

Education needs more partnerships to overcome challenges

4 April 2016 - Strategic partnerships had to overcome the funding crisis facing tertiary education, the Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mr Mduzuzi Manana, told the Second Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) Summit.

Mr Manana said such partnerships should cut across the HRD value chain from foundational learning to the world of work.

“Partnerships mean more brains work together for business ideas and solving problems that the country encounters,” he said.

Citing Technical Vocational and Education Training (TVET) colleges as an example, Mr Manana said partnerships between private businesses and sector education and training authorities (SETAs) should aim to build an expanded, effective and integrated post-school education and training (PSET) system.

“With more than one partnership between government, private sector and education, the ability to raise funds may be increased,” he added.

“South African university students from lower and middle income households face funding challenges such as not being able to pay the required tuition fees, accommodation and study materials.

“Cooperative partnerships between private banks, government institutions such as the Department of Higher Education, Department of Basic Education, provinces, and sector education and training authorities need to be established to overcome such challenges.”

He said the PSET sector must work proactively with industry and business, organised labour and government to deliver appropriately skilled graduates to meet societal and economic needs.

Referring to the status of Human Resource Development in South Africa, Mr Manana said significant progress had been made in terms of access to education, particularly in relation to black African learners.

“However, the education system still has some significant weaknesses,” he warned.

“Based on the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS), South Africa continues to perform poorly against the developed, developing and under-developed countries.

“Importantly, how well a country performs at maths and sciences is a predictor of economic growth, as it points to the quality of the human capital pool.”

He said that in general the quality of education in South Africa was a major concern because it was an important component of human resource development, and ultimately, important for South Africa's broad development agenda.

“Forging of partnerships will enable stronger and more cooperative relationship between education and training institutions and the workplace.”

Mr Manana pointed out that the country's performance in school education impacted “extremely badly” on the preparedness of students entering PSET and ultimately their readiness for the job market, but partnerships had helped.

“Progress made by the DHET in increasing and supporting the production of professionals in identified scarce skills areas is clearly noticeable through the various partnerships forged.”

The department’s HRD strategy under review proposed five goals:

- Strengthening basic education and foundation programmes in science, technology, engineering, maths , languages and life skills
- Expanding access to quality post-schooling education and training
- Producing appropriately skilled people for the economy
- A developmental state with effective and efficient planning and implementation capabilities
- Improving research and technological innovation outcomes.

Mr Manana said the long-term strategy would ensure a pipeline approach to meeting the country’s current and future skills needs.

It considered the entire HRD system, particularly blockages that impeded HRD, and provided a coordinated framework to address systematic challenges along the education, training, research and skills development pipeline.