

**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION, DR BLADE NZIMANDE ON THE OCCASION OF THE MINISTERIAL COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND TRAINING SUMMIT HELD AT THE CAPE TOWN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE**

08-09 March 2002

Honourable Deputy Minister, Mr Buti Manamela;  
Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee, Ms Nompandolo Mkhathshwa and Members of the Portfolio Committee present;  
Directors-General, Dr Nkosinathi Sishi and Dr Phil Mjwara;  
Deputy Directors- General from DHET and other Departments;  
Esteemed national and international speakers on the programme;  
Chairpersons of CET College Councils;  
Principals of CET Colleges;  
Chairpersons of SETA Boards and CEOs;  
Representatives from SACPO;  
Representatives from Usaf;  
Chief Executive Officers of Quality Councils;  
General Secretaries and other officials of Trade Unions/ Labour;  
Representatives of social partners at NEDLAC  
Representatives of the Catholic Institute of Education;  
Representative of the South African Council for the Blind;  
Officials from the DHET and other Government Departments;  
Student representatives from CET College SRCs;  
Members of the media;  
Virtual and delegates present here;  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning

I am pleased to be hosting this first ever two-day hybrid (physical and virtual) Community Education and Training Summit, under the theme “Mass Skills Programme Provision”.

This is an important Summit that brings the Post School Education and Training sector, other government departments, non-governmental organisations, labour and business, under one roof to discuss issues relating to this important sector of our PSET. This is potentially the largest component of our post-school sector as it caters for many South Africans who need to improve their educational levels and/or acquire a skill. Hence the theme of this Summit on mass skills provision.

This Summit aims to take forward, consolidate and further dynamise the CET sector to achieve its mandate as contained in the 2013 White Paper for Post-School Education and Training.

This Summit also takes place following the hosting of our highly successful three (3) Regional Skills Summits, which served as a precursor to this Ministerial Summit.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who participated in these regional summits.

I am also happy that this Summit is taking place after a fairly stable opening of the 2022 academic year.

It must be noted that there are some pockets of challenges in some of our institutions. However, I am encouraged by the level of commitment to institutional engagements between the management and student leadership to resolve the concerns raised by students on registrations, which includes unblocking of returning students results, payment of NSFAS allowances, historic debt and vaccinations in the PSET.

I am happy that most of these challenges have been addressed and the 2022 academic year is now proceeding with less disruptions.

My Department of Higher Education and Training will continue to monitor the developments on the commencement of the academic year to ensure that no one is left behind and that all the concerns are fully addressed.

Having said that, I am delighted to note that in this Summit we have representatives of students for CET Colleges. Once properly organised, I will engage with them on issues relating to CET colleges.

## ON SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

Ladies and gentlemen

Expanding access and diversifying a highly articulated education and training provision, as well as improving its quality and responsiveness to the world of work, are the main policy objectives of the Post-School Education and Training system.

The attainment of these objectives remains a challenge as South Africa continues to face an ever-increasing number of people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET).

The upsurge in the number of NEET suggests the need to expand access to post-school education and training opportunities in the system beyond current provisioning.

This requires PSET institutions to offer a diversity of programmes not only to take account of the needs of the youth who completed schooling, but also for those who did not complete their schooling, in an integrated and articulated manner.

It should remain as a concern for all of us that over 3.4 million young South Africans, aged 15-24 are disengaged from education and work.

The youth unemployment rate, measuring job-seekers between 15 and 24 years old, hit a new record high of 66.5%.

Two million of them have not finished Grade 12, while some of them are working in the extensive informal economy.

However, our CET sector caters for all youth and adults, irrespective of age!

Our unemployment rate as a country rose to 34.9% in the third quarter of 2021, up from 34.4% in the previous period.

It was the highest jobless rate since comparable data began in 2008 on the back of the July unrests and the lockdowns.

This are amongst the reasons that we ought to reposition the CET sector to play its unique role in the provision of the necessary skills required for our economic development, and to take the majority of our people out of poverty and indignity.

Currently our government is seized with using its own resources and internal capabilities to deal with the school-to-work transition, by investing a significant portion of its budget to support our youth with learnerships and internships and other government funded programmes that help to create mass employment.

We all know that our failure to integrate many people into the labour market threatens social cohesion and in the South Africa context this remains of particular concern because of the over-representation of black South Africans in the NEET population.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CET SECTOR

Our White Paper for Post School Education and Training called for the establishment of CET Colleges as the third tier of institutions in the PSET system.

The CET College System was then established in 2015 as part of the Post School Education and Training system. The sector if well organised, has the potential to address some of these challenges experienced by the people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET).

