



DEEP RURAL CORNERS: New campus for Limpopo

Blade Nzimande

THE design of the the new Thabazimbi Waterberg campus in Limpopo is based on standard plans developed for a model Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Campus, which I approved in 2012. This campus design aims to build multipurpose campuses to cater for mixed programming, including TVET education, Higher Education, AET, Skills and Learning Programmes.

The Thabazimbi Waterberg campus is built to focus on engineering, with an aim to develop artisans to meet key scarce skills in the area and in the country.

The campus is also designed for a mixed delivery of teaching and learning.

For contact (face-to-face) instructions, the campus has been built with capacity of 732 students at a time, but has a 1 000 optimum utilisation capacity.

Through a well resourced E-learning Resource Centre as well as computer rooms with extended hours of access for students to the Internet, the campus can also offer a significant proportion of computer-aided instruction.

Due to site limitations the campus does not provide student accommodation.

The campus also has limited provision of sports facilities. But there are ongoing discussions with the local municipality to secure use or ownership of the community sports field nearby.

This will potentially provide an opportunity for a partnership and for development of facilities to the benefit of the surrounding community.

Community Beneficiation and Local Procurement

The establishment of this campus is part of government's Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs), specifically SIP 14, which focuses on higher education infrastructure.

As part of SIP 14, the TVET

REACHING OUT: The new Thabazimbi Waterberg Campus is part of government's aim to decentralise access to education and training and to ensure that as many young people in the deep corners of our country as possible have access technical and vocation education and training.

Infrastructure Development Programme is mandated to support the socio-economic development of communities where campuses are constructed by providing jobs and business opportunities from the public monies spent.

This was a tender condition for the Thabazimbi project.

On this premise about R14-million was spent on the local economy.

This is 48% of the expenditure which was targeted for the procurement of local goods.

Furthermore, in line with government's stated objective, which is to ensure tangible benefit of local communities from government programmes and where public funds are being used, training opportunities and local procurement were extended to the Thabazimbi community during construction of the campus.

Thirty-five young people were recruited from the Thabazimbi community to be given accredited short skills training in Community House Building.

This was preparatory training for them to qualify for undergoing a learnership.

The campus construction site provided them with the requisite practical and workplace training while Waterberg TVET College gave them the necessary theoretical training.

In addition to the workplace training on site, the students employed their skills for the direct benefit of the community by refurbishing a house in Extension 3, Regorogile

Location.

They will also be building another house within the community as part of their learnership programme, with bricks and building material left over from the construction of this campus.

The quality assurance of the learners' training was addressed by the relevant SETA, the Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA).

All of this was overseen by the Department's TVET Infrastructure Program Team.

I am particularly pleased by this project because these learners are graduating and receiving their statements of results.

We are very pleased to see, among them, women in a field that for decades was effectively closed to women in South Africa.

We must not forget that, even as they were being trained, the learners were supported with stipends of R1 500 each a month to help them with transport and basic refreshments.

A total amount of nearly R2-million has been spent to date for the success of the skills development program.

One question might be raised about this program: "Where to, from here, for these learners?" I am glad to report that, from last month, these students formed part of the first cohort of the Thabazimbi Campus students by doing a learnership in Community House Building.

The Services SETA has committed funds to support this training, helped by the



main policy objectives of the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training, which calls for expanding access, improving quality and increasing diversity.

We've placed the TVET system at the centre for the training of young school leavers, providing them with the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for employment in the labour market.

The Thabazimbi college is placed between provinces where there are prospects for massive mining growth.

The platinum belt stretches from the North West province to the Sekhukhune District Municipality in Limpopo, while coal-fired power stations have high prospects for triggering skills demands that are related to other spheres of study.

Construction SETA on the quality assurance front.

Services SETA has agreed to contribute significantly to the ongoing operational costs of the new college site.

Skills Development and Training

The opening of this campus is also significant because it contributes towards the strategic goals of the Department of Higher Education and Training — that is, to address the plight of "NEETS" – young people who are not in employment, education or training – by expanding access to post-school education institutions, and more specifically within the college sector.

In line with the Strategic Plan of the Waterberg TVET College, programme offerings of the campus will respond to the labour market needs of the Waterberg District and the Thabazimbi Local Municipality in particular, as well as the general needs of the Limpopo province.

As government, we have taken a conscious decision to spread accessibility of education and training to all South Africans.

I open this College far away from the Witwatersrand complex because we want to decentralise access to education and training and to ensure that as many young people in the deep corners of our country as possible have access to this very important government intervention.

This is in line with the

Programmes

In terms of the College's Strategic Plan, the programme offerings of this campus will respond to the labour market needs of the Waterberg District and the Thabazimbi Local Municipality in particular, but also to the general needs of the Limpopo Province.

Apart from the iron ore mine, which is closing down, Thabazimbi Municipality is surrounded by platinum producing mines.

The main programmes will respond to skills required by the mines through qualifications in the trades, agriculture, business and entrepreneurship.

The College has reported a student enrolment of 333 for this campus. Teaching and learning are currently conducted at the Waterberg TVET College's Amandelbult Campus (30km from Thabazimbi).

Preparations for the students to move into the new campus in 2017 are well underway.

Dr BE Nzimande is Minister of Higher Education and Training. This is an edited version of his address at the recent launch of the new Thabazimbi Waterberg Technical and Vocational Education and Training College's campus in Limpopo

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