higher education & training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING, DR NOMUSA DUBE-NCUBE, MP AT THE LAUNCH OF THE KWAZULU-NATAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION (KZN-SDIPE) AT HARRY GWALA SPORTS PRECINCT, KWAZULU-NATAL FRIDAY , 16 OCTOBER 2026

Theme: From the Lecture Hall to the Playing Field — Building Skills, Health and Futures Together

The Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, **Mr Thami Ntuli;**
The MEC for Education in KwaZulu-Natal, **Mr Sipho Hlomuka;**
Mayor of uMsunduzi Local Municipality ; **Councillor Mzimkhulu Thebolla**
The Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of South Africa, **Professor Puleng LenkaBula,** and the UNISA leadership present;
Amakhosi and Izinduna, our Traditional Leaders;
Leadership of the National Skills Fund, CATHSSETA and our Sector Education and Training Authorities;
The leadership of the KwaZulu-Natal Skills Development Institute for Physical Education;
Officials of the Office of the Premier, the Provincial Department of Education and the Department of Higher Education and Training;
School Principals, Educators and School Governing Bodies;
Our Student Coaches and Graduates;
Our learners — the real stars of today;
Members of the media;
Ladies and gentlemen, sanibonani nonke.

PROTECTING OUR DEMOCRATIC GAINS

Programme Director, we meet just [20] days before the Local Government Elections on Wednesday, 4 November 2026, and in the year we mark thirty years of our Constitution. The rights it guarantees, to vote, to education and to dignity, were won through the sacrifice of leaders such as Harry Gwala, in whose name this precinct stands.

Local government is the sphere closest to our people. It maintains the fields our children play on and the services that make our communities dignified. I call on every eligible South African, particularly our young people, to vote on 4 November, and on all of us to keep these elections peaceful, free and fair. As our learners know from the sports field: compete hard, but respect the rules and one another.

OPENING

What we watched this morning was not entertainment. It was education in motion and skills development made visible.

Tata Nelson Mandela captured this at the Laureus World Sports Awards in Monaco in May 2000:

> *"Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair."*

Those words are the pillars of this institute: sport that inspires, skills that build careers, education that reaches every school, and hope through real opportunity.

I bring greetings from the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mr Buti Manamela, who conveys his full support. Before Harry Gwala became

"the Lion of the Midlands", he was a teacher. Placing qualified young coaches before our children honours that legacy.

FROM PILOT TO INSTITUTION

This is not a new start. In 2017, the Department, the National Skills Fund and CATHSSETA placed Physical Education students from four KwaZulu-Natal TVET colleges in primary schools, including in this district, because too many of our learners were being taught physical activity by untrained staff. With UNISA now on board, KZN-SDIPE moves from a pilot to an institution.

A RESPONSIVE POST-SCHOOL SYSTEM

Our mandate is an integrated, high-quality and responsive post-school education and training system. Responsive means answering to what our communities, schools and economy need. The 2026 State of the Nation Address placed skills and youth employment at the centre of our national agenda, and through the Skills Revolution we are making the post-school system an engine for employment, not only for certificates.

ONE FIELD, MANY PARTNERS

Every partner here brings a vision, and in KZN-SDIPE those visions meet.

UNISA, as "the African university shaping futures in the service of humanity", lets a student coach in Ixopo or Kokstad study, coach and serve her community without leaving home.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education seeks a well-educated, skilled and highly developed citizenry, and active children learn better.

The Office of the Premier has provided the coordination behind a healthy, skilled province.

CATHSSETA aims to meet the skills needs of every sub-sector by 2030, and sport is an economy in its own right.

The National Skills Fund has invested in this programme since its first days.

Our municipalities have turned precincts like this into classrooms, and **Amakhosi** open the doors to the rural school at the end of the gravel road.

INDUSTRY-DRIVEN CURRICULA

My central message today is this: our curricula must be driven by industry, and no student should graduate without real work experience.

Too often we design programmes first and ask employers afterwards. That order must be reversed. In this sector, industry means schools, federations and clubs, the fitness and wellness industry, sports medicine, event management and our municipalities. They know which skills are scarce.

I therefore call on UNISA and our partner institutions to establish industry advisory structures for every programme linked to KZN-SDIPE, guided by CATHSSETA's Sector Skills Plan and by occupational qualifications through the QCTO, so that what students learn matches the jobs that exist today and those emerging tomorrow.

WORK EXPERIENCE FOR EVERY STUDENT

Work experience must be built into every qualification: credit-bearing, supervised by a workplace mentor, recorded in a logbook and assessed with the employer.

When student coaches serve in our schools, three things happen. Students gain real experience before they graduate. Graduates can answer the employer's first question, "What experience do you have?" And learners receive qualified coaching. This advances our Annual Performance Plan 2026/27 commitment to expand work-based learning.

I appeal to sports clubs, fitness companies and sports medicine practices: host an intern, mentor a coach, offer a learnership. And we must strengthen articulation, so that a TVET qualification in sport leads on to a diploma, a degree and beyond.

PARTNERSHIP AS OUR WAY OF WORKING

Silos duplicate effort and waste scarce resources. Partnership builds sustainable pipelines. This is Batho Pele in practice, putting learners in under-resourced schools first, and it advances Sustainable Development Goals 3, 4, 8 and 17.

Let me state clearly: the Department of Higher Education and Training fully endorses incorporating the KZN-SDIPE model into the provincial basic education ecosystem.

VISION 2030

Today we celebrate our launch cohort of 450 learners, student coaches and graduates. Please join me in applauding them.

But 450 is our starting point. In line with the Medium-Term Development Plan 2024–2029, this initiative will reach 6,250 learners across KwaZulu-

Natal by 2030, and the Department commits its ongoing support to get there.

A CALL TO THE SECTOR

What has been built in KwaZulu-Natal must not stay in KwaZulu-Natal. I call on every university and TVET college, particularly those offering education and sport science, to replicate this model: bring industry into your curricula, guarantee every student a work placement, and adopt a cluster of schools in your district.

CLOSING

To our student coaches: you are not volunteers filling a gap. You are professionals in training, and the children in front of you will remember your names. To our learners: keep running, keep playing, keep learning. Your country believes in you.

Sibambisene — together, we move forward.

I thank you. Ngiyabonga.