

MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING, DR BE NZIMANDE, MP SPEAKS AT THE STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP ON SKILLS SUPPLY AND DEMAND IN THE HAIRDRESSING SECTOR

INTRODUCTION

Programme Director, Mr Lehloma Ramajoe,
Chairperson of Services SETA Board, Mr Themba
Mhambi & Board members,

My Special Advisors

The CEO of Services SETA, Mr Andile Nongogo and your
management,

Dr Nkosinathi Sishi, Acting DDG of the Planning Branch,

Mr Zukile Mvalo, DDG of Skills Development Branch

The CEO of QCTO, Mr Vijayen Naidoo,

Representatives from the hairdressing industry,

Industry and business experts,

Representatives of public TVET Colleges,

Representatives of private FET Colleges,

Professor Nonhlanhla Khumalo from the Hair and Skin
Research Laboratory,

Staff from the Department, Services SETA, other SETAs,

Ladies and gentlemen

Member of the media

Good Morning

Thank you for being here to engage with the subject of hairdressing. As we all know, this sector employs many people in our townships and rural areas. I look forward to hearing your responses to the research report on *Skills Supply and Demand in the Hairdressing Industry*. This meeting is quite significant – not only because of the subject matter it will engage on – but because it is a demonstration of how the DHET can collaborate with SETAs on matters of common concern. This project shows that it is indeed possible to do so. I thank Services SETA for working together with the Department in this project.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF HAIR

There is much more to hair than most people realise. It is often associated with identity, politics, and is inextricably linked to the broader socio-economic context of society. Hair symbolises who we are and where we come from. It is reflective of race, culture, youth, health, wealth, femininity, virility, style and so much more.

There is little doubt that there is more to hair than simply what is on our heads. Hair represents a cultural phenomenon; it provides a racial signal, and it makes a political statement. It is an expression of self; a public display of style, and a personal representation of how we see ourselves, and how we want the world to see us.

Not too long ago, the Pretoria High School for Girls was shamed when a teacher from the school reprimanded a pupil for her afro hairstyle. Many argued that the rebuke was against the young lady's freedom of expression, whilst others defended the warning since it appeared to violate the school's rules. Was this matter simply a case of an unruly hair style, or an incident of teenage rebelliousness, or was it something deeper – perhaps a personal reflection of ethnic pride that was being halted due to cultural and racial insensitivity? Whatever the

case, the young lady in question clearly had strong feelings about her hair and what it represented.

Michelle Obama had this to say about hair: *“It kills me that black women feel they can’t wear their hair naturally. It’s beautiful”*.

This is a powerful quote from a strong women, speaking to the power of hair. On the one hand, we see the power of hair in its ability to induce confidence and pride; on the other hand, we see the power of hair in its ability to induce shame and self-loathing. One’s attitude towards one’s hair and what people feel that it represents is deeply intertwined with one’s sense of self-worth. This deep personal relationship between hair and self-esteem is evident throughout history, philosophy and even religion.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF HAIR: SOCIO-ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES

For many centuries, hair has had a significant place in the social, economic, cultural and religious lives of people.

For example:

- “In 15th century Africa, hairstyles were used to indicate a person’s marital status, age, religion, ethnic identity, wealth and rank with the community”
- “In ancient Egypt, hairstyles very much depended on the wealth, age and social group the individual circulated in”.
- Chinese hairstyles varied in women depending on the age and marital status.
- In ancient Israel, hair signified important features of identity with respect to gender, ethnicity and holiness. In the Bible, Samson was known for his strength, which was attributed to his long hair.
- Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism, also make reference to hair with respect to demonstrating honour and respect towards their respective religious practices.
- In the Vedic period (1700-1100BCE), Indian males were expected to shave off all their hair, leaving a

lock of hair at the back or at the side, allowing "God to pull people into heaven".

Not much has changed in the 21st century. Hair, in whatever form, still signifies socio-economic status, and remains associated with many cultural and religious practices.

WHY THIS STUDY?

