



The

FW de Klerk Foundation

Continuing the miracle into South Africa's second decade

30 March 2005

Meeting facilitated by the FW de Klerk Foundation with Education Minister Pandor

Statement by the FW de Klerk Foundation.

The FW de Klerk Foundation facilitated a meeting between concerned civil society leaders and Education Minister Naledi Pandor as part of its attempt to promote dialogue between community leaders and government that deals frankly and constructively with contentious issues and contribute to mutual understanding and practical solutions.

The FW de Klerk Foundation called for a meeting with the Education Department to discuss the status of Afrikaans mother-tongue instruction in schools and the future role of Article 21 (former Model-C) schools. The meeting held on 30 March 2005 in Pretoria was exploratory and aimed to lay the groundwork for further discussions on these 'burning issues'. The Foundation's delegation was lead by former president FW de Klerk and included its executive director Mr Dave Steward; as well as educationalists Mr Clive Roos and Dr Huw Davies; and Prof Danie Goosen, Mr Roland Henwood and Mr Johann Rossouw from the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge. Minister Pandor was accompanied by her deputy Mr Enver Surty; deputy director generals Mr Cassius Lubisi and Ms Naseema Badsha; advisor Mr Martin Mulcahy and the education expert Ms Penny Vinjevold.

Mr De Klerk said that his delegation had come to see the Minister to initiate a constructive debate on Afrikaans education and on the role of Article 21 schools. He was worried that a 'shouting match' was developing on these issues that reduced everything to the question of race. It was necessary to take hands on these questions. Empowerment through education had to succeed and sensitive issues had to be addressed within the framework of the bill of rights to ensure better education for all. He stressed that his delegation was not there to plead for whites or to protect privileges. They wanted instead to lay down a basis for cooperation and to ensure that education did not become an arena for political conflict.

The Foundation's delegation emphasised the practical and theoretical grounds for providing instruction in the mother tongue and maintained that there existed a demand for and interest in Afrikaans as a language of instruction in schools. The delegation also made suggestions on how spare capacity at Article 21 schools could be used to increase the number of higher grade maths and science matriculants from disadvantaged communities. Members of the delegation expressed strong support for a comprehensive review of education legislation and support for the broadening of learners' access to resources and expertise in Afrikaans-medium schools.

Minister Pandor emphasised “the right of all children to access quality learning and teaching”. She said that she was not “anti-Afrikaans”. The question was: how do you satisfy the need for mother tongue education on the one hand and public access to people of all races on the other? She said that she was worried about the notion of “our schools and your schools”. It was essential that a discussion of Afrikaans education should be based on reliable data - particularly on the changing composition of residential communities - and not on anecdotal information. She agreed on the need to review education legislation.

It was also agreed that this exploratory meeting would be followed by further discussions and that both sides would review their information on Afrikaans schools before the meetings. According to Education Minister spokesperson Tommy Makhode “the education department remains committed to quality education for all” and he said that they would “undertake an analysis of the demand for and interest in Afrikaans as medium of tuition and the identification and location of schools that offer Afrikaans medium tuition”.¹

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¹ South African Government Information. 2005. ‘Minister of Education, Ms Naledi Pandor, MP, meeting with former President FW de Klerk and the FW de Klerk Foundation’ issued by the *Department of Education*, 30 March 2005. Available [online]:
< <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2005/05033108151002.htm>>