

Speech by the Premier of the Northern Cape, Dr Zamani Saul, at the Matric Awards

Kimberely Girls High School

8 January 2020

Programme Director

Members of the Executive Council

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education, Ms Bongwiwe Mbinqo-Gigaba

Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Provincial Legislature

Members of the Provincial Legislature

District and Local Mayors present

Stakeholders and partners in the Private Sector

Government officials present

Educators, parents and learners

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen

It is my profound pleasure to join you here this morning to announce and also celebrate the outcomes of the much anticipated 2019 National Senior Certificate examinations. It is always both an exciting and a tense time but it is definitely a time that all those who sat for this all important examination look forward to and we are exceptionally pleased to spend this important day with the top achievers of the Northern Cape and all key stakeholders in our education sector.

The outcomes of the National Examinations are perhaps the most important occasion in the Educational Cycle of our learners. These results are closely watched, analysed and critiqued as the public have come to consider these results a measure of the effectiveness of our education system.

The vision of a modern, growing and successful Province is anchored in our Education system. This will assist us to lay a solid foundation for a prosperous Northern Cape. Over the past 25 years of democracy, concerted efforts were made to address the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality in the Province. Today, we look back full of pride because we have seen many achievements in education, from the creation of a single non-racial education system to the accomplishment of almost universal enrolment in the early years of school.

The focus has now shifted towards the quality of education whilst at the same time improving access. In looking to address the negative drivers of education and set specific achievable targets by phases to 2025, it is useful to note and align with targeting processes already under way in Government such as those in the Monitoring and Evaluation Commission in the Presidency, as well as analyses in the Department of Basic Education's sector plan, Vision 2025. Generic levels of intervention identified in the Education Roadmap should be kept in mind too, as these have to operate at three levels simultaneously:

- In class (what happens in the classroom itself, specifically how teachers ensure that quality learning takes place);
- Support to schools (of the pedagogical, administrative and social kind provided by principals and departmental officials to ensure schools are able to function and that teachers can get on with their job of teaching and learners can learn; and
- The societal level (this includes backlogs in facilities; the impacts of poverty such as hunger, poor sight and health, transport needs, HIV/Aids, gangs and so on; as well as parents' difficulties in providing support as a means a broad social compact around education).

At this point, Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to congratulate all 9 138 candidates that sat for the 2019 National Senior Certificate Examinations and highlight some of the key achievements:

- The pass rate for the Northern Cape Province is 76.5% in comparison to 73.3% in 2018, which is an increase of 3.2%
- Eleven (11) schools obtained a pass rate of 100%, compared to the 4 schools in 2018;
- One thousand six hundred and thirty three (1633) candidates obtained distinctions, compared to the one thousand five hundred and sixty two (1562) in 2018;
- Two thousand seven hundred and sixty nine (2 769) candidates obtained access to Bachelor Degree university entrance, compared to the two thousand five hundred and eighty nine (2 589) in 2018;
- Namakwa District is the top performing district with a pass rate of 89.9%;
- All Districts achieved above 70% pass rate;
- We have reduced the number of underperforming schools from 32 schools in 2018 to 20 schools in 2019;
- Moshaweng High School in the John Toalo Gaetsewe District showed the best improvement in the Province with a pass rate of 95.8% an increase of 45.9%;

Ladies and gentlemen, it is worth mentioning that the Executive Council of the Northern Cape Provincial Government, adopted fourteen underperforming High Schools. In a short space of time, we managed to turn around the situation at these schools. Ten out of the fourteen schools achieved a pass rate above 60%.

The Members of the Executive Council will continue to support these schools as well as further adopt more underperforming High Schools. Work will commence as soon as schools reopen on the 15th of January 2020.

I wish to commend the principals, teachers, parents, and community members who provided these learners with such important support and encouragement. My plea is that you will continue this momentum

Ladies and gentlemen

The Northern Cape Provincial Government will soon launch the Love Your School Campaign which will strengthen the community involvement and participation in the environment of their education. The programme seeks to improve the management and maintenance of sanitation facilities in schools as well as increase awareness of good sanitation and hygiene practices.

The social ills plaguing our schools are also major cause for concern. These include vandalism, teenage pregnancy, violence in schools and many others. Education is a societal matter and we need community members to partner with us to ensure that we create a conducive environment for learning and teaching, where our children can thrive.

Programme Director

At this stage I want to acknowledge the hard work of the learners, parents and educators of this province and encourage you to do better next year. This is possible with focus and determination. I am convinced that the Province can reach the 80% pass percentage.

Most of the learners who will receive awards today studied under difficult circumstances. We are proud of you. To the Class of 2019 and our Top Achievers, remember, that wherever the future takes you, you will remain ambassadors for the Northern Cape so keep flying our flag high.

Education is a central, critical determinant of the economic and social success of any country. It is probably the most effective means to eradicate poverty. It is the means to future success for the individual.

Education provides the skills and competencies that allow individuals to perform productive roles within the economy and society. It helps individuals achieve their own economic, social and cultural goals and helps society 'to be better protected, better served by its leaders and more equitable.

Schooling is, however, not just about knowledge and skills, but also about values, attitudes, as well as creative and emotional development, all of which to contribute to 'responsible, active and productive citizenship.

It is the most important element in our efforts to tackle unemployment and build an economy that meets the needs of our people. That is why we have made education one of the apex priorities of this Administration. We value education as we believe that it promotes good citizenship, prepares our young people for the needs of a democratic society and the modern economy.

Our appeal is that all stakeholders will play their part in ensuring that education is not a departmental or a government programme but a societal matter. Education is not about a classroom and a book. All role players need to join hands to ensure that this is realised and that what we have achieved thus far is sustained.

To those learners who could not succeed, there is always another tomorrow. Nelson Mandela once said, "Everyone can rise above their circumstances and achieve success if they are dedicated to and passionate about what they do". Failure is not a permanent feature but a temporary inconvenience that serves as a source of experience. We want you to succeed and as Government, we will support you to do so.

To the successful learners, especially, the top achievers of our province: once more congratulations, you have made our province proud.

To our educators, thank you for unleashing the natural powers within our learners. Continue to be at the heart of our Education system. Continue to be the role-models in our society as you guide our children towards success.

Let me conclude by thanking the Department and the MEC for granting me this opportunity to say a few words to the people of the Northern Cape and the key stakeholders in Education, at this opportune time of the year.

On behalf of the Northern Cape Executive Council, I would like to pass our best wishes for the New Year. Let us make 2020 the year of achievement and success in our Province in all spheres, especially education.

Congratulations once more to all our achievers!

I thank you.