

THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION, DR
BLADE NZIMANDE ADDRESS ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2023 BUDGET VOTE

Honourable House Chairperson;
Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Honourable Buti
Manamela;
Chairperson and Members of the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science
and Innovation;
Director-General of the Department;
Greetings to my special guests- learners from schools I have adopted;
Honourable Members;

INTRODUCTION

I dedicate our 2023/24 budget to the memory of our fallen heroes and heroines
within the Post School Education and Training sector who recently passed on.

I am talking of the likes of David Niddrie, who was my Ministerial envoy responsible
for advising me on the National Skills Development policies and strategy and also on
the criteria for the allocation of funds from the National Skills Authority (NSA).

Niddrie was also a stalwart of the liberation movements, in particular of the South
African Communist Party (SACP), the African National Congress (ANC) and the
Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

My thoughts are also with Mboneli Vesele, Peter Roets family, Busiwe Notyawe,
Sesethu Dweba, Asanda Ngubo, Lesego Tsindo, Sydney Maseko, Thabang Ndlovu
and Ntokozo Xaba and Professor Dan Kgwadi, to mention a few who we lost
recently. All these individuals were either employees and students within our PSET.

Our budget vote is also taking place during South Africa's year of hosting of BRICS.
I held the 15th BRICS Academic Forum and I will also be hosting the 10th BRICS
Meeting of Education Ministers on 14 July 2023 in Mpumalanga province.

Honourable Members

The National Plan for Post School Education and Training has six goals and
associated objectives and four ideas emerge as the new drivers for the system.

First, the massification of the college system with 1 million enrolled in the Community
Colleges and 2.5 million in public and private TVET colleges by 2030.

Secondly, the diversification of the public universities based on their strengths and
the needs of the communities in which they are located supported by a 1.6million
enrolment target.

This is the reason that our immediate task as a Department is to change the size and
shape of our PSET system particularly to expand the college sector.

The time has arrived for us to drastically increase intake in TVET and Community Colleges.

Honourable Members

Through HIGHER HEALTH, we have reached over 2 million students in all our public universities, TVET and CET campuses by leading the COVID-19 response for the PSET sector.

Last year, over 700 000 students were beneficiaries of Higher Health's health and psychosocial support programmes.

In August this year, I will be hosting a Summit to mobilising men behind GEWE. This will be based on the UNESCO's programme in fighting toxic masculinities

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Honourable Members

In this financial year, we will be updating the National List of Occupations in High Demand and piloting the provincial lists of Occupations in High Demand in collaboration with two provinces of Mpumalanga and Western Cape.

We are also working on the skills for the hydrogen economy project, in collaboration with Department of Science and Innovation (DSI).

Through our Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) combined, we opened up 52 701 learnership opportunities to the value of R1.6 billion in the last financial year.

We opened up 14 475 internships opportunities to the value of R758 Million.

We opened up 14 954 TVET placement opportunities to the value of R726 Million and we also committed to achieve a target of 20 000 placements of TVET graduates work placements.

Our SETAs combined opened up 7 095 university students work placements to the value of R311 Million and we also awarded 13 169 bursaries in various fields on skills in high demand to the value of R970 Million.

We opened up 34 514 skills programs opportunities for the unemployed to the value of R278 Million.

We also reskilled and upskilled 36 502 individuals in various sectors of the economy to the value of R494 Million.

A sum of R1,7 billion was disbursed by the National Skills Fund towards its bursaries programme in 2021/22, benefitting students enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in scarce and critical skills.

In the current financial year, at least 5 000 students will receive NSF funding for undergraduate and postgraduate studies.

For the 2023/24 financial year, we have set for ourselves the following targets as part of expanding training opportunities:

- 110 500 workplace-based learning (WBL) opportunities;
- 149 000 learners to be registered in skills development programs;
- 23 000 learners to enter artisanal programs;
- 21 000 learners to pass artisanal trades;
- 32 550 learners to complete learnerships; and
- 6 450 learners to complete internships.

TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET)

Honourable Members

Currently 26 of our colleges are engaged in entrepreneurial training through our Entrepreneurship Hubs. We are working to ensure that all our colleges are involved in some form of entrepreneurship training in the next three (3) years.

We have also expanded our Centres of Specialisation from 26 to 34 Centres at 20 TVET Colleges with a further investment of R68 million and 16 Colleges now have 35 Trade Test Centres.

These trade test centres have trade tested over 600 artisans of which over 500 have qualified as artisans.

Last year, I hosted the first-ever centralised national artisan graduation ceremony for artisans qualifying on the top thirteen (13) of the trades in high demand.

As a Department we will also be hosting a TVET Curriculum Review and Transformation seminar from the 28th -30th August 2023.

We are standardizing our registration and admission processes in our TVET colleges to do away with different processes which have been applied by our colleges. This will include standardization in the processes of issuing of certificates.

This standardization process will also help us in the migration from manual to online registration processes in all our TVET colleges.

We have also witnessed student growth in several colleges that have now begun to embrace the use of technology in their enrolment processes and reducing the number of walk-ins at TVET colleges.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Honourable members

Through our Community Colleges, we have made the youth our important focus and a priority particularly for the youth that is “Not in Education, employment or training (NEET).

We have also created opportunities for our older generation who wish to enter our educational institutions.

We have also allocation R200 million from the National Skills Fund to ensure that we achieve our objective of increasing offerings of skills programmes in our TVET Colleges.

Through the National Skills Fund, we have allocated funds for capacity building of Community College lecturers, introduced skills programmes, learnerships and non-formal programmes. This includes the introduction of Civic Education.

