

**A SPEECH DELIVERED BY MEC MAVHUNGU LERULE-
RAMAKHANYA AT THE NATIONAL TEACHING AWARDS
PROVINCIAL CEREMONY HELD AT THE RANCH HOTEL ON 30
AUGUST 2024.**

**Executive Mayor for Capricorn District
Executive Mayor for Polokwane Municipality
Acting Head for Limpopo Education Department
CFO, DDGs and Chief Directors Present.
SGB Associations
All the Sector Unions Present
Members of the media Present
And all those who are following along on virtual Platforms**

Ndi Matsheloni

I am delighted to be in your midst this morning as we continue to recognize and appreciate our educators, the frontliners who ensure that we deliver in our core mandate of providing quality basic education and innovative programmes across all grades. It is because of them that we are now able to walk tall as the province. We have earned a tittle of a province on the rise due to your sterling work and improved results in the past two years. This year's edition is a testimony that the existence of this department depends on the quality of educators that we have in the system.

The appreciation awards coincide with the end of women's month and I have no doubt that women in their majority, will ascend the stage to receive accolades for their hard work. Let me take this opportunity to thank all the female educators in our midst who go an extra mile to make a difference in your respective spaces of work, in the subjects that you offer and for remaining exemplary to our children. The nation relies on women for care and to nurture the future leaders. We cannot appreciate you more but suffice to say that you are the pillars of the sector and your dedication to this noble profession is unmatched.

I want to comment all the educators for giving your all under unfavourable conditions. You continue to adapt and thrive in different seasons. Some of you are veterans in your space of work and you witnessed the evolution of the sector. You endured and embraced the changes that came with technology. I know it was not easy for some of you to accept the introduction of technology in your space. You took a conscious decision to remain in the system and adapt with the change. the 4th industrial revolution has changed our approach to the norms and standards in the classroom. Some of your colleagues were not brave enough to accept the change and have long left the sector. A great loss to the profession but I am comforted by the fact that you remained loyal to the calling despite all the challenges. Some of you did not only remain but went further to adjust and re-invent yourselves. This is evident enough that teaching is not just a profession but a calling. We have taken it upon ourselves to ensure that your dedication and hard work does not go unnoticed.

One of my greatest pleasures working for the Department of Education is the interaction with the learners. One day I was reading an article that had compiled some things teachers have heard from their learners over the years. These are things that are outstanding and seem to have stuck with the teachers.

One teacher relayed a story about a time when their Primary School was organising a charity event to raise donations for organisations that fought against child abuse. So, the children at the school were tasked with the responsibility to organise different forms of buyable items to be sold at the school. The day of the event arrived, and all the children set up their little tents on the school grounds thus the fundraising began. The teacher walked up to the table with one of the kids where the child was selling some home-made key rings, on the side of the table was a donation jar with a label that said, "Buy a key ring to prevent the abuse of children on the school grounds".

The incredible things children say!

So, I enjoy listening to such stories and hearing the experiences that educators have with learners beyond teaching and learning.

As educators, your jobs require a lot of hard work, creativity and a caring heart. I have no doubt that this room is made up mostly of individuals that have the heart for teaching. It is this heart that allows learners to thrive and that makes room for teachers to impart much more than education in learners. You impart dignity, self-assurance, patriotism and much, much more. Some of you even have the special talent of imparting humour, that allows children to express joyousness. Although we have organised this humble occasion today to express our respect, admiration, commitment to support your work, I do not believe there will ever be enough words one can use to applaud and thank you.

Our province is on a steady climb in terms of quality performance and you know, I resist the urge to subtly declare that “**we are cruising very nicely**” because I believe more can, is and should be done so we not only cruise nicely but we soar to greater heights. I want to thank you all for your contributions in this endeavour and to encourage you to pass the same message to your colleagues when you go back home. As the department we see your work, we are proud, but more so inspired by the dedication despite the challenges of your field and life itself.

Allow me to also re-affirm our determination as a department to provide support and empower you as educators in your professions as you help us achieve academic excellence. Your vitality, resourcefulness and heart are a beacon to millions of lives. As a department we recognise the importance of your wellbeing and functionality. As the Province, we have dedicated 2024 as the year of academic excellence. The academic year is focused on challenging educators and children to go an extra mile. The excellence and improvement of results lie squarely with the educators.

