



# PARLIAMENT

OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## COMMITTEES

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## SELECT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND RECREATION

### KEY ISSUES RELATED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND RECREATION.

The Department of Higher Education and Training was established in 2009 when Department of Education (DoE) split into Basic Education and Higher Education. The main responsibility of the Department is to ensure that Outcome 5 of government's 12 outcomes "A skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path" is achieved. The purpose of this paper is to present key issues which require attention.

#### Issue of Access

Access to education is a fundamental Constitutional right. Each year thousands of young matriculants endeavour to gain access to higher institutions yet the available spaces in those institutions of higher education are limited. In some programmes, for example engineering and Medicine, Universities raise minimum requirements unreasonably thus affect those students who are from poor educational background. For example, a student with a Bachelor pass at Grade 12 would not automatically gain access to any Bachelor degree. How does the Department address such cases? Does the Department have any oversight role and control over the universities in determining minimum requirements?

Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges have recently received popularity and as such many students begin to consider pursue their careers through FET Colleges. Most FET Colleges and Campuses are in town hence most students from rural areas can not gain access to these FET's. In responding to the demand of FET Colleges how does the Department plan to extend campuses to rural areas? The President during the State of the Nation Address indicated that 12 training and vocational education colleges will be built. According to the targets of the department in the APP 12 campuses will be built. The department should clarify if new colleges will be built or there will be extension of the existing Colleges. Furthermore, the department should update the Committee on the progress made so far in constructing the said campuses as it was part of 2013/14 targets.

In any University there 5% reserved for the SADC<sup>1</sup> students. How does the department monitor that universities do not exceed to 5% especially in the postgraduate programmes?

<sup>1</sup> Article 7 SADC Protocol on Education and training of 2006

### **Issue of funding students**

Funding is one of the key factors affecting education particularly for those students coming from poor socio economic background. Every year students protest in both universities and FET colleges demanding funding. In 2013/14 financial year National Student financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) had shortfall of 2.6 billion. The Department used 1 billion from the national skills fund to assist NSFAS deals with the shortfall. To what extent does the current budget meet the potential numbers of NSFAS applicants who need financial aid? What are long term plan of the Department of ensuring that the available funds match with the rapid growth of students at both universities and FET?

### **Issue of Student accommodation**

Most tertiary institutions do not have enough accommodation to accommodate all students specially those who are coming far from the institution. It is necessary that students are provided with a safe and conducive environment. In the previous years there were lot of concerns related to students' accommodation. The concerns were related to the quality of the accommodation

### **Issue of student performance**

The performance of students at FET Colleges is generally low especially in subject like Mathematics. In the last three years NCV levels 2 & 4 did not achieve 58% and according the targets of the department the maximum target in the next three years is only 56%. This target poses a serious concern because it implies that almost 50% of the students who enrol in the FET will not make it through to the final level (NCV level 4). The department should investigate why students are not doing well in Mathematics. Additionally, the department should consider targeting higher targets.

### **Issue Illegal colleges**

The number of candidates who complete Grade 12 is increasing every year. This increase in numbers poses a challenge to the existing institutions of higher education because these candidates cannot all be accommodated. Generally, those who are admitted at any university or FET become desperate and tend to take whatever offer that comes. Some end up enrolling at colleges that are not registered and or accredited by the authorised bodies such as UMALUSI, CHE etc. There have been instances reported of illegal colleges in some provinces. What is the response of the Department in dealing with this issue?

### **Issue of Community Training Centres/colleges**

Over the years focus has been on formal education programmes which are offered at school, college or university. This form of education caters a particular group of individuals.

Experience has shown that there is a great need for the training (short) programmes particularly those that will target skills and knowledge such as cooking and baking; poultry farming and other short programmes. In the 2014/15 APP has a put a target of 9 Public Community Colleges to be declared. Where are these Colleges situated? Which programmes and NQF levels will be offered? Who will be responsible for facilitating/teaching and managing in these Colleges?

### **Issue of Central application system**

The Higher institutions in Kwa-Zulu Natal have adopted the central application system. The central application office processes applications for first time admission to universities and colleges in Kwa-Zulu Natal. The system provides opportunity for the applicants to have their applications circulated to all institutions of their choice within the province. A candidate applies to a central application office (CAO) and receives application forms and information booklets which contain all information about different programmes offered at institutions (including minimum requirements and closing dates). The system has so far produced good results and it is used effectively it can reduce high numbers of students who travel to universities in January for application. From this best practice, one would expect the Department extend this practice to the rest of the Provinces. What is the status of central application in other provinces?

### **Issue of the Provincial/Regional offices**

The regional offices for the Department are essential in ensuring effective monitoring of FET Colleges within the Provinces. According to the APP 2014/15 of the Department there are already 5 established Regional offices of the department and the rest will be established this year. Where are these regional offices located? How many officials are serving in these offices?

### **Issue of Administration of Universities and FET Colleges**

In the previous years several Universities and FET Colleges were put under administration. The questions in this regard are: How many FET Colleges are still under administration? Furthermore, the department should update the Committee on the Colleges under forensic investigation.

### **Issue of capacity building of FET College Lectures**

The experience shows that the quality of teachers determines the quality of learner performance. The strategic Plan of the department indicates that there will be a formal qualification/degree for FET College lectures. When will this degree programme be offered and how it will be offered? Which universities will be offering this qualification?