

Keynote Address by the MEC Zolile Monakali

Northern Cape Teaching Awards 2023

Flamingo Casino, Kimberley

10 August 2023

Programme Director

Members of the Executive Council

Head of Department: Ms Moira Marais - Martin and all senior government officials

Representatives from all Teacher Unions

Representatives from SGB Associations

Stakeholders and Partners in the Education sector

Most importantly, the Educators, the Provincial Finalists of the 2023 Northern Cape Teaching Awards

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Distinguished guests;

This gathering here tonight reminds me of an anonymous quote which reads, **‘Teaching is the one profession that creates all other professions.’** I think we are all in agreement with that.

Education remains the cornerstone of any thriving community, economy and country and so often it is accepted as commonplace that there must be people who educate others because it is their vocation or calling in life. In my mind, it is not just a mere job. Very few, however, realise what it takes to be an educator. To be the one responsible for planting and nurturing the seed of knowledge and education is a massive responsibility. Education will forever remain the engine that stimulates and drives our

economy; it is the foundation of our culture and is an essential preparation for life beyond the classroom.

You will, by now, know that I am an ardent advocate for education and the academic advancement of our people. Therefore, it is my distinct pleasure to be in your company tonight as we pay tribute to excellence in the Northern Cape education sector.

We are celebrating excellence in education during a month where we pay tribute to the women who marched to the Union Buildings on 9 August 1956 in protest against the pass laws. Yesterday we hosted a very successful Women's Day event in Port Nolloth under the theme, **“Accelerating socio-economic opportunities for the empowerment of women.”** The socio-economic empowerment of women in our country is critical because it is aimed at addressing the legacy of apartheid and the transformation of our society. Government is also committed to ensuring the full and equal participation of women in the economy and it starts with the education of our girl children to start being biased towards STEM subjects so that they are better prepared for not only the jobs of the future but also for what the changing South African economy requires.

Pleasing to note is that the Northern Cape Department of Education has a total of nine thousand five hundred and sixty-eight (9 568) educators in the system, of which six thousand six hundred and eighty (6 680) are females and two thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight (2 888) are males. Tonight we honour fifty-six (56) passionate, creative and innovative educators who challenge, support, guide and inspire their learners every day.

You are supremely fine examples of educators who have made a world of difference within your communities, and who continue to inspire, not only your learners but your fellow educators as well. For your contribution towards excellence in our schools, I would like to publicly thank you.

Tonight I also want to pay tribute to one of our educators from Technical High School, Ms Viki Mpompolas, who was one of our Provincial winners at last year's awards and has been nominated by the Department of Basic Education as the only female teacher to represent the country at this year's African Union (Au) Continental Teachers' Awards. These Awards have been established to demonstrate respect for teachers

and the teaching profession by encouraging and celebrating committed teachers in Africa. The winners will be announced in Addis Ababa in October this year on World Teachers Day and we wish Ms Mpompolas well with her participation. We are proud of you and know that the entire Northern Cape is behind you.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is well established that Education contributes to the well-being of each citizen and the overall development of the country. It is not only a medium to improve productivity and growth of the economy but is also an effective tool to enlarge and raise participation in democracy and the transformation of society. Thus, the role of education is very important in every Nation and our teachers take a leading role to nurse the process of cognitive human growth and development through quality teaching from a very fundamental, up to an advanced stage.

Ladies and gentlemen, good teachers, not only bring out the best in their learners, but they also inculcate and develop a love for life-long learning. When I visit schools, I see this in the daily activities of the teachers, and most of you even go beyond the activities of the school and this is merit worthy. Your commitment to the all-round development of our learners assists learners in reaching their full potential. I specifically make reference to the learners and teachers from Carnarvon High School who represented the country in Morocco, during the Coding and Robotics competition, these teachers and learners did us immensely proud as they obtained position 33 out of 66 competing teams, from 50 countries.

Due to the enthusiasm and dedication of teachers, two learners from Emang Mmogo Comprehensive School in Kimberley will represent South Africa and the rest of the African Continent at the Stockholm Junior Water Prize Competition that will be held on the 18 to the 23 August 2023.

Today we celebrate you and teachers such as these. We are immensely proud and know that you will continue to excel, against all odds.

We all know what a huge difference we can make when we take an active interest in the lives of our learners. Your care and concern is the beacon of hope for many of our learners when they are faced with challenges, whether in their school exams, difficulty coping with grades, different aspects of school life or the difficulties of teenage life. In most instances, our teachers make a positive difference with a listening ear and a

caring heart. The teacher in so many cases is also required to become the parent and moral guide to so many children conflicted with all kinds of social ills.

