



higher education & training

Department:
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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

INPUT BY HONOURABLE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

AND TRAINING

PROF. HLENGIWE MKHIZE

DURING

THE OCCASION OF HARAMBEE'S SOLUTIONS EXCHANGE

AT

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Representatives from Business

Representatives from Labour

Members of HRD Council

Ladies and Gentlemen

Introduction

The focus of this high level platform is on one important segment in our society, the youth. The importance of this segment is underscored by the fact that this continent in which we are, **Africa**, is so youthful. Youth are the most important and dynamic segment of the population in any country. It is believed that developing countries with large youth population could see tremendous growth, provided they **invest in young people's education**, health and protect and guarantee their rights. They are drivers of **innovation**; they are **creators, builders and leaders of tomorrow**. Our stern conviction therefore remains ***“People's Education for People's Power”***.

Since the dawn of democracy, we have taken a resolve to transform and align our educational system for improved outcomes. The establishment of the Department of Higher Education and Training in 2009 added a new aspect to the transformative potential in higher education, which is the provision of a single, seamless post-school education and training system that meets the aspirations of young people and adults.

Since its inception, a plethora of new policies and legislation has come into effect to steer higher education in the country. These have been introduced to facilitate the transition from a disjointed post school education and training system to an integrated system.

Our mandate and priorities have always been informed by the vision espoused in key government documentation such as the National Development Plan, the 2009-2014 and 2014-2019 Medium Term Strategic Frameworks (MTSF) and the imperatives of the 2013 White Paper for Post-School Education and Training.

Worldwide Trends on the Importance of Skilling the Youth

In their reports, the International Labour Organization estimates that **73.4 million people aged 15-24** do not have a job, a figure that represents **43% of global youth**, and **three times as many young people** are underemployed.

According to McKinsey Social Initiative report released in 2015, about 40% of employers report **skills shortage for entry level vacancies**. Hence, the skills gaps have become an issue to both employers and the unemployed. This trend is exacerbated by technological advancements which are rapidly replacing manual jobs, leaving millions of young people unprepared to participate in the 21st-century knowledge economy.

United Nations's Sustainable Development Goal #4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning

The attainment of a quality education is the foundation to (for?) improving people's lives and sustainable development. Looking at the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, goal no.4 has 10 targets encompassing many different aspects of education. There are seven targets which are expected outcomes and three targets which are a means of achieving these targets. Let me draw your attention to the following:

- By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university;
- By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship;

- By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous people and children in vulnerable situations;
- By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy;
- By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among other things, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development;
- Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all; and
- By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.

Around the world, governments are looking for ways to raise education levels whilst at the same time trying to coordinate the supply of skilled workers so that they match the needs of the economy and society.

For instance, in countries like Switzerland and Germany, dual vocational education and training (VET) is the most common type of education at the upper secondary level. Formally, dual VET programs “**comprise both work-based training and formal education**, in most countries at upper-secondary level, and lead to a qualification in an intermediate skill”. Admission to a dual VET program is conditioned by finding a contract with a training firm and is thus considered a market-based mode of education.

Early school tracking is a common feature of countries traditionally oriented towards dual VET, which links the proportion of dual VET students and the age at first tracking in various OECD countries. The median age at first tracking in OECD countries is 15; however, Germany, Switzerland and Austria all track students from an earlier age.

In our own setting here at home, one of the priorities spelt out in our forward looking planning document, the **National Development Plan (NDP)** is that by 2030, South Africans? should have access to education and training of the highest quality, leading to significantly improved learning outcomes. The graduates of South Africa's

universities, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges should have the skills and knowledge to meet the present and future needs of the economy and society.

Our role as government remains key in addressing the challenge of youth unemployment. Governments operate as an important node between policy and practice, as well as addressing the socio-economic problems impacting youth, such as unemployment.

Rights Enshrined in the South African Constitution

In South Africa the right to education and all the associated rights are encapsulated in the Constitution which is the supreme law of the country. **Section 29 of the South African Constitution** states that:

1. Everyone has a right:
 - To a basic education, including adult basic education.
 - Further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

2. Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or language of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure effective access to, and implementation of this right, the state must consider

all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account:

- Equity;
- Practicability; and
- The need to redress the results of past racially-discriminatory laws and practices.

3. Everyone has the right to establish and maintain, at their own expense, independent educational institutions that:

- Do not discriminate on the basis of race;
- Are registered with the state; and
- Maintain standards that are not inferior to standards at comparable public educational institutions.

