

MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION, DR BLADE NZIMANDE ADDRESS ON THE OCCASION OF THE TVET COLLEGES STRATEGIC INDUSTRIAL PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT HELD AT THE CAPE TOWN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE

27 July 2022

Programme Directors;  
Dr Nkosinathi Sishi, DHET DG and senior management and officials of the Department of Higher Education and Training and the Department of Science, and Innovation;  
Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science, and Innovation, Ms Nompandolo Mkatshwa;  
My Special Advisors;  
Senior management and officials of sister departments;  
TVET College Principals;  
Representatives from business and industry  
President and Members of the South African Public Colleges Organisation (SAPCO);  
Chairperson and Members of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges Governors' Council (TVETCGC);  
President and Members of the South African Technical and Vocational Education and Training Student Association (SATVETSA);  
SETA Chief Executive Officers and Officials;  
Community Education and Training College Principals;  
Organised Labour Representatives;  
Distinguished Guests;  
Members of the Media;  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am greatly honoured to welcome you all to the inaugural two-day TVET Colleges Strategic Industry Partnerships Summit hosted by the Department of Higher Education and Training.

Over the years the TVET college sector has hosted various events and activities which have assisted us greatly to focus our attention on improving the provision of technical and vocational education in our country. But today's event is the one that is closest to my heart - forging dynamic strategic partnerships with industry!

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 how to strengthen TVET colleges partnerships, particularly with regard to Work Based Learning.

I also wish to upfront call upon all employers to open their workplaces for the placement of both TVET college students as well as to give workplace exposure to TVET college lecturers, so that what is taught is relevant and also needed by industry.

The primary aim of these placements is to assist the transition of our young people from learning to working.

Deputy Director General Zungu, I have previously stated on numerous platforms that TVET college management, especially Principals, must know that they are not running TVET colleges unless they prioritise building partnerships with industry.

Recently, I gave a directive that all TVET college Principals should sign new Performance Agreements that include Industry Partnerships as one of their Key Performance Indicators.

This decision was informed by the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training which requires Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) to be a central component of the college programmes and that the extent to which students are able to get placements in the workplace must be used as an important indicator for assessing the performance of the management of institutions.

As TVET college Principals, you owe it to the youth and the country to manage student admissions with the end in mind and this calls for the establishment of strategic partnerships with industry.

It will indeed be a travesty of justice and a serious indictment on us, as leaders, if we were to allow our inaction to cause TVET colleges to become a dead-end for students.

I still visit too many workplaces, including those closer to our TVET college campuses, but not a single TVET college student is to be found placed there. This must come to an end!

One of our core responsibilities as leaders is to break down barriers to opportunities by creating pathways for young people to access skills training programmes, access workplace-based training, articulate into higher education, and pursue self-employment without any hindrance.

To this end I have also asked DSI to assist by support innovation programmes and initiatives in our TVET colleges. The DHET must also help in introducing entrepreneurship programmes in our TVET colleges.

Ladies and gentlemen, this Summit also came in a month in which we celebrate the Nelson Mandela International Day on the 18th July every year. On this day, citizens of the world are called-up to make a difference in their communities.

Today at this Summit, in the spirit of Nelson Mandela, I am calling upon yourselves to take action and inspire change in the PSET sector, particularly within our TVET colleges.

In one of his quote about education, Nelson Mandela said:

“Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president

of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another.”

## OVERVIEW OF OUR TVET COLLEGES

Ladies and gentlemen

Our vision remains that of providing an integrated, coordinated and highly articulated Post-School Education and Training System for improved economic participation and social development of our youth and adults.

Our Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges cater for many South Africans who need to improve their educational levels and/or acquire a skill.

To this end, the ability of TVET college Principals to lead the forging of partnerships with industry and/or workplaces is of critical importance.

I am glad that all the key stakeholders are represented here today and that includes representation from TVET college management and students, CET colleges, Government Departments, SETAs, academia, organised business, organised labour, State Owned Companies, and other key skills development partners.

