

# Vocational education needed to make NGP a reality

PRETORIA: Technical and vocational education is essential to developing the South African economy and making the New Growth Path (NGP) a reality, says Higher Education and Training Minister Blade Nzimande.

"If we are to turn around the decline of our manufacturing industries and boost the hospitality and other service industries, then our people must develop the necessary skills," the minister said.

He added that the quest for decent work in South Africa would only be possible and sustainable if the country developed a skilled workforce. This, he said, would strengthen the working class and make workers less expendable and more central to further economic development.

The minister was speaking on Monday in Shanghai, China, where he was chairing a roundtable discussion on the role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in middle-income countries during the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Third International Congress on TVET.

Nzimande is leading a high-level nine-member South African delegation to the congress, which includes senior officials of his department and representatives of the National Skills Authority (NSA), the Quality Council on Trades and Occupations (QCTO), the Mining Qualifications Authority and the Education Policy Unit of Wits University.

Highlighting the significance of the conference for developing countries, Nzimande said it came at a time when technical and vocational education and training was becoming more central to the country's development agenda.

"South Africa perfectly reflects this trend with recently developed policies that emphasise the strengthening of the effectiveness of FET colleges and SETAs, reinvigorating artisan training, and building partnerships between educational institutions and employers," the minister said.

He noted that many middle-income countries were primarily producers of minerals and agricultural raw materials, but to develop further, they needed to beneficiate their raw materials and develop their manufacturing and other key industries, which required the growth of technical and vocational skills among their workers.

He warned that large informal economies in poor and middle-income countries should not be ignored by governments, but rather be assisted by various means, which would include training.

"This will help make them more productive and assist in bringing them into the formal economy. TVET policies should be related to economic development policies in general as well as to industrial and other related sectors' policies. However, TVET should not be narrowly occupationally focused, but should include significant elements of social studies and ethics,"

the minister said.

South Africa, Brazil, Kenya, Palestine and Turkey shared their experiences at the roundtable discussion.

The congress, taking place from 13 - 16 May 2012, is discussing a wide range of TVET issues which includes promoting the attractiveness of TVET, teaching and learning strategies, promoting social equity through TVET, skills development for rural transformation and the governance and financing of TVET.

Previous UNESCO TVET conferences took place in Berlin in 1984 and Seoul in 1999.

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