

■ OPINION

# SIZWE NXASANA: In 10 years left before 2030, the state cannot achieve objectives of the NDP alone

Growing SA's skills base and supporting students from poor and middle-income families is critical to the growth and development of SA's economy

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A South African flag on the Donkin Reserve. Picture: THE HERALD/MIKE HOLMES

According to a report released by the department of higher education and training, only 1,901 people (out of every 100,000) attend tertiary education institutions, the lowest of the five Brics countries.

The report also highlights the fact that the growth rate in university

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When the department of higher education's report was compared to similar statistics compiled by Unesco on the various Brics countries, SA was found to be lacking: Brazil had 4,023 enrolments per 100,000 citizens, Russia had 4,582, India had 2,453 and China was on 3,104.

Relations among the Brics countries are based on noninterference, equality and mutual benefit, but when faced with these statistics, it is unclear how we could benefit ourselves, let alone our neighbours or the world at large, when our economic and global competitiveness is compromised to this extent.

### **National Development Plan 2030**

These statistics bring into sharp focus how much work still needs to be done, 25 years into our democracy. The National Development Plan, a document written in August 2012, stated in its opening sentence that it "aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030".

It states: "This plan envisions an SA everyone feels free yet bounded to others; where everyone embraces their full potential, a country where opportunity is determined not by birth, but by ability, education and hard work. Realising such a society will require transformation of the economy and focused efforts to build the country's capabilities. To eliminate poverty and reduce inequality, the economy must grow faster and in ways that benefit all South Africans."

The NDP envisaged a 70% increase in the participation rates at SA universities in order to increase the enrolment to 1.62-million by 2030. Twenty-five percent of the enrolment should be students enrolled at postgraduate level. The NDP also envisages increases in student throughput and graduation rates to more than 75%.

Throughout the NDP document, emphasis is placed on economic growth through the improvement of education quality and skills development. This, according to the NDP, can only be achieved by active citizenry, a concept where the government provides the basic

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Student Financial Aid Programme (Isfap) is an organisation aimed at supporting the objectives of the NDP, especially with regard to the university sector.

Isfap is mobilising the private sector and professional bodies to assist government with the funding of students who are unable to attend tertiary education institutions due to financial constraints.

Growing SA's skills base and supporting students from poor and middle-income families is critical to the growth and development of SA's economy. Both government and the private sector have come together under Isfap to fund students and help address issues of sustainable employment.

Making sure that these students graduate and then assisting in sustainable employment afterwards, is our way of contributing to the vision as set out in the National Development Plan 2030.

- *Nxasana is chair of the Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme*

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