



## **STATE OF KWAZULU-NATAL AGRICULTURAL FOCUSED SCHOOLS:**

### **1. Background**

South African agricultural sector plays an important role in the economy. It is a provider for food, earner of foreign exchange, employment source, and source of capital and buyer of goods. Continued investment will have a significant impact on many households and greater economy due to the above (Greyling, March 2015). Agricultural sector is currently faced with a number of challenges like land reform, globalization, technology development, and scarcity of critical skills (Department of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, October 2008). Land Reform policies aimed at redressing dispossession of land from black South Africans continue to demand advanced agricultural skills, on black South Africans, to meet new demands in the agricultural sector. It is therefore imperative that our education system contributes towards the broader government programme of transforming the agricultural sector.

### **1.1. Agricultural Sector in South Africa**

South African agriculture is characterized by 'two agricultures'. White commercial agriculture was strongly supported by the state with research, subsidies, markets, and education. Black subsistence agriculture where farmers produce for their own household needs only was practiced on crowded, marginal land with little support and low productivity. The patterns have not changed even today since commercial farmers still produce 95% of agricultural output, occupying 87% of agricultural land but comprising only 20% of farmers (Peden, 2015).

### **1.2. Agricultural Sector in KwaZulu-Natal**

KwaZulu-Natal is one of the main livestock farming areas in South Africa. The bulk of households engaged in agriculture in South Africa are in KwaZulu-Natal (23% of the country's total). The proportion of households engaged in agriculture in KwaZulu-Natal is 18.6%. It has a total of 6.5 million hectares of land for farming purposes of which 82% is suitable for extensive livestock production and 18% is arable land. The agricultural sector is growing at around 12% per annum and contributing around 4% of the province's gross domestic product (South African Government, 2020) (Davis, 2016).

### **1.3. NDP priorities on agriculture**

The National Development Plan (NDP) argues that agriculture is the primary economic activity in rural areas and has the potential to create close to two million new jobs by 2030. It further plans to bring under used land in commercial areas and land reform projects into commercial production, and develop strategies to support new farmers in collaboration with markets (Greyling, March 2015). The NDP further argues that there is a need for the training of new cadre of agricultural extension advisors that will respond effectively to

the needs of small-holder farmers and contribute to their successful integration into the food value chain. This will enable more rapid transfer of agricultural land to black beneficiaries without distorting land markets confidence in agribusiness sector. It will also ensure sustainable production on transferred land by making sure that human capabilities precede land transfer through incubators, learnerships, mentoring, apprenticeships, and accelerated training in agricultural sciences (South African Government, 2020). Furthermore, there is a shortage of agricultural production specialists, agricultural engineers, agricultural economists, agricultural development specialists, and veterinarians. All these fields are still dominated by whites while blacks only dominate on agricultural development specialists. This calls for radical changes that will ensure more Black South African professionals/specialists in agriculture (Department of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, October 2008).

#### **1.4. History of Agricultural Schooling in South Africa**

Agricultural schooling emerged from rudimentary gardening for blacks in mission schools in the 1800s to colonial schools producing labourers in 1900s. Gardening was taught in black primary schools and agriculture for black school leavers. After 1994, agricultural science is mainly offered in rural public secondary schools where learners take agriculture as one subject amongst six non-agricultural subjects. It is also offered in 43 specialized agricultural schools with an aim to produce commercial farmers. These schools only amount for 0.7% of state secondary schools and enrolments are limited due to high fees (Peden, 2015).

Agricultural science is one of the top popular subjects and it tends to be selected for its perceived easiness compared to other science subjects than learners' interest in farming. While agriculture continues to be associated with apartheid curriculum, which is intensified by use of agricultural work as punishment, it has gained greater currency in tertiary institutions where it is accepted as an alternative to Life Science as an entry requirement. Agricultural sciences only, has not assisted black school leavers to pursue for scarce skills

careers within the field of agriculture. This is due to the lack of facilities, like laboratories, in rural schools that mostly teach the subject as opposed to most of their white counterparts who had been exposed to agricultural focused schools. As a result, those who have interest in agriculture find themselves having to practice as extension officers (Peden, 2015).

Agricultural school is a public school that specializes in theoretical and practical training within agricultural environment on an economic farming unit. It embarks on non-profitable farming enterprises solely kept for educational purposes. In South Africa, there are only 42 agricultural schools. In KwaZulu-Natal, there are only three namely, Weston Agricultural College (Mooi River, UMgungundlovu District), Vryheid Landbou Skool (Vryheid, Zululand district), and James Nxumalo Agricultural High School (Ulundi, Zululand district). The first two schools were mainly built for white learners with all the facilities needed. Their location further gives them additional advantage of easy access to facilities from nearby commercial farms. The third one was mainly built for blacks, under KwaZulu Government, with limited facilities. There are other two schools that offer more than one agricultural subjects i.e. Velangaye High School (Nkandla, King Cetshwayo district) and Chief Ngonyama (Ozwathini, ILembe District) (KZN Department of Education & KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2013).

## **Problem Statement**

*Agricultural focused schools are subsidized on a similar basis as public ordinary schools. The situation is even worse in KwaZulu-Natal where per capita state subsidy is below the national norm. The costs at these schools are however considerable higher than in other schools which demands higher subsidies from government. As a rule, the school fees are higher to cover for hostel accommodation costs of pupils. An urgent need exists to review the subsidies received by these schools since they find it difficult to cater for their operational expenses. In such cases it is not possible for the schools to subsidize hostel fees from poor families and*

*this could thus serve as an access barrier to rural and poor black pupils* (Department of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, October 2008).

### **Revitalization of Agricultural Focus Schools**

KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education envisaged to revitalize agricultural schools in the province as part of the Transformation of the Schooling System (TSS). It planned to have one agricultural school in each of the eleven districts except for Umlazi district. Zululand district had to remain with the already existing two schools due to already existing infrastructure and farming facilities fully functional. As a result, a task team comprising of officials from the Department of Education and Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in the province was formed (KZN Department of Education & KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2013). In making the already existing agriculture focused schools vibrant, viable, and sustainable, the following needs were identified:

- Purchase and Supply of Equipment
- Upgrading and refurbishment of buildings
- Erecting of electrical fencing
- Address the specific needs pertaining to the individual schools.

The financial implications for these projects were amounted to 18.9 million.

**The team further proposed the following:**

#### **a. Staffing**

The staffing requirements, on a school with 350 learners, should comprise of: 1 Principal, 1 Deputy Principal, 2 heads of departments, and a minimum of 10 Post Level One educators. The administrative staff should consist of 1 Chief Provisioning Administrative Clerk, 1 Provisioning Administrative Clerk, 1 Administrative Clerk, and Accounting Clerk. Cleaners should consist of 1 general foreman, 1 handyman, and 5 general assistants.

#### **b. Norms and Standards**

The per capita subsidy should be at least 10% more than that of a public ordinary school and not linked to a Quintile Ranking to cater for special circumstances like supply and maintenance of machines and equipment.

#### **c. Working Hours**

The schools must be allowed to make special arrangements in respect of working hours at the hostels and farm to cater for weekends and holidays.

#### **d. Procurement**

The use of time consuming procurement processes to be reduced for the smooth running of the farm.

#### **e. Remuneration**

All educators responsible for farming section to receive remuneration equal to that of hostel staff due to having to present theory and practical work during and after school hours. The salary of farm manager should be equivalent to that of post Level Two educator as s/he is involved in daily farming activities.

#### **f. Hostels**

Hostel subsidies for learners to ensure that agricultural education is accessible to every citizen.

#### **g. Farm finances**

All income generated by the farm to be utilized to pay for farming expenses and for further development of the institution. All moneys generated to be accounted for.

Because of the above, the three agricultural focused schools in the province were approved for the revitalization programme by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in 2014 for three financial years i.e. 2014/15, 2015/16, and 2016/17. Each school was allocated its own budget that was going to be received in three financial years. However, the schools were only funded for one year which left the schools with several budgeted items not being accomplished.

The above literature bears testimony that there is a dire need for agricultural focused schools in the province to produce more black professionals to deal with the increasing demands in the agricultural sector. Practically, there is only one agricultural focused school built for rural black population in KwaZulu-Natal, which is James Nxumalo Agricultural High School. This intervention was to ensure these schools have adequate human, financial, and physical resources for them to sustain agricultural focused school status. This study intends to evaluate the resourcefulness of three Agricultural High Schools with an aim to propose interventions which will enable such schools to sustain themselves.

#### ***Methodology***

*A total of three Agricultural focus schools were visited by Members of KwaZulu-Natal Legislature Education Portfolio Committee. The three schools visited were (James Nxumalo Agricultural High School, Vryheid Landbou High School, and Weston Boys Agricultural College). The actual visits were preceded by Committee researcher's visits to the schools to identify issues of importance to be dealt*

with during the actual visits to the schools. School management were afforded an opportunity to present the state of their respective schools, followed by engagements by Members of the Portfolio Committee. Issues of importance were identified and resolutions on each issue were taken for implementation. The following section will discuss findings from each school.