The National Development Plan (NDP) emphasises the importance of workplace-based training in job creation and the need for TVET colleges to become preferred institutions for vocational education and training.

It also stresses the role of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) in supporting the development of relationships between educational institutions and employers.

There are 50 TVET colleges operating across more than 270 campuses around the country in both rural and urban settings, and there are 21 SETAs in South Africa, covering 21 industry sector clusters.

However, the main challenge in South Africa is youth unemployment, which remains high at 66.5% for young people between the ages of 15-24 years, whereas the number of those who are not in employment, education and training is 3.4 million for the same cohort.

The expansion of workplace-based learning opportunities for students has proven to be a challenge in the TVET college sector and this might have, in part, prompted President Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa in his State of the Nation (SoNA) Address on 10 February 2022 to mandate the Department of Higher Education and Training to, amongst others, place 10,000 unemployed TVET graduates in workplaces from April 2022.

In response to the SONA, as a Department we made a commitment to ensure that 10 000 TVET college graduates are offered workplace experience so that they can

complete their qualifications, thus improving their prospects for employability or starting their own small businesses.

In this regard, I had further requested that the TVET Branch should host this very important Summit with a view to strengthening partnerships and soliciting support from industry to ensure expansion of workplace-based learning opportunities for TVET college students.

Ladies and gentlemen

There are signs that this partnership is beginning to work as the roles and contribution of each partner are becoming clearly defined and understood by all.

Industry and workplaces are absolutely crucial as there is no artisan that can be produced only through theory without practical work experience.

Work integrated learning speaks directly to the vision of the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training which emphasises the crucial role of technical and vocational education that combines academic and workplace learning.

Hence our slogan of “Together, turning every workplace into a training space” which is embedded in our National Skills Development Strategy.

The hosting of this important summit provides an opportunity to all key stakeholders gathered here today to fully engage on how we can collaborate and strengthen our efforts to turn every workplace into a training space.

I always say employers and industry cannot be blaming government for not producing the skills needed unless industry is able to provide workplaces for practical experience.

I have directed our DG, Dr Sishi to work with senior management of the DHET to come up with a training strategy in support of the measures announced by the President day before yesterday to support the electricity generation plans and alternative sources of energy. Addressing the problems facing Eskom must be a training space for engineering apprentices and professional engineers and other related skills so as to ensure continuous supplying of the much needed skills in our energy sector. Our TVET colleges and SETAs must be alive to this challenge and rise to the occasion.

Our Department of Science and Innovation is already part of the team led by the DG in the Presidency to address the challenges facing Eskom.

The Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) emphasizes the need for industry training to be leveraged on to support the drive to build and strengthen the required skills base.

Therefore, employers cannot afford to be bystanders in the process of training artisans and other mid-level skills offered in our TVET college system. For the

prosperity of individual citizens, as well as the economy at large, industry must be involved in every aspect of life at a TVET college.

We also need to ensure the involvement of the public sector (eg. Our municipalities and government departments, as well as state-owned enterprises) in our effort to place our students.

There are huge advantages to employers when they open their workplaces to TVET college students for experiential learning.

I may not be a businessman but to me this actually makes sound business sense.

Having TVET college graduates with relevant skills and experience will translate into a larger pool of talent that employers can choose from.

As mentioned earlier, the issue of high unemployment cannot solely be government's responsibility. The social unrest we continue to observe in our country is partly as a result of youth uncertainty about their employability and this cannot be good for our country.

As a result, I call upon business to more than ever join hands with us to tackle youth unemployment and skills training.

As Government, we have made great strides to create conducive conditions for such partnerships to happen.

We have developed legal and regulatory frameworks, we have also invested quite a great deal in TVET colleges including the employment of competent personnel and management; although much more is still needed to expand and improve our TVET colleges.

