



Media briefing on the official launch of '2013: The year of the Artisan' by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr BE Nzimande

4 Feb 2013

“It’s cool to be an Artisan”

We are here today with the Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mr Mduzuzi Manana, to officially declare 2013 as “The Year of the Artisan”. For South Africa as a country, one of our biggest priorities is to develop qualified artisans to support our economy, particularly when one considers the fact that to successfully deliver on the strategic infrastructure projects (SIPs), we need artisans. The SIPs were announced by President Jacob G Zuma in his State of the Nation Address (SoNA) last year.

The SIPs include the building of roads, schools, universities, harbours, power stations and other social and economic infrastructure. The growth of industry as well as the strategic infrastructure projects announced by the President – some of which are already being rolled out – require quite a significant number of qualified and competent artisans. The launch of 2013 as “The Year of the Artisan” therefore seeks to bring into sharp focus the need for the production of artisans as part of the national strategy to deal with the shortage of critical skills in South Africa.

The launch today is in direct relationship to a number of interventions we have taken as a department in systemically addressing the shortage of skills in the country. One of those interventions was the National Artisan Development Conference that we held in July last year. Through that Conference, we established a platform that will annually review the state of artisan development in South Africa and allow for discussion and consultation on how to continually improve the National Programme for Artisan Development, known as: “Seven-Steps to Becoming a Qualified Artisan”.

On that day, we started with a small, developmental conference, but we were nonetheless building on some important advances we had made over the past three years since the DHET was established. My intention was, and remains that we progressively expand this discourse across all the provinces so that when we meet again in another conference, we will have a much louder and clearer voice on national artisan development, as it is implemented in all provinces.

Out of this launch here today, my colleague, Deputy Minister Manana, will lead the initiative in all Provinces where the option of Artisanry as a career option for the youth – and other out of school adults – will be widely communicated and promoted.

There is no doubt in my mind that we need to accelerate the process for improving the status and profile of artisan trades as inspirational careers for the large numbers of young South Africans. The provincially based discussions that followed our Conference last year, which will continue with the Deputy Minister’s visits, require all our partners to commit to the “Seven-Steps” in support of accelerating the development of these key labour force skills.

Another important development that is also linked to this is that last year in January we launched the Green Paper on Post School Education and Training. A White Paper is due out soon and I must commend the resounding response and support into that process from our stakeholders, because it has helped shape our thinking on the challenges, purpose, organisation and priorities of the post school system in South Africa. I trust the Media also made its inputs into those processes, and those of you who did would have noted that artisan training and other forms of workplace-based training are a central part of our strategy to expand education and training opportunities for our people, especially the youth.



Closely associated with the expansion of education and training opportunities is the question of raising the status of vocational training. The idea that trades and other vocational programmes are only for those who can't get into university is deeply ingrained in our society and has a detrimental effect on our ability to develop the skills required by our labour market, not to mention the status of those who make a very important contribution to our economy and society.

With the launch of "2013: The Year of the Artisan", we are actively changing this misconception, and working towards making FET Colleges, and the artisan and other career-based training programmes that they offer, the option of choice for the majority of our youth - and other out of school adults - who take this route.

The National Artisan Moderation Body or NAMB that we had established in 2010 is responsible for coordinating artisan development in the country. Through this structure, we now have NAMB Offices in provinces, which are located in engineering campuses of public FET colleges. One of the key tasks of these offices was the coordination of provincial conferences with the purpose of raising the profile and impetus of artisan development in provinces, districts and local municipality structures. The brief was that this would be done in collaboration with the SETAs and FET colleges in their respective provinces. We instructed that these conferences should be held at FET College campuses so that we would continue to locate our public FET colleges at the centre of all national artisan development processes.

The "Seven-Steps – Becoming a Qualified Artisan" advocates the National Programme for Artisan Development and allows for a common national, cross-SETA and cross sector understanding of processes involved in becoming an artisan. To a large extent, institutional and general public knowledge of this process has been lost to South Africans. The conflated and confusing sector-based skills development system has created huge blockages to a simple and easy-to-understand artisan development system. Through the Provincial road-shows that will be led by the Deputy Minister, we will once again be re-emphasising the basic steps of becoming an artisan and how these steps can be efficiently and effectively implemented.

Following the launch today, Deputy Minister Manana, will go to all provinces throughout the year engaging the youth with the aim of:

- i. Promoting Artisanry as a career of choice within the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system
 - ii. Raise awareness about the professionalisation of Artisanry by skilling existing artisans through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) processes
 - iii. Highlight skills development opportunities that are available in Artisanry to learners, and the youth in general
- In declaring 2013 as the "Year of the Artisan" we also wish to appeal to the Media as one of our critical stakeholders to work with us in putting into sharp focus the need for the production of artisans as part of the national strategy to deal with the shortage of critical skills in South Africa.

Huge public investment was announced for infrastructure projects in the President's State of the Nation Address (SoNA) in 2012. At that time, the President highlighted the fact that the massive investment in infrastructure must leave more than just power stations, rail lines, dams and roads. It must industrialise the country, generate skills and boost much needed job creation, he said. Now in line with that kind of pronouncement from the Head of State, we as a department have also invested billions into the development of our FET Colleges.

Our goal is to develop them into institutions of choice, so that we will not have to import skills from other countries in order to deliver on our Strategic Infrastructure Projects. We



are saying to you today that Government views the production of artisans and other mid-level skills as a priority, and hence the official declaration of 2013 as “The Year of the Artisan”.

I thank you.

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