

# TVET enrolment drastically increasing, but industry, college partnerships still vital

**Blade Nzimande**

Photo: Sashnee Moodley



BY: SASHNEE MOODLEY

The enrolment of students into technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges has grown by 131% since 2010 but there are still challenges that must be addressed through industry and college partnerships.

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This was revealed on Wednesday by the Minister of Higher Education and Training **Blade Nzimande** at the launch of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) – SwissCham College Improvement Partnership at the Ekurhuleni West College (EWC), in Germiston, Gauteng.

The DHET and the representative body of Swiss businesses and their associates in South Africa, SwissCham Southern Africa, had entered into a partnership aimed at

improving the quality of teaching and learning in public TVET colleges, aimed at making them centres of excellence in the national skills development landscape.

The DHET, which has oversight of the national skills development system, is already implementing a comprehensive strategy to bring all 50 public TVET colleges into line with prescribed national norms and standards, with a view to raise its colleges to a level comparable with the best worldwide.

Meanwhile, Nzimande further revealed that the number of students in colleges grew from 310 000, in 2010, to more than 700 000 to date.

The DHET had also set aside bursaries to the value of R2.1-billion for TVET colleges this year, up from R318-million in 2009 and had further grown its financial aid scheme.

Addressing various industry experts and TVET and Swiss Embassy representatives, the Minister stated that TVET colleges were not “glorified high schools” and that they were important, adding that the support and participation of industry was vital to ensure that students from TVET colleges were well placed in the work place to provide the necessary skills for the country.

“Last year, the SwissCham requested a meeting for a partnership. After listening to the proposed partnership, we were convinced the department should take [up the opportunity]. This programme and cooperation will involve key aspects that include lecturers being placed in Swiss companies for workplace exposure, industry experts ... [engaging] with colleges and [providing] some training, and a college-to-college collaboration between [Switzerland] and South African,” Nzimande stated.

The partnership would also cover curriculum enhancement to ensure what was taught was relevant to industry needs. Further, occupational teams will be formed to create a network consisting of colleges, representatives from universities, the relevant sector education and training authorities (Setas) and industries.

Nzimande also enthused that work-integrated learning or work placement was at the heart of what the department wanted to achieve.

He stated that government should lead by example and revealed that he had advanced a recent engagement with national carrier South African Airways to encourage work-placement programmes for students.

“Where are the South African companies in this? Why should the Swiss companies beat them? We have inherited a situation where our TVET colleges are not respected and Swiss companies are partnering with us to strengthen these colleges, but we need local

companies to step up,” said Nzimande.

Another key challenge, he highlighted, was South Africa’s high youth unemployment coupled with its skills shortage in technical fields.

Nzimande assured that part of the DHET’s plan was to address this challenge by ensuring colleges became more attractive to the youth through partnerships between industries and colleges.

He stated that South Africa’s higher education landscape was “lopsided” as there were three times more students in universities compared with colleges, highlighting that the DHET’s goal was to reverse this by 2030.

Placement was also at the heart of economic and skills development, Nzimande pointed out and said every workplace should become a training space.

“College principals must also ensure they have a relationship with industry. This programme is extended to three years and we have [asked] the Department of Trade and Industry that those companies that take in students be accredited with triple black economic-empowerment score points.

“Government cannot succeed without the contribution of the private sector. If we are to really address the skills shortage, a partnership with colleges, universities and Setas is important,” he concluded.

Edited by: Tracy Hancock