

'Forgotten' local colleges in dire straits - union

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The South African Adult Basic Education and Training Educators Union has detailed the dire working conditions of its members at community colleges, which are threatening the sustainability of the sector.



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In a presentation to Parliament's higher education and training portfolio committee on Wednesday, the union said there was a lack of resources at adult education centres and the low budgets allocated to community colleges had left many centres operating without basics such as toilet paper, stationery or working machinery.

This had led to a demoralised teaching staff and subsequently a high failure rate.

The white paper for post-school education and training provided for the establishment of community education and training colleges that targeted post-school youth and adults looking to further their education, improve their skills or progress to opportunities in the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges and university education.

These colleges are meant to cater for those who do not qualify for admission to TVET colleges or universities. The government is aiming to increase youth and adult involvement in community education and training to 1-million by 2030.

However, the union's Xoliswa Singiswa says these targets are unlikely to be reached if the department were to continue to neglect the sector. Some of the challenges include a lack of resources, poor remuneration and unsecured facilities where students and teachers are easily robbed.

Singiswa said after the committee meeting that the sector was being marginalised by the Department of Higher Education. "If those people [who cannot attend TVET colleges or universities] cannot be educated, then we are doomed. If they want the economy to succeed, they will need to improve community colleges. The sector is neglected and treated as a stepchild of the department."

Officials told MPs the department would, among other objectives, secure funding of about R114m to adjust the salaries of Limpopo community education and training lecturers to their initial scales before they were cut.

Source: Business Day

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