MEC Panyaza Lesufi’s Profile

Hear MEC Andrek Panyaza Lesufi speak, analyse his prose and wisdom, one can tell that he is a seasoned politician. His assertiveness shows itself in the way his subordinates show him respect when they talk to him.

Lesufi is caring beyond the call of duty and he gives a great deal of himself to his work. One minute he is at school instilling discipline as well as motivating learners to do their best; the next he is in a week-long workshop deliberating over provincial government’s involvement with various education stakeholders – and this diary does not include his many other obligations to the ANC, of which he is a member.

Gauteng province has identified education as the backbone of radical socio-economic transformation. On this strength MEC Lesufi has identified 10 Pillars, as a strategic focus for the department in the next five years. The Pillars outlined form the basis of GDE’s key interventions to improve:

• The quality of learning and education management
• Monitoring of progress against a set of measurable indicators, covering all aspects of education in the province.

Being a dynamic and visionary educationist, he realises the importance of education not only in terms of eradicating poverty and illiteracy but also wants to use education as an effective tool for social change and rapid economic growth of our country.

Lesufi is an activist who rose through the ranks of both student and youth movements before leading students as President of the Student Representative Council (SRC) at the University of Natal, Durban Campus (now the University of KwaZulu-Natal) says teacher and classroom development is key.

Without a doubt he is a fighter, a quality he prefers to call “determined.” “Almost everybody agrees that strong classroom management skills are essential for successful teaching,” he says.

“The first role of the classroom teacher towards the learner is to assess the behaviour of the students; to develop their knowledge and enhance their skills; to create a good relationship as learners and teachers; and to mould their learners into a distinctive character by teaching good manners and right conduct.”
Lesufi adds that teachers are also the one who should implement rules and regulations to organise and maintain the orderliness of their learners, to be the role model of the class and to show the passion they have for their profession as teachers.

Virtually, Lesufi plays a significant role in reshaping, restructuring and reorganising the education system of the Gauteng province as well as our country. He is an advocate of Information Technology Communication (ICT) in schools.

A former government communicator and spokesperson Lesufi says: “Good communication is essential in today’s business and my role is to ensure that all Gauteng classrooms become paperless.” Lesufi will identify and act on improvement opportunities to better facilitate improved learner performance with a specific focus on specialisation e.g. art and science.

Lesufi, who started his political activism as a student in Tembisa, north of Johannesburg, in the early 1980s, says ICT allows the teacher to produce and modify resources quickly and easily. “It allows access to a wide range of information in various formats, and interactive whiteboards have become essential tools in the classroom,” he says.

He adds that he wants to improve the quality of basic education through modernising and creating state of the art schools utilising ICT. Lesufi says he will pair schools with different backgrounds through the creation of a single school governing body and sharing of resources.

“We cannot run away from the fact that we must change from the ways that our teachers were using chalkboards because we are living in a technological era where everybody is using ICT, at home, at school and everywhere,” says Lesufi.

Lesufi says he will improve allocation of resources to schools according to school needs and enhance the ability to effectively utilise resources. He says interactive dictionaries can prove invaluable in the classroom. The days of having to refer to a weighty tome in the corner of the classroom are long gone, and the essential development of vocabulary is made easier through interactive resources.

Inquisitive and adventurous, he has played multiple roles in the theatre of his life. He also served for three terms as Branch Secretary of the then ANC Tembisa Branch, before becoming Deputy Regional Secretary of the then ANC Khayalami Region, a position he held for almost nine years, and founding Deputy Regional Secretary of the ANC Ekurhuleni Region.

He has been a member of the Provincial Executive Committee since 2007, and attended almost all National Conferences and Policy Conferences of the ruling party. He serves in the National Communications Forum as well as on various ANC sub-committees.
Lesufi is the founding leader of the Association of Senior Managers of the State (ASMOS) – a body that coordinates the affairs of senior managers in government. He is a recipient of the University of Natal's Chief Albert Luthuli Award, presented to him by former President, Thabo Mbeki. The university furthermore bestowed on him the Best SRC President Ever Award in recognition of his leadership qualities.

He also worked within the NGO sector as Outreach Manager of the Tembisa Careers Centre, in community structures, such as the Community Policing Forum (CPF), as Secretary of COSAS and the South African Tertiary Institutions Sports Congress (SATISCO-Durban), and as Chairperson of the Creative Arts Society (CASOC).

He is currently studying towards a Master of Business Administration (MBA) Degree.