

72 students receive bursaries

Masakh'iSizwe in bid to remove youth barriers as country faces skills shortage and many graduates remain jobless

TNA REPORTER.

IT IS a paradox that while South Africa was faced with a shortage of skills, many graduates remained unemployed, said Donald Grant, Western Cape MEC for transport and public works, at the weekend.

He was speaking at the Masakh'iSizwe Bursary Awards ceremony in Cape Town where bursaries were awarded to 72 university students in transport, engineering and the built environment fields.

"The economic climate is particularly difficult for youths. It is a struggle for young people to gain access to tertiary education.

"Once they have completed their courses, it is often a struggle for young graduates to gain employment. It is a paradox that while our country is faced with shortage of skills, many graduates remain unemployed. This situation is caused in part by a mismatch in the supply and demand for specific skills, as well as employers requiring experience even for entry-level posts."

The Masakh'iSizwe bursary programme and the professional development programmes worked together to create an environment that removed barriers for youths, unlocked their potential, and provided them with opportunities to maximise their achievement. At the same time these programmes address critical skills shortages while empowering youth and driving economic growth through infrastructure development.

Grant said these programmes revolved around four main objectives



SKILLED WHILE JOBLESS: Graduates from the Eastern Cape took to the streets recently demanding to be hired, amid a peculiar situation in a country which decies the lack of skills, yet many graduates linger idly. PICTURE: TWITTER

which included addressing the skills shortage in the transport, engineering and built environment sectors, empowering financially disadvantaged youths by providing them with opportunities to obtain tertiary qualifications and attain professional registration, reducing youth unemployment through work-relevant job placements of interns and graduates in the transport, engineering and built environment sectors and establishing partnerships with relevant stakeholders to provide a collaborative platform where relevant stakeholders,

the private sector, NGOs, foundations, professional bodies, higher education institutions and different spheres of the government share resources and influence the curricula of higher education institutions to ensure these respond effectively to the needs of both public and private sector employers.

Grant said a total of 10 companies were participating as partners with the department in these activities through the Bursary Collaboration Venture and another 49 companies were silent partners in the programme.

"This joint venture aims to empower the youth by making available funding for tertiary education and to create learning and employment placements for interns and graduates.

"Recently, my department has included provisions in certain contracts with external service providers that enable companies to provide beneficiaries of various capacity building programmes with exposure to, and skills transfer opportunities on, infrastructure project sites. As an example, Masakh'iSizwe beneficiaries will

in future be given exposure to the real working world on the live-work-play better living exemplar game-changer project on the former Conradie Hospital site near Pinelands.

"It is an honour for me to address you and to celebrate once again what is a tremendous achievement. We are gathered here to welcome new members of the department's Masakh'iSizwe Bursary Programme, and award them bursaries to further their studies. My special thanks to all the parents and guardians in attendance for showing their support for the new bursars.

I hope you will all continue to do so as these bursars continue on what will undoubtedly be a challenging journey towards attaining their academic qualifications."

Grant said once they had completed their formal qualifications, graduates should meet a number of requirements before they could become registered professionals.

"It is with great pleasure that I inform you that my department has, because of the challenges that may lie ahead, been complementing its bursary programme with two professional development programmes that train and develop graduates employed by the department and that give them the support they need to meet the requirements for professional registration. Today, I'm honouring all the people who have become professionals with the department's support for all their dedication and hard work. I'm well aware that it is not an easy task to attain professional registration.

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