

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS, MR NTOPILE KGANYAGO, MP, DELIVERS A KEY NOTE ADDRESS AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF ADDITIONAL CLASSROOMS AS WELL AS HONOURING OF THE THREE RETIRED TEACHERS AT THE MEROGENG PRIMARY SCHOOL, MANKWENG.

DATE: 23 SEPTEMBER

VENUE: MEGORING PRIMARY SCHOOL – MANKWENG (TURFLOOP)

- ***Programme Director***
- ***The acting Principal, Mr M.C. Mothapo***
- ***All Educators (both serving and retired)***
- ***Member of the School Governing Body***
- ***All the invited guests***
- ***Learners***
- ***Ladies and Gentlemen***

Thank you for the invitation. The reason I honoured your invitation is the same as for honouring many more similar invitations. It is born out of the realization that education is the foundation of a successful and prosperous nation, like South Africa aspires to be.

Decades ago, I too, took that most important single step when I entered the classroom. Today thanks to the efforts of our dedicated teachers, I am a leader whose actions and work influence the lives of many ordinary South Africans, for the best. Again thanks to the unselfish dedication of my teachers, who set me up on the road to success.

As the Deputy Minister of Public Works, I lead the Department of Public Works whose main function is to build and maintain government buildings and other physical structures including schools. My Department, working with the provinces literally lays concrete foundations for the moral and intellectual development of our nation – you.

Even long before South Africa was awarded the right to hold the FIFA 2010 Soccer World Cup Tournament, government had already begun to build essential public infrastructure to improve the lives of the South Africans. These include prisons, police stations, hospitals, roads, community centres and of course, schools.

Today we are gathered here to officially open the school buildings erected by the Department of Public Works on behalf of the Department of Education. But these are just buildings, a mixture of bricks and mortar which can be destroyed by lightning or bulldozed anytime. When we talk about a school, we refer

specifically to the interaction of educators and learners during which information and knowledge are shared which build character and the body of knowledge we need to survive as a nation. The teachers and yourself are a school and these buildings will be useless without you.

Some of you might think that I am saying the schools buildings are not necessary. No they are needed. However, I want to point you to many cases in South Africa, especially in the deep rural areas, where many learners still do not have proper buildings, yet this does not stop them from being excellent students with good grades come the end of the year.

I know this for sure because again my Department with the cooperation of provincial governments is involved with a programme to eradicate mud schools and other unsafe structures under which our children learn. The encouraging observation is that kids at these schools have not given up hope. In fact, they are the most fired up because they know that good education is the only way out of poverty trap.

Since 1994, government has been committed to creating conducive conditions for learning and teaching. First we integrated schools and banished racial discrimination. Then we introduced school nutrition schemes for deserving communities. Last year the Minister of Education assured the country that the phenomenon of children learning under the trees was a thing of the past. Now government is busy eradicating poorly constructed schools. The next obligation is to upgrade and improve the facilities and other amenities at our schools so that our school can have minimum requirements to be classified as a school e.g. laboratory, library, sports fields.

With such capacity, our schools will be able to breed learners with potential to assume leadership roles in society. The country needs certain skills and expertise and all eyes are on you. The problem of our country is not entirely that there are no jobs.

The problem is mainly that we lack requisite skills to build the economy such as engineers, health professionals, technical teachers and artisans. My Department since 2007 has been actively recruiting carpenters, brick-layers, plumbers, pavers and electricians so that we can train them to become a source of skills we so desperately require.

Government knows that perfection can only be attained with right quality of educators. It is for this reason that the school, the government and the community want to thank and honour those teachers who have dedicated their life to build the nation. To teachers:

- Dina Modipane
- Joel Thosago

- Sarah Mamabolo

We like to extend our sincere gratitudes. You are indeed exemplary. You are the embodiment of perseverance, dedication, loyalty and strength. Unlike many of us, you did not allow the frustrations and problems of teaching to take away your focus from building our nation through its children.

We call upon our children to reward you by becoming like you. We know that many children have. Today politicians, professional people and other prominent names, have passed through your hands and they look back at you as the rock upon which good foundations are laid. Again we thank you.