



**MINISTRY OF JUSTICE CORRECTIONAL SERVICES
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Speech for the release of the 2020 Inmate Matric Results by the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Ronald Ozzy Lamola on 25 February 2021, Leeuwkop Management Area

Deputy Minister of Correctional Services, Nkosi Phathekile Holomisa

Gauteng MEC of Education, Mr Panyaza Lesufi

National Commissioner of Correctional Services, Mr Arthur Fraser

The Inmate Matric Class of 2020

Teachers

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

As we are about to celebrate the achievements of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) for the 2020 academic year, may we as a point of departure, pause and observe a moment of silence in remembrance of two of our educators who passed away in the course of the year:-

Mr Michael Simphiwe Johnson, and

Ms Hlupi Constance Motlatla.

May their souls rest in peace, we shall fondly remember them for their great work.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate the entire class of 2020, it's a class that conquered tremendous challenges, they're made of steel. I also like to congratulate the Minister of Basic education, MEC Panyaza Lusifi who is with us today and all other MECs for their stewardship. We would not have completed this academic year had it been not for their firmness to complete the academic year. Mam Angie was steadfast that the 2020 academic year cannot be lost. The entire class of 2020 are indebted to her commitment with all the educators who made completion of this academic year possible. I therefore dedicate these results to her. Yimbokodo, she is a women of steal, wena uyibokodo Mama Angie.

When we were appointed to this portfolio, we impressed upon the Executive Management within Correctional Services to ensure that correctional centres become theatres for effective training, and skilling of inmates. Inmates must be equipped with skills that will make them employable and enable them to create opportunities for themselves and their respective communities.

No correctional centre should ever breed hardened criminals who upon their release, terrorize communities with their newly acquired sophisticated and most brutal acts of criminality. Our centres should not be breeding grounds for criminals but rehabilitated inmates who can be boilermakers, plumbers, carpenters, famers etc.

Correctional Services should not relieve us of the responsibility of seriously engaging with the problems of communities, especially those produced by racism and socio-economic inequality.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have all accepted that Covid-19 has changed the way of life and introduced a new normal in our daily routines. The Department of Correctional Services has adapted to this new normal. We have endured and continue to mitigate against Covid-19 in our centres. This is in line with our objective to protect both officials and inmates against the effects of Covid-19 and save lives.

The education of inmates was also affected and faced various challenges when our country was placed under lockdown in March 2020. This disrupted our educational programmes. Hence we explored other approaches for teaching and learning behind bars. One of the approaches we implemented and intensified was access to online tutoring and learning by inmates. Most of the inmates responded positively to this approach, they ably confronted significant challenges and Covid-19 could not hinder their desire to do well in their studies.

In preparing for the 2020 school year, we ensured that each correctional centre school drew-up a curriculum recovery plan to make up for the lost time. This also meant that inmates needed to complete the majority of related activities in their cells. What also assisted us were the educational programmes that the Department of Basic Education broadcasted on television and radio stations which inmates had access to.

As DCS, we are gearing our systems towards on-line education offerings as classroom teaching and learning continue to experience disruptions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Relevant equipment and other tools are being procured in order for inmates to be able to access online digital content. These resources will be used by offenders to access curriculum content, as well as to view lessons on relevant platforms.

For any nation to grow and prosper, it must invest in education and nurtured it at all levels. This dictates that the prioritization of education is not just for some in society, or particular structures in Government, but all sections of society must make education their priority.

I say this because it has been proven that it is only through education that people are able to develop themselves. It also becomes an important factor for avoiding poverty and other social ills.

We are in the process of reforming correctional centres geared towards our intention of reducing recidivism and creating safer communities. It is an open fact that most inmates will one day be released. Therefore, our rehabilitation programmes seek to reduce barriers which previously characterized life behind bars for inmates during the apartheid. Under apartheid, correctional centres were just prisons used to warehouse prisoners.

The barriers included lack of training and learning, rife gangsterism, idleness and denial of life changing opportunities. While some of these challenges are still prevalent in our centres, we strive to release people from our centres who will contribute positively to their communities.

We exist in a global world that is continuously evolving. The world today is demanding technologically savvy people, and thus the demand for high-level skills and continuous education is imperative in order to stay relevant. What does this mean for Correctional Services, which currently houses a total of one hundred forty one thousand four hundred forty six (141 446) inmates.

