

**Address by the Premier of the Northern Cape, Dr Zamani Saul, at the Northern  
Cape Teaching Awards 2021**

**Protea Hotel, Big Hole, Kimberley**

**7 September 2021**

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**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 2021 Northern  
Cape Teaching Awards**

**Members of the Media Fraternity**

**Invited Guests**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

“I would like to commence my remarks with an anonymous quote which reads, “Life as a teacher begins the day you realise you are always a learner”

Education, Programme Director, is the cornerstone of any thriving community, economy and country and so often it is accepted as common place 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, realize 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. 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. 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.

We present these awards at a time when we are commemorating Public Service Month. This month is celebrated annually and it is an integral part of government's Batho Pele Revitalisation strategy. This strategy seeks to re-affirm the significance of Batho Pele in transforming public service delivery whilst securing maximum benefits for citizens in line with our constitutional rights to be treated with dignity, courtesy, and to receive quality and sustainable public services. It is also a time when we pay tribute to the many public servants who continue to make a positive difference in our country.

The theme for the 2021 integrated Public Service Month is: "The Year of Charlotte

Manye Maxeke – a resilient public service workforce that responds to the coronavirus pandemic". This theme of resilience during a crisis harmonises with the current realities of South Africa's Public Service. The theme aims to methodically examine how the Public Service is managing the new and fast-changing service delivery environment shaped by the coronavirus pandemic and other external factors, which have disrupted the schooling sector in a manner not anticipated.

This virus has negatively affected the lives of educators, learners, and support staff at schools; compromising teaching and learning. We have seen a significant number of schooling days being lost due to a range of factors. Chief amongst these are the periodic opening and closure of schools, educators opting to retire, and in some instances even resigning due to the increased workload and pressure to complete the curriculum and the extended school or work hours as part of the curriculum recovery plans.

Since the onset of the pandemic, more than three hundred and ninety five (395) schools have been affected with a total number of three thousand six hundred and forty five (3 645) educators, learners, non-teaching support staff and screeners being infected. It is encouraging to report that we have seen a total recovery rate of three

thousand two hundred and nineteen (3 219) representing a recovery rate of 88.3 percent in the affected group.

Like the rest of the country and the world, we have sadly lost fifty people in the education sector in the Province to the deadly virus. This is regrettably significant in our province given our demographics, and we once more extend our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. I now ask that we please rise and observe a moment of silence for their departed souls, and we pray that their legacies will forever be etched in the memory of those who had the privilege to cross their paths.

While we rise for a moment of silence, I also want us to spare a thought for the three educators at Umso High School in Colesburg, who tragically lost their lives in a car accident this past Saturday. We also pray for a speedy recovery for one of the educators who is still in hospital. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families, management, staff and learners of Umso High School during this very difficult time of mourning.

**Ladies and gentlemen**, I cannot overemphasize the effects Covid-19 presents to us all, and I want to make a sincere plea to our educators and non-teaching staff to assist the Government in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic by observing all protocols and also getting yourself vaccinated. Vaccination remains our most effective weapon in the fight against Covid-19 because it reduces the risk of severe disease, hospitalisation and death. Allow me, thus, to express my gratitude to the more than 12 000 educators and support staff who have opted to get themselves vaccinated. This will go a long way in stabilising our education system and normalising teaching and learning in our schools. I also want to make use of this opportunity to warn against the spreading of incorrect, distorted information and fake news. Whilst it remains your right to refuse the vaccination on whichever grounds you deem relevant, please do not discourage others to do so, for people look up to you and understand what you say to be credible and true. I encourage you to first verify facts before forming an opinion and before spreading it as the gospel truth. Government further calls on all educators to encourage all learners, 18 years and above, to make use of the public vaccination programme to register and get vaccinated.

**Ladies and gentlemen**

Despite the current difficult and trying times, we are gathered here; driven by our conscience, to celebrate and give recognition to those who have excelled in the profession. You have, during turbulent times, proven your mettle and gone far beyond the call of duty. This evening, we therefore wish to express our gratitude to you and motivate you to continue the selfless endeavours that you make for our children, their future and for the benefit of our Province and ultimately our country.

Tonight we honour 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.

Programme Director, it was Nelson Mandela who stated that, "Without education, our children can never really meet the challenges they will face. So it is very important to give children education and infuse a spirit of service and patriotism and contribute positively towards the development of our country.

Our greatest responsibility therefore, is to educate the next generation of informed citizens, inculcating in them a love for knowledge, research and new discoveries. A good education system needs to be about the practical business of ensuring that young people receive the preparation they need, to not only secure a good job and a fulfilling career, but to also possess the resilience and fortitude to overcome challenges that life may offer. Engrained in good teaching is the moral rectitude to be good and do good. Nothing surpasses this maxim.

Ladies and gentlemen, first and foremost, teachers are our primary nation builders, and they give strength and meaning to every profession in our country. I can therefore with confidence state that as a society, we blossom and grow from the knowledge and skills that teachers help to instil in our learners.

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 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. We all know what a difference this can make to the learners' lives. 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.

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 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 that 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. We therefore rely on you to guide, 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.

I also call on your support in advancing the ‘**Love your school campaign**’; in order for our learners to take pride in their environment, which will inevitably lead to learners contributing positively to their communities.

### **Ladies and gentlemen**

Tonight I wish to commend the tremendous effort teachers put into the training of our Province’s human resources and these awards present us with an ideal opportunity to do just that. As we do so, we want to say to you that we are fully aware of the high level of sacrifice, selflessness, dedication and great sense of responsibility that your daily duties entail. Excellence in education, in my view, is when we do everything that we can, including personal sacrifices, economic sacrifices, time away from family and missing important family milestones, to ensure that our children in school become the best versions of themselves and what society certainly needs.

At some point in every person’s life, a teacher’s influence is significant and often has life-changing effects. In most instances, teachers act as the guides for life and they show the path towards success. They enrich the personalities and shape the characters of learners by imparting valuable knowledge and skills.

I also urge our teachers to take advantage of the various opportunities for lifelong learning and self-development to sharpen your teaching skills in these times of constant change. This way, you will always remain current and will be in a better position to impart modern and relevant knowledge to our children.

Programme Director, this year marks the twenty first ceremony of the National Teaching Awards and I want to take this opportunity to appreciate the role of all Teacher Unions in the manner in which they continue to support these Awards. Our Teacher Unions are our important and valued stakeholders and we thank you for your dedication to the noble cause of educating our nation.

I also would like to thank and acknowledge the invaluable sponsorship by:

- BBB Mojave
- Gamagara Development Forum
- IT Cognify
- JTG Trust

- KRMS Architects
- Monwabisi Investments Holdings
- MTN
- Nkgabise Construction
- Old Mutual
- Orion Minerals
- Phakama Research
- PC Builders
- Standard Bank
- Vuyani and
- V3 Consulting Engineers as our partners in education.

When we say that education is a societal responsibility, this is what we really mean. Thank you very much for your generosity and commitment to the education of our future leaders. It is indeed partnerships such as these that will enable us to provide quality education to our children.

### **Ladies and gentlemen**

Today 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 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.

I therefore 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.

I also encourage those educators who are not receiving awards this evening that they should continue to strive by being diligent, caring and supportive to our learners. Your efforts, most definitely, are also recognised.

I think it appropriate that I end with this anonymous quote, "If you think that education is expensive, imagine the price of ignorance,"

**Thank you.**

You have made all of us proud.