



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY
AMBASSADOR THEMBISILE MAJOLA, DEPUTY MINISTER OF ENERGY ON
THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF THE LEARNERS
FOCUS WEEK 2018 PROGRAMME
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL, DURBAN ON 09 JULY 2018.**

Programme Director

Professor Thabo Msibi, Dean of Education, UKZN

Cllr Ntandoyenkosi Khuzwayo, eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality

Partners from SOEs and Private Companies,

Senior government Officials,

Valued Educators,

Learners, our special guests,

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning.

It is a real pleasure to be with you today and participate in the 2018 Learners Focus Week Programme, which is very close to my heart. This Programme is about empowerment of young people, and is very critical and strategic to the development of you as young people, the future leaders of our country. We are focusing on Education which is a very important tool for everyone to determine their own destiny and chart

their preferred career path. It is key to providing the necessary tools to address the challenges of life. Knowledge gained throughout the learning, through formal education instils in every individual high levels of self-confidence. Education opens various doors to the opportunities of achieving better prospects in life and enable access to career opportunities and growth.

Education is the cornerstone of any society. Education is also a ticket out of hardships and poverty, as there are no short cuts in life. The Government has adopted National Development Plan which gives more emphasis on the economic growth and development through adequate investment in energy infrastructure with special focus on job creation and skills development especially for the youth. Through education we will be able to not only create skilled future employees, but to produce employers and innovators.

The Learners Focus Week 2018 is a Department of Energy awareness programmes to contribute to development of strategic skills for the energy sector and encourage learners, especially from rural and township areas who may otherwise not be aware of the opportunities on offer or available in the sector. We use this Programme to provide information and equity in access to energy related opportunities through education. In the long run, programmes such as this promote growth and development of the country.

The Department of Energy values the youth of this country, most importantly the education of our youth. Since 2011, the Department has been investing in the education of the youth through the Learners Focus Week. We understand that the best form of empowerment that we can give to you as the future of this country is education. To every one of you present today, consider yourself as amongst the most fortunate as you are amongst the 300 learners selected to participate on this prestigious programme. This is because you have proven that you are capable of competing with the best and have not allowed your circumstances to define you or your future. As the saying goes – education enables you to gain knowledge, it informs and challenges you to question, to be curious and seek more knowledge. Knowledge is empowering and hence it is power! No one can take away your knowledge. Learning is a lifelong process that is not confined to the classroom.

Education opens up your horizons, enables you to explore, discover, question, resolve and find solutions not only at school, or work but in your daily life.

Many of you were probably very excited at being selected to be part of this year's Learners' Focus Week. The excitement would have been compounded by the prospect of travelling to Durban, and most importantly, what you are here to learn. During the course of the week, you are going to be exposed to and get to understand the prospects in the energy sector. There will be presentations on the energy value chain ranging from coal, oil and gas, renewable energy, nuclear energy, and the related career opportunities. I can assure you that there are many, varied and exciting careers that you can pursue in this critical sector. Importantly, pay attention to all the presentations as they will broaden your knowledge. Remember, knowledge is power.

The Learners' Focus Week Programme under department of energy has now awarded in excess 100 full bursaries. Some of those who were awarded bursaries before are already employed. In our midst, there are those who are students, studying through bursaries awarded at the learners' focus week. Some of those will be Programme Directors during the course of the Programme. Though bursaries form part of the Programme, the focus is but about education and ensuring you are empowered for life beyond grade 12.

This growth would not have been possible without the participation and the generosity of our partners. Our partners have contributed immensely towards making it a success. This investment is in building a better South Africa, where we produce globally-competitive individuals. Instead of being major consumers of technology, we should get to a level where we are pioneers. In 2017, the Learners' Focus Week was hosted in Kimberley, and 29 bursaries as well as 10 study grants were awarded. For the first time in the programme, some of the learners were awarded laptops and tablets.

As part of the Programme, and made possible through the generosity of our partners we will be having two educational psychologists. The psychologist will provide you with guidance on career choices you make and assist you as you make decisions on areas of study you may want to pursue.

Other than the presentations that you will be getting, you will also have an opportunity to visit various energy-related facilities around KwaZulu-Natal. Technical tours have been arranged to Sapref, Enref, eThekweni Landfill and Avon Peaking Power.

This experience will give you a better understanding of how the energy industry works. These are tours to enable you to make informed choices should you choose to pursue studies in fields related to energy. Ensure that you take notes and ask questions during these tours as that is the only way to learn.

