



higher education & training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Programme Director

Rt Hon Matt Hancock for the Cabinet Office & Pay Master General

President of Mauritius, Dr Gurib-Fakim

Ministers

Deputy Ministers

Vice Chancellors

Heads and Executives of Education Organisations and Institution

Dr Jo Beall, Director: Education and Society, British Council

Conference delegates

Ladies and gentlemen

Good afternoon and welcome to Cape Town, South Africa.

It is an honour to address you at the 2016 Going Global Conference for Leaders in International Education. I must admit that the conference theme “***Building nations, connecting cultures***” is very catchy. In the

past 22 years our higher education landscape has gone through major changes in form, shape and size and these all constitute the transformation and restructuring programme of our higher education system. It is the transformation programme necessitated by our unequal past and the desire to have an effective higher education system for the benefit of all South Africans. For instance, we now have more black and female students enrolled at our universities than when we started under our democracy in 1994. Enrolments in scarce skills programmes such as Science, Engineering and Technology, and Business and Commerce have also improved to begin to reflect the demographics of the country. Overall, student enrolments have since more than doubled and our programme offerings expanded.

Yet despite the enormous progress and changes made over the past 22 years, our institutional landscape still, in some respects, reflect its colonial and apartheid past. Disadvantaged institutions, and especially those in rural areas, still in need of a lot of resources, including financial, human, infrastructural, as well as various facilities in order to make these institutions comparable to global standards. There are still challenges regarding the need to build a larger, more diverse, and yet highly articulated post-school education and training system that includes but goes beyond universities.

In January 2014 my Department launched The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training, which clearly lays out the priorities for higher education and training in South Africa: The White Paper provides direction towards the creation of:

- a single, coordinated post-school education and training system;
- an expanded access, improved quality and increased diversity of provision;

- a stronger and more cooperative relationship between education and training institutions and the workplace; and
- a post-school education and training system that is responsive to the needs of individual citizens, employers in both public and private sectors, as well as broader societal and developmental objectives.

The White Paper recognises explicitly that teaching and learning, research and innovation, and skills development are all integral parts of the work of universities, and that knowledge production must increase if South Africa's developmental goals are to be achieved. These goals are clearly articulated in government policies, especially in the National Development Plan, the New Growth Path and the Industrial Policy Action Plan, which all identify knowledge production as important for job creation and for making South African industries more competitive globally.

Basic priority aims include increasing the numbers of doctoral graduates, meaningful publication outputs, and patents to enable product innovation. These represent serious challenges, relying as they do on strong undergraduate performance in the sector, and on coherence of the policy frameworks guiding these areas across the higher education and research communities, as well as on strengthening particular areas identified as important for national development. Underlying these challenges is the capacity of the higher education system itself to deliver quality education in an expanding, diversifying and ever more complex context.

Earmarked grants represent one of government's steering mechanisms to bring about improvements in targeted areas of need. One such grant is the Research Development Grant aimed at developing research capacity at universities amongst academic staff, so that they can contribute to post-graduate teaching and to research output. In 2015/16, nearly R210 million was allocated for this purpose. South Africa's rapidly increasing research output is evidence of the expanding pool of researchers in our universities. An agreed focus of the Research Development Grants has been on increasing the number of staff with doctoral qualifications. The low percentage of academic staff holding the doctorate illustrates the challenge for the country in rapidly growing the numbers of doctoral graduates. In 2014, for instance, the figure for permanent staff with a PhD as a highest qualification was at 43%.

Our universities have a big role to play in our quest as Africa to develop and to deal successfully with the challenges facing our countries. One of the main things that we need is for our academics to undertake research and produce quality outputs that in the end will inform policy and influence positive outcomes for the greater good of society. We need our academics to get involved in the production of research and to engage with the societies if their research is to have any impact in our societal challenges. We must deliberately seek to change the location of our continent in knowledge production, such that it not only is a consumer of knowledge but also becomes a producer of globally respected knowledge. Incidentally, this task is perhaps best expressed by the marketing slogan of our national carrier, South African Airways, "Bringing the world to Africa and taking Africa to the world."

It is very unlikely that we can have research that can be used by policy makers and decision makers if our universities isolate themselves from wider society. Universities have to engage with communities and be active in them. As the Department of Higher Education and Training we are doing our part in making sure that research is undertaken in our universities, and that it is growing. Every year the Department provides subsidies to universities for their research outputs.

Since the advent of our democracy in 1994, we have significantly increased the production of postgraduate students. However, the challenge is still enormous on this front. For example, South Africa produces only about 28 PhDs per million graduates each year. This is very little compared to other countries, and also compared to other developing nations. If institutions do not produce enough postgraduates this will have a dire effect on their research production. Government, private sector as well as the institutions need to see to it that hindrances are dealt with and that means are made available for students to be able to pursue postgraduate studies.