CET Colleges were established to target out-of-school youth and adults who require various forms of skilling, including upgrading of their education and basic qualifications, second chance learning, non- formal programmes and the provision of skills programmes to contribute to different forms of livelihoods.

CET Colleges mark an important shift in government strategy on adult education. It marks an expansion and transformation of the traditional adult education system to go beyond just improving one's own basic education, but to provide a variety of skills that are much needed in our communities.

Ladies and gentlemen

The youth employment challenge requires various decisive actions across a range of fronts, including measures to promote economic development, and active measures to encourage labour market insertion.

But a very wide range of evidence shows that effective vocational programmes are an important part of the answer.

Providing practical training linked to the prospect of a job, smoothing the transition from school to work is the most fundamental and urgent preoccupation that we all must be seized with.

Linked to the Summit theme, I want to urge delegates to also focus on the issues of the Critical Skills List, and the National List of Occupations in High Demand (OIHD) in South Africa.

This list tells us which occupations are likely to have such vacancies and which occupations are likely to grow due to new investments, especially by government.

The National List of Occupations in High Demand (OIHD) list identified 345 occupations that are in high demand out of a total of 1 500 registered in our Organising Framework for Occupations.

Many of the occupations on the list can be associated with key areas and sectors identified as crucial for the Reconstruction and Recovery Plan as announced by President Ramaphosa, such as the digital economy, energy, infrastructure development, manufacturing, tourism and agriculture, data scientists, web developer, computer network, technician, electrical engineer, concentrated solar power process controller, mechatronic technician, toolmaker, gaming worker, crop produce analyst, agricultural scientist, just to name a few.

For this summit, it remains critical that the issues of the selection of our programme offerings, resource allocations, as well as the identification and development of new programmes in line with the needs of our economy and society at a local level should be discussed to ensure that CET colleges respond to the socio-economic needs of localities.

However, in order for the CET sector to effectively play its role, its programmes need to be linked to and be articulated with the rest of the post-school education and training institutional landscape, so that there can be seamless progression (where required and necessary) from CET programmes into TVET colleges and universities. We must work to remove all cul-de-sacs or dead ends in our post school education and training system!

## THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE 2009 AND 2019 LANDSCAPE TO THE CET SECTOR

Ladies and gentlemen

The creation of DHET in 2009 represented a major step forward in integrating vocational education and training policy of South Africa.

Prior to 2009 responsibility for education and training was divided between the Departments of Education and of Labour and often very weakly coordinated.

In 2009 the DHET was established, and given responsibility for one of the twelve objectives of the South African government, namely 'to develop the human resources of the workforce in an inclusive way'.

The Department brought together responsibility for the university and college sector, adult learning centres (now CETs), the private institutions, the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) the National Skills Fund (NSF) and the regulatory bodies responsible for qualifications and quality assurance.

The creation of the DHET was also meant to focus on the post-school education sector as a whole, and not just universities, important as they are. In fact, our own statistics tell us that only 6 of our 100 grade one learners end up graduating out of universities. The question is where do the 94 go to or end up doing? The answer must be the rapid expansion of the college sector to absorb these, both the TVET and CET college sectors!

Another milestone came in 2019, when President Ramaphosa decided to combine the Departments of Higher Education and Training together with Science and Technology under one Ministry.

This strategic realignment further opened huge opportunities in the production of both knowledge and skills and with an enormous potential to contribute towards innovation in our country.

This integration under a single Ministry offers the country with a unique set of strategic opportunities to realign, reposition and project their joint capabilities in new ways.

The integration of DST and DHET under a single Ministry is not simply to ensure greater administrative efficiency or bureaucratic streamlining, but to drive the post-school knowledge and skills development imperative more decisively, more effectively and with greater transformational impact in society.

It offers the country with a unique opportunity to realign, reposition and project the joint capabilities of the entire post-school knowledge and production system at the core of the national development agenda.

I would like to submit to practicalise and dynamise the vision of the CET sector as contained in our 2013 White Paper on PSET, especially also through sharing of knowledge, skills and infrastructure by all role players in the PSET (universities, TVET Colleges, SETAs, CETs).

Together, these form an integrated (and potentially articulated) "post-school" system, a clear strength we must seek to exploit.

**STRENGTHENING THE CET SECTOR**

As the CET Colleges are an emerging system which currently is very weak and parts of it are very unstable and generally underfunded, strides have been made to build the sector through a number of interventions.

This includes the establishment of CET Colleges and the appointment of College Councils; the establishment of the necessary legislative and policy framework; the development of a CET sector plan and partnerships with SETAs and other stakeholders for programme diversification.

