



Nelson Mandela
Centenary
2018
Be the Legacy



A NELSON MANDELA FOUNDATION INITIATIVE

SPEECH BY PRESIDENT NELSON MANDELA AT THE EDUCATION AFRICA, PRESIDENTIAL AND PREMIER EDUCATION AWARDS. 22 NOVEMBER 1997

It is a great honour to join you in celebrating the contribution which our award winners have made to our people's quality of life. This ceremony highlights the role of education in realising our goals as a nation.

At the outset I should confess my delight at the impact these awards are beginning to make in the educational fraternity. For the first time in three years, there is a marked increase in the number of entries. These entries and the unprecedented number of guests gracing this ceremony, from South Africa and further afield, tell us that more people are joining hands in efforts to improve the quality of education, and to make it accessible to the majority of South Africans.

They show that we are all beginning to recognise in the most practical way, that education is central to the success of a whole range of other human endeavours. Our own reconstruction and development effort, the renaissance of the entire continent and our successful interaction in the global village, depend largely on the progress we make in educating our populations.

In South Africa the challenges are as stark as they are real. The recently compiled School Register of Needs provides us with hard and cold facts. The majority of our children, especially in rural provinces, still either do not have access to basic education or depend on institutions that lack the teaching media and equipment needed for effective learning and teaching. Such conditions continue to hinder the progress of the Campaign for Effective Learning and Teaching that we launched earlier this year. This campaign and the School Building Program, are vital elements in government's progress in dealing with the legacy of unequal distribution of resources.

Of course, try as it might, Government on its own cannot achieve our nation's educational goals. We need to harness the

energies and resources of the whole nation.

It is precisely for this reason that we cannot repeat too often our appreciation of the role of business; non-governmental organisations and community organisations in the transformation of education.

Very encouraging too is the increasing participation of parents and students, in the management of our schools and tertiary institutions.

Government will continue to create the statutory framework to allow all stakeholders to participate meaningfully in policy formulation and in the education of our nation.

The power of education extends beyond the development of skills we need for economic success. It can contribute to nation-building and reconciliation. Our previous system emphasised

the physical and other differences of South Africans with devastating effects. We are steadily but surely introducing education that enables our children to exploit their similarities and common goals, while appreciating the strength in their diversity. We need to educate our young people to become adults who cherish the values of respect for women and children proclaimed in the National Men's March today.

In short we need a system, as envisaged by Curriculum 2005, that is geared to the realities of our country and the ideals of our people.

Chairperson,

All efforts to improve our people's access to education are noble. Today we honour a

few of the most outstanding examples. We give deserved recognition to men and women who have made not only their communities, but the whole nation, proud; patriots whose selfless sacrifices have impacted positively on the lives of many; unsung heroes and heroines who sought neither glory nor recognition.

We present these awards as a pledge of permanent partnership. In honouring you tonight, we join thousands of workers who can now read and write thanks to your efforts; children who now have access to early childhood education facilities; and those whose special educational needs have been satisfied.

It is our fervent hope that these awards, and your educational projects, will inspire many more South Africans to contribute to this critical aspect of nation-building.

Let us join hands, as government, business, NGO's and communities. Let us work together to educate our nation!

I thank you. ●