This is a big community that we cannot afford to leave out of the country's economic production cycle. It is a community that, when well-informed, schooled and equipped with relevant skills, is capable of making a vital contribution to the society's upliftment. In other words, this is a community that must be rehabilitated not only to start living as law-abiding citizens upon release, but, as active members of the community, obligated to improve their societal conditions.

Education is an effective rehabilitation tool. As such education is a fundamental pillar of our correctional system. In our centres, education must always be structured and used to equip inmates to build social capital so as to improve their well-being whilst incarcerated and post-incarceration in order to realize a second chance in life. This talks to the transformation of an inmate and goes further to benefit the greater society, as the person released will now be armed with relevant knowledge and skills. The long-term gain in this instance results in lower re-offending rates as well as lower social costs for the State.

We have created a conducive environment for learning in our correctional centres. For two (2) years in succession we have registered one hundred and sixty (160) students. The seventeen (17) registered correctional centre schools that we currently have are ideally structured like a normal school that you will find in the community, where you have classrooms, a staff room, ablution facilities, libraries, and other amenities. Inmates who attend school are also housed in distinctive cells, in order to ensure that they are not easily disrupted by the general inmate population.

Educational attainment in DCS has been significantly improving, looking at the pass rate that inmates have been achieving over the years. Indeed, one can say that we have registered significant strides. Just looking at the past five (5) years inmate matric pass rate, which is as follows: -

2015 – 72.9%

2016 – 72.1%

2017 – 76.7%

2018 – 77.3%, and

2019 – 82.6%, one can see that indeed we are doing well.

It is important that I highlighted our performance in the previous years, so to indicate that our focus is not merely access to education but, instead, the provision of quality education where excellence is our resolve. The subject offering is thus important when talking about quality education. We therefore pride ourselves for making it an endeavor for inmates to enroll for subjects relevant towards the country's growth trajectory.

When some of our inmates acquire distinctions in subjects such as Mathematics, Accounting, Physical Science and Agricultural Sciences, this can only mean that all individuals are capable of excellence irrespective of the environment or the situation they find themselves in. Our responsibility is not to judge them and confine them to the dark books of life. But, we need to ignite a sense of hope and renewal. A sense of hope. A sense of responsibility. That is what rehabilitation is all about. It is the rejuvenation of an individual towards his or her true worth.

We are pleased that MEC Lesufi joined us today against a very tight schedule. We want to foster strategic partnerships with the Gauteng Department of Education to unlock the educational potential of our schools here in the province. We want Basic Education to continue contributing to our education imperatives to inmates through their expertise, resources, and any other contribution that they can bring to the table. Equally, we want to through offender labour, respond to minor maintenance challenges and renovations in schools here in Gauteng. Let us explore these areas so that together, we can make education a lived reality for all our people.

Now, the moment that we have been waiting for is upon us.

For the 2020 academic year, DCS full time learners achieved a pass percentage of 86.3%. When inclusive of part-time learners, DCS is standing at 81.3 pass rate.

This is higher than the national average of 76.2 percentage, it is also higher than the highest provincial percentage of 85.1 attained by the Free State. Our learners also obtained a total of 76 distinctions and we also produced 78 Bachelor's Passes, which is a minimum requirement for admission to a Bachelor's Degree.

Our best performing learner is Lwazi Chamane from Usethubeni Youth under Durban Management Area in Kwa-Zulu Natal with an average of 80.6 percent and four (4) distinctions on IsiZulu, Life Orientation, History and Tourism respectively.

It should also be noted that:

- uSethubeni centre in Durban Westville registered 19 inmates all 19 of the inmates passed and are eligible to study for qualification a bachelors.
- 5 schools achieved a 100 percent pass rate.

We are pleased that our results increased even under the 2020 unprecedented year. We congratulate our learners and teachers for their resilience. We equally extend our gratitude to the Department of Basic Education for their continued support and assistance. This performance is yet another great affirmation to the transforming journey of our correctional facilities into Centres of New Beginnings.

We will continue to provide opportunities for inmates to complete high school education and go further to pursue tertiary education with institutions of higher learning if their families can afford to sponsor their studies or if inmates successfully apply for bursaries. This is due to the fact that inmates or their families have to cater for the higher education not the department of correctional services.

Allow me to conclude with the words of American Educational Reformer, Horace Mann, when he said, "education is the great equalizer but this only works if the most vulnerable individuals have access to it."

I thank you.