

**Speech to be delivered by the MEC for Education, Mrs Reginah Mhaule
at the Occasion of a Meeting with Principals at Nkangala District on 26
June 2014.**

**Programme Director and DDG Mrs, Lucy Moyane
Head of Department, Mrs Mahlasedi Mhlabane
Chairperson of the Moral Regeneration Movement, Rev Mikah Nthali
Pastor Solly Mahlangu
District Director, Mr JJ Mabena
Members of Senior Management
Members of the District Management team
Circuit Managers
Principals
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Sanibonani

We thank you dearly for honouring this meeting.

We thought it will be prudent that we meet in this fashion first as indicated by the Head of Department to confirm that we are still together in this noble journey to educate the people of this province.

Secondly which is more imperative is to use this platform to express our profound appreciation to you for the great strides which have been recorded in the education sector. We are indeed mindful of the fact that the good story that is being told by the people of the province, is due to your dedication and commitment. We are truly grateful for that.

Thirdly, we saw a need to confirm our resoluteness to spare no effort but continue to work around the clock to consolidate on the gains made.

We need to consolidate these gains taking into account the 2011 Census results which confirmed that Mpumalanga is a youthful province with the population distribution made up of 69.4 % by the youth.

This means that in whatever we do, special emphasis must be made to empower the youth given our view that the youth is our future and investing in the youth is investing in the future of South Africa.

I also think that it is advisable that I must thank the ruling party, the African National Congress for the confidence they have shown in me by entrusting me to work with you. I am fully aware that this is a rare privilege which should at no stage be taken for granted.

The ANC has received an overwhelming mandate from the citizenry of this country to govern for the next five years. This happened because of the fact that our people acknowledged that indeed this country is better now than it was before 1994. The people of this country therefore mandated the ANC to implement its manifesto for the next five years including the National Development Plan.

Key to the manifesto of the ruling party as it relates to education is the provision of **Early Childhood Development**.

The provisioning of Early Childhood Development remains a top priority for this administration as this is an area where we interface care giving and initiate our children into the teaching and learning environment.

We intend to move in earnest to ensure that our children receive two years of compulsory pre-school education.

At the same time the province will work towards improving the knowledge base of ECD practitioners and qualifications of Grade R Practitioners' to NQF Level 6.

Of more significance, is our quest to take the Grade R practitioners' skills development and empowerment programmes to greater heights by establishing the first Provincial Early Childhood Development Institute that will serve as a hub for skills development and a centre for dispensing improved ECD services.

This institute should be operational by January 2015.

We have also prioritised the need to accelerate the implementation of the Provincial Human Resource Development Strategy.

This must be done by enhancing the coordination of programmes in an integrated manner to increase competency levels of employees through transversal training programmes.

Our view is that this will help a great deal to improve service delivery to the Mpumalanga community culminating to better quality of life.

We have taken a view that the Department must forge strategic partnerships with Higher Education and Training, SETAs and relevant stakeholders to fast track the implementation of the Provincial Human Resource Development Strategy and the Mpumalanga Economic Growth and Development Plan. Coupled with this, the province will establish the Provincial Human Resource Development Council in line with National Skills Development Strategy III during this financial year.

In addition, the province will double up its effort to create opportunities for out-of-school youth through skills programmes particularly in the sectors identified in the Mpumalanga Economic Growth and Development Plan. Through the implementation of the Integrated Youth Skills Development Plan, the Province would be responding to the resolutions as highlighted during the Youth Summit held in Secunda on 29 to 30 April 2014.

To achieve this, the Department must upscale the number of bursaries that are offered to learners who pass Grade 12; these bursaries are awarded in line with the Provincial Human Resources Development Strategy and the Mpumalanga Economic Growth and Development Plan.

We have brought along the application forms to all principals of secondary schools. Please encourage learners to apply on time.

Following the Youth Summit, the Department will convene an inter-departmental team to develop a costed implementation plan for the province.

