

Deputy Minister Mr. Buti Manamela and Acting College Principal Mrs. Elsie du Toit sign handover agreement at Ingwavuma Skills Development Centre launch

On 20 November 2024, the Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mr. Buti Manamela, officially launched and handed over the Ingwavuma Skills Development Centre to uMfolozi TVET College. This Centre is a collaborative effort between the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA). It is well-equipped to benefit the community with artisanal, carpentry, plumbing, electrical, solar manufacturing, and ICT digital skills development and training opportunities, particularly for the youth, women, and people with disabilities in the Ingwavuma community. The Centre aims to address the challenges faced by rural communities, where there is a lack of training facilities, and Ingwavuma is one of many areas across South Africa that faces similar challenges.

In welcoming the uMkhanyakude District Mayor, Mr. Mdaka expressed his gratitude and commended DHET and CETA for their collaborative efforts to bring higher learning institutions to the people of uMkhanyakude. He stated that a 2022 report indicated that one of the biggest challenges they face as a district is youth unemployment, which goes hand in hand with skills shortages. He added that previous generations had to travel far and wide for study opportunities, but now he is thankful that the efforts of DHET and CETA have started to yield positive results. “We, as the people of uMkhanyakude, welcome this Centre with open arms. It will give the people of uMkhanyakude, especially the youth, an opportunity to compete at the same level as other youth in urban areas. Skills development goes hand in hand with employment opportunities, so we believe equipping the youth with skills will open opportunities to build and stimulate the economy of Ingwavuma.”

In his keynote address, Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mr. Buti Manamela thanked the Catholic Church for donating the land on which the Centre was built. He said it shows how much can be achieved when working together as a community. He added that as government, they want to see the Centre fully operational by next year, providing programmes that will uplift the community and the country. “One of the big challenges we face as a country is that we have a large number of young people who are not in school, not in employment, and who do not have the skills to operate their own businesses. We want those young people to gain skills, and this Skills Centre is part of the government's commitment to providing skills to young people,” he said. He added that the Skills Centre is a great opportunity for the youth to study for free, qualify, and become artisans, especially in the construction and built industry, and also contribute to the community. He also urged municipalities to support the students who will graduate from the Skills Centre by giving them opportunities in the municipality. “We are going to have qualified people coming from this Centre who must be utilized by the community and the public and private sectors,” he said.

Mrs. Elsie du Toit, Acting College Principal, said, “On behalf of uMfolozi College management and Council, I’m honoured and humbled to be part of this occasion. As a college, our mandate is to ensure that we provide easy access to skills development for our communities. It’s important to us that when students complete a course, they must be able to get a job or an opportunity to create their own employment or business and not be unemployed. The courses offered at this Skills Centre will be necessary for the development of this community. That is why it is important to us to have a good relationship and open communication with this community. What is also important to us as a college is that our students must have a workplace. Therefore, the support of the community, businesses, and the municipality is crucial. We are trying as a college to ensure that every single person has an opportunity to improve their skills, whether they have matric or not.” She pledged that the college would work very hard to ensure that the Centre is fully functional and can provide solutions and opportunities for all. The Acting Principal further thanked CETA and the Deputy Minister for the opportunity and the trust they have placed in uMfolozi to ensure that the Skills Centre is run properly.

Inkosi Lubelo II of the Mngomezulu clan congratulated the community of Ingwavuma, especially the youth, and thanked DHET, uMfolozi College, and CETA for opening the Skills Centre. Speaking to the youth, he said they must change the mentality that they need a university degree to get employment. “Acquiring a university degree is a good thing, but these days, the jobs that are available are for people with building and construction, plumbing, and electrical skills etc.,” he urged. He encouraged the youth not to look down on scarce skills because the development of Ingwavuma will rely on these skills for infrastructure development.