CET Colleges cannot continue to offer academic programmes only, but must be capacitated and positioned to provide skills.

This is the reason we have this Summit today to discuss strategies for ensuring that the CET Colleges plays a meaningful role in the provision of skills, which includes artisanal skills such as boiler making, refrigeration, welding, bricklaying, painting, carpentry, plumbing, electrical, electronics, etc.

I am therefore calling on the summit to find practical and implementable interventions for the youth and adults who continue to face poverty and unemployment.

I envisage an expanded CET College system that is able to address the challenges in communities through a variety of education and skills intervention.

CET Colleges must be dynamically linked to the communities they serve, understand their needs and respond accordingly.

The current partnerships between my Departments of Higher Education and Training and Science and Innovation on the piloting of the implementation of digital skills through the Living Lab project is amongst the projects that is currently in implementation.

I am delighted to report that the first pilot project through funding from the Technology Innovation Agency (an agency of the DSI) has been completed and I can report that a number of pilot projects are taking place with various partners and stakeholders.

The CET branch today will share information on these projects so that they become part of the implementation plans emanating from the Summit.

It is in this spirit that I am making a call to our partners in the private sector, faith-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, our PSET institutions and community structures to engage with our CET Colleges to find potential areas of co-operation.

For an example, within the PSET sector, the TVET Colleges are strategically placed to assist CET Colleges in the delivery of skills programmes.

This includes possible collaboration with the Centres of specialisation which are located within our TVET colleges.

In this regard, I have directed that our DDG for TVET and the DDG for CET urgently work in finalising partnerships between TVET and CET Colleges.

Furthermore, our TVET College principals should reach out and work with CET College principals in assisting them deliver of their mandate of mass skills provisioning.

I have met the Chairpersons of the CET College Councils recently to discuss ways in which the CET Colleges can be strengthened and capacitated.

I must say that a number of proposals were tabled in the meeting. I had made an undertaking that the proposal made by the Chairpersons find expression in this Summit.

I therefore call on the Summit to engage with some of the proposals as presented to me which includes:

1. The utilisation of TVET College infrastructure in the short to medium term to enable the expanded provision of short skills programmes. The utilisation of TVET College facilities, through Memorandum of Agreements with CET Colleges will enable CET Colleges to be accredited for short skills programmes as part of an innovative Quality Assurance model developed by the QCTO.

The Chairpersons further raised the need to establish an additional fifty-four (54) colleges as envisaged in the White Paper, one College per district municipality and metros. This will be in line with our commitment to have a post-school institutions or site in every local district. Most importantly, the securing of dedicated CET College infrastructure that will enable the CET Colleges to have a clear institutional identity.

The establishment of these additional Colleges will assist in the implementation of mass skills programme intervention as envisaged in the objectives of this Summit. SETAs and the National Skills Fund must assist in this regard.

2. To accelerate the expansion of skills programme provision, the Chairpersons of the CET College Councils called for the establishment of a dedicated Information and Communications Technology fund to assist Colleges to develop and make use of ICT facilities for both administrative purposes and for teaching and learning.

3. There was a call for a percentage of SETA funding to be dedicated to CET Colleges similar to a commitment currently in place for the QCTO. This will assist the Colleges with consistent and predictable funding whilst dedicated fiscus funding is being sought.

Much as this will require legislative changes, there is however nothing stopping the SETAs in the meantime from offering some of their training programmes from their discretionary grants through the platform of CET learning sites. Indeed, I am pleased that some of the SETAs are already doing so. In other words, we need a very strong partnership between SETAs and CET Colleges and am calling for an increase in the scope of these partnerships, and for the SETAs who have not yet come onboard to do so.

4. Additionally, the Chairpersons called for resource mobilisation through partnerships with government departments and their programmes such as National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC), Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), Learning Assistant Programme (LAP), the Department of Social Development, COGTA and Correctional Services. Protocols must be entered into with the relevant departments for this to be possible.

I have also made an undertaking that I will go to Cabinet to create a framework for these proposed partnerships with relevant government departments, once the Summit has considered and concretised on the proposals.

On the other hand, there is an undertaking by the SETAs and the National Skills Fund (NSF) that CET Colleges should be supported. I hope that the Summit will firm-up on these commitments. I am pleased that we have allocated about R200m from the NSF for CET colleges to drive the massification of skills provision through offerings in our CET sector!

## REGIONAL SUMMIT RESOLUTIONS

Additional, I wish to congratulate DDG Futshane, together with the sector, for having convened three Regional CET summits, in part preparation and as a build up towards this national Summit.