Equally the province will establish the Youth Development Unit to be located in the Office of The Premier which will oversee the implementation of this plan and regularly report to the Provincial Management Committee (PMC) and Executive Council.

The Department is also mandated to improve the results of the Annual National Assessment (ANA).

I hope we all agree that greater care and attention should be towards establishing a strong foundation so that learners can master literacy and numeracy skills from an early age.

We must commit to work decisively to ensure that at least 75% of learners in grades 3, 6 and 9 obtain results above 50% in Languages and Mathematics and achieve pass rates of 90% by 2019.

Our view is that this can be achievable only if we can hold our primary school management teams accountable at all times.

The Province is hard-pressed to increase the number of learners who enrol and pass Mathematics, Physical Science and Technology from Grade 10 to 12 levels.

The established Maths, Science and Technology Academy should help accelerate the realisation of this goal.

In that regard additional Basic Resources such as science and computer laboratories and systems to broadcast lessons have already been provided to the identified 100 MST secondary schools to ensure positive outcomes in this regard.

We are also mandated to improve **School Governance**

This must be done first, by expressing our deepest appreciation to our parents on their involvement in the education of their children and participating in the school governing bodies.

The Department is required to ensure ongoing capacity building to all school governing bodies in 08 Modules regarding their roles and responsibilities. In fact preparations for the 2015 elections of the school governing bodies should start in earnest.

We must work with our school governing bodies to ensure that our schools comply with basic school safety measures which in turn will create a safe and caring school environment free from all forms of social ills.

The Department will equally works around the clock with SGB's to eradicate all inappropriate structures, provide water, electricity and sanitation to all our schools by 2019. Remember the Minister of Basic Education has already signed the norms and standards on schools infrastructure.

The **Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust (MRTT)** was mandated to help to fast track the provision of sanitation facilities in Bohlabela District. We will see how this approach works and if there would be any need to utilise the same approach in the future. We uphold that this provision will restore the dignity of

our teachers and learners. I am saying this because lack of these facilities robs our personnel of the pride that they deserve.

The Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust remains part of the provincial broader plan to unleash experiential practical training through customised and accredited programmes. I request that you help to spread this message so that our communities can take advantage of the immense opportunities that comes with this institution.

Of significance is that MRTT is mandated to provide scarce and critical skills in technical, hospitality and tourism as well as entrepreneurial programmes.

It is also strategically positioned to train the out of school youth in the eight identified CRDP Municipalities and to contribute towards programmes aimed at reducing the unemployment rate in the province.

We must take pride in the establishment of the **University of Mpumalanga**

The Department will continue to work with the Department of Higher Education and Training to ensure the realisation of the goals set and to make this University beneficial to the people of Mpumalanga in the true sense of the word.

To achieve all of this we must ensure that our staff is motivated, feel appreciated at all times and where possible ensure that you have the basic resources.

Let's ensure that we have adequate human resources by accelerating the process of filling in of vacant posts. This will not only resource us but will help to reduce the unemployment rate in the country.

Let us support our management at all times, adhere to deadlines, and respond to community inquiries in keeping with the Batho Pele Principles

Now that the President of the Republic has pronounced the marching orders for the next five years through his State of the Nation Address, let us commit that on our part we will do our best.

I hope you know that we are going to sign delivery agreements that binds us on targets set for the province to move forward and we are hopeful that we should be in a position to finalise the five year departmental strategy in August this year.

Please lead from the front in ensuring that children of school going age are admitted in schools for 2015 before the August 2014 deadline.

The target for 2014 Grade 12 results is **10%** improvement meaning that the province should obtain **88.7%**.

To achieve this we have arranged that all schools which obtained results below 60% must attend winter school classes which will start on 30 June to 10 July. We also encourage learners to take advantage of the direct support programmes such as the dial a tutor, Text a tutor and radio lessons which have been extended to ten community radio stations.

I request that we all contribute towards the success of all these programmes so that in turn we can achieve our desired targets.

Once more thank you very much for the support, I wish you the best in all your endeavours.

Ngiyabonga.