



basic education
Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



National
Teaching
Awards

Address by the Minister of Basic Education Angie Motshekga at the Virtual Teacher Appreciation and Support Programme Conversation with key stakeholders

June 15 2021

Programme Director

The Director-General

Teachers and Teacher Assistants

Principals

District Directors and Circuit Managers

Donors and partners

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Fellow South Africans

Tomorrow marks the 45th anniversary of the historic June, 16 events popularly known as the Soweto Uprising of 1976, which left scores of young people dead.

As we know, the apartheid regime's notorious police force opened fire using live ammunition on unarmed and defenceless learners.

Two years before, the apartheid government had decreed that certain school subjects in black schools be taught in Afrikaans.

The Afrikaans order didn't apply to white pupils.

It was a cold winter morning on Wednesday in June 1976 day that so much happened so quickly, and yet it had a lasting impact on so many levels.

The first schoolchild to be killed was 15-year-old Hastings Ndlovu.

But it was the picture of the dying Hector Pieterse, captured by the photographer the late Sam Nzima, which sent shockwaves of revulsion worldwide.

The Soweto Uprising changed the lives of so many and added impetus to the international community genuine solidarity with the ANC.

At the same time, it increased revulsion against the apartheid regime across the globe.

The June 16 events also turbocharged the ANC armed struggle against the apartheid regime as many young people running away from the Police skipped the country to join the ANC Mission in exile.

The corner of Vilakazi and Moema streets' sidewalks in Soweto are painted red to symbolise the blood shed on that fateful day.

So yes, tomorrow, we will join the rest of the country and dip our revolutionary banners for our martyrs.

It's an act of self-love to preserve our history and honour the courage, bravery and ultimate sacrifice of the 1976 youth corps.

May their revolutionary souls continue to rest in POWER!

Following the advent of democracy in 1994, June 16 is celebrated as National Youth Day and June as Youth Month.

This year National Youth Day and Youth Month will be celebrated under the theme: "The Year of Charlotte Mannyha Maxeke: Growing youth employment for an inclusive and transformed society."

Programme director; since the historic events of June 16, 1976, for us as activists, tomorrow marks 45 years at the coalface of a relentless struggle to transform the schooling sector to serve the people.

It is 45 years of a revolutionary struggle to bring about a non-racial, non-sexist, united and prosperous South Africa.

It is 45 years of confronting challenges that continue to face our young people and bedevil the republic.

In this crucial year of our young people, we also have the honour to celebrate Isithwalandwe/Seaparankwe uMama Charlotte Manny Maxeke on her 150th birthday.

Mama Maxeke made an indelible impact on many areas, including education, faith and politics.

In celebrating Mama Maxeke, we have to confront the challenges facing the youth of 2021.

Recent statistics show that youth unemployment continues to be a bane for our country's youth.

As part of a battery of measures to draw young people into the economy, we have, through the Education Employment Initiative (BEEI), employed 320 000 unemployed youth as Education and General Education Assistants.

We implemented this ground-breaking initiative to alleviate joblessness as part of the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme from December 2020 to April 2021.

These young people were placed in public schools across the country to assist teachers in the classroom as they fought against the new challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The initiative used the direct public investment to create employment opportunities and provide support to workers negatively impacted by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Education Employment Initiative (BEEI) was funded to the tune of R7 billion, of which the most considerable portion was transferred to provinces as part of an equitable share.

A large slice of this, just over R 4 Billion, was deployed to create job opportunities for unemployed youth in the basic education sector.

Just one percent was allocated towards training, and another one percent of the public employment investment was paid to the UIF for each youth employed in the Education Employment Initiative.

Some R2, 4 Billion was used to save exiting posts in the government subsidised independent schools and school governing bodies' funded positions in public schools.

The success of Phase 1 of the Education Employment Initiative has ignited talks of phase two.

Talks are at an advanced stage with the Treasury in this regard.

As part of the mooted phase two, let's a dialogue on the lesson learnt in implementing the Education Employment Initiative phase 1.

Let's learn from the serious challenge of late payments of the stipends in some provinces during phase 1 of this vital Initiative and devise ways to avoid the repeat.

We are free to reimagine the Education Employment Initiative and see how it can assist teachers well into the future.

