



higher education  
& training

Department:  
Higher Education and Training  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## **NOTES FOR THE UNVEILING OF THE COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE AND IMBIZO AT THE NEW THABAZIMBI CAMPUS OF WATERBERG TVET COLLEGE, HELD IN THABAZIMBI IN THE WATERBERG DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE ON 21 JUNE 2015**

### **Background**

Since the inception of the Department of Higher Education and Training, which is tasked with spearheading and overseeing post-school education and training in South Africa in 2009, we are proud to say that great strides have been taken in this direction.

We continue to advance in achieving our overall objectives of building a fair, equitable, non-racial, non-sexists and democratic South Africa.

One of our major focuses is to bring institutions of higher education and training to areas that have historically been neglected, especially rural areas such as this one throughout the country.

All of us gathered here today are aware of the importance of June in terms of education and the evolving history of South Africa. This lies essentially in its association with the youth who said 'Enough is enough' on 16 June 1976, and stood up against the might of the apartheid state, armed only with their determination and the rocks and stones of the streets of Soweto.

June 16 is historical and memorable because on that day the long suppressed anger and resistance against apartheid and its hated Bantu education system broke loose and manifested itself in the youth braving the tear gas and guns of the regime in a loud show of defiance.

June 16 was the day when the youth rose up and said 'No' to the forced imposition of Afrikaans – the language of the oppressor at the time – as a medium of instruction

that could lead to additional difficulties in attaining an already discredited Bantu education system.

By their actions, the youth of 1976 were not only repudiating the imposition of Afrikaans upon them, but also challenging the whole apartheid system that had placed them and their forebears under the yoke of subjugation for several generations.

The youth of 1976, throughout the breadth and length of the country, stood up against a system declared a crime against humanity by international rights bodies and yet which continued not only resisted international pressure, but continued to brutally enforce a stronghold on the lives and aspirations of black South Africans.

In 1976 the youth took up the cudgel from where the banned liberation movements had left off long before their time, and risked the loss of lives for the greater liberation of the country.

And their fight was not in vain. 1976 revived the sleeping giant of resistance, spurring the underground movement to bolder action in confronting the evil system. Not to say the liberation movements were inactive at this time. We are all aware that the underground movement was quite active, and that the apartheid regime was as equally determined to suppress the will of the people.

Today, therefore, as South Africa celebrates 21 years of democracy and 60 years of the Freedom Charter, it is with a huge amount of pride that we open such an institution in Thabazimbi.

The fact is that in 2015 South Africa faces many challenges on the economic front. It is a fact that without an active citizenry, government cannot defeat the basic challenges of uplifting the lives of all South Africans, especially the underprivileged. It is also a fact that education and training are the doors that when opened will lead to the economic freedom that underpins government policy at this phase of our democracy.

Statistics tell the unpleasant story that our youth bear the brunt of economic stagnation. Yes, we are well aware that employment opportunities are scarce and far between, and that this frustrates many. We therefore also call upon our youth to take

it upon themselves – in a similar manner as the youth of 1976 – to actively seek out and participate in activities that build instead of waiting passively for help to come to them.

As government we recognize that we need to train our people, especially youth, in skills such as bricklaying, carpentry, electricity, motor mechanics, plumbing, Small Medium and Micro Economic Enterprise Development, General Maintenance, Computer Literacy, and welding, which will all be taught here in future.

Also in the pipeline for this institution we are at today are Occupational Programmes and Qualifications in the disciplines of Plumbing, Bricklaying and Block Making, General Maintenance, Tiling, and Retail Management.

We realise also that our youth need proper career guidance to direct them to programmes for which they have an aptitude, and which will provide training areas needed for the country's economic growth. Our Department would like to encourage the youth to enrol for scarce and critical skills like Engineering, Artisans, Law and so on, in order to ensure that these skills are kept secure at all times.

Over the next five years we are committed to strengthen the capacity of the post-school education and training system. We will collectively work towards the long-term goals set out in the NDP, such as increasing qualified artisans to 30,000 per annum, and increasing enrolments at our Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges to 4 million.

The Department continues to address the plight of students who are unable to graduate because they cannot find places for experiential learning. It is estimated that countrywide there are more than 60 000 graduates, out of school youths 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 inherent objectives of this slogan, my department has entered into partnerships with Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), municipalities, national and provincial government departments and the private sector. A concerted effort is being made by all stakeholders to ensure that work-integrated learning and

the placement of TVET college learners, University of Technology graduates and out-of-school youth gain momentum throughout the country.

For the 2014/15 financial year and going forward, the SETAs have allocated over R340 million in the Province of Limpopo, targeting training of 11,345 beneficiaries in various interventions, which include adult education and training, artisan development, bursary funding for the Limpopo learners, internships, learnerships, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), skills programmes and pre-apprenticeship.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2014 I launched a project in the Vhembe district, financed through the National Skills Fund (NSF). The NSF invested R26.7 million in the Vhembe District Municipality Skills Development Project, a project which commenced in January 2013 to train 2 188 beneficiaries, implemented by the University of Venda in partnership with the District Municipality over a three year period to 2015. The Local Economic Development Strategy of Vhembe, derived from the Provincial Growth Strategy, states that the key economic sectors in the district of Vhembe are agriculture, tourism and arts – in line with the identified sectors for the whole Province. We are proud of the contribution of the district and its ability to leverage the natural resources and contribute to the Gross Domestic Product.

In addition to this project and other small scale projects funded throughout Limpopo from the NSF, the NSF made a further investment of R398 million in the 7 Public TVET Colleges in the 2013 financial year, spanning a three year period up to 2016. This investment is in keeping with the strategic thrust of my department, that of strengthening capacity of our TVET College system and expanding access to meet the overwhelming skills shortage faced by the Province and the country.

This NSF investment in these colleges is meant to benefit over 15,000 learners over the said three-year period. It is also expected that all the seven TVET Colleges will use the capacity building allocation to ensure that they build right partnerships with industry, communities, local and provincial governments and the SETAs so as to ensure that they are able to serve the skills needs of local, regional and provincial economic players within which they operate.

## **Universities**

The Limpopo Province is home to two of our universities – the University of Venda, or UNIVEN as it is popularly called, and the University of Limpopo (UL).

These universities contribute in a number of ways to the development of high level skills for the province and the country as a whole. It is particularly gratifying to note how they have developed over the last 20 years – growing their student numbers, improving their infrastructure and moving strongly into science engineering and technology fields. The University of Limpopo is expected to have a total enrolment of just under 20 000 student this year, with 38% in Science Engineering and Technology fields, while the UNIVEN is expected to have enrolled almost 12 000 students with 42% in these fields. The targeted number of new spaces for students entering into these universities in 2016 is expected to be about 5 000 at UL and 3 600 at UNIVEN. Both Universities are set to enter into new fields of study in the near future, and my department will be supporting them in these expansion efforts to ensure more diverse opportunities for university study in the Limpopo Province.

Since mining is one of Limpopo Province's main growth areas, I have requested UNIVEN to consider establishing mining engineering as one of their competencies. Engagements are underway with my Department for the development of a proposal, including partnerships with industry in the Thohoyandou area, to introduce mining and engineering as fields of study. This will build on UNIVEN's current enrolments and strengths. The current focus on the Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) fields will support UNIVEN's growth into engineering.

In 2013 UNIVEN produced 1 800 graduates across various fields. This was an impressive 3.8% growth in graduates from the previous academic year. Of these, 677 graduates were in SET – which included 22 engineering graduates and 173 life and physical sciences graduates. UNIVEN has also contributed to other scarce skills areas, producing 202 graduates in animal and human health and 348 new teachers in 2013. The university is expected to continue in its growth trajectory in the sciences and has set targets to produce 110 graduates in engineering, 526 graduates in life and physical sciences and 704 graduates in animal and human health per annum by 2019.

UL is also focused on science, engineering and technology. In 2013, 49% of its students were enrolled in SET fields and it produced 1,974 graduates across the various SET specialisations. UL also contributed significantly to the other scarce skills areas, producing 406 life and physical sciences graduates, 633 animal and human health graduates, and 479 teachers in 2013. Of course, since 2013 there have been some significant changes at UL. Specifically, the MEDUNSA campus has been unbundled from UL and incorporated into our newest university, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University in Ga-Rankuwa in Gauteng.

However, my Department recognises that the Limpopo Province requires a university that can provide high level skills in the medical field. It is currently estimated that 80% of Limpopo Province's posts for doctors and medical specialists are vacant. This highlights a critical need, in the community and the country as a whole, to increase the number of MB ChB graduates. South Africa has a major deficit in medical doctors and the country has not built a new medical training facility since 1976. The University of Limpopo has a vision to be a leading African university through addressing the needs of rural communities through innovative ideas, and in line with this vision it is establishing a new School of Medicine that will open its doors to its first intake of students in 2016. The Limpopo Province has been earmarked as the first of five Presidential priority infrastructure projects and it has been publically announced by both the President and key ministers that the University of Limpopo School of Medicine will be established in Polokwane.

My Department, with the assistance of the University of Pretoria, is conducting a feasibility study to determine the most appropriate and viable type of post-school institution for the Giyani district. Ensuring that there are appropriate post-school education opportunities in rural areas is important, but we need to know that the relevant skills are provided. The former Giyani College of Education was established in 1988 in Mopani District, in present-day Limpopo Province. The college offered a four-year Higher Diploma in Education, with Science as one of its specialisation areas. During the post-1994 reforms of the higher education and training sector, the college was nominated for incorporation into an existing university that specialised in teacher education. However, the envisaged incorporation did not materialise and the college was closed down in 2002. The closure of the college impacted on the provision and availability of educational opportunities to the immediate community

and the region. Currently, the campus of the former college is utilised as a multi-purpose skills training centre. The local community, through the *Khatsani Educational Initiative*, has petitioned my Department to consider establishing a university or college campus on the former Giyani College of Education site. This is the context that informs the feasibility study. I am keen to support the development of this campus as a multi-purpose post-school institution, and a feasibility study will inform us of the kinds of programme that such a post-school institution should offer, and what level of investment will be required to make this a reality. The development of the Giyani Campus will be dependent on our ability to raise the funds required.

My Department has been working with both universities in the Province to strengthen teacher education. UL participated fully in the Department's Strengthening Foundation Phase Teacher Education Programme, and through its participation it has developed a new Bachelor of Education in Foundation Phase Teaching, which is currently being reviewed by my Department. When this programme has been approved and accredited by the Council on Higher Education the university will start offering it. This will ensure that the Province is able to produce sufficient foundation phase teachers to support the schooling system going forward.

I am pleased to say that Government, through my Department, has invested significant funds into the two Universities in Limpopo province. A total of R1, 480 billion from the Department's infrastructure and efficiency earmarked grant has been allocated to these Universities since 2006, when the fund was initiated. Specifically, the Department has invested total of R848, 870 million into UL and R631, 279 million into UNIVEN from 2006 to 2014. This support has enabled these universities to improve the quality of their infrastructure significantly, and has supported: the construction of new academic buildings, laboratories and lecture theatres; the refurbishment, upgrading and conversion of academic buildings; development of student accommodation; and the acquisition of equipment and furniture.

Government's key mechanism for assisting poor students to access post-school education is the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). In 1999 NSFAS was responsible for disbursing R441 million of financial aid to students and today the entity is responsible for over R9.5 billion in financial support to students with most of

the funding provided by government. Funding from the NSFAS to UL, including the Medunsa campus in 2014/15, amounted to R356.6 million. In 2015/16 the Medunsa campus, which has been incorporated into the Sefako Makgatho Health University, has been allocated its own funding. Funding for students at the University of Limpopo amounts to R342.8 million.

This is a sizeable contribution by government to assist poor students, but as you all know the demand for financial aid far outstrips the resources available. South Africa's present level of public expenditure on higher education is rather high by international standards and has been growing at a somewhat faster real rate than in many other countries. And yet despite increased funding the cost of higher education, especially at universities, remains expensive and unaffordable to the majority of poor students in the country. The Department remains committed to source additional funding.

### **Career Development**

With regard to the Department's involvement with providing career advice and career development, the *Apply Now!* Campaign was launched in 2012 in response to the increased number of learners that pass Matric annually and have not applied for university programmes in time to meet the deadlines for applications. This has led to students that were not able to study a programme that they were interested in, and a huge number of walk-in applicants forming long queues at universities at the beginning of each year without being accommodated at the institutions.

The campaign seeks to provide learners with critical information on post-school education and training options, qualifications and funding and highlights the importance of applying in time to any of the post-school education and training institutional programmes.

An *Apply Now!* Booklet is developed and distributed to all Grade 12 learners in high schools across the country. The booklet is developed in collaboration with the Department of Basic Education. The first edition was printed in 2012. The booklets are accompanied by an instruction note to help teachers explain them to learners. We make every effort to ensure that learners have access to them.

Secondly, Programme Director, the Department has invested in a radio programme. The Khetha Radio Programme further hosts *Apply Now!* topics and messages. These programmes run weekly in 10 African languages, including Afrikaans. Since the launch in 2012, the campaign has hosted numerous information dissemination outreach projects targeting deep rural areas.

### **Career Development Services**

Have you heard of *Khetha* – our Career Development Services brand that says “decide your future – make the right choice”? It was set up to establish a comprehensive and coordinated career development service for everyone in South Africa.

Khetha offers a national career advice helpline which anybody – learners, parents, workers – can call to get career information and advice. I want to encourage everyone to call if you are unsure about any career related matter. The national career advice helpline can be reached at 086 999 0123 or you could simply send an SMS to 072 204 5056 with your name and contact telephone number. A career advisor will call you back.

You can also tune into the radio every week in one of 10 languages. More information is available on the website.

The new number to call for any Career Development advice, guidance and information is **086 999 0123**. We have a qualified career advisor on the other end waiting to assist you at no cost at all. Use other means like ‘please call me’ and SMSs too. We are there to help you.

In conclusion, let me take this opportunity to urge our youth to be vigilant against indulging in self-destructive activities such as alcohol, drug and substance abuse, unprotected sex. In whatever you do, I wish to tell our youth that your country needs you – healthy, strong, well trained and focused.

I thank you