

INPUT OF THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING,
MR MC MANANA ON THE DECADE OF THE ARTISAN, FS

Programme Director

It is a profound honour for me to address this milestone launch of the Free State leg of the Decade of the Artisan. The input that I am going to make today in this important occasion will try to give you a detailed outline of what our Department is currently implementing as a contribution to skills development and consequently job creation.

The establishment of a dedicated department in 2009 by the President was to focus on Higher Education and Training as well as to address some of the challenges relating to skills shortages and the lack of synergy between the skills we produce at our post-school institutions and the labour market.

Our government has spent billions of rands in education, training and skills development in its quest to deal with the over 3 million young people who are neither employed nor undergoing any formal education or training. We believe that skilling our labour force will play a role in fighting unemployment directly by providing skilled people to a skills-starved economy, but also indirectly by providing a stimulus to economic growth and the development of new and existing industries and economic sectors.

We are also aware that this is a ticking time-bomb that such a big number of young and energetic population of our society is out of school and out of jobs. Yet we continue to import a lot of skills.

These are amongst the reasons that our government took an informed decision to make education, job creation and decent work its number one priority for the current period and in this regard we would like to highlight the fact that education and training are a critical component of achieving growth and development of the various priority economic sectors. The New Growth Path outlines clearly to this priority and reflects on how important the role of education and training is.

Programme Director,

Our Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) are now in contact with the overwhelming number of employers in the country and we have invested sufficient resources for them to facilitate partnerships between training institutions and employers. It is rather concerning that we have about 5 000 University of Technology students and just below 20 000 FET college students who cannot complete their studies and graduate because they do not have the workplace learning component required to do so. SETAs are therefore compelled to expedite their efforts to forge these linkages.

As part of addressing the above challenges, as government, we signed a Skills Accord together with labour, business and community constituencies at NEDLAC and through this Accord we want to turn every workplace into a training space.

Our department has also developed a National Skills Development Strategy III which gives clear direction as to what is expected of the SETAs in the new post school system and in generally strengthening skills development in South Africa.

I need to indicate that in our country there is this wrong notion that post school education only means university education. This is not the case and we are trying very hard to dispel this notion and in our quest to promote the FET college sector, we are hoping that young people will find them as equally attractive.

Programme Director,

We see the TVET college sector as a viable option for young people because it is our strong belief that the courses offered at our Vocational Education and Training Centres are appropriate to build the critical skills base that our economy needs and this in turn will make them eligible for employment.

The skills courses offered by our TVET Colleges like artisanal, technicians and other trades are what our economy needs and to this end, we are (unfortunately) not producing enough of them because of the stigma attached to TVET colleges.

This happens within a context of a very serious shortage of mid-level personnel and expanding this must be our high priority as people with these skills are able to fill many of the jobs necessary to expand the economy and achieve their own sustainable livelihoods.

Our government has taken a lead by increasing learnerships intakes at all levels of government and we expect that state-owned enterprises and especially you as employers will do the same. Priority should be given to TVET students and students from the universities of technology.

We are working hard to foster alignment between the SETAs, the public FET colleges, the universities of technology, labour and employers for this purpose and it is precisely what you are doing here today that is getting us closer to our solutions.

Programme Director,

Let me also mention that we are putting systems in place to ensure that the output from TVET colleges is not for the sake of producing graduates and hence we are progressively influencing the modification of the curriculum in order to proactively respond to the needs of the labour market.

I am sure that with your help in opening up your doors to learners to do experiential training in your companies, we can easily reach our targets in the specified time frame, which is 30 000 artisans per annum by 2030. In particular I would like to urge all the employers in this province to work closely with the TVET Colleges to produce artisans. Each Employer should in fact consider the TVET College to be its own

training centre that is paid for by the State. Of course you can then help your own training centre with contributions of equipment and tools, as well allowing your qualified staff to spend time at the college to interact with young people.

