

Minister Pandor's remarks at the launch of the Fibre Processing and Manufacturing (FP&M) SETA's third annual Career Summit and Expo

Gallagher Convention Centre, Midrand, Gauteng
29 October 2018

This career summit is about offering you career options in a changing world.

We have an oversupply of low-skilled workers and an undersupply of high-skilled workers. We struggle to compete in labour-intensive global markets because our unskilled workers are too expensive and we struggle to compete in capital-intensive markets because we are short of high-level skills.

Those with high-level skills are employed in the dynamic parts of the economy - hi-tech manufacturing, the creative industries, hi-tech medicine, business services, education and computer software, in advertising, in mobile phones, and in aerospace engineering.

Globally the market for people with portable skills is exploding - in engineering, finance, marketing, construction, healthcare, management and technology.

Companies operate in dozens of countries, requiring complex technologies and a massive pool of highly skilled people able to navigate tricky international waters.

Low-income developing countries like China and India are spending billions on infrastructure, creating enormous demand for skilled workers.

There is a fierce global competition for talent.

Workers have to incrementally upgrade skills and learn new skills through lifelong learning.

That's why we're investing in skills of all levels to become a learning and knowledge society.

We are focussing on low to mid level skills and this is where the TVET college sector is going to make a huge contribution.

There are rich and rewarding careers in trades, and in trade specialisation in particular, and that there are many pathways to management.

You don't have to wear a white shirt to be a manager or an entrepreneur or to run your own business.

Choosing a vocational rather than an academic path to a career is not choosing the short straw.

It can lead to a fulfilling life with generous financial reward.

Especially now that automation removes so much repetitive work. A car mechanic is becoming more and more like a software engineer.

This year education is free for all years of TVET study.

Education is the most important and effective form of socio-economic development.

It's the only way of ensuring that we all enjoy the freedom and democracy that is envisaged in the Freedom Charter.

We've ensured universal access to education. The economic situation did not allow for free and compulsory education in 1994. But we've worked towards that goal.

The evidence lies in the fact that about 80% of schools are no-fee schools, and we provide free meals to over two million learners every day.

The opening of colleges and the financial support to universities and technikons has ensured that each child has opportunities to achieve his /her maximum potential. We have new plans for the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges around the country.

Recently we launched an initiative that focuses on the teaching of 13 trade occupations at TVET colleges. This initiative, known as the Centres of Specialisation Programme, is designed to address the growing demand for the skills needed in our current massive infrastructure build.

The Programme is part of our plan to build an expanded, effective and integrated post-school education system that is anchored by the TVET colleges, and which adequately prepares students for the workplace or self-employment. In this regard, too, the Programme is deliberately structured in such a way that students will develop and maintain close working relationships with employers in their areas of study, through equally close partnerships between colleges and employers. The Programme will achieve its objectives by focusing on the development of the 13 trades in high demand

for the country's infrastructure projects.

The list of priority trades that have been identified include those for bricklayers, electricians, boilermakers, plumbers, automotive and diesel mechanics, carpenters and joiners, welders, fitters and turners, and riggers. What is most pleasing so far is that the government, TVET colleges and employers are working together very closely to advance the Programme in the interest of the country, the economy and all our people.

We plan to expand both the number of colleges involved in the current two-year Programme, as well as the number of trades covered.

If such key programmes are taken to more areas and regions, with more partners joining this cause, we will create more jobs.

So I say to all grade 12 learners, apply now. Apply for a place in a university. Apply for a place in a college. Take an opportunity. Reach for a dream. Thuma Mina.