

**MINISTER NZIMANDE'S ADDRESS TO DEANS/ HEADS OF SCHOOLS OF THE
FACULTIES/ SCHOOLS OF EDUCATION
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I am happy to be participating in this highly important and strategic meeting today, and I am thankful that you have taken time out of your busy schedules to meet with me.

I hope that the discussions that we engage in today will be mutually beneficial, and will assist to position your institutions and the department to play the key role that we collectively have to play to improve the quality of education in South Africa. I would like these discussions to be frank and open and relaxed, and the main intention is to identify and discuss issues and strategic levers that we can work on together.

No one can deny that faculties and schools of education have a pivotal role to play in the education context in South Africa. Of all the faculties at universities, education faculties directly support other education sub-sectors, through the teachers you produce and develop for these sectors, and through your research, knowledge production and community engagement activities in these sub-sectors. If teaching is considered to be the mother of all professions, then does that make the faculties of education the grandmother? Maybe not, but certainly the responsibility is huge. Teachers have been shown to be the single-most important factor impacting on the quality of education systems, and we have to make sure that our universities are capable of producing quality teachers who can teach in diverse South African contexts.

I want to acknowledge the high degree of responsiveness of the university sector, specifically the faculties of education to increasing enrolments and graduate numbers in initial teacher education, in response to the real crisis we have been facing regarding sufficient teachers for the school system.

It is remarkable that we have been able to completely turn this situation around in a short space of time. The data speaks for itself. In 2007, our universities graduated less than 6 000 teachers per year.

In 2013, 16 500 new teachers graduated. Our enrolment plan to 2019 indicates that the universities will be producing in excess of 23 000 new teachers per year by 2019. This means that

we will have addressed the teacher supply-demand gap, we will be producing enough teachers, and there will no longer be a teacher shortage in absolute terms.

But if we do not plan appropriately from now, there will still be relative shortages. The issue of the size of teacher education will largely have been addressed and our attention has to also now focus much more strongly on the issues of shape and quality.

There is a danger of relative shortages persisting, for example in terms of phase or subject specialization. We have to more sharply focus our enrolment planning so that we do not just enroll teacher education students generally, but be guided by system needs in terms of the kind of teachers we produce.

Our data suggests that we are currently not producing enough Foundation Phase teachers and Intermediate Phase teachers and the share of enrolments for these phases must be grown. In the Foundation Phase, the availability of African language mother tongue teachers is extremely worrying. We have to increase the number of teachers we produce who are able to effectively teach in, and effectively teach the African languages in the Foundation Phase, and across all the other school phases as well. This is not just a teacher supply issue, but a social justice issue as well, and it does mean that universities have to change their own language practices to enable the effective development of the African languages.

There are other teaching specializations where the numbers have to be grown, for example in mathematics and science and the technology-related disciplines. The DHET is currently sharing the results of its work to understand relative shortages with the system, and this can be used to plan the shape of enrolments more effectively. Our challenges regarding teacher supply will not be addressed if for example, we produce 23 000 teachers annually by 2019, but the specialization spread of these teachers is not aligned to the needs of the system.

There is another teacher education shape issue that is becoming more and more important. Faculties of education have traditionally focused on the education and development of school teachers, and on research and development work focused on the schooling sector. But the education sector is bigger than this. One of the big current weaknesses in the college sector relates to the caliber of teaching in this sector.

The education and development of lecturers for our TVET colleges, and educators for the adult education system has not received much attention. When universities have focused some attention on these sectors, it has largely been a result of the efforts of a few passionate individuals rather than a systemic and institutionalized initiative, and the work has largely been located in centres or units at the periphery of education faculties.

Our universities have to play a much stronger role in developing teachers for the post-school education and training college sector, and to research and knowledge development for these sectors. This is vital given the need to substantially grow these sectors to enable wider and more appropriate education opportunities in the country.

The DHET will seek to partner with faculties of education to make this happen. We would like to see post-school education and training becoming a strong focus area for faculties of education. The ability of education faculties to develop teachers for this sector and to conduct research leading to knowledge development for this sector must be substantially increased.

