



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

**PROF MS MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE CHANCELLOR
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**OPENING AND WELCOME: LAUNCH OF THE MATTHEW GONIWE SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP AND
GOVERNANCE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
MIRIAM MAKEBA CONCERT HALL, UNISA MUCKLENEUK CAMPUS**

Strengthening Early Childhood Education in Gauteng Through Empowering Educators

31 March 2017

- Madame Programme Director, Prof Nkidi Phatudi, COD: Department of Early Childhood Education, CEDU
- The Honourable Panyaza Lesufi (MPL) MEC of the Gauteng Department of Education
- Professor Veronica McKay, Executive Dean: College of Education
- Dr More Chakane, CEO: Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance
- Unisa management and staff here present
- Unisa students and members of our labour formations
- Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

A very good afternoon to you all and to this exciting launch of the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance's Early Childhood Development project.

If history has taught us anything, it is that time has a way of erasing, or softening and diluting the memories of those who have gone before us and who have sacrificed so much for the liberation of our people. Matthew Goniwe, one of the (in)famous "Craddock Four" is one such

person. So while we gather in his name today, and while this School bears his name, I thought it fitting that we should remember and honour this 38 year-old man who was murdered on 27 June 1985.

Being a humanist at heart, Matthews Goniwe strove to improve the general living conditions of the surrounding community. The abuses against which he fought are still rife in our communities today. He too was appalled at drug and substance abuse and he dedicated his life to eradicating these social ills amongst his community and his people. Mathews Goniwe believed very strongly that education had a fundamental role to play in this process by instilling in future generations, values that would form the basis of a healthy and productive society – and he believed that could be achieved and driven through personal example, discipline and self-development.

It is sad and perhaps a little discouraging to discover that that for which Matthew Goniwe laid down his life, is still so prevalent in our communities and in our societies today, and so when one engages in projects such as this one – the Early Childhood Development Project, there is a sense of thankfulness that there are some who are indeed carrying that torch of caring forward and keeping the fire of his dreams and his example alive.

The agreement between Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance and Unisa was signed in November 2016. In terms of the agreement, Unisa would support and train 500 Grade R teachers who are in the service of GDE and are registered with the institution for B.Ed. Foundation Phase degree. The duration of the contract is three years, with an option of a renewal for a further one year- to see through students for the last year of their studies.

The reasons for the training and education of these teachers are manifold. I have already alluded to some of them. Amongst others, is the low level of qualifications, which was highlighted in the Auditor General's report (2013 -2015). It is said that 70% of Grade R teachers in the country do not have relevant qualifications or are underqualified. One is also aware that a lack in teaching skills has been blamed for less than satisfactory foundations being laid for future education. This state of affairs does not augur well, taking into considerations the steps taken by the Department of Basic Education to ensure that all children are able to access quality Grade R before entering Grade 1.

A gradual and incremental process has been followed in paving the way for this project, particularly in the policy environment, and here one thinks of the the *Framework for the Universal Access to Grade R Policy (2011)* and the *Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development (2001)*, which aimed at expanding ECD provision by ensuring equitable access to,

and improving the quality of, ECD programmes for children from birth to six years of age. There are more seminal and milestone policies in the pipeline, culminating one trusts, in a situation where, by 2030: Grade R should be fully integrated into compulsory schooling.

This can only be realised if all teachers in Grade R are qualified. The onus therefore resides with training institutions to accommodate these teachers so that they become fully efficient and capable of teaching and preparing children to function effectively in formal schooling. However, the Auditor General's report (2013 – 2015) also suggested that training has not materialised as envisaged, and this lack of appropriate qualifications and necessary skills prompted the Department of Basic Education to embark on a drive to equip Grade R teachers appropriately – hence our launch today.

The Gauteng government through MGSLG decided to enter into an agreement with UNISA whereby 500 of their Grade R teachers were to be supported in completing the B.Ed. Foundation Phase degree. To date Unisa has admitted more than 200 students to study for the B.Ed. Foundation Phase. These students are afforded constant support within the general support the institution offers to its students. Contact sessions are also offered to this cohort – and we are hoping that 70% of the first-year students will pass their first year of studies.

I am therefore delighted to welcome you here today for the launch of the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance's Early Childhood Development project. I trust that our partnership will realise the intended benefits and that this project will become the flagship and progenitor of a bountiful supply of quality Grade R teachers who will lay the foundation of a healthy and productive society and citizenship.

I thank you.