



higher education & training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**ADDRESS BY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING, DR. B.E.
NZIMANDE, AT THE LAUNCH OF THE WHOLESALE AND RETAIL
LEADERSHIP CHAIR, CPUT HOTEL SCHOOL – WESTERN CAPE, 25
FEBRUARY 2014**

Programme Director,

Vice Chancellor of CPUT- Dr Prins Nevhutalu,

Chairperson of W&R SETA - Dr Thami Mazwai,

CEO of W&R SETA – Mr Joel Dikgole,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure to be part of this official launch of the Wholesale and Retail Leadership Chair this evening. This initiative by the Wholesale and Retail SETA (W&R SETA) in collaboration with the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) is of great importance. It will promote wholesale and retail as a career of choice, giving the sector the dignity it deserves.

This Research Chair will assist us keep track of topical issues and trends in the wholesale and retail sector, informing our policy development and our strategy and tactics. This partnership is especially important as the W&R SETA is striving to increase access to programmes aligned to the demands of the workplace as articulated in the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS III). I am impressed by how this initiative responds, in a long-term,

sustainable way, to the need to improve the quality of our sector skills plans. The wholesale and retail industry in South Africa is one of the biggest employers in the country, undoubtedly a crucial part of our economy's foundation. Therefore initiatives of this nature aimed at improving the sector are of critical importance.

This partnership between W&R SETA and CPUT is indeed visionary and in line with the White Paper on Post School Education and Training System launched on January 16 just a few weeks ago. This policy will bring about a single, coherent, highly articulated and diverse post-school education and training system, with all sub-sectors and institutions playing their unique role.

The White Paper sets out policies to guide the DHET and the institutions for which it is responsible in helping to build a developmental state with a vibrant democracy and flourishing economy. The partnership between the W&R SETA and CPUT contextualizes the emphasis on research in the White Paper.

The new Research Centre at CPUT could consider innovative ways to leave an indelible and positive mark on academia and on the wholesale and retail sector. Here are some things it could ensure:

- Innovative research results in the sector are disseminated in different ways, through journal and newspaper articles, book chapters, monographs and textbooks. To transform our economy, we need quality, reliable data on the skills required in the sector, with information both about the nature of the skills and the numbers of skilled people required. This information will also assist and influence our decision making and policy formulation. Empirical and scientifically reliable data is vital for policy direction, skills planning and the national skills development strategy. Above all it is useful to students.
- The Centre could ensure proper mentoring of postgraduate students in the wholesale and retail area from honours to PhD level. This is important especially in the light of the fact that only a handful of South Africans take studies at post-graduate level in this area.

- This Centre should bridge the gap between research and teaching, influencing the university curriculum and enabling potential postgraduate students to familiarize themselves with its work.
- Researchers linked to the Centre must consider undertaking research in other African countries. We should be outward looking in our approach especially considering SADC economic integration. We should also remember that South Africa draws a sizeable number of retail workers from Southern Africa and other African countries. It would be interesting, for instance, to have a study of the socio-economic conditions of African workers from other countries in wholesale and retail centres and why they often seek employment in South Africa. A study around migration patterns of African retail workers from their respective countries would also be interesting.
- The Centre should not operate in a cocoon. Research collaborations and partnerships with other centres and institutes are vital for its work to blossom. Such centres include the Govan Mbeki Research and Development Centre at the University of Fort Hare, the Mayibuye Centre at the University of the Western Cape, Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER), the Chris Hani Institute housed at COSATU House and the Institute of Social and Economic Research at Rhodes University. In addition, many universities, including CPUT, have NRF Research Chairs from which lessons and experiences could be drawn by this envisaged Centre on wholesale and retail trade.
- The new Centre should implement student exchange programmes. This will enable its students to grasp and understand how other countries and their respective research institutions approach the wholesale and retail sector and scholarship in the area.
- The Centre should run research seminars relevant to its field and to fields with which it is closely related such as socio-economic development and labour studies. Postgraduate students should present their research findings in these seminars. This could boost their confidence whilst further familiarizing them with academic practice. Presentation of academic papers in national and international conferences by postgraduates and scholars linked to the Centre is also of utmost importance.

- The Centre should host visiting scholars with expertise in the field of wholesale and retail. These can be attached to the Centre for up to three years. Such visiting scholars could help in a number of ways including post-graduate supervision, researching and co-authoring papers with students and running research clinics for the benefit of students.

These are just some suggestions on the envisaged wholesale and retail Centre, informed by many years of experience in the post school sector, that I am presenting to you, Professor Mason, Chair of the new Centre. Obviously there are many more ideas on how this Centre could best service its students and I am sure that you and your colleagues have already begun to explore some of them.

I would also like to say that as we head towards the end of the current NSDS III in March 2016, initiatives such as this Retail Leadership Chair will also assist in developing, realigning and streamlining the future National Skills Development Strategies.

We are here mainly talking about research and postgraduate study in the area of wholesale and retail studies. I do not, however, want to end without reminding us all that success at postgraduate level is built on robust undergraduate programmes. The post-school system must also provide paths for articulation between various qualifications: there should be no dead-ends for students; there should always be a way for someone to improve their qualifications without undue repetition and hindrances. As DHET we expect our best undergraduates to consider post-graduate studies after the completion of their undergraduate programmes and, amongst others, to take wholesale and retail studies. We encourage this because through NSFAS we have put enormous resources into funding university students to acquire their degrees. Government has increased NSFAS funding from R2.375 billion in 2008 to over R9 billion in 2014. The number of NSFAS beneficiaries has increased from 41 600 in 1999 to 77 000 in 2008 and to about 430 000 in 2014 including students at TVET colleges. And so we urge students go all the way to PhD level and take your studies in fields like wholesale and retail that the country so greatly requires.

Professor Mason, this new Centre should strive towards self-sufficiency. The Centre should not only rely on the W&R SETA for funding but also begin to look for possible funding

elsewhere, for instance from the private sector. We do not want to end up with a Centre which will run out of funds as soon as the W&R SETA three year funding cycle ends. The centre must fundraise and be self-sufficient, becoming the pride of this university. As DHET we support this initiative and take research very seriously. I am certain that with outstanding intellectual quality behind this project, the objectives will be achieved, contributing significantly to the expansion of knowledge.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all those who have worked so hard for the realization of this partnership. These include the CEO of W&R SETA Mr Joel Dikgole, his staff, and the SETA chair Dr Thami Mazwai. Our gratitude also goes to the Vice-Chancellor of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Dr Prins Nevhutalu and his team. Let us join hands and work hard towards the realisation of this project.

Thank You