



higher education
& training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SOLUTIONS FOR SA's TVET SYSTEM

You could hear a pin drop as renowned policy expert Dr Simon Field presented his much anticipated findings regarding the state of the South African Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College system in Johannesburg on Tuesday 18 November.

After completing its ten-month mission commissioned in January this year to review the country's TVET system, the French-based Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Dr Field launched his findings at the inaugural TVET Conference, which concludes on Wednesday 19 November.

Delegates from many different sectors were privy to pertinent information which covered the strengths and the weaknesses of the TVET system, as well recommendations that could be made in strengthening the system.

In his presentation, Field highlighted the concerning trend of young people being disengaged from the world of education and employment.

"While economic growth in the country has been respectable, it's been weaker than in many other emerging economies. About 3,4 million young people are not formally employed nor in education or training (NEET). These numbers are alarming and present a profound challenge," he said.

Field said the failure to integrate so many people into the labour market threatens social cohesion.

"Also, in the context of the post-apartheid transition, this is a particular concern because of the over-representation of black people in the NEET population," he added.

Field said the TVET sector should play a critical role in responding to these challenges.

He added that effective vocational programmes can be a critical tool in this response by providing training linked to the prospect of a job – smoothing the transition from school to work.

Challenges and recommendations

- **CHALLENGE:** Current architecture of the South African TVET system poses a confusing mix of overlapping and competing programmes and qualifications and inadequately developed programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Merging of upper secondary vocational programmes to two main tracks – school and work-based track; meet the needs of adult learners, develop second chance programmes; development of diplomas and certificates at post-matric level should be promoted; improve pathways from initial vocational to academic programmes.

- **CHALLENGE:** Current TVET programmes are insufficiently responsive to current labour market.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Make workplace learning mandatory for vocational programmes; co-ordinate vocational provision through strategic body; establish flexibility in a proportion of the curriculum that can be adapted by the training providers; invest in better data, especially on labour market outcomes.

- **CHALLENGE:** Inadequate skills and qualifications of lecturers and the need to improve professional preparations of college leaders.

RECOMMENDATION: Strengthen professional preparation of these lecturers with attention to balance between pedagogical skills and workplace experience. Also, promote effective college leadership by ensuring more systematic training for prospective and current college leaders.

- **CHALLENGE:** TVET colleges currently offer limited support for students in academic difficulties, and this reflects insufficient incentives at colleges to encourage completion.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Provide support to ensure adequate levels of literacy and numeracy; ensure adequate incentives for completion for both institutions and students; underpin pathways of progression with high-quality career guidance.

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