who started teaching in 1980 who has never been to any training and/or workshops since then.

The focus must be there also to retrain our teachers and those who are old enough to be at home, must just be given that opportunity to go and play with their grandchildren.

The time is moving and world is fast changing, we cannot afford to be debating on silly topics like this ones now, the Minister must take the Nation into confidence and tell us whose mandate is she pushing here with this thing because truly speaking, I don't think there might be any clear logic behind this and I stand to be corrected but that's my view.

With this and other reasons I make a plea to South Africans to stand together and reject this plan, as it will have a bad impact in future for our beloved country.

Even if this would have been another way of making TVETs be more alive, it cannot work as they are being failed already with assistance and systems used to fund students, more especially the TVETs ones.

Our TVETs are not properly and sufficiently equipped already to take in the current numbers, yet Department wants a solution that have a potential impact of increasing the numbers moving forward to go and study there after that Grade 9. The only logical question is: what is it exactly that the Minister wants or aims to achieve with this plan?

Currently, the minimum entry level requirement in many employment opportunities is grade 12, then you create another cabal that will come with their General Education Certificates and at the age of 14. That is effectively saying that young pupils, in their early teens, can go and sit at home because they are certificated! Certified to do what exactly?

I Edgar Curtis Legoale reject this plan and appeal to all South Africans to also join me in rejecting it, because to me is about the Ministers interest of being seen as working hard to cut dropouts, failures and repetition instead of looking into the Future of the country.

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