

ANC bigwigs clash over varsity fees

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Blade Nzimande and Cyril Ramaphosa are going head to head on university fees.



Cyril Ramaphosa says bursaries should not be capped. Image: [Swing Top Circle](#)

Minister of Higher Education Nzimande has hinted at fees being capped but ANC deputy president Ramaphosa, who headed a ministerial committee on the topic, has warned that education would suffer if this was done.

Ramaphosa's committee looked at how the country's 23 universities were funded over the past six years. Its report said that if fees were capped, universities would not be able to cross-subsidise students who needed financial help.

Universities gave about R1bn in bursaries to needy students in 2011. Some of the money came from student fees. A total of 478,194 under-graduate and post-graduate students were helped by universities between 2007 and 2011.

But Nzimande, in a foreword to the report, said capping of student fees needed further attention.

He said an increase in the National Student Financial Aid Scheme budget was negated by student fee increases that had been higher than inflation in some cases.

The report also found that government funding had not kept pace with the growth of student enrolments. He said it was a concern that African and coloured participation was lower than white or Indian.

Although student enrolment increased from 495,356 to 938,201 between 1994 and 2011, the participation of African and coloured students remained below 15%, compared with 59% for whites and 46% for Indians.

Professor Adam Habib, vice-chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand, said the government's subsidy only covered 25% of his university's costs, while 50% of its income was derived from research contracts, donations and other sources.

"If you want to talk about capping fees, you have to talk about increasing subsidies simultaneously," Habib said.

Source: Sunday Times via I-Net Bridge

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