



DEPUTY MINISTER
TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Deputy Minister Fish Mahlalela's address on the occasion of the Tourism Sector Human Resource Development (TSHRD) webinar held virtually on the 14 October 2020

DDG, Ms. Mmaditlonki Setwaba
The Moderator: Dr Thabi Leoka,
Panelists, Ms Karen Borain – Demand Side and Dr Kaitano Dube – Supply Side
Representatives from Private and Public sector
Various Department officials
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon

Our engagement takes place today under the theme: **“An appropriately skilled tourism workforce offering excellent visitor experiences and contributing to the inclusive growth of the tourism economy in South Africa operating in the Covid-19 environment”**.

In our attempt to mitigate the theme home we are saying, what has been the impact of COVID-19 on TSHRD and how do we envisage handling the new normal?

Ladies and gentlemen, when we talk about the skilled tourism workforce these wise words by Oliver Reginald Tambo comes to my mind:

“The children of any nation are its future. A country, a movement, a person that does not value its youth and children does not deserve its future.”

This webinar today is aimed at establishing, from your participation and input, whether we are in the right path of developing the people who will take ownership of their own development in our country now and beyond COVID-19.

We can therefore not talk about inclusive growth without thinking about our youth and women in this country.

As we meet on this platform, participants should be mindful of the past that we come from, where the apartheid system dictated the use of unskilled labor in the sector. Surely, we cannot allow this to be a norm. The world we live in is dynamic and not static, and so are the citizens.

Looking at the list of participants to this webinar, ranging from representatives from DHET, DBE, COGTA and other stakeholders from Tourism Association level, key Industry Captains, Institutions of Higher Learning, TVET Colleges/SACPO, NGOs e.g. SADA, GTTPSA, Labour Representatives, SETAs, Quality Assurance Bodies and other Human Resource Development stakeholders, one can deduce that we are all concerned about the future of skills development in the sector and in the country at large.

This concern is understandable as we are citizens of a country that regards Education as a tool that could liberate the mind of our young people to total self-actualization.

Self-actualization in the Maslow's hierarchy of needs is the highest level of psychological development where the "actualization" of full personal potential is achieved, which occurs usually after basic bodily and ego needs have been fulfilled. This leads to complete realization of one's potential as manifest in peak experiences which involve the full development of one's abilities and appreciation for life.

This is what we want our youth to achieve.

Before we were hit by COVID-19 pandemic, the country was moving towards implementing Vision 2030, where government was to place special focus on youth development and employment.

The necessity to focus on the youth is due to the fact that the unemployment rate among young South Africans was more than 50%. This was regarded as a national crisis that demands urgent, innovative and coordinated solutions.

Figures from Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) are showing that increasingly more young people are out of work despite them being a major human resource for development, key agents for social change, economic expansion and innovation.

Now that we are experiencing the challenges brought about by COVID-19 lockdown, our task has doubled. We are faced with a scenario where those who were working find themselves unemployed.

As you know that our system of education has not equipped us to be our own employers but, to seek to be employed.

A comprehensive plan to skill the youth had to be developed, but how do you develop a plan without having undertaken an audit of the type of skill that was needed?

It is for this reason that we need all the stakeholders for instance like; private sector, to create pathways into work for young people through scaling up existing pathway management networks.

These are the networks that would allow young people who opt in increased visibility, network support and opportunities, to signal their availability for jobs and self-employment.

We need to make sure that youth from poorer households – and young women in particular – are empowered to take up the new opportunities.

In the Tourism Department, we have revised the TSHRD Strategy for it to be responsive of the current needs of the people.

Today we need to talk about whether the needs for skilling identified will translate into the development of our economy.

The empirical evidence that was generated from the Skills Audit Review conducted to inform the development of the Tourism Human Resource Development Strategy (THRDS) suggested that the current Basic Education System and Education and Training in the Higher Education, do not respond adequately to new trends and demands in the Tourism sector.

