

PRESS RELEASE

19 MAY 2018

Today we celebrate the graduation of more than 700 Newly Qualified Teachers in Gauteng, who completed the Diploma in Grade R Teaching programme.

The Gauteng Department of Education in partnership with the *Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance* and SANTS Private Higher Education Institution is directly addressing the quality of Early Childhood Development in this province by ensuring that the majority of in-service Grade R teachers are adequately qualified. Thus, effectively elevating the quality of teaching in Grade R classes, where the greatest need exists for quality Early Childhood Development teaching and learning.

Early Childhood Development (ECD) has been recognised as critical for establishing the foundation of academic success. The early years are crucial for the acquisition of concepts, skills and attitudes that lay the foundation for lifelong learning. These include the acquisition of language, perceptual-motor skills required for learning to read and write, basic numeracy concepts and skills, problem-solving skills and keenness for learning.

The government has also begun to address the quality of teachers and Initial Teacher Education programmes by implementing the policy on The Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) in 2011. This specific document explicitly stipulates that the minimum qualification for a qualified professional Grade R Teacher in South Africa is either a Diploma in Grade R Teaching or a Bachelor of Education in the Foundation Phase Teaching qualification.

In partnership with the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), the *Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance (MGSLG)*, funded this cohort of in-service student teachers for the duration of their studies at SANTS. *MGSLG* is a section 21 Company (non-profit organization) and an agency of the Gauteng Department and as such co-managed the implementation of the programme together with SANTS. Just more than a thousand students registered for the Diploma in Grade R Teaching programme during the first semester of 2015. This initiative was rolled out across 25 districts of this province. A total of 706 student teachers graduands completed the qualification in the minimum period of three years.

SANTS, as a Distance Higher Education Institution, provide teacher education qualifications across South Africa. The Diploma in Grade R Teaching has been approved and recognised by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and registered with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) on an NQF Level 6. Graduands will be qualified and recognised teachers who will be able to teach Grade R learners in formal schooling.

Professor Jean Baxen, SANTS' Executive Academic Director, emphasizes that teaching is not merely about knowing the content. Rather, it is about knowing how to take the content and reproduce it in a way that produces optimal learning outcomes for all children irrespective of race, class, gender, cultural heritage, and sexual orientation. Teachers have to balance living life to the fullest, while at the same time being role models in schools, classes, and communities. Teachers also don't know everything and will continue to learn throughout their careers. Prof Baxen adds that South Africa needs resilient, flexible, adaptive, and passionate teachers who are prepared to navigate contextual realities to produce learning that offers children hope and possibility.

In addition to the 706 graduates, 57 Grade R Teachers and 2 Bachelor of Education graduands will join the event to also graduate during this ceremony. These graduates were responsible for their own tuition fees during their studies at SANTS.

Should you have any additional questions please do not hesitate to get in contact.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kobie', written in a cursive style.

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