This year the Department is playing host to the following provinces, Kwazulu-Natal, North West, Free State, Gauteng, Limpopo and Mpumalanga. I would like to thank the educators who have made this journey in support of the learners. Your assistance is highly valued and appreciated. You could have chosen to be anywhere, but decided to sacrifice time with your families in order to play a role towards the building our learners for a better South Africa. This is in line with the President's "Thuma mina" campaign. You are the enablers this country needs in order to move forward.

The Department of Energy has a mandate to ensure secure and sustainable provision of energy for socio-economic development and to ensuring our people have access to modern forms of energy. The energy sector is crucial to the economic development and requires dynamic young people that can actively participate in driving innovation, technology and science in the sector. The unemployment challenge facing the country requires united energy sector that initiates and grows programmes and projects aimed at curbing youth unemployment.

Education follows a similar principle and philosophy as farming. You don't sow today and expect to harvest today. If you have purchased and planted an avocado tree, you can probably expect to see your first fruit 3-4 years after planting. If you are growing from seed, it can take anywhere from 5 to 13 years before the tree is mature enough to set fruit. It means patience is needed whilst taking care of the plant. It is the same with education, you need to work hard and be patient, and the fruits will come later.

In order to build the skills required to run the South African economy, an investment in education is needed. In order to be skilled, you first need education. To acquire the necessary skills, you need to be educated and be prepared to learn. In isiZulu they say

“Indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili”, meaning those who have gone before are the ones who can show the path. That’s how we can build a skills base and be a globally-competitive, progressive and prosperous society.

The energy industry is an exciting industry both in terms of employment and business opportunities. As government we have plans to double the generation capacity of energy in South Africa. The Energy sector is thus a growing industry more especially in the area of renewable energy. The other buzz word in the industry and in the country in general is energy efficiency and clean energy technologies which provides opportunities for research and development as well as innovation. Energy efficiency offer substantial opportunities that did not exist before. You are all aware that we have an abundance of coal, and that it is a big emitter of greenhouse gasses or pollutants of our environment and air quality. You can be the future energy sector leaders. In order to access the available opportunities, take your education seriously and study hard. There is nothing that beats hard work and determination.

I take this opportunity to encourage all learners to consider career path in the energy sector as your participation will also contribute to the transformation of the sector. The sector requires skills such as artisans, electricians, technicians, engineers, nuclear technologist, environmentalists, researchers and scientists throughout the value chain. Learners gathered here today should seize this opportunity with both hands.

This week some, if not most of you, will learn of careers you had never been exposed to before. Listen attentively as you might just discover a career to pursue or any area of interest in business Post University.

Beyond the educational part of this programme, this provides a platform for cultural exchange where you get to learn about other cultures. South Africa being a vast country and very diverse, we should learn about other cultures in our rainbow country. There is no culture that is superior to others, we are all different and unique hence the need to learn from each other. It is our diversity that makes us unique and our unity is a strong basis for our nationhood.

In conclusion, I want to remind you learners that education plays a paramount role in the modern technological world we live in today. Tata Nelson Mandela said, “Education

is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” He is right. Another black icon Martin Luther King, Jr said “The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.” We need to live up this this important mantra. I want to remind you that the “The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet.” Said Aristotle. The Programme is challenging. Doing STEM at school is bitter but the rewards are sweet.

This investment by government, through the Department of Energy and together with our partners to name a few NERSA, NECSA, SAYNPS, SANEDI, NRWDI, Total, BP, Shell, Engen, Sasol, EWSETA, Puma, Mulilo and Eskom, is about developing and molding you, our very dynamic youth, into knowledgeable and globally competitive engineers, researchers, innovators, business people that while being globally competitive are grounded and are able to act locally.

Each one of you can make differences in your chosen field and make meaningful contribution to your community, to society and to the growth and development of our country. You are the future, and your destiny is in your hands. Remember what the Icon and Father of our Nation, President Rolihlahla Mandela said: It is not about the number of times you fall, but about your ability to pick yourself up and try again. You will fall, you will fail, but never give up. You are the leaders of tomorrow.

Let me thank all our learners and their educators for your participation. Let me also thank the provincial governments, University management, partners, presenters and exhibitors. For making this event possible. I wish you a week of excitement and discovery that will enrich each and every one of you.

I thank you and wish you well.

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