

Message of Support delivered by the CEO of HESA, Dr Jeffrey Mabelebele, on the occasion of Annual General Meeting of ETDP-SETA held on 21 October 2013 at Emperors Palace, No 64 Jones Road, Johannesburg, Convention Centre – NCC Conference Room

Programme Director;
Chairperson of the ETDP-SETA Board, Ms Shirley Mabusela;
Members of the ETDP-SETA Board;
Chief Executive Officer of the ETDP-SETA, Ms Nombulelo Nxesi;
Senior Representatives from the Department of Higher Education and Training;
Senior Representatives from the Department of Basic Education;
Chairperson of APPETD, Dr Tholsia Naicker;
Representatives from Organised Labour (NACTU, NAPTOSA, NEHAWU, SADTU, and COSATU);
Ladies and gentlemen.

1 INTRODUCTION

Good evening.

Let me start off by expressing my gratitude and that of the public Higher Education sector for the invitation to offer a message of commitment to the skills development agenda. Indeed one of the primary responsibilities of the public university sector which I represent is to respond to the skills need challenge our country is facing. As a sector, our individual members do develop and implement institutional skills plans in order to advance their own development trajectories.

The expectation is that a member organisation such as HESA will have to develop a sector skills plan with a view to overcoming shortages in the supply of people with priority skills needed for the successful implementation of current strategies to achieve economic growth.

2 INTERVENTIONS AND PROPOSALS

From the side of HESA, we have identified two specific skills development initiatives we believe could be mounted at a sector level through HESA:

2.1 Higher Education Leadership and Management Programme: This programme seeks to identify aspirant managers and leaders within our university system, and provide them with adequate training to meet the skills demands. In the last 18 months, four (4) of our universities were placed under administration by the Minister of Higher Education and Training. Our analysis of the challenge seems to indicate that the bulk of the problems facing our institutions had to do with management and leadership capabilities. Although the councils of these universities could shoulder the burden of responsibility, leadership and management collective of some of these institutions could have averted the situation. In view of these challenges, we have put a huge premium on leadership and management capacity development, so that our institutions could be efficiently and effectively led and managed. Through the ETDP-SETA grant since 2011, HESA has been able to increase the number of appropriately skilled professionals in the Higher Education sector to meet the demands of our current and emerging management and leadership challenges. The

ETDP-SETA has allowed us to implement our Higher Education Leadership and Management Programme, and well over 90 professionals from the sector have gone through the programme since 2011. One should underscore the point that an effectively and efficiently run and high performing Higher Education sector lays a solid foundation for accelerated economic growth. For this we would forever remain indebted to the ETDP-SETA.

2.2 Building the next generation of academics for our system of Higher Education:

The biggest risk facing our system of Higher Education is that our most productive scientists and researchers are destined to retire in a decade's time. This includes the professoriate layer (associate professors, full professors and senior professors). The imminent retirement of these accomplished researchers will impact adversely on the knowledge production capability of our system of Higher Education. A related challenge is that these researchers happen to be mainly white males, and this goes against the national imperative to de-racialise, de-muscularise, de-genderise our academic workforce. In view of this, HESA has developed a detailed proposal to respond to this challenge at the level of the sector, and the proposal has now been identified as a catalytic intervention in the National Development Plan. We have been engaging with the DHET and DST on the matter, and indications are that the DHET would like to consider a much broader intervention than our targeted and time-bound proposal. We would like to engage the ETDP-SETA on this matter in the next few months, so that the sector can respond adequately to its historic mandate of knowledge production, through both basic and applied research.

2.3 Institutional initiatives: I am mindful of the fact that our own institutions have been implementing some elements of their skills development plan through the support of ETDP-SETA, independent of HESA. Some have solicited the support of the ETDP-SETA to strengthen their initiatives to support Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and/or Service Learning activities. Most of our students who have completed their theoretical component of the curriculum have been battling to graduate in part because they are not able to secure placement opportunities in the workplace, in line with the requirements of their study programmes. This remains an area requiring a deeper engagement between HESA and the ETDP-SETA.

3 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to the ETDP-SETA Board for immeasurable amount of support throughout our HELM Programme. In particular, I would like to thank the CEO of ETDP-SETA, Ms Nxesi, for her insights into and patient endurance throughout the relationship between HESA and the ETDP-SETA. She has indeed been a true blessing to the sector. As we recommit ourselves to the skills development agenda, we hope to engage with the ETDP-SETA (Board and CEO) more regularly with a view to contribute to *increasing the number of appropriately skilled people to meet the demands of our current and emerging economic and social development priorities.*

I thank you

END.