

MEDIA RELEASE

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Minister calls for dialogue, stresses progress and focus in TVET sector

Minister of Higher Education and Training Blade Nzimande today calls on formations representing students at Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges to engage in discussion with his Department and College administrations and to strengthen and renew efforts to resolve their legitimate issues.

Minister Nzimande again points to the considerable progress made since the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) took over 50 colleges in the sector less than two years ago. “TVET Colleges have been and remain on a continual road to improvement since we unified structures and management,” said the Minister. “Nevertheless, we are aware that there is still a way to go until the institutions are at peak performance in terms of delivering on their mandate of empowering young people across the country with the skills and knowledge they require to become useful and active participants in their local economies.

The DHET has been informed by some TVET College principals that some student formations at their institutions intend taking action over a range of grievances once term starts. Minister Nzimande in this context reiterates both the constitutional right of those wishing to protest to do so peacefully, and the equally important right of those who wish to continue teaching and learning to do so unhindered and without intimidation.

“Bringing the sector into a centrally managed and guided framework was a very important step towards ensuring that we create and sustain real and viable alternatives to a university course for those young people who want to gain a post school skill, but who may either have not achieved a university pass, or who may not have the inclination to pursue a course of academic study,” said Minister Nzimande. “The DHET inherited a very mixed bag, because some of the provinces had done better than others in ensuring that the sector could at one and the same time be expanded to accommodate the many thousands of previously excluded young people, while ensuring that new entrants received the kind of training and support which could ready them with skills the job market is looking for.”

In some places, the Department was still in the process of ensuring that the right procedures are used when processing students, and some institutions need further help to get on track, for example in ensuring that students who qualify also receive their certificates quickly.

“We are determined not to let this situation go on for longer than is absolutely necessary, and we are working with the college authorities and other relevant institutions such as SETA to rectify any deficiencies,” said Minister Nzimande. “We call on the students representative bodies at the TVET Colleges to engage with us and their administrations as we together ensure continuing improvement.”

The DHET had demonstrated its very significant commitment to growing and improving the sector, among others through substantial infrastructure investment, the Minister said. In addition, funding for TVET students via NSFAS has risen dramatically since the DHET was founded ten years ago.

“Whereas in 2007, just 12 283 students in TVET Colleges were supported through NSFAS, last year this figure reached 256 904,” said Minister Nzimande. “Government increased the funding available to TVET students in the same timeframe from R 66.7m to over R 2.3bn last year.”

Recently, the Department had announced that three new TVET campuses will come into operation this year, among them

- Thabazimbi Campus at the Waterberg TVET College in Limpopo
- Bambanani Campus at uMfolozi TVET College in KwaZulu-Natal
- Nkandla A Campus at uMfolozi TVET College in KwaZulu-Natal

TVET Colleges will this year make 207 510 places available to new entrants, 142 484 of them for students interested in studying towards a National Diploma in Engineering or Business Studies. Another 65 026 places will also be available across 19 programs for the National Certificate (Vocational), which provides theory and practical experience in a range of vocational fields.

The National Skills Fund (NSF) will continue to invest in TVET colleges, focusing on funding around 15 000 learners each year in programs linked to scarce and critical skills areas, especially with regards to artisan development. The NSF will also fund significant quality improvements in the TVET college sector, including:

- development of a foundational learning programme to improve learner throughput
- creation of centres of specialisation for 13 priority trades across the country in the TVET colleges and
- providing connectivity to campuses across the country through the South African National Research Network.

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