



## higher education & training

Department:  
Higher Education and Training  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

### **OPENING REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION, PROF BLADE NZIMANDE, ON THE OCCASION OF HIS VISIT TO THE EASTERN CAPE TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGES**

13 DECEMBER 2023

The MEC of Education in the EC, Mr Fundile Gade (in absentia);

The Director General of the Department of Higher Education and Training, Dr Sishi;

The Deputy Director General for TVET Colleges, Mr Sam Zamokuhle Zungu;

Chairpersons and members of College Councils;

The Regional Manager and Officials from the Regional Principals/Acting Principals and Deputy Principals of TVET Colleges in the Eastern Cape;

Representatives from Organised Labour;

Office; and

DHET Senior Officials.

Greetings

## **Introduction**

I want to begin by thanking all of you for accepting my invitation to this meeting today. I know that this is a very busy week in the calendar of our TVET colleges as you are preparing to conclude the academic year and finalise plans for the beginning of the 2024 academic year.

A special word of appreciation goes to the Buffalo TVET College for arranging logistics and for hosting this important gathering.

As you may be aware, I initially requested that we hold this meeting early in November, however, due to other pressing matters, our meeting had to be postponed for today.

Let me also upfront indicate that I have also requested that the senior management of the Department to attend this meeting in order for them to note and respond to some of the issues that will be raised in our engagements today.

As such, the aim of this engagement is not merely to listen but also reflect on areas where, as a sector, we are performing well and to devise intervention mechanisms in areas where we are weak.

## **Background**

Our National Development Plan commits to grow technical and vocational training with specific emphasis on its size and shape, differentiation, articulation, efficiency and functional effectiveness in response to the broader national development challenges.

Our SETAs have injected **R138 600 000** for the workplace training which was paid directly to employers to produce more artisans!

Currently, South Africa is producing on average **20 000** qualified artisans per year. Ours is to ensure that the number increase significantly to meeting our National Development Plan (NDP) target to produce 30 000 qualified artisans per year by 2030.

We have expanded our Centres of Specialisation to **thirty-four** (34) Centres at **twenty** (20) TVET Colleges, to enhance workplace linked training of artisans and related occupations, with a further investment of **R68 million in sixteen** (16) of our Colleges who now have **thirty-three** (33) Trade Test Centres. These trade test centres have trade tested over **600** apprentices of which over **500** have qualified as artisans.

Currently twenty-six (26) of our colleges are engaged in entrepreneurial training through our Entrepreneurship Hubs. We are hard at work to ensure that all our colleges are involved in some form of entrepreneurship training and we plan to, through our DSI, also introduce innovation hubs in our TVET colleges.

To date our Department has 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 as per the President's commitment at this year's State of the Nation Address.

***The big question to ponder, is that how many of these successes***

*are from the efforts of our TVET Colleges here in the Eastern Cape.*

## **Curriculum of EC colleges**

I am pleased to note that the eight TVET colleges in this region, offer both Ministerially approved and funded programmes, as well as occupational programmes that are funded through the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), the National Skills Fund (NSF), the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) as well as other external funders.

I would like to encourage all colleges to conduct an analysis of the local needs in the areas where colleges are located and offer programmes that address the skills required by these specific areas.

We must ensure that we completely move away from the 'one size fits all' approach. Some of your colleges are in rural areas while others are in the country's automotive hub and industrial areas.

We should factor this reality in deciding the curriculum for our colleges in order for our colleges to drive our skills revolution and the creation of the much needed jobs by our economy.

This region has tremendous opportunities that can further be exploited and enhanced by our TVET colleges.

The province has some of the most scenic coastlines that lend itself to boost the South Africa tourism sector. If I may ask, how many of your students do programmes related to tourism, hospitality, marine and the automotive industry?.

We cannot claim as a sector that we want to respond to local challenges if we do not align our curriculum according to the skills required by our local industry.

This also includes the creation of partnerships with industry in order to better the opportunity of our students to get jobs, internships, and apprenticeships from these business.

As I always say, a TVET College without any partnership with industry is no TVET College but an FET, something that we have done away with as a sector.

I therefore directed that all our TVET college principals must include in their performance agreement the establishment of relationships with the industry as part of their agreement with the councils of the colleges.

These partnerships also include compulsory partnerships with our SETAs.

