



MANAGERIAL EXPERTISE: The DHET has designed a programme to strengthen the management of the campuses of TVET Colleges.

Blade Nzimande

AS part of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges Turnaround Strategy, I recently launched the first phase of the professional development of college managers' project.

In its commitment to transformation, this government has increased the intake of students in public TVET Colleges by 67%, since 2009.

Currently we are providing vocational education and training to just over 700 000 students. We are committed to continue expanding to reach our target of 2,5-million by 2030.

There has been a significant increase in state resources to the TVET sector.

However, there continues to be a weak output of graduates and low throughput rates of students, thus hampering the progression of students into the labour market and creating significant backlogs in the pipeline of new students, which has restricted access for the large numbers of school-leavers.

However if our targets are to be met, we have to improve the management of our 258 campus sites.

TVET campuses vary greatly not only in size and geographic location, but also in their historical constitution.

TVET colleges in their

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT for TVET Campus Managers

present form are new in South Africa, but technical education and skills training has a long history in this country.

Prior to the merger and establishment of the 50 colleges in 2002, the campuses (except for those established after 2002) were independent institutions, delivering vocational education at different levels and receiving very different state resources prior to 1994.

Hence, within a single TVET College we may have campuses that have been constituted very differently, with very different capabilities and, most importantly, had very different governance structures and organisational cultures.

With the exception of those campuses that had historically catered for white constituencies, the majority of "campuses", especially those catering for Africans in particular, and to a lesser extent those catering for Coloureds and Indians, had little or no autonomy.

Although there has been significant development in many areas of the TVET College system, without strong

leadership and management at the campus level there will be little progress in the development of the TVET colleges' mandate to be the vehicle for national economic and social development.

As part of the implementation of my Turnaround Strategy, I requested that my department undertakes a programme to strengthen the management of the campuses of our TVET Colleges, hence the "Professional Development of Campus Managers Project".

The first phase of the project is aimed at not only building the management capacity of TVET College campus managers but also at professionalising the role and functions of a campus manager.

This training is part of a three phase programme — where 40 campus managers will be given individualised support, following the training. In the second phase, the training and support will be extended to 150 campus managers.

The third phase will be the consolidation of the training programme into modules,

with the aim of delivering a specialised accredited qualification for TVET campus managers.

Currently there is no initial or continuous professional development programme dedicated to the training of campus managers.

The traditional career path for many of them has been from lecturer to senior lecturer, to head of department and then to campus manager.

This post, for many incumbents, is their first real management role.

The kinds of challenges campus managers face may differ even within a single college.

The managers of an historically poorly resourced campus in a rural location may be faced with different challenges to a more urban-based and historically well-resourced campus.

I must stress that all TVET Colleges are governed by the same Act (CET Act 2006 (as amended)).

And we must always remember that our mandate is to enable students to acquire the necessary knowledge, practical skills, and applied

vocational and occupational competence, as well as to provide students with the necessary attributes required for employment.

This is the core purpose of our existence.

We need to manage the implementation of policies and regulations.

As a government we have registered that this first phase is of implementation.

We can no longer only engage in discussing what is to be done, we have to act upon implementing the policies.

Resources have also gone into ensuring that this is a residential course.

The aim is to build Communities of Practice. Our Communities of Practice should not be restricted by provincial borders.

We are part of the TVET College family and by working together we can support each other.

Without leadership and management that is capable and committed at campus level, there will be little progress in the development of the TVET colleges' mandate to be the vehicle for national economic and social development.

Let us together build a strong TVET College sector so that this programme of using expertise from within the sector will serve as an example to others.

Dr BE Nzimande is the Minister of Higher Education and Training

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