

**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE SIHLE ZIKALALA
DURING THE DEPARTMENT'S BURSARY AWARD SESSION, KOPANONG HOTEL CONFERENCE
CENTRE, BENONI, 25 JANUARY 2024**

Programme Director, Ms Thandeka Msibi;

The Deputy Minister of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, Ms Bernice Swarts;

CEOs and Chairpersons of the DPWI entities;

The Head of PMTE, Mr Siza Sibande;

CEO of the Property Sector Charter Council, Ms Portia Tau-Sekati;

CEO of the Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA), Mr Malusi Shezi;

CEO of TASEZ, Dr B Zulu;

Executive Dean at UNISA's College of Education, Professor M Makoe;

School Director – Educational Studies at UNISA, Professor R Tabane;

Dr Murendeni Liphazi from the University of Johannesburg;

Head of Student Recruitment at the University of Pretoria, Mr Wallace Isaacs;

Programme Coordinator at the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement, Mr James Tlhabane;

The Academic community;

Representatives of Voluntary Associations;

Representatives from the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education & Training;

Senior Government Officials;

School Principals;

Our most distinguished guests: All the 2024 Bursary recipients;

Members of the Press;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is an absolute joy to address a cohort of young people who carry the hopes and aspirations of our nation.

As we congratulate them for being worthy recipients of the prestigious bursaries from the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, we also extend our appreciation to their parents, guardians, teachers, mentors, and principals.

Each learner's achievement is a community achievement and reminds us of the African saying: **"It takes a village to raise a child."**

When prophets of doom want to make us believe that it is all dull and gloom in the land, our bursary recipients are the silver lining in the cloud and the stars that shine the brightest when it is dark.

Thank you all for inspiring us and for reminding us that South Africa is alive with possibility.

Many of you have defied the odds by sheer determination.

You have triumphed over adversities and proved that discipline and hard work pays.

We thank you for not being a part of those who look for reasons, if not excuses, why society must understand failure.

To the teachers and guardians who did not fail to encourage, to motivate, to guide, you are the true heroes and heroines.

To the bursary awardees, you are the crown in the jewel; and today we sing your praises for demonstrating that paying attention and putting effort pays.

To the democratic state under the ANC-led government, we have no doubt that today is an occasion that would bring a smile to the freedom volunteers who gathered in June 1955 in Kliptown to adopt the Freedom Charter and declared, "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white!"

It was these amadelakufa enkululeko who said in the Freedom Charter, "The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall Be Open". They envisaged a democratic state where, **"the aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace"**.

These young people today have honoured the sacrifices of the youth of 1976 who protested against an inferior Bantu Education that sought to turn education for the black majority into an instrument of racial subjugation and guarantor for the supply of cheap black labour.

Today, you have all turned your back and broken with a diabolic past reminiscent of Dr Hendrik Verwoerd who argued that, **"the Natives will be taught from childhood to realise that equality with Europeans is not for them. There is no place for the Bantu child above the level of certain forms of labour."**

It was this architect of apartheid, Dr Verwoerd, who said: **"What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? That is quite absurd. Education must train people in accordance with their opportunities in life, according to the sphere in which they live."**

Since 1994, under Founding President Nelson Mandela, the ANC government has been working hard to undo the damaging legacy of Dr Verwoerd and the Bantu Education system whose aim was to keep the indigenous people hewers of wood and drawers of water in the land of their birth.

Driven by the vision of creating a united, non-racial, non-sexist, equal and prosperous society, Tata Madiba's people-centred government made education an apex priority.

We recall that before 1994,

- (a) Only 20% of adults matriculated –the highest was 72% for white men, and the lowest 18% for African women.
- (b) 50 % of African women and 44% of Coloured women only had primary school education. Men were only slightly better.
- (c) Only 5% studied at university or college.
- (d) Poor children struggled to get access to high school.

Tata Madiba and the freedom delegates that adopted the Freedom Charter would be pleased to know that we continue to open the doors of education. **Today,**

- (a) No less than 67% of all learners get free schooling.
- (b) 12 million out of 13 million children attend 23 000 government schools.
- (c) About 50% of all youth get matric, and more girls than boys pass matric.
- (d) About 15% of adults have studied further at universities or colleges.
- (e) 75% of learners get a free meal at school.

Compatriots, **before 1994**

- (i) Most students' parents paid their fees, or students had to borrow money.
- (ii) Few poor students could afford to study.
- (iii) In 1994, there were only about 150 000 tertiary students in SA.

