

**ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING, MR BUTI MANAMELA, TO THE WORLD  
TEACHERS' DAY CELEBRATION**

**UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, GAUTENG**

**5 OCTOBER 2018**

Programme Director

Principal and Vice-chancellor of UNISA - Prof MS Makhanya:

Deputy Vice-Principal - Prof G Moche

Dean of the College of Education - Prof V Mckay

My fellow speakers on the programme

Government officials

Colleagues from UNISA and other universities

And most importantly, the teachers here present today

“I am where I am because I had good teachers”. This is a statement that many of us can make when we are asked to give reasons for our achievements.

Therefore it gives me great pleasure to honour good teachers on World Teachers' Day, teachers who give meaning to the principle of access to quality education through the quality of their knowledge and service to the children of South Africa.

Teachers who go beyond the minimum expectations and who seek to nurture the full potential of every child in their care.

Allow me to congratulate two such teachers of quality who have represented South African teachers at a global level. Wendy Horn from the Western Cape and Marjorie Brown from Johannesburg were nominated in the top 50 out of 8000 teachers across 148 countries who competed for the Global Teacher of the Year Award at a ceremony in March 2018. Although neither of them won the prize, they are shining lights for quality teaching in South Africa. I salute their achievement and encourage more of our teachers to apply for such recognition of their teaching practices and work ethics.

The education system in South Africa is being transformed from the inequities of the past. We recognise that it is a work in progress but also that we have also made significant gains.

Our constitution recognises that quality education is a fundamental human right for all our children. Without quality education other rights become very difficult to be fully realised. Without quality education it is difficult to develop individual freedom and empowerment. Without quality education our society cannot develop.

Quality education does not just happen. It has to be created, and many factors have to come together. One such factor is the availability of qualified and quality teachers. I make this distinction intentionally. Having a qualification does not automatically imply quality. Quality is a work in progress, and the qualification is the starting point. Our new teachers have to embrace a learning attitude as they take up positions in our schools and have to build on what they have learnt during their studies to become the teachers they desire to be and the teachers that the country needs. They

also need to be supported in this endeavour through good induction and mentorship.

The Department's response to the national need of "*more teachers, better teachers*" has yielded a significant number of trained and qualified teachers into the system. In 2008, 5 939 new teachers graduated from the public universities in comparison to 23 706 new teacher graduates in 2016. By 2019, it is estimated that in excess of 25 000 newly qualified teachers will graduate annually, largely addressing the absolute teacher supply-demand gap in South Africa, and helping to ensure that all children have qualified teachers.

However, simply having enough qualified teachers in our schools is not good enough – as a Department we must ensure that our children have access to quality teachers through teacher education programmes and interventions that are responsive to the needs of our country.

We understand that the strengthening of Initial Teacher Education is an ongoing process that has been unfolding with more focus and intensity since 2007, through a range of policy, planning and programme initiatives. This was in direct response to issues highlighted by the Ministerial Task Team on teacher education, by the 2007 Council on Higher Education review of teacher education programmes and in the 2009 Teacher Development Summit, which are themselves part of the process to strengthen and improve the quality of teacher education.

Research findings also drive the agenda to strengthen the quality of teachers. The Initial Teacher Education Research Project found that the teacher education programmes in the five universities sampled had “little structural or conceptual coherence, often seeming to lack a broader vision or logic which could inform and weld together the teaching of subject and pedagogical knowledge with curriculum requirements and the supervision of work-integrated learning in varying educational contexts”.

International studies such as the PIRLS and TIMMS also illustrate weak performance of our children, and one of the contributing factors is inadequate teaching that results when teachers do not have the required content knowledge to teach their subjects, or who have the knowledge but are weaker in terms of their pedagogical ability.

It became clear that the quality of teacher education offerings varied from one university to another. The Department responded to this evidence by developing the Policy on Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ).

The Policy sets minimum standards for all initial teacher education qualifications offered by higher education institutions.

It requires that all initial teacher education programmes must be strongly focussed on developing teacher knowledge and practice and sets specific requirements in place for the teaching practice components of initial teacher education programmes.

All universities are required to develop new programmes that comply with the policy.