During the 2010 soccer world cup, when the country was flooded with international guests, many visitors with ethnic hair could not find a salon in the formal sector that could tend to their hair needs. Seven years later, the situation has not changed significantly. This gap in the industry is a reflection of the need to both improve opportunities for skills development, as well as to provide support for small business development. I am therefore glad to see a representative from the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) here today.

This study was therefore undertaken because there appears to be a mismatch between enrolments in hairdressing programmes at TVET colleges, and the rapidly growing hairdressing industry in the country.

REFLECTIONS ON THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REPORT

I have gone through the report on *Skills Supply and Demand in the Hairdressing Industry*, and was quite impressed with the findings. The positive contribution of the hairdressing industry to both the formal and informal economy of South Africa is uncontested.

It is evident however, that more TVET Colleges need to offer hairdressing qualifications in order to provide opportunities for more students to enrol for such programmes, and seek opportunities for sustainable livelihoods or business or employment. In doing so, however, the curriculum and orientation of the programme needs to shift so that it caters adequately for both afro/ethnic hair. It also needs to keep up with current trends, and should be made simple, and shortened in duration. The study demonstrates that young people are often not interested in enrolling for hairdressing programmes, not only because of funding constraints, but because the curriculum is alienating. New qualifications

should therefore be more accessible, affordable and worthwhile. To this end, I look forward to hearing what the new QCTO qualification on hairdressing looks like.

HAIR AND SKIN RESEARCH LABORATORY

The National Skills Fund (NSF) provided the grant for refurbishment and initial equipment of the Hair and Skin Research (HSR) Laboratory which was officially opened in 2015 at the University of Cape Town. The Services SETA provided a major boost in 2016 when it collaborated to fund 2 South African firsts: the Cosmetic Safety Testing Laboratory and the Advanced Diploma in Cosmetic Formulation Science – this is a skills development program for the sector that aims to increase the share of the cosmetic market that directly benefits South Africans by providing an entrepreneurial career path for unemployed science graduates. The HSR Lab also offers Masters and PhD in Trichology & Cosmetic Science. The HSR lab is deliberately housed in the Division of Dermatology to produce cosmetic scientists who understand the importance of skin health and who

aim to protect consumers from preventable harm caused by unsafe ingredients. The current lab space is very limited but ideal for the Masters and PhD programs. The Services SETA has committed to extend the collaboration by funding a dedicated facility (The Africa Research Institute for Skin hEalth - ARISE) for cosmetic safety testing, education of cosmetic formulators, hair dresser workshops and direct public engagements (including school visits). These are activities that aim to both reduce the epidemic of cosmetic hair loss and skin damage that predominates in people of African ancestry AND increase entrepreneurs in safe product development. This infrastructure and national facility (The ARISE Building) is the leg-up South Africans need to be world leaders in science-based innovative product development for Afro Hair and Skin.

WHERE TO NOW:

In taking forward the findings from this study, the Department of Higher Education and Training will:

1. Explore the feasibility and implications of expanding the provisioning of hairdressing qualifications and programmes at TVET in consultation with TVET Colleges, and other role-players.
2. Investigate the viability of hairdressing as a path to a sustainable livelihood in specific communities, and assess the role of Community Colleges in to this end.

Acknowledge the importance of the informal sector to the economy, and explore creative initiatives by Community Colleges to upskill hairdressers working in the informal sector.

CONCLUSION

Stakeholder engagements of this nature are crucial to gaining understanding with regards to the various dimensions and sub-sectors of this very dynamic industry. Highlighting issues of concern, what specific actions to be taken, and how to build on existing strengths, the input from stakeholders will provide invaluable insights into improving the sector. Lessons

learnt from this study and the approach thereof can also provide guidance in investigating other professions that may require the same level of interrogation for improvement.

I would like to take this moment to extend my heartfelt appreciation to all those colleagues represented here today; it is your eager participation and contribution to gatherings and initiatives such as these that will allow us to support and grow the profession.