**IRREGULAR EXPENDITURE AT SETAS CONCERNS COMMITTEE**
The Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Technology received a briefing from the Department of Higher Education, Science and Technology on the Sector Education and Training Authorities (Setas). The committee was particularly interested in hearing about irregular expenditure and success stories.

The country currently has 21 Setas, covering all industries both private as well as public. “What guides training at the Setas is the national skills development strategy. Their business is mainly to train and facilitate workplace training and placement,” Director-General Mr Gwebs Qonde said. High staff turnover, governance and irregular expenditure were all highlighted as challenges facing Setas.

The Chairperson of the committee, Mr Philly Mapulane, asked the department to explain how the Setas will function to create more certainty. He also raised the issue of the R17 million in irregular expenditure at the Mining Seta.

Committee Member Mr Baxolile Nodada said the number of qualified audits at Setas on the basis of irregular expenditure is a big concern. “Not anywhere do you talk about consequences. There is no consequences or outcomes measure, no accountability with regards to skills transfers. People just leave.”

“Why is there no specific number provided in the presentation for contribution on skills, and where are the placements happening. How many trainees find work after these trainings, what is the number of people placed in jobs?” he asked.

Committee Member Mr Phuti Keetse concurred that irregular expenditure was concerning and needed to be addressed. “It is not normal to pump in money to something we cannot be sure of. What are the success rates? I concur with the other speakers that the committee should be given statistical information on those who go through the system,” Mr Keetse said.

Mr Qonde responded that it would be preferable if the Setas brief the committee, as the department only played an oversight role in the Setas.

In response to the rape and murder of Ms Uyinene Mrwetyana this week, Mr Mapulane condemned the scourge of gender violence and urged all South Africans to fight against it. The committee observed a minute of silence to honour her life.

Sibongile Maputi
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