We are now in full swing of the Decade of the Artisan which I launched in February last year. The Year of the Artisan programme in 2013 was so successful that I then decided to extend the programme over the next ten years to continue building the emphasis. The revised programme focuses on employers opening up workplaces for more artisan learners, particularly apprenticeships. To achieve such a significant growth not only needs considerable investment and commitment by all artisan development role players with a special focus on workplaces in South Africa, but will also require sustained, committed and high profile political leadership. The lack of artisans in our country could have a devastating impact on our economy because artisans play a crucial role in the delivery of services, especially in engineering trades. At present, the average age of artisans is 55 years old and this means that within the decade, artisanship will become a really scarce skill. If we do not have enough artisans to meet the demands of business, business will definitely go elsewhere.

Let me mention some of the key milestone achievements since embarking on this artisan project:

- I launched the annual Open Week for TVET Colleges (1st week of August) where colleges are encouraged to open up their doors and invite learners and schools to come and see what they have to offer. Subsequent to this, we declared August as the TVET month and directed colleges to conduct the following during this month: free assessments, regional skills competitions in preparation for future participation in the international World Skills Competitions, conduct college campus tours for ordinary young people who are out of school and invite employers to the engineering college campuses for tours and discussions.
- I also launched the World Skills Competitions South Africa after having visited the Americas regional competition in Brazil in 2012 and the world skills global competitions in Germany in 2013. After lengthy discussions between myself and the President of World Skills International Mr Simon Bartley, we decided to be part of this progressive initiative which seeks to harness our energies towards the promotion of artisanship.
- South Africa has been a member of World Skills International (WSI) since 1990 but this important national project remained in private hands for so long that its impact was never felt by your ordinary South African youth. Founded in 1950, World Skills is a global organization that promotes vocational, technological and service oriented education and training. They promote skilled careers in 72 countries and regions, all working with youth, educators, governments and industries to help prepare the workforce and nurture talent of our young people. World Skills brings youth, industries, and educators together to give youth the chance to compete, experience, and learn how to become the best in their skill of choice. This from the traditional trades to multi-skilled technology careers in the industry and service sectors, supported

by partners, industries, governments, volunteers and education institutions. World Skills is making a direct impact in raising the level of skills throughout the world.

- Membership now spans the Americas, much of North and South-East Asia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It is worth noting also that the member countries of BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South-Africa), and IBSA (India-Brazil-South-Africa (IBSA)) are all affiliates of WSI, committed to the common goal of growth with sustainability.
- WSI provides an excellent networking platform for member agencies or bodies, which have national or regional responsibility, to promote vocational education and excellence in their respective countries. Through the use of cutting edge web and software technologies, it is able to provide its members with access to current developments on skills standards, competition events and specialist discussion forums and it promotes artisanship as a career of choice.
- Within the South African context participation in the World Skills competition holds huge potential to influence the development and employability of the South African Youth. In addition to this it acts as an effective vehicle to increasing awareness of apprenticeships and artisanal skills, raising of course the standard of vocational education and training and artisanal skills.
- Subsequent to the launch, the Department: Higher Education and Training set in motion a process to establish and operationalise a formal governance structure for World Skills South Africa.
- Regional competitions were held at TVET Colleges during November 2014 and the winners of these competitions are currently participating in the internationally aligned National competition in Cape Town which I opened last night. Winners will be sponsored and coached to represent South Africa at the international “skills Olympics” competition in Brazil in 2015. Again, we call on you be our supporters and partners in this great initiative. We cannot do this alone as government and I challenge you as employers to play your part in the skills revolution of our country by thinking less about the maximization of profits at the expense of absorption of our students and young people who urgently need workplace exposure.

Let me conclude by saying: there is no doubt that the artisan training space has now moved away from a period of great uncertainty to one of certainty and clarity. This must therefore pave a way for the pace of delivery of qualified artisans into the South African economy to increase.

I would like to urge you all to play an active role in the skills revolution of our country and ensure that we turn all workplaces into training spaces.