

**Speech for a Keynote Address by the Honourable Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mr Mduduzi Manana, MP at the Ministerial Bursary Handover that will take place on 28 February 2013 at Vuselela Further Education and Training (FET) College, Taung, North West Province.**

It is indeed an honour to be able to share with you, not only the celebration of excellence, diligence, hard work and sacrifice throughout your school years that is being recognised today, but also the celebration of the future of our nation sitting in front of me. I am always filled with hope for the future and for our country when witnessing the dedication and devotion to the task of achievement of young people that is evident here today.

To the 105 young adults who are receiving bursaries today, I commend you for your diligence and your efforts and congratulate you for your achievements in matric in the year 2012. But it is not just about your achievements that we are celebrating today, it is also about your character and ability which I believe will take you forward on the path of excellence and set you on a course for success. It is my sincerest hope that you will live up to your achievements, that you will inspire others to follow suit and that you will be prepared to help others along the way.

In fact, there are many others who equally deserve similar credit and it is such a pity that many of these go publicly un-rewarded and some even go unnoticed altogether. Let's applaud the parents, family members, friends, teachers and mentors who have supported you in your efforts to be where you are today. We honour them today too, unknown as they may be. To everyone who receives a bursary today, receive your accolades with pride but do so in the spirit of *ubuntu*, for we are what we are because of others, and we should not forget that fact.

South Africa, as you know, is a country in which there continues to be huge disparities in wealth, standards of living and life expectancy. We are a society with an increasingly agile and competitive first world economy co-exists with widespread poverty and unemployment. It is vital therefore, that South Africa should continue to build a strong and productive skills base, which will enable us to grow our economy and to compete in a globalising world.

It is no less important and urgent that we raise the educational levels and improve the training and skills of the growing numbers of young people, the majority of them black and poor, who exit from our school system and enter the labour market with little hope of formal employment. Creating hope and meaningful opportunity for these young people is a crucial concern of government and an issue to which all responsible citizens need to give serious and sustained attention. It is with this in mind that we wish to create hope and opportunity, through this initiative of providing full cost bursaries to academically able but financially needy learners.

Allow me the opportunity to spend a few minutes on the origin and achievements of the Minister's Special Bursary Initiative that you are the beneficiaries of. The National Skills Fund Bursary for Scarce Skills development was established in 2009. The intention of the bursary scheme is to implement a new funding model aimed at increasing the number of high achieving learners registering and succeeding in mainly scarce skills disciplines. This has been identified as a priority objective in terms of the National Skills Development Strategy. The funding model consists of a full cost bursary which will be awarded to academically able but financially needy learners. Particular consideration will be given to learners with disabilities as well as rural learners.

Linked to the Mandela Day Career Guidance Festival, that you participated in last year, the Minister of Higher Education and Training is annually awarding bursaries as part of the longer term initiative. A total of 295 bursaries, linked to the Mandela Day Festival, have been awarded to Grade 12 learners so far, made up of 95 learners from the Mopani district in Giyani, Limpopo. A further 100 bursaries were awarded to grade 12 learners from Lusikisiki in the Eastern Cape as well as in the Northern Cape at the beginning of 2011. In rand value, the cost of the financial support comes to an estimated R16 million for the learners from the 2010 and 2011 Matric classes. And you are the next cohort of recipients.

You are joining a selected few privileged young people that are now studying in various South African institutions of higher education and training, mostly for diplomas and degrees in critical and scarce skills.

You have achieved the first step in building your future by achieving marks high enough to qualify as a bursary recipient. You have an even bigger responsibility now to give everything in your studies to succeed and to join our South African job market and contribute productively to our economy. I am encouraged by your choices of studies, and I can see our future engineers, geologists, economists, lawyers, advocates, biotechnologists, chartered accountants and maybe even the President of the country sitting in front of me. I am especially excited by the number of you that are joining the teaching profession. I personally want to thank you for taking up teaching as your profession of choice.

Given that we are gathered together today to celebrate that we are South Africans, it is appropriate at this ceremony to pay tribute to the late Oliver Tambo because it was this great visionary who once said that:

*'It is our responsibility to break down barriers of division and create a country where there will be neither whites nor blacks, just South Africans, free and united in diversity.'*

We continue to draw inspiration from ANC Former President Oliver Tambo. If we ask ourselves what it is that shaped the life of this great visionary, what values and life skills enabled him to make such an important and enduring impact on the history of the African National Congress and of a democratic South Africa, we can only note two major influences that moulded his style in politics and leadership. The first was him remaining **attached to his traditional rural roots** and the second was the kind

of **expertise he acquired through education**. President Oliver Tambo combined these two influences creatively to develop an approach that was able to reach and empower a much broader mass audience, both nationally and internationally. I believe that the educational value that can be derived from this group of young adults being celebrated here today would certainly have the approval of Former President Oliver Tambo.

Stay true to your traditional rural roots and values; and always be a proud South African and a proud rural Taung resident. Always honour your parents, other family members, friends, teachers and mentors who have shaped you and brought you where you are today.

Be an example to other young people of Taung and beyond, encourage others to succeed in life. Always value your education and the opportunities you received to succeed in life. By ploughing back on the investment we are making today, be kind to complete on record time so that we can extend this gesture to other rural and poor young learners. You have an obligation to free us from the dangers of foreign aid and investment that rests on imported skills without a good sustainable programme to develop our own local skills. Building the local skills base will benefit our economy and empower our people. We have to ensure that we exercise more control in the utilisation of our rich natural resources and exploit their economic benefits for all our people. This is only possible when skilled South Africans are driving our economy.

Work hard at the institution that you have chosen, North West University (Mafikeng campus), the Central University of Technology and the Free State University. Make use of numerous opportunities lying in front of you. And if you have a problem, do not hesitate to seek help. Work hard to achieve your goals in life and use this moment and time wisely to succeed in your studies. Realise your potential and help our country become a force to be reckoned with.

In conclusion, let me say that I am delighted that President Zuma's administration has made it possible for you to enter the post-school system and I'm here on behalf of his government not to **implore you** to become an active partner in education but to **applaud you** for taking up this challenge and doing something about it. I wish you all the best for your future studies. We as the Department of Higher Education and Training commit ourselves to monitor and support you throughout your studies.

I thank you.