



higher education
& training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OPENING ADDRESS BY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING, DR BLADE NZIMANDE at the 2nd SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL WORLD SKILLS COMPETITION, 13 FEBRUARY 2017

Programme Director, DDG Skills, Mr Mvalo,

Councilor Zulu, representing the Province,

Ms Haynes from Business and business representatives,

Dr C. Thakur from DUT and University representatives,

ETDPSeta CEO and SETAs CEO Forum, Ms Nxesi and SETA representatives,

Ms Ntlatleng, Principal of Ekurhuleni West and SACPO Chairperson and College representatives,

Officials from my department,

Competitors from all Provinces,

WSSA Technical Delegate, Mr Andre Vermeulen,

Experts and Judges

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Members of the media

Good Evening,

eThekwini has always been a city of industry, a city connected to the world via the oceans and through international trade.

It is also a city very close to my heart because as many of you know, I grew up and learned about the many challenges facing our country just up the road from here.

And so it is a pleasure for me to be able this evening to say a few words at this official opening of what in my view is and will remain an absolutely crucial intervention as we take on those challenges. Skills are and will remain central as we develop and refine our capacity as an industrial country, and as we expand our worldwide trading links, not least via the harbour at the heart of this city, the biggest and most important port on our continent.

Let me thank all of you for being here as we together celebrate the World Skills South Africa Second National Skills Competition. To us this crucial event will help enhance and develop skills among our young people as well as increase our efforts in empowering our young people with the competence and knowledge which will allow them to become full and productive participants in our industrial economy.

Program Director allow me to propose that as this is our second national competition to host, two years back was Cape Town, now it is KwaZulu-Natal, the next province to host the national competition should be inland.

122 competitors accompanied by their respective competition experts will over the next three days demonstrate their abilities across 22 skills areas. These include Electrical, Mechanical, Civil and Information Technology engineering as well as other Manufacturing and Services fields.

It is inevitable that enormous pressure will be experienced by all the competitors. Mental strength and character, high levels of discipline, focus, determination, endurance, technical knowledge, and abilities, precision, team work, and problem solving and time management skills will be critical to success in the competition.

In fact, one might say, this is something of a Skills Olympics. And as with those famous games, it is not just the medal winners who deserve our applause. Every single competitor has by qualifying to be here already shown that they are disciplined, hard working, and determined to do well for themselves, their families, and our country.

140 experts and judges will also experience enormous pressure over the coming days as their coaching endeavours come to fruition and they show their mettle as ethical impartial arbiters tasked with

determining who the winners are. We thank all of you for your dedication, your time, and your contribution to assisting and inspiring future generations as they strive to excel.

The age limit for participation in the skills competition is 22 years. This means that young people entering our TVET colleges and universities must already bring basic skills with them. We are therefore pleased by the fact that Basic Education continues to expand its curriculum to include more technical, vocational and occupational programs and subjects.

On our side, we are working with the TVET Colleges as they continually revise and upgrade their technical and vocational curricula. These efforts are directed at expanding program delivery to embrace increasing numbers of occupational trade qualifications as listed by the QCTO.

As many of you are aware, our Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training Mduzuzi Manana leads career and artisan development in the country. He has, since taking on this portfolio, worked tirelessly to promote artisanal skills acquisition at TVET Colleges and in the workplace.

This is a crucial intervention, both for our young people who have chosen not to pursue an academic path, and for the future of industry

in our country. We all know that, the National Development Plan has sets a target of producing 30 000 artisans per year by 2030.

And so it is with gratitude to all involved and led by the Deputy Minister that I can tell you this evening that we are already producing over 16 000 qualified artisans per year. We are well on the way to achieving our national goals!

Competitions like the World Skills South Africa finals we are opening tonight go a long way towards building enthusiasm for the trades as a route to personal and family empowerment. This battle of the best has mobilised our young people in the TVETs and the Universities of Technology, where the higher level skills around robotics, mechatronics, and other advanced technologies are taught.

World Skills South Africa project is one of the projects in the Department targeting the continuous expansion of the TVET Colleges sector particularly on artisanal skills, as patrons will notice over the next three days of the competition that predominantly it is TVET Colleges participating in these 22 Competition Skills areas.

That is why as the Department we support this competition wholeheartedly. And we are particularly pleased that we do not stand alone. Industry assists in a myriad of ways, and may I say, industry is also the ultimate beneficiary of this important competition which is

designed to ensure that we get the very best skills out of our further education system and into the economy.

Industry participation is mostly welcomed in these competitions as they possess the capacity to set the tone for high standards of participation in the competition for TVET Colleges and Universities of Technology.

In December 2016 as the Department we presented our strategic thinking regarding artisan training in the country generally, wherein one of our key proposals is to pursue closer ties with industry. The WSSA space offers an ideal platform to give meaning to that pursuit for closer collaboration.

South Africa is one of 74 countries affiliated to the World Skills International (WSI). This second national competition is in preparation for our international competition participation, which will be hosted in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates in October 2017.

It is therefore no small achievement for competitors to succeed at this level. The winners will represent South Africa in pitting their skills against the best from countries across the world, including our BRICS partners China, Brazil, India, and Russia, as well as Germany, the USA, Namibia, and many more.

Finally, allow me to address the competitors directly: May the best teams win, and may you go on to do us proud at international level!

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased to declare the 2017 WSSA National Skills Competition officially open.

Thank you