



higher education & training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Keynote Address by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr B.E Nzimande, at the
Launch of the Vhembe District Skills Development Project and Career Expo,
Makhuvha Stadium, Vhembe District, 30 April 2014**

Programme Director

The Premier of the Province, His Excellency, Stan Mathabatha

Executive Mayor and Local Mayors

Mayoral Committee Members and Councillors from various Municipalities

Senior Management and Officials from all spheres of Government

Council Members and Management from TVET Colleges

Council Members and Management from SETAs

Graduates present here today

Employers and their Representatives

Education and Training Providers,

Learners

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Ndaa, Ndimatsheloni, Avuxeni, Dumelang.

It is a great pleasure to be here today to celebrate with you the launch of the Vhembe Skills Development Project and career EXPO. It is a momentous occasion marking an important milestone in our country's education and skills development trajectory through empowering and developing the country's citizenry.

As the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) we are particularly concerned about the 3.5 million youth between the ages of 15-24 who are not in employment, in education or in training

(the NEET). This has resulted in much lower levels of economic growth and entrepreneurial activity in the country than we need. Such youth are obviously disillusioned and deprived of a purpose in life. Truly, this is a terrible waste of potential and robs the country of productive capability that should help solve the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality. This is the reason why career EXPOs like this one, and the Vhembe Skills Development Project, are important for youth development.

Through one of our wings, the National Skills Fund (NSF), my Department has invested R 26.7 million in the Vhembe District Municipality Skills Development Project. Training for various cooperatives commenced in March 2014. 2 188 beneficiaries are being trained in skills such as Plant Production Level 1, Animal Production Level 1, Bricklaying and Plastering Level 2, Finance Management, the Farm Together Programme, Road Construction, Welding, Pipe Fitting, Plumbing, mentorship, conflict resolution, communication and negotiations. This project is implemented by the University of Venda in partnership with the Vhembe District Municipality. To date, my Department has disbursed R 10 million to this project from the R 26.6 million committed by the NSF.

The Vhembe Skills Development Project also offers skills programmes to cooperatives, learnerships, artisan development, career guidance and skills infrastructure support to the Madzivhandila Agricultural College, making a huge impact on socio-economic development in the area. The Vhembe Skills Development Project epitomizes the vision of the Vhembe District Municipality of creating jobs and alleviating poverty through partnerships with relevant stakeholders. The University of Venda in partnership with Vhembe District Municipality, Vhembe TVET College and Madzivhandila College of Agriculture are responsible for delivery of this project.

Our investment in Vhembe is not limited to the Vhembe Skills Development Project. It includes, for instance, the Vhembe TVET College, in which we have invested R 65 million to support various interventions including learnerships, skills programmes and capacity building of college staff. Some of these qualifications lead to the artisanal training route, thereby addressing the issue of scarce skills in the provinces' industries. All these mechanisms, pioneered by my Department, aim at tackling poverty and changing lives in Vhembe, ensuring that our youth become participants in a vibrant economy we can all be proud of.

In fact, all of Limpopo's seven TVET Colleges, including Vhembe, have greatly benefitted from the DHET's initiatives. The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) allocation for TVET colleges has grown exponentially from R 318 million in 2010 to R 2.1 billion in 2014, providing funding for 233 958 TVET college students in 2014. The total bursary funding for seven Limpopo TVET colleges increased from R 47 234 744 in 2009 to R 193 212 725 million in 2014. In addition, my Department has, in the current financial year, made available R 2.5 billion from the NSF and Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) towards the construction of 12 new campuses and refurbishment of two existing TVET campuses. Two of these new campuses, the Letaba TVET College in Giyani and Waterberg TVET College in Thabazimbi, are to be erected here in Limpopo. In addition, the total allocated by NSF to all the Limpopo TVET colleges for programme expansion and capacity building is R 398 410 231.

