

ADDRESS BY LIMPOPO MEC FOR EDUCATION MR ISHMAEL KGETJEPE AT THE 17TH ANNUAL NATIONAL TEACHING AWARDS (NTA) FOR THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE, 13 OCTOBER 2016, BOLIVIA LODGE, POLOKWANE

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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

Good evening,

I am very pleased to be here tonight as we recognize and thank the hard working teachers who dedicate themselves to educating Limpopo learners. It is always gratifying to be at a ceremony that pays tribute to outstanding teachers from our schools. As we honor dedicated persons within the teaching profession and celebrate excellence, the description by Australian Physician and Author, Helen Caldicott, comes to our aid as to the nobleness of this profession. She says: **“Teachers, I believe, are the most responsible and important members of society because their professional efforts affect the fate of the earth”**.

Just last week Wednesday, the whole world befittingly marked World Teachers’ Day, all because educators are pride and joy of

nations and being a teacher is one of the greatest jobs in the world. Today we are celebrating the joy of hard work and the pride of being a dedicated teacher. So it is true that before any success, comes sweat and blood in the form of hard work. Your contribution to making nations successful remains immense and immeasurable.

Equally, the standards you set are the backbone of our schools and tonight's ceremony shows that our school educators are up to the challenge and gives recognition to the innovative strategies being used in this dynamic era of our basic education. Recognition of excellence in teaching inspires the whole sector to be its best for our learners and one of America's most quoted writers of inspirational maxims, William Arthur Ward, accordingly agrees when he says: **"The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires."**

As a professionally teacher myself, I have seen and know first-hand the dedication required from our school teachers. I have seen up close how hard a day at work, standing in front of a classroom of kids can be, but also the joy that successful teachers bring us. You, the nominees in this room and thousands more educators across the province are all contributing to the future strength of our nation by providing the highest quality education that we can to our young people. You will agree with me that in the last two decades, basic education has become more widely accessible than at any point in our history. So you can imagine what quality teaching does to so many of our young people.

When a person reaches their potential through inspirational teaching, the benefits flow not only to them but also to the country's productivity, society, and international influence. This is because of your abilities to explain complex material, engage learner interest, show concern and respect for learners and their learning, set appropriate assessment, give quality feedback and learning from your learners.

We know that there is a causal link between excellent teaching and productive learning outcomes. We celebrate that link tonight, by celebrating your excellence in teaching. That's what separates our nominees tonight from the rest, your gift to reveal simplicity in teaching and learning in a manner that excites and stimulate learners. We are confident that with you leading the way, after recently launching the 2016 matric countdown, we shall make good use of the remaining time to further prepare our 110 557 learners for the upcoming examinations.

These awards are a clear testament that we have in our province, men and women in our schools, who are professionals dedicated to doing their work against all the odds. These awards further testifies to the fact that we have men and women in our schools whose love for the job is unparalleled and are happy, without any fusses, to go an extra mile to do what they have to do to lift others higher. We urge you, our educators, to lift our learners as we count down to these exams. Be examples and also lift your colleagues who do not take much pride in the profession.

Your high quality teaching and motivation will inspire learners to achieve more than the ever dreamed. Research after research shows that the most significant in-school factor influencing learner achievement is the quality of teaching. Well trained and

knowledgeable teachers are the foundation of a high quality education system and our nation, it is important that we promote excellence in teaching and educational leadership. Quality teachers teaching a robust and relevant curriculum at schools where there is appropriate school governance and where parents are engaged with their children's education, is as good a formula for a good education as we know.

Our commitment in the area of quality teaching and improving the working conditions is something that we must pursue by all means possible and it is one of our key agenda. So teacher education becomes very critical because the quality of teaching in our schools starts with the training of graduates entering our classrooms. We must ensure that teachers that are graduating have the skills needed in today's classroom. It is critical therefore to focus on the most significant issues that need to be addressed to improve the training of teachers both now and in future years.

Just as our own challenges, tactics and techniques evolve, so do the tools that our educators use in the delivery of the curriculum. It is only appropriate that we consider and examine the skills we are equipping our educators with. Whether we like or not, some of the reasons why a learner did well or poorly could be attributed to teacher quality. You can also attribute some of the reasons to the socio-economic status and conditions, some of which government is progressively addressing.

Ours must be to ensure that Limpopo educators are the province's best for our learners and the nominees in this room are leading the way in this regard. I am emphasizing continuous training because a lot is changing in the classrooms. Some classrooms are no longer what they used to be some couple

decades ago. Technology is driving change to the way learners learn, learner's expectations and importantly how teachers teach in the classroom. We know that what we have set aside in this financial year for teacher development and training is not sufficient but it is a good start as we move forward.

The skills that we ask teacher to have now are very different to what a lot of teachers were originally trained in. And just as our teacher education process needs to change, it needs to reflect the fact that you changed, both the way you relate to curriculum, and how you deliver it. With that particular passion I have seen, knowing that the magic of a classroom between teacher and learner is the key that drives learner outcomes.

I congratulate everyone nominated here tonight. I congratulate all those who receive the awards this evening and all those who continue to inspire learning. It is truly inspirational to realize that in this room we have a huge number of people who have changed children's lives and continue to do so. We thank the adjudicators for their meticulous work of identifying the very best in the system. We wish well those of you who will proceed to represent the province in the national awards.

The reigning champion for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics, Ms Lekalakala from Toronto Primary in Mankweng did us and the province very proud in the National Teaching Awards. We are encouraged by the fact that some of our educators were runner-ups in the top three in other categories but we believe that you can do better than being second best. We expect more champions in other categories.

I conclude by wishing all our learners every success in their final examinations. Let us support them in these critical times of their academic lives by creating peaceful environments wherever our learners are. Let our learners heed the wise words of German Philosopher and poet, Friedrich Nietzsche, who says: “**One repays a teacher badly if one always remains nothing but a pupil**”. We urge our learners across Limpopo to give it their very all and repay our educators, parents and the province with good quality results and become something in life.

My profound thanks go to all the role players, our traditional leaders, religious learners, our teacher unions, the business communities, communities and parents, who have worked with us in good and bad times and for supporting education throughout the year. It is through our collective efforts and cooperation that we can achieve more quality and better results.

Together we move South Africa forward!

I thank you.

