National Skills Development Strategy outline

In his opening keynote address at the 2019 Haggai Education and Training Skills Development Summit at the CSIR International Convention Centre in Tshwane yesterday, the Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training Buti Manamela outlined the objectives of the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS).

While South Africa focuses on job creation and economic empowerment, sustainable career development depends on the upskilling of the country's citizens with relevant skills and capabilities. The Haggai Education and Training Skills Development Summit brings together the public and private sectors to discuss these opportunities.

Manamela listed some of the benefits of skills development, garnered from a recent evaluation by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). "Employers believe that skills development has improved productivity, reduced errors in the workplace, and improved the quality of product or service delivered," he said. "Trade union representatives agreed that this was the case. Training has also increased the work readiness of young people entering the workplace," he continued.

Looking back at NSDS III (2011 to 2016)

The DHET recently conducted an evaluation of NSDS III. "There were just over 1.4 million beneficiaries of skills development system funding between 2011/12 and 2015/16," he said. Manamela went on to explain that the proportion of previously unemployed learners being absorbed into full-time employment is high for apprenticeships, learnerships, and internships. However, the unemployment rate is still rising.

The evaluation also found substantial underspending of available funds. "The skills development levy (SDL) brought in an income of about R63 billion over the period 2011 to 2016. About R50 billion went to the Sector Education and Training Authority (SETAs) whilst over R12 billion went to the National Skills Fund (NSF). In total they made R31 billion worth of discretionary commitments between 2011 and 2016 whilst disbursing only R20 billion of these commitments," Manamela explained.

The future of NSDS IV

The Deputy Minister described how national priorities informed the NSDS IV: "In early March 2019, Minister Pandor promulgated the National Skills Development Plan 2030. The NSDP has been crafted in a policy context of the National Development Plan (NDP) and the White Paper on Post School Education and Training."

Manamela explained that the NSDP is proposing a multi-tiered approach to understanding and responding to the skills needs of our country by:

- Firstly, determining skills at organisational level, understanding skills needs at the workplace in both the public and private sectors.
- Secondly, determining skills at sectoral level of occupations in high demand and priority occupations.
- Thirdly, determining skills, at national level, which includes provincial and local levels of occupations in high demand and priority occupations.

The NSDP aims to achieve eight outcomes by 2030, each with its own performance indicators and targets. The outcomes include:

- Outcome 1: Identifying and increasing production of occupations in high demand.
- Outcome 2: Linking education and the workplace.
- Outcome 3: Improving the level of skills in the South African workforce.
- Outcome 4: Increasing access to occupationally directed programmes.
- Outcome 5: Supporting the growth of the public college system.
- Outcome 6: Skills development support for entrepreneurship and cooperative development.
- Outcome 7: Encouraging and supporting worker initiated training.
- Outcome 8: Supporting career development services.

The Deputy Minister also explained that the NSDP sets out the institutional arrangements for SETAs with greater emphasis on good governance, sound management, better efficiency, and greater impact.

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