

REMARKS BY HONOURABLE PREMIER SENZO MCHUNU ON THE OCCASION OF THE RELEASE OF MATRIC RESULTS FOR THE PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL, ICC, 6 JANUARY 2015

Honourable Peggy Nkonyeni, MEC for Education,
Director-General, Mr NVE Ngidi,
Head of Department, Dr Nkosinathi Sishi,
Members of Provincial Legislature present,
Matriculants,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me start by wishing you and all your loved ones a happy and prosperous 2015. We are meeting here today to mark yet another chapter in our calendar as a nation. It is the moment where we release to the people of KwaZulu-Natal in particular and South Africa in general, academic results of our matriculants.

Through this process, we are able to reflect on how we have performed as a Province of KwaZulu-Natal in relation to the previous year and in relation to national average. As a principle point of departure, we affirm the importance of education as one of the key priorities for our government.

The decision to characterise education as priority, is to acknowledge the important role it plays in development of any given society. Our country grapples with legacy issues of decades of bad policies and mismanagement of our education system.

The unequal distribution of resources in terms of investment in school infrastructure, teacher-pupil ratio, general levels of development to enable access to schools, poverty and other factors, have characterised our education system for years. Lack of access to quality education is therefore, part of the historical genesis of inequality in our society.

Our country is faced with serious challenge of poverty and unemployment, which combined, exacerbate the crisis of inequality. Having education is not a guarantee of a better life. But without education, one's life is by and large doomed from the beginning.

Therefore, education is not just a means to an end, but is both a means and an end of development. It is in this regard that our policy interventions have moved beyond the question of access to actual acquired competencies.

Today marks an important chapter to many learners who sat for their final examinations, and are thus hoping for positive results that would enable them to pursue their dreams. Some wish to go to universities and other post-matric institutions to develop their education and training.

For us as government, a guide to action should no longer be only about school completion alone as this is inadequate.

There is a need for all of us as role-players in KwaZulu-Natal, to shift our focus to real issues and target of schooling. This target should go beyond meeting the Millennium Development Goal of universal access to primary education. It should be about adequately equipping the youth of our Province to fully participate in economic, political and social roles in the future as adults.

We always say the future of our country belongs to our young people. We must thus ensure that every young person in our Province makes necessary transition to adulthood, fully equipped with minimal set of competencies and skills needed to function adequately in the economic, social, and political spheres of a modern society.

The results for 2014 have already been marred by some negative coverage in the news, following allegations of irregularities in some schools. As government, we condemn cheating in examinations. The true test of our progress as a Province must be measured in every form, through authentic results.

Any irregularities that may be discovered, brings an unnecessary blemish to the otherwise encouraging picture of the direction we are taking as a country. This therefore, calls for strengthening of monitoring mechanisms beyond the districts and school principals, but extending to all teachers in our schools. It also means we need to do a thorough investigation on what leakages may be present in our school system, to avoid such occurrences in the future.

This brings me to the overall picture of our results. It is clear that we have not made required progress in eliminating under-performance in the category of 0-19%. We have also not made progress in adding further schools to those scoring 100% pass rate.

Our country has adopted the National Development Plan (NDP) as our framework and blueprint to address underdevelopment and its associated challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality. Both the NDP and the Industrialisation Policy Action Plan (IPAP), put emphasis on building a knowledge economy to compete in this changing global economic order.

Therefore, if we look at performance by subjects, it is encouraging that there has been high performance in terms of average, in subjects required in the knowledge economy. These include subjects like electrical technology, mechanical technology, civil technology, information technology, computer applications technology and maritime economics.

However, there has been stagnant growth if not backward slide in other areas. It is an understandable concern that we have dropped in physical sciences and mathematics. This is so, given the stated focus and need to upscale in these subjects in line with our stated objectives in the NDP.

Going forward, among the interventions we need to focus on, is vulnerable children. This includes establishing the exact number of learners in schools taught by unqualified teachers, particularly in rural areas in subjects like physics and mathematics on the main. Our interventions should thus be geared toward these particular areas, and provide necessary extra tutorial support.

We congratulate those learners who passed their examinations. We wish them success in their endeavours as they pursue their dream at a different level. To those who could not make it, we are with you in your moment of pain. This should not be the end of your dreams, but should be a moment for you to re-focus and work harder in realising your dreams.

I wish all of you a blessed and prosperous year.