

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY LIMPOPO PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA
DURING THE LIMPOPO G20 EDUCATION INDABA, THE RANCH
RESORT, POLOKWANE

21 MAY 2025

Programme Director,
Deputy Minister of Basic Education, Dr Reginah Mhaule,
Speaker of the Legislature, Doctor Makoma Makurupetje,
Members of the Executive Council,
Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Education
Chairperson of the House of Traditional Leaders, Hosi Ngove
All Executive Mayors,
All Local Mayors,
Director General, Mr Nape Nchabeleng,
All HODs,
University of Limpopo Vice Chancellor Professor Mahlo Mokgalong,
University of Venda Vice Chancellor Professor Bernard Nthambeleni,
SAPS Provincial Commissioner, General Thembi Radebe,
Heads of Department,
Deputy Director Generals,
Labour Unions,
Circuit Managers,
Principals,
School Governing Bodies,
Business Community,
Captains of Industries,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Members of the Media,

Ndi Matsheloni, Thobela, Avuxeni, Good morning, Goie more,

As we gather today within the expanse of the savannahs of our beloved province, where the mighty waters of the Great Limpopo River meander through vast landscapes of resilience and promise, we come together to embark on a profound journey - a journey dedicated to the future of our children and the educators who nurture them.

Today, we host the Group of 20 Provincial Indaba on Education for our province with over 300 people gathered here, a momentous occasion that embodies the essence of collaboration and innovation. This moment connects Limpopo to the rest of the international world, raising its hand to be counted amongst the nations of the world where the incessant will to acquire knowledge is a driving force for generations.

This Indaba symbolises the blossoming flower of knowledge in the fertile soil of our province, where rich cultures and diverse voices unite to promote a brighter educational landscape. Just as the baobab tree stands resilient and wise, drawing strength from its deep roots, so too must we cultivate foundational learning and empower our educators to navigate the ever-changing tides of the world around us.

In the spirit of inclusive dialogue, we embrace the vision of harnessing global insights for local solutions, amplifying our provincial voices within the broader G20 discourse. Here, in the heart of Limpopo, we shall address the critical themes of Quality Foundational Learning - a cornerstone for nurturing lifelong learners - and Education Professionals for a Changing World, essential for equipping our educators with the skills they need to thrive in a rapidly evolving society.

Education is the heartbeat of a nation's soul. It is the silent architect of our collective future, laying brick by brick the foundations upon which dreams are built and destinies fulfilled. When the pen meets the page, history is written anew, and hope is planted in the hearts of the next generation.

It is through education that we harness the winds of change, navigating toward a more just, more equal and more prosperous tomorrow. It is the candle that lights the darkest corners of poverty, inequality and ignorance. A candle that will light the future of our children. And as the great Oliver Tambo once declared, "A nation that does not take care of its children does not have a future."

In 2024, as a province, we achieved 85.1% matric pass rate, marking a significant improvement from the 2023 year's 79.5 %. This increase has put the province amongst provinces with great improvement. Thanks to MEC Lerule-Ramakhanya, the management team and our educators for such a great achievement.

We recognise that in the journey of education, teachers are not just facilitators, but they are the cornerstone of transformative change. They are agents of hope, growth and innovation. If we are to cultivate a generation that will compete and lead in a globalised world, we must begin by affirming, uplifting and capacitating our educators.

We must also ensure that our teachers are equipped with digital fluency skills and modern pedagogical tools to effectively integrate technology into their classrooms.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is not knocking; it is here. Robotics, coding, artificial intelligence, these are no longer futuristic concepts, but they are the reality that our children must master.

And to lead them there, our teachers must be ready. Refresher courses, digital training and continuous professional development are not optional they are urgent tools to change the face of our education system.

As a rural province, we bear the burden of uneven development. Yet, it is here where the seeds of innovation and excellence must be sown. If we are to close the rural-urban divide, we must strengthen education in every corner of our province, from Homu to Ha-Mashau, from Giyani to Groblersdal. Infrastructure, connectivity, and human capital development must be at the centre of our rural education agenda.

But the government cannot do this alone. We need all hands on deck. School Governing Bodies, parents, learners representative councils, traditional leadership, civil society, religious fraternity and the private sector, we all have a role to play. Education is not the responsibility of one department but the moral responsibility of an entire society.

Programme Director, let's all of us focus on strengthening both foundational learning and the quality of our education professionals. Reading for meaning by Grade 4 must be our minimum standard. Our learners must be given the skills to think critically, reason scientifically and express themselves with confidence.

The curriculum itself must speak to the future. We must revise and reshape it to ensure our learners leave school ready to enter higher education institutions with purpose. They must study courses that speak to the needs

of Limpopo's economy like agriculture, tourism, mining, green energy and technology.

Early Childhood Development must also be central to our discourse. A child who receives a strong foundation in the early years is more likely to thrive throughout their educational journey. This Indaba must assert that all our children, regardless of background or geography, deserve access to quality ECD programmes. Equality in education begins there.

To the business sector and captains of industry, your investment in education is an investment in the future workforce of this province. Partner with us in building classrooms, training educators, providing learning materials and bridging the digital divide. You have a vital role in shaping the education landscape.

This Indaba must serve as a catalyst. The resolutions we adopt here must bring about real, tangible change. The challenges we face are immense, but so too is our collective strength.

Let us emerge from this Indaba with actionable resolutions, resolutions that will shape the future of education in Limpopo and South Africa at large. We are the architects of our future, and the blueprint begins here.

To all the delegates, I call upon you to participate meaningfully. Engage with honesty, propose with passion and resolve with purpose. Our children are watching and their future depends on what we do here.

Thank you!