

**Eastern Cape Premier Noxolo Kiviet's keynote address at the 2011
School Awards Gala Dinner held in East London on 5 January 2012**

Programme Director

MEC for Education

Members of the Executive Council

Leaders of political parties

Members of the Provincial Legislature

Education Stakeholders

Heads of Departments

Distinguished guests –

Learners, parents and educators

Ladies and gentlemen

In three-days-time the oldest liberation movement in Africa, the African National Congress, is celebrating its 100th anniversary. Besides tens of thousands of people who will converge in Mangaung in the Free State this weekend, we will be using this opportunity to reflect on how far we have moved to realize the ideals that inspired ANC founding fathers and mothers 100 years ago. Both the founding members and champions of the drafting of the Freedom Charter in the 1950s, were resolute on the centrality of education in the development of our people, our economy and our societies.

We are gathered here to celebrate both progress made and to reflect on the extent of the challenges that still lie ahead in our quest to realize the vision outlined in the Freedom Charter when we spoke in one voice that “Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened”.

We are gathered to celebrate the achievements of great men, women, sons and daughters of our land who spared no effort to achieve excellence in our education system.

I am inspired by your understanding that education is one of the strategic pillars on which our economic development and social transformation must be based. Whilst our province has a deep history of use of education for social subjugation and oppression, education has also been used by democratic forces as a tool for liberation. The Eastern Cape has a rich history and legacy of producing esteemed politicians, statesmen and academics.

Currently the province is standing at a critical point of turning around its economic growth and development path and in accelerating social transformation. We have concluded a number of ground breaking and strategic agreements that include:

- Umzimvubu Water Catchment Project to supply accelerated industrial and agricultural development with commitments from the Department of Water Affairs to fund its feasibility study;
- Expansion of Ngqura container port to serve as trans-shipment hub with a rail link to Gauteng to supply manganese and other industrial products;

- Billions of rands worth of investment in improving our infrastructure including roads such as N2 Wild Coast Toll Road, hospitals, schools and other community infrastructure;

These are just highlights of major programmes on the pipeline that require intensive provision of scarce skills which our education system is not able to meet fully at this stage. Major growth areas we are working on include the smelter in Coega, agro processing industry, biofuel which our basic education system should prepare to support through supply of appropriate human capital.

It is these high achievers we are celebrating today that should form the backbone of our human capital development to ensure the sustainability of these major projects. We have made a commitment to turn 2012 into our special year of success in many respects as the province.

Despite the marginal decline in overall results, we take pride in the fact that you have excelled. We are also happy that the quality of passes has improved, with less numbers of poorly performing schools registered, while improvements were registered over the last three years by many historically disadvantaged schools.

In as much as we believe historical structural deficiencies that characterized our Cluster A and B – in the eastern parts of our province and in farm areas, we continue to produce gems because of hard work, dedication and love for the people and children of this country shown by many players.

I wish to mention Imidushane High School in the King Williams town district that moved from zero percent pass rate in 2009, to 14.7% in 2010 and to 50% in 2011.

We also wish those that have not succeeded to attain a matriculation pass in the class of 2011, the best in their efforts to stand up and try again. This is not the end of life. A renowned motivational speaker John Maxwell in his book “Failing Forward” cites Kyle Rote saying:

“There is no doubt in my mind that there are many ways to be a winner, but there is really only one way to be a loser and that is to fail and not look beyond the failure.”

I am saying look at the growing opportunities that we have in this province, which require a range of skills and competencies and prepare yourselves to exploit them.

There are numerous opportunities and alternatives we will continue to create which include your supplementary examinations, further education and training, skills development and opportunities for work. Our national and provincial needs for technical or vocational skills continue to grow at high rates while the supply of these critical skills for industry development and economic growth remain in short supply. Among us here today are a number of strategic partners from business, labour and civil society who are sharing our desire to boost economic growth, development and social transformation in our province. Let us work together to achieve these noble objectives.

We have made some strides that we have committed to sustain in order to turn around our fortunes in the education system. These include:

- Focus on strengthening pre-primary education as well as the General Education and Training category has begun to yield the desired results. These include continued improvement in early childhood development enrolments and plans for improving pass rates to over 60% by 2014 in reading, writing and calculating for grades 3, 6 and 9;
 - We have stabilised our education system following a series of challenges experienced early in 2011 in the areas of nutrition, scholar transport and infrastructure development. In respect of nutrition the management of the programme has been decentralized to schools. The scholar transport, as a non-core responsibility of Education, has been given to the Department of Transport and is running well.
 - We have also allocated R97 million for provision of laptops to educators to bridge the digital divide and to enhance access to multi-media learning aids for all our learners. This will be accompanied by intensive educator training in information and communication technologies; and
- We will also intensify the implementation of the Learner Attainment Improvement Strategy (LAIS) that contributed immensely to the significant improvement of schooling outcomes in yester years. Central to the strategy is leadership development particularly in dysfunctional schools, integrated planning, closer oversight of curriculum delivery, teacher development uplifting of maths and science teaching.

We regard education as a liberating factor to individual children and communities which must remain a top priority for government and every one of us in the Eastern Cape.

We are celebrating these achievements, but a lot more must and has to be done by all of us working together to address a plethora of historical and new challenges that face our society with regard to education. Eastern Cape remains very poor with high levels of inequality. We still have high numbers of schools with poor infrastructure. Violence in schools, drop-out rates particularly in grades 10 to 12, growing number of orphans, teenage pregnancy and drug abuse remain a daunting task that requires a collective effort.

We congratulate learners, parents, educators, families, schools governing bodies and stakeholders as well as our administrators that worked so hard to make these positive results possible.

Let me conclude my message by citing Dr. John Tibane in his book titled “Do it... because you can!”:

If a man does only what is required of him, he is a slave! The moment he does more, he is a free man. Doing a common thing uncommonly well is the secret of achievement”.

To make a difference in the Eastern Cape does not require rocket science, but simple actions done commonly well.

We must go back to the trenches and work harder and smarter to make our province proud in 2012.

I thank you

Premier Noxolo Kiviet

Province of the Eastern Cape