

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING, DR. B.E. NZIMANDE, AT THE MANDELA DAY CAREER DEVELOPMENT FESTIVAL HELD AT BHEKUZULU HALL, UNIZULU, KWADLANGEZWA, ON 18 JULY 2015**

**Protocol**

Good afternoon.

It gives me great pleasure to again host this year's Mandela Day Career Development Festival, which is held on this very important day in the calendar of our democratic South Africa. This Festival is aimed at empowering our youth to make informed career choices into post-school education and training opportunities, enabling them to contribute to building a better society and developing the country's economy. This is one of my flagship annual projects, and has already taken place in five provinces – the first being held in 2010 in Giyani, Limpopo; the second in Lusikisiki in 2011 in the Eastern Cape; the third in Taung in 2012 in the North West; and the fourth in 2013 in Qwa-Qwa, Free State.

One of Nelson Mandela's main concerns was the future of the youth. He passionately believed that education could enable young people to fulfil their potential. Mandela himself said: "No country can really develop unless its citizens are educated."

Last month, in June, we celebrated Youth Month in recognition of the contribution of youth to the struggle for the liberation of this country. We explored potential ways to improve the condition and future prospects of the country's youth. Importantly, we emphasised that the celebrated youth of 1976 took to the streets to protest against the untenable educational and living conditions imposed upon them by an illegitimate political system.

We highlighted at every opportunity the fact that with the advent of democracy in 1994, led by the ANC and its Alliance Partners, the political space in South Africa has dramatically changed and opened up. Today we are able to debate, disagree, protest, and have dialogues in different forums without fear. I am therefore distressed and puzzled about incidents such as the one that happened last week at the Kwa-Gqhikazi Campus of the Thashana TVET College, where extensive damage was done not only to the infrastructure, but also to the essential equipment that keeps academic and personal records of all learners at the institution. We as a nation have to ask ourselves why this culture of destruction and lawlessness appears to have taken root – and may be growing – when we have so many avenues to air our views and frustration in constructive ways?

Why is it that learners who were born in a democratic dispensation take it upon themselves to engage in mass destruction in order to put their view across? This leads to unpleasant conclusions that such actions are driven not only by the motives that are put forward, but have other underlying implications. We take this matter very seriously and will conduct thorough investigations and take severe action where required. We need to make it clear that mindless acts of vandalism do not reverse the gains made by our hard fought liberation struggle. We will not allow purely criminal elements to destroy infrastructure paid for by tax payers that will have to be replaced by funds that could have been channelled towards meeting the challenges of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. This kind of behaviour has to come to a stop.

In 2010 I was tasked by the President to provide leadership and coordinate career development services in the country across all spheres of government.

On completion of your grade 12 in 2015, many of you will need to make important career choices that will shape your future. Through these Mandela Day initiatives, we as a Department continue to make you aware of the importance of furthering your learning experiences either at a TVET college, University, Learnership programmes or through any other forms of technical training.

The current administration, under the leadership of President Jacob Zuma, took a decision that technical and vocational education and training (TVET) must lie at the heart of the skills and economic development of our country. It is precisely in light of this decision that in the past five years we have been hosting the annual Nelson Mandela Career Expo at a Technical and Vocational Education and Training College as a way of profiling this important sector while providing much needed career guidance to learners.

Many learners often wonder why they should study at a TVET College. The answer is quite simple: these institutions offer industry-relevant education and training to improve the chances for young people to get into employment and perform socially useful work.

This Festival provides the ideal forum to give direction for various career paths. It remains your prerogative as learners to take responsibility for your lives and future careers by learning more about the different career paths you can take, how to go about achieving success in your chosen paths, and how to make use of all the resources available to you. Particularly important is to consider the subjects necessary to pursue specific careers. For instance, it is important that those who wish to pursue studies in engineering or become artisans have to take subjects such as mathematics and physical science.

We are fully aware that many of you struggle to pursue post-school learning due to lack of funds. There are many funding options available to you from various sources. You may apply for financial assistance at your post-school institution, as well as apply for bursaries, scholarships and student loans. There is focused funding support for areas that are socially important, such as the Funza Lushaka bursaries for Teacher Training, especially in scarce subjects. There are learnerships and internships funded by SETAs and the National Skills Fund (NSF). We also have international Scholarships that are managed through the DHET.