Another earmarked set of grants, the Teaching Development grants, aim to improve success at all levels of the educational process. They also focus to a large extent on building academic staff capacity as a means to more effective learning environments. The very substantial investment of over R900 million a year has brought about significant innovations and enhancements in the teaching and learning area. These gains have been further developed and consolidated through close collaboration with the unfolding 'Quality Enhancement Project' led by our Council on

Higher Education - an advisory body to the Minister of Higher Education and Training.

While the introduction of the Research and Teaching Development Grant has undoubtedly strengthened the system in many respects, the challenge is multi-faceted, having to do with the ageing academics; developments in higher education worldwide that demand ever greater levels of expertise from staff; the relatively underqualified academic staff workforce; low numbers of postgraduate students representing an inadequate pipeline and the slow pace of regeneration and change on the part of the sector itself.

To achieve our growth targets in terms of academic staff, we will require 3,683 more staff by 2019. If one adds to that number the expected numbers of retirements over the next few years, the number of new academic staff that will need to be recruited to achieve the 2019 targets is 6,170, not including resignations or death. In summary, the data strongly suggest that the sector will need to recruit at least 1,200 new academics per annum if these targets are to be met.

In response to this challenge, the Department has built on previous investigations and international experience to develop a plan, called ***“Staffing South Africa’s Universities – a Comprehensive Approach to Building Capacity and Developing Future Generations of Academics”*** or **SSAU**.

In setting out ways in which the sector’s staffing needs can be met, the SSAU Initiative differentiates between several distinct groups and

strategies, and provides a framework for addressing the recruitment processes and developmental needs relevant to each of these groups.

The groups and strategies relate to:

- (i) recruitment and development of new staff;
- (ii) improvement of the effectiveness of currently employed staff in terms of qualifications and occupational competencies (teaching, research, community engagement, academic leadership and management); and
- (iii) recruitment of additional staff on a short-term or part-time basis.

Where the scheme differs from previous schemes is that it is multi-pronged, nationally managed and steered, and premised from the outset on new permanent posts. Crucially, participants will, in addition to registering and completing a higher degree (Master's or doctorate), participate in an agreed Development Programme over the first three years – with a contract monitoring progress – and will be eligible for mentoring for the first four years of the six-year induction cycle of the initiative.

The central components of the Development Programme comprise a nationally offered set of core and elective short courses, and development opportunities focused on building capacity in the core areas of:

- Research development, including discipline-specific activities aimed for example at publications, more general initiatives such as

supervisor development, and support for attending conferences and participating in various international mobility opportunities;

- Teaching development;
- Academic Leadership; and
- Engaged Scholarship.

In addition, the Development Programme includes the provision of a mentor to constructively monitor and facilitate agreed developmental milestones and plans for professional development. The intention is that the initiative will be fully operational in all aspects within six years. In the first phase of implementing the scheme in 2015, 125 posts were advertised and over 100 of those posts were filled – and we intended to improve on this and increase the numbers as more financial resources become available.

South African universities are also making a significant contribution in supporting university education in our continent. In 2014 there were 969 154 students enrolled in public Higher Education Institutions in South Africa, with approximately 71 539 foreign students. The largest number of foreign students were enrolled in the contact mode, i.e. 40 350 students.

Of the total number of foreign students, 52 947 students were from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries. The largest proportion of these students were from Zimbabwe, i.e. 26 848 students. Another 11 944 students were from other African countries. 6 648 students were from non-African countries (United States of America for instance had 1 310 students)

Ladies and gentlemen, we are gathered here from various entities, countries and continents with a vision for a global collective, and I would therefore encourage our institutions and countries to engage in strong collaborations. This is crucial in the expansion of globalisation in education. Being in Africa, and also having some common challenges with our neighbours, collaborations have the potential of assisting in finding common solutions to our problems and to also assist our decision and policy makers.

In that light too, it would be remiss of me not to mention the Rhodes Must Fall campaign and the escalating debates around the world regarding the decolonisation of knowledge.

As many of you may know, the Rhodes Must Fall campaign, which received significant global attention, began here at the University of Cape Town early last year. Originally directed at removing a statue of Cecil John Rhodes at UCT, the campaign soon morphed into a wider movement for the 'decolonisation' of education in South Africa and elsewhere in the world.

While the campaign divided public opinion, it highlighted in my view the urgent need for the higher education sector, here and abroad, to champion a necessary process of constant academic and cultural transformation to, among other things, engender excellence and more effective learning, as well as expand access to higher education and serve the needs and interests of society best.

Closely linked to this are the ongoing national and international debates around the transformation of tertiary education curricula and the need to do away with some of the colonial features still embedded in our higher education system. It is very important that academics continue to play a leading role in these debates.

In concluding let me thank and congratulate the British Council for deciding to host the 2016 Going Global on the African continent as the first to host outside of the U.K., and for choosing South Africa as the venue.

With these remarks I sincerely welcome you to the most beautiful city in the world, and wish you a productive conference.

Thank You!