



MINISTRY
HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Media statement by Minister Blade Nzimande on the transfer of the Skills Development and Training Sector to the Department of Higher Education and Training

4 November 2009

From Sunday, 1 November 2009, the Department of Higher Education and Training assumed responsibility for the skills development and training sector in government. This is an exciting development in the post-election restructuring of government to be more responsive to the developmental, social and economic needs of our country.

We are now responsible for a range of institutions and public entities which were previously distributed across both the Departments of Education and of Labour. The Ministry of Higher Education and Training also hosts the secretariat of the human resource development strategy for South Africa, which is led by the Deputy President.

The creation of the Ministry and Department of Higher Education and Training provides an opportunity, at a critical moment in our history, for the creation of a coherent and single post-school education and training system that is structured both to meet the aspirations of youth and adults and to ensure that education, training and skills development initiatives respond to the requirements of the economy, our rural development challenges, and the need to develop an informed and critical citizenry.

During 2010, the ministry will work with stakeholders to develop a policy framework for a diverse post school education and training system which will be responsive to identified challenges and our collective aspirations, including transformation imperatives.

The Further Education and Training College sub-system

The Further Education and Training (FET) College subsystem has grown and changed over the last fifteen years, and further changes are anticipated with the move of the colleges to a national function. Challenging work lies ahead to make colleges institutions of choice for many more young people and adults.

The shape of our post-secondary system is not appropriately balanced between

Universities and colleges, and whilst access to universities must be increased, enrolment in Colleges must double in the next five years.

We will consolidate the institutional base for FET colleges in partnership with the skills development system and improve responsiveness to the needs of the economy. We will work closely with the National Board for Further Education and Training to review the impact of some of the recent changes, particularly in the management and governance structures. The National Board for Further Education and Training (NBFET) and the Ministry have agreed on an urgent national audit on individual institutional governance and administration.

The skills sub-system

Despite gains made to date in the area of skills development and training, the Ministry of Higher Education and Training must address a number of challenges which have limited the effectiveness of the policy intentions. These include:

- * How to build a viable system of education and training that will respond to the needs of adults and youth: the self-employed; the unemployed; those with unrecognised skills; as well as the employed
- * Improved coordination between the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA) system and education and training institutions, particularly FET Colleges and Universities of Technology
- * Negative perceptions of SETAs performance, management and governance
- * The unblocking of funds in the national skills fund which must include a review of systems, procedures and of decision making
- * Inadequate alignment of industry needs and provision of training and skills development and in particular the need to increase the supply of artisans and technicians
- * Finalisation of industrial policy action plans to improve the effectiveness of skills development efforts. This is necessary to ensure the alignment of the sector skills plans of the 23 SETAs to steer skills development strategies for the development of the labour force of our country.

The relocation of the skills development subsystem into the Ministry of Higher Education and Training thus provides an opportunity to reconceptualise strategies for skills development within the larger unified higher education and training system with positive potential impacts on the post school education and training system.

In meetings with the National Skills Authority (NSA) which is responsible for advising the Minister on skills development policy we have agreed that:

- * The NSA needs to be strengthened in order to perform its expert advisory role
- * The NSA must have administrative, policy and research capacity to support its work
- * Alignment of the work of the NSA with HRD-SA is a priority
- * The relationship between the NSA and other statutory bodies needs to be strengthened.

Supporting the NSA to fulfil its important functions is a priority for my ministry. A strategic planning session of the NSA with the ministry is scheduled for the first week of December.

I have appointed the Director-General for Higher Education and Training as the Chairperson of the NSA during this important period of transition in order to strengthen relationships between my Department and the NSA. This is an interim arrangement until a new NSA Chairperson is appointed.

I wish to also announce that after consultation with the National Skills Authority, I will be gazetting the extension of the national skills development strategy two and current SETA licence by one year, from March 2010 to March 2011. I have informed all the Chairpersons of the Board of SETAs as well as their CEOs of this decision.

It is my considered view, supported by the NSA, that this extension is important to ensure alignment of the national skills development strategy with HRD-SA and to allow some deliberation on the way forward. Current mechanisms contained in NSDS two will be emphasised in the Service Level Agreements between the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and SETAs for the 2010 financial year in order to ensure alignment with government's strategic priorities and to focus on immediate priorities such as:

- * SETA/FET College partnerships (particularly on training and placement)
- * The provision of opportunities for work-based learning to accompany formal learning in colleges and universities of technology
- * Skills for rural development and cooperatives
- * The training layoff scheme
- * Intensified artisan training.

SETAs will continue with their current mandate and implement their 2010/11 Service Level Agreements as well as contribute to the new strategies to finalise NSDS three.

These extensions will ensure both continuity and change. Service delivery will continue, and be consolidated whilst the new Department of Higher Education and Training will take forward inclusive processes, with its social partners, to renew and refresh strategies, policy and institutions in order to strengthen the skills and human resource base of the country.

We will be actively pursuing collaborative relationships between the SETAs, the NSF, universities – especially universities of technology and FETs in order to seek ways to release funds to grow the skills base.

We are working to ensure the smooth incorporation of the skills development and training component and look forward to building a strong, focused and performance team in the department with an overall goal of creating synergy between formal education and workplace training. The move is set to overhaul the education and training landscape in South Africa and we invite the private sector, organized labour and civil society to actively participate and join the skills revolution in our country.

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