

SKILFUL COLLABORATIONS: Public Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges are among the key places to which local people will turn to acquire the skills they perceive will best lead to an improvement in the quality of their lives and to employment or income-generating opportunities.



DHET

formalises partnerships with the Premiers of Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape

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MR Gwebinkundla Qonde, the Director-General of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has signed a Protocol with Mrs Marion Mbina-Mthembu, Director-General in the Office of the Premier in the Eastern Cape and with Mr Thulani Mdakane, Director-General in the Office of the Premier in Mpumalanga, the former on 30th March 2016 and the latter on 19th April 2016.

In each case the signed Protocol commits the two departments to work together towards the achievement of accelerated skills development in support of the provinces' Growth and Development Plans.

This heralds an exciting time of improved alignment between skills needed and skills delivered at provincial level.

Why are such Protocols important?

The provinces are mandated under the National Development Plan (NDP) to develop and implement plans that support the broader national growth agenda of the government.

In response to this call, provinces have developed Provincial Growth and Development Strategies and Plans, which incorporate (inter alia) the Strategy Integrated Projects (SIPs) for infrastructure that have a footprint in the province.

Implementation of these provincial plans depends on the availability of people with the requisite skills and knowledge.

In many cases these skills are not readily available and need to

be 'home-grown' wherever possible.

Public Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges and universities are the key places to which local people will turn to acquire the skills they perceive will best lead to an improvement in the quality of their lives and to employment or income-generating opportunities.

Many learners, and indeed learning institutions themselves, are not sufficiently aware of the specific growth and development projects planned in their province and the skills required for them.

This means that learners' decisions about which programme to enrol for are based on incomplete knowledge, and the institutions of learning are unable to prepare themselves. The Protocols aim to bridge this gap.

Under the Protocols, the provinces will work with the DHET to interrogate their plans to determine the skills required for their implementation.

The list of skills so generated, once prioritised, will then become the basis for the identification of which college or university is best placed to provide the theoretical foundation for these occupations.

Where new courses are needed, these too will be a matter of mutual concern and work.

Of course the competence to perform most occupations is not

acquired at a college or university only – in most instances a period of workplace learning is also required, either during or after the theory is acquired.

The Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) that also fall under the DHET will therefore also be informed of the priority skills needed in the provinces and will be encouraged to provide grants to employers to provide the necessary workplace training.

In short, the provinces will derive a list of priority skills needed for the implementation of their growth and development plans and the DHET will support the development of these through its colleges, universities and SETAs.

It is this partnership to which the heads of the Offices of the Premier in the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga and the Director-General of the DHET have committed themselves to building.

In the process learners will be informed of the priorities and encouraged to consider these when making programme choices.

The outcome is intended to improve the rate and quality of responsiveness of the local education and training institutions to the skills required for growth and development in these provinces, which in turn will contribute to reversal of the evils of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

Of course this level of planning and training will complement local efforts already underway to address sub-sets of the priority occupations that have already been identified and are currently being trained through various vehicles.

There is no question that current or planned initiatives should "wait" for this – of course not.

How will the partnership work in practice?

The DHET has developed what it calls "The 21 STEP PROCESS" to guide it in this partnership:

● **Steps 1 – 9** provide a systematic methodology for identifying skills in demand by working with project managers responsible for the various projects and assessing where these skills are already available. An electronic tool is available to support this process; ● **Step 10** refers to the training standard of the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) which will, when gazetted later this year, require all infrastructure projects to train on site (see Government Gazette Vol. 578, 23 August 2013 No. 36760 for details);

● **Steps 11 – 16** refer to a process whereby the relevant colleges and universities are identified and how they can be supported to increase their successful graduate numbers in the targeted priority programmes. Step 14 addresses

the processes to be followed to incentivise employers to provide workplace learning in these areas; ● **Steps 17 – 20** refer specifically to the skills required within government departments needed to procure and manage large infrastructure and other projects. They support the roll-out of government's Infrastructure Delivery Management System (the IDMS) and the complementary national infrastructure maintenance plan; and

● **Step 21** speaks to the governance structures required to facilitate the earlier steps. And in this regard the Protocols are key vehicles for putting these into place – for instance the establishment of a Provincial SIPs Steering Committee that brings in the leaders responsible for the implementation of each step together. This structure will oversee the actual project management of the work needed. It will complement the work of other structures, and report to the Premiers. The work will therefore also feature in the overall work schedule of the Provincial Human Resources Development Council and the Provincial Skills Development Forum in a manner determined by the Premiers.

Anyone who is interested to learn more about this methodology can visit <https://sip-skills.onlinecf.net>

Work will commence in earnest in Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape now that the Protocols have been signed. The Director-General of the DHET has proposed that similar Protocols be signed with the other Directors-General in the Offices of the Premiers and responses are currently awaited.

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