

Target set for FET colleges

A target has been set to have four million students at further education and training colleges (FET) by 2030, Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande said on Wednesday (14 November).



"The department of higher education and training is now implementing a comprehensive turnaround strategy for all 50 FET colleges, covering the 264 campuses in the country," he said in Cape Town.

"The intention is to systematically address key challenges these institutions have been faced with over the years, to achieve sustainable improvements in the quality of teaching and learning."

Nzimande said the department's goal was for FET colleges to help boost economic growth and reduce unemployment particularly among the youth.

"We are turning our FET Colleges into institutions of choice," Nzimande claimed.

A target of one million enrollments by 2014 had been set.

The National Development Plan (NDP) stated that the current FET college system was not effective, too small and its output was poor.

"This statement in the NDP addresses directly what we want to achieve through the turnaround strategy at FET colleges," he added.

Nzimande said the current system had low output, lecturers with inadequate qualifications and lacked industry-linked experience.

Finances in the colleges were not managed properly and the institutions lacked the ability to generate or manage data.

The turnaround strategy entailed changing the FET colleges from a provincial to a national competence, which would align them with emerging legislative and policy changes, he said.

Student performance and success would be the core mandate of the colleges.

Performance contracts would be drafted for principals to bring about a higher level of accountability, and there would be an increase in student support services.

Nzimande said some of the changes had been effected, resulting in a higher number of enrollments. In 2011 there were 427,435 students enrolled at colleges but this year there are 657,690 registered students.

Occupational enrollments had increased by 84% through funding from the National Skills Fund and the Sector Education and Training Authorities (Setas).

"It is anticipated that this will rise slightly in 2013 and then stabilise for a while as the structural alignment of colleges and Setas takes further effect," Nzimande said.

He said funding for the colleges would remain the department's focus and would be "tied closely to output".

The department had already placed 40 chartered accountants as interim chief financial officers, through a partnership with the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants, in order to improve financial management at FET colleges.

Source: *Sapa* via I-Net Bridge

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