



INTERNET ARTICLE

Schools go head-to-head at SA Youth Water Prize Competition

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The stakes were high at the SA Youth Water Prize Competition (SAYWP) as schools from the nine regions vied for the coveted prize which put them in line to represent the country in the annual Junior Water Prize Competition in Sweden, Stockholm.

The competition, which is the brainchild of the Department of Water and Sanitation and has been running for 19 years, was held at the Southern Sun OR Tambo, Kempton Park in Ekurhuleni, on 01 June 2018.

Adjudicators at the competition were treated to high calibre presentations as learners came up with different presentations which provided solutions to challenges in the water and sanitation sector.

The nine schools represented their different provinces after having won the provincial competitions where a number of schools had participated. The SAYWP is the Department's programme that identifies talent at high schools across the country with a view to encourage learners to follow careers in the water and sanitation sector.

The programme is a response to dwindling skills in the sector and is geared towards replenishing them while providing job opportunities for the youth once they come professionals.

A grade 9 learner, Kwazi Zwezwe from Ixopo High School in KwaZulu-Natal, trounced finalists from eight provinces to win the 1st prize. Kwazi presented a model called: A Water from Air: The Rainmaker. This model earned the young Kwazi, kudos from the adjudicators, paving a way for him to represent the country in Stockholm later this year. The Eastern Cape took the second spot while Limpopo came third.

Standing in for the Regional Coordinator of KwaZulu-Natal, Ms Nokwanda Mkhize, said the outcome of the competition was a reflection of the work they had done from the grassroots level to where they were.

The proud Ms Mkhize said: "As a province we are so overwhelmed and grateful for this opportunity. For us as a region this means so much because we have had to work hard. It means we are one step closer to reaching our goal of finding solutions to our water problems."

She added that for a young person from Ixopo to have done such an amazing job at such a young age proved that South Africa was in good hands as these young people were going to be future engineers and scientists in the water sector.

Chairperson of the adjudicators, Dr Henry Roman, who is a Director at the Department of Science and Technology's Environmental Services and Technologies, praised the standard of the competition as being very good, but said there was still a lot to be learnt.

Dr Roman reiterated that presenting skills were important when selling an idea, saying that finding source articles was also critical for referencing and supporting one's work.



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He encouraged learners to ensure that their models work when they are presented as this went a long way in making adjudicators appreciate the work that they had done.

“It is important that you realise that you (learners) have been given an opportunity. You must appreciate that you are going to have job opportunities so you must study hard. Studying is very expensive,” said Dr Roman, adding that this necessitated that they passed.

Dr Roman said transformation must be reflected in the learners themselves by not abusing the opportunity that the Department was giving them.

The Director: Career Management at the Department, Ms Verena Meyer-Singh, who represented bursaries to learners who had participated in the competition, said she was delighted at presenting the bursaries to the learners but cautioned them to use the bursaries wisely by putting in hard work.

“The Department is spending a lot of money to make sure that it gets the skills needed in the water sector. So, what we require is you to study hard and become professionals in whatever field in water and sanitation. This guarantees you jobs once you have completed your studies,” Ms Meyer-Singh urged the learners.

DWS’s Acting Chief Director: Water Services and Local Water Management, Ms Iris Mathye, expressed her gratitude to all learners who participated in the competition, saying she was very impressed with the high level of science, technology and innovation presented.

She said this SAYWP was not merely for its own sake, but was a designed to programme to encourage the youth to follow careers in the water and sanitation sector, which was in need of skills.

“The sector is facing a lot of challenges. There is a water shortage and pollution and therefore we need fresh minds to help us deal with these challenges. The solutions you have presented today are some of the means with which we must use to find solutions to our challenges,” Acting Chief Director Mathye concluded.

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