

WESTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE DEBATE

TUESDAY 24 JUNE 2008, 14H15, CAPE TOWN

Empowering the youth for poverty eradication – Address by Western Cape Education MEC Cameron Dugmore

Mr Speaker

Colleagues

Honorable Members of the House

Members of the gallery and media

One of the major shifts in our education system since 1994, has been to move towards a curriculum that fosters an active participation in the learning process on the part of students.

We moved from a traditional methodology of ‘active’ teaching and ‘passive’ pupils to a learner-centred model of ‘active’ learning and educators who facilitate the learning process. (The essence of an outcomes-based education model.)

Key to the success of this model is that learners take up the challenge of becoming ‘active’ in the learning process. Learners must learn to take the initiatives, to be innovative, creative and to take the broadening opportunities for learning with both hands.

There are so many opportunities for learning and these can be illustrated in the following examples.

TEN PRACTICAL OPTIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO CONSIDER:

1. STAYING AT SCHOOL AND FINISHING

Much has been done to encourage the retention of learners in schools until they complete the senior certificate. This area remains a challenge though, because the biggest role-player in realising this objective are the learners themselves.

The learner is key to that decision 'to stay' or 'to go'! Leaving is a decision largely exercised by the learner. Staying is also a decision exercised by the learner. With the increasing systemic emphasis on learner support – the environmental conditions that mitigate against the decision to stay, are slowly being eroded.

2. GO TO AN FET COLLEGE

Our compulsory schooling age was designed to emphasise the fact that learners have a choice after completing the General Education phase. Human beings are very diverse creatures and South Africans are no exception! Let's face it – not everybody enjoys the same things – people learn differently, have different sets of intelligences, want different outcomes for their lives.

South Africa is a celebration of human diversity. This is the basis for encouraging a learner to pursue the huge diversity of learning opportunities that are available through public FET Colleges. Over 600 different learning programmes are on offer in 2008 in our Western Cape FET Colleges. There is a learning field of interest for everyone!

3. STUDY AT AN ADULT EDUCATION CENTRE

Adult Education and Training remains a key tool in our efforts to combat Youth Unemployment and Poverty Alleviation. It offers youth people the opportunity to acquire much needed life skills and continue their education.

Adult Learning Centres are located in the heart of communities, making it accessible for the disadvantaged in particular. In line with the Western Cape Education Department's (WCED) focus on access, more Adult Learning Centres operates in the day than was previously the case.

Using the available data on adult literacy education it reveals an overall trend towards greater youth enrollment in adult literacy education, although, this trend varies across centres.

Several factors might account for these trends. Among those can be the higher skill and educational expectations awaiting dropouts in the job market. In line with this increase need Centres tend to increase skills based programmes. The WCED is exploring partnerships with FET Colleges where AET sites can direct learners to colleges or look at the feasibility of using AET sites as satellites for FET Colleges.

The flexibility of AET programmes and centres allows youth to enter/register at an Adult Learning Centres anytime during the year. The electives: Small Medium and Micro Enterprise, Ancillary Health Care and Agriculture can play a significant role in making youth employable or self-employable.

Youth and the Mass Literacy Campaign

The South African Literacy Campaign launched by Minister Naledi Pandor, is intended to enable 4,7 million adults to become literate by the end of 2012. Kha ri gude, Tshivenda for let us learn, invites those adults who missed out on their schooling and who cannot read or write, to join one of about 20,000 literacy classes that will be held all over South Africa, including the Western Cape.

The Kha ri Gude literacy campaign was developed in response to the call by the Minister for a national campaign to end illiteracy among South African adults.

We regard this campaign as one of the important ways in which the developmental state prioritises the needs of the poor and addresses the right of all citizens to basic education in the official language/s of their choice. It is intended to provide the opportunity for 4,7 million South Africans to become literate.

The target for the Western Cape in 2008/9 is 9,000. In order for a provincial programme of this magnitude to reach its target, the campaign requires voluntary support from a wide range of people and organisations drawn from all sectors of society and across all sectors and organisations, who will assist in establishing learning sites around the province, help to recruit literacy volunteer educators and work with them to recruit learners.

The youth can play an important role in this regard. They will be trained as volunteers and equipped to provide basic literacy to communities.

4. STUDY AT A UNIVERSITY

Higher Education is the traditional aspiration of many learners and our education system is still predominantly focussed on getting learners into

higher education. There is a particular need for learners to pursue studies in the traditional higher education vocational routes, particularly those that are engineering related.

5. DO A LEARNERSHIP

Young people who feel that they need to join the labour market rather sooner than later and get a job and leave school, need not say goodbye to Further Education and Training (FET).

A policy principle is that all sectors of economic activity resort under a Sector Education and Training Authority (Seta) and all medium to large employers are compelled by law to contribute to a skills fund. These funds are then available to finance Learnerships where the practical component takes place at work and the theoretical component takes place at an FET College.

6. DO AN INTERNSHIP

If for some reason a learnership is not available or appropriate, internships are another innovative way in which young people can notch up valuable employment experience and acquire marketable skills for the job market.

7. START A BUSINESS

A sure way to sustain yourself through life (and your family and your employees if you are successful), is to find a unique product or service that people will be willing to pay you for. This is called entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurs are creative, flexible and brave and have tenacity. It has been said that most successful entrepreneurs didn't get it right the first time

round! They made mistakes but tried again until they are successful. So I want to encourage our young people to be prepared to take risks whilst you still have very little to lose and a lot more to gain.

8. JOIN THE ARMY/SAPS

There are many opportunities for those who enjoy a disciplined environment to be a part of the South African National Defence Force or Police Services. There are many career opportunities in the security forces that are as diverse as the people that make up this country. Don't forget, it includes opportunities on land, sea and air.

9. STUDY TO BECOME A TEACHER

One of the vocational routes of study at higher education level is teaching! The need for education and training in South Africa and the world in general is vast. Teachers are always sought after and it is a deeply rewarding career to have a positive influence in the lives of others through your daily work.

10. VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

A culture under threat in South Africa, is the culture of voluntarism. Helping others is actually a deeply traditional culture in South Africa, but modern international trends such as consumerism and others, tends to make people more self-centred and less caring for the well-being of others. Let us resist this!

Each of us must kindle our spirit of social responsibility and sense of belonging in a community. Voluntarism should be on the personal agenda of every responsible South African citizen.

IN CONCLUSION

FET Colleges are really underestimated as institutions of further education and training and they are generally under-utilised by our youth. Many who have been there say they are our best-kept education and training secret! Those that enrol in them are generally very satisfied and the majority of graduating students find work in a short time.

There are numerous bursaries available and these include:

- the iKapa Elihlumayo provincial bursary;
- the National Student Financial Aid Student (NSFAS) bursary specifically for learners who want to study in one of the 12 new National Certificate Vocational directions of study; and
- various Technical Colleges Student Aid Trust (TECSAT) bursaries for specific skills and vocational programmes of study.

All a prospective student should do is approach your nearest FET College and the student advisory officer will give you all the necessary information and guidance.

I thank you...