Ladies and gentlemen

This region is also the home of our country's foremost world-renowned icons of our struggle for independence. This element offers further opportunities to both our national and local tourism sector.

May I ask today as to how many of our colleges are offering programmes, including **occupational programmes** that address the national tourism demand?

Today I implore on all of you, as colleges, to move away from offering programmes that do not lead to meaningful employment and local economic development. This is counterproductive.

There are numerous occupational programmes that are on the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) list. It would be prudent to match these with the needs of your area.

I recently launched the Hairdressing Programme as a fully funded occupational programme because it enables students to become self-employed.

I must say that I am pleased that the Port Elizabeth TVET College will begin delivering the programme from January 2024 and that the seven (7) other colleges will offer the programme from 2025.

### **Audit outcomes and infrastructure spending**

I am also pleased to note that there is steady improvement in the audit findings of many colleges in the region.

For the year 2022, out of eight (8) TVET colleges in the region, six (6) colleges have shown an improvement from negative to unqualified audit outcomes.

However, with respect to the TVET Capital Infrastructure and Efficiency Grant (CIEG), I would like to see greater progress. Since the 2018/19 financial year, the National Treasury has allocated funds in the form of

the CIEG to the Department.

A total of R1.7 billion was allocated to this region since the CIEG inception in 2018/19 financial year. However, the regional average spend to date stands at 70%.

I am worried about these low level of spending in six of the eight TVET colleges. This is due to the non-spending and execution of projects by some colleges.

One college has received over R 3 million during the 2022/23 financial year and has not started spending on the much-needed ablution facilities at that college.

Another college received R36 million during the 2019/20 financial year for the Student Housing Project and has not started spending. This practice is concerning, particularly that our colleges are in dire needs of infrastructure improvements.

Non-expenditure on allocated funds is a sign of lack of urgency. It gives an impression that colleges do not need these funds and that they may be reallocated elsewhere where they are most needed.

### **Governance issues**

I am aware that issues of governance have been a challenge for some time in some of our colleges her in the Eastern Cape.

However, currently I am informed that the is relative stability with all eight

of our TVET colleges in the region.

The colleges have properly constituted college councils, academic boards and Student Representative Councils (SRC) for the cycle 2018/19 to 2023/24 period.

All college councils executed their roles and responsibilities, as outlined in the Continuing Education and Training Act, No. 16 of 2006, as amended, (CET Act 16 of 2006 as amended). Let me congratulate all the colleges in this regard.

I also note that most colleges will continue to elect SRCs at the beginning of the new year. While I acknowledge and commend the progress on the stability in this area,

I am also aware that the late payment of National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) allowances have also led to instances of instability at some of our colleges in this academic year.

I frankly would like us to have constructive engagements on how we may collectively deal with this situation, off course, working together with NSFAS in order to avoid this situation from recurring in the forth-coming academic year.

With respect to the College Councils, some Council members terms of office are ending at the end of this academic year and others will end in the new year.

Let me indicate that the Department is in the process of finalizing all



council appointments. The planned schedule in their appointment was delayed as there was a low response and the call for nominations had to be readvertised.

The Department will run capacity building workshops for the new council in January 2024.

While the relationship between the college council and management remains cordial and professional in most colleges, there have been challenges of governance at two (2) of our colleges.

In response to stakeholders' concerns, I appointed an independent forensic investigator at one of the colleges. I am awaiting the investigator's final report and will consider appropriate action based on their recommendations.

I wholeheartedly thank all colleges for submitting their strategic and annual performance plans. I furthermore thank colleges for planning with the TVET branch, in the commencement of the 2024 academic year.

May I urge that you explore expanding access using digital technologies.

### **TVET Colleges management**

With respect to TVET colleges management, I must say that the lack of permanent staff is a serious concern for me. I therefore have requested the Department to urgently prioritise these appointments.

Lastly, I would like to talk about corruption practices taking place at our

colleges as a result of tenders. These practices must immediately stop. I must indicate that government is against any form of maladministration and corruption. We must collectively work together to deal with this scourge.

I want to remind all of you that our post school education and training institutions are places of study and of making trade off in relation to business opportunities in all of our institutions. I hope to see a change in attitude and proper plans in dealing with this unfortunate situation.

## **Conclusion**

As I conclude, I wish that we all have constructive engagement with clear resolutions on a way forward.

Ngiyabonga

**Word Count: 1867**