

**ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER  
EDUCATION AND TRAINING, MR BUTI MANAMELA,  
TO THE 2018 WIL AFRICA CONFERENCE**

**COSTLANDS UMHLANGA CONVENTION CENTRE,  
KZN**

**19 July 2018**

Programme Director,

The President and Members of the Southern African  
Society for Cooperative Education;

International and regional delegates

Representatives from our Higher Education Institutions

Senior Officials from Government

SETA CEOs and Officials,

Technical and Vocational Education and Training College

Representatives,

Community Education and Training College

Representatives,

Organised Labour Representatives,

Business and Industry Representatives,

Skills Development Providers,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for inviting me to address you at this 2018 WIL-Africa Conference on Work Integrated Learning. The conference comes at the time when our country has a renewed focus on finding solutions to a range of issues confronting our growth and development agenda.

Beginning with the 2008 economic crisis that affected us and the rest of the world, it would appear that a decade later we have been slow to recover. A look at the current socio economic scenario would suggest that:

- Economic growth rates have remained suppressed and at times regressing;
- Employment numbers have remained largely flat implying that very little new jobs have been created; and
- Our unemployment rate is rising to unacceptable levels.

These challenges have inflicted deep economic pain to our people leading rising levels of dissatisfaction that manifested themselves in people taking to the streets asking government to do something.

As you might recall student protests over the last two years were a message to government and society that the costs of higher education are becoming unaffordable to the majority of our people. The solution, when it was eventually found, came at a cost to other areas of our growth and development. We had to sacrifice or scale down other education and training programmes to ease the burden on society.

Our problems are far from over. For me there are still three challenges our Post school education and training institutions must help us resolve:

The first is the problem of our young people not completing their qualifications on time. For each additional year spent repeating some aspects of the

programme of learning represents a cost to society. This makes our education system expensive and inefficient. There are many arguments on where this problem stems from but regardless of this we owe a debt to society to show that we are doing something about this problem.

The second problem relates to young people who are unable to complete their qualifications because of the inability to find workplaces where the curriculum requires workplace learning. This problem is prevalent in selected programmes offered by our Universities of Technology and TVET Colleges. A search for answers or causes to this problem often leads to fingers pointing in different directions, the lack of funding and unwilling employers etc. More than twenty years into our democracy we appear far from finding the right connections between institutions of learning and workplaces/industry to make work integrated learning possible.

It also appears some of our institutions are even considering dropping work integrated learning altogether from qualifications. I would urge that this decision is not

taken lightly or with haste as it has consequences for the future of our youth and the country at large.

It is encouraging that a number of employers like Bosch, Tsogo Sun, Bidvest, Siemens and Sappi are also participating in this conference. This is perhaps testimony that employers are willing to partner with us to make education more meaningful to the learner and the economy.

The third problem relates to the young people with qualifications finding it difficult to land their first job. For some it may take as many as five years to find the first job and even then the job has little to do with the qualification they possess.

One dominant narrative seems to be suggesting that industry does not consider the skills they have relevant to the job at hand- implying the post school system is training for the wrong jobs.

We do not have the time to examine and confirm/refute the merits of this argument, but suffice to say that the problem of graduate unemployment concerns to all of us: industry, education institutions, civil society and government. We must find a solution.

As I suggested, government has called for a renewed focus on getting our growth and development agenda back on track. I want to cite three areas where government will need the involvement of all of us.

Government and Industry/business have finally has agreed to do something about the rising tide of unemployed youth.

With figure now surpassing 6 million and spanning both rural and urban communities, young men and women. The burden is hardest for those who have failed to complete matric or study further. The longer young people remain unemployed, the harder it is for them to find work.

Structural factors such as spatial marginalization and resultant high transport costs, disappointing educational outcomes and poor matching of training and skills to demand are often cited as reasons for the high unemployment experienced in country. Their impact is particularly large on poor black youth, who lack the networks and know-how to access jobs.

The business constituency lies at the heart of job creation. The private sector is responsible for over 60 per cent of all jobs in South Africa.

On this basis Government and Business committed over the next three years to provide one million youth with paid workplace based learning opportunities through the Youth Employment Service (YES) programme. The programme intends to provide a young person with a one year quality work experience with training – technical and as well as on the job support.

The call is on all of us to support this programme. It may also offer a partial solution to the problem of young people not finding workplaces to complete their qualifications.

Government intends to convene a Job Summit later this year as announced by the President during the State of the Nation Address. This summit intends to look at areas of our economy that can be given the needed push to unlock growth and jobs. A key component that is likely to emerge from this Summit is a renewed focus of education and training- a call to do things differently.

We will be turning to our institutions and asking them to make sacrifices in their programme offerings to deliver those skills the economy requires now, in the medium and long term.

Government has pledged to raise \$100 billion (R1.3 trn) over the next five years. Recent reports suggest we have already received pledges totalling \$20 billion (R260 billion) with indications that the investments might be in renewable energy. The question we should ask ourselves

is “How ready are we with the skills required by these investors?

I have raised a number of issues relating to our economy and the socio economic conditions in our country not to detract this conference from its set agenda but to provoke your thoughts as you go back to your respective institution. I want you to take these issues back with you and think hard about how you are able to support work integrated learning.

We want you to open up your workplace so that every workplace becomes a training space.

I thank you.

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