Today:

- (i) **Approximately 2-million young people** are now studying at colleges and universities.
- (ii) There are about ten times as many black students at universities as in 1994, and the government pays most of their fees and other costs.
- (iii) In the last 5 years, the NSFAS budget increased **from R15 billion to R40 billion** to support poor and middle-class students.

To improve education,

- Our government runs about **23 000 government schools** and is training teachers, improving materials, building more schools and improving access to water, proper toilets and electricity at schools previously denied these services.
- **67% of our government schools are no-fee schools.** We are expanding **Grade R to two years** instead of one to give children an extra year of education.
- 99% of children who are 14 years and younger attend school – in 1994, it was only 51%.
- The matric pass rate has improved from 50% in 1994 to over 82.9% in 2023, the highest pass rate since the dawn of democracy.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) plays a critical role in delivering essential services. To do so effectively, it must have a highly skilled and competent workforce.

This year is the 10th year that the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure has been offering these bursaries to address the challenges of the skills pipeline and transformation in the Built Environment.

Our university bursary scheme is one of the ways through which as a Department, we respond to the country's occupation skills that are in high demand as gazetted by the Department of Higher Education and Training.

The Bursary Scheme supports undergraduate studies areas like: Construction Project Management, Occupational Health and Safety; Quantity Surveying; Landscape Architecture; Architecture; Property Studies; Real Estate; Urban Design and Regional Planning; Engineering (Mechanical, Electrical, Civil, Structural, Chemical); Interior Design; Actuarial Science; Horticulture, Geographic Information Science (GISc), and Maritime Studies.

The Council for the Built Environment (CBE) has bemoaned the slow pace of transformation in the Built Environment which is compounded by the challenge of aging professionals who are leaving the sector.

The CBE 2023 Quarter four (4) research reflects an imbalance in the country's demographic representation within the built environment sector number of registered professionals (62% Whites, 28% Africans, 06% Indians 04% Coloureds); and still male dominated with 86% and women at 14%.

One of our programmes to address these challenges and in contributing to the skills of the future in our sector is the Department's Schools Programme and the University Bursary Scheme Programme.

We are pleased to report that our valued Bursary beneficiaries are supported financially throughout their tertiary studies until graduation. Upon completion of studies, bursary holders join the Department's Internship Programme wherein they gain relevant technical experience for a duration of 24 months in line with their contractual obligation to the Department and in accordance to the DPSA regulated internship period.

Today, the Department is awarding **100 bursaries** to learners who will be pursuing careers that will make a meaningful contribution to the development of the South African Built Environment.

The estimated budget per student is R177 500. This amount varies based on the institution and study Programme. The department has allocated budget of **R17 800 000** (nearly R18-million) for the 2024 academic year new intake.

The bursary covers all university costs including tuition fees; accommodation, meals, textbooks, projects, excursions, and a monthly allowance.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we thank all our stakeholders, including principals, tutors, mentors, universities who are making our schools programme a resounding success.

The DPWI Schools Programme has been implemented since 2013. A total of 71 schools across all nine provinces have participated and benefitted from the programme.

The schools programme promotes careers within the Built Environment through career awareness. The Programme contributes in the creation of a solid foundation for a high pass rate in Mathematics and Physical Science.

Through the programme, our Department is able to provide dedicated support to learners, educators and school management teams in order to encourage the achievement of a high pass rate in Mathematics and Physical Science as gateway subjects into the built environment.

The programme supports **Quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools, which are no fee paying schools**. It targets Grade 9 learners excelling in Mathematics and Natural Sciences.

The department selects and adopts schools through the assistance from the Department of Basic Education, in particular, the Education District Offices.

School performance to be considered is expected to be at least 60% in Mathematics and Physical Science and at least 40% of learners should be enrolled for Mathematics and Physical Science stream from Grade 10 – 12;

Currently, a school is **adopted for a minimum period of three years** to a maximum period of five years.

In 2023, participating schools were as follows: 8 in Limpopo, 8 in Gauteng, 9 in Mpumalanga, 6 in Northern Cape, 16 in the Eastern Cape, 5 in the Free State, 5 in KwaZulu-Natal, 6 in the Western Cape and 8 in North West.

One important intervention by the Department is the hosting of the annual Winter Schools Camp which provides a week-long of Mathematics and Physical Science tuition and remedial work.

The 2023 camp was attended by **191 learners** in Gauteng given its geographic centrality for the whole country.

Through what we call Buddy Members, the Department also supports learners in the School Programme to make applications for university study.

Annually, at the beginning of the year, the Department hosts a **Principals Forum**. Yesterday the Principals Forum was hosted in Tshwane in an effort to strengthen skills and competencies of participating schools to ensure they further support learners participating in the Programme.

