

Address by Hon. Premier TSP Makwetla at the launch of the Ethics Education Campaign, Mdzili Secondary School, Nkomazi Municipality

10 June 2008

Programme Director

The Honourable Mayor of Nkomazi municipality, Cllr J Mavuso,
MEC for Education, MEC Mmathulare Coleman, and Members of the Executive Council present,
Executive Mayors and councillors,
Traditional leaders,
Spiritual leaders and all community leaders in our midst,
The Director-General, Mr KW Ngema, the HOD and officials of the Department of Education,
Educators and learners from Mdzili Secondary School and other neighbouring schools,
Residents of Nkomazi municipality at large,
Ladies and gentleman,

We are privileged to be part of this historic launch of the Ethics Education Campaign in the province today. The launch of the Ethics Education Campaign here today underscores our commitment as Mpumalanga towards building a strong ethical culture in our communities and public institutions. Our collective obligation to build a morally upright society guided by values of integrity, social accountability and selflessness is a necessary condition for the realisation of a human rights-based culture which values democratic freedoms, justice, human dignity, and a strong sense of responsibility for others when making personal choices.

In a sense, ethical behaviour is an expression of standards of what is good, right and fair in the context of our day-to-day decision making practices. Ethical behaviour is an embodiment of values that society upholds as acceptable, right and fair in its evolutionary growth and development. As South Africans, our Constitution epitomises a unique code of ethics that espouses the highest ideals of human rights, freedom and dignity, and serves as a moral compass towards building a caring society. Critically, to give practical meaning to the ethical values of the Constitution, we should all internalise its contents and live by the values it outlines. Its spirit must direct our moral choices and ethical considerations.

We launch the Ethics Education Campaign during South Africa's Youth Month, and it is important that we remind ourselves of the spirit of June 1976 – Each One Teach One. This implies that we should not advance at the cost of others, and that it is not about survival of the fittest. The end does not justify the means, and it is therefore for example not okay to cheat in exams, to commit qualifications fraud, or to buy exam papers. It requires of all of us to root out the culture of stealing – you eat what you work with – 'Ukukhepha'.

For us, it is important that communities take special interest in the promotion of ethical values that foster development, progress and social cohesion. It is the collective responsibility of all sectors of society to do away with unethical behaviour, fraud and corruption practices, which undermine the fundamental values of morality, and the attainment of society's development outcomes.

Programme Director, communities should be at the forefront of campaigns that help to build a culture of ethical values and practices among its people, public representatives, leaders and institutions. The erosion of ethical values in any community is an indication of the decay of its moral fibre and points to deep-seated problems which may render the community dysfunctional and unstable.

Programme Director, it has been demonstrated internationally that fraud and corruption poses serious threats to social development, service delivery and progress. Fraud and corruption diverts resources meant for community development to individuals who use public resource for own interest. Equally, communities experience vandalism and theft of resources and infrastructure meant for development and the provision of services. As communities, we should not countenance such destructive, unethical behaviour that permeates our communities and public institutions.

In the public service, we must enjoin the active support of communities to hold the public service representatives accountable for unethical conduct in the execution of their public service duties and obligations. We encourage everyone to expose perpetrators of fraud and corruption which undermine the service delivery objectives and commitments of government. Communities must be aware that they have a right to speak out against institutions

and individuals who work to serve their own interest at the expense of communities who are supposed to receive services and benefit from development initiatives.

Programme Director, as the provincial government, we are committed to live and instil the values of integrity throughout the administration. One of the key objectives of the integrity management programme in the Office of the Premier is to create enhanced awareness among employees, the public and other stakeholders so that we build a sustainable culture of integrity, where all stakeholders, including learners, routinely strive to do what is ethical(good, right and just). We believe that increased awareness will result in increased reporting of instances of fraud and corruption. In turn, this will enhance Mpumalanga Provincial Government's detection ability and prevention of these unethical cases.

Programme Director, through collective action on the promotion of ethical values, we are making progress in the fight against corruption, fraud and unethical conduct. Last year, the collaboration between the government and the financial institutions saved the government more than six million rand in fraudulent activities by stopping syndicates between government officials and service providers, where service providers were paid without rendering any service. Some of these cases are being handled by the courts.

We are also encouraged that the number of cases reported increased from 107 in the 2006/07 financial year to more than 220 in 2007/08. The growth of more than 100 percent on cases reported shows that the public and government officials have confidence that government will act decisively against the perpetrators when cases are reported. This is an encouraging trend in that it shows intolerance of unethical values that undermine development and service delivery.

From this year onwards, we will engage in the rollout of ethics awareness campaigns targeted at students at both primary and secondary levels. Today's launch of the ethics education is the beginning of an important commitment to invest in the future leaders and citizens of Mpumalanga to ensure our communities bring up children whose core values are underpinned by a strong sense of integrity and morality. Learners will be taught ethics to ensure that we build prepare them for their future roles as leaders and ethical citizens. We believe that the future returns in the investment we are consciously making now are immense. Having youth that is ethical will improve the management of public resources and institutions in future.

For our revolution to triumph, we must vanquish the moral example of the lumpen proletariat, as they are a serious threat to our future. Student protests against the so-called xenophobic attacks on non-South African nationals must be commended. However, we need to rid our schools from violence and criminality on the school grounds, the bullying of other students, which is a backward culture.

Programme Director, as public institutions, schools are microcosms of culture and the society that supports them. It is imperative that they become bastions of ethical behaviour. These schools need to empower the learners to determine and learn ethical behaviour and practices which will guide them in their daily lives as they grow up to become responsible adults. Educators can play an important role in assisting students to view ethical choices as a vital part of their future lives, both as professionals and in their daily living. Learners can play a critical role in building a strong ethical culture in our communities.

In conclusion, I maintain that building an ethical culture is not just a moral responsibility but a social responsibility to build a cohesive nation whose values are underpinned by integrity and the commitment to service and the public good. This is an undertaking that requires the 'Business Unusual' approach, with 'all hands on deck' to create and sustain an ethical culture in our schools to pay tribute to the spirit of the student uprisings of June 1976 against injustice in our country and society.

I thank you.