In order to continue promoting access to TVET colleges for academically deserving students from poor backgrounds, DHET increased the TVET college bursary allocation from R312 million in 2009 to R2, 2 billion in 2015. This significant increase in the TVET college bursary allocation improved access in the number of young people entering the TVET college sector. Through these funds, the number of TVET college students who benefitted from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) increased from 55 174 in 2009 to 262 046 in 2014.

We have developed a multi-platform service that provides free career information, advice and guidance to anyone in the country. Our services must reach people in all walks of life. We have been taking conscious steps to reach people in rural areas and those who live in historically disadvantaged areas.

We have established a **National Career Advice Portal** to provide career information. There is an information management team dedicated to ensuring that career information available through the site is credible, relevant, and as accurate as possible. This Portal is accessible through mobile devices such as cell phones. This online service is accessible by anyone who uses the internet on the mobile device or computer by going to **www.CareerHelp.org.za**. It provides descriptions of all the occupations available in the country, career paths to reaching these occupations and information about the institutions that offer the qualifications one would need to achieve.

Our **Khetha Radio Programme** is a career information dissemination programme broadcast in 10 local languages. The topics discussed focus on all aspects of careers and studying the qualification you need.

We have established a fully operational **National Career Advisory Helpline** using state of the art technology that is located within the Department of Higher Education and Training. Specialist staff are ready to take your call and to respond to career and study related questions at **086 999 0123**. If anyone prefers, they can send an SMS or a “please call me” to **072 204 5056** and we will call back.

The career development services we render are free and available to citizens of all ages.

By ensuring that you gain relevant technical and vocational skills, we are providing the foundation for becoming economically active and in turn, moving you from the economic and social periphery to the mainstream productive economy. The economic freedom of the historically disadvantaged majority can be achieved through the greater synergy between the economic, social, and industrial spheres. TVET Colleges can play an important role at the interface of all of these spheres.

We are taking time and effort to make sure that our colleges are responsive to industry's needs. We want learners from our colleges to find employment and have skills relevant to the labour market and the needs of society. We have a number of projects to ensure that this alignment is improved.

In particular I would like to inform our youth of two projects which are enjoying high priority in your province. The first is the Oceans Economy project led by the deputy president. We are as a country embarking on a project to revitalise our ocean economy. Colleges are gearing themselves to deliver against this mandate. This would be a good career opportunity for our youth to consider.

In addition to this we have established a retail academy in this province, which is a joint effort between our SETAs and colleges. Retail is another good career opportunity to pursue.

It is important that as the youth of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, you place education as the key element in achieving substantive change and contributing to skills development in our country. It is equally important that you study with the intention of becoming an employer rather than an employee. Young people are competing for the limited space in

the job market. Create job opportunities with the skills afforded to you, instead of waiting for someone to employ you.

### **Community Education and Training Colleges**

With effect from 1 April 2015, the Community Education and Training function became the exclusive responsibility of DHET. The new Colleges serve both the management and administrative role to the 3 276 Community Learning Centres merged under the 9 Community Colleges. The functionality of the Community Colleges is dependent on the establishment of the College Councils. This process is already underway with the first inauguration of the Community Colleges Councils scheduled to take place on 22 August 2015. This is not only a historical event but a sign of the commitment of the Department to transform this historically neglected sector.

The key priorities in this sector are expansion of educational opportunities, including offering necessary support for people with disabilities, and diversification of programmes. The under construction Central Application Services will ensure that numbers enrolled are verified and this will significantly improve our planning system.

As a Department we understand your dreams. We are working hard to provide a diverse range of appropriate education and training opportunities, as well as to give you as much information as you may need to make a decision about your future.

### **Conclusion**

Let me now take this opportunity to thank the Management, staff and students from the Umfolozi TVET College and the University of Zululand for hosting the event and make their infrastructure and facilities, staff and students available for this important event.

Let me end by wishing all the matriculants the best of luck in their final year of examinations. I encourage you to apply yourself and exceed the pass rate achieved by the 2014 matriculants in KwaZulu-Natal.

Thank you.