

**EVALUATION OF NATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (NSDS III) 2011-2016**

**Theory of Change**

**Submitted by**



**And**



# The Philosophy behind NSDSIII – its Theory of Change

NSDSIII was developed in 2010/11 and at the time there was no explicit Theory of Change (TOC) developed for the strategy. In the process of preparing to evaluate the strategy it was agreed with the NSA that a TOC would be developed. This is therefore a TOC developed in retrospect. It attempts to set out as clearly as possible what policy makers had in mind when developing the strategy, without trying to impose outputs, outcomes and impact that were not part of the thinking in formulating NSDS III. It tries to answer the questions of “What were the outputs that the strategy envisaged, and what were the immediate, inter-mediate and final outcomes that were intended and what impact was intended?” Skills Development is part of a wider HRD strategy for the country, which in turn is part of a wider development plan for the economy and society.

It is important that the TOC is correctly located and that the assumptions underpinning the strategy are clearly spelt out. The evaluation must measure not only the progress in relation to intended outputs, outcomes and impact, but must test the assumptions and measure the extent to which progress was aided or inhibited by the correctness or otherwise of the assumptions made.

## Methodology for development of TOC

The development of the TOC is the result of the following process:

* Extensive desk research was conducted including a review of NSDSI and II, as well as NSDSIII, the PSET White Paper, SETA Grant Regulations, SSP and other guidelines issued by DHET and a number of reviews and evaluations considered relevant to the strategy.
* Interviews were conducted with key national stakeholders who were either directly involved in, or closely connected to, the process of developing NSDSIII.
* The MAS/REAL research team brainstormed NSDSIII and the desk work results and fed the team’s understanding of the strategy into the TOC process.
* NSDSIII was unpacked and the specific goals and outputs set out in the strategy were given TOC names. In other words, everything was classified in terms of being an output, immediate outcome, inter-mediate outcome and impact. It should be noted that in some cases outputs that appear as such in the strategy have been reclassified in the TOC to be outcomes. The aim was to show the flow from outcome to immediate and inter-mediate outcomes and then ultimately the impact intended.
* Gaps were identified in the text of NSDSIII. In other words, where the strategy was specific about a goal, but less clear on specific outputs or inter-mediate outcomes, this was identified as a gap and the desk research and interviews were used to guide the filling of the gaps. New outputs, outcomes and impacts were developed and presented as additions or interpretations by the research team.
* A draft TOC was prepared and presented to an NSA workshop in February 2017. The NSA gave guidance on the interpreted areas, and on the process for finalising the TOC as part of the wider literature and document review.

## Theory of Change

The TOC for NSDSIII is set out in Excel format in the pages below. These pages are designed around an interpretation of the NSDS III goals which can broadly be understood as:

1. Improving the quality of skills planning and supply and demand forecasting in order to improve planning and enable resources to be allocated to achieve greater impact.
2. Expansion of provision of lower and middle level skills, with a particular focus on artisans and the role of public TVET colleges in the delivery of these skills.
3. Improving the engagement of higher education and research institutions in skills planning, the provision of higher level skills and industry-focused research and innovation.
4. Focusing on skills interventions for unemployed young people to provide them with basic skills and to enable them to gain entry to the labour market.
5. Supporting small and micro enterprises, including NGOs and cooperatives with skills development so as to expand their capacity
6. Targeting skills development to build public sector capacity to improve service delivery, improve capacity to intervene in the economy and build a developmental and capable state.
7. Use career development services to improve labour market information so as to improve the choices made by young people and steer them to become qualified for occupations in demand in the economy.

By pursuing all of the above goals, the vision of the NSDS will be achieved, namely: ***A skilled and capable workforce that shares in, and contributes to, the benefits and opportunities of economic expansion and an inclusive growth path***

The following table should be read from left to right, so as to see the intention on the left, intended progress in the middle and intended impact on the right.