Limpopo's two universities are also NSFAS beneficiaries. For instance, allocations for the University of Limpopo has grown from R 186 489 339 million in 2011 to R 284 149 028 million in 2014. Venda University NSFAS allocation has grown from R 148 740 844 million in 2011 to R 161 962 164 million in 2014. We are also in the process of unbundling the old Medunsa campus in Ga-Rankua from the University of Limpopo. It will become the new Health Science University offering a range of health science disciplines such as Environmental Health and Clinical Engineering. This initiative does not mean that we are dis-empowering the University of Limpopo. On the contrary, our plan is to empower the University more meaningfully. There will be a new Faculty of Health at the University of Limpopo which will offer, first, the MBChB and subsequently other health degrees. This new Faculty will have a symbiotic relationship with the hospitals of Limpopo.

SETAS are also doing excellent work in this part of the country. The 200 learners who are graduating today have been certificated by Agriseta, proof that SETAs are doing remarkably well. There are various skills development intervention programmes by different SETAs in Vhembe. For example:

- BANKSETA is working closely with the University of Venda's Centre of Excellence to provide 135 disabled students with assistive devices costing R 400 000. BANKSETA works with this Centre of Excellence in the Maths & Science Support Programme with 300 beneficiaries to the tune of R 3.9 million.
- CATHSESETA is involved in skills programmes with 40 beneficiaries costing R 320 000.

- EWSETA has embarked on an Electrical and Mechanical Engineering NQF 4 learnership programme with 170 beneficiaries at a cost of R 18 million.
- SSETA is involved in placing 190 TVET graduates in the district at a cost of above R 7 million.
- MICT SETA is involved in two skills development programmes here in Vhembe, benefitting 65 people to a total of R 1 845 000.
- ETDP SETA is also involved in numerous projects here in Vhembe such as:
 - An ECD learnership with 28 beneficiaries at a cost of R 364 000.
 - A braille and sign language programme with 23 beneficiaries at a cost of R 282 823.
 - Workplace learning with 11 beneficiaries at a cost of R 330 000.
 - Admin Assistant Internships with 250 beneficiaries at a cost of R 9 million.
 - ACE leadership and Management Training with 61 beneficiaries costing R 923 100.

Other SETA projects beyond Vhembe include those by:

- CATHSETA which is involved in interventions in municipalities in the province such as Bela Bela, Thulamela, Capricorn, Mogalakwena, Mokopane, Thohoyandou, Lephalale and Ba-Phalaborwa. These projects include learnerships, work integrated learning, skills programmes, bursaries and internships. There are 147 beneficiaries of this nearly R 2 million project.
- The TETA SETA operates in municipalities such as Thulamela, Polokwane, Fetakgomo, Lowveld and Greater Tzaneen, providing learnerships, bursaries and artisanships to 382 beneficiaries at a total cost of just above R 30 million.
- The MICT SETA is involved in skills programmes in districts such as Capricorn, Polokwane and Sekhukhune at a cost of R 13 million.
- In Capricorn District Municipality CHIETA is involved in learnerships and workplace experience with four beneficiaries, costing R 144 000.
- SSETA is involved with the placement of TVET college students. It is also engaged in activities like the allocation of bursaries and learnerships in municipalities such as Mopani, Capricorn and Sekhukhume. There are 1 044 beneficiaries at a cost of over R 41.7 million.

There are other planned projects by SETAs. These include:

- The Senior Management Development Programme at the University of Limpopo, in Capricorn District Municipality funded by CHIETA. Thirty individuals will benefit from this R 900 000 programme.
- ETDP SETA will be involved in a range of programmes such as Career Development, Internships and Recognition of Prior Learning. More than 3 000 people are set to benefit from ETDP SETA programmes at an estimated cost of above R 30 million.

As the Department we have directed SETAs to open offices in TVET colleges to ensure that work placement is properly facilitated. SETAs are also expected to provide career guidance to our youth, thus serving as catalysts for career EXPOs like this one. SETAs have responded positively to our call, and to date, more than 40 offices have been opened in TVET colleges in different parts of the country. These include offices opened in Limpopo's TVET colleges such as Capricorn, Mopani South East, Sekhukhune, Waterberg, Lephale and Vhembe.

