

MEDIA STATEMENT

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TO: All media

ATTENTION: News Editors/ Reports

For Immediate use:

MINISTER NZIMANDE RESPONSE TO SASCO DAY OF ACTION MEMORANDUM ON TVET COLLEGES

The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dr Blade Nzimande, has noted the South African Student Congress (SASCO) memorandum on TVET Colleges as submitted today, 15th October 2020 to the Office of the President. The information provided below should not be seen as a substitute for any further direct engagement with the SASCO leadership, which may be needed in taking this matter forward.

The Ministry appreciates the critical importance of the issues raised in the SASCO memorandum and the correct strategic emphasis placed on building the capacity and expanding the TVET College sector. This view is consistent with my view that our country must invert the university-centric nature of the South African post-school education and training system if we are to successfully meet the needs of the National Development Plan. We must immediately note that some significant strides have been made in the last two years, although clearly much still remains to be done. This includes a number of interventions related to the demands made in the Memorandum:

ON THE REVIEW OF THE TVET COLLEGE CURRICULUM

The Department has undertaken a major review of TVET curricula since 2018. As a result of this process, thirty-eight (38) subject curricula have been reviewed and in the process of being evaluated by Umalusi and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupation (QCTO). Fourteen of these curricula will be implemented in January 2021.

All the ICT-related curricula have already been reviewed and will be implemented on a phased-in basis also from January 2021.

“Furthermore, a new Robotics stream will be introduced in the NC(V) programme IT and Computer Science in 2021,” said Minister Nzimande.

However, we must note the severe disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to this process. As a result, we have been forced to shift the implementation of some components of the curricula review from 2021 to 2022 in order to ensure that there is sufficient time for preparations and training of the lecturers.

“The early work for the establishment of a lecturer training institute in Gauteng has begun and will soon gain traction. It must also be noted that the establishment of new TVET lecturer qualifications and the development of associated programmes and their offering by universities is well underway,” said Minister Nzimande.

Currently fourteen **(14)** universities are developing TVET College educational and training qualifications. Eleven **(11)** programmes have already been accredited by the Council on Higher Education, three **(3)** are already being offered, and the other eight **(8)** are planned to be offered from 2021.

“Since 2019 all qualifying students get either a travel or accommodation allowance, plus a personal care allowance to cover the personal requirements of students. In essence this constitutes free education for most students who progress in their studies”, said Minister Nzimande.

ON URGENT DEVELOPMENT AND REVAMPING OF INFRASTRUCTURE IN TVET COLLEGES

The Capital Infrastructure Efficiency Grant (CIEG) was made available to all 50 Colleges for this purpose since 2016/17. This grant has been created specifically for repairs and maintenance of teaching and learning spaces in all our institutions, including at our Colleges. Colleges have developed plans for all campuses where such repairs are urgent to make the learning environment suitable. I am, in addition, looking into more accelerated repairs and maintenance as spending on this grant is way far behind.

ON HIRING OF QUALIFIED AND COMPETENT LECTURERS

Since the publication of the Gazette on minimum professional qualifications for TVET lecturers in June 2013, Colleges are using these minimum standards in the recruitment of lecturers. Also, the Department is working with several universities in the development and offering of TVET-specific lecturer qualifications, which will then provide a pool of properly qualified staff for colleges to employ. These lecturers will be equipped with theoretical and practical knowledge. They are also required to undergo work-based experience in order to qualify to teach. This new generation of lecturers will start filtering into the system from 2022.

ON THE COMPULSORY PLACEMENT OF TVET GRADUATES FOR INTERNSHIP AND INTRODUCTION OF TRADE TESTING WITHIN CAMPUSES TO QUALIFY AS ARTISANS

The placement of TVET students for internships and experiential learning is dependent on the availability of learning opportunities in the labour market around a College. If this is made compulsory then the enrolment numbers into Colleges must match the learning spaces made available by local employers, and this will seriously drive down the enrolment numbers in colleges. There is however the compulsion for Colleges to place

TVET students in workplaces who are at the exit levels of their studies, and this being undertaken on a wide scale and is gaining serious traction. This system must be drastically upscaled given the importance of the College-industry interface. We have also agreed to work with the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany to adapt valuable and relevant insights from the Germany vocational training system with its robust links with industry. We also want to see a stronger relationship between the TVET Colleges and our SETA's.