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| **Strategic focus area** | **OUTPUTS** | **IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES** | **INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES** | **FINAL OUTCOMES** | **IMPACTS** |
| Skills planning and supply and demand forecasting | Sector skills plans are professionally researched | Sector and nationally commissioned research and data is analysed, validated and captured in an integrated database that is accessible to stakeholders | SSPs provide a sound analysis of the sector and articulate an agreed sector strategy to address skills needs. | Skills Planning Mechanism established that has credibility and informs planning | A credible institutional mechanism for skills planning established and informing skills planning. |
| Capacity is established within the Department of Higher Education and Training to coordinate research and skills planning | Programmes are put in place that focus on the skills needed to produce research that will be relevant and have an impact on the achievement of economic and skills development goals | National need in relation to skills development is researched, documented and communicated to enable effective planning across all economic sectors | Available resources allocated to achieve greater impact. |
| Lower and middle level skills interventions and expansion of Public TVET colleges role in their provision |  |  |  |  |  |
| SETAs research and identify middle level skills needs in their sectors and put in place strategies to address them, particularly through the use of the public FET colleges and universities of technology working in partnership with employers providing workplace-based training. | Projects are established to address middle level skills in each sector. | Each college has a strategic plan in place to build capacity and engage in skills development programmes, including programmes offered in partnership with employers. | Partnerships between DHET, SETAs, employers, private providers and public FET colleges are resulting in increased capacity to meet industry needs throughout the country. | Increasing access to occupationally-directed programmes delivered through or in collaboration with Public TVET colleges |
| SETAs establish projects and partnerships to enable the relevant number of artisans for their sector to be trained, to qualify and become work ready | The national Artisan Development Project developed by JIPSA and now located in the DHET, is planned, managed and reported on, with interventions made where blockages occur | 10,000 artisans per year qualify and find employment. | Middle level skills needs are identified and addressed in all sectors | Training of employed workers addresses critical skills, enabling improved productivity, economic growth and the ability of the work force to adapt to change in the labour market |
| SETAs identify FET colleges with relevant programmes and put in place partnerships to offer vocational courses and work experience for college learners | The capacity of FET colleges to provide quality vocational training is reviewed. | The NCV is reviewed with inputs from stakeholders and the curriculum is revised to ensure that it provides a sound foundational basis for building labour market relevant skills | The National Certificate (Vocational) and N-courses are recognised by employers as important base qualifications through which young people are obtaining additional vocational skills and work experience, entering the labour market with marketable skills, and obtaining employment. | A public FET (TVET) system that is responsive to sector, local, regional and national skills needs and priorities |
| SETA stakeholders agree on the provision of substantial quality programmes for employed workers and report on the impact of the training. | The programmes offered to meet industry needs, including those supporting apprenticeships and N-courses, are reviewed, updated and made available to and accessed by employers. | The capacity of college educators to deliver programmes is reviewed. Skills development programmes, including work placement opportunities, are devised to meet the needs of the college educators |
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| Higher level skills, innovation and research | Sector skills plans identify the supply challenges in relation to high level scarce skills gaps and set out strategies for addressing them | Sector projects are put in place to address specific sector skills gaps. | Agreements are entered into between SETAs, university faculties and other stakeholders on flagship research projects linked to sector development in a knowledge economy | The academic staff at colleges are able to offer relevant education and training of the required quality | High level national scarce skills needs are being addressed by work ready graduates from higher education institutions |
| Sector skills plans identify the focal areas for research, innovation and development | Agreements are entered into between SETAs, university faculties and other stakeholders on appropriate interventions to support improved entry to priority programmes, increased work experience and experiential learning for students and access to post-graduate work placements | Agreements are entered into between SETAs, university faculties and other stakeholders on flagship research projects linked to sector development in a knowledge economy | Expanded levels and quality of industry relevant research |
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| Skills for unemployed youth | The DHET partners with stakeholders in the youth sector to put in place training and work experience projects for young people. | A national strategy is in place to provide all young people leaving school with an opportunity to engage in training or work experience, and improve their employability. | Training and work experience provided to unemployed young people | The low level of youth and adult language and numeracy skills is addressed to enable additional training | Improved absorption levels of young unemployed people into work |
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| Meeting the skills needs of small businesses, micro enterprises, cooperatives, NGOs and community based organisations | SETAs identify in their skills planning research, established and emergent cooperatives and their skills needs. | A national database of cooperatives supported with skills development is established and the impact of training reported on. | Sector projects are established by sector stakeholders, supported by the NSF. | Cooperatives supported with skills training and development expand and contribute to sector economic and employment growth | Encouraging and supporting cooperatives, small enterprises, worker initiated, NGO and community training initiatives |
| SETAs, through their skills planning research, identify the skills needs of small and emerging businesses in their sector, and promote relevant programmes. | Cross-sectoral projects are established to address skills needs along local supply chains aimed at supporting local economic development | National database of small businesses supported with skills development is established and the impact of training reported on. | Partnership projects to provide training and development support to small businesses are established in all sectors and their impact reported on | Increased capacity of small and micro enterprises? |
| SETAs engage with trade unions, NGOs and community-based organisations in their sector and identify skills needs and strategies to address needs. | Sector projects are developed that are piloted by SETAs and expanded through partnership funding. | Stakeholders expand successful projects with support from the NSF. | Worker, NGO and community-based education programmes are supported and their impact measured and reported on |
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| Building a capable state that is proactive in the economy | SETAS with responsibility for public sector training conduct analysis and reflection on achievements and challenges | A thorough analysis and reflection is conducted on provision of education and training within the public sector and the contribution of the various role players | Plans and funding arrangements are agreed between the relevant departments/entities and the SETAs, and are reported on. | Education and training plans for the public sector are revised and programmes are implemented to build capacity | Increasing public sector capacity for improved service delivery and supporting the building of a developmental state |
| DHET leads a discussion on factors impacting on provision and publishes proposals on improving the institutional framework for public sector education and training. | Sector skills plans set out the capacity needs of relevant departments and entities. |
| Careers development | Career guides are developed with labour market information from SETAs, addressing sub-sectors within their sector. | Sector stakeholders are engaged and programmes are adjusted to meet the skills and qualification needs to promote comprehensive career development. | Career paths are mapped to qualifications in all sectors and sub-sectors, and communicated effectively, contributing to improved relevance of training and greater mobility and progression | Workers and learners are making informed decisions on programmes linked to career plans | Improved relevance of programmes to learner and employer needs. |

