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| MEMORANDUM FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE |

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 1740**

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**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 16 OF 2023**

**Mr S S Zondo (IFP) to ask the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation:**

Whether his department has any interventions in place to address the situation where at the end of each academic year hundreds of thousands of graduates do not have any prospect of employment due to the absence of an investment into and/or demand for certain skills and degrees by industries; not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details of the interventions?

**NW1988E**

**REPLY:**

Due to the limited number of jobs which are readily available in the country, university graduates are not always able to secure immediate relevant work opportunities once they have completed their studies. The Department of Higher Education and Training (the Department) is participating in the Presidential Youth Employment Stimulus (PES) programme. The programme offers opportunities for unemployed graduates to gain useful university-based experience in a range of areas that can improve their readiness for employment and open career pathways that may not have been available without work experience.

In 2021/22 financial year an amount of R90 million was allocated to support the programme across all 26 universities with 3000 graduates placed on contract to support core administration and operations in core business areas, teaching and learning and research.

The Department designed a standard reporting template to be used by all universities for monitoring purposes. This was to ensure that there is coordinated reporting and recording of opportunities provided through the programme. Universities submit monthly reports with updates on placements of graduates including information on jobs created, demographics, number of graduates leaving the programme and reasons, challenges experienced and financial reports. The reports also include the performance of the participants and impact of the programme as it seeks to provide participants with skills and social relief in the form of stipends.

An amount of R93 million is allocated for the implementation of the second phase of the programme. All 26 universities are participating and have started recruiting and placing graduates as per the plans received by the Department. It is anticipated that approximately 3000 graduates will be employed across universities.

The Department has further decided it will conduct tracer studies in this financial year to establish which universities yield graduate employment and in which fields of study. Once the study is completed further support will be provided to the lagging universities.

Recently the Minister hosted the summit on Strategic Industry Partnerships with Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges which was held at the International Convention Centre (ICC) in Cape Town from 27 July 2022 to 28 July 2022, the Minister emphasized the importance of establishing partnerships with industry for student placements to the extent that he recently gave a directive that all TVET college Principals should sign new Performance Agreements that include Industry Partnerships as one of their Key Performance Indicators.

Through the Ministerial summit on strategic industry partnerships with Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, the Department of Higher Education and Training, and its partners in government, industry and academia shared best practices and innovation regarding expansion of workplace-based learning opportunities for TVET college students. Furthermore, the Minister called upon all employers to open their workplaces for the placement of both TVET college students as well as to give workplace exposure to WET college lecturers, so that what is taught is relevant and needed by industry.

This decision was informed by the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training which requires Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) to be a central component of the college programmes and that the extent to which students can secure placements in the workplace must be used as an important indicator for assessing the performance of the management of institutions. The National Development Plan (NDP) also emphasises the importance of workplace-based training in job creation and the need for TVET colleges to become preferred institutions for vocational education and training. It also stresses the role of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) in supporting the development of relationships between educational institutions and employers.

The expansion of workplace-based learning opportunities for students has proven to be a challenge in the IVET college sector, however there are signs that a partnership between all the key stakeholders (TVET colleges, SETAs, and industry) is beginning to work as the roles and contribution of each partner are becoming clearly defined and understood by all.

The vision of the Department is to provide an integrated and coordinated Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system for improved economic participation and social development of the youth and adults. To this end, TVET college Principals are required to manage student admissions with the end in mind, and this calls for the establishment of strategic pannerships with industry. This approach will ensure that TVET colleges do not become a dead-end for students as college management is duty bound to break down barriers to opportunities by creating pathways for young people to access skills training programmes, access workplace-based training, articulate into higher education, and pursue self-employment without any hindrance.