

**Speech by the Honourable MEC for Social
Development, Mr Mxolisi Sokatsha, on the occasion
of the Graduation Ceremony of the Welding and
Motor Mechanic Skills Program Learners. Juvene
Hall-De Aar. Pixley Ka Seme District – Northern
Cape, 12 March 2015: 17h00**

Programme Director:

**Executive Mayor of the Pixley Ka Seme District Municipality:
Cllr J Lolwane**

**Ward councillor of the Emthanjeni Municipality:
Cllr Makibi**

**Speaker of the JTG District Municipality:
Cllr Seweditse Gaobosewe**

**Speaker of the Joe Morolong Municipality:
Cllr Masara Pitso**

Representatives from the MERSETA

**Representatives from Bright Idea Projects and Free Tribe
Development**

Management and Staff of the Department of Social Development led by the Head of Department Liz Botes

Representatives of the Rural FET College

Representatives from the Office of the Premier and the Department of Education

All Media Houses Present

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen;

And the most important people here tonight, our graduates of the Welding and the Motor Mechanic skills Program;

Good evening to all;

It is indeed a great honour and privilege to be part of and be invited to say a few words at this auspicious occasion – the graduation of the class of our Motor Mechanics and Welding. To all the graduates, I would like to convey my warmest congratulations on behalf of the Honourable Premier and the Northern Cape Provincial Government on what is indeed a splendid personal achievement.

I want to share the following quote with you by Orrin Hatch: ***“Graduation is not the end; it's the beginning.”***. Indeed graduates, a new chapter in your life has begun, filled with uncertainty, hope, dreams and anticipation. Enjoy the journey!

Ladies and gentlemen, skilled young people are the future of this country, without them, we can't begin to talk of a developmental state. For a country and a government, it is always pleasing to witness the injection of yet another group of into the economy and an improvement in national and provincial statistics. This in turn will translate into improved quality of service as well as more accessibility, especially in the rural and underserved areas of the Northern Cape Province.

I also wish to thank the leadership of the department; the Office of the Premier; the Northern Cape Department of Education; the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA; the Northern Cape Rural FET College; friends and relatives for their support and being able to share this joyous occasion with them. New friendships were formed that would last well into your futures. Memories were made, hard times were endured and relaxing times were enjoyed. These are the things that kept you as going throughout the past period.

It indeed is a day for Jubilee for us as a department and our partners precisely because the social landscape has changed considerably since the dawn of our young democracy.

Ladies and Gentlemen; what we are witnessing here today is not an event that happened by chance. Let me tell you, towards the 2004 general elections, the ANC in its manifesto said that there was a need to have trained one million people, mostly young, through learnerships and skills programs such as this one by 2014. This was after the realization that it would be difficult to drastically lessen unemployment, which was and is still predominantly constituted by young people with no skills to enter into the formal economy.

There is and will always be a need to engage our youth in disciplines like this, because for we know that unemployment is a significant contributor to social ills like crime, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse etc.

Program Director, the young people we are honouring here today are an extension of the Department's war on poverty program as change agents.

Why I am saying this is because I believe that these graduates were not just selected randomly to participate in the skills program. They should have been identified because of the fact that there was a need for them

to bring change to the socio-economic status of the households and communities they emanate from.

Ladies and Gentlemen; the adoption of the Balelapa Household profiling by the Northern Cape Executive council in May 2010 was a milestone in ensuring that we understand our communities thereby enhancing our planning ability as the Northern Cape Government. Because it would give a clear account of what needs to be done to create a better life our people.

Changes seen by the education, training and development sector include, but not limited to, a shift from residual to development training initiatives; from selective means tested and racially based on universal, non- racial and targeted groups- based access to education; from degree and diploma dominated development practice to an introduction of emerging skills programs based professions such as Artisans through skills programs, Community Developmental Workers etc.), from development that is led and managed by academics to the proliferation of other disciplines that ultimately contribute to the objectives of the National Development Plan.

These changes, Ladies and Gentlemen are coupled with an increase in a variety of social challenges such as HIV/AIDS, Drug and Alcohol

Abuse, Teenage Pregnancy, Poverty and Unemployment, Abuse and Trafficking of Women and Children.

In light of these changes and increase in social problems, a lot of work has been done by amongst other social services professional, their voices have been loud on these issues as they continuously beg for their comment.

This gathering here must be a platform to reflect on these issues as a collective. We must join the leadership of educators and training and development institutions through numerous initiatives, to rightfully so, focus our energies on education and advocacy matters as well as integrated practice issues as far as possible.

Program Director, Having said that, Our country and our province needs more supply of skills to sustain and enhance our development. We believe, as the ANC led government, that the training particularly of our young people is critical if we are to achieve our goal of a better life for all.

The training of artisans amongst other forms an integral part of the Northern Cape Human Resource Development Strategy and the National Skills Development Strategy, where a call for the increase of the skills base linked to economic sectors amongst others is made. Recruitment and retention of educators for career pathing and

succession planning is of vital importance. A total of 100 graduates are now available to venture into the field of practice.

The graduation today is the beginning of another chapter in your lives. You are now responsible for your acts and omissions as dictated by your scope of practice.

In conclusion, Program Director; the mere decision to skill our nation was aimed at decreasing unemployment, and in particular to grow our economy through skills and development.

I therefore want to make a call to all stakeholders gathered here tonight that these graduates must be linked to job and self-employment opportunities as well access to further study and training.

I am in essence saying that there must be a clear exit strategy defined for these graduates; an exit strategy of them being active participants in the economy through employment or self-employment; not an exit back to the streets.

In closing, I want to leave you with the following quote from Mahatma Ghandi: ***"the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others"***

I wish you all the best.

Thank you.

Kealeboga

Enkosi

