

Comments on the National Skills Development Plan 2030

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1. An integrated PSET system in which SETAs play a crucial role is critical – the DHET should consider the opportunities and constraints of the current SETA-TVET arrangement and ensure that there is synergy between the two entities.
2. The purpose of the NSDP is “providing greater levels of access to education and training in rural areas”. This is commendable but challenges will be experienced during implementation because, rural areas in SA are disadvantaged in terms of adequately resourced institutions of learning and access to work-based opportunities in industry. How will the relevance of curricula to skills needs in rural areas with quite different local economies be improved? Alternatively, since large proportions of young people migrate to towns in search of employment opportunities, how can rural institutions prepare them to effectively search for and retain employment?
3. The purpose of the NSDP is to “drive skills development primarily through public education system” particularly through TVET and higher education institutions. However, the private sector will play a critically important role in expanding access and variety in the system. South Africans should have the right to choose between public and private education and both should benefit from NSDP. Partnerships between private and public institutions are to be welcomed. The modalities of these partnerships will be important.
4. It is stated that the “NSDP addresses problems and opportunities in the skills landscape...” It also needs to address and ameliorate the perception about TVET Colleges as places for “non-performers” as a matter of urgency if PSET in general and the NSDP in particular are to succeed.
5. The NSDP indicates “the roles (to be) played by DHET and the key institutions in implementing the NSDP”. The Department should ensure that it has the capacity and is sufficiently staffed to undertake the challenges posed by the NSDP.

6. An aim of the NSDP concerns “improving the monitoring and evaluation capacity in the system” to improve accountability. Monitoring and evaluation of the PSET system is critical – how is the current system being monitored? What lessons learnt are currently emerging from this monitoring? What will be done to ensure that stakeholders such as industry and communities “participate actively and articulate their concerns and objectives”? A key consideration will be how the DHET’s PSET M&E Framework enables M&E to facilitate improvement to systems.
7. Among the Principles and Goals of the NSDP is a “strong focus on workplace learning...” which has been a challenge for students and graduates from TVET colleges. How will this be addressed? The NSDP may provide some indications as to how this will be achieved. Does the Department have any views on incentivising this activity?
8. The NSDP intends “Focusing on support systems for learners” – this is commendable. Two observations are relevant here: efficiencies can only be improved if learners are made aware of their chosen career pathway and its articulation to higher levels of learning when they commence studying. SETAs should help and encourage students to formulate a career plan from the onset in coordination with the training institution. In addition to providing stipends, SETAs may consider ways of supporting student’s career planning while they are doing their WIL/WBE.
9. Rationalising the system is a commendable strategy to reduce overlaps between institutional functions. For instance, where SETAs conduct quality assurance responsibilities QCTO and DHET are also doing the same kind of work. There should be clear lines of understanding as to which institutions do what quality assurance for occupational, vocational, or artisan qualifications.
10. Evidence based decision making is always important, especially in resource-constrained times. Accordingly, market information needs to be acquired with participation of broader stakeholders such as industry to determine sectoral skills needs.
11. The role of the HEQC and especially the QCTO is pivotal in ensuring the progressive expansion of high standards in the relevant occupational fields notably, in technical and vocational education. The Quality Councils should work very closely with industry on the development of part/qualifications to address supply. A curriculum review cycle should be determined with the inputs from all stakeholders. Currently,

Public PSET institutions are seen as training on obsolete qualifications whereas progressive skills and qualifications are accessed in private institutions. Simultaneously, SETAs should work with PSET institutions in advocacy for the uptake of the part/qualifications once they have been developed.

12. The DHET initiated its list of Occupations in High Demand. The role of the HEQC and especially the QCTO is pivotal in ensuring the progressive expansion of opportunities for rural youth to enter these occupations. Communities and stakeholders such as schools and parents especially in the RURAL areas should be made aware of such occupations and relevant SETA and DHET funding needs to be made easily accessible.

13. SETAs

- The functions that SETAs undertake are important. However, extending the lifespan of the SETAs may be problematic taking into account the fact that many of them are currently – or in the past have been - under administration making levels of accountability weak. Taking a shared service approach is a commendable innovation provided that this mode ensures that access is easier for all.
- Increasing funding allocations to support occupational programmes is important to expand these opportunities quickly. However, the following may be considered: that SETAs are often in danger of under-spending. Perhaps more money should be allocated to the QCTO to carry out the QA so that it can be responsive in generating part/qualifications within the required time.

End of submission