

Educators honoured at National Teaching Awards

Deputy President Paul Mashatile has reaffirmed government's commitment to reinforcing teacher support and prioritising the professional growth of those who are the key drivers of basic education.



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On behalf of the nation's people, the Deputy President saluted all teachers for their commendable and unparalleled contributions.

"Acknowledging that teaching is a labour of love and passion, as Government we are committed to reinforcing teacher support, and prioritising the professional growth of the women and men who are key drivers of basic education.

"Such a posture is critical in that it boosts their personal prowess and propels our schools towards unparalleled achievements. The wellness of all public servants in the Department of Basic Education must as such remain a priority, " he said.

The Deputy President was delivering remarks at the National Teachers' Awards, held at the Hatfield Christian Church in Thaba Tswane, Pretoria on Thursday.

This year marks 23 years since the first National Teachers' Awards took place as spearheaded by the former Minister of Education, the late Professor Kader Asmal.

Mashatile said the awards will always serve as a reminder of the contributions of Professor Asmal to social transformation in South Africa, to the extent that the Lifetime Achievement Award is named after him.

The Deputy President used his address to recognise the daily achievements of teachers who quietly inspire students to overcome obstacles in life by believing in them, igniting a passion for learning in young, bright minds, and quietly planting the seeds of optimism for a better future in the classroom.

He said these are the triumphs that may not always make headlines, but carry children and youth towards the kind of prosperous society that we all envisage.

“In celebrating our teachers today, let us therefore renew our commitment to supporting them in every possible way, for in their success lies the success of our nation,” he said.

The Deputy President highlighted that unemployment, poverty and inequality are the three main challenges that plague society today, adding that youth, women and other marginalised groups bear the brunt of these.

It is therefore, he said, the government’s responsibility to ensure that its policies are aligned across various departmental priorities.

“Our commitment to building a brighter future for our children is unwavering. We have taken note of the challenges, particularly concerning reports that our young learners struggle to read for meaning. A fundamental aspect of improving our education system hinges upon building robust foundations of literacy and numeracy from the earliest ages,” he said.

Mashatile highlighted that the system shift of Early Childhood Development (ECD) from the Department of Social Development to Basic Education is a testament to government’s dedication to this cause.

He said this offers a ripe opportunity to instil these foundational competencies right from the early stages of education.

Turning to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Mashatile said it presents both challenges and opportunities for us.

With the introduction of avant-garde subjects like Coding, Robotics, Data Analytics, and Science Technology, he said government aims to keep South Africa at the forefront of global innovation.

“Our fervent belief is that by equipping our learners with these competencies, we’re not only making them globally competitive but are also paving the way for a technologically advanced and prosperous nation.

“We recognise that our teachers must be equally adept and updated to achieve this. We’ve begun substantial investments in training programmes to ensure our educators are well-versed with emerging technologies such as the Internet of Things, Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, and others.

“By doing this, we aim to cultivate a symbiotic growth pattern where our educators and learners evolve together, harnessing the boundless potential of the digital age,” he said.

Turning to climate change and the recent climatic disasters, the Deputy President said these events and others highlight the urgent need for environmental education and training in order to equip communities with the requisite skills and capacity to both respond to, and prepare for the inevitability of climate disasters.

He emphasised that education has an important role in raising awareness and changing behaviour. Globally, educators are tasked with the monumental role of raising awareness about climate change and nurturing a proactive generation in finding solutions.

“As we charter our course into this new era, the importance of a well-rounded, technologically adept, and socially responsible education cannot be emphasised enough.

“And at the heart of this mission are all the teachers of our country - those of you honoured today, and those who also dedicate themselves in earnest to the development of our children and youth through education. Let us continue on this journey, hand in hand, as we mould future generations that are equipped, empowered, and enlightened,” he said.

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