In addition, School Management Team Workshops are organized at individual schools and are presented in collaboration with the University of South Africa (UNISA), the University of Pretoria, and the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SASTA).

To improve the throughput rate, the DPWI bursary scheme incorporates an intensive **Bursary Care Programme** which is implemented in partnership with Outlook Foundation, UNISA, and DPWI Buddy Programme members.

The bursary care programme provides structured academic support, psycho-social support and life skills coaching.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in the decade since inception of the university bursary scheme in 2004, the Department has invested approximately **R200m** on the bursary scheme.

In the ten years,

- A total of **534 bursaries** were awarded. **Females: 47, 5%; Males: 52, 4 % and 0, 37% people with disabilities**, and 96% throughput rate recorded.
- Out of the total number of 534, a number of **185 participated in the Technical Internship Programme or Candidacy Development Programmes**. The Candidacy/ Young Professionals Programme is a structured Mentorship Programme aimed at accelerating the registration of Professionals within the Built Environment.
- A total number of **89 are currently within the department** participating in the Technical Internship and or Young Professionals while **28 obtained professional registration** across all seven disciplines (Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Quantity Surveying, Construction Project Management, Town Planning, Engineering and Property Valuation. Registered professionals constitute in-house design teams and further assist in the filling of vacancies through when they are appointed.
A total number of **132 were still studying** at various universities in 2023, **50** of those expected to join the Internship Programme in 2024.

Ladies and Gentlemen, before concluding, we wish to emphasise the importance of strengthening partnerships and collaboration with all stakeholders in the education ecosystem, especially those stakeholders that are working with our government to improve learner outcomes in STEM subjects.

In this regard, we wish to pay tribute to the role of the private sector and civil society in helping our nation develop the requisite skills in the Built Environment.

On a day like this, we stand with great pride and enthusiasm to highlight the commendable efforts of the Property Sector Charter Council (**PSCC**) in collaboration with the non-governmental organization **Kutlwanong**.

Over the past 13 years, PSCC has been dedicated to promoting property and construction as viable and rewarding career options for learners in basic education, particularly in previously disadvantaged areas.

In the last six years, PSCC has forged a strategic partnership with Kutlwanong, a renowned centre for mathematics and science education operating in eight provinces across our nation.

The primary objective of this partnership has been to elevate the quality of Mathematics and Science education, recognizing their pivotal role as key subjects for entry into, and the pursuit of, built environment qualifications and various STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) careers.

One of the outstanding achievements we celebrate today is Kutlwanong's remarkable performance, which has translated into an impressive tally of 9905 distinctions in mathematics and science since early 2006. This is a testament to the efficacy of their programs and the impact they have had on shaping the academic landscape of our nation.

In the pursuit of promoting careers in the Built Environment, Kutlwanong has successfully produced an average of 5 distinctions per learner among the 2023 Matric cohort.

These young talents are not just achieving academic excellence; they are expressing a genuine interest in pursuing careers in the Built Environment.

The synergy between PSCC , Kutlwanong, and Investec exemplifies the power of public-private partnerships and showcases what can be accomplished when organizations unite for a common cause.

In this regard, we invite more companies in the private sector to make a contribution in building the required skills to support the Built Environment and grow our economy.

While today our focus is on undergraduate degrees in the sector, we invite the private sector to also contribute in the strengthening of artisan skills at our TVET colleges and help our country produce the envisaged 30 000 artisan a year to grow our economy.

To all the bursary recipients today, please remember that we trust you and we have no doubt that you will continue to make us and your families proud.

Remain disciplined, motivated, and help us build the South Africa that we can all be proud of.

Founding President Nelson Mandela who valued education is proud of all of you.

Charlotte Maxeke, the first African woman to obtain a BSc in the US in 1903 and was a champion of gender equality must be smiling in her grave to see young girls breaking ceilings and excelling in STEM subjects and engineering studies.

It is from you young people that we will draw future leaders of our country.

Remain inquisitive, innovate, and be a beacon of light to those that will follow in your footsteps.

Allow me to dedicate a 1930s poem by Brecht titled, IN PRAISE OF LEARNING:

***Learn the simplest things!
For you whose time has come it is never too late!
Learn your ABC, it is not enough, but learn it!
Do not let it discourage you, begin!
You must know everything! You must take over the leadership!
Learn, man in the asylum!
Learn, man in prison!
Learn, wife in the kitchen!
Learn, man of sixty!
Seek out the school, you who are homeless!
Sharpen your wits, you who shiver!
Hungry man, reach for the book: It is a weapon.
You must take over the leadership!***

South Africa Works Because of Public Works!

I thank you!