The policy also encourages the strengthening of African languages in teacher education. In line with national policy on mother tongue instruction

in the Foundation Phase we have to prepare teachers who are able to teach in and to teach African languages.

Tata Nelson Mandela, whose centenary year we are celebrating, recognised the importance of language in communication when he stated that if you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.

These simple words resonate at the heart of quality education in two ways: they acknowledge that language is strongly linked to culture and identity. The use of the mother tongue in any context is not just academic; it also creates a more receptive communicative environment.

The Policy on Minimum Requirements understands the importance of all languages including sign language in creating a supportive and enabling environment which optimises quality teaching and learning experiences for all children. It has strengthened the language requirements for new teacher graduates, ensuring that all languages are offered on two levels: home language and languages of communicative competence, and that all students must have an African language at one of these levels. All universities offering teacher education must align their curricula in compliance with this criteria.

To further strengthen the teaching and learning of African languages, the Department is supporting the development of Centres for African Language Teaching at the University of Johannesburg and the University of Mpumalanga.

We are also in the process of putting a professorial chair in African Languages Teaching in place as part of the South African Research Chairs Initiative.

The Primary Teacher Education Project is a specific project being implemented by the Department from 2016 to 2021 to strengthen primary teacher education in the two fundamental areas of mathematics and literacy.

Children from birth to 4 years are also entitled to quality education and quality teachers. The Dakar Framework: *Education for All* firmly addresses quality education for all children, with a special focus on early childhood care and education.

This resonates with our National Development Plan which emphasizes that “Delays in cognitive and overall development before schooling can often have long-lasting and costly consequences for children, families and society.

The most effective and cost-efficient time to intervene is before birth and the early years of life. Investment in Early Childhood Development should be a key priority.”

The Department has responded to the priority of quality education for children in this sector through the development of the policy on the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education (Birth to 4 years) which was published in the Government Gazette in 2017. Ten universities, in collaboration with non-governmental organisations involved in ECD, are developing professional qualifications which will be offered in 2019/2020.

Children with special needs also have a right to quality education. The Department recognises that this area of schooling must be strengthened urgently and has responded by implementing a project which aims to strengthen special needs in initial teacher education.

The Centre for the Deaf Studies (University of the Witwatersrand), the Centre for Visual Impairment (University of Pretoria) and the Centre for Neurological Developmental Learning Needs (University of Johannesburg) are developing programmes, materials and resources in these special needs areas. The products will be available by 2019/2020.

Our endeavours to produce quality teachers will continue. We are committed to our mandate to strengthen the quality of teacher education as referred to in the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development; the Medium Term Strategic Framework 2015/16 – 2019/20; the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (2013), and in the Department of Higher Education and Training's (DHET) 2015/16-2019/20 five-year Strategic Plan.

We are taking our responsibilities with regard to teacher education very seriously.

But what we can do as government and as departments can never be enough. As I have already mentioned, not all qualified teachers are good teachers. Policies, strengthened programmes responsive to national needs and professional qualifications can only go so far in contributing to the development of quality teachers.

There is another dimension that is difficult for government to influence directly – the ethical dimension which includes values, inspiration, commitment, passion, responsibility and accountability which is intrinsic to quality teaching. The power of the ethical dimension must not be overlooked.

The voices of the children and the adults who have been irrevocably affected bear testimony to the teachers who go beyond the call of duty. In his book entitled Great teachers of South Africa, Professor Jonathan Jansen identifies these extraordinary teachers as “Beyond Teachers”. Student teachers from Rhodes University articulate their appreciation of the beyond teachers as teachers who are “silent warriors who make the world a better place; who teach not only from the book but from the heart; who never see poverty, only potential. Inspired by you, we will teach till we die”.

In anticipation of World Teachers’ Day, a prominent lawyer honours her English teacher in a post in social media, when she says “Decades have passed and I still recall her words of wisdom, my refusal to acknowledge, her tempering but not lowering the need to rise up beyond our circumstances under apartheid, the quiet dignity and integrity, the unwavering belief that the youth would make a difference as she gave me the confidence to raise my voice, I don’t know where you are, I don’t know what you are doing, but know that in your softness I found my strength”.

We salute the teachers of South Africa. We applaud your service to our country through your commitment to quality education for the children who are the future of our country.

I thank you.