



higher education  
& training

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Department:  
Higher Education and Training  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY DR. BLADE NZIMANDE,  
MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
AT THE NEW AGE-SABC 2 BUSINESS BRIEFING  
BILL GALLAGHER ROOM, SANDTON CONVENTION  
CENTRE  
MONDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2012**

Programme Director, Mr Peter Ndoro

Deputy Minister Mduduzi Manana

Leadership of The New Age and the SABC

Honourable Guests from Constituency Organisations  
represented here

Distinguished Guests with us here today, and the  
viewers of Morning Live

Ladies and Gentleman; Comrades

In South Africa we currently have about 3 million young people between the ages of 18 and 24 who are not in employment, education or training. For many of them, if they cannot get a job or some type of formal learning at this stage of their lives, they are unlikely ever to be able to get into the labour market and earn a sustainable living for themselves. This is a huge waste of the potential of our youth and must be tackled as a matter of urgency.

**Preparing youth for the workplace** and for life as knowledgeable and responsible citizens is largely the responsibility of the Dept of Higher Education and Training. This responsibility is shared by a range of educational, regulatory and funding institutions which we refer to collectively as the post-school system. These include the universities and colleges of various types, adult education centres, the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), the National Student Financial Scheme (NSFAS) and the qualifications

and quality assurance institutions such as SAQA, the Council for Higher Education (CHE), Umalusi and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). In addition, many workplaces to which young people are attached as apprentices, learners, interns or articulated clerks also constitute part of the post-school system, usually operating in partnership with educational institutions to ensure learning opportunities.

My department has been working hard to **expand learning opportunities**, especially – but not only – for the youth and to improve its quality. Loans and bursary to poor students from the **NSFAS have been expanded** substantially over the last three years. Funds made available to students **grew from R2.375 billion in 2008 to R6 billion in 2011** and are expected to continue growing. NSF funds have been made available for special purposes such as R50 million for post-graduate scholarships, R63 million for students with disabilities, R350 million for poor continuing

students who were unable to register due to outstanding debt and insufficient funding in 2012. Final year undergraduate NSFAS students are being given loans equivalent to the full cost of study which will be converted into a full bursary if they complete their studies successfully. We intend to extend this arrangement progressively to students in earlier years in future.

We aim to expand university enrolments by approximately 70% by 2030. Apart from increasing enrolments at many of the existing institutions, we will also need to build new universities and campuses. **Two new universities** – one in the Northern Cape with its main campus in Kimberley and one in Mpumalanga, headquartered in Nelspruit – are now in the planning stage and we expect to start the first academic programmes there by 2014.

At the beginning of last year we **introduced fee-free education for poor students at FET colleges**. This very important achievement has helped to expand college enrolments **from a headcount enrolment of approx 327 000 to a projected 550 000** in just the last two years. President Zuma addressed the principals of all FET colleges earlier this year to emphasise the high priority that government places on developing these colleges as places to produce artisans and others with mid-level skills.

By 2030, we expect to increase to 4 million enrolments in all non-university, post-school institutions. These will include colleges owned by other government departments such as nursing, agricultural, police and other colleges. It will also include a new institutional type that we are provisionally calling Community Education and Training Centres as well as private institutions. Enrolments in 2030 will give us a participation rate of about 23% in universities and approximately

60% in other post-school institutions. An important role in expanding both university and college education enrolments will be played by distance education and the use of information and communications technologies.

Also important in the provision of opportunities, is the recognition of the capacities and skills of those who have learned through on-the-job experience. Under apartheid, many black workers in particular learned to do the jobs of the white artisans that they were ostensibly assisting. Their skills, however, were not recognised. Recognition of prior learning (or RPL) is now being taken very seriously so that such workers will be able to augment their practical knowledge with theory and obtain formal qualifications.

