

**Speech to be delivered by the MEC for Education, at the Occasion of  
the 2015 National Teaching Awards held in Kruger National Park on 16  
October 2015**

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Programme Director; Mrs. Lucy Moyane

Members of the Executive Council present

Head of Department; Mrs. Mahlasedi Mhlabane

National Association of School Governing Bodies led by Mr. ME Maseko

Managing Executive of Kruger National Park; Mr. Glen Phillips

Representatives of SANABO-SANASE

Representative of Old Mutual led by Mr. Lawrence Gabela

Representative of Standard Bank of South Africa led by Mr. Lawrence  
Ntimane

Members of Senior Management

CTU-SADTU

CTU – Independent Unions

Circuit Managers

Nominees for the National Teaching Awards

Teachers

Parents

Media

Principals

Comrades and Friends

Ladies and Gentlemen

**Sanibonani,**

It is well known that October is a special month for teachers. We come here to celebrate our outstanding teachers at the backdrop of celebrating World Teachers' Day on 05 October as pronounced by UNECSO. I must highlight that we are marking the 16th year of implementation of the National Teaching Awards (NTA) and this is one of the occasions that I look forward to, on every new calendar.

I therefore send my regards to everyone that came to honour our teachers today; I thank you for setting time aside so that you may join us as we honour our great heroes and heroines.

## Conceptualization of the NTAs

One of the greatest principles that I was taught as a young woman, was that you should always say please and thank you. In this regard, to honour that which our educators have excelled on, it is only befitting that on this podium, in front of you as a collective, I extend my greatest appreciation to the individuals that have taken a pledge to serve our communities, our dear educators.

One needs to say that the National Teaching Awards Scheme was conceptualised and launched in 2000 and through extensive consultation, the scheme has been refined, sharpened, as well as broadened in terms of its frame and categories.

We are here to satisfy the objectives behind the NTAs which are:

- Focus public attention on the positive aspects of Basic Education, thereby raising the public image of the teaching profession.
- Recognise and promote excellence in teaching performance.
- Honour dedicated, creative and effective teachers and schools.
- Encourage best practice in schools.
- Afford South Africans the opportunity to publicly say thank you to all outstanding teams or individual teachers in schools.

As a norm our honour and celebration will reflect on the 10 categories which are:

- Excellence in Primary School Teaching
- Excellence in Secondary School Teaching
- Excellence in Primary School Leadership
- Excellence in Secondary School Leadership
- Excellence in Grade R Teaching
- Excellence in Special Needs and Inclusive Teaching
- Excellence in Technology–Enhanced, Teaching and Learning Award

- Excellence in Mathematics Teaching (GET);
- Excellence in Natural Sciences Teaching (GET);
- Lifetime Achievement Award

## **Tribute to Teachers**

Let me also congratulate each and every educator that is nominated for these awards, I know that it may sound as a cliché, but believe me when I say that just by being nominated, you are of course already a winner. You are counted amongst those educators who are making a difference and agents of change and development in our communities.

Many a time, the role of educators in our communities is taken for granted, many do not sit down and dissect the role of an educator. If they did, they would acknowledge that these are individuals that help build a child's character, teach a learner that they have five fingers on each hand, and help a child to write their name. I mention the simplest roles, because even the richest man/woman today, who signs off important documents, was taught by a teacher to write his or her name.

As nation builders, Educators are pillars of our societies, these men and women lay a foundation for each and every learner's future. It is also important to note that they accomplish this with learners who have different character traits and gifts.

The South African nation is reliant on you as educators to lay the foundation, bricks and mortar for the developmental agenda of our country. We are here celebrating and honouring all those dedicated teachers who have chosen to take positive action as opposed to complaining and being disruptive.

It is well known all over the world that teaching is a calling not just any profession. This is mainly so as to be a good teacher requires selfless character and putting the interest of the learners at the top of the value chain.

These are the kind of teachers who can easily go an extra mile and pour their hearts out as they make sacrifices for the benefit of our kids and communities.

### **A Call to Teachers to Stay in the Profession**

It our wish as a Department that your good practices can also snowball to the rest of the province and country. The teaching profession has lost a lot of spark and this has a negative effect on the recruitment drive of young persons to teaching. What complicates the situation even worse is the spate of resignation coupled with retirements amongst teachers. We need not experience the misfortunate of reality as expressed by the African proverb which says, if you close your eyes to facts, you will learn through accidents.

I thus want to make a special appeal to all our educators not to take these drastic steps but should consider the repercussions of such action, as some of them are also placing themselves in harm's way. As the pay-out funds resulting from their pensions are speedily depleted within the first year of their resignation.

This is a sorry tale as it pains us to see our former employees suffering at the end. On the other end of the spectrum, the department cannot afford to lose good educators in high numbers.

Let us revive the honour and pride of the profession by becoming good role models to our communities through our deeds and actions. We all need to understand the bigger picture and know that the greatest weapon available to the poor to fight poverty and inequality is education. In the absence of education chaos and poverty reigns.

I also want to make a call to our youth and learners to consider taking up teaching as a career and profession so that we could be able to supply the demand for teachers within the province in the light of the huge exodus of teachers generally.

## **Conclusion**

The Malagasy people say, " Advice is a stranger; if he's welcome he stays for the night; if not, he leaves the same day."

Let me thus conclude by wishing all the nominees the best of luck and say that the Department of Education values their contributions. I want also to stress that whatever you have learnt on this journey please go back to your schools and classrooms to practice and perfect your lesson delivery and management. As such heed the call to arms and make use of the council and advise provided by those who have travelled ahead of you.

As I close, I want to express our heartfelt gratitude to our sponsors mainly Old Mutual and Standard Bank for playing a crucial part in taking teaching and learning as well as teacher development to another level. We really appreciate your patriotic gestures and we are fully convinced that our partnership will go along way.

**Ngiyabonga.**