### **Demographics**

| <b>Demographic data</b>       | <b>James Nxumalo</b>                                                                | <b>Weston College</b>                                                               | <b>Vryheid Landbou</b>                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Year of establishment         | <b>1988</b>                                                                         | <b>1914</b>                                                                         | <b>1977</b>                                                                                                    |
| Location                      | <b>Ondini</b>                                                                       | <b>Mooi River (Mpofana)</b>                                                         | <b>Vryheid (Zululand)</b>                                                                                      |
| Enrolment                     | <b>610</b>                                                                          | <b>166</b>                                                                          | <b>232</b>                                                                                                     |
| Quintile                      | <b>4</b>                                                                            | <b>4</b>                                                                            | <b>4</b>                                                                                                       |
| State paid Educators          | <b>16</b>                                                                           | <b>07</b>                                                                           | <b>07</b>                                                                                                      |
| SGB paid educators            | <b>04</b>                                                                           | <b>08</b>                                                                           | <b>10</b>                                                                                                      |
| State paid non-teaching staff | <b>24</b>                                                                           | <b>28</b>                                                                           | <b>31 (13)</b>                                                                                                 |
| SGB paid non-teaching staff   | <b>0</b>                                                                            | <b>35</b>                                                                           | <b>28</b>                                                                                                      |
| Agricultural subjects offered | <b>Agricultural Technology, Agricultural management, and Agricultural Sciences.</b> | <b>Agricultural Technology, Agricultural management, and Agricultural Sciences.</b> | <b>Agricultural science, Agricultural management and practices, and Agricultural technology, and agri-echo</b> |
| Matric performance 2019       | <b>95,31%</b>                                                                       | <b>92%</b>                                                                          | <b>92%</b>                                                                                                     |



## ***Findings***

### **1. JAMES NXUMALO AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL**

| <b>CHALLENGES</b>       | <b>DESCRIPTION</b>                                                                                                                  | <b>RESOLUTION</b>                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>PPN</b>              | The learner teacher ratio that is used for all public ordinary schools is not suitable for focus schools.                           | The department to reconsider the PPN allocation of the agricultural schools to accommodate their size and operational requirements. |
| <b>Overtime Payment</b> | There is no remuneration for teachers and farm staff who are mentoring and supervising learners at the farm during and after hours. | The department to restructure the compensation model for agricultural schools to accommodate for working extra hours.               |
| <b>Quintile ranking</b> | The school is ranked quintile four which increases a burden to parents to pay more for their children's education.                  | The school to contest quintile ranking by providing evidence on the socio-economic status of the school community.                  |

|                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Overcrowding</b>                         | Classrooms accommodate 30 learners, and currently most of them have between 40 and 60 learners.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | The school to reconsider their admissions strategy considering the enrolment capacity of the school. |
| <b>Shortage of furniture</b>                | There is shortage of desks and furniture in the classrooms.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | The department to provide the school with additional furniture.                                      |
| <b>Funding model</b>                        | The high costs of running an agricultural school necessitates the for charging high school fees that could render inaccessible for learners from needy communities, hence the need for a funding model that is not linked to quintile ranking and PPN. There are no funds to continuously maintain machinery and buy equipment for the farm, and feed for livestock. Water and electricity bills are high. | The department to review the funding model for agricultural schools.                                 |
| <b>Suspension of revitalization Project</b> | The RASP was suspended in 2017 unexpectedly. This affected the installation of perimeter fence, fencing of the grazing camps, revitalization of camps, pastures, and orchard, procurement of Boran and Jersey heifers, and two bulls, and delivery vehicles.                                                                                                                                               | The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to explain the cutting of revitalization grant.  |

## 2. WESTON AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

| CHALLENGES                                           | DESCRIPTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | RESOLUTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>High water and electricity bills</b>              | In 2019, the school was owing R1,9 million and currently owing 2.4 million. The school pays R188 000 for electricity every month. The Department managed to pay 1.2 million to ensure that teaching and learning takes place after the school had no electricity for a week. | The District to engage with the Municipality Manager with a purpose of correcting metering system and wrong calculations to ensure that the school is charged accordingly. The district to furnish the Portfolio committee with the progress report. |
| <b>Old and dysfunctional agricultural equipment.</b> | The school still operates using old and sometimes dysfunctional equipment and machinery. Some of the machines cannot even pass the safety tests. As a result, they do not expose learners to modern ways of agriculture using latest technologies.                           | The Department to support the school to procure new, functional, and safe equipment and machinery.                                                                                                                                                   |

