

Speech to be delivered by the MEC for Education, Mrs. Reginah Mhaule at the Graduation of Educators who have completed the FET band Technical Educators Training on 21 November 2014

Programme Director, Dr Henk Jooste

Acting Chief Executive Officer: NIHE-MP; Dr Paul Maminza

Site Head of Emalahleni Campus; Dr Coneth Richards

Facilitators from TUT, Pretoria Campus

Members of Senior Management

Dignitaries present here today

Principals from Gert Sibande and Nkangala District

Educators

Friends and Family of Graduates

Our Graduates

The Media

Sanibonani

I stand before you today in an elated state, this excitement I have drawn in through the ambience of this state of event.

Today marks yet another milestone, when we witness our country on a state of development. As we slowly climb towards the top of the ladder of expansion, we pause to reflect and celebrate the journey we have thus travelled.

We are gathered here to celebrate and honour educators who are a part of the journey of progression, educators who have continuously given themselves to the profession without any resistance, in pursuit of the growth of their communities, particularly the nation.

These are teachers who pride themselves in their profession by being professional at all times, and who are prepared to render the service for the nation from the cradle to the grave.

When our educators are fully trained and are able to transfer their knowledge to learners, it creates a balance in our communities and thus denounce the notion that after twenty years of our democracy there still exists “*previously disadvantaged communities or schools.*”

We share a collective view that we need to act in a manner that empowers our teachers through all means, including inculcating technical skills because we fully understand that in case we fail to do so, the country will be at the risk of mediocrity.

We know that history is not friendly to loafers; hence this partnership with higher education institutions and the private sector is sacrosanct.

Educating the Nation

One of our core fundamentals is that we continue to build a solid educational system for the benefit of all the children of this country irrespective of their social economic background.

This can only be done by offering them the best quality education which is second to none, in a conducive environment by educators who are adequately trained and equipped with sufficient content knowledge.

The ultimate goal is that our children should at all times be exposed to an enhanced education processes which will free them from the sorry state of poverty, ignorance and helplessness.

This is not only history in the making, but a platform to showcase the qualitative higher education trajectory in steering the objectives of the National Development Plan (NDP)

The National Development Plan captures this vividly as it says:

“Our story keeps growing as if spring is always with us.

Once, we uttered the dream of a rainbow.

Now we see it, living it.

It does not curve over the sky.

It is refracted in each home, in the community, in the city, and across the land, in an abundance of colour.

When we see it in the faces of our children, we know: there will always be, for us, a worthy future.”

To achieve this worthy future requires that we collaborate purposefully, complement each other and share skills and resources.

It requires that we rise above the expected norm and create an environment where institutions of government and the private sector will at all times work towards achieving a common goal which is to emancipate our people for a better life.

The Importance of Technical Skills in the Province

Government remains steadfast to fight the high youth unemployment rate through the implementation of the Provincial Human Resource Development Strategy.

This is based on the firm view that when the youth is furnished with scarce skills and knowledge that the Industrial Sector requires, they are easily absorbed in the world of work.

Congratulate Graduates and Acknowledge TUT

Our graduates today leave this place as fully certified ambassadors of the notion ***“Together Moving South Africa Forward”***.

Like soldiers you are armed with weapons to face a destructive war. Be always mindful that it's only that your war is one of the mind, where you are to equip the minds of our learners with all the knowledge and practical skills you have acquired on this training.

As we are gathered here to celebrate you as vessels of knowledge, I am certain that through you, tomorrow we will be gathered to celebrate learners that you have taught.

Congratulations to everyone of you. I am personally very proud of teachers who continue to develop themselves, as they prove to me that the future of our country is indeed in good hands.

Allow me to also recommend that as teachers, please encourage our learners to also apply and further their education through our FET Colleges. These colleges are meant for learners to develop their skills.

Our universities play an important role in the development of our children but FET Colleges are equally important as they are also able to offer scarce skills that are required in the industrial sector.

To the **TUT Engineering Faculty**, we thank you for the efforts that you have made in ensuring that our teachers obtain updated theoretical knowledge and practical training they needed on the new technology roll-out.

We are also very grateful that the training also included health and safety aspects of the workplace, as this curb any injuries in our schools, when machinery is utilised.

We hope that more workshops will be held in the future, that will target learners.

Tribute to the National Institute of Higher Education

I wish to take this opportunity to extend my deepest tribute to the National Institute of Higher education in Mpumalanga and to its leadership.

What you have done for this province is unprecedented. Today, we are all comforted and encouraged by your patriotic gesture and commitment.

Mpumalanga is no longer the same because you stood up to your mandate as reflected in the higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997) to coordinate the regional provision of higher education and to ensure the coherent provision of higher education through programme collaboration with public higher education institutions operating in Mpumalanga Province.

Today, Mpumalanga prides itself with being one of the two provinces to host the first universities to be built in this country by the Democratic Government.

The University of Mpumalanga is already positioned as a beacon of hope for the majority of our youth throughout the country and in the SADEC Region, thanks to the men and women who embraced this vision before this university came to fruition.

It is our hope that the late Professor Connie Mogale, the founding CEO of NIHE is marvelling this progress wherever she is.

We believe that she is smiling when she looks at this achievement and today's ceremony in particular and like Jesus Christ it is safe for this institution to say "***It's finished***"

When I looked at your website and the reports at my disposal on the notice of the disestablishment of the National Institute for Higher Education, I could not help it, but to try to find solace that you have done your part, you lived up to the expectations and truly you fought a good fight.

On behalf of the provincial government and the people of Mpumalanga we wish to take this opportunity to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for having lived up to your mandate.

Indeed, you are closing on a high note.

We wish you all of the best in the new responsibilities that you are currently undertaking.

Thank Tshwane University of Technology

Let me also extend our sincere appreciation to the leadership of Tshwane University of Technology for embracing this programme leading to this graduation.

Your contribution resonates very well with you motto: "*We empower people*"

We are delighted that we have found a patriotic partner in you. Today, we know that the sun will shine on us because we have you as our pillar of strength.

Thank you so much for what you continue to do for the people of the rising sun.

Conclusion

Dr Martin Luther King once said:

“The prosperity of any country depends not on the abundance of its revenues, nor the strength of its fortifications, nor the beauty of its public buildings, but in its cultivated citizens, in its men of education, enlightenment and character.”

On that note let me once more congratulate all the graduates today, let us work harder to build and change our communities for the better.

Ngiyabonga.