

THE FUNCTION AND FUTURE LANDSCAPE OF THE SETAS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) were introduced as a replacement of 33 Industry Training Boards. The Industry Training Boards had limited powers and responsibilities. They only covered certain sectors and mainly focused on Apprenticeships. As stated in Chapter 3, Section 10 of the Skills Development Act of 1998, the SETAs were formulated to develop a sector skills plan within the framework of the National Skills Development Strategy. The SETAs are responsible for approving the Workplace Skills Plan (WSP), allocating and awarding grants for national training and development, undertaking quality assurance and monitoring education and training in a specific sector. The implementation of the skills is done through but not limited to the establishment of learnerships, internships and unit based skills programmes.

On the 15 December 2017, a call for public comment was gazetted by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Hlengiwe Mkhize. The gazette, named "*The National Skills Development Plan (NSDP)*" was published after consultation with the National Skills Authority (NSA), with the intention to promulgate a policy to re-establish the SETAs under Section 9(1) of the Skills Development Act.

The notice states that the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has proposed that the SETAs will be preserved and re-positioned as a statutory body without a restrained lifespan. In doing so, the SETAs will undergo annual performance reviews. Mechanisms will be put in place should the SETAs fail to meet their mandate and de-established due to non-performance.

Consideration has also been put forward for the revision of the Standard and Industrial Classification (SIC codes) of all Economic Activities. This aims at ensuring that there is consistency with the SIC amendments that are done by the SETAs.

A system of cost cutting through shared resources and shared services will also be established. Shared services will include but will not be limited to the following areas: information technology, human resources and regional offices. This will be done with the aim to ensure that resources are used more efficiently and to possibly reduce the SETAs administrative costs.

Currently 10.5% of the Skills Development Levies paid by employers are being allocated towards the SETAs administrative costs. The reduction in administrative costs will be re-allocated to aid in upgrading the quality assurance systems between the SETAs and QCTO.

A standard Central Application System for all stakeholders, private and public training providers will also be investigated as a device to apply for funding (discretionary grants). The intention of having a central system is to provide a possibility of promoting priority programmes that will support economic growth, create employment and social development. This system will also concentrate on the quality of the learner data systems, which are currently unreliable and inaccessible. A sound data and information system will be required and essential to effectively track the learners and to regulate the education and labour market outcomes of those who were supported by it. This system will be connected to the improvements that are occurring at the DHET.

Whilst proposed changes are currently only open to public comment, it is evident that the Minister is trying to address and eradicate the nightmare that many stakeholders and providers are facing in dealing with the SETAs. We can only hope that more positive and effective mechanisms will be retrieved and implemented from the comments made by the public to provide a better landscape of the SETAs.

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