The 2017 TVET Imbizo resolved, amongst others, that the TVET college sector must prioritise governance and management, improving financial management, curriculum review, professional development of academic staff, and establishment of partnerships linkages and relationships.

Whilst we acknowledge progress on some of these resolutions there are some that still requires attention including the issues of colleges building and strengthening industry partnerships, hence this important summit.

Ladies and gentlemen

Since 2018, the Department of Higher Education and Training has embarked on a plan to review and update programmes and qualifications offered at TVET colleges in order to align them with the needs of the rapidly changing economy and society. This plan has focused on the following aspects of the curriculum:

1. Integrating digital skills knowledge into current programmes;
2. Introducing new programmes focusing on robotics in response to the 4IR;

3. Phasing out of outdated programmes such as Report 191 programme N1 - N3;
4. Reconstruction of Engineering programmes in collaboration with the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) to make them more responsive to the changing industry environment;
5. Revision and updating of subject content. In this regard, the Department has updated curricula in at least 60 subjects of the Report 191 programme since 2018; and
6. Aligning TVET College Programmes and Qualification Mix (PQMs) with the skills needs of the country.

Aligning our colleges and their programmes to the world of work is a non-negotiable. However, the review and update of curriculum is a continuous process, and it has been prioritised by the Department as part of its strategic plan.

All these positive developments that I have just highlighted would not have been possible without collaboration with the key stakeholders such as QCTO, Labour, SETAs, Industry, Universities and Universities of Technologies.

I have seen some positive changes in TVET colleges, but colleges need more and better support.

By 2030, TVET colleges must be strong differentiated institutions, offering a range of high-quality programmes preparing students for the world of work and entrepreneurship. They must offer qualifications that are responsive to the needs of students, as well as regional and national skills demand.

Deputy Director General Mvalo, it pleases me that many of our colleges are running SETA funded occupational programmes. These programmes are commonly believed to have significant labour market currency.

The importance of these programmes is that they are directly linked to employer needs and generally involve work placements as part of the programme.

Acting Executive Officer, Mr Mabusela, I am also pleased that the National Skills Fund (NSF) has committed to continue investing in TVET colleges towards funding over 15,000 students per annum in occupationally directed programmes, which are linked to scarce and critical skills areas, especially with regards to artisan development.

Our established Centres of Specialisation based in more than 20 TVET colleges continue to focus on employer linked, quality training in thirteen (13) designated trades. These Centres of Specialisation have already trade tested 119 apprentices who have now qualified as artisans.

An Advanced Diploma in Technical and Vocational Teaching is being offered by the Nelson Mandela University (NMU), Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), University of Johannesburg (UJ), and Vaal University of Technology (VUT). This is

an initial professional qualification targeting underqualified or unqualified lecturers to ensure that they attain a TVET specific and relevant professional qualification.

The Department through collaboration with various institutions, provides in-service training and development to lecturers to ensure that they are fit for purpose. For example, Cisco has been training over 1,000 lecturers across all TVET colleges in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) knowledge and skills which includes, amongst others, Introduction to Cyber Security, and Introduction to Internet of Things.

Furthermore, the Department in collaboration with the Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA) has conceived a Lecturer Development Programme which is aimed at benefitting 270 TVET college lecturers nationally.

This programme has clearly demonstrated the need and significance of developing the capacity of lecturers. The greater benefit is improved quality training for TVET students and job creation through Work Integrated opportunities as a spin off from the programme.

Lastly on issues of work-based learning, I will be hosting a gala dinner where I will be giving away awards in recognition of TVET colleges and companies that have placed the highest number of students for workplace-based learning.

Manzini, I am quite concerned that we have not made significant progress towards attaining the target of placing 10,000 unemployed TVET graduates in workplaces.

What is more concerning though is the report that the majority of SETAs have not made commitments to place these unemployed TVET graduates.

