

**SPEECH DELIVERED ON BEHALF OF THE KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR
TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON, HON. WILLIES
MCHUNU DURING THE NATIONAL ADULT LITERACY CELEBRATION IN
UTHUKELA DISTRICT - 08 SEPTEMBER 2011**

Programme Director;
Members of the Provincial Legislature present;
Inkosi M.Z. Hlongwane;
All Amakhosi aseNdlunkulu present;
Her worship the District Mayor;
His worship the Mayor of Okhahlamba;
All Councilors present;
Senior officials from various Government Deapartments;
Members of the Media;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

I wish to start by thanking you for attending this important event organised by the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government, on whose behalf I stand here before you. This event marks an important day in the national calendar - the National Adult Literacy Day Celebration.

South Africa is a democratic country, characterized by inequalities which require redress, equity and reconstruction and indeed all of us are in agreement that education is an essential component of the reconstruction of the South African society.

As citizens of this province therefore, I am of the opinion that our wish is that we develop a skilled and literate KwaZulu-Natal where all citizens will receive education which will enable active participation in socio-economic processes that will contribute to reconstruction and economic development.

Adult Education and Training (AET) provides adult learners with a stepping stone in their path in lifelong learning and development. AET programmes open the doors of learning to the previously disadvantaged communities. AET empowers them with relevant skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that will equip them to cope with the global challenges of the 21st century.

It is therefore that today we want to emphasize the constitutional right of access for every citizen irrespective of physical or mental status and gender. We want to see our non-literate persons being supported to access AET programmes so that they find a gateway for self-advancement and development.

Literacy and AET are not only a right, but a means to achieving dignity and adjustment to adult life and responsibility. Every adult wants to be respected and to be deemed a socially well-adjusted and enabled citizen. This desire tends to be negatively affected by levels of literacy.

A good example is the status of a voter who cannot read as compared to one who can read and write, unassisted. Adult learners are empowered to also enjoy a certain degree of independence and can learn how to apply for such facilities like telephones, ID, pension, licence etc.

The call for Life Long Learning or Learning communities is better understood if adults are literate and themselves are on a path of education and training. In other words, we need a critical mass of parents that can talk convincingly about the joys and benefits of education and skills.

I was told that one of the challenges in the Uthukela District on this programme is that the number of adult male learners is dwindling. This may be caused by cultural stereotype, male chauvinism and even sheer laziness coupled with alcoholism.

There are also drop-outs amongst adult learners and even those who continue, they absent themselves frequently, maybe due to the challenges of parenting, adulthood, ill-health, and adulthood.

Similarly, entrepreneurship needs to be supported by the important stepping stone of skills. Without soft artisan skills chances of succeeding as an entrepreneur are small, because wishes and ideas need to be put to action through skills.

Societal stratification is made worse by disparities in levels of literacy, general education and skills. For us to achieve social cohesion, we should aim to tackle various contributory factors.

As part of broad government intentions, AET addresses the following:

- The vigorous fight against unemployment in the Province;
- The alleviation of poverty;
- Fighting against crime;
- Accelerating economic growth; and
- Uplifting the standard of living which will impact in the reduction of dreadful diseases, including HIV and AIDS.

We take this opportunity to commend this District for having reached even the deepest rural areas such as Mahlutshini and Tonyelana with the AET programme. We have also noted the inclusion of disabled learners in your programme.

The percentage of the population aged 20 years and older with no schooling in the province of KwaZulu-Natal was 22.9% in 1996, and it decreased to just below 20% by 2006.

Today the fact remains that there are a number of adults with no schooling at all in KwaZulu-Natal which suggests that this province still needs to do more.

We encourage each and every learner here to strive to achieve whatever they want in life, remembering that with education they will be able to achieve far more.

We would like to thank all our educators who are working tirelessly to ensure that the learners are predisposed for life-long learning as well as skills-training to tackle poverty and mitigate its negative and even devastating impact on families and communities.

I thank you