

Minister Pandor's opening remarks at 9th Pan African TVET colleges conference

Table Bay Hotel, Waterfront, Cape Town

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President and North America Representative: Mr Allen Edwards

Vice President and African Representative: Mr Christopher Brink

European Representative: Mr Justin Togher

It's my honour and privilege to welcome you all to South Africa.

Technical and vocational education is going to be confronted by new training demands and changes in the next five years.

We are going through a technological revolution that goes by the acronym of 4IR. It's about artificial intelligence, big data, and the internet of things.

It's a revolution dominated by new technologies - nanotechnology, biotechnology, synthetic biology, applied neuroscience, geo-engineering, regenerative medicine, robotics, additive manufacturing, and, specifically, machine learning algorithms, the most important general-purpose technology in use today.

South Africa is in the process of modernising and strengthening TVET colleges and their role in skill development. We want our lecturers to contribute to aspects of these new technologies, but to date there is no comprehensive African strategy to take advantage of their many benefits.

Africa cannot afford to be left behind. We already have some of the components necessary to play a role, especially in our research universities and innovative mining and manufacturing sectors.

But much more needs to be done in the TVET college sector.

TVET systems in a growing number of African countries are undergoing promising reforms that are designed to build on the inherent strengths of the system.

Although the primary objective of technical and vocational training in Africa is to provide valuable employment for our young people, a strategic approach to skills development on the continent cannot ignore the effects of 4IR.

The vast skills and economic development needs of Africa mean that African countries must pursue the development of skills and entrepreneurship at all levels of the spectrum: basic, secondary and tertiary levels, with each country emphasizing the skills types that correspond best to their stage of economic development and the needs of the local labour market.

The challenges to meet these objectives remain huge. It is with conferences like these that we are able to share good practices, share our common objectives, and concretely commit our collective will to make these a reality.

TVET colleges have been identified as one of South Africa's priority policy areas.

Our government has over the years developed the links between the different parts of the post-school education and training system (universities, TVET institutions and the SETAs) and between them and the world of work in order to ensure that young people have better educational and economic opportunities.

TVET colleges should be recognised as vital national assets that empower the next generations with very practical skills and knowledge. They can make a crucial contribution to the ability of our economy to be competitive, if properly supported.

Our TVET colleges are moving to a 'contracted apprenticeship' model.

That's why we've invested so hugely in colleges from this year, so that we can reshape the colleges, and provide worthwhile opportunities for all young people who want to choose a career in a trade.

The 50 TVET colleges, with an enrolment of 700,000 students, are allocated R10,7 billion this year (up 45% from R7,4 billion in 2017). And R1,3 billion of this is for an

infrastructure grant, the first time we have earmarked such funding. This is a clear indication of the emphasis we're placing on TVETs.

This year our targeted free tuition scheme for students is being implemented for all years of study in colleges (only first year at universities) - 458,875 college students will receive bursaries for tuition and books; 50,480 students will receive travel, accommodation, and meals allowances; and 82,600 will receive a transport allowance.

Colleges operate in an increasingly commercial and enterprising way.

They are expected to innovate, pursue new opportunities and take measured risks in delivering what is best for their stakeholders.

In recent times, they have gone through major transformational change and we look to them to provide more and more young people with valuable careers in the future.

We now have a Quality Council responsible for setting qualifications and framework curricula for trades and occupations: the QCTO. It has been directed to re-unite theory, simulated practice and workplace learning into the design of their qualifications, and many of these new qualifications have been developed for trades.

Our challenge now is to offer these programmes in a more integrated fashion.

Some time ago, we borrowed from the Germans and embarked on a dual system pilot project, focusing on just two trades, electricians and plumbers. Many useful lessons have been learnt in this process, and we are deeply grateful for the collaboration we have had.

In 2019 we will begin our Centres of Specialisation Programme three-year pilot. We have identified thirteen trades and have selected twenty-six college sites, two per trade, and now plan to implement these programmes in the dual system modality with employer partners.

We have also borrowed from the Koreans and we are beginning to consider the Korean model in South Africa. The Koreans introduced training consortia based on partnerships between large companies and government.

For example, Samsung has a television manufacturing plant in the Dube Tradeport. To provide skills for the plant, Samsung partnered with the Coastal KwaZulu-Natal TVET College and the Department of Higher Education and Training to establish the Samsung Engineering Academy in KwaMashu.

International car companies - Volvo, Volkswagen, BMW - have similar academies to train the artisans they need.

Of course, business government partnerships are not new. Several international companies like Pfizer, Nestlé and Hitachi have invested in high-skilled research partnerships with government.

For example, government recently entered into a ten-year partnership with IBM South Africa in an ICT Research & Development and Innovation programme.

The partnership commits IBM to an investment of R700 million in a programme involving academic, enterprise development, and research components.

Are our TVET education systems and programmes relevant to the fourth industrial revolution?

It's time for the TVET college community to start a much needed conversation and debate about how to reshape vocational education into an adaptable, flexible and relevant environment to contribute to a rapidly changing society.

There are many who question the quality of TVET training in South Africa.

In my view, we are only going to succeed at addressing our problems in so far as we manage to establish partnerships across different stakeholder groups.

I've made it my own objective to establish strong partnerships with the business sector. So we are now going to pilot a programme from next year, so that when students enter the programme, they will already have an apprenticeship contract, and that is the way that TVET colleges should be.

We should have very strong links with industry.

All countries – developed and developing – need to rethink their models of education and models of teaching.

The sooner we start to be realistic about the changes the world is facing, the sooner we can move to address the challenges. Clearly, those who will be best suited to face the obstacles presented by an uncertain future will be those who are most ready to move with the times.

I wish the conference every success in its deliberations.

Thank you.

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