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## Cross-cutting themes of NSDSIII

In addition to the specific goals and outputs the NSDS makes reference to a number of priorities in the text of the document. The following is a list of cross-cutting issues that need to be considered in addition to, or in conjunction with, the above TOC.

1. The strategy must achieve "Fundamental transformation” and address historical inequities linked to class, race, gender, age and disability in our society"***.*** This points to the need for equity and demographics to be considered in the measurement of progress in relation to all the outputs, outcomes and impacts being measured. The assumption is that **constant attention will be given to achieving equity and redress**.
2. The Vision (quoted above) is clearly indicating the economic role that NSDSIII is intending to play, first by improving economic performance and therefore the creation of jobs and income generating opportunities, and secondly enabling previously disadvantaged people, through skills development, to gain access to these opportunities. The assumption is that **there will be a close working relationship between the Skills Strategy and economic and development strategy stakeholders in using skills to build the economy.**
3. In the problem statement there is a commitment given to addressing certain issues that are addressed as outputs but in addition the following are listed: the need to focus on “substantial programmes” (not just short courses); the importance of training to enable workers to avoid retrenchment and adapt to change; reducing inefficiency and silos that get in the way of skills development; addressing rural skills needs and not focusing all training within towns and urban areas. The assumptions are: **that SETAs and the NSF will intervene to support employed workers with training that is substantial**; **that there will be efficiency gains that enable more to be achieved with available resources**;
4. In the section “what is NSDSIII” there is a statement that it is a framework. This is explained by stating that funding is to be allocated according to the strategy; PIVOTAL programmes will be prioritised; TVET revitalisation will be enabled; small enterprise development will be achieved; partnerships will be developed that address cross-sectoral needs; rural development will be achieved. These can be understood as broad themes that inform the thinking behind NSDSIII.
5. In the text explaining the goals there are a number of commitments, including: to conduct research into college strengths and weaknesses; to upgrade college lecturers; improving coordination of support to coops including the establishment via DTI of a training academy; skills planning and implementation arrangement for the public service to be reviewed by relevant departments; the role of government and government entities in the supply of skills to be expanded. The assumption underpinning these commitments is **that there will be improved coordination across and between government departments to ensure that skills development and other interventions support each other to achieve wider goals**.
6. In the section on skills institutions it is stated that DHET will put in place measures to improve performance (of the SETAs and the NSF), reduce waste and make them more effective; to improve financial performance; implement shared services; NSF will align its spending to government priorities including those for the economy, science and technology and the Green Economy. One assumption behind these is **that the SETAs and the NSF will be reformed, given clearer focus and will become more efficient and effective**. A second assumption is **that SETAs and the NSF will align their work with wider government priorities and programmes** - **the Green economy being an example of something all SETAs will be required to address**.
7. In a section on partnerships the need for a range of partnerships is flagged. The assumption is that partnerships will be developed to support NSDS implementation, both between SETAs, between the public and private sector, and within the post school education and training system.
8. In the section on implementation the clear assumption is that all stakeholders and role-players will collaborate to collectively implement the strategy.
9. There is a section on Monitoring and Evaluation that commits the Department and SETAs to putting in place an effective M&E framework and system. The assumption is **that there will be monitoring of progress and that corrective action will be taken where parts of NSDSIII are not being achieved**.

The above assumptions will need to be tested and measured as part of the evaluation.