Some of the challenges and recommendations emanating from the Regional Summits include:

- Infrastructure challenges and the need to move CET Colleges away from schools; [I strongly support this]
- Lack of capacity of CET College lecturers to deliver on skills and occupational programmes, beyond formal adult schooling;
- Inadequate funding for CET Colleges; and
- Lack of diversified programme offerings at CET Colleges.

It is therefore important that deliberations at this Summit must consider these recommendations from the Regional Summits.

In addition to all these proposals, it is my view that CET Colleges must play a significant role in offering civic education to our communities which is critical to entrench an understanding of our country, its values, our democratic and developmental ideals, and our Constitution.

This is important because inherent in civic education should also be about promoting moral values that seek to build responsible citizens which the country needs in the face of the escalating scourge of gender-based violence and many other social ills.

## ON STANDARDISATION

Ladies and gentlemen

As we are working hard to ensure that we refocus the CET colleges to be at the centre of our skills development system, I am also aware of the standardisation challenges experienced by some of the CET college lecturers.

While good progress has been made in the processing of standardisation commitments, there remains pockets of concern which the Director-General and the DHET team are working with the sector to resolve.

Just to explain what the standardisation process is all about. Following the transfer of ABET Educators from Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) to DHET in 2015, 9 CET colleges were established during which staff were transferred with no changes to their conditions of service as protected by Section 197 of the Labour Relations Act (LRA).

Since then, it became clear to the Department that the academic staff within the CET colleges were under different pay regimes in different provinces, with some staff being paid notches that were not aligned to the Public Service Act (PSA) or Employment of Educators Act salary scales.

In addition, some staff were receiving benefits while others received 37% cash in lieu of benefits, and hours of work were different depending on which provincial department of education the staff had previously worked for.

The above became a matter of a national dispute and was raised by recognized unions in the GPSSBC, resulting eventually in being addressed by the Department and unions as stated in a Settlement Agreement signed by parties of the GPSSBC in Feb 2019 as "Provision of standardised benefits for CET Colleges".

As indicated, I am happy of the process to standardise benefits for the CET Colleges.

Director General Sishi and the Deputy Director General Futshane are keeping me informed of the developments. I urge all involved in deliberations to support the process so that outstanding issues can be concluded without any further delays.

## SKILLS STRATEGY

This summit also takes place after negotiations have been concluded in NEDLAC on our PSET Skills Strategy. I now expect that the Strategy will be finalised and approved for implementation.

One of the key pillars of the strategy is on the expansion of short skills programmes – accredited and unaccredited. I know this has been one of the debates in NEDLAC and I am happy that parties seem to be finding each other on this matter. The Skills Strategy will surely assist our sector to respond adequately to the skills demands of our economy.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I am committed to ensuring that the Department and the Ministry work in collaboration with all partners and stakeholders to achieve the outcomes of this Summit. I remain steadfast and committed to the growth, development, consolidation and transformation of the CET Sector! I privilege no single subsector of the PSET system, but I seek to equally strengthen and grow all of them, with particular emphasis on more rapid growth for the college sector!

To ensure that we waste no further time in ensuring provision of further education and mass skilling that our economy so desperately needs, I will expect to receive a full report and set of recommendations within a month of the conclusion of this Summit.

There must also be an implementation plan must have clearly defined responsibilities and time frames.

I want to end by challenging especially the CET College Councils and the principals by saying that you have to be innovative, creative and reach out to all the stakeholders and to your communities to make all what we have spoken about here does become a reality! Please disabuse yourself of the idea that all you are leading are adult schools! CETs are a completely different reality; whose task is that of mass skilling of out of school youth and adults. For this to succeed you must be out there forging and driving partnerships.

College councils must supervise college principals to ensure that they forge dynamic partnerships, including for creatively raising the much-needed resources by the sector. Any CET College principal without such partnerships does not deserve to be in this sector. I say to the principals, please strengthen and closely supervise your various learning sites so that they offer the variety of the skills and learning programmes we need. Start by piloting through your stronger learning sites!

I also urge the DG, the DDG, working together with the trade unions in the sector, to work towards resolving all outstanding labour relations and conditions of service matters without any delay, so we stabilise the sector. No labour relations issue must be impossible to resolve.

I am proud we have absorbed the overwhelming majority of educators and staff in the CET sector and now have permanent jobs, and we have taken them out of the uncertainties of precarious contract and part time employment. This is the achievement of one of my most important goals since I became Minister in this sector!

I eagerly await the outcomes and resolutions of this all -important Summit.

With these words, I wish you all a fruitful, engaging and successful Summit.

Thank you