

Education: Women put in a strong showing

8 August 2016 - Women dominate South Africa's post-school education and training (PSET) landscape, outnumbering men as both students and staff in higher education institutions and technical and vocational education and training institutions (TVET).

This emerges from the Statistics on PSET in South Africa in 2014, released this year by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

The statistics show that women numbered most in almost all facets of the country's PSET in which a total of more than two million students and learners were enrolled in more than 2,000 institutions in South Africa in 2014.

In the higher education (HEI) sector comprising universities there were 145 public and private institutions which serviced more than 1.1 million students in 2014, while public TVET colleges and private colleges (formerly private FET colleges) comprised more than 340 institutions in 2014, which served more than 780,000 students.

The third PSET sector of adult education and training (AET) comprised more than 1,800 public and private AET centres.

In 2014, females made up 58.3% of total student enrolment in public HEIs compared with 41.7% males, with a higher proportion of women enrolled for both contact and distance modes of learning compared with men. In private HEIs, the picture was similar where female enrolment at 73,776 was higher than that of males (65,431) in 2014.

The only areas in which men outnumbered women in HEIs were among instruction and research staff, of whom women formed 46 percent, and service staff where 43 percent were women. In administrative staff, 60 percent were women.

Of the 702,383 students in public TVET colleges, 357,940 were women, 304,667 were men and 39,776 chose not to disclose gender.

Most public TVET students (486,933) enrolled for Report 191 programmes (levels N1 to N6), of whom 247,350 were female and 230,960 were male. Although the total proportions of enrolled male and female students showed a small overall gender variance, there were significantly more men than women in levels N1 to N3 while substantially more women than men were enrolled in the higher N4 to N6 levels.

Of the 166,433 students who had enrolled for the National Certificate (Vocational) (NC(V)) qualification type, 97,147 were female and 65,727 were male, with women outnumbering men most in NC(V) level 2 and least in level 4.

Overall more female than male students registered for and wrote examinations and consequently more female than male students completed the different qualification categories.

The trend for the number of students who registered, wrote and completed Report 190/1 N3 and N6 qualifications differed between the two genders with male students outnumbering female students for N3 and females outnumbering males for N6.

The number of female students who registered, wrote and completed NC(V) Level 4 also exceeded that of male students.

Of the total number of 18,396 staff members in public TVET colleges in 2014, the number of female staff (9,544) was higher than male (8 852), although there was 59 percent more men than women among lecturing staff. More women than men were employed among both support and management staff.

Only in private colleges was there a slightly higher number of men than women (40,688 males compared with 38,307 enrolled female students) in 2014. The proportion of enrolled males in private colleges was greater than females in most of the qualification categories except occupational qualifications.

The greatest gender variance was in the Report 191 (N1-N3) category with 10,047 males to 4,806 females. In 2014 private colleges employed 3,948 persons, of whom 1,732 (1,125 women and 607 men) were employed as support staff, 1,622 (730 women and 892 men) as lecturing staff and 594 (341 women and 253 men) as management staff.

As with the other sectors, public and private, female staff only comprised a minority of the lecturing staff in contrast to majorities in the other two staff categories.

The gender dominance of women was at its greatest in the adult education and training (AET) sector, comprising 1,828 centres with 15,447 educators and 262,680 learners. For examinations in the General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Basic Education and Training (GETC-ABET) Level 4, 103,488 women students registered, of whom 80,850 wrote and 30,989 completed the level in 2014.

By contrast only 29,875 men students, registered, of whom 21,684 wrote and 7,603 completed the level. Among staff, 74 percent of the total in public AET centres were women, with females dominating in all staff categories -- 76.2 percent of management, 75.2 percent of educator staff and 58.2 percent of support staff.

In the smaller private AET sector -- comprising 55 institutions, 420 educators and 7,560 learners -- the gender balance was closer with 54 percent of management staff being women, 59 percent women of educator staff and 45 percent of support staff for a total 56 percent women.