Our schools today are confronted with various challenges ranging from:

- Teenage Pregnancy;
- Teacher-Learner Sexual Affairs;
- Corporal Punishment in Isolated Cases;
- Learners Attacking Teachers;
- Alcohol, Drug and Substance Abuse;
- Gangsterism and
- Vandalism at schools

It is during these critical challenges that our teachers need to rise to the occasion and foster in our learners the values of mutual respect, responsibilities and how to interact with each other in a dignified manner. I cannot emphasise this enough, but in addition to good and responsive parenting; teachers are paragons of goodness in shaping the moral compass of our learners.

Remember teachers, you are central to our children's development and at the heart of the education system. You are, beyond the demands in the classroom called upon to be more than an anchor in the lives of young and impressionable children. You as the educator, the often unsung hero, are required to be a teacher, preacher, social worker, friend and confidant to a fragile group of people and you must shape them to become the best that they were destined to be.

We therefore rely on you to guide and create the time and space for learners to better understand themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, and even interests and passions. This will go a long way in shaping them to grow into confident, empathetic and resilient individuals; all the attributes that make a well-rounded individual.

Ladies and gentlemen, the National Teaching Awards was conceptualised and launched in 2000 and is now in its 23rd year of implementation. Through extensive consultation, the programme has been refined, sharpened, as well as broadened in terms of its frame and categories.

Through the Northern Cape Department of Education's Provincial Teaching Awards, we are actualising the National Teaching Awards' aims and objectives which are to:

- Recognise and promote excellence in teaching performance so that our teachers feel valued by the system;
- Honour dedicated, creative and effective teachers and schools which will encourage our teachers to go beyond the call of duty;
- Encourage best practices in schools;
- Afford South Africans the opportunity to publicly express their gratitude to all outstanding teams or individual teachers in our schools.

Added to the social challenges confronting our education system is also the demand for educators in our system as well as a teacher population that is busy ageing and curriculum changes that put pressure on educator demands. We are also witnessing a country-wide trend that young educators are exiting the system. We are therefore pleased and look forward to the research that the Department of Education is working on regarding the supply and demand of educators. We encourage the teacher unions to partner and work with the Department to find the appropriate solutions.

Ladies and gentlemen, tonight we are celebrating teachers from Grade R to Grade 12 as well as the management of our schools. I acknowledge that education is a continuous cycle and that excellence should be found at every level of the schooling system. Excellence in Grade R is critical because if we want to improve our impact, we have to start from the Foundation Phase. If we neglect the Foundation Phase, it becomes a challenge to improve learner performance in Grade 12.

In our modern rapidly changing world, where immeasurable learning losses were caused by Covid-19 pandemic, it is imperative that the teaching profession should be driven by individuals who articulate a vision based on moral and professional purpose.

We therefore depend on school leadership and teachers to clearly understand the business of schools in the context, which calls for the design, creation and innovation of high-quality intellectually demanding work for learners, as articulated in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement.

In fact, the modern teacher in particular, has to be acutely aware of the urgency in being artful in attracting learners to learning, as they have to make learning inviting, even when the task at hand is not inherently interesting to learners. This indeed is a very difficult time in the educational space.

I therefore call upon School Management Teams to be constantly engaged in the programs offered by the Northern Cape Department of Education such as the Induction Training for individuals appointed in leadership positions, including The Advanced Diploma for School Leadership and Management. In addition the Leadership Network which supports School Management Teams must be sustained through Professional Learning Communities, as it will undoubtedly bring about less underperforming schools in the Province. In the past financial year, the Northern Cape Department of Education offered training to two hundred and twenty-one (221) School Management Team Members and supported one hundred and eighty –one (181) Female School Management Team Members in these Professional Learning Communities.

My call is therefore that you and others should continue to embrace the capacity building programmes as there will be a growing dedication to the benefits of continuous learning, innovation and the creation of a model of successful School Management Teams across the province.

Ladies and gentlemen, although our matric results have improved, having registered a 74, 2% pass mark in 2022 and 71, 4% in 2021, much still needs to be done to perform above the National Average which is 81%. Apart from you continuing to do your best, I urge you to inspire your peers to become totally focused in ensuring quality learner outcomes.

As I conclude, allow me to congratulate all the recipients of these prestigious teaching awards. I am convinced that you will fly the Northern Cape flag high at the National Teaching Awards. As you receive these awards, let it serve as a reminder that you hold the hopes of the parents and learners of this beautiful Province so you should constantly strive to deliver on the commitments to our people.

As you return to the classroom, we count on your support in ensuring that the curriculum recovery plans are implemented. As a Province, we will continue to support

all educators and learners during these difficult times. Together we all have a role to play in ensuring that we improve their lives through Education and Training, which will help us to realise the Provincial Government's vision of a Modern, Growing and Successful Province with access to equal and quality education for all our learners.

You inspire me. You inspire us all. You deserve our thanks.

I once again wish to thank every educator in this room and the classroom for their dedication and commitment to building the generation of tomorrow. I want to leave you with the words of Aristotle who said, **“Those who know. Do. Those that understand, teach”**.

I thank you.