

Nzimande 'gaining ground' on higher education

PRETORIA: Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande says he's gaining ground on Further Education and Training (FET) colleges.



"Financial support to Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges has increased into billions of rand, chartered accountants have been appointed to put in financial management systems and new councils are currently being appointed to strengthen governance in colleges across the country," Nzimande said in a statement.

"Our focused attention in turning around FET Colleges and making them institutions of choice is supported by very significant interventions, with state funding in the five years between 2009 and 2014 progressively increasing from R3.1 billion to R5.2 billion.

"Bursary support has also increased from R312 million in 2009 to R1.7 billion this year. By 2014, we will be providing bursaries to poor students in our FETs to the value of R1.9 billion," Nzimande said.

He added that additional financial support to the value of R2.5 billion has been allocated towards curriculum development and infrastructure refurbishment and construction at campuses. This investment had come from the National Skills Fund (NSF) and Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs).

Nzimande said the process of appointing new FET College Councils would be finalised by April 2013, and to strengthen governance, these councils would undergo an induction programme, followed by developing a council charter stipulating their performance requirements.

"Furthermore, as of 2013, the performance reporting of colleges per quarter will require College Council's oversight and approval before they are submitted to the department," he said.

In dealing with the administrative capacity to handle finances, the department has partnered with the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) to appoint qualified Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) with a brief of establishing sound financial systems and procedures and mentor existing personnel in the colleges.

Currently 42 CFOs had been appointed and the finance administrative staff at FET Colleges will undergo financial management training relevant to their work, while the appointment of College Financial managers will be finalised where vacancies exist.

"These financial managers will be mentored by the CFOs we have appointed with SAICA to ensure the effective and sustainable continuation and functioning of the systems and procedures that they would have developed and implemented," Nzimande said.

A process of assessing the positions of Deputy Principal: Financial Management at colleges in terms of the Department of Public Service and Administration requirements is currently underway to ensure the relevance of the post level and salary package.

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