

WCED Adult Awards Ceremony

BY: Mr Cameron Dugmore, Provincial Minister of Education

AT: Western Cape

12 March 2008

DDGs - Brian Schreuder and Sindi Lingela (Shayi)

Tina Singh - Chief Director: Assessment and Examinations

Sigamoney Naicker - Chief Director: Curriculum Development

Zodwa Modimakwane - Director for Assessment Management

André Damon - Adult Education Programme Manager

Head Office Directors and District Directors

Curriculum officials and all other officials

But most importantly - I want to greet and warmly welcome all the adult learners, whose sacrifice and hard work will be acknowledged and honoured tonight. Warm welcome also to their families and friends.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Adult Education is a key strategy in our Provincial Government's Ikapa Elihlumayo strategy - to grow and share the economy of the Western Cape.

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) is committed to Adult Education and have been pioneers in the field of particularly the assessment of ABET. It remains one of our key weapons in the struggle against poverty.

In line with our Human Capital Development Strategy, which is a cornerstone of Ikapa, I am pleased to note that there was a general increase in the number of entries for October 2007 compared to previous years. This high turnout rate is commendable.

I also want to acknowledge the role of our officials and their hands-on involvement in the registration of candidates and close monitoring of the site-base assessment by district officials. I believe this ensured that candidates were more positive to sit in for the examination.

Turning to the examination itself, it is interesting to note that the majority of the candidates were younger than 44 (81.8%). The average age of the candidates for October 2007 was 32 years (34 years for Oct 2006) and more youth were in the system for the ABET L4 examination than before.

The oldest candidate who sat for the examination was 71 years of age. This candidate is from Elsie's River CLC and did four learning areas. The oldest candidate who obtained a GET Certificate was 50 years of age. This candidate was from the Goodwood Adult Learning Centre. The youngest candidate who obtained a GETC was 16 years of age from the Klein Karoo School of Skills.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am mentioning this because I believe this demonstrates a growing commitment to education in the province, regardless of the difficulties that so many of our communities face.

Slowly the consciousness that education holds the key to the future is taking hold across the province, among young and old. Indeed we are beginning to place education and skills at the

centre of all our endeavours.

The intended outcomes of the ABET Level 4 qualification is to ensure that adult learners are prepared to become actively involved in communities; are empowered and confident when engaging in cultural activities; and are provided with a strong foundation for the acquisition of knowledge and skills needed for the world of work.

The ABET level 4 examination is written mostly by adult learners who have dropped out of the formal schooling system due to various reasons. In some cases, this qualification means promotion at their work or access to job opportunities.

I am pleased to note that Umalusi, who conducted the external verification for Mathematical Literacy and English last year, had attributed positive comments to our officials. WCED was commended for submitting work of a good quality and standard.

They also gave individual feedback to the curriculum advisers, pertaining to the work at specific centres per district. The specific centres that did work below the required standard were indicated to the curriculum advisers and mechanisms for improvement will be put in place this year.

Portfolios with excellent tasks were also identified and these will be copied for each district so that this can be used for best practice sharing, as a resource for planning in 2008.

The evidence suggests that generally site-based assessment at centres meet national and provincial requirements and that there has been a noted improvement in the standard of some of the internal assessment tasks set within the ABET sector. The assessment tasks developed are fair, valid and consistent.

I believe that although there is considerable improvement from previous years in the quality of the curriculum delivery, there are also areas of concern and there is always room for improvement.

However, I am sure our department is studying recommendations from the ABET 2007 Report, especially with regards to improved planning and applying assessment tasks taking into account the different cognitive levels.

I am told that the number of entries for certain learning areas such as Agriculture Technology and Small, Medium and Macro Enterprise is very low, which for me is a concern, especially because of the skills and knowledge acquired through these learning areas can help candidates to become self-employed. I believe we should do more to promote these learning areas to ensure a higher number of entries.

Although some other learning areas showed an improvement in the percentage of candidates that wrote the examination, the low number of entries for IsiXhosa remains a concern. The Xhosa-speaking community should be one of the main target groups to be provided with an education by the ABET sector.

The improvement in the results for Ancillary Health Care, Mathematical Sciences and SMME is commendable. Ancillary Health Care and SMME are two important electives in the

Western Cape in terms of providing career pathways in primary health care and entrepreneurship respectively.

There was a significant decrease in the pass rate of Applied Agriculture and Agricultural Technology, Human and Social Sciences and English during the October 2007 examination compared to the previous two years.

The poor performance in English is a continuing concern. Many candidates are second and third language speakers of English, which makes the learning area all the more challenging.

An increase in the quality assurance at both provincial and national levels is occurring within ABET assessment. The role of Umalusi as quality assurer during all the stages of the examination is welcomed by the WCED.

The challenges of part-time educators, non-specialist educators, limited teaching time and a general lack of resources as well as facilities are still issues facing the ABET sector.

This makes the success of some of our centres and their adult learners all the more remarkable. The intervention strategies to improve the results of the maths and sciences learning areas, I am told, have borne some fruit, as there has been good improvement in these areas.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me turn my attention to the stars of the show tonight: all the learners who will be acknowledged. I believe that through availing opportunities to learn to historically disadvantaged communities, will we be able to fight poverty and create jobs.

I am extremely aware of how the social pathologies in our communities impact on all of our lives, but more especially so on education. There is a plethora of reasons why many learners drop out of the formal schooling system.

One of Apartheid's lethal legacy, which continues to haunt us, is the low levels of illiteracy and numeracy among adults. That is why Minister Naledi Pandor has announced the Kha Ri Gude Literacy Campaign, designed to enable South Africa to be declared a territory free of illiteracy by the end of 2012.

This campaign will seek to reach 4.7 million illiterates and thereby also meet South Africa's commitment made at Dakar in 2000 to reduce illiteracy levels by at least 50%. The Western Cape has a target of 10,000 for this year. Whilst the campaign has only started I truly believe that we can reach the target.

The campaign aims to develop and foster optimum cooperation and partnerships with a range of state and civil society agencies. The campaign will endeavour to cooperate with all sectors of society in effecting a major transformation of the literacy levels in the country.

You yourself, by having taken this second chance offered to you, you have shown your commitment to yourself, your family, your community. And this is sadly what is lacking from many - determination and the will to rise above your circumstance.

My congratulations to all of you - we are very proud of you and what you have achieved.

Those that could not come to the awards because of circumstances beyond their control, my congratulations to them for excellent work, often in very difficult and trying circumstances.

Thank you all for accepting our invitation to be part of this celebration and please enjoy the formal function and make it memorable for the learners and centre managers.

Our thanks to all the teachers, learners and centre managers in the field. They are at the very point of delivering of the curriculum. I want to commend them for the sterling work they have done and also the extra mile they went to achieve results of this nature.

Thank you also to the district officials, their increased involvement is commendable. Thank you to all curriculum and examination officials, for your continued professionalism and dedication to adult education.

Thanks to your leadership you have ensured the successful completion of the examination and once again delivered results of high quality. Your collective effort has ensured that the ABET level 4 examination has been conducted with the necessary integrity, which has resulted in the approval of the results by Umalusi.

I thank you