

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR ORAL REPLY

QUESTION 204

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(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER 27 OF 2010)

Mrs F F Mushwana (ANC) to ask the Minister of Higher Education and Training:

What steps will he take to (a) ensure that the Further Education and Training (FET) colleges attract more students and (b) change the perception that it offers inferior qualifications?

NO3123E

REPLY:

- a) The current general belief across our communities is that FET colleges deliver programmes and qualifications that are significantly inferior in quality to those delivered by Universities. FET Colleges are viewed as second-choice institutions. This perception has developed over generations and will require consistent endeavour over the medium and long term to provoke and appropriate collective mind-shift.

We are making several efforts to change this perception such that our communities would envisage both FET Colleges and Universities as viable, respected, worthwhile institutions that provide excellent quality education within their related fields, and should be institutions of first choice.

- b) Thus far a Higher Education Summit and a FET college summit and a Skills Summit have been held. These summits are part of a strategy to involve all relevant stakeholders in critical discussions, cogent analyses, robust debate, and rational evidence based assessment of each sector.

The inter-relatedness between, and need for cohesion amongst institutions, government, civil society, private enterprise and the labour movement, across the sectors is highlighted.

The picture that emerges (and is being gradually adopted) is one where the sectors (FET, Higher Education, Occupational) function in seamless cohesion rather than in conflict, exclusivity or polarisation.

The Summits have identified a shared set of principles which form the basis for action to improve teaching and learning, efficiency, effectiveness, good governance, social responsibility and heightened employability of their graduates.

These wide ranging activities promote the notion that the students who flow from these institutions are geared to contribute positively to the economy, to enhance social cohesion, to demonstrate social justice and to display a genuine caring for fellow citizens.

Additional Information

Amongst the areas targeted for intervention are:

- Policy, legislation and implementation
- FET college programmes and qualifications
- Planning and funding for 2011 and beyond
- Examinations
- Customised Support for Staffing and Student recruitment.

An individualised diagnostic analysis of FET College functioning is being conducted. This indicates the nature, duration, intensity and focus of support needed. The support will be provided by expertise based teams drawn from DHET, Provincial Education Departments, Higher Education Institutions, Private Enterprise, Professional associations etc. The teams would have a coordination centre and would be comprised on the basis of the diagnostic analysis.

The overarching strategy entails a continuous yet differentiated focus on developing a Skilled and Capable workforce to support an Inclusive Growth Path through:

- Establishing a credible institutional mechanism for skills planning
- Increasing access to programmes leading to intermediate and high level learning
- Increasing access to occupationally-directed programmes in needed areas and thereby expanding the availability of intermediate level skills (with a special focus on artisan skills)
- Increasing access to high level occupationally-directed programmes in needed areas and Research, development and innovation in human capital for a growing knowledge economy

These elements will be robustly and relentlessly pursued. The resources of the sectors will be pinpointed on the identified levers of change.

With time and perseverance the throughput of learners in the sectors will rise, their absorption into the economy will increase, their positive participation in society will be more noticeable and society will develop a respect for them and for the education

process that fashioned such quality citizens irrespective of whether they emerged from work-place programmes, universities, universities of technology or FET Colleges.

In short, a paradigm-shift would have occurred