

SA education ready to jump: Motshekga



Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga. Picture: Gallo Images

Struggling schools across South Africa will benefit from the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) initiative, Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga said on Friday.

"The NECT has targeted the most dysfunctional schools in the country. We are using high-level consultancy skills to turn around the schools," said Motshekga in Pretoria.

She was addressing reporters at the Sefako Makgatho presidential guesthouse, after President Jacob Zuma concluded a meeting with several chief executives of major companies which are part of the NECT.

Launched last year, the NECT is a partnership aimed at strengthening cooperation between stakeholders in the education sector including government, business, labour and civil society. Its aim is to improve education outcomes in South Africa.

On Friday, Motshekga said the national education sector was "ready for a huge jump".

"This year we are finalising the implementation of Caps (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements), which we introduced three years ago. With Caps embedded, we have thrown lots of resources into the sector, we then need to slowly begin to deal with the defects that we know are in the system.

"As a sector, we are ready to take the next step," she said.

Caps replaced the controversial Outcomes Based Education curriculum.

NECT chairman Sizwe Nxasana, who is also First Rand chief executive, said the new educational initiative has already raised funds to revive schools.

"In just over a year, the NECT has mobilised resources from the private sector, all the labour unions involved in education and civil society.

Regarding the private sector involvement, we have 85 of the largest companies in this country making not just financial contribution but also supplying skills," he said.

"By the end of December 2013, we had assisted the government in having detailed profiling in 4,362 schools in eight districts in identifying the gaps and the shortages that existed, for example principals. That helps in designing interventions in those 4,362 schools."

Of the 4,362 schools, Nxasana said 291 were in dire need of assistance.

"We have mobilised service providers that are working with the department, funded by government, private sector and labour unions, to improve the quality of education."

"The idea is that the improvements that have started in the 4,362 schools can find their way in improving the whole system of the around 24,000 schools we have in the country," said Nxasana.

Chief executive of the NECT, Godwin Khoza said the initiative has received "pleasant surprises" of support.

"It is really a story of pleasant surprises. Teachers, teacher unions, parents, civil society has come out in support," he said.

"I think there is huge potential. The president was very supportive. He has re-emphasised his commitment to the NECT. He has laid very clear marching orders to all of us in and outside government," said Khoza.

Zuma did not address media after the lengthy closed-door meeting.

-Sapa