As a sector, we are also supporting the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention that creates new pathways into employment for our young people.

It ensures that the youth gain the right skills, start their own businesses, and get into good jobs.

Other measures to increase youth employment opportunities include the Expanded Public Works Programme, Community Works Programme, and the Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator.

There's also a National Youth Service, which allows young people to become activists for good by participating in the upliftment of the communities.

Programme director, we converge here to also dialogue about the teacher appreciation and support programme.

As Basic Education Minister, I am mindful of teachers' vital work in shaping our society, yet they are often not recognised or respected.

The truth is that teachers are indispensable in our education system.

In fact, committed teachers are critical in our efforts to steer our country back into the inclusive economic growth path after years of policy uncertainty, corruption and state capture.

In his 2019 address to our flagship teacher appreciation project, the Annual National Teaching Awards (NTA), the late Minister in the Presidency Jackson Mthembu summed up the role of teachers.

Mthembu coined the term for teachers as frontline workers.

He said: "Teachers are in a frontline of our collective efforts to undergo a skills revolution to break the cycle of poverty and grow an inclusive economy."

We pay tribute to the late education minister, Professor Kader Asmal, who pioneered these teaching awards over 21 years ago.

For this reason, the National Teaching Awards, 21st edition, has been reimagined and benchmarked against the best teacher awards in the world.

The idea is to have a high-end awards system that genuinely rewards our teachers for their hard work and tenacity.

We have learned the best practice from the African Union Teacher Prize, Commonwealth Education Awards and the Global Teacher Prize.

All these awards are geared towards honouring the teaching profession and promoting excellence in teaching.

Our teachers already compete in some of these international teaching awards.

The year 2020 was a boon for our teachers as Mrs Bridget Sinyosi became the first place winner in the African Union Teacher Prize.

Ms Cynthia Mokhudu was nominated as part of the top ten finalists in the Global Teacher Prize.

It was sad that we couldn't host the 2020 NTA awards edition due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

I am happy to announce that the reimagined NTA, the 2021 edition, will go ahead as a hybrid event on October 5 2021, during National Teachers' month.

The event will be limited to the attendance of the top three winners in each province, sponsors, senior education officials and key stakeholders.

Once again, my heartfelt appreciation to our teachers and all the education assistants, our unsung heroes and heroines, ensured that the Class of 2020 completed their academic year under highly challenging circumstances.

We are genuinely in the business of changing lives, one learner at a time.

Programme Director, it will be remiss of me not to address the elephant in the room, COVID-19 and its devastating effects.

Technically speaking, our country has entered the 3rd wave of COVID-19.

As it stands, the non-pharmaceutical measures remain the best arsenal at our disposal in the face of the grave danger posed by the coronavirus.

These measures include social distancing, wearing cloth masks to cover one's nose, mouth and chin, washing hands with soap, and or 70% alcohol-based sanitiser for 20 seconds.

I cannot stress enough the imperative to avoid birthday parties, weddings and funerals unless it is totally unavoidable.

In the interim, we have gazetted the regulations for the return of all learners in primary schools (Grades R to 7) to the daily attendance and traditional timetabling model from July 26 2021.

Similarly, schools for learners with special education needs (Grades R to 12) must also return to the daily attendance and traditional timetabling model from July 26 2021.

As you may recall, all contact sport remains suspended.

We continue to monitor the trajectory of the pandemic and make all necessary regulations and directions in line with the COVID-19 Risk-Adjusted Differentiated Strategy.

I realise that there is anxiety about sending all primary school children back to school at once.

There's no need to panic. Our decision making is supported by empirical evidence.

Research shows that primary school learners benefit more from continuous and unbroken contact time with their teachers.

However, the health and safety of learners, teachers and school community remains of paramount importance and will not be compromised.

I am happy to reaffirm the President's message that the next frontier in a battle against COVID-19 is the roll-out of vaccination.

I am also privileged to confirm that the next phase of the vaccine roll-out is for teachers and education staff of all levels.

In conclusion, I have already taken my COVID-19 vaccination, and I am confident in the ability of our government to fulfil the ambitious target of vaccinating 67 percent of our population.

Let's save lives and protect livelihoods. It is in our hands!

I thank you.