



public works

Department:
Public Works
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

EPWP – Improving Quality of Education in Gauteng

The quality of education that thousands of children are receiving at schools in Gauteng is improving as a result of Government's Extra School Support Programme (ESSP).

The ESSP is part of the Government's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) Social Sector programmes and is implemented in many primary schools in Gauteng.

"Since the implementation of the ESSP in 2011, we've noted an improvement in the ability of our children to grasp both literacy and numeracy at our schools. We've seen an improvement in the results of the Annual National Assessment (ANA) at the schools where the programme is being applied. Today our children are able to read and count as a result of this programme", the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE's) ESSP coordinator in the Ekurhuleni North Region, Rebecca Moloi said.

The Programme is implemented by the GDE – as a lead department – alongside various Government Departments including Public Works, Community Safety as well as Sports and Recreation.

The ESSP is applied in Grade 1 to Grade 7 and it is implemented in a three pronged approach, i.e. homework supervision, mass sport participation and school safety. The three pronged approach to this programme ensures a holistic quality of education for thousands of school children.

The first part of ESSP is the homework supervision, which is a programme where children are being assisted with their homework by EPWP Participants.

"We do a range of duties at the school including checking the learners' homework diaries and ensuring that they (learners) actually do their homework. Where the learners struggle with a subject – we work with them to ensure that they better understand that particular subject. It must be noted however that we do not spoon-feed the children, instead we work with them", the ESSP homework supervisor at Siphephu Primary School in Daveyton-Ekurhuleni area, Yoliswa Khumalo said. Khumalo, pointed out that as homework supervisors they also assisted learners with various activities such as reading, spelling as well as language activities. She said that the Programme has also benefited her tremendously, particularly in relation to caring and working with children.

"The EPWP has changed my life for the better because I'm able to put food on the table with a monthly stipend that I receive. I have also learned a lot about caring for children. This programme has been wonderful!" she added.

The team of ESSP homework supervisors at Siphephu Primary School is led by the 23-year-old Phindile Makaringe who pointed out that there were a total of eleven ESSP practitioners at the school.

"There are six (6) homework supervisors, four (4) sports supervisors as well as 4 patrollers (safety officers) at the school. The homework supervisors help the learners with their homework in four main subjects, namely Mathematics, English, IsiZulu and in IsiNdebele", she explained.

Learners

The learners at the school described the ESSP as a "great programme". "I was struggling with English, particularly with spelling of words and synonyms. My marks were also not looking good. But since the ESSP teachers (supervisors) arrived at our school, my spelling of words has improved. I now know more synonyms and my marks are improving", said Thato Nxumalo, a grade seven (7) learner at the school.

She indicated that as a result of the ESSP supervisors, they had formed a debate team at the school. "My parents are also happy that my school work is also improving", Nxumalo added.

The ESSP's second and third legs are mass sport participation and school safety respectively.



EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME

A grade seven (7) learner at the school, Thabiso Mofokeng, explained that the ESSP's mass sport participation had encouraged him to participate in several sporting codes at the school. "As a result of my participation in gymnastics and soccer at school, I have participated in several national tournaments in both sporting codes", he said.

Another learner who is benefiting from ESSP at the Bhekifundo Primary School, Mbali Zwane urged the Government to unleash more ESSP participants to her school. "All my friends and classmates in Grade 3 love these ESSP teachers (EPWP participants) because they truly help us. We would like to have more of them", she said.

A grade 2 teacher at Sephephu Primary School, Hazel Mashinini, also commended the ESSP. "These ESSP participants have made our work easier and are willing to go an extra mile to help the children. We need government to get more young people on this programme", Mashinini added.

A parent of a grade 3 learner at Bhekifundo Primary School, Nylon Mabusela, also hailed the Programme. "Parents love to see their children's education being taken serious. We are pleased that government has taken the education of our children serious", Mabusela said.

The school's principal, Patricia Mahati, also spoke highly of the Programme. "We currently have 12 ESSP participants at our school. We would welcome the decision to increase this number", she added.

The Gauteng Department of Education (GDE's) ESSP coordinator in the Ekurhuleni North Region, Rebecca Moloi, said that the programme focused at providing a holistic development of learners at school, while providing work opportunities to the EPWP participants. She said that there were 34 primary schools in her region that were implementing ESSP.

With the programme, the department of Education won the 2015 Kamoso Awards, as the best Social Sector implementing department. The Kamoso Awards were introduced in 2007 with the aim of rewarding excellence in EPWP projects.

Moloi added that the ESSP participants were receiving accredited training in various skills such as people's management, Information Technology and Office Management, as well as Early Childhood and Development (ECD) training.

Moloi said that the ESSP participants were on a 12 month contract and were hired based on merit.

Criteria for the appointment of ESSP's homework supervisors and sport supervisors include having a Grade 12 qualification. The candidate must be able to speak, write and read the language of training and must be available for four hours a day.

