

Northern Cape Teaching Awards 2016
Keynote Address by MEC Martha Bartlett
Flamingo Casino
Tuesday, 22 November 2016

Premier Sylvia Lucas

Members of the Executive Council

Head of Department: Mr GT Pharasi

Representatives from Liberty, Old Mutual, De Beers and
Petra Diamonds Mines

Senior Managers and Departmental Officials present

Teacher Unions

SGB Associations

Stakeholders in the Education sector

Most importantly, the Educators and participants of the
Northern Cape Teaching Awards 2016

Ladies and gentlemen

Distinguished guests

Program Director

It is an honour to address the Northern Cape Teaching Awards as we celebrate the efforts of women and men who epitomise the best that South Africa has to offer, the best that our education system has to offer and the best that our public service can show.

It has been said, “The mediocre teacher tells, the good teacher explains, the superior teacher demonstrates, and the great teacher inspires”, so we have a lot of inspiration in the room this evening.

All educators are winners tonight as they represent the noblest values of teachers all over the world: a passion for children, a desire for a better future, a yearning for knowledge and a commitment to community. Few other professions are as future oriented than teaching, where most of the fruits of the profession are only visible in the future. It takes a special type of person with unique skills and attributes to excel in teaching.

We are also here to celebrate the efforts of our best teachers, knowing well, that teachers operate in a difficult environment. Our society is a complex one, at times stressful, our societies are sometimes violent, often poverty ridden and frequently ridden with social dislocation and marginalisation that affect our children in complex ways.

As a teacher myself, I have personal experience of how teachers were respected and revered by society.

Unfortunately, that is no longer the case. We need to revive that spirit of Ubuntu by being true to our teaching vocation.

If it is still true that teaching is a calling, as teachers we need to conduct ourselves as people who have been called to serve the nation. We must live an exemplary life and ensure that we inspire many to aspire to be teachers tomorrow.

I know that participants in these awards are also assessed on how they deal with the impact and effects of social challenges that include, among others, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, diversity and gender sensitivity.

This means that the challenges of our society call upon our teachers to be more than just teachers. Sometimes they find themselves having to be Social Workers, Psychologists and many other professions.

This is what we mean when we say that we are dedicated to service and perform beyond the call of duty.

The National Teaching Awards was conceptualised and launched in 2000 and in 2016 it entered its 16th year of implementation. Through extensive consultation, the scheme has been refined, sharpened, as well as broadened in terms of its frame and categories.

Programme Director, this is one of the ways in which the Department of Basic Education acknowledges and encourages dedicated and caring teachers in their efforts to develop each learner as a citizen of a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa.

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 practice in schools
- Afford South Africans the opportunity to publicly say "thank you" to all outstanding teams or individual teachers in schools

Your achievement shows that despite the "times of challenges and controversy" we face in our education system; our schools continue to have a cadre of torch-bearers, tirelessly working hard to deliver quality teaching. Better education is sorely needed by the young and this beautiful country of ours that is in dire need of development.

I can say with confidence that, given the level of excellence displayed by tonight's recipients, we have entered the road that will help us overcome the many challenges confronting our education system.

While education has always been a high priority for this government, it has become the single highest priority or apex priority as it is called. This ladies and gentlemen, is partly in recognition of the importance of education.

Action Plan 2019: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030 envisages the continuous improvement of teachers and their capabilities and who are confident in their profession. It also aims at attracting a new group of young, motivated and appropriately trained teachers to the teaching profession.

It also envisages a school principal who ensures that quality teaching and learning takes place according to the national curriculum, but who also understands his/her role as a leader whose responsibility is to promote harmony, creativity and sound ethic within the school community and beyond.

The Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development advocates for more targeted, subject specific teacher education and development that will improve teacher content knowledge.

The Northern Cape Department of Education have responded to this integrated teacher education and development plan by developing our Provincial Integrated Teacher Education and Development Strategy through which we will be able to identify and address individual teacher as well as systemic needs and attract an increased number of high level achievers into the teaching profession.

I want to take this opportunity to appreciate the role of all Teacher Unions in the manner in which they supported the National Teaching Awards. Our Teacher Unions are our important and valued stakeholders and we want to 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 Old Mutual and Liberty 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 passion in education.

Partnerships of this nature are very crucial if we are to achieve our human resources development goals.

Thank you for investing in the future of our children. It is indeed partnerships such as these that will enable us to provide quality education to our children.

In conclusion, allow me to convey a special word of thanks to our dedicated and motivated teachers for their sterling work and high standards. What you do for the nation's children, moves us closer to realising a better life for all.

You are being honoured tonight precisely because you stood the “ultimate test” in “moments of challenge” by striving endlessly and selflessly, against all odds, for quality teaching and quality learning.

Again, congratulations to all recipients of the prestigious teaching awards!

Lastly, may your outstanding work and excellent achievements inspire all our colleagues in the teaching fraternity to do more to help us achieve quality education and open access for all our people, in particular, for the poorest of the poor.

The future of our country is in good hands!

I thank you all.