For us to realise our goal for the academic year, we rely on you to excel in your responsibilities. I expect you to lead by an example by taking a lead in everything. The salary of a teacher is not enough for the job you do but I know you put your profession first before anything. I have seen you at work on weekends, during school holidays and at the enrichment

camps. You devote your time and resources to the sector even when we are not able to compensate you. The long hours and extra lessons will deliver the year of Academic Excellence. We want our learners across all grades to receive equal attention. It is to this effect that we request your ideas on how best we can support you as a department, especially in terms of your mental as well as physical health. There is a Venda Proverb or idiom that says, ***“Munwe Muthihi au tusi Mathuthu”***

The beauty about learning is that it is life long, and I am hoping that through initiatives such as these we are also able to learn how to work more effectively with one another. As a department we intend to continuously learn new ways to provide effective support in order to make your jobs a smooth experience. It is for that reason why I want to take this special moment to thank all our educators, who in the past represented us in both the Provincial and National stages of the competition. We are known for conquering in various categories and we have earned respect because of your consistent effort. We are today known as a performing province because of the extra effort you put in your work. The future of my learners in this province is in good hands. The saying that *“education is a societal matter”* is not just a slogan but a true reflection of your daily lives. The role of an educator is not only limited to the classroom, but some of you are also excelling in extra-mural activities. Our choirs, sporting codes, reading champions just to name a few, are the products of your commitments. All the work you do with sports, languages, mathematics, financial education, science and the arts is necessary.

Programme Director, allow me take this opportunity to acknowledge some of our educators for their respective contributions to the sector. These are the teachers who have gone beyond the scope of their duties to make a difference in their place of work and the community that they serve. I will request that you rise and take a bow as I read out your names.

1. Dr Paul Ngoako Rangongo (**Capricorn North**)

- Principal and teacher at Chokwe Primary School in the Bahlalooa Circuit, Capricorn North District.
- Awarded the Limpopo Department of Education Kader Asmal Lifetime Achievement Award and was second runner up at the 23rd National Teachers Awards representing Limpopo. Was

nominated by Department of Basic Education as well as South African Council for Educators to Represent the Republic of South Africa in the Continent of Africa under the auspices of Africa Federation of Teaching Regulatory Authorities (AFTRA) 2024.

- Dr Paul Ngoako Rangongo was awarded the AFTRA Fellow Lifetime Achievement Award 2024 for the work he is continuing to do for education nationally as well as internationally.

2. Seshibe Nkokotla Lina (**Mogalakwena**)

- Foundation Phase Teacher of Sepedi Primary School in Mokopane Circuit, Mogalakwena District
- Holds the number one position as National Champion in the Indegeneous Folklore for the 2024 academic year

3. Pheladi Rachel Mangwale (**Waterberg District**)

A young educator who has gone above and beyond in her contribution to education. Her outstanding work has been recognised by Sunday World Unsung Hero 2023 whilst at it she is an author of the book: How to Teach Your Child to Read

4. Fhatuwani Khwathisani Maselesele (**Tshivhase Secondary School**)

- Has maintained an average of 93,39% matric pass rate between 2009 and 2023
- Oversaw multiple infrastructure improvement projects sourced from various donors in his illustrious career

5. D.L Tsoeleng (**Mogalakwena District**)

- Joined Seritarita Secondary in Mapela Circuit in 2018 which had matric results at 58%
- Restructured the curriculum to focus on Maths, Science and Technology which led the improvement of results as follows:
 - (i) 2021: 90%
 - (ii) 2022: 96%
 - (iii) 2023: 91.8%

6. Madjadji Primary School Principal – Ms Mokgalaka TM (**Mopani East**)

- Through dedication and hard work, we have seen the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) being won by none other than Madjadji Primary School carrying an R850 000.00.

7. Nicholas Malekane – Sekhukhune East

- For his contribution in turning the tide in poor performing schools. The legacy he left in two schools that he worked and led before joining Gobetse Secondary school. He became the principal of the school with 46% matric pass rate in 2019 and the school is currently performing above 85%.

8. St George College Principal – Varughes J

- For instilling discipline at the school and maintaining consistency for over a decade. The school has obtained 100% pass rate for over 12 years with scores of bachelor passes.

9. **Tom Naude Principal – Antonette Jordaan (Capricorn South)**

The Principal of one of our technical schools who is not only managing the school but also teaches Mathematics with a lot of accolades.

10. Taxilla Principal - Caiphus Tlou Ramara (**Capricorn South**)

- The Principal who has consistently performed above 90% in matric with a high enrolment. One of the best performing schools in Capricorn South District.

As we head closer to hand out awards to the top achievers. let me indicate that all the educators in the room this morning are winners. A winner is not only the candidate who takes a cheque and a trophy home, but a teacher with a deep desire to educate the nation. You all winners though few will ascend the stage. We are looking forward to crowning the winners who will represent Limpopo in the National stage.

I thank you

Ndza khensa