University Education

To ensure that the entire public sector university system is developed, we are intensifying the implementation of the University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP).

Over a period of seven (7) years, we have allocated a total of 758 lecturer posts to universities and in the current financial year additional 85 posts will be allocated to universities as part of the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP). This brings the total allocated posts to universities to 843 by end of the current financial year.

Of the total of 583 lecturers participating (nGAP), 338 (58%) are Female and 245 (42%) are Males; 569 are Black (African, Coloured and Indian) and 14 are White.

We are also continuing to rollout development programmes through the Professor Sibusiso Bhengu Development programme to strengthen our historically disadvantaged universities.

I have also commissioned the Council on Higher Education to conduct a study on blended learning.

Since our publication of the draft Central Application Service Bill for public comments, we now have received valuable comments which we are studying in the Draft. Parallel to this process, we have initiated a pilot project of the Central Application Service for the academic years, 2023, 2024 and 2025.

Student funding

In relation to student funding, we now are working towards the finalisation of a new Comprehensive Student Funding Model, based on the considerations of this report which we aim to submit to Cabinet before the end of this year.

We aim through this also to introduce measures to support all the categories of students including those who are not supported by the current NSFAS funding policy.

We are proud to say that the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) is currently funding 1.1 million students with a budget allocation of R47,6 billion in the 2023 academic year. Of this amount, universities have been allocated R38.6 billion and TVET Colleges R8,9 billion for the first time we have passed the 1million mark.

At its inception in 1991, the scheme had a budget of R21.4 million allocated to the first cohort of about 7000 students.

In 2023, SASSA beneficiaries account for 49% of the funded students in 2023.

To date, the scheme improved its student application portal and it has introduced a WhatsApp and USSD functionality to assist students with the tracking of applications for 2023 and to receive responses directly in order to reduce the reliance on the call center.

NSFAS pays for the full cost of study which includes full tuition, accommodation limited to R45 000 per annum, a measure to ensure that we curb overreaching by student accommodation service providers.

It stands to reason, that NSFAS should be involved in the student accommodation space and introduce controls as it spends approximately R14 billion a year on student accommodation.

In this regard, NSFAS has opened its accreditation portal to accommodation providers to apply for accreditation. Already, 8196 beds have been accredited covering the Eastern Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal Provinces.

NSFAS also pays living allowances in the sum of R 1750 per month and personal care for distance students to the value of R 3 045 per academic year. Students not living in residences and private accommodation qualify for transport allowances of R 7 875.

On average, a student is funded to the tune of R 95 552, excluding Unisa students who only receive books as allowances because they offer distance learning.

Last year NSFAS also introduced direct payments through the NSFAS bank card for TVET Colleges. Groundwork is being done to onboard universities in a phased in approach from the 1st of June this year.

Infrastructure development

Honourable members

To date, the Department has invested over R3.701 Billion for the maintenance and repairs of TVET Colleges' infrastructure through the Capital Infrastructure and Efficiency Grant (CIEG) since the grant inception during the 2018/19 financial year.

In addition to maintenance and repairs, CIEG is also used for upgrading the Information Technology (IT) infrastructure.

In relation to TVET Capital Projects, a total of nine (9) TVET College Campuses have been completed at a cost of R2.6 billion.

The total amount currently available for investment in infrastructure projects across all the 26 existing universities during the 2023/24-2025/26 MTEF period is R8.662 billion.

We have completed feasibility studies for the establishment of the University of Science and Innovation in Ekurhuleni and the Crime Detection University in Hammanskraal. The new universities should see actual construction in the coming year or two.

I am therefore pleased to report that the process for the allocation of the R182.11 million towards Imbali Educational Precinct projects has been completed.

We have also commenced with a feasibility study for the establishment of the Giyani Education Precinct through the establishment of a University Campus with the Tshwane University of Technology.

I am also pleased to report that the construction design phase for the Ulundi Campus of the University of Zululand will commence in this current financial year and that the actual construction should commence in the 2024/25 financial year.

The review of the existing DHET-National Treasury-DBSA partnership for the delivery of the Student Housing Infrastructure Programme (SHIP) is also reaching finality.

In the meantime, a total of 8282 beds have been delivered across 6 institutions at a cost of R2.13 billion and the institutions include Nelson Mandela University, North-West University, University of Western Cape, Nelson Mandela University, University of Fort Hare and Vaal University of Technology.

Funding for Phase 2 SHIP projects at 4 institutions - Gert Sibande TVET College, Majuba TVET College, Tshwane University of Technology, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal have been approved and the planning of these projects has commenced. The total budget for the projects is R2.136 billion.

We have secured R1 billion rand over a three-year period within our budget for the construction of nine (09) Community College Learning Centres.

This is history in the making as this is the first time that we are investing in infrastructure for Community Colleges.

The construction of the first three Community College Centres will commence in the current 2023/24 financial year. The days of ABET and night schools are over!!!

We have also ensured that we refurbish our infrastructure and customise our teaching to cater for the requirements of the people living with disabilities.

Honourable members

Our budget for the 2023/24 financial year is R133.8 billion, with an annual average increase of 5.3%.

in conclusion, I would like to thank the Honourable President, Deputy President, Cabinet Colleagues, DG Sishi, the members of the Portfolio Committee for their support engagement.

I also would like to thank the USAf, SAPCO, SAUS, SATVETSA and our trade unions for working with us to achieve the goals that we have set for ourselves.

Gratitude also goes to my wife, my staff in the Ministry and to the entire Executive Management Committee and Staff of the Department, the Boards and Executives of our Entities, and everybody who contributed toward the achievement of our mandate as the department.

I thank you.