I however remain optimistic that the SETA CEOs and employers will support the Department to deliver on the mandate of the President and respectively make commitments and pledges, at the gala dinner tonight, to place students in the workplace for experiential learning.

Ladies and gentlemen

## TRANSFORMATION OF GENDER RELATIONS AND THE FIGHT AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN THE PSET SECTOR AND WORKPLACES

This Summit will also engage on the issue of Gender Based Violence and Femicide in the PSET sector and the corporate environment in general, particularly as we now seeking partnerships with the industry.

The PSET sector is a microcosm of our communities and has been significantly affected by this GBV pandemic.

As a Department we have developed a Policy Framework to Address Gender- Based Violence and through HIGHER HEALTH, we increased awareness of the continuum of GBV and I engaged all our institutions to improve their campus safety and security.

In the recent past, we had observed the gruesome murders of our students mostly within their residential areas. This include the barbaric murder of Nosiselo Mtebeni, the Fort Hare University student, Precious Ramabulana, the Capricorn TVET College student, Uyinene Mrwetyana, the University of Cape Town (UCT) student, Nthabiseng Rampai, the Goldfields TVET College student in Welkom in the Free State, Jesse Hess, the University of the Western Cape theology student and many more.

I have personally denounced such barbaric and shameful acts against women, both in our institutions of learning and in society in general. Our society cannot continue another day harbouring such disgraceful people, who are hell-bent to tear the moral fibre of our society apart.

It is therefore important that the industry at this Summit commit to the fight against GBV, discrimination based on gender, and patriarchal attitudes and practices in their workplace, in order to further ensure that our workplaces equally accommodated and support the participation of men and women, including students placed for work-based learning.

## FIGHTING AGAINST CORRUPTION AND INFRASTRUCTURE BUILD

In 1999, when opening Parliament, President Nelson Mandela said, “Our hope for the future depends also on our resolution as a nation in dealing with the scourge of corruption”

As the PSET sector, we therefore need to intensify our campaign against corruption and state capture tendencies, and redeem the image of our institutions. Similarly we need to break the chain of corruption between the private and public sectors.

We must always remember that our institutions are places for education and intellectual empowerment of our youth, not places for tenders and self-enrichment.

Over the past ten years, we have strengthened our investment in infrastructure projects across our 26 universities by investing a total of R21.2 billion, of which 7.6 billion was earmarked for HDIs amounted to 37.4%.

We are prioritising equipment and teaching resources, including a conducive student living and learning environment.

We will also use the Capital Infrastructure Expansion Grant to address the serious backlogs in infrastructure maintenance in TVET colleges, with particular focus on improving the teaching and learning environment.

To further illustrate our determination to provide decent student accommodation, I held the ground breaking Accommodating Tomorrow’ Summit, led by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) on the 27 June 2022 in Mangaung.

Part of the objectives of the summit was to have a discussion on the management of student accommodation that is privately owned - a matter that often causes a lot of problems and challenges.



Ladies and gentlemen

Let me conclude by saying that the purpose of this summit is to reflect on where we come from and to collectively forge the way forward as we reflect and take stock on the progress we have made and the challenges we have yet to tackle.

Work with us as the private sector and industry to reduce skills bottlenecks, especially in priority skills areas; improving participation rates in the system; and generally expand quality technical and vocational education in our country.

The foundation has been laid - Together we can build the ideal TVET system capable of addressing the skills needs of our country!

I will be delighted to see at the end of the summit more partnerships emerge and existing ones strengthened to train more of our TVET graduates.

I look forward to the deliberations and to hear your views on how we make TVET colleges more responsive to the needs of industry and how industry supports the strengthening of our TVET sector.

Director-General, Dr Sishi, I would like to thank you and your team in preparing for this Summit. Let me thank all of you the participants in this Summit for setting aside time to be part of the deliberations here. Off-course we need to get very concrete proposals coming out of this Summit.

I wish you successful deliberations!

Thank you.