



Speech by the Director-General for the Department of Higher Education and Training , Mr GF Qonde, at the National Artisan Development Strategy Conference on 6 December 2016

Programme Director - Mr Fumani Mboweni

International Guests

SETA CEOs and Officials

Technical and Vocational Education and Training College Representatives

Community Education and Training College Representatives

Organised Labour Representatives

Business and Industry Representatives

Skills Development Providers

Departmental Officials

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning

I am truly honoured to address you today at the start of the 2016 National Artisan Development Strategy Conference. The road to this consultative conference started with the release of the ***Trade Test Pass Rate and Quality Improvement Strategy*** in August 2015 for public comment. The comments received by the Department of Higher Education and Training highlighted that we needed to consult further in the development of this strategy.

Based on stakeholder inputs the ***Trade Test Pass Rate and Quality Improvement Strategy*** has been renamed the ***National Artisan Development Strategy*** to ensure that this strategy is as comprehensive and holistic as possible, thereby covering all the elements of the artisan development value chain.

The ***Quarterly Labour Survey*** for the third quarter of 2016, indicated that employment grew by 288 000 after two successive quarterly declines. However, the growth in

employment was offset by the increase in the number of people looking for work by 239 000, resulting in a rise in the unemployment rate by 0.5% to 27.1%.

The main issue that we all need to be concerned with is the fact that the youth aged between 15 and 34 years remains vulnerable in the labour market with an unemployment rate of 38.2%, which is 11.1% points above the national average.

Last week the Human Sciences Research Council released the results of the South Africa's participation in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). The headline finding at Grade 9 level was:

“South African performance from 2003 to 2015 moved from ‘very low’ to ‘low’”

If one analyses South Africa's improvement relative to the participating countries, we are:

- the 2nd lowest in the Grades 9 and 5 Mathematics category; and
- the lowest in the Grade 9 Science category.

Of further concern, is that South Africa used its Grades 5 and 9 results whereas all the other countries used Grades 4 and 8, which was the comparison benchmark. The situation may even be more serious if we had actually used our Grade 4 and 8 results. Given the low base coming out of Grade 9, Mathematics and Science is core to becoming an artisan.

I am prefacing my message to you with this context so that we can understand the challenges our country is facing and how important it is that we tackle the issues of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

On the positive side, several studies indicate that learners who participate in the apprenticeship system are easily absorbed by the industry or manage to create their own employment.

A study, which was undertaken by the *Human Sciences Research Council*, indicated that it was evident that the majority of apprenticeship and learnership participants (70% and 86% respectively) who completed their qualifications experienced a smooth transition into stable employment.

It is against this background, amongst others, that Minister Nzimande made a pledge under the banner of the ***First National Skills Accord***, when he indicated, and I quote “*We have highlighted the need to ramp-up artisan training, and placement for students and now have commitments that will take us forward to reach our key artisan training targets. I also indicated that this required the collective effort of all involved to achieve success, and that government was ready for an active and concrete partnership*”. Unquote.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the economic development of our country is closely tied to the development and availability of a skilled citizenry. In November 2013, you will be aware, the Cabinet approved the ***White Paper for Post-School Education and Training - Building an Expanded, Effective and Integrated Post-School System***. One of the main recommendations of the White Paper was the need to rejuvenate the artisan development system through the re-establishment of a good artisan training system. A good artisan training system is not just about numbers, but also requires the production of quality artisans in order to contribute to the lives of individuals, the developmental needs of our economy and the broader society at large.

Programme Director, the ***Medium Term Strategic Framework*** tasked the Department to develop a strategy that will look at improving trade test pass rates and the quality of artisans produced in the country. I am glad to hear that the INDLELA team has held consultative sessions in all nine provinces as well as consultation sessions with critical stakeholders around the proposed ***Artisan Development Strategy Framework***.

I am indeed very pleased that this proposed strategy seeks to establish a national baseline for an integrated national artisan development system, which defines critical components of artisan development ranging from the artisan training system itself, funding regimes, quality assurance, impact measurement issues and so forth.

The proposals contained in the ***Artisan Development Strategy Framework*** are in line with the White Paper requirements for a coordinated and integrated system, which seeks to optimise the synergies that exist within and between the various role players in the post school education and training system. The artisan development system is not just made up of colleges and employers but the value chain includes a broad-based stakeholder participation, which this strategy will amplify. It therefore follows

that the success of the post-school education and training system, which includes the artisan development system, requires that all these various elements work together in a coordinated and integrated fashion.

Programme Director, skills development needs to occur at every given opportunity. This can be at an institution like a college, a university or at a workplace. Expansion of skills development in the workplace is the fastest and most immediate mechanism that we need to utilise, as that is where much of the existing skills base resides in the country and must be leveraged. This puts a direct responsibility on public and state-owned companies and the private sector employers to open up workplaces for learners to gain these experiential skills.

As we grow the number of institutions like the TVET colleges as fast as resources allow us, these must correspondingly be linked to workplaces as training spaces, in order to expand the learning process of future artisans. Without overemphasizing the point, it remains true that at the centre of the success of the proposed **Artisan Development Strategy** is the need to get more employers involved.

I am therefore very pleased that employers have registered in numbers for this conference and will be giving two presentations tomorrow, highlighting the continuous improving relationship between the Department and employers.

It is a critical relationship, which needs constant bona fide engagements at all times. Above all, to accomplish such a relink of employers (workplaces) to the TVET college system requires that SETAs in particular start to very seriously facilitate partnerships between the employers in their sectors and relevant TVET colleges.

SETA CEOs and Officials,

The artisan numbers, which SETAs fund from the levy grant, must drastically increase which in essence is government's effort to alleviate training cost pressure from employers. This has to be fast-tracked so that the integration of education and training becomes a reality experienced by all South Africans. We appreciate that some of the SETAs have already set up offices in the TVET colleges in response to a clarion call by the Department and the **National Skills Development Strategy III**, which emphasizes partnerships between employers, public education institutions (TVET

colleges, universities, universities of technology), private training providers and SETAs.

It is important to note that the skills system is primarily managed through the SETAs and is not seen as a stand-alone sub-system. Rather through the levy/grant system and the SETAs, the skills system should incentivize employers to provide the necessary workplace learning opportunities for learners in all three primary sub-systems of the post-school system. The integration of the work of SETAs with the three delivery sub-systems is seen as fundamental to the conception of the PSET system as a whole.

You may agree with me that SETAs can be seen as the primary interface between training institutions and the business and union sectors, industry, public sector institutions (e.g. schools, hospitals) and state-owned enterprises where work-place-based-learning opportunities can be found, as emphasized in the White Paper.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in closing

This conference is the culmination of a ***National Artisan Development Strategy*** consultation process, which started on the 1st of September in KwaZulu-Natal. The conference, amongst other things, will outline the various inputs that emanated from the consultation process and some of those inputs will support and enrich the final ***National Artisan Development Strategy***. Propelled by this strategy we should be able to produce 30 000 qualified artisans per year by 2030 as required by the ***National Development Plan***.

I wish to caution that the consultation and adoption of the ***National Artisan Development Strategy*** will in itself not produce one single artisan. It is the various social partners gathered here today who are central to the finalisation and implementation of this strategy, and therefore I would advise that clear roles and responsibilities be crafted for all parties, especially towards the implementation of the strategy, which is crucial to achieve our artisan targets. The actual work of implementation starts after the closing remarks of the conference are made tomorrow.

INDLELA has to now become central and pivotal in leading and implementing this strategy. Going forward we will need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of INDLELA.

Turning towards our Deputy Principals: Academic at TVET colleges, they will need to ensure close alignment between the college curriculum and the needs of the business sector, with placement of TVET college students being facilitated by SETAs at workplaces for experiential learning. Foundational programmes and support becomes critical in preparing our youth, especially in relation to Mathematics and Science, to become successful in their chosen artisan fields.

I trust that the deliberations over the next two days will be fruitful and result in taking forward the process of producing a world-class national artisan development system that will improve the economic performance of our country through a skilled citizenry.

I leave you with the wise words of Aristotle when he said that “***The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet***”.

I thank you.