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|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Abattoir dysfunctional.</b> | The abattoir on site has not been functional for 15 years because it does not have an operating licence.                                           | The Department to support the school in obtaining an operating licence for the abattoir.                                |
| <b>Theft of animals.</b>       | School livestock if stolen by the local people.                                                                                                    | The department to support the school with safety and security measures to prevent livestock theft.                      |
| <b>Unauthorised grazing.</b>   | There is an unauthorised grazing of livestock on the school premises by the surrounding community.                                                 | The school to engage with community leadership and stakeholders to address unauthorised grazing on the school property. |
| <b>Shortage of funds.</b>      | The school experiences increasing costs to maintain the school while the Department financial support and school fees are inadequate.              | Funding model of the school to be reconsidered.                                                                         |
| <b>Exorbitant school fees.</b> | The school is forced to charge high school fees to cover for operational costs. As a result, some of the parents cannot afford to pay school fees. | Funding model to be reassessed to allow access for learners from poor family backgrounds.                               |

### 3. VRYHEID LANDBOU HIGH SCHOOL

| CHALLENGES                     | DESCRIPTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | RESOLUTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Revitalization project.</b> | The school benefitted from the revitalization project with farming infrastructure. However, the output on some of the constructed farming equipment is not in line with specifications. As a result, there are difficulties in running of the farm as some of the animal feeding equipment is not working. | The District to engage with the contractor to ensure the output is according to the specification. A comprehensive report detailing scope of the project and budget allocation to be submitted to the Portfolio Committee. The department must also strengthen monitoring and evaluation of the project. |
| <b>Norms and standards.</b>    | The school funding has been cut by 50% for the past two years.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | The department to prepare a report on the school norms and standards                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

|                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Exorbitant school fees.</b>   | School fees are more than 18 500 for day learners and an additional 25 000 for hostel fees. The school relies heavily on school fees to make operational functioning of the school possible. The school is ranked as quintile 4.                     | The department to relook at the quintile of the school considering the geographical location and socio-economic conditions around the school. |
| <b>PPN</b>                       | The Department PPN allows for only seven educators as per the school enrolment. The school pays for 11 educators and 13 support staff in the region of R3000 000. In addition, the school needs agriculture specialists except for the farm manager. | The department to relook at the PPN allocation of agricultural focus schools in general.                                                      |
| <b>Shortage of farming staff</b> | There is a general shortage of farming staff which resulted on the closure of piggery.                                                                                                                                                               | The department to reconsider human resources allocation of agricultural schools.                                                              |
| <b>Farm manager</b>              | The farming manager is retiring and the department has indicated that there would be no replacement on the vacancy.                                                                                                                                  | The post of the farm manager to be reprioritised for replacement in the school.                                                               |
| <b>School infrastructure</b>     | The backup electricity supply reported to have low voltage which affects the school operations during power outages.                                                                                                                                 | The district to engage with the contractor and ensure upgrade the voltage of the backup electricity supply.                                   |

|                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Principal post</b>             | The principal is retiring at the end of the year and that will leave a vacancy on the already insufficient educators in the school.                                                  | The department to work closely with the School Governing Body in an effort to expedite filling of the principal post.                  |
| <b>High electricity bill</b>      | The school pays between R40 000 to R50 000 on monthly electricity bill. The school is currently installing solar power against the very high cost.                                   | The school to expedite completion of solar power installation to alleviate high electricity costs.                                     |
| <b>Safety and security</b>        | The school has one security guard employed by the department to look at the 872 hectares of land. The school therefore pays an extra R30 000 per month to reinforce school security. | The department to support the school with additional security to safeguard the whole school and minimise security costs to the school. |
| <b>Dysfunctional broiler unit</b> | The broiler unit has been dysfunctional for four years because of the upgrading contract.                                                                                            | The contractor to complete construction on the broiler unit for it to be functional.                                                   |

## Conclusion

The findings on the visits to the three agricultural schools indicate that such schools have a potential to uplift the agricultural sector and improve rural economies in the province. However, issues like Post provisioning norm and funding model currently used by the Department of Education are catastrophic to the lives of thee schools. They negatively affect the working conditions of staff,

maintenance of infrastructure, equipment and tools, and denies access to learners from poor family backgrounds. Should the situation remain as it is, such good schools will cease to function and become the thing of the past. The new sustainable funding and resource allocation model that considers school size and its operational needs should be implemented instead of the general model which puts more emphasis on the number of learners. It is also important that the provincial department of Agriculture and rural development come to the fore in providing financial and infrastructure support as they are the main source of agricultural success in the province. It is therefore important that the report be shared with the both Department of Education, and Department of Agriculture and Rural development for further deliberation on these matters with the Portfolio Committee.

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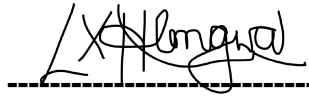
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**Hon LXH Hlongwa- Madlala**  
**Acting Chairperson**

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