4. Subsection 3 does not preclude state subsidies for independent educational institutions.

Human Resource Development Council of South Africa (HRDC)

The Human Resource Development Council of South Africa (HRDC) makes a valuable contribution in developing the most strategic resource, which is our people, for social and economic benefit.

The HRDC has become the engine to strategise on several of the goals articulated in the ***New Growth Path*** (NGP) and ***National***

Development Plan, developed with a view to overcome the challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

The **Revised HRD Strategy Towards 2030** was approved by the HRD Council and thereafter approved by Cabinet on 23 June 2017. The Strategy outlines the five programmes that are implemented to achieve five strategic goals from 2016 to 2020 as follows:

- Foundation Education with Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Languages and Life Orientation and Life Skills;
- Technical and Vocational Education and Training and the rest of the college sector;
- Higher Education, Training, Research and Innovation;
- Skills for a transformed society and the economy using the workplace as a platform; and
- A Developmental and Capable State.

We understand the challenges that need to be addressed and, through partnerships with the social and private sector, we are hoping that the engagements that have taken place at this **Solutions Exchange** will lead to the development of a practical, short-term work programme that can mobilise all of us towards the following objectives:

Firstly, enabling the inclusive growth of our economy and growing jobs that can absorb our young unemployed youth.

Secondly, increasing pathways for young people, including through increased access and throughput in post-schooling education and training:

- 1) By establishing public TVET Colleges and Community Education and Training Colleges as credible partners in the delivery of **occupational qualifications**, including but not limited to artisans.
- 2) By ensuring that multiple pathways exist for learners in **entrepreneurial** and/or **work placement**.
- 3) By building **linkages** between colleges and employers in the private sector.
- 4) By building the capacity of TVET college **lecturers**.
- 5) By strengthening TVET College **leadership and management**, by improving the **capacity** of technical high schools and by strengthening the **linkage** between **technical high schools** and **TVET colleges**.

Thirdly, producing skills for a transformed society and the economy using the workplace:

- 1) To build a flexible and responsive skills system which requires closer relationships between the **social partners**.

- 2) To expand **programmes** to address occupations in demand, including considering skills for new economies.
- 3) To raise skills levels of **employed workers** and to implement worker and shop steward education that focuses on workplace skills plans that address workplace training.
- 4) To establish effective structures and systems for achieving **quality** education.
- 5) To acknowledge **recognition of prior learning** and to ensure that the curriculum includes promoting **self-employment** with the aim of developing Small Medium and Macro Enterprises as well as entrepreneurs.

Chairperson,

TVET colleges in South Africa require collaboration and partnerships in order to respond to the developmental state needs of South Africa. Almost all the TVET colleges are involved in various partnership agreements with Higher Education Institutions, business or municipalities, though some colleges are less active in this regard.

Some learners progress from school to TVET colleges and universities and then face academic challenges, which result in high dropout and low graduation rates. This feeds into the challenge we face with respect to the number of young people that are **Not in Education, Not in Employment and Not in Training** (commonly known as the NEETs).

The HRDC found that these challenges need to be understood in terms of the socio-economic circumstances of students and institutions. Further, the low number of enrolments in programmes at NQF levels 5 and 6 means that an important progression pathway into higher education is being missed by both employed and unemployed people. An expansion of level 5 and 6 programmes could open up opportunities for many more to progress to university. These cross cutting programmes are addressed through the different HRDC structures.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion

Business has a big role to play in realising the term “ from learning to earning” through the following:

- 1) Business has to continue to work on commitments within the **Skills Accord**.
- 2) Business is needed to implement the CEO Initiative to support the **Youth Employment Scheme (YES)** which aims to place one million young people in internships.
- 3) Business can help by providing **additional funding for bursaries** as well as for other skills priorities, over and above the skills levy.

and finally

- 4) Business should continue to support the **employment tax incentive scheme**.

Business also has the responsibility to support the education sector through the provision of workplace training an intervention which can help both young people and the unemployed to build links with the labour market and gain useful work-related skills. Knowledge clusters, in which companies adopt innovative product market strategies and interact with educational institutions, can foster the creation of skill-intensive jobs and a better match with workforce skills.

We must all adopt a “matching skills” approach providing the right skills needed in the labour market, while generating the necessary economic dynamism to generate new jobs.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you