TIMEOUS DELIVERY OF CERTIFICATES AND DIPLOMAS TO GRADUATES

The Department is working very hard at meeting the 3-month turnaround time to issue certificates after students have met all their academic requirements. This target has been met just before the onset of COVID -19. There is currently a major effort underway to eliminate the certifications backlog from 1992. This is done in conjunction with SITA and Umalusi. Students who lodge requests for certificates via the call centre will be responded to immediately in the meantime.

However the challenge of certification is complex, and because of this, Minister Nzimande intends to appoint a Ministerial Task Team to urgently look into this matter.

ON LINKING THE NON-FORMAL ARTS WORK WITH FORMAL TVET

We acknowledge the strategic logic of this demand and the DHET is committed to ensuring a progressive TVET system is developed in the context of post-school education and training strategy.

ON THE FORMALISATION/INTEGRATION OF ALREADY EXISTING NON-FORMAL SKILLS TO CREATE AND ENHANCE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES OF UNSKILLED AND ILLITERATE ADULTS AND THE YOUTH

This goal must be addressed through the development of a robust and well-functioning Community Education and Training (CET) College system which has been provided for the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training.

ON BUILDING TVET CAMPUS PER EACH SUB-DISTRICT

Whilst this is desirable, financial constraints have made it difficult to build TVET campuses per each sub-district. Our investigations have shown that to operationalise a new small campus requires an annual investment of at least R600million. This excludes the initial building and set-up costs. To make the provision of TVET education and training sustainable, we are committed to expanding existing campuses to reach more students, as well as embarking on distance and open learning initiatives. The COVID pandemic has catalyzed such initiatives in many Colleges already.

ON THE INTRODUCTION OF HEALTH FACILITIES WHERE THERE IS NONE

Colleges are supported by Higher Health to access health services in health facilities close to the colleges. Many Colleges are already being serviced by mobile clinics, and this will be expanded to cover all Colleges in the future.

ON THE URGENT BUILDING OF NINE (9) TVET COLLEGES

There are nine (9) campuses nearing completion – but not nine (9) Colleges. All these campuses will be completed by end of 2021, whilst two (2) will be completed by end of this year (2020). It must also be noted that there has been delays in 2020 caused by COVID 19 epidemic, however, we remain committed to operationalise all these new campuses, upon the availability of funding from the National Treasury.

ON OVERSIGHT BODY TO TRACK TRANSFORMATION ON THE SECTOR

The Minister is central to driving the transformation agenda of the Post School Education and Training sector. The oversight of Colleges is undertaken at different levels – at the level of individual Colleges, Councils are responsible for governance, supported by administrative oversight by the Regional Offices of the Department. All TVET Colleges have their core functions and responsibilities set by the Department and are monitored accordingly.

BUILDING MORE STUDENT RESIDENCES AND ACCOMMODATION IN TVET COLLEGES

There is an overarching project in the Department that deals with student residences in an integrated way for both universities and TVET colleges. For TVET colleges however, the long term goal is to have students study closer to their institutions so that they can be absorbed into the local labour market and meet these needs. In this way we also build more stable and successful communities.

ON INNOVATION:

- Several colleges now have a Learner Management System (LMS) in place to support remote learning;
- There are several online learning materials available to students on the www.tvetcolleges.co.za platform;
- Plans are afoot to provide TVET college students with laptops from 2021 to ensure that digital learning is upscaled;

- Colleges are planning to move towards the use of e-books, which enables publishers to make electronic materials accessible to students, such as YouTube videos and web links;
- The Department has undertaken a major project to provide internet access to every single campus across the footprint of the country, through the SanRen infrastructure. Even the remotest campuses will be covered. At the moment the infrastructure is being piloted in a few colleges to test the system, with the full roll-out complete in 2021.
- The department has also entered several stakeholder partnerships that support digital skills training in TVET colleges, which includes amongst others CISCO and Huawei.

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