The inadequacy in responding adequately by the DHET, does not promote skills in the field of Tourism.

The main question is, how do we respond to the challenges of not having the well-equipped institutions and a curriculum to skill our youth and women towards self-employment?

A review of the implementation of THRD strategies globally reveals that the tourism industry is important for future job creation in both developed and developing countries.

Further, the predominance of SMMEs in the industry, especially for developing countries like South Africa, have contributed to poor human resource development (HRD) practices.

Personnel in the tourism industry have received insufficient practices, which leads to the industry having a low-skills base.

Except the non-responsiveness of the Education Department curriculum and institutions, there is another challenge that has been detected, that is, the employer antipathy to a more progressive approach to HRD.

This might be due to the fact that properly skilled personnel might want to demand a pay rise and/or look for owners that provide a lucrative package. To prevent them from leaving, they are denied growth through skills development.

The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic has not helped the situation either. The closure of all borders due to lockdown has put a strain on the plan that was trying to close the gap in the human resources development. All has come to a standstill.

Product owners that were willing to give our learners on the job training have closed shop. How then do we revive the sector so that the trainees can find a home for experiential learning?

The new challenge that we are facing is that, we cannot expect that after COVID-19 things will go back to where they were before COVID-19.

We are faced with the 'new normal' that calls upon all of us to determine the kind of industry that will satisfy the needs of the travelers that have also transformed, and the human resource training needs that will respond to the 'new traveler'.

The example of the 'new normal' is the webinar we are having now, during alert level 1 that is technologically assisted. We cannot freely come together as we wish as we did before, and if we do, we need to keep a social distance.

The 'new normal' is ushering in technology into the management of the industry. As custodians of skills development, are we ready to respond to this new skill need, so as to respond to the transforming needs of the industry?

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said,

"Rarely do we find men who willingly engage in hard, solid thinking. There is an almost universal quest for easy answers and half-baked solutions. Nothing pains some people more than having to think."

Fortunately, I cannot say that about us today. Here we are, about to engage in hard solid thinking on how we can develop the majority of our country to be able to participate in the economic development of our country.

We need to expand our Human Resource Development programmes to enable young people to gain paid workplace experience through initiatives like the Youth Employment Service, and also facilitate work-based internships for graduates of technical and vocational programmes.

We need to pause and ask ourselves how are we going to take this new knowledge to the rural areas in order to bridge the gap between well established and underdeveloped products?

This webinar must assist the Department on how to bring about the transformation of the skills needed to develop our economy through tourism.

In conclusion we should be mindful that the President of the Republic will be addressing a joint sitting of parliament to discuss the economic recovery plan. We need to tap into it as we come up with a Human Resource Development product that will address the skills need in the aftermath of COVID-19.

There is a great demand for online training and support in an increasingly digital world, as we speak. We need to be ready to provide such training for the tourism sector learners.

We need to develop proposals on how we can access part of the Jobs Fund resources established by our Government to support innovative initiatives and approaches to job creation with a particular focus on women, youth and historically disadvantaged South Africans.

We need to tap also in the Government's roll out of small business incubation centers that provide youth-driven start-ups with financial and technical advice as they begin their journeys.

A change agent is needed. I am reminded of the Thomas Sankara, a young leader of the people then, who said the following when interviewed by the Swiss Journalist Jean-Philippe Rapp in 1985:

"You cannot carry out fundamental change without a certain amount of madness. In this case, it comes from nonconformity, the courage to turn your back on the old formulas, the courage to invent the future".

True to the quotation, this webinar is not an easy one but, a most important one since it deals with sustainability as we skill our youth and women so that they can be able to stand on their own, now and post COVID-19, as we invent the future.

I strongly believe that it is only through an integrated approach that involves all the sectors and driven by a multi-departmental force that could bring a Human resource development package that will respond to the dynamic needs of our sector and the society.

I declare the engagements open.

I thank you