

University education 'can never be free'

SA must not deceive itself with the idea of free higher education and should focus on finding a workable model, statistician-general Pali Lehohla says.



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"There can never be free education.... Let us not deceive ourselves. Everything [has] costs," Lehohla said in Parliament after briefing MPs on the 2015

financial statistics of higher education institutions.

Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande announced in September that university fee increases for 2017 would be capped at 8%, and poor and "missing middle"

students would receive state help to make up for the hike. This sparked a wave of protests and renewed calls for fees to be scrapped.

The higher education fees commission is to submit its first report on the viability of free higher education to President

Jacob Zuma in November 2017.

Lehohla said a loan system which allowed students to access tertiary education and pay back what they owed once they graduated was a viable model to adopt.

He has also said the government should implement a graduate tax.

Diane Parker, a deputy director-general in the department, said a pilot model to fund "missing middle" students has been presented to the Cabinet.

"Whether or not the model is fully implemented will depend on the outcome of the presidential fees commission," she said.

Source: Business Day

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