

The ANC's broken education system is load shedding the future of young South Africans sentencing them to a lifetime of poverty and unemployment

Speech by Baxolile Nodada MP, DA Shadow Minister of Basic Education

Somlomo
Malungu Abekekileyo
Fellow South Africans, Molweni

Mr President, I sat in these very benches last Thursday night to listen to your SONA speech.

To be honest, I did so with less hope than the thousands of parents who in 1994 put trust in the ANC to escape oppression.

They trusted that Bantu education would be replaced by quality education that would provide a pathway out of poverty and unemployment.

Mr President, imagine a child born into our South African democracy. Not only their parents' pride and joy, but also the hope of the nation.

Let's take the story of young Khanya, whose name means light. Born in Xholobeni.

29 years into our democracy, Khanya will have to overcome so many obstacles if he is to become one of only 3 in every 10 young adults who are employed in this country, living a life of dignity.

He like many will quickly realise that he has had the misfortune of being born to one of the 30 million South Africans who live under R17 a day stretching their support grant as far as possible to survive child stunting.

The reality is that he will most likely be one of the 50% of grade 1 pupils who drop out and never complete matric.

His parents will soon realise that he is one of 8 in 10 grade 4 children who can't read for meaning in any language. Attending one of the 89% of schools without a library to even help him with his reading.

By grade 6 he surely would have been taught by one of the 1 575 unqualified teachers. Teachers who fail exams for the very same subjects that they teach.

Khanya might find himself in one of the chronically overcrowded classes struggling with the pace and content of the caps curriculum.

Khanya's light is dimming by the day.

Given that South African teachers spend an average of 12% less time teaching than planned, Khanya is most certainly going to be one of the 80% of children who will receive an education that is amongst the very worst in the world across all indicators – sending him to a lifetime of poverty.

There is a high likelihood that his life, like thousands of other children, will be endangered in one of the 1 423 schools that still use pit toilets and dilapidated mud/asbestos infrastructure despite your ANC government's promise to eradicate them.

Or he might lose his life to violent crime and behaviour on school grounds like Shawn Mphela, who was fatally stabbed outside Geluksdal Secondary School in Brakpan.

At this point he may even consider dropping out, potentially joining the 3.8 million youth not in education, employment or training.

A figure that has increased by over 500 000 young people since your last SONA speech Mr President.

If through sheer grit and determination Khanya and the millions of South African learners beat these odds of poor quality teaching, overcrowding, dropping out, survive dying in a pit toilet or being stabbed to death; and actually pass a matric exam; chances are that they will be part of the 68% of matrics without a bachelors pass with slim chances of accessing tertiary education.

Mr President, the real matric pass rate is 54.6% – not 80.1% – this paints a darker picture than the one you tried to make us believe on Thursday night.

Your government has in fact left behind more than 337 000 learners who should have completed matric in 2022.

Mr President, your government's sole focus on quantity means nothing if quality and depth of education is left out of the equation. Only 32% of this cohort achieved a bachelor pass and even worse only 13% will access a university and the rest will be left starring unemployment in the face.

If Khanya and thousands of learners qualify to access a university, they might form part of the 50 to 60% of first years who are unable to cope and fail due to a poor foundational education.

When the ANC's education system is done with Khanya and millions of young people, they will be part of the 7 in every 10 young people who are unemployed, standing at robots begging for a job, sentenced to a lifetime of poverty.

Mr President, Your party's broken education system has blacked out Khanya's light and shattered the hopes his parents once carried. Loadshedding his future and the millions of young South Africans like him to a life of unemployment.

"This, Sir, is your government's legacy – the new form of oppression."

IANC sele ijike yangumbutho wengcinezelo. Icinezela ulutsha laseMzants Afrika ngoku ba nika imfundo engekho semgangathweni. Imfundo ezawubaqhubela kubomi be ntlupheko, apho bengazu fumana misebenzi baphele bengo mahlalela bekhongozela kulo rhulumente we ANC ongu hohle zakhe. Nilibulele ikamva labantwana beli Mongameli!

It was at this podium last year that you promised to eradicate pit toilets and rapidly build more schools to curb overcrowding, yet nothing was budgeted nor mention of progress in your speech on Thursday.

It is at this podium where I warned you that poor quality teaching is a major cause of poor quality outcomes and that you should prioritise the professional development of teachers and establish an independent schools monitoring evaluation authority to monitor quality teaching in the classroom. Still no action.

I pleaded with you to track, trace and retain learners to schools so that we don't lose them to unemployment, poverty and crime. You agreed, yet there has been no mitigating strategy to curb the problem that has in fact worsened.

Early literacy is the key Mr President, last year I begged you to prioritise reading, writing, language and numeracy by backing it with a budget to catch up, yet there is still zero in the basic education budget for reading.

There is no silent revolution in our schools, Sir but a thunderous crisis.

However, there is one place working hard to give Khanya a pathway out of poverty.

Where more learners stay in school until matric;

Quality Teaching is monitored;

There is investment in reading for meaning;

And, infrastructure is being built.

Through its Rapid School Build Programme, the DA-run Western Cape has managed to build the equivalent of one school every four days.

Through its independent Schools Evaluation Authority, the DA-run Western Cape is promoting quality teaching in the classroom and professionally developing teachers. That is why universities must align their teacher qualifications with the 3-stream curriculum.

And through its Team READ programme, the DA-run Western Cape is going all-out to address the reading crisis.

If children can't read, they are doomed before they even begin.

Children in Western Cape schools are spending an extra 2 hours per week on reading.

And a new budget of R111 million has been allocated for reading, targeted at all Afrikaans and isiXhosa schools.

That's why the percentage of kids in the Western Cape who can read is double the rest of SA, and it's why the Western Cape has the highest learner retention rate by far.

It's time your Special Purpose Vehicle flew from the paper and became reality.

Use it to roll out ICT and libraries.

Ensure that books are available in all mother tongues.

Conclusion

Fellow South Africans I know many of you are Khanya and your light too has been blacked out by the ANC government.

Now is the time to cut off ANC power at the ballot box so that our future light can shine.

Now is the time to vote in a DA government that will forge an education pathway out of poverty and unemployment into opportunity and jobs in 2024.

Like Madiba said; “If the ANC does to you what the Apartheid government did to you, then you must do to the ANC what you did to the Apartheid government.”

That time has come to end ANC oppression.

I thank you.