Colleagues, my reflections so far have focused on the size and shape of teacher education. The issue of substance – what actually happens in teacher education programmes, and the quality of the teachers produced through these programmes – is the most important of all.

The DHET recently produced a series of teacher education qualification policies focused on school teachers, TVET lecturers and Community Education and Training lecturers and educators. These new policies are meant to contribute to the quality imperative through setting minimum standards for teacher education qualifications and through their foregrounding of teacher knowledge and practice.

But legislation by itself cannot result in quality, and its translation into good practice cannot happen unless universities take the new policies on board. Where universities use the re-alignment and ensuing curriculum process to critically interrogate current practices and imagine new possibilities, and where the tendency to mere compliance is avoided, we are likely to see teacher education programmes that produce teachers who are able to respond adequately to the demands of teaching in diverse South African teaching contexts.

The current large-scale Initial Teacher Education Research Project which is a collaborative partnership between JET, the EDF, the DBE and the DHET is a positive undertaking, and universities must be commended in opening up their programmes and practices to scrutiny through research. This is the only way we can collect real evidence and build knowledge on which to base concrete future plans.

The research is already able to point to some issues in initial teacher education that need attention, such as the high level of variety in initial teacher education programmes, and the selections that are made with respect to knowledge selection, depth, breadth, space within programmes and time spent on different components. As this research unfolds over the next two years, we trust that the universities will be able to engage positively and critically with its findings, and where it points to areas that need improvement, that these will be fully taken on. The DHET will look to support the universities in their efforts to respond.

A recent cohort study conducted on the Bachelor of Education degree, which tracked the throughput of students who entered the B Ed degree in 2005, showed that by the end of 2011, seven years after they had started their studies, 37.9% of the students had dropped out of their programmes, and only 52.7% had graduated. We have to do better than this as a system, particularly in a programme that is focused on teaching, and thus should be able to provide better support for students on the programme, because the lecturers understand educational issues much more deeply?

You will no doubt respond by indicating that all the size, shape and substance issues in teacher education I have discussed so far have one key dependency – adequate resourcing. The DHET recognizes this, and we have directed substantial funding to support growth in teacher education.

The growth in enrolments has been supported by increased subsidy funding to support those enrolments through the input and output subsidies allocated as part of the block grant allocated to universities.

A key question that must be asked is whether the funds that are allocated by the DHET to universities in line with their teacher education enrolment and graduate numbers are being adequately allocated at the university level to support the teacher education programmes. This must be investigated and engaged with at institutional level.

The DHET has also invested substantial funds to support new teacher education infrastructure at the universities. R451m was allocated in the 2010/11-2011/12 cycle, and R662m was allocated in the 2012/13-2014/15 cycle. This has enabled a range of new infrastructure projects at universities including new office space, new teaching spaces and new student work spaces. We trust that the faculties of education have ensured that infrastructure needs that have not yet been addressed, have been included in the infrastructure master plans that the DHET recently required universities to submit.

You will know that the Ministerial Committee for the Review of the Funding of Universities recently completed its work. The DHET has set up a technical task team to model what the implications of various recommendations made in the committee's report would be for the system. Teacher education considerations are a part of this process. There is recognition within the system that attention has to be paid to enabling the practice teaching component of teacher education programmes to happen more effectively, including through better resourcing of this component.

The DHET has made some progress in conceptualizing a new 5 year plan to further support teaching and learning development in the system. The Teaching and Learning Development Capacity Improvement Programme will have a focus on:

- Strengthening primary teacher education
- Developing capacity in the system to support the development of specialist teachers for learners with special education needs.
- Supporting universities to develop capacity for TVET and Community College lecturer development.

This new programme is being built into the DHET's new strategic plan, and it will become the key vehicle through which the DHET addresses pressing qualitative and quantitative issues relating to teaching and learning development in the education sector through a focus on the development of quality teachers for all education sub-sectors over the next five years. Obviously, strong partnerships will need to be developed with the universities, specifically the faculties of education in rolling out this programme.

Clearly, the range of issues that require strong collaboration between the DHET and the faculties of education are many. I have attempted to highlight some of them here. I am sure you will highlight others, and I look forward to your constructive engagement on all these issues in this meeting.

Thank you.