

THANDI LEWIN

THE Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) is leading the development of a National Plan for Post-school Education and Training over the next 12 months.

It is drawing on the expertise of a range of sector experts in order to do this, with the intent that the plan is an expression of the deep-seated needs in the sector and that its implementation finds traction in the sector.

It is intended that the National Plan for 2017-2030 will be a Sector Plan, much like the National Plan for Higher Education (2001) and the Department of Basic Education's "Action Plan to 2019: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030".

In a sense it will provide a blueprint for working towards an expanded, effective and integrated post-school system over the period to 2030.

The plan aims to give effect to the policy proposals of the White Paper on Post-school Education and Training (PSET) released in 2014, and will therefore draw on a number of initiatives underway since the release of the White Paper.

It is not a coincidence that a 2030 horizon is chosen, as this plan must align strongly with the National Development Plan, whilst setting achievable targets taking present and future socio-economic scenarios into account. The plan must be practical, realistic and implementable.

The DHET acknowledges the need to focus on strengthening policy implementation across the post-school sector, and believes that the release of the White Paper PSET and the existence of a number of other policy frameworks in the sector, has led to the need for an integrated implementation plan.

The requirement is for a coherent implementation plan that can bring sector policy together into a clear and sustainable pathway for PSET development to 2030.

This plan will clearly identify priorities for the growth and the development of the sector over the next 13 years.

In the current context of low economic growth and competing priorities within government and within the education sector as a whole, the plan will signal the necessary choices for the transformation and growth of the sector over the period to 2030.

The post-school sector is a diverse one, comprising different levels and types of programmes and institutions and serving the development needs of a range of people.

This diversity is seen as a strength of the sector, and the plan will include sub-sectorial focus areas as well as integrating features.

Through a coordination team appointed internally, the DHET will work with expert task teams in three sub-sectors: Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET); Community Education and Training; and Higher Education.

These task teams commenced work in January 2016 under the leadership of respected experts in each field: Ms Carmel Marock (Technical and Vocational Education and Training), Dr

NATIONAL PLAN for Post-school Education and Training



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Peliwe Lolwana (Community Education and Training), and Professor Derrick Swartz (Higher Education and Training).

Oversight of the planning process rests with the Director-

General, as it is critical that the planning process is able to align with existing policy implementation processes taking place across the Department.

Task teams include active

participation from senior DHET officials, allowing for dialogue between external experts and DHET sector managers.

The task teams are operating within broad terms of reference

and will be expected to guide the development of the plan in each of the sub-sectors.

However, there are many points of overlap and articulation amongst the groups, and oversight mechanisms are in place to ensure that cross-cutting and integrating issues can be expressed in the plan.

All task teams, for example, will have to deal with issues of the size and shape of the sectors, and funding issues, but there are also specific matters in each area, such as the programme offerings in the TVET sector, and a framework for differentiation in the higher education sector, and the development of a clear vision for the new Community Colleges sector.

While the process is not a new policy development process, the planning takes into consideration areas where policy alignment and consolidation is necessary.

The planning process will need to consider growth and development scenarios for each sub-sector and the PSET sector as a whole.

These scenarios will take account of the necessary financing of the sector, the staffing necessary to support PSET institutions, the infrastructure required for adequate provision and growth, and the broad sets of principles that will guide provision and integration.

We need to think about new ways of developing the sector to allow for effective integration and better articulation, and to find mechanisms to share resources and infrastructure to ensure sustainability and allow for growth across this diverse sector.

A draft plan will be developed through the process outlined above before being submitted for public comment in early 2017.

As far as possible within the timeframes allowed, consultation and engagement with key PSET stakeholders will take place as the plan is developed.

Once the draft plan has been released, there will be a process of public comment allowed before it can be finalised and put into action.

Ultimately the plan must be a practical expression of the nation and the DHET's intention to build a strong and sustainable post-school sector providing a range of diverse education and training opportunities to South Africans.

The focus must be on growth, sustainability and improving quality in all areas.

Quality is conceptualised broadly and must be interpreted within the policy goals of the White Paper PSET: to build an increasingly integrated and coordinated sector with better possibilities for articulation; to improve access and increase diversity; to ensure that access is matched with a reasonable chance of success; to be responsive to the needs of citizens and the social and economic development of the country; to pay attention to social justice both inside the post-school system and in making the system responsive to its context; and in all parts of the system to improve the linkages between education and the workplace.

Ms T Lewin is Chief Director: National Post-school Education and Training Planning Coordination in the Department of Higher Education and Training



The DHET is currently working on a coherent implementation plan for Post-school Education and Training that can bring sector policy together into a clear and sustainable pathway for development to 2030