

DDGs appointment to bring stability in higher education

The Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Technology has commended the appointment of three new Deputy Directors-General (DDGs), saying it will ensure stability at senior management level in the department.



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“The committee has noted that the positions of the three DDGs have been vacant for a long time, and their filling will indeed see the achievement of the commitments and the vision of the department,” said committee chairperson, Philly Mapulane.

The department appeared before the committee virtually on Tuesday to present its revised strategic plan for 2020-2024 and its annual performance plan for the 2021/22 financial year.

The committee said that due to the constrained fiscus and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the country’s economy, the department had to make difficult choices in order to ensure that the commitments made by the government for the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) sector are realised.

“Some of the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) targets had to be adjusted down due to budget shortfall, mainly in

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Community Education and Training (CET) programmes. Head count enrolment for the TVET and CET colleges has been adjusted down and capped at 620,000 and 388,782, respectively.

“The committee was concerned that university enrolments will continue to grow, and the current inverted pyramid will not be changed. Reducing the budget of colleges in the midst of high youth unemployment and the three million youth that are not in education, employment and training is very concerning,” Mapulane said.

Relevant skills to grow local economy

However, the committee commended the department for introducing skills that are fit for purpose in the TVET and CET colleges, saying these interventions will go a long way in addressing the local economic skills needs.

“Interventions to support the establishment of disability units at TVET colleges is very progressive as this will ensure access of students with disabilities to education and training,” Mapulane said.

The committee also commended the interventions made by the department to support the Presidential Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan by ensuring that the relevant skills to grow the economy are offered at PSET institutions.

The committee bemoaned the budget cuts within the department’s budget over the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) period.

“The budget is projected to decrease by R20.8 billion over the MTEF. The department’s budget in the 2021/22 MTEF period, when inflation adjusted, will decrease. Of great concern to the committee is the risk that student funding continues to grow at the expense of university subsidies, and if this trend is maintained, student funding will overtake the subsidies to universities.

“Therefore, in the medium to long-term, universities’ budgets will be constrained and that will compromise the quality of higher education, as the number of students will exceed the capacity of the universities to offer quality education,” Mapulane said.

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