The Department continues to make a concerted effort to assist students who are unable to graduate because they cannot find experiential learning placements. It is estimated that countrywide there are more than 60 000 graduates and students who require work placements. The Department is currently strengthening interventions and practical responses to meet our slogan of "Together, turning every work place into a training space". In pursuit of the objectives implied by this slogan, my Department has entered into partnerships with SETAs, municipalities, national and provincial government departments and the private sector to ensure its success.

Work integrated learning speaks to the vision of the White Paper on Post School Education and Training which I launched on 16 January 2014. The White Paper emphasizes the crucial role of technical and vocational education with academic and workplace learning. Comrade and Premier Mathabatha, I would like to appeal to you and your colleagues in the Limpopo Provincial Government to work closely with my Department, exploring possibilities of student experiential learning placements in the province's different departments. Our youth cannot miss out on this important aspect of career development.

Work Integrated Learning prepares learners for the world of work and entrepreneurship and also leads to the acquisition of a full qualification. Between last year and now we successfully launched the KwaZulu-Natal, Free State and Gauteng graduate placement projects. They have been warmly embraced by these three provincial governments. As outlined earlier, in this province, many SETAs are already involved in work placement activities, often working closely with local government. However, we urge other SETAs to extend their scope to this province, addressing the dire skills need in our communities and partnering with industry for sustainable economic growth and community development. Most crucially of all, we need the intervention of provincial government in work placement.

I am now approaching closure: I am glad to see the success of the partnership between the Madzivhandila Agricultural College, UNIVEN, Vhembe TVET College and the Vhembe district municipality coming to fruition. Your integrated style of serving our communities is a shining example that must be shared with the nation and replicated in different parts of the country. It gives practical meaning to the slogan of “Together, moving our country forward”. Education and skills development are the most powerful tools for tackling the challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality. As government we will continue to provide the necessary support in partnerships of this nature to ensure that our people are delivered from economic bondage.

The Vhembe Skills Development Project will continue until the end of December 2015 and will require commitment from the Provincial Government, the district municipality, local municipalities, learners and all other stakeholders concerned. As the DHET we are uncompromising when it comes to value for money in skills development. We urge the district municipality and its partners to achieve 100% completion and placement rates. This will maintain confidence in all government funded initiatives.

To learners graduating here today, I want to thank you for your commitment and the confidence that you have shown throughout your studies. I would also like to wish every other youth gathered here success in your careers. I hope that this EXPO experience will make a real and lasting difference in your lives and further contribute to the sustainable livelihoods to which this government is committed.

Let me take this opportunity to thank our partner stakeholders, namely employers and training providers, for your contribution in making our skills endeavors a success. We have made considerable strides in skilling our people, but the road ahead is long and your partnership will forever be important

to us. I would like to acknowledge and thank our exhibitors in this career EXPO for their support and for their partnership with the district. These include exhibitors like SSETA, Vhembe TVET College, UNIVEN, Tshwane University of Technology, Anglo American, De Beers, Cooperatives and SMMEs.

Through you, Premier Mathabatha, we urge the Limpopo Provincial Government and its stakeholder partners to challenge the negative mindset towards TVET colleges. This mindset is most definitely beginning to change, but we are not quite there yet. My department is working hard to ensure that our TVET colleges become institutions of choice for our youth.

Lastly, as the country celebrates 20 years of democracy, let us remember all those who died during the struggle against apartheid. This includes *Umkhonto we Sizwe* cadres such as Mlungiseleli Velaphi, Sizakele Buzo, Fezile Zigoxo, Siphon Kolisi and Vuyani Goniwe who were killed by the notorious South Africa Defence Force between the years 1978 and 1988 and were buried as paupers in Tshikota Cemetery in Makhado. Let us also not forget the likes of Alf Makaleng, a student activist from Turfloop who died in detention in the late 1980s. As we cast our votes on the 7th of May, we should keep in mind that those who laid down their lives during the turbulent apartheid times, brought about the fruits of freedom that you and I are enjoying today.

I thank you! Ndaa! Ri khou livhuwa! Ha khensa! Rea leboa!