

OPENING ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, CHUPU STANLEY
MATHABATHA ON THE OCCASION OF THE LIMPOPO EDUCATION LEKGOTLA HELD
IN POLOKWANE ON THE 10TH MARCH 2022.

Programme Facilitator

MEC for Education, Mme Polly Boshielo;

Director General of the province and HODs present here today;

Districts, Circuit Managers and principals of our schools;

Leadership of the trade union movements in education sector;

Representatives of student organisations and School Governing Bodies;

Friends from the Media;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Programme Facilitator

Firstly, please allow me to take this opportunity to commend the administration of Limpopo provincial government, under the guidance of MEC Polly Boshielo, for organising this Education Lekgotla.

Many of you should still remember that, during the recent State of the Province Address, I made a commitment that our province will organise this Lekgotla.

I pronounced on this Lekgotla amongst others because, it is in our common interest as society that we confront the challenges prevailing in our education sector.

In particular, I am looking at this Education Lekgotla as an approach towards the attainment of socio-economic transformation in Limpopo.

In the same spirit, I am convinced that, this Lekgotla will help us achieve sustainable, high level and strategic outcomes that we all desire.

It is therefore important to state that, we have gathered here today as parents, learners, educators, teacher unions, education managers, officials of government, religious and traditional leaders, and other stake-holders, because we all want 'quality education' for our learners here in Limpopo.

Indeed, we desire quality education in order to achieve the following key outcomes:

- Promote social cohesion, national identity and patriotism;
- To develop and prepare learners to partake in the socio-economic and scientific imperatives affecting society;
- To prepare learners to actively participate in the labour market regime of the country, whether as entrepreneurs or part of the skilled labour force, necessary for industrialization of the economy, and;

- To ensure that they are the informed, rational and active participants in our democratic dispensation.

Programme Facilitator

It is in this context that, it is consistently affirmed that education is a societal matter.

This means that, all education stake-holders I mentioned above, have a responsibility to ensure the provisioning of quality and accessible education to the future generation.

Furthermore, as a country we will not be able to achieve our developmental imperatives, unless we produce or develop all-round, capable, dynamic and responsive students, who can lead and revolutionaries our society.

The type of student I am talking about, is the one who can lead the overall effort to transform the economy towards high levels of growth, poverty reduction and industrialization.

It is against the above mentioned background amongst others that, the executive council (EXCO), directed that we should convene this Education Lekgotla.

We have a generational mission 'to build a Limpopo that we want' through education and we will fulfil this mission.

Programme Facilitator

Our key mandate here is to review the state of education in the province. In doing so, we will focus on early childhood development, primary and secondary school levels.

We know that majority of the people in the country are only interested in the Grade 12 results, however, as Limpopo, we decided that schooling needs holistic and coherent approach.

The Limpopo Development Plan, has prioritised the provisioning of accessible, relevant, quality and quantitative education, as one of the strategic priorities for the province.

This strategic priority means our performance will be measured in terms of the actual learner from poor household, having access to quality education.

In addition, Grade 12 results are one of the measurements being used to assess secondary education. Here, a strong emphasis is on the number of learners who have passed with university entrance.

We have to consider this indicator because, over the last few years, we have all witnessed a decline in terms of our matric results and that is seriously concerning. With regard to relevance, the criteria we need to adopt is whether Grade 12 graduates are able to be absorbed in the labour market or at institutions of higher learning.

Programme Director

Perhaps it is prudent upon this Lekgotla to ask and respond to the question as to whether, we are moving Limpopo towards education excellence, as our theme clearly states.

Secondly, as we deliberate on this issues, we have to bear in mind that, the world of economy is fundamentally changing towards the imperatives of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

This therefore means that, the new normal in the world of work or labour market, is also changing drastically in terms of addressing the needs of the economy. It is the World Economic Report that has projected that, in ten to fifteen years to come, some jobs that are common today are likely to be irrelevant, as the new world order will be dominating.

The report also states that there will be new professions necessary to compete in the new economy. This therefore should propel us to seek ways and means to respond to this requirement.

To this stage, our food for thought should be whether our learners are ready to compete in this era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution or not?

It is one of the leading thinkers in the 4IR field, son of the soil, Professor Tshilidzi Marwala, who said and I quote:

“All aspects of society must be prepared to reskill and to approach skilling as a continuous process. Our education system at all levels must promote problem solving skills, computerizational thinking, inter-disciplinarian skills and mastering the social economic and political world”,

Prof Marwala goes on to say “Furthermore, schools should promote digital literacy, while every effort should be made to attract students to science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics subjects” close quote.

It is therefore significant and fundamental that, perhaps this Lekgotla must reflect as to whether we have the necessary school infrastructure and attitude, to attain the all-round and multi-disciplinarian human beings that Professor Tshilidzi Marwala is referring to.

This Lekgotla must also help relook into the decision to close teachers training colleges. If the decision was wrong, let us come with ways and means to correct that. This is a clarion call I am making to all of you.

This is because we need an education system that is relevant and responsive to the needs of the economy.

Programme Director

It was former President Nelson Mandela who said and I quote:
“Education is the great engine of the personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine, and that a child of a farm workers can become the President of a great nation” close quote.

I reflect on the above so that we can clearly understand the importance of this Lekgotla. The necessary condition to achieve this all-round, inter-disciplinarian, new person in education, requires our collective effort.

It is in the same spirit that, we urge all of you as representatives of the broader society here in this Lekgotla, to collectively reflect on the state of education in the province.

You are duty bound to embark upon an honest assessment, without fear, favour or prejudice, towards the achievement of educational excellence as we envisage. It can't be right that as Limpopo we are always number last when it comes to performance on matric results. We are here to troubleshoot the existing challenges and unleashed workable solutions.

As Franz Fanon always say, we are a generation with a mission, it is either we betray or fulfil this mission. I am saying ‘the future of our province is in our hands and what we do today will determine our tomorrow.

With those few words, I wish to remind you that Covid-19 pandemic is still with us, therefore let us all adhere to all the health protocols in place.

With those few words, the Education Lekgotla is officially opened.

I thank you! Ndolivhuwa! Inkomu! Kea Leboga! Baie Dankie!