

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

Tabernakel, Kimberley

19 January 2024

Programme Director

Members of the Executive Council

Speaker of the Provincial Legislature, Ms Newrene Klaaste

Members of the Provincial Legislature

Acting Head of the Department, Mr. G Oliphant

Representatives of our Teacher Unions

Stakeholders in Education: MTN, Vodacom, Standard Bank, Old Mutual, South African Institute of Charter Accountants (SAICA);

Senior Management and Officials of the Department of Education;

School Principals present;

Members of the Media;

Most importantly, our top performing learners and their parents

Today we are gathered here as it is an annual institution to acknowledge our top learners and schools in the Province. As this Administration, we have committed ourselves to improving the quality of education in all our schools, across all Grades. This was backed up by significant budgetary allocations to ensure that education enjoys the priority status it deserves. We are convinced that we are making great strides in mitigating some of the factors that harm education and improving its quality, whilst ensuring equal access for all.

It has been proven that excellent educational outcomes are influenced by adequate access to resources such as proper school infrastructure, classrooms, libraries, decent water and sanitation. Importantly, motivated and committed principals and teachers also form an integral part of a well-functioning learning environment and

ultimately contribute to high levels of academic performance. All of these contribute to a conducive environment for learning and teaching.

While there are still many challenges and we are aware that more needs to be done; conditions in the education sector have noticeably improved since 1994. As a country, we have been steadily moving towards the social reality of the delivery of Section 29 of the Constitution where “everyone has the right to a basic education”.

Ladies and gentlemen, when we started this Sixth Administration in 2019 we articulated a vision for our Province as, “Building a Modern, Growing and Successful Province.” We defined a Modern, Growing and Successful Province amongst others; as being at the cutting edge of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and one that prioritises quality education, training and retraining of the youth.

We are therefore greatly pleased that the Census results 2022 show a positive trajectory in several key indicators including education where the total number of population aged 20+ with no schooling declined. Furthermore, it is important to note that 43,3% of children aged 0-4 have access to our Early Childhood Development Programmes and are reported to be attending some sort of Educare Centre(ECD) facilities around the Province. Persons aged 5 - 24 years attending school also show a magnificent increase of 6, 1% from 64, 2% to 70, 3% in 2022.

This shows good progress as the Province is changing the narrative when it comes to education and is showing commitment to providing sustained investment in education. It remains our priority as a government to make the process of either attending school for the first time or continuing one’s education as seamless as possible.

We have gathered here today, to observe and acknowledge our top learners and schools in the Province. Allow me therefore to provide a short analysis of the 2023 National Senior Certificate Examinations.

The Northern Cape registered thirteen thousand and thirty-two (13,032) full-time candidates for the 2023 National Senior Certificate Examination. This is the second biggest cohort of candidates, over the past 5 years, who have registered and completed the National Senior Certificate Examination.

A total of twelve thousand eight hundred and forty-two (12 842) candidates wrote all subjects in the 2023 National Senior Certificate examination, nine thousand seven hundred and forty (9 740) candidates completed their final examination, bringing the overall pass rate of the Northern Cape to 75, 8%. The pass rate for this year has increased by 1, 6% from 74, 2% in 2022 to 75, 8% in 2023.

If we were to look at the results of the last four years, we would see a positive growth in that in 2020 our matric pass rate was 66%, in 2021 it was 71.4%, in 2022 it was 74.2% and for 2023 we have 75.8%.

Ladies and gentlemen, although we recorded an improvement in the 2023 Matric Results, regrettably we are still below the national average of 82, 9%. We are however encouraged by the positive trajectory of the Matric Results in the Northern Cape over the past 4 years and it is a clear indication that we are on the right path.

I have tasked the Department of Education to develop a Provincial Improvement Plan which will include, amongst others, a myriad of programmes with a specific focus on underperforming schools, novice teachers, learner performance, ICT in schools, leadership and management and consequence management.

The pass rates for our five Districts are as follows:

- The Namakwa District recorded the highest pass percentage of 81,6%, an increase of 1,6%;
- The ZF Mgacwu District has recorded a pass percentage of 81,4% with a decrease of 2,4%;
- The Pixley Ka Seme District has recorded a pass percentage of 74,2% with a decrease of 4,1%;
- The Frances Baard District follows with a pass percentage of 73.9% with an increase of 1,8% and;
- The John Toalo Gaetsewe District recorded a 73,7% pass percentage with an increase of 5,7%;

Congratulations to the Namakwa District for being our top-performing District. We would also like to congratulate the John Toalo Gaetsewe District who recorded the highest improvement in the 2023 National Senior Certificate Examinations.

Last year the Department of Education introduced two subjects; Sign Language as a Home Language and Maritime Studies. Both these subjects recorded a 100% pass mark.

Today, we will also introduce a new award for our Top performing Special Needs learner in the Province.

Amidst the challenges that we still face in the education sector, we need to ensure that we leave no one behind. We must wage a fight against illiteracy, promote a culture of inclusion in and throughout the education system to reach all learners and prioritise the most disadvantaged and vulnerable. We must prioritise gender equality eliminate all barriers to girls' completion of 12 years of compulsory education, and encourage their participation in Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects.

We must increase our investment in Early Childhood Development and education to counter disadvantages and set the foundations for successful learning in school. Lastly, we must work together to ensure that our children are given every advantage as they strive to lead our country and economy in the future.

As young citizens in our Province, you are in a position to take advantage of the new opportunities that our economy has Government have to offer. We are resolute that our youth must gain the right skills to grow the economy. We encourage you and make an appeal that you must take up the various skills development and youth empowerment programmes in the Province to adequately prepare you for the jobs of the future. You must align your qualifications to the developmental needs and mega projects that will find expression soon in our Province.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we also have a reason to celebrate today. Allow me to acknowledge the presence of the top-performing candidates in the Province. Today, we will also celebrate excellent achievements in specific subjects, where candidates obtained level 7's. These candidates will be announced and acknowledged later in the program. They have demonstrated the highest level of resilience; they were able to master the highest level of discipline and hard work regardless of their social and economic conditions.

Finally, we will support all candidates that have not made it through these exams. We will assist and support them in the subjects not achieved, to ensure that they complete the requirements for passing.

Allow me to take this opportunity to thank the MEC for Education, Mr Zolile Monakali, the Head of the Department, Mr. Gideon Oliphant and all Senior and Middle Managers for their administrative leadership.

All District and Circuit officials, Curriculum Chief Directorate, Curriculum Coordinators and all Subject Advisors need special mention and have to be acknowledged for the role they have played.

A word of appreciation to the Examination Chief Directorate as well as the District Examination officials for their commitment, involvement and outstanding manner in which they conduct examinations in our Province.

I thank all the teacher unions that operate in this sector and all our dedicated teachers for their outstanding role in assisting the Northern Cape Department of Education in taking our combined efforts to greater heights.

A special word of appreciation to all our partners in Education, who are present: MTN, Vodacom, Standard Bank, Old Mutual, South African Institute of Charter Accountants (SAICA) for their unwavering support and commitment towards Education.

I sincerely trust that this cooperation and relationship will continue and further strengthen. Through this public-private partnership, we will be able to turn the tide and contribute towards a quality public education system.

In conclusion, I call on all stakeholders and partners in the Education Sector to strengthen our hands and with us to achieve excellence in Education. I call on particularly parents to become actively involved in the education of their children and actively involved in the life of the schools.

Thank you