A very important goal for us is to ensure that the entire **post-school system operates in a unified manner**, with cooperation and coordination between its different elements. Universities – and

especially universities of technology – will be expected to play an important part in training FET college lecturers. The university system will have to assist to make it easier for FET college graduates to enter universities, and especially universities of technology.

The **SETAs are now starting to work more closely with the public FET colleges** and some universities to fund skills development programmes of various types. The SETAs, which have contacts with most employers, are well placed to assist the colleges and universities of technology to ensure that students find opportunities for work-integrated learning in public and private sector workplaces. They are also being required to assist with the placement of graduates from post-school institutions in jobs. We are restructuring the SETAs to play this role effectively.

This is a very important function, especially for black graduates. Recent research shows that **black graduates find it a lot more difficult to find employment** than their white counterparts. Recent research shows that 55% of Black graduates from Stellenbosch are unlikely to get a job in their first year after graduation compared to 12% of Whites from the same university. Similarly, from Wits University, 29% of Black graduates do not get jobs compared to 7% of Whites.

We don't have similar statistics for college graduates but the situation is likely to be the same as most black youngsters do not have the family and other connections to the labour market enjoyed by whites and the few, more affluent blacks. We are currently investigating the modalities of introducing **compulsory community service for all university graduates**, that will go some way in addressing this problem.

Increasing opportunities for young people to access educational institutions, while important, is not enough. We have made interventions in some universities which have faced problems in order to stabilise them. In colleges, we are making major interventions to improve the quality of learning. I have just signed agreements with all the FET college principals for the **allocation of R2.5 billion from the National Skills Fund for the expansion and capacity building of the colleges**. Interventions are being made to ensure that the institutions are strengthened, the quality of teaching improved, that adequate facilities and equipment are available in all colleges and that student support services are augmented.

With the assistance of the SA Institute of Chartered Accountants, we have started a process to ensure that all FET colleges have CAs as Chief Financial Officers. This process was started two months ago and will be completed by the end of this month and we expect it to have a stabilising

impact on the colleges and ensure that they become stronger institutions.

Last year the **National Skills Accord** was signed by all the NEDLAC partners: government, business, labour and community organisations.

The agreement included:

Government and business and labour made commitments to expand training, using existing facilities.

Government and business pledged to improve the funding of training as well as the use of funds and incentives available for that are companies to train.

They agreed to increase the numbers of apprenticeships, Learnerships and internships in both the public and private sectors, with specific numerical targets agreed upon. A central role in this regard is to be played by the state-owned enterprises. Government has committed to set annual training targets for all State-owned

enterprises as well as to expand training opportunities within the public sector.

All parties agreed to work to improve SETA governance and financial management as well as stakeholder involvement in the SETAs. They agreed that industrial training should be linked more strongly to the New Growth Path and the needs of particular sectors. The Sector Skills Plans developed by the SETAs should support growth and jobs in the sectors by ensuring relevant skills are developed and by significantly stepping up production of key skills.

Government, with assistance of business, committed itself to improving the quality of education offered in FET colleges, enhancing the responsiveness of training programmes to labour market needs, and funding the FET colleges adequately.

Business committed to providing more opportunities not only for students to get work

experience, but also for college lecturers to get workplace exposure in order to keep up with, and be trained in the latest technological innovations and trends.

Organised labour and government agreed that not all trainees will become employees in the company concerned and a distinction will be drawn between trainees and employees for purposes of establishing who is entitled to collective bargaining entitlements.

A slogan we have adopted in the Dept of Higher Education and training is '**Every workplace into a training space!**' We appeal to employers and trade unions to help make it into a reality for the good of South Africa. We also expect government infrastructure programmes that are getting underway to have an important impact of skills development. All contractors for these projects will be expected to take on trainees and contribute to the country's skills development efforts.

In conclusion, let me state my belief that if all of us— educational institutions, SETAs, employers, workers and government - **work together, we can create a system that provides the skills that the country needs** to strengthen its economy and provide the education and training that our people need to expand their life opportunities and make a better life for all.

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