

**Media statement by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mr Blade Nzimande during the media briefing on department's budget vote 2014/15**

22 Jul 2014

**Introduction**

In his State of the Nation Address on 17 June 2014 President Jacob Zuma indicated, among other things, that this government will continue to invest in education and skills as that is the key to economic growth and development. Education remains, as the President stated, 'an apex priority for this government.'

Since the establishment of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) we have made important advances, particularly policy interventions aimed at transforming the education system to overcome the legacy of apartheid and colonialism and to confront racial, gender, class and other forms of inequality.

We have also expanded the enrolment in all post school institutions, especially for blacks and other previously disadvantaged people. Universities have seen a year on year increase in the enrolment since the establishment of this Department in 2009. The expansion has been most pronounced in the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges (formerly known as FET colleges) where head-count enrolments have increased by over 130%.

We are aggressively paying a particular focus on TVET Colleges as the most preferred post schooling option to acquire critical skills that our economy need. We are building more TVET Colleges across the country and more money will be directed to elevate their stature and programs offerings. Our top priority is to expand them while improving their quality.

Our turnaround strategy to improve the functioning of colleges is starting to bear fruit and will continue. On the 2014 MTEF period, we have allocated R19.2 billion to ensure that TVET college enrolments continue this expansion. Currently, post-school education and training institutions are unevenly distributed across the country, with rural areas being particularly poorly served. To correct this distribution, R2.5 billion has been committed by the Department towards the refurbishment of two existing TVET college campuses and the building of twelve new campuses.

All TVET college Principals and Deputy Principals have successfully been transferred to my Department from the Provincial Education Departments with effect from 1 April 2013. I have also appointed Councils to all colleges. To finalise the process of shifting responsibility for the colleges to the national government, the transfer of lecturers and support staff is being finalised through Collective Agreements in the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC), General Public Service Sector Bargaining Council (GPSSBC) and Further Education and Training Colleges Bargaining Unit (FETCBU).

We have also established three new universities in Mpumalanga province, Northern Cape and the one in Gauteng ( the first of its kind in African Continent) to offer Health Sciences. The DHET has further established the new National Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences to respond to the declining trends from Universities in producing more Social science graduates.

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) has expanded to include students in TVET colleges and the amount disbursed annually has grown rapidly, by approximately 270% since 2008. We will continue with this trend of funding to absorb as many poor and deserving students as we can.

A turnaround strategy in the colleges is in place and is improving the quality of learning and management. In the university sector, we are prioritising the development of infrastructure for the

historically disadvantaged institutions, support for teaching and learning and the production of the next generation of academics.

In consultation with the wide range of stakeholders, we developed the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training which I released in January. This is a comprehensive strategy for transforming the post-school system and its various components and most of the new initiatives over the past five years are aligned to it. We are therefore developing a comprehensive national plan to implement the White Paper.

### **Social inclusion**

My department has initiated a process of publishing the Social inclusion policy framework for public comment. All public educational institutions reporting to DHET will have to abide by good practices contained in the policy. Vexing issues such as racism (NWU the recent case in point), discrimination based on gender, HIV and AIDS and class will be confronted through this policy.

Furthermore, the department will develop a disability policy framework for the post-school sector. The framework will set norms and standards for the treatment of students and staff with disabilities in all aspects of university or college life, including academic life, culture, sport and accommodation.

### **Adult Education and Training**

South Africa has millions of youth who leave school with a senior certificate or without this Certificate, and therefore cannot access opportunities for further education and there are millions of adults who wish to study further. Currently our Public Adult Learning Centres caters approximately 300 000 individuals, which is inadequate.

In responding to the above, the Further Education and Training Colleges Amendment Act, No. 1 of 2013 provides for the creation of a new institutional type, to be known as Community Education and Training Colleges. The department is going to establish these Community Colleges and will be modeled through grouping together clusters of adult learning centres and strengthening their infrastructure, staffing and programmes. A draft national policy on community colleges will soon be gazetted and I urge all stakeholders to interact with it and give feedback to us.

### **Universities**

Over the next five years it is my intention to consolidate the work done since 2009 to ensure that the higher education system is effectively integrated into the post school education and training system.

In line with the vision outlined in our White Paper, the university education system will continue to expand. It is expected to grow from a head-count enrolment of 953 373 students in 2012 to approximately 1.1 million students in 2019. This is well on the way to achieving our target of 1.6 million students in public universities by 2030.

Aside from expanding enrolments, we also need to focus on quality and student success. Our universities will focus on improving their graduate production from 165 995 graduates in 2012 to approximately 217 000 in 2019. The growth rate in graduates is thus expected to be significantly higher than the growth rate in enrolments.

To support better efficiency and success, we are expanding foundation programmes to ensure that under prepared school leavers are better equipped for university. We are also increasing investment in teaching

and learning development. In the current financial year, R609 million has been allocated to Teaching Development Grants to strengthen teaching and improve learning outcomes. The Council on Higher Education is implementing a Teaching and Learning Capacity Enhancement Programme that will complement our initiatives.

I recently published the Policy for the Provision of Distance Education in South African Universities in the Context of an Integrated Post-School System, which will contribute significantly towards the expansion of higher education. The use of innovative technologies and the use of open education resources are two areas that will receive attention.

The department has maintained a strong focus on strengthening the production of school teachers over the last five years and has made major gains in this regard. In 2013, approximately 14 700 new teachers graduated compared to 6 885 in 2009, an increase of 113% in new teachers per annum. In the next five years we will expand the focus from basic education teachers to include the production of teachers for the whole system including early childhood development, TVET colleges, the planned community colleges and teaching at our public universities. Our projections are that public universities will produce in excess of 23 000 new teachers annually by 2020.

We are also working to address the shortage of academics and improve their qualifications. Our aim is to ensure that we increase the number of university academics with PhDs from 39% in 2012 to 47% in 2019, and at the same time ensuring that they develop their teaching capability and their productivity in research and innovation. R180 million in Research Development Grants to universities are mainly being channelled mainly towards the development of junior and emerging academic staff through Masters, Doctoral, post-doctoral programmes.

The growth of the higher education system needs to be supported by quality infrastructure. Over the MTEF period of 2012/13 to 2014/15, R6 billion was allocated towards infrastructure projects across the existing 23 universities with an amount of R2.3 billion committed for the current financial year. A total of R1.6 billion from the R6 billion was allocated for student housing development.

### **National Student Financial Scheme (NSFAS)**

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) remains the cornerstone of our commitment to support poor and working class students to gain the benefits of a higher education. Since its inception, NSFAS has assisted over 1.4 million students. The department's allocation to NSFAS for 2014/15 amounts to R6.139 billion. This includes R3.914 billion for loans and bursaries to universities, R2.107 billion for bursaries for Technical and Vocational Continuing Education and Training (TVET) colleges and R116.2 million for administration. This is supplemented further by R2.416 billion made available through NSFAS recoveries, the National Skills Fund (NSF) scarce skills bursaries, through Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA) bursaries and from bursaries such as the Department of Basic Education's Funza Lushaka programme, bringing the total funding available for loans and bursaries for the 2014 academic year to R8.850 billion.

### **Linking education and the labour market**

The department places great emphasis on linking education and the workplace. This will include the development of a clear strategy to turn every workplace into a training space. We are now finalising Workplace-Based Learning Programme Regulations, with the purpose of making it easier for SETAs to fund the workplace-based learning.

SETA offices are now being opened in rural areas and townships as well as in TVET colleges to bring them closer to the people they are supposed to serve. By the end of this financial year, all TVET colleges will have a SETA office.

The department is embarking in a process of reviewing the current SETA landscape, within the context of the White Paper and this process will be completed by 31 March 2016. The White Paper directs that SETAs' roles be streamlined to focus on obtaining accurate data about workplace skills needs, as well as facilitating cooperation between education and training institutions and workplaces.

Since the launch of the Strategic Integrated Projects of the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission (PICC), my Department has been working to determine the skills needed to build and maintain the massive new infrastructure plans of government. This has required a wide range of investigations across all the sectors associated with the National Infrastructure Plan (NIP) to find out the skills needs and anticipated shortages. The Department will be launching a report on the anticipated skills shortages for the Strategic Integrated Projects in September 2014.

It is against this backdrop that I will present this 6th Budget Vote for the DHET. For the 2014 MTEF, the department's budget increases at an annual average rate of 6.8%, from R34.3 billion in 2013/14 to R42 billion in 2016/17. The amount of R36.9 billion for 2014/15 is an increase of R2.5 billion (or 7.4%) on the 2013/14 allocation, excluding funds from the skills levy. The skills levy, which is channelled through the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and the National Skills Fund (NSF), is expected to increase at an annual average rate of 9.5% from R12.3 billion in 2013/14 to R16.1 billion in 2016/17

Thank you.

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