

ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING, MR BUTI MANAMELA, TO THE HEAIDS LIFE ORIENTATION LECTURER CERTIFICATE CEREMONY

SOUTHERN SUN HOTEL, OR TAMBO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, GAUTENG

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CEO of HEAIDS – Dr Ramneek Ahluwalia
Senior officials from the DHET
Officials from the SACPO, Umalusi and the NSF
Officials from the GIZ
HEAIDS staff
Life Orientation Lecturers from our TVET colleges

Good morning to you all. Today marks a milestone event and a very exciting one for me in particular, as I have been particularly involved in supporting lecturer development at our colleges. Human Resource development and skills building speaks to the very essence of our mandate as the Department of Higher Education and Training. It is what we do, it is who we are.

As you are all aware, the teaching and learning space is not an easy one. In the last year we have been challenged not only by the Fees Must Fall movement but also on the notions of curriculum relevance and transformation.

I was pleased when I was briefed on the work that HEAIDS has been undertaking over the past years within the formal curriculum area. Through The National Skills Fund grant, HEAIDS has been able to build on foundational work that was undertaken in the preceding phases of the programme when higher education was challenged to respond to the HIV/AIDS multi-sectoral strategy in relation to knowledge generation and the development of appropriately trained graduates.

In addition to formative work in universities spanning various disciplines, HEAIDS focussed attention to strengthening HIV integration within the National Certificate Vocational (NCV) Life Orientation (LO) curriculum at our TVET colleges. HEAIDS approach within the TVET colleges was both strategic and relevant. It strengthened assessment so that standardisation could occur. It was also relevant because it responded to critical needs within the sector that affected the well-being and through put rates of our students.

The baseline study that HEAIDS conducted at the inception of the project enabled it to understand the many challenges that colleges were facing in relation to Life Orientation and more specifically, the weaknesses of the system of assessment. The Assessment Workbook was then developed to do two things.

Firstly, it was aimed at strengthening assessment and enabling lecturers to think more critically about assessment and link it to competency. Secondly, the workbook was designed to help lectures think differently about HIV and pedagogy and to use participatory teaching to stimulate

the interests of students.

Our students face severe and varied social challenges. They live in communities and families where the social fabric is being stretched at its seams. These social challenges have a direct impacts on a student's ability to learn, cope and deal with stress related impacts. Within this context, I believe Life Orientation holds centre stage and cannot be undervalued.

In fact Life Orientation is a critical "glue" subject that holds our students together. Life Orientation holds other subjects together too. This makes you as Life Orientation lecturers, a critical component in our learning and teaching equation. We are here today to honour you and the valuable contribution that you are making in ensuring that we have well rounded and competent graduates.

Today we are presenting you with a certificate for the successful completion of the training you received through the HEAIDS intervention. The training that you received must successfully translate into better teaching.

Your certificate means much more than a piece of paper because your role as a Life Orientation lecturer has individual, community and national impacts. Let me ask you to reflect on the following:

Think about how many HIV infections have you prevented?

How many students living with HIV have you supported?

How much drug and alcohol abuse have you prevented?

How many instances of GBV (Gender Based Violence) have you helped to prevent, and helped students to report and get the correct treatment to prevent HIV and other STIs?

How many students have you protected from transactional sex and blessers? How many students have you educated about preventing unwanted pregnancies?

How many students have you encouraged to set goals to fulfil their college dreams and plans?

How many students did you guide to believe in themselves?

How many students did you help to protect through teaching them about labour legislation, job contracts and their rights as workers?

How many students did you assist into gainful employment through teaching interview skills, and getting job application packages together?

How many students did you inspire to become entrepreneurs and create more jobs? How many students did you equip with the necessary life skills such as creative problem solving and logical decision making?

How many students did you equip with basic computer skills so that they can compete in the world of work? How many students did you assist with online applications and job searches?

How many students did you inspire to become good citizens, to vote in elections, and to practice Ubuntu and volunteer where most needed, and in so doing, build our beautiful South Africa?

You cannot but for a moment, undervalue the role that you play in shaping our students.

I am very happy to hear that HEAIDS was able to train over 400 LO Level 4 lecturers on the Assessment Workbook. I am especially pleased to know that each of you sitting here today are assets that we can count on to elevate LO to the status that it deserves.

You will be the champions going forward. It is clear that you will need to drive the agenda on a daily basis, it is also clear that we cannot afford to let our guards down, given the challenges that face our students daily.

Of some 1.7 million students in the higher education system, at least 43% of them are in the TVET college system. We know that almost 85% of them emerge from low socio-economic backgrounds and we know their vulnerabilities that they enter the higher education system with. So, as Life Orientation lecturers you need to be at the forefront of exploring new ways to teach, new ways to inspire and new ways to help build our nation. And new ways to deal with new challenges!

The HEAIDS Centre has become a formidable partner to the DHET. This intervention is an excellent example of how a HEAIDS-DHET collaboration was able to make significant changes in the delivery of assessment and this bodes well for the future. The HEAIDS and DHET Curriculum teams must be commended for their innovation and we look forward to the next phase of the project.

In conclusion, I want to thank the team and various partners that are here today. I am sure that I can count on your commitment to take this work forward. More especially, I want to acknowledge each lecturer present here for your passion and commitment and I look forward to awarding you with your certificates. You are the true heroes of the day.

My plea to you is to go into class next week, with new skills, new energy and a new determination to teach this subject of Life Orientation to the best of your ability. In doing so you will guide and direct our students to the benefit of our country.

I thank you.