**Memorandum from the Parliamentary Office**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 3361**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 27/10/2017**

**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER 39 OF 2017)**

**Mr A P van der Westhuizen (DA) to ask the Minister of Higher Education and Training:**

(1) Whether she has found that the decrease in the number of students assisted by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) at public technical vocational education and training (TVET) colleges from 235 988 in 2016 to 225 950 in 2017 represents a trend that should be reversed; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what actions will she undertake to ensure that the number of students at public TVET colleges studying with NSFAS support is increased; and

(2) What growth in the number of TVET college students studying with NSFAS support over the medium term does she deem to be in line with the growth in the number of students in need of financial support?

**NW3753E**

**REPLY:**

1. The Ministry is aware of the trend and is in full agreement that this trajectory must be reversed. The Department’s Medium Term Strategic Framework targets 200 000 students per annum and therefore the Department is within the target range. There are year-to-year variations in the numbers depending on the number of students applying and qualifying. The reduced numbers are attributed to the growing demand for increased allowances from those already funded due to the cost of accommodation and travel. Added to this, the majority of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges were not participating in the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) centralised student-centred model in 2016. In 2016, sixteen (16) Colleges participated in the NSFAS student-centred model and 34 Colleges used an old and outdated NSFAS administrative system to process student applications. The old NSFAS administrative system did not entail verification of students’ supporting documents submitted by various government departments and thus a high number of students were awarded bursaries.

In 2017 the NSFAS centralised student-centred system was rolled out to all TVET Colleges requiring all applications of TVET College students to be processed through the new student-centred model which involves rigorous verification of applications of students. This stringent verification of students’ applications may have attributed to the decreased number of NSFAS beneficiaries in 2017 since many students, especially those who do not qualify for travel and accommodation allowances, are reluctant to complete and sign the bursary documentation. However, it must be noted that NSFAS has not concluded processing applications for 2017 and as such the number of NSFAS beneficiaries is likely to increase.

1. For the last seven (7) years, bursary funding for TVET Colleges has only been increasing in line with the Consumer Price Index. Taking into account the accompanying annual increase in tuition fees, a substantial increase in the number of NSFAS beneficiaries is not feasible from the allocated funds. Therefore, the number of public TVET College students benefitting from NSFAS is likely to remain stable unless there is a substantial increase of bursary funding from the voted funds. Motivations in this regard have been made to the National Treasury to increase the NSFAS allocations to TVET colleges in terms of providing relief to all who qualify for NSFAS support but there is insufficient funding and the current accommodation and travel allowance is insufficient to cover the costs.

**COMPILER DETAILS**

NAME AND SURNAME:

CONTACT:

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Minister signs Parliamentary Question 3361.

MR GF QONDE

DIRECTOR–GENERAL: HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

DATE:

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION 3361 IS APPROVED / NOT APPROVED / AMENDED.

COMMENTS